

Conventions and Institutions

Benedictine Rule

Monastic orders existed in Ireland and Wales in the fifth century, first arrived in England in the sixth and seventh centuries, and in the eighth century the Rule of St. Benedict (480–ca. 550), Benedict's set of codes for behavior, also came to be known in the British Isles. Receiving additional impetus after 1066 and then again with the arrival of orders of canons and friars in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the monastic orders had their maximum numbers at the beginning of the fourteenth century, declined with the pestilence later in the century, then recovered significantly. From their inception many monastic houses received large endowments, were powerful landholding institutions, and were deeply and directly involved in the economic, legal, and social lives of all of society's strata in both immediate and extended geographical areas.

William Caxton (ca. 1422–92) began his career as a merchant. In the 1440s he went to Bruges, Cologne, and Ghent where he began his career as a printer and translator. He returned to England in 1476 with movable type and proceeded to publish over one hundred titles in the remaining sixteen years of this life, including several of Chaucer's, Gower's, Lydgate's, and Malory's works as well as his own translations.

Six English translations of the Benedictine rule survive from the eleventh century to 1516. None of the translations is dependent on each other, nor is any direct French or Latin source known. Caxton's edition from about 1490 also contains Heinrich Suso's *Horologium sapientiae* and other texts, and it, like several manuscript versions, is addressed to both men and women. Also like the other versions, Caxton's print lays out the qualifications and

duties of the abbot and abbess, the process of admission to the order, directions for divine service, cultivation of obedience and the twelve rungs of the ladder of humility, and the practical regulation of dress, food, and manual duties.

Primary documents and further reading

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Language: English (Southeast Midland)

Book date: ca. 1490

[B]ere in thy mynde this synguler note that the hede or the sovereyn wyth all the congregacion streytly be bounde to folowe the rule in every poynte and that none of them be soo bolde to decl[y[n]e or departe therfro so that none folowe the wyll of theyr owne mynde oonly but ever be redy to be reformyd. The subgettes also owe to be ryght ware that they make no strife wythyn or wythout wyth theyr sovereyns; yf that they doo, anone lete hem have the streyt regular punysshment wyth the fere of God and in keypyng the rule, remembrynge that the hede withoute ony dowte shall yeve a full streyte accompte oo day of all their jugementes and byhaviour to God atte ferefull daye of rekenynge . . .

Also, the sovereyn and the subgettes owe ever to flee idylnesse, the norissh¹ of al synnes, and to be occupyed ever in vertu, lovyng God wyth all their herte, of all theyr soule, and of all their strength, and theyr neyghbour as theyr selfe, doying ever unto theym as they wolde be done unto, dyspisyng theyrselfe, and folow Crist by the crosse of penaunce. Also, they must chastyse theyr body and flee the pleasur therof and to use fastynge, and

¹ nourisher.

refresshe the poore peple wyth dedes of mercy, goostly and bodely, and medle lytyll wyth worldly actes, no thyng preferrynge above the love of God, wrath or deceyte never to kepe in herte or to promyse ony false peas, keypyng ever charytee, and use never to swere, leeste that by custome ye fall in perjurie, and sey ever the trouthe in herte and mouth, never yeldyng evyll for evyll but rather good for evyll, doyng no wronge to ony but for to suffre patiently whan it is done to you. Love your enmyes, and curse hem not, and be redy to take persecucion for a rightwys mater; never be prowde or dronkew nor moche etyng or slouthfull, not grutchyng or bakbytyng, ever puttyng your trust in our Lord God. Whan that ye see ony goodnes in your-selfe, anone put it to oure Lorde and not to your-selfe. All thinge that is evyll ascryve to your-selfe. Fere ever the daye of jugement and the dungeon of hell, desyryng wyth all your mynde and herte the everlastyng lyfe, and have evere deth suspecte afore your eyen, and gyde ever your dedes wysely in every hour, and be certeyn that God beholdith them in everi place, and every evyll thought that commyth to your mynde, anone put it away by thynkyng of Cristes passyon, and shewe them by confessyon to your goostly fader, and kepe ever your tongue from evyll and schrewde langage, and speke lytyll and well, and ever avoyde vayn wordes and dissolute laughter and japes, and be glad to here gode lectures and lyves of sayntes with preyer, dayly waylyng your synnes and the synnes and ignoraunce of the peple wyth amendes making. The preceptes of your sovereyn in all thynges obey, lefull as to God, and fulfyll them. Love ever chastyte; and flee ever envy, hatrede, and stryff; and worship your elders; and favour the yong in all love and drede of God. Ever pray for your enmyes and, or the sone goo downe, be in perfyte peas wyth them dayly to your power, and never dyspeyr of the grete mercy of God. Loo, thyes ben the instrumentes of the spirituell crafte and occupacion, the which exercisid and doon, oure Lorde hath promysed to you and us that eye never sawe, nor ere ever herde, nor cowde ever in-to mannys herte ascende, the whiche to al his lovyng servantes he hath ordened. Amen.

Obedyence is a grete vertu done without grutchyng or taryenge. It is the fyrst steppe unto mekenes, and it is right specyous and nedefull to be had for all peple and namely for relygyous persones. True obediencers, assone as thei be called or commaundid of theyr sovereyn, anone after the worde seyde, they be redy wyth all gladnesse to doo the dede so commaundid, settinge asyde all other thynges undone and their owne wyll in every poynt, and that wyth all quyknese of herte and body for drede of our Lorde. Wherefore, he callyth suche a lyfe a streyt waye to heven and not a comyn waye where synners take her owne wyll, and be not undir the yocke of obedyence to an other. Wythouten doubte trew obedyencers folow surely

oure Lorde and his wordes where he seyth, “I come not in-to thys world to doo myn owne wyll but the wyll of my fader the whiche sent me.”² Thenne this obedience is gretly acceptable to God and swete to al Cristen peple whan it is done quikly and wythoute grutchynge or frowarde³ countenance in worde or in herte. Our Lorde loveth a thyng done unto hym cherefully in soule, and such obedience done to the sovereyn is done to God and for God, as he seyth hymselfe. Yf one obey with grutchyng either in worde or in their herte, fulfyllng the commaundement of theyr sovereyn, yet it is not acceptable to God, the whiche beholdyth the herte ever and the wyll of the doer therof, and he shal have noo grace but rather payne ordeined for grutchers, without he amende him.

As for silence, doo afir the cheyf prophete of God, David, where he seyth in the sauter, “I have seyed that I shall not offende in my tongue. I have put a keyng to my mowth and am dompe and therwith made meke and silent.”⁴ In moche speche, as it is writen, synne cann not be avoyded; also, in the power of the tongue is deth and lyfe. As it accordith to a mayster to speke and teche, so it behoveth the disciple to here and be silent; wordes of unclennes voyde or, mevyng to disolucyon or to laughter, ben dampned by the rule in ony place to be had, and it is commaundid streytly by the same, none to be so bolde to open their mowth in suche maner of talkyng. Also, silence is to be kept by the rule at all tymes and spyritually at nyght after complyn, and noo licence thenne is to be gyven to any for to speke but oonly to officers or to them that grete nede causith to speke with sadnesse and honestee, and silence also is to be kept at all refeccions and meles and in other places, and at other tymes specyfyed by the rule. Yf theyr be founde ony gylty in theis premyses, thei ought to be punysshid streytly and grevously.

Holy srypture cryeth and seyth, “He that wyll high hymselfe shal be made lowe, and he that mekyth hym selfe shall be made high.”⁵ In thys is shewid that exaltacyon is the doughter and nygh of kyne to pryde, whiche is mortall. Yf we wyll atteyne and come to the heyth of perfyte mekenes, the whiche wyll bringe us to the honour of heven in body and soule, lete us lyft up our herte and mynde unto heven by the skale and lader of Jacob, descendyng wyth the angels from ony exaltacyon, and clymme up to them by mekenes and humyliacion . . .

[The twelve steps are then specified; the sixth and twelfth follow here.]

² John 6.38.

³ ugly.

⁴ Psalms 38.2–3.

⁵ Luke 14.11, 18.14.

The sixth degree of mekenes is whan one is well content wyth symple araye or habite, and is glad to be set lytill by and to be take as a drudge or outcast of the religion, and to be ever redy to doo al thynges that is boden hym to doo, jugyng him an idyll servaunt and unworthy to God and man . . . The twelfth degree is whan one, not oonly in his mowthe but aswell in his body, shewyth mekenesse to all that beholde hym as in al his dedes in chaptour, in chirche, in garden, in felde, sittyng, walkyng, or standyng, and his hede enclynyng and his sight to the grounde, shewyng hym selfe every houre gylty of hys synne, havyng ever suspect for to be brought to the ferefull jugement of God, seyng thus wyth the publycan, “Good Lorde, I a synner am not worthy to lyfte up myn eyen to heven.”⁶ Who som ever hath ascendyd al thise degrees of mekenesse shall anone have the charyte of God perfytely, the whyche thenne puttyth away all drede in suche thynges, the whyche he dyde afore with drede, and also dooth thenne al his actes of accustome as it were naturalle to hym, cherefully and wythoute labour, and that not for the drede of hell he dooth it, but for fervent love that he hath to God by a custome and delyte of vertue, the whyche grace is yeven of the holy gooste . . .

The grete vice and syn of properte in relygyon is namely to be cutte away by the rote. Presume none in relygyon to yeve ony thyng or to take wythout the wyll and commaundement of the sovereyn, nor it is leefull ony to have a thyng to theyrself propre, not as moche as their owne body, or to have their own wyll in their power. All thynges to them necessary is to be had of the sovereyn accordyng to theyr nede, not acceptyng ony persone more than an other but accordyng to nede and in-firmyte. And all thynges must be commyn emonge theym accordyng to the lyfe of the apostles. None presume to sey: “Suche a thyng is myne.” Yf ony be founde gylty in this venemouse offence of properte, lete hem twyes or thries be correct; yf they doo not amende, see thenne to their cha[s]tysment. Yf at ony tyme one nede a lytill thyng, thanke he our Lorde and say he ever “*Deo gracias*,” not beyng sory that another that nede hath, that pite is shewid uppon hym. And he that hath suche pite shewyd upon hym shal not therof be proude by contenance or by worde, and thus shall all the congregacyon be in rest and charitee, and grutchyng layd a syde, the whiche is perilous to be had eyther by worde or sygne. Yf ony therin be founde culpable, anone put them to streyt disciplyne.

Eche one be besy to serve other, and none is to be excusid from the dressing bord of the kechyn wythout they be seke or other wyse occupied for the commyn well. In suche meke and low service is goten grete mede,

⁶ Luke 18.13.

charite, and rewarde, and whan they shall departe wekely from the kechyn by cours, they owe to make al thynges clene at theyr departyng, and the clothes that the covent hath fyled with theyr handes or fete, they shall delyver clene also wyth all mekenes. And moreover theyr owne fete they shall make clene in theyr departyng, and delyver al the naprye⁷ and clene clothes to the celerer. Suche servytoures by the rule may take a lytyll refresshing of mete and drynke afore high dyner for by-cause of their attendaunce and servyse at the same . . .

In the tyme of Lent echon by theyr-selfe have the Bible, the whiche they owe to rede complete and hole besyde theyr servyse, and the seyde Bible is to be delyverd unto them atte begynnyng of Lent. And the serchers of the relygyon owe to see warely about that they be occupied in lecture therof Sondag and other, and not aboute fables, japes, or sluggisshenes. Yf any suche be founde, see that they be spoken unto sharply ones or twyes, and yf they amende not theyr-wyth, lete them be correct soo that all other maye beware by them. If theyr be ony so slouthfull or neclygent that they maye not or wyll not be occupied in redyng or holy medytacyon, thenne lete them be assigned to other occupacyons to doo so that they be never unoccupied in vertu. If they be seke or feble for age, thenne such an occupacyon is to be put unto them that they maye awaye wyth and not to be ydyll, by the discrecion of the sovereyn.

How be it that a religious persone owe every tyme to kepe Lent, yet for by-cause that fewe have thys vertu, therfore we advise and counseyll, seyth Saynt Benet,⁸ all of the relygyon spiritually theys forty dayes of Lent to kepe in all clenness of lyfe, and to put utterly awaye all theyr neclygences and olde custome of synne, and thenne more spiritually to gyve them to prayer, waylyng and wepinge, redinge, and abstinence in mete and drynke, wythdrawyng somewhat of theyr takyng in mete and drynke other wyse than they dide afore, and that wyth good wyll, offeryng it in his mynde to God and to the poore peple, and to wythdrawe some what of slepe and speche and wanton behaviour. And as for abstynence of mete and drynke, it owe to be doon wyth the consente ever of the sovereyn and the helpe of prayer. For yf it be otherwyse doon, it is to be taken of presumpcyon and vayne glory, and thenne it hath noo mede . . .

Clothyng to the covent, and habyte, is to be even accordyng to the hete of the yere or to the coldenes of the countre that they dwell in, lasse or more as nede is. And the sovereyn must have consideracion therof and to

⁷ linen.

⁸ Rule 49.1–3.

bye suche cloth that is made in that countre or provynce of the vilest and lyghtest pryce. And as oft as they shal take new, thenne to rendre up the olde for the use of pore peple. Of other thynges necessary for theyr body daye and nyght in wynter and somer, and of theyr celles and lodgyng, and of their behavoure in them with other, the hole rule certifieth, and how the sovereyne shal dyligently serche that thei lacke no thyng to theym necessary soo that all occasion of grutchyng, or for ony thyng werkyng, or for ony thyng kepyng have no place in the relygyon, ever remembryng the wordes wrytyn in the Actes of the Apostles where it is seyde that it was distribute and delyverd to echone of theym as theyr nede required . . .⁹

[A] monestary is to be sette in suche a place where all thynges necessary soone maye be had so that the covent nede not to passe the boundes of the clausures therof, the whiche yf thei dide, shulde be perylle for theyr soules. Saynt Benet woll that the rule be red effectuelly oftymes in the yere afore the congregacion for by-cause none of hem shal pretende ignorance or ony excuse.

Whan ony of the bredern must doo a journey without the clausure of the place, after licence had, he shall commende hym to the prayer of his sovereyn, and ever at last oryson in the servyse of God shal a prayer be sayd for him and all that is absent. And the daye that they come home ayen, they shal lye prostrate all the servyse tyme and desyre the covent to praye for theym for theyr excesses done in the journey, as in syght, heryng of ony vanytees or evyll thynges, or ony voyde wordes. And they shall not tell ony thyng that they sawe or herd in theyr journey, for it is a grete meane to the destruccion of suche a place of relygion. And he that presумыth to doo the contrary or to goo oute of the clausure of the monestary to ony place, thought it be never so lytil, wythout commandement or licence of the sovereyn, owe to be streytly punysshyd.

Friars

The mendicant orders first arrived in England in the thirteenth century and the number of adherents rapidly grew. Two of the four principal orders – the Friars Preachers (Dominicans or Black Friars) and the Friars Minor (Franciscans or Grey Friars) – quickly became integral in the life of universities and commercial centers in the country, the Franciscans producing the remarkable theologians Roger Bacon, John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham,

⁹ Acts 4.35.

and John Pecham. Both orders also established houses for women, which flourished in the fourteenth century. Along with the remaining two orders – the Augustinians and the Carmelites (White Friars) – the four mendicant orders had their maximum number of followers (in approximately 190 houses) in the early fourteenth century before the pestilence. Friars ideally gave up permanent residence in one locality and material possessions; maintained contact with communities through preaching, confessions, and burial of the dead; and were obedient to provincial superiors and ultimately the pope.

Anti-fraternal criticism began almost with the inception of the mendicant orders because of their real or perceived competition with parish priests and other secular clergy over the offices of preaching, confession, and burial as well as the income derived from these sources. Reproof and satire gained additional impetus from William of St. Amour, a master at the University of Paris, who wrote *De periculis novissimorum temporum* (*On the Perils of the Last Times*) in 1256, a work that questioned the fraternal orders' very right to exist as true apostolic functionaries and that was sharply critical of fraternal hypocrisy, in particular the desire for material gain despite claims to poverty. Petrarch, Boccaccio, Jean de Meun, William Langland, Geoffrey Chaucer, and John Gower all satirize the friars, a practice which came to have additional significance in England because of Lollardy, new developments in the debates among clergy members, and Richard FitzRalph.

Richard FitzRalph (ca. 1300–60), archbishop of Armagh and primate of Ireland, was, until the 1350s and 1360s, best known in his role as a refuter of Armenian heresies for the pope in Avignon and as a preacher and theologian in England. Either coming upon or partially instigating an anti-mendicant controversy in London and elsewhere in 1356–7, FitzRalph proceeded to preach a number of anti-fraternal sermons in the vernacular, which led the four orders to respond, in turn requiring the archbishop to defend his position in front of the papal court. On November 8, 1357, he preached before Innocent VI what became known as *Defensio curatorum*, which outlined his objections to the friars, a text that survives in over seventy manuscripts.

John Trevisa (ca. 1342–1402), having attended Oxford, became a priest and vicar for Thomas, fourth Lord Berkeley, for whom he completed six translations of Latin texts, including Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon* (see "The English and England," p. 50 and "The English Language," p. 259), Batholomeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum* (see "Humors," p. 13), and two original works in English on translation. The date of his translation of the *Defense of the Curates* is unknown. The translation survives in six manuscripts.

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Language: English (Southwestern)

Manuscript date: ca. 1400

Y seide, and efte y seye, if me axeth what person is most worthi to be chose for singuler¹ of parischons,² a frere or the ordynarie, y say that the ordynarie is more worthi to be chose for schrifte than eny frere. For he is more profitable, and schrifte that is schewide singulerliche to hym voydeth mo desavauntes³ and damages. First y saye that the ordinarie is the more siker⁴ persone, for . . . he is y-fonge⁵ a person of God and of holy chirche

¹ personal well-being.

² parishioners.

³ more disadvantages.

⁴ reliable.

⁵ accepted as.

and of the comyn lawe, and the frere is forbode by the lawe. Thanne the ordynarie is the more siker persone. Also, the ordinarie is more y-bounde to his parischons than is a frere. Thanne the parischon may verreilich and more sikerliche triste that the ordynarie wole more bisiliche ordeyne for his savacioun than wole eny frere that is a straunge persooone, as a bodiliche leche⁶ that is prevy and y-knowe is more y-holde to the seke man than a straunge leche. Also, by the comyn cours, the parischon douteth nought nother schal doute of his ordinarie, wether his power to assoile his sugetis⁷ be y-bounde other no, but of freres he may have verreiliche suspeciou and trowe that her power is y-bounde for diverse cursyngis, and with oute eny doute hit is more siker to be schryve to hym that hath fre power than to hym that his power is y-bounde. Thanne the ordinarie is the more siker persone and the more certeyn. And that me may trowe that freres beth acursed, hit is preved, first by the decretal in *Clementinis de decimis*. There it is seide that “Alle men of religioun that haveth no benefice beth a-cursed if thei withholdeth, other withdraweth, other fondeth to appropre to hem without a lawful cause, by any maner, colour, other sleighth,⁸ rightes other tethinges that beth dewe to holy chirche.”⁹ And it semeth no dowte, by Goddes owne lawe, that tethinges of byqueestes and of fre giftes is detty¹⁰ and dewe to parische chirches and to curatours therof. And so seyn the doctors Innocencius and Hostiensis.¹¹ Thanne alle freres that bynymeth¹² parische chirches the tethinge of that is y-geve hem other biquethe, beth acursed. For thei payeth nevere tethinge of siche byquystes and giftes, as it is comynliche seide . . .

Also, that the ordynarie is more siker to the paryschon, hit is preved other wise in this maner: for the parischon may skilfulliche deme that his ordynarie is a juge lasse suspect and more skilful¹³ for to enjoye¹⁴ hym skilful penaunce and profitable for his synnes. For he schal nought suppose nother have suspeciou that his ordynarie hereth his schrifte for covetise of getyng and of wyngnyng of bodilich help and socour, for the ordynaries liflode¹⁵ longeth

⁶ doctor.

⁷ subjects.

⁸ sleight.

⁹ Clement V (d. 1314), *Clementines*.

¹⁰ owing.

¹¹ Innocent IV (ca. 1190–1254), Henry of Suso (d. 1270).

¹² deprive.

¹³ reasonable.

¹⁴ enjoin.

¹⁵ livelihood.

to his offys by lawe of God and of holy chirche. Of freres thei may suppose and wene that thei doth hit for to have socour and help of her liflode, for in here appele that thei made agenes me in Engelond hit is conteyned that by her fundacioun thei beth y-bounde to beggerie and to the heighest poverte, nought with-stondyng that thei tellith that thei haveth powere to here the schriftes of alle men that wole be schryve to hem. Therefore, the parischen may skilfulliche suppose and have suspeciou that, bycause of getyng somme releve of her beggerie, thei beth so busy to here schriftes. Thanne may the parischon skilfulliche argue in his herte why wolde this begger sitte and here my schrifte and leve his beggyng and getyng of his liflode but he hope to have of me siche maner help, and nede driveth to synne, by the which synne the nede myght be releved, as Proverbs 30,¹⁶ Salomon, seith and prayeth: “Geve me nother beggerie nother riches, but geve me onliche what is nedeful to my liflode lest y be excited to denye and saye who is oure Lorde, and compelled by nede for to stele and forswere the name of my God.” Thanne hit folewith that for all maner synnes, he wole joyne me almes dede for to releve his owne beggerie, and so y schal nought be cleneliche by-quit of my synnes. Therefore, whanne hise disciples axide of oure Lord, “Why myght we nought cast hym out?” and spake of a fende, oure Lord answerde and seide: “These manere fendes beth nought cast out but with bedes and fastyng,” Matthew 16.¹⁷ Of this worde hit is y-take that as for evereche diverse seknesse of body diverse medicyns helpith, so for evereche gostlich seknesse most be ordeyned his propre medicyn. And this begger that is bisy about his beggerie wole nought with-out suspeciou ordeyne me siche medicyns for my synnes . . .

Curatours haveth another grete damage by cause of mysuse of privy-leges: that freres haveth touchyng¹⁸ the thre quarters of alle profites that fallith to hem, other wise of biquyst other of gifte, distinctliche other indistinctliche,¹⁹ and al maner mysuse that thei useth of that is conteyned in the chapitre *dudum*,²⁰ and touchyng the ferthe part that is i-graunted to curatours and y-taxed there, the whiche ferthe part of many biquyestes, offryngis, and giftes freres payeth nought to curatours, but freres appropreth hit to hem-silf with many cautels and wyles as curatours tellith so that bitwene hem and freres as it were in evereche place among Cristen men is

¹⁶ Proverbs 30.8–9.

¹⁷ Matthew 17.18–20.

¹⁸ handling of.

¹⁹ individually or indiscriminately.

²⁰ before.

ple²¹ and strif withoute ende. So that in many placis charite is fer, and after wordes cometh strokes . . .

Thanne hit folewith that these of the ordres of beggers multeplieth hem in this maner agenus the ordenaunce of God almyghtyes witt and his wisdom, and bynymeth therby the fleece of the peple and of the clergie, and chargith hem in everech place. For now unnethe may any grete men other smaal, lewed or lered, take a morsel of mete but siche beggers come unbede and begge nought as pore men schuld atte gate other atte dore, axing almes mekelich as Fraunces taught and hoteth²² in his testament,²³ but thei cometh into houses and courtes, and beth y-harberwide,²⁴ and ethith and drynketh what thei ther fyndeth unbede and unprayed. And notheles thei bereth with hem corn,²⁵ other mele, brede, flesche, other chese; though there be but tweyne in the hous, thei bereth with hem that oon. And no man may hem werne but thei put of²⁶ al kyndeliche schame. And it is wonder that thei dredith nought the sentence of Pope Gregorye that writeth in a comyn privelege to prelates of holy chirche in this maner: “For ofte vices of privy riches entreth, and Sathanas his angel degiseth²⁷ hym in the liknesse of an angel of light. By this present auctorite, we comaundeth and hoteth that if eny that tellith that thei beth of the ordre of frere prechours precheth in yowre contrayes and turneth hem to begging of money wharby the ordre of hem that haveth made professioun to povert myght be diffamed, take ye hem as fals faytours²⁸ and dampneth hem.”²⁹ Thei beth now so sotyl in this crafte of beggerie that pore vikers and persons and al the peple pleyneth therof, neigh in everech place. This semeth a wonder maner lyvyng in hem that seyn, that thei mot holde the gospel by her professioun and doth agenus Cristes owne sentence that sente his disciples to prech the gospel and seide: “Passe ye nought from hous to hous,” Luke 10.³⁰ Also thei doth agenus another scripture that seith: “Voide and war that thou be nought herberwed from hous to hous,” Ecclesiasticus 29.³¹ Bot thei goth so about

²¹ contention.

²² commands.

²³ Rule 1.9.

²⁴ lodged.

²⁵ grain.

²⁶ off.

²⁷ disguises.

²⁸ beggars.

²⁹ Gregory I the Great (ca. 540–604), *Liber regula pastoralis*.

³⁰ Luke 10.7.

³¹ Ecclesiasticus 29.30.

from court to court and from hous to hous, for her cloystre schulde nought be her prison. Ys nought this grete damage to the clergie and to the peple also? Sothlich hit semeth so to many men, and al hit hath occasioun of the mysuse of pryvyleges, for thei tellith that thei useth so the pryvyleges of prechyng and of heryng of schriftes, neigh everech man schameth to werne hem other to put hem of.

And also these pryvyleges and other thingis that schal be touched withynne doth freres many damages. For hit semeth that these pryvyleges infecteth hem with many maner synnes: with the synne of injurie and of wrong, with the synne of unbuxomnesse,³² with the synne of covetise, and with the synne of pride . . .

Also, Seynt Fraunceys in his rule hoteth in this maner: “Ich hote heighlich alle freres that thei have noon suspect company as counseil of wymmen; also, that thei come nought in abbayes of monchons³³ out-take³⁴ thilke freres that have special leve of the court of Rome; also, that thei be nought gossippes to men nother to wymmen leste sclaudre arise by occasioun therof among freres.”³⁵ And freres procureth the contrarie for to here the pryveste counseile of wymmen, of queenes, and of alle othere, and leggeth³⁶ hed to hed. With grete obedience thei folewith Seynt Job that seide: “Ich have made covenant with myn eighen that y wolde thenke of a mayde.”³⁷ And so now by sich company thei disputeth with ladyes in chambre; therefore, in al the worlde wide sclauder springeth of freres, the wiche sclaudre y wole nought reherse at this tyme. Of many hit semeth openlich that thei infecteth hem-silf with the synne of unobediens and unbuxumnesse by the mys-use of siche pryvyleges and of her owne reule by occasioun of siche pryvyleges.

Humors

Humoral theory in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries belonged both to the world of the practitioner and the academic. It originated in Aristotle’s idea of balance within the body and achieved its fullest articulation in the works of Galen (129–ca. 216), which became central

³² disobedience.

³³ nuns.

³⁴ except.

³⁵ Rule 1.12.

³⁶ lie.

³⁷ Job 31.1.

to the curriculum of medical study in Europe. The enormous quantity of medical manuscripts in England (over 7,000 in English alone from the mid-fourteenth to fifteenth centuries) testifies to the thorough extent to which medical discourses permeated society.

Bartholomeus Anglicus wrote his *De proprietatibus rerum* in the mid-thirteenth century. Bartholomeus was probably born an Englishman, studied in Paris, became a Minorite in France, and went on to lecture on theology in Paris. His text is encyclopedic, not a strictly medical work, and contains information about spiritual and human matters, including all the branches of human knowledge. John Trevisa completed his translation of *De proprietatibus rerum* in 1398, a translation which survives in eight manuscripts alongside several Latin versions (see “Friars,” p. 7, for a general introduction to Trevisa, as well as “The English and England,” p. 50, and “The English Language,” p. 258). These eight manuscripts are large and professionally produced. About 1495 Wynkyn de Worde published one of Trevisa’s translations, possibly a later printing of one completed by Caxton in Cologne in 1471–4.

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Language: English (Southwestern)

Manuscript date: ca. 1410

To trete of the propretees of mannes body and of the parties therof, we schul first biginne to trete of the qualitees of the elementis and of the humoures of whiche the body is maad . . .

Elementis beth foure, and so beth foure qualitees of elementis of the whiche everiche body that hath a soule is componed¹ and imade as of matir, and nameliche mannes body that is nobilest among alle the elementis and most nobilliche is i-ordeined among alle thinges that beth componed and imade of divers thinges. Mannes body is i-ordeyned to be the propre instrument of the resonabil soule in his workes of kinde and of wille.

Mannes body is made of foure elementis — of erthe, watir, fire, and aier — and everiche therof hath propre qualitees. Foure ther beth iclepid the firste and principal qualites, that is to wite, hete, coold, drye, and wetenesse, and ben iclepid the firste qualites for they sliden first of the elementis into the thinges that ben imaade of elementis. They ben also iclepid the principal qualitees for of hem cometh al the secundarye effectis. Tweyne of these qualites ben iclepid *active* “able to worche,” hete and cooldnes. The othir tweyne, drynesse and wetnesse, ben iclepid *passive* “able to soffre.” And so as these qualites have maistrie, the elementis ben iclepid *active* othir *passive* “able to do or soffre.” The firste tweyne ben principallich iclepid *active*, nocht for they worchin alone, for the passive qualites worchith also, [for] non qualite is in the body an ydel; but therefore they beth iclepid *active* for, be the worchinge of hem, the othir beth ibrought inne and ikept and isaved . . .

For *libro I capitulo 16* Constantinus² seith if the body is hote, thanne is moche fleisch and litil fatnesse, rede colour, moche here (blak othir rede), hote touche and gropinge, good witt, a man of gret facounde³ and of gret mevyng,⁴ hardy and wraathful, lovy⁵ and lecherous, and desiringe moche, and hastilich defienge⁶ for good digestioun, of scharp voys, an schamefast, of strong and swift puls . . .

¹ mixed.

² Constantine the African (d. 1087), *Royal Book*.

³ eloquence.

⁴ moving.

⁵ given to amorous activities.

⁶ digesting.

Also, coolde is the modir of whightnesse and of palenes, as hete is the modir of blaknes and of rednes. And so in hote londes cometh forth blake men and browne, as among the Moores, in coolde lond white men, as among the Slaves. So seith Aristoteles *in libro de celo et mundo*⁷ and tellith the resoun why and seith that in coolde londes the modres of wommen ben disposid to conseive suche children. Therefore, they beren children with whyte skynnes that haveth longe, yelewy, neissche,⁸ and streite here. The contrarie is in hote londes there wymmen bereth children that ben blake and hath litil here and crips,⁹ as in blo men londe.¹⁰ Thenne coolde schewith itself in the body what he is and hath the maistrie withinne, for in the body ther coolde hath the maistrie the colour is white, here is neissche and streight, hard wit¹¹ and forgeteful, litil appetite, miche slepe, hevy goinge and slowe. So seith Constantinus *libro primo capitulo 17*. This schal not alwey be undirstonde in everich colde nedeliche,¹² but in comparisoun to the complexioun of the heete that hath the maistrye and in proporcioun of the hote lond to the coolde lond, auctoures seith suche thingis and lefte hem iwrite in here bookes to hem that camen aftir hem . . .

An humour is a substauce fleting¹³ in dede, and is ibred and cometh of gederinge of the element qualitees, and apt to norische and fede the membres and to counforte the worchingis therof kyndeliche, or hapliche¹⁴ to lette the worchingis therof. For humour is the firste principal material of bodies that haveth felinge and chief help in here worchinge, and that bycause of norischinge and of fedinge. Constantinus seith that the humoures beth iclepid the children of the elementis, for everiche of the humours cometh of qualite of elementis. And there beth foure humours: blood, flewme, colera, and melencolia. And beth iclepid symple in comparisoun to the membres and lymes, though they be componed in comparisoun to the elementis whos children they beth.

Thise foure humours, if they beth in evene proporcioun in quantite and qualite, he fedith alle bodyes that hath blood and maketh hem parfite and kepith in [dewe] beinge and state of helthe; as agenward, if they beth

⁷ Aristotle (384–322 BCE), *De caelo et mundo*.

⁸ soft.

⁹ curly.

¹⁰ Ethiopia.

¹¹ slow to understand.

¹² necessarily.

¹³ flowing.

¹⁴ potentially.

uneven in proporcioun and infecte, thanne they bredith eveles. Thise humours beth nedeful to the makinge of the body and to the reuleynge and kepinge therof, and also to restore what is ilost in the body . . .

Thise foure humours beth ibred in this manere. Whan mete is ifonge¹⁵ in the place of seethinge,¹⁶ that is the stomak, first the more sotil partie and fletinge therof that phisicians clepith *ptthisinaria* is idrawe be certeyn veynes to the lyvour and ther, by the worchinge of kinde hete, it is ichtaungid into the foure humours. The breedinge of hem bigynneth in the lyver, but it endith there [not] atte fulle. First, by worchinge, hete turneth what is coolde and moist in[to] the kynde of flewme, and thanne what is hote and moist into the kynde of blood, and thanne what is hote and drye into the kynde of colera, and thanne what is coolde and drye into the kinde of malancolia. Thanne the proces is suche: first, fleume is bred as an humour half sode;¹⁷ secoude, blood that is parfitliche isode; the thridde, colera that is oversode;¹⁸ the laste is malencolia that is more erthi and the drestis¹⁹ of the othir. And so suche is the ordre, as Avicenne seith: the breedinge of elementis is streite and agenward into the same, for aier is ibred of fire, and fire of aiere, and everiche element of othir . . .²⁰

Thenne of the sentence of the forseid auctours²¹ gedre thu schortliche that kinde blood is pure, hoot and moist, sotile²² and swete, and also it kepith the kinde vertu of fedinge.²³ And blood is the sete of the soule and conteyneth hym, and maketh parfite [youth], complexioun a chaungith, and kepith and saveth the herte and the spiritis, and maketh hem glad, and waketh love, schedith him in the uter partie of the body and maketh it of good colour and hiewe. And if blood is wel and temperat, he kepith hele and helthe. And if he is corrupt, it bredith corrupcion, as in *lepra*²⁴ that is corrupt blood in the wellis.²⁵ Medlid [with] othur humoures, it temprith the malice therof. And blood by his vertu swagith the smertinge of eighen . . .

¹⁵ received.

¹⁶ digesting.

¹⁷ cooked.

¹⁸ over-cooked.

¹⁹ dregs.

²⁰ Avicenna (980–1037).

²¹ Isidore of Seville (570–636), Constantine the African, and Aristotle.

²² thin.

²³ it retains the natural power of food.

²⁴ leprosy.

²⁵ source.

In wommen, for to grete moisture and defaute of hete, if it is iholde over dewe tymes, it is cause and occasioun of ful gret greves. For somtime it stuffith the spiritual membres, and somtyme frenesye²⁶ and othir eveles that beth opunliche iknow, as that corrupt blood to longe iholde is ise[n]t to divers place of the body, as it is more openlich contained in *libro passionarum Galieni*.²⁷ Therfor, agens suche periles best remedye is to voyde suche corrupt blood that greveth so the body that he is inne, for also it chaungith wondirliche and infectith othir bodyes. For *libro 10 capitulo 2* Isidre seth by the touch of the blood *menstruales* fruyt growith noght but drieth and beth ibrent, and dyeth herbes, and treen leseth here fruyt, irne²⁸ is frette²⁹ with roust, bras and metal wexith blake. If hounde etith therof, he waxith wood.³⁰ Also a thing hatte³¹ *glutinum aspalti* is so hard that it may nought be toded³² with watir nothir with irne, and if the blood *menstrualis* touchith, that *glutinum aspalti* al tofalleth anon, as Isidir seith. This blood is bred in wymmennes bodyes of superfluite of moisture and feblenes of hete. And for it schulde not greve kinde, it is igedred into the modir as filthe into a goter. If it is iput out therof in dwe maner, it clensith and releveth al the body, and clensith the modir also, and disposith and maketh able to conceyve . . .

The superfluyte of [flegm] is knowen, as Constantinus seith, be thise signes and tokens: for a verray fleumatik man is in the body lustles, hevvy, and slowgh; dul of wit and of thought, forgeteful; neissche of fleissche and quavy,³³ bloo of colour, whitliche in face, ferdeful of herte; ful of spittinge, snyvel, and rokeinge,³⁴ ful of slouthe and of slepinge; of a litil appetite and of litil thurst but if the flewme be salt, for than for mellinge³⁵ of hote humour he felith salt savour in his mouthe; neische, yelowh, and streit of here; neische, grete, and slough of puls. His urine is white and thicke, rawe and evel icoloured. He is fat and greet and schort; and his skin is pleyn and smethe, [bare withouten eer].³⁶ He metith³⁷ and hath swevenes³⁸ of grete wattris and

²⁶ madness.

²⁷ Pseudo-Hippocrates (Gariopontus, d. ca. 1050), *Passionarius*, here attributed to Galen.

²⁸ iron.

²⁹ corroded.

³⁰ mad.

³¹ called.

³² mixed.

³³ soft, flabby.

³⁴ spitting, vomiting? (obscure).

³⁵ mixing.

³⁶ hair.

³⁷ dreams.

³⁸ dreams.

snowe and reyne and of seilynge on coolde watir and of swymmynge therinne. Men of that complexioun hath often coolde yveles and beith itravayled³⁹ therwith and nameliche in wintir, for thanne the qualitees of fleume, coolde and moist, beth istrengthid. So seith Constantin . . .

Thenne this kyndeliche colera, if it passe noght the boundis of kynde, it maketh othir humours sotile, and comfortith digestioun, and clensith drasten⁴⁰ and corrupcioun, and maketh the body to strecche in lengthe, brede, and thickenesse, and bredith boldenes and hardynes and mevyng and lightnes and wrethe⁴¹ and appetite of wreche⁴² and also of the werkes of Venus, and helpith the *vertu explosive*,⁴³ and clerith thicke matere and maketh it meve from the middel to the uttir parties, and chaungith the uttir parties in colour of citrine⁴⁴ and blak. And so colerik men beth generalliche wratheful, hardy, unmeke, light,⁴⁵ unstable, inpetuous; in body long, sklendre, and lene; in colour broun; in eer blak and crips, [hard] and stif; in touche hoot; in puls strong and swifte. The urine of hem is thinne in substaunce and subtile, in colour fury,⁴⁶ schinyng, and clere . . .

If this humour [melancholy] have maistrye in any body, thyse beth the signes and tokenes. First, the colour of the skyn chaungith into the blake or into bloo colour; sour savour and sharp and erthey is ifeled in the mouth by the qualite of the humour; the pacient is faynt and ferdful in herte withoute cause. Galien seith if the dredes of suche endureth withouten cause, his passioun is melencolia. And so al that hath this passioun withouten cause beth often dredeful and sory, and that for the melencolif humour constreyneth and closith the herte. And so if men asketh of suche what they drede and wherfore thei beth sory, they haveth none answeere. Somme weneth that they schullen dye anon unresonabliche. Somme dredith enemyte of som oon. Som loveth and desireth deth. *In libro passionum* Galien seith no wondir though he that soffreth *coleram nigram* be sory and have suspeccioun of deth, for no thing is more dredeful outward in the body than derknes. And so whanne any derk thinge heleth the brayn as malincolie flewme, it nedith that the pacient drede, for he bereth with hym the cause why he

³⁹ belabored.

⁴⁰ dregs.

⁴¹ wrath.

⁴² vengeance.

⁴³ "*vertu explosive*" is a Galenic faculty, dealing with elimination of wastes.

⁴⁴ yellowish or yellow-red.

⁴⁵ cheerful.

⁴⁶ fiery.

schulde drede. And therfore he meteth dredeful swevenes and of derknes, griselych to se, and stinkinge of smelle, and soure in savour.

Of alle thise cometh *passio melancolya*. Also, it cometh of [*mania*,] “madnes,” and of disposicioun of melancolie whanne suche hath likinge and laugheth of sorewful thinges and maketh sorowe and dool for joyeful thingis. Also, suche holdeth here pes whanne they schulde speke and speke to moche whanne they schulde be stille and holde here pees. Also somme trowith that they beth erthene vessellis and dredeth to be touchid lest they beth ibroke. And somme weneth that they closeth and conteyneth the world in here fist and alle thingis in here hondes, and therfore they putte noght here hond to take mete; they dredeth that the worlde schulde tofalle and be lost if they streight out here hondes. Also somme weneth that an aungel holdeth up the worlde and wolde forwery⁴⁷ late the worlde falle, and therfore they heveth up here hondes and schuldres to holde up the worlde that hem semeth is in point to falle and breideth⁴⁸ strongliche and streyneth if fisicians maketh hem holde doun here hondes. Also somme weneth that they have none heedes, and somme that they have leden hedes or asse hedis or som othir weyes evel ischape. Also somme, if they here the kockes crowe, they rereth up here armes and crowith, and trowith that hemsilf be kockes, and at the laste they ben hoos⁴⁹ for grete cryenge and doumbith. Also somme falleth into wel evel suspicions withouten recovere, and therfore they hatith and blameth and schendith hire frendes and somtyme smytith and sleeth hem.

Melencolik men fallith into thise and many othir wondirful passiouns, as Galien seith and Alisaundir⁵⁰ and many othir auctours, the which passiouns it were to longe to rekene al on rowe. And this we seeth alday with oure eighen, as it fel late of a nobleman that fel into suche a madnes of melancolye that he in alle wise trowed that he hemsilf was a catte, and therfore he wolde nowher reste but undir beddes there cattis waitid aftir myse.⁵¹ And in cas in wreche of his synnes Nabugodonosor was ipunyschid with suche a payne, for it is iwriten in stories that seven yere hym semed that he was a best thorough divers schappis: lyoun, egle, and ox.⁵²

⁴⁷ wearily.

⁴⁸ start.

⁴⁹ hoarse.

⁵⁰ Alexander of Tralles (d. 605).

⁵¹ mice.

⁵² Daniel 4.25–34.

Marriage

Three principal bodies of texts discussed marriage in late medieval Europe: theology, law, and literature. Theologians focused on marriage not only as a socially sanctioned state of mutual love between a man and a woman, but also as many possible relationships among the individual, the Church, and Christ. Hence, earthly marriage, and particularly the wife, ranked lower on a scale below other possible marriages, the married woman less favored than a virgin bride of Christ. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 set the prohibition against marriage between first cousins, but this tells us little of the reality of people's abilities and desires to choose. The same council, however, accepted the idea that free consent was necessary, but in England in the later Middle Ages the king and lords frequently imposed a marriage tax on tenants who married people out of their feudal property or who simply wanted freely to choose their own partners. The legal implications of the marriage bond were different for men and women. In general marriage was a disadvantage for a woman, who became a *feme covert*; without special provisions, she was legally "covered" by her spouse, who gained control over land and goods.

Geoffrey de la Tour Landry, a knight from the province of Maine-et-Loire, composed his *Book* for his daughters in 1371–2. Geoffrey states in his prologue that, having composed a book of instruction (now lost) for his sons, he decided to make his book for his daughters because he still remembers his wife who died some twenty years before, he has seen his fellow courtiers deceiving women with their words and deeds, and he wishes his daughters to "turne to good and worshiþe above all ertheli thinges." He states that he employed two of his priests and clerks to compile tales of good and evil women for his daughters' instruction from the Bible, histories of kings, and chronicles; he adds examples from his own life as well as commentary. Over twenty French manuscripts of the book survive. Two English translations remain: a mid-fifteenth century manuscript and Caxton's translation from 1483–4 (from which the following excerpt and that in "Sumptuary," p. 215, are taken). Geoffrey's *Book* is a frequently transfixing misogynist text of moral prescription and exempla.

Dives and Pauper consists of a fictionalized dialogue between the wealthy and learned Dives and the authorial poor wandering preacher Pauper. It is a long didactic treatise on the ten commandments written by an unknown friar in the first quarter of the fifteenth century and survives as a whole or in part in eleven manuscripts and three early printings. The majority of the text concerns the ways in which Christian doctrine intersects with human

worldly practices (frequently legal practices). Parts of the text take up issues of interest to Wycliffite writers and their opponents. The following excerpt (and the other, in “Sumptuary,” p. 215) is from chapter 4 on adultery, the subject of the seventh commandment.

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 Language: English (Southeast Midland)
 Book date: 1484

How men ought to love after his estate and degree.

“What saye yow, lady,¹ wold ye have kept them so straitly that they shold not take somme plesaunce more to somme than to the other?”

“Syre, I wylle not that they have or take ony plesaunce of them that ben of lower estate or degree than they be of, that is to wete, that no woman

¹ the lady of the tower.

unwedded shalle not sette her love upon no man of lower or lasse degree than she is of. For yf she tooke hym, her parentes and frendes shold hold her lassed and hyndered.² These, whiche loven suche folke, done ageynste theyre worship and honoure. For men ought to desyre ne coveyte nothyng so moche in this world as worship and the frendship of the world and of hir frendes, the whiche is lost as soone as she draweth oute her self oute of the governement and fro the councyll of them, as I myght telle, yf I wold, an ensample of many whiche therfore ben dyffamed and hated of theyr parents and frendes.

“And therefore, syre, as I theyr moder charge and deffende them: that they take no playsaunce,³ ne that in no wyse sette theyr love to none of lower degree than they be come of, ne also to none of hyhe estate, whiche they may not have to their lord. For the grete lordes shalle not take them to theyr wyves, but alle theyr lovyng loke and semblaunt, they do it for to deceyve them and for to have the delytes and playsaunce of theyr bodyes, and for to bryng them in to the folye of the world.”

How wedded wymmen, whiche have sette theyr love to some of lower degree than they be of, are not worthy to be callyd wymmen.

“Also, they whiche putte and sette theyr love on thre maner of folke – that is to wete, wedded men, prestes, and monkes, and as to servauntes and folke of noughte – these maner of wymmen, whiche take to theyr peramours and love suche folke, I hold them of none extyme ne valewe but that they be more gretter harlottes than they that ben dayly at the bordell. For many wymmen of the world done that synne of lechery but only for nede and poverté, or els by cause they have ben deceyved of hit by false councylle of bawdes. But alle gentylle women whiche have ynough to lyve on, the whiche make theyre peramours or lovers suche maner of folke as before is sayd, it is by the grete ease wherin they be and by the brennyng lecherye of theyr bodyes. For they knowe wel that, after the lawe of theyr maryage, they may not have for theyr lordes ne to be theyr husbondes men of the chirche ne other of no valewe. This love is not for to recovere ony worship but alle dishonour and shame.”

How hit is almesse⁴ to enhaunce a man in to grete valour.

“At the leste, syth ye wylle not graunte ne accorde that youre daughters love no man peramours as longe as they shalle be unwedded, please it yow

² lowered and belittled.

³ pleasure.

⁴ alms, good deeds.

to suffre that whanne they shall be wedded, they may take somme plesaunce of love for to hold and behave them self the more gaye and joyefull, and for the better knowe theyr behavyng and maner emonge folke of worship. And as before this tyme I have sayd to yow, it were to them grete welthe and worship to make a man of none extyme ne of valewe to become of grete valour.”

The answeere of the lady of the towre.

“Sire, to thys I ansuere yow: I wylle well and am content that they make good chere to all worshipfulle men, and more to somme than to the other, that is to wete, to them of gretter name and more gentyl, or els better men of theyr persones, and after that they bere to them worship and honour, and that they synge and daunce before them honourably. But as for to love peramours sythe they shall be wedded – withoute it be of suche love as men ought to bere unto folke of worshippe – for to love and worshippe them after that they be worthy and of valour, and whiche have had grete payne and travaylle to gete and acquere glorye and worship by theyr valyaunce in armes, these must be loved, doubted,⁵ served, and honoured withoute havynge in them ony plesaunce, sauf only for the bounte of them. But to saye and hold hit good that a wedded woman shold love and have a peramour, ne take the othe and feythe of none, to thende that they be theyr lovers and peramours, ne also to gyve also to gyve their feith and othe to none, I trowe and wene certainly that no lady ne damoyzell, wedded ne woman of other estate, shall not put her estate and worship in this balauce . . .”

Glasgow University Library MS Hunterian 270, fols. 161v–172r. In P. H. Barnum (ed.) (1980) *Dives and Pauper*, 2 parts. EETS, o.s. 275, 280. London: Oxford University Press, II: 65–89 (selections).

Language: English (Southwestern)

Manuscript date: ca. 1450

DIVES: Whan gaf God lawys of matrimonye, and what lawys gaf he?
 PAUPER: Whan God hadde mad Adam, he put a gret slep in hym and in his slep he took out on of his rybbys and fylde up the place with flesch, and of that rybbe he made Eve and broughte hir to Adam. Than Adam awooc and, as God inspyred hym, he tolde the lawys of wedlac and seyde thus: “This bon is now of myn bonys and this flesch of myn flesch, for this thing man

⁵ feared.

shal forsakyn fadyr and modyr, and clevyn to his wyf, and ther schul ben two in on flesch,” Genesis 2⁶. In whiche wordys, whan he seide that man for his wyf schulde forsakyn fadyr and moodir, and clevyn to his wif, he schewyd the sacrament of trewe love and unyte that owyth to ben atwoxsyn⁷ housebonde and wyf, and be the same wordis he schewyd what feith owyth to ben atwoxsyn hem, for he shal clevyn to hys wyf and medlyn with hyr and with non othir, and she with hym and with non othir. And in that he seyde that ther shuldyn ben two in on flesch he schewyd that thei shuldyn medlyn togedere principaly to bryngyn forth childryn to Godys worchepe, for in her child, housebond and wyf ben on flesch and on blood. Also, in that he seyde that the housebonde schulde clevyn to his wyf, he defendyth⁸ fornicacion and avouterie. And in that he seyde in the singuler nombre – “to hys wyf” and nout “to his wyfys” – he defendyd bygamye, that a man schulde nout han to wyfys togedere ne on woman to house-boundys togedere. And in that he seyde that thei two schuldyn ben in on flesch he defendyd sodomye. And also be the same wordis he schewith that iche of hem hat power ovyr otheris body and non of hem may conteynyn but thei ben bothin therto of on assent. DIVES: Why made God woman mor of the rybbe of Adam than of anothis bon? PAUPER: For the rybbe is next the herte, in tokene that God made hyr to ben mannys felawe in love and his helpere. And as the rybbe is next the herte of alle bonys, so schulde the wyf ben next in love of all women and of alle men. God made nout woman of the foot to ben mannys thral ne he made hyr nout of the hefd to ben hys maystir but of his syde and of his rybbe to ben his felawe in love and helper at nede. But whan Eve synnyd, than was woman maad soget to man, that the wyf schulde ben rewlyd be hyr housebonde and dredyn hym and servyn hym as felaw in love and helper at nede and as nest solas⁹ in sorwe, nout as thral and bonde in vyleyn servage, for the housebonde owyth to han his wyf in reverence and worchepe in that they ben bothin on flesch and on blood. DIVES: Why made nout God woman be hyrself of the erde as he dede Adam? PAUPER: For to moryn¹⁰ her love togedere and also to gevyn woman materie of¹¹ lownesse. First, for moryng of love, for in that woman is part of mannys body man must lovyn hyr as hys owyn flesch and blood,

⁶ Genesis 2.23–4.

⁷ between.

⁸ forbids.

⁹ nest of consolation.

¹⁰ increase.

¹¹ reason for.

and she must also lovyn man as hyr begynnyng and as hyr flesch and hyr blood. Also, she owyth takyn gret materie of lownesse and thynkyn that man is hir perfeccioun and hyr begynnyng, and han man in reverence as hyr perfeccioun, as hyr principal, as hyr begynnyng, and hyr firste in ordre of kende. God made al mankende of on, for he wolde that al mankende schulde ben on in charite as they comyn al of on.

DIVES: Wether is avouterie gretere synne in the man than in the woman?
 PAUPER: Comounly it is mor synne in the man than in the woman, for the heyere degre, the harder is the fal and the synne mor grevous. Also, man is mor myghty be weye of kende to with-stondyn and hat mor skyl and resoun wherby he may withstondyn and bewar of the fendis gyle. And in that he is mad maystir and governour of woman to governyn hyr in vertue and kepyn hyr from vycis, if he falle in vycis and in avouterie mor than woman, he is mychil to blame and worthi to ben reprovyd schamfully. Therfor, Sent Austyn, *libro De decem cordis*, undirnemyth¹² housebondys that fallyn in avouterie and seith to iche of hem in this maner: “God seith to the that thu schal don non lecherie, that is to seye, thu schalt medelyn with no woman but with thin wyf. Thu askyst this of thin wyf, that she medele with non but with the, and thu wilt nout yeldyn this ne kepyn this to thin wyf. And ther thu aughtyst ben afornt thin wyf in vertu thu fallys[t] down undir the byr of lecherie. Thu wilt that thin wyf be ovyrcomere of lecherye and han the maystry of the fend, and thu wilt ben ovyrcomyn as a coward and lyn don in lecherye. And noutwithstondyng that thu art hefd of thin wyf, yet thin wyf goth afornt the to God, and thu that art hefd of thin wif gost bakward to helle. Man,” seith he, “is hefd of woman,¹³ and therfor in what houshold the woman lyvyth betere than the man, in that houshold hongyth the hefd donward for, sith man is hefd of woman, he owyth to lyvyn betere than woman and gon afornt his wif in alle goode dedys that she mon suhyn¹⁴ here housebounde and folwyn hyr hefd. The hefd of iche houshold is the housebonde, and the wyf is the body. Be cours of kende, thedir that the hefd ledyth, thedir schulde the body folwyn. Whi wil than the hefd that is the housebounde gon to lecherie and he wil nout that his body, his wyf, folwe? Why wil the man gon thedyr whydir he wil nout that his wif folwe?”¹⁵ And a lytyl afir in the same booc Sent Austyn seith thus: “Day be day pleyntis ben maad of mannys lecherie although her wyfys dur nout plenyyn

¹² reproves.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 11.3; Ephesians 5.23.

¹⁴ follow.

¹⁵ Augustine (354–430), *Sermons*.

hem on her housebondys. Lecherie of men is so bold and so custumable¹⁶ that it is now takyn for a lawe insomylchil that men tellyn her wyfys that lecherie and avouterie is leful to men but nout to women,” thus seith Sent Austyn. DIVES: And sumtyme it is herd and wust that wyfys ben takyn lychynge with her servans and brout to court afor the juge with mychyl schame. But that ony housebunde is so brout to court afor the juge for he lay with ony of his women, it is seldam seyn. PAUPER: “And though,” as seith Sent Austyn in the same booc, “it is as gret a synne in the housebonde as in the wif and somdel mor, but forsothe,” seith he, “it is nout the trewthe of God but the schrewidnesse of man that makyth man lesse gylty than woman in the same synne.” Men ben nout so oftyr takyn in avouterie ne punchyd for avouterie as women ben, nout for thei ben lesse gylty but for that thei ben mor gylty, and mor myghty, and mor sley to meyntethin her synne, and nyh iche of hem confortith othir in his synne. Men ben witnessis, jugis, and doerys to punchyn avouterie in woman. And for thei ben ovyrdon¹⁷ gylty in avouterie, therfor thei travaylyn nyh alle with on assent to meyntethin her lecherie. In woman is seldam seyn avouterie, and therfor it is wol slaundrous whan it fallyt and hard punchyd. But in men it is so comoun that ther is unethis ony slaundre therof. Women dur nout spekyr agenyng the lecherye of men, and men wyl nout spekyr to reprovyng lecherye of man for thei ben so mychil gylty . . .

DIVES: Women mon betere ben chast than men for thei han mychil keypyng¹⁸ upon hem. The lawe byndith hem to chaste. Her housebondis ben besy to keypyng hem, and harde lawys ben ordeynyng to punchyn hem if they don omys. PAUPER: To this answerith Sent Austyn in the same booc and seith thus: “Mychil keypyng makith woman chast, and manhod schulde makyn man chast. To woman is ordeynyng mychil keypyng, for she is mor frele. Woman is aschamyng for hyr housebound to don omys, but thu art nout aschamyng for Crist to don omys. Thu art mor fre than the woman for thu art strangere and lythlyere,¹⁹ thu myght ovyr-comyn the flesch and the fend if thu wilt, and therfor God hat betakyn the to the. But on woman is mychil keypyng of hir housebonde, dredful lawys, good norture, gret schamfastnesse, and god principal; and thu, man, hast only God abovyn the. Thin wif fleth lecherie for dred and schame of the, for dred of the lawe, for good norture, and pryncipaly for God. But for alle these thu kepist the nout

¹⁶ customary.

¹⁷ excessively.

¹⁸ attention.

¹⁹ stronger and more lithe.

chast ne thu levyst nout thin lecherie neyther for dred of God, ne for Godis lawe, ne for schame of the world, ne for schame of thin wyf to whom thu art boundyn to ben trewe, ne thu wilt levyn it for no good norture but lyvyn as an harlot and usyn harlotis manerys; thu art nout aschamyd of thin synne,” seith Sent Austyn, “for so many men fallyn therynne. The schrewidnesse of man is now so gret that men ben mor aschamyd of chaste than of lecherie. Manquellerys,²⁰ thevys, perjurerys, fals witnessis, raveynouris,²¹ and false men ben abhominable and hatyd amongis the peple, but hoso wil lyn be his woman and ben a bold lechour, he that is lovyd, he that is preysyd, and alle the woundis of his soule turnyn into gamyn. And if ony man be so hardy to seyn that he is chast and trewe to his wif, and it be knowyn that he be swiche, he is aschamyd to comyn amongis men that ben nout lyk hym in manerys, for thei schul japyng hym, and scornyn hym, and seyn that he is no man, for manys schrewydnesse is now so gret that ther is no man holdyn a man but he be ovyrcomyn with lecherie, and he that ovyrcomyth lecherie and keptit hym chast, he is letyn²² no man.” These ben the wordis of Sent Austyn in the same booc . . .²³

[T]he lawe put many cas in whyche the housebunde may nout accusyn his wyf of lecherie; first, if he be gyilty in the same . . . Also, if he geve hyr occasion to don fornicacioun be withheldyng of dette of his body . . . Also, if she be deflyd be strencthe and gret violence agenys hyr wil . . . Also, if she wene that her housebond be ded . . . And if she be weddyd to anothis wenyng that hyr housebond be ded, whan he comyth hom, she must forsakyn the secunde housebonde and wendyn agen to the firste; and but she forsake the secunde onon as she knowith that hyr firste housebunde is on lyve ellys she fallith in avouterye and hir firste housebonde may accusyn hyr and forsakyn hyr. Also, if she be decevyd and medelyth with anothis wenyng that it wer hyr housebonde . . . Also, if he knewe hyr lecherie and suffryth hyr in hyr synne and medelyth with hyr aftir that he knowyth hyr synne or forgevy[th] it hyr and reconcylyth hyr to hym, than may he nout accusyn hyr . . . Also, if hyr housebonde put hyr to don omys . . . Also, if an hethene man forsake his hethene wif and she be weddyd to anothis hethene man and aftir thei ben bothin turnyd to Cristene feith, than is he bondyn to takyn hyr agen but she felle in ony othis fornicacioun, nout-wythstondyng that she be knowyn flechly of the secunde house-bonde . . .

²⁰ man-killers.

²¹ thieves, rapists.

²² considered.

²³ *Sermons*.

DIVES: Reson and holy writ cachyn me to grantyn that bothin avouterie and symple fornicacion ben wol grevous synnys, but mor grevous is avouterie, and fayn Y wolde kepyn me from bothin synnys. But women ben the fendis snaris and so temptyn men to lecherie that it is wol hard to me for the kepyn me. “*Adam, Sampsonem, Petrum, David, and Salomonem femina decepit; quis modo tutus erit?*” “Woman deceyvyd Adam and Sampson, Petir, Davyd, and Salomon; ho may than ben sykyr from womany’s gyle?”²⁴

PAUPER: Many man hat ben deceyvyd be wyckyd women mor be his owyn folye than be deceyt of woman, but many mo women han ben deceyvyd be the malyce of men than evere wer men deceyvyd be malyce of woman. Therfor, the woman lechour is clepyd the snare of the fendis that huntyn afir mannys soule, for Salomon seith: “*Inveni amario-rem morte mulierem, etc.*,” “Y have foundyn woman mor byttyr than deth. She is the snare of the hunterys, hyr herte is a net and hyr hondis ben harde bondys. He that plesith God schal ascapyn hyr, but the synful man schal be takyn of hyr,” Ecclesiastes 7²⁵ But men ben clepyd nout only the snare of the fend but also thei ben clepyd his net sprad abroad on the hyl of Thabor for to takyn many at onys, Hosea 5²⁶. Mannys malyce is clepyd a net sprad abroad on an heye hil for it is opyn and boldeliche don, nout in a fewe but in manye, and therfor whan holy wryt reprovyt the malyce of men, he spekyth in the plurer nombre as to manye, but whan he reprovyth the malyce of woman he spekyt in the singuler nombre as to fewe in tokene that ther ben mor schrewis of men than of women and comounly mor malyce in men than in women, althou sum woman be wol malicious. Fyghtynge, roberye, manslaute, opyn lecherie, glotonye, gyle, falsnesse, perjurie, tretourie, fals contr[y]vynge, and swyche othir horrible synnys regnyn mor in man than in woman.

This fals excusacioun that men so excusyn her synne be the malyce of woman began in Adam and les²⁷ Adam and al mankende, for synfullyche he excusyd hys synne be woman whan God undirnam²⁸ hym of hys synne and putte woman in defaute; and also he put God in defaute that made woman and answeyrd wol proudlyche, as men don these dayys, and seide to God: “Woman that thou geve to me to ben myn felawe gaf me of the tre, and Y

²⁴ Salimbene de Adam (1221–ca. 1287).

²⁵ Ecclesiastes 7.27.

²⁶ Osee 5.1.

²⁷ lies with.

²⁸ reproved.

eet therof,”²⁹ as ho³⁰ seye: “Haddist thu nout govyn hyr to me to ben myn felawe, Y schulde nout a synnyd.” And so noutwithstondyng that he was mor in defaute than woman, yet he wolde nout knowlechyn ony defaute but he putte woman and God princypaly that made woman in defaute. DIVES: Hou was Adam mor in defaute than woman? PAUPER: For to hym princypaly God gaf the precept that he schulde nout etyn of that tre, and Eve knew it nout but be Adam. Woman was temptyd be the fend wondirfolyche in the neddere, whyche wente that tyme righth up and hadde a face lyk a woman, as seith Bede and the Maystyr of Storiis,³¹ and she was deceyvdyd with his fayre behestis and his false slye speche, for he hyghte³² hyr that thei schuldyn nout deyn but ben as Goddis, connyng good and wyckyd. Adam hadde non temptacioun fro outward but a symple word of his wyf that profryd hym the appyl, for we fyndyn nout that she seyde to hym ony deceyvable word. And therfor sith man was forbodyn of Godys mouth, and she nout but be man, and man hadde lesse temptacioun than woman and therto in nothing wolde accusyn hymself ne yeldyn hym gylty but putte defaute al in woman and in God, therfor he synnyd mor than woman, for woman yald hyr gylty,³³ but she askyd no merci. She made non swyche excusacion but in gret party yald hyr gylty in that she seyde, “The neddere hat deceyvdyd me.”³⁴ For in that she knowlechyd that she was deceyvdyd, she knowlechid that she hadde don omys, and unwiselyche, and othirwyse than sche aughte a don. And for that woman lowyd hyr and knowlechyd hyr unwisdam and hyr folye, therfor God putte in woman that tyme onon hope of our savacioun whan he seyde to the neddere: “Y schal puttyn enmyte atwoxsyn the and woman, and atwoxsyn thi seed and hyr seed, and she schal brekyn thin hefd.”³⁵ That was the fend, whyche was hefd and ledere of the neddere that tyme. The seed of the fend ben wyckyd warkys and wyckyd folc, to whyche God seyde in the gospel: “*Vos ex patre diabolo estis,*” John 8, “Ye ben of the fadir the fend.”³⁶ The seed of woman gostlyche ben hyr goode dedys, with whyche the fend and the fendis lymys han gret envye, and comounly women wlatyn³⁷ mor horriblete of synne than don men. And

²⁹ Genesis 3.12.

³⁰ though he.

³¹ The Venerable Bede (672–735); Peter Comestor (d. 1178).

³² promised.

³³ yielded herself as guilty.

³⁴ Genesis 3.13.

³⁵ Genesis 3.15.

³⁶ John 8.44.

³⁷ abandon.

be our lady, blyssyd mote she ben, the fendys power is dystryyd. Also, the seed of woman was Crist, born of the maydyn Marie withoutyn part of man, and so ther was nevere man propyrlly seed of woman but Crist alone, and alwey is enmyte betwoxsyn Crist and the fend and his seed . . .

And so ben men yit these days ovyrcomyn with lecherye withoutyn womans companye and withoutyn doying of women for, as Crist seyth in the gospel, “Hoso loke on a woman in wil to don omys with hyr, though she thinke nout on hym, he that doth lecherye”;³⁸ and if he handele hyr, or smelle hyr, or speke to hyr, or go to hyr, or seke be whyls and sleyghthis to han his lust of hyr, thou the woman consente nout to hym and though he be lettyd of his wyckyd wil, yit is he gylty in lecherye and doth agenys this comandement of God: “*Non mechaberys.*”³⁹ Men lechourys gon and rydyn fro town to town to getyn women at her lust. Thei sekyn the women and nout the women hem. They castyn many wyls to getyn womans assent in synne. Men comounly ben warkeris and begynners of lecherie, and than wether the woman assente or nout assente, yit the man is gylty. And for oftyntyme it fallit that whan men wendyn ben sekyr of the womans assent, than the woman wil nout assentyn for dred of God; and if she assentyd afor and hyghte the man to folwyn his lust and aftir repentyth hyr and withdrawith hyr from hys wyckyd companye, than schal that lechourys man diffamyn al women and seyn that thei ben false and deceyvable, for swyche lechouris spekyn mest vylenye of women for they mon nout han her foul lust of hem at wille. And for thei mon nout defylyn hem with her body, they defylyn hem with her tunge and spekyn of hem wol evele and diffamyn hem falslyche and procuryn to hem the harm that they mon . . .

DIVES: And, though, many woman wil assentyn to lust of the flesch wol lyghthlych if it be profryd. PAUPER: That is soth, but women be nout so redy to assentyn as men ben to profryn it, and he that profryth it and begynnyth, he assentyth first and is mor in defaute. DIVES: Thu excusist mychil women and accusist men. PAUPER: Y accuse non good man but wyckyd men, lechouris, ne Y excuse no wyckyd woman but goode women that ben falslyche defamyd of lecherie, nout only in here personys but in her kende generally, for the proude malyce of man diffamyth unskylfolyche⁴⁰ the kende of woman and, as Adam dede, put his synne on woman and nout wil accusyn hys owyn malyce to getyn mercy.

³⁸ Matthew 5.28.

³⁹ “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” Exodus 20.14.

⁴⁰ unjustly.

Pilgrimage

The spiritual, moral, physical, and pecuniary aspects of pilgrimages were the subject of debate throughout the Middle Ages, but contention intensified in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England as it did on the Continent. Archbishops, bishops, and others encouraged the view that pilgrimages were effective in remitting sins, while popular belief in the efficacy of visiting shrines of saints for curative reasons remained strong. On the other hand, arguments arose against physical pilgrimages and for the superiority of an exclusively spiritual journey, which may include enclosed or private forms of asceticism and hardship as well as penance that did not involve travel. Also, geographic pilgrimages as penance were not always voluntary during this period, and it became increasingly common for people to be sentenced to perform pilgrimages for violations such as adultery, disturbing the peace, theft, assault, poaching, and even more serious crimes. These actions fed tensions about class inequities as well as led to concern about the danger caused by involuntary pilgrims. Corruption and excesses associated with pilgrimages also received criticism; how important for contrition was the buying of badges, likenesses of saints, relics, wax talismans, candles, and other paraphernalia? That both willing and sentenced pilgrims could pay off their pilgrimage through various forms of donation or by having a proxy perform the pilgrimage also raised questions about penance as well as social justice. Uneasiness about the veneration of saints and physical representations of spiritual figures logically became associated with discussions about pilgrimages, especially from Lollards. Their criticism of the many aspects of pilgrimages is one of their most distinctive and common objections (see “Lollard Trials,” p. 59, and “Plays and Representations,” p. 262).

William Thorpe was educated (possibly at Oxford) and took orders as a priest. Some time between 1382 and 1386 Robert Braybrooke, bishop of London (1382–1404), tried Thorpe for heresy and imprisoned him there. In 1397 he was released from that imprisonment (or possibly a second term in prison). Ten years later on August 7, 1407, Thorpe was examined before Thomas Arundel (archbishop of York 1388–97, archbishop of Canterbury 1396–7, 1399–1414) and three clerks in Saltwood Castle in Kent. According to a “litol rolle” in the archbishop’s hands, a bailiff from Shrewsbury claimed that Thorpe had preached that the sacrament remained material bread after consecration, that images should not be worshipped, that people should not go on pilgrimages, that priests have no right to receive tithes, and that it is not lawful to swear in any manner. Thorpe denies the specific

charges in his *Testimony* and submits himself to God and the Church as long as they accord with his ideas; his account ends with him being sent to prison. Thorpe's *Testimony* survives in four versions; Rawlinson C.208 is the earliest.

Whether the events recounted in Thorpe's text are truthful or not is open to debate, and the issue becomes even more interesting because of his realist style: dramatic arguments, detailed depictions of the actions of those present, descriptions of Thorpe's own thoughts and feelings. The reasons why a person would openly proclaim in writing his continuing adherence to Lollard beliefs are difficult to understand, especially if he recanted. If Thorpe wrote his account in prison, it is puzzling how such a manuscript would have circulated.

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 Language: English (Southeast Midland)
 Manuscript date: ca. 1410

And thanne the archebischop seide to me, "What seist thou now to the thridde poynt that is certefied agens thee, preching at Schrovesbirie opinli that pilgrimage is unleeeful? And over this thou seidist there that tho men and wymmyn that goen on pilgrimage to Cantirbirie, to Beverleye, to

Bridlyntoun, to Walsyngam, or to ony suche pilgrymage ben acursid and madd foolis spendi[n]ge her goodis in wast.”¹

And I seide, “Sere, bi this certificacioun I am acusid to you that I schulde teche that no pilgrimage is leeful. But, ser, I seide nevere thus, for I knowe that there is trewe pilgrimage and leeful and ful plesynge to God. And therefore, ser, howevere myn enemyes have certified to you of me, I toolde at Schrovesbirie of two manere of pilgrimagis, seiinge that ther ben trewe pilgrimes and fals pilgrimes.”

And the archebischop seide to me, “Whom clepist thou trewe pilgrimes?”

And I seide, “Sere, with my forseid protestacioun, I clepe hem trewe pilgrymes travelynge toward the blis of hevene, whiche in the staat, degree, or ordre that God clepith hem to, bisien hem feithfulli for to occupie alle her wittis, bodili and goostli, to know treweli and to kepe feithfulli the heestis of God, hatynge evere and fleyngge alle the sevene dedli synnes and every braunche of hem; reulyngge vertuouli, as it is seide bifore, alle her wittis; doynge discretli, wilfully, and gladli alle the workis of mercy, bodili and goostli, aftir her kunnyngge and her power; ablyngge² hem to the giftis of the Holi Goost; disposynge hem to resceyve into her soule and to holde therinne the eighte blessingis of Crist,³ bisiyngge hem to knowe and to kepe the sevene principal vertues. And so thanne thei schulen deserve herthorough grace for to usen thankfulli to God alle the condiciouns of charite, and thanne thei schulen be movyd with the good spirit of God for to examyne ofte and bisili her conscience, with that neither wilfulli ne witingli thei erren in ony article of bileve, havynge contynuely, as freel kynde wole suffre, al her businesse to dreede and fle the offence of God, and to love over al thing and seche to done ever his plesynge will. Of these pilgrymes I seide whatever good thought that thei ony tyme thenken, what vertues worde that thei speken, and what fructuose werk that thei worchen, every such thought, word, and werk is a stap noumbrid of God toward him into hevene. These blessid pilgrymes of God, whan thei heeren of seyntis or of vertuose men or wymmen, thei bisien hem to knowe the lyyngge of seyntis and of vertues men and wymmen, how thei forsoken wilfulli the prosperite of this lyf, how thei withstoden the sugestions of the fend, and how thei ref[r]eyneden her fleischli lustis, how discreet thei weren in [penaunce doynge, how patient thei weren in] alle her adversitees, how prudent thei weren in conselyngge of

¹ Canterbury had the shrine of Thomas à Becket (archbishop of Canterbury 1162–70), Beverley a shrine to St. John, Bridlington a shrine to St. John of Bridlington (prior 1362–ca. 1375), and Walsingham a shrine to the Virgin.

² preparing.

³ Matthew 5.3–11.

men and of wymmen, movynge hem to haten evere al synne and to fle it, and to schame evere greetli therof, and to love alle vertues and to drawe to hem, ymagynynge how mekeli Crist and his sueris⁴ bi ensauple suffry[d]e[n] scornes and sclaudris, and how pacientli thei aboden and token the wrathful manassynges of tirauntis, how homely⁵ thei weren and servysable to pore men for to releve hem and conforte hem bodili [and gostli] aftir her kunnyng and her power, and how devoute thei were in preieris, how fervent in hevenli desiris, and how thei absentid hem fro spectaclis and fro veyn sightis and heeringe, and how stable of contenance thei weren, how herteli thei weileden and sorewiden for synne, how bisi thei weren to lette and to distroie alle vicis, and how laborouse and joieful thei weren to sowe and to plante vertues. These hevenli condiciouns and suche other have tho pilgrimes either thei bisien hem to have, whos pilgrimage God acceptith.

“And agenward,” I seide, “as her werkis schewen, the moost part of hem, bothe men and wymmen, that gon now on pilgrimage, have not these forseide condiciouns neither loven to bisien hem feithfulli to have hem. For, as I wel knowe, sith I have ful ofte assaied, examyne (whoever wole and can) twenti of these pilgrimes, and there schulen not be founden ofte three men or wymmen among these twenti that knowen thriftili oon heest of God, neither thei cunnen seien the Pater Noster, neither the Ave, neither the Crede in ony manere langage. And, as I have lerned and also I knowe sumdel bi experience of these same pilgrimes, tellinge the cause whi that manye men and wymmen now gon hidir and thidir on pilgrymage, it is more for the helthe of her bodies than for the helthe of her soulis, more for to have richessis and prosperite of this world than for to be enrichid with vertues in her soulis, more for to have here worldli or fleischli frendschip than for to have frendschip of God or of hise seintis in hevене; for whatever thing man or womman doith, neither the frendschip of God ne of ony seint mai be hadde withouten keypyng of Goddis heestis.

“Forthi with my protestacioun, I seie now as I seide in Schrovesbirie, though thei that have siche fleischli willis traveilen soore her bodies and spenden myche moneye to sechen and visiten the bones either ymagis, as thei seien thei don, of that seint or of that, siche pilgrymage is neithir preisable ne thankful to God neither to ony seint of God sith in effecte alle siche pilgrymes dispisen God and alle hise seyntis. For the heestis of God thei wolen neither knowen ne kepe, neither thei wolen conforme hem to lyve vertuesly bi ensauple of Crist and of hise seyntis. Wherfor, ser, I have prechid and taughte opinli and privyly, and so I purpose al my lyf time to do

⁴ disciples, followers.

⁵ plain, unpretentious.

with Goddis helpe, seiinge that siche madde peple wasten blamfulli Goddis goodis in her veyne pilgrymageyng, spendyng these goodis upon vicious⁶ hosteleris and upon tapsters, whiche ben ofte unclene wymmen of her bodies, and at the laste tho goodis, of the whiche thei schulden do werkis of mercy aftir Goddis heeste to pore nedi men and wymmen, these pore men goodis and her lyflode these renners aboute offren to riche preestis, whiche have moche moore lyfelode than thei neden. And thus tho goodis thei wasten wilfulli and spenden hem unjustli agens Goddis heeste upon strangeris, with the whiche thei schulden helpe and releeven aftir Goddis wille her pore and nedi neighebores at home. Yhe, and over this foli, ofte tymes dyverse men and wymmen of these that rennen thus madly hidir and thidir on pilgrimagynge, borow[e]n herto mennys goodis, yhe, and sumtyme thei stelen mennes goodis herto, and thei yelden hem nevere agen.

“Also, sire, I knowe wel that whanne dyverse men and wymmen wolen goen thus aftir her owne willis and fyndingis out on pilgrymageyngis, thei wolen ordeyne biforehonde to have with hem bothe men and wymmen that kunnen wel synge rowtinge⁷ songis, and also summe of these pilgrimes wolen have with hem baggepipis so that in eche toun that thei comen thorough, what with noyse of her syngynge, and with the soun of her pipinge, and with the ginglynge of her Cantirbirie bellis,⁸ and with the berkynge out of dogges aftir hem, these maken more noyse than if the king came there away with his clarioneris and manye other mynystrals. And if these men and wymmen ben a monethe oute in her pilgrymage, manye of hem an half yeere aftir schulden be greete jangelers, tale tellers, and lyeris.”

And the archebischope seide to me, “Lewid losel,⁹ thou seest not fer inowgh in this mateer, for thou considrist not the grete traveile of pilgrymes, and therefore thou blamest that thing that is preisable. I seie to thee that is right wel don that pilgrimes have with hem bothe syngeris and also baggepipes that, whanne oon of hem that gon barefot smytith his too agens a stoon and hurtith him soore and makith him blede, it is wel done that he or his felowe take thanne up a songe either ellis take out of her bosum a baggepipe for to dryve awei with siche myrthe the hurt of his sore, for with siche solace the traveile and werinesse of pilgrymes is lightli and myrili brought forth.”

And I seide, “Sere, Seint Poul techith men to wepe with men wepyng.”¹⁰

⁶ corrupting.

⁷ bellowing.

⁸ Pilgrims frequently attached small bells to their horses' bridles.

⁹ wretch.

¹⁰ Romans 12.15.

And the archebischof scornede me and seide, “What janglist thou agens mennys devocioun? Whatevere thou and siche other seyen, I seie that the pilgrimage that is now usid is to hem that done it a preparacioun and a good m[e]ne to come the rather¹¹ to grace. But I holde thee unable to knowe this grace, for thou enforstist thee to lette the devocioun of the peple sith, bi autorite of holi writt, men mowen lefulli have and use siche solace as thou reprevest. For Davith in his laste psalme techith men to usen dyverse intrumentis of musik for to preise with God.”¹²

Prioresses

In the year 1000 only six or seven religious houses for women existed in England. When religious houses were dissolved in the sixteenth century, approximately seventy-five Benedictine nunneries were active. Nuns’ primary duties were prayer, contemplation of religious texts, and duties that sustained their house. Nunneries’ wealth varied widely, from those that received royal patronage or that benefited from the bequests of affluent families, to houses that were in constant peril of economic failure.

Prioresses and abbesses often were women of some social standing. They were in charge of not only the spiritual but also the physical well-being of usually about twelve sisters; they had to be adept at managing property, assigning work, buying and selling goods, finances, overseeing support staff, novices’ education, and discipline. The Ankerwyke priory of Benedictine nuns in Buckinghamshire west of London was founded about 1160 and contained eight nuns in 1441. The properties mentioned in the bishop’s record that were administered by the prioress, Dame Clemence Medforde, were all within a 20-mile radius of the abbey.

The following excerpt is fairly typical of bishops’ visitation accounts, revealing situations in which rules are frequently broken while accusations and revenge are common among the inhabitants of houses. It follows the usual form of such documents: introduction, *detecta* (the house members’ depositions) and *comperta* (the bishop’s findings) here combined, publication of the findings before the convent, and injunctions. Of bishop William Alnwick’s forty-two surviving accounts from 1438–45, nine contain injunctions in English, all of which are addressed to women’s houses. (Alnwick also presided over Lollard cases, for which see “Lollardy Trials,” p. 59).

¹¹ sooner.

¹² Psalms 150.3–5.

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 Language: Latin and English (Northeast Midland)
 Manuscript date: 1441

The visitation of the priory of Ankerwyke of the order of St. Benet, the diocese of Lincoln, begun and performed in its chapterhouse, on the tenth day of the month of October in the year of our Lord, 1441, by the reverend father in Christ and lord, William, by the grace of God bishop of Lincoln, in the sixteenth year of his consecration and sixth of his translation . . .¹

[1.] Dame Margery Kyrkeby says that all the houses and buildings within the priory are going to ruin, and three useful and necessary houses have fallen down, thrown to the ground because of the carelessness and negligence of the prioress, namely the sheepfold (which was worn out by the fault of the prioress, who was then at a wedding at Bromhall),² another house in which dairy products are made, also a barn of which the timber, because it was not gathered together, is now burned. She³ confesses being

¹ William Alnwick, bishop of Norwich 1426–36, and Lincoln, 1436–49.

² About 6 miles from Ankerwyke.

³ I.e., Clemence Medforde, the prioress.

at the wedding; she confesses the burning and also the remainder of the article.

[2.] Also, that the prioress alone keeps and all her time has kept the common seal of the house so that she can do with it whatever she wishes without the knowledge and consultation of the nuns. She confesses that she alone has kept the seal in her turn for the time, years and days, and sometimes with other fellow nuns, provided there have been any who are discrete there.

[3.] Also, there used to be customarily many notable vestments; where they have gone or whether they be there is not known; it is believed, however, that they have been removed from the house. She says that all the things that she received from the last prioress remain there in the house, about which she shows a schedule concerning the donation of the vestments and jewels.

[4.] Also, they had four chalices, and now they do not even have one. She confesses that there were four, of which two were in the house; the third is in pawn to Thomas Stanes [with the consent of the convent]; the fourth has been taken apart, also with the convent's consent.

[5.] Also, the prioress caused a silver thurible and a silver chalice, the heaviest which they had, to be broken up to make a cup for use at table, and she gave the chalice and censer as broken silver to one brother William Tudyngtone, a monk of Chertsey,⁴ so that he might take an order to make the aforesaid cup from it and because the prioress had been given to understand that he had paid for the making of the chalice . . .⁵ and she did not have enough to pay him. The cup remains in the hands of the said monk. She confesses the article, but she first had communication, as she asserts, with the convent, who all say that concerning this a discussion was not held in the chapter nor was the consent of all had, but only that the majority had no knowledge of the deed before it was done.

[6.] Also, she says that there used to be ten beautiful psalters kept in the house, some of which the prioress has given away and alienated. She confesses that she lent three, one to the prioress of Bromhall; she denies she did it without the consent of the convent.

[7.] Also, that in the past year in a place called "ly parkis," two miles distant from the priory, she sold a hundred oaks without asking any counsel or consent of the convent and under no compulsion of necessity. She denies the article.

⁴ A Benedictine abbey of St. Peter in Surrey, about 20 miles southwest of Westminster.

⁵ A sum is illegible here.

[8.] Also, at Alderbourne⁶ she caused beeches to be felled at an unseasonable time so that they will never grow again, and therefore they are destroyed forever. She denies the article.

[9.] Also, the prioress has never rendered an account of her receipts and expenses, and yet all alone she receives, pays, and administers everything without any communication with the convent, even taking care of weighty business and leases and, even though she says that at the time of her installation the house had three hundred marks debt, this deponent says distinctly that then it was only thirty pounds in debt, and this amount was paid from other sources and in no way from the goods of the prioress or priory. She confesses that she never has rendered an account; she confesses also that she alone has received and administers everything without the knowledge of the convent. She denies that she has made leases unless it be with the knowledge of the convent.

10. Also, she caused a wood called Rowel, situated at Parnyshe,⁷ to be felled unseasonably, leaving the boughs to lie after felling so that it is not likely that the wood will grow again for the profit of those now living. She denies the article.

11. (See 1.) Also, she says that the prioress has destroyed an entry, namely "a gatehouse," through which necessary items were brought in and chaff and other refuse were removed, and now that this entry has been blocked up they are carried out through the church to the great disgrace of the house. She confesses the whole article but says that she did it for greater seemliness in order to shut the pigs and other beast out of the cloister, which formerly, coming in through that entry, befouled it.

12. Also, to the fault of the prioress, six nuns have now left the house in apostasy. She confesses that so many nuns have left but without her knowledge.

13. Also, she has appropriated to herself in the dormitory four nuns' places and has blocked up the view of the Thames, which was a great comfort to the nuns. She confesses blocking up the view because she saw that men stood in the narrow space close to the window and talked with the nuns; she confesses the appropriation of the places.

14. Also, the prioress wears very expensive gold rings with diverse precious stones and also girdles silvered and gilded over, and silken veils, and her veil is too high on her forehead so that her forehead, being entirely uncovered, can be seen by all, and she wears furs of vair. She confesses the

⁶ In Buckinghamshire, west of Uxbridge.

⁷ Probably in Egham, Surrey.

use of several rings and girdles, and silken veils and the high carriage of her veils; she confesses also the use of vair furs. She has sworn that she will reform these things, having pledged to do so.

15. Also, she wears shifts of cloth of Rennes, which costs sixteen pence an ell. She denies the article.

16. Also, she wears kirtles laced with silk, and silver and silver gilt pins, and she has made all the nuns wear the same. She confesses the article with regards to herself; she has sworn that she will reform these things and has sworn to perform her penance, etc.

[17.] Also, she wears above her veil a cap of estate furred with budge. She confesses; however, it is because of various infirmities in her head. She has sworn as above that she will reform these things.

[18.] Also, she does not supply, nor for three years has supplied, fitting habits for the nuns to such an extent that the nuns go about in patched clothes. The threadbareness of the nuns was apparent to the lord.

[19.] Also, the prioress invited several outside people from the neighborhood to this visitation at great cost to the house, saying to them, "Stand on my side in this time of visitation, for I do not want to resign." She confesses the entertainment of her friends, but it was not to this end . . .

And on this Monday, namely the twenty-ninth of the said month of October, in this year and the aforesaid chapterhouse, the said reverend father sat in his capacity of judge in the business of his visitation and then ordered that the prioress and convent of the said place be called before him, who all appeared before him in person. And when they thus appeared, the same reverend father, the process of such business previously had and done, and also the adjournment of the same visitation having been first recited by him and acknowledged by the same nuns, put forth in detail and rehearsed to the same prioress article by article all that had been made known to him concerning the prioress. These things having been put to her, some the same prioress confessed and some she denied, just as it is written down at the end of every article; and concerning her denials, so far as they concern dilapidation and so involve deprivation, the lord decreed that an inquiry should be made after the summons of the same prioress and the others who ought to be summoned for this purpose, reserving to himself the power of proceeding against her as regards the rest according to her responses and the process held concerning them. And because the same prioress complained of sister Margery Kyrkeby in that she had called the same prioress a thief, the same Margery, being judicially impeached touching this, expressly denied the charge and cleared herself of it based alone on her own testimony. Afterwards, because the prioress confessed that for a long time past,

even for very many days and years, she had had in her own keeping the common seal and very many, even all, of the archives of the house, the lord ordained that all these should be kept in one chest under two locks, the keys of which the prioress should wear one and sister Margery Kyrkeby, chosen for this by the convent, the other; and that nothing should be sealed with the said seal unless with the common counsel and consensus of the more reasonable part and majority of the convent and in the chapterhouse; and until provision of such locks should be made, the lord had the common seal shut up in a little box under his own seal. And then the same reverend father warned the said prioress, in virtue of the obedience proffered by her, to admonish and correct her sisters who are at fault in any way in the chapter, not in the hearing of any secular people, in a motherly and sisterly and temperate manner, and in no way severely, as has been her way, and in all other respects to treat them gently and supply and cause to be supplied to them sufficient raiment, habits, bed clothes, and nourishment. He also enjoined the individual members of the convent, under pain of imprisonment, that they should humbly obey the prioress in all lawful things and pay her reverence and show her honor, not any disobedience or disgrace. And because the young nuns asked that a governess in reading, song, and the regular observances should be appointed them, the lord, with the consent of all, appointed sister Juliane Messangere, enjoining her to perform the charge laid upon her and to instruct them in good manners and in no way so that they go contrary to the prioress in anything . . .

[T]he same deputy, wishing first and before all to obtain the clearest and fullest information and assurance concerning the observance or want of observance of such injunctions, as he affirmed, caused all the nuns except the prioress to go out of the chapterhouse and, proceeding in such business of the inquiry and having required the same prioress to tell the truth in virtue of obedience, diligently examined her concerning all and each individual injunction, and whether she, her fellow nuns, and the sisters have observed or not observed the same injunctions or any of them. And she, answering, said that these injunctions were and are in effect and according to her power well observed as regards both her and her sisters except the injunction whereby she is bound to supply to her sisters sufficient raiment for their habits and, concerning the non-observance of that injunction, she responds that she cannot observe it because of the poverty and insufficiency of the resources of the house, which have been much lessened because of the lack of a surveyor or steward. For which reason she besought the lord's goodwill and assistance that he would deign with charitable consideration to make provision for such a steward or director.

[Injunctions:] Wyllyam, by the grace of God, bysshope of Lincoln, to our wele belufed doghters in Cryste, the prioresse, and the covent of the priorye of Ankerwyke, of the ordere of Seynt Benette, of our diocyse, helthe, grace, and our blessing. Now late we visytyng yow and your saide pryorye, by our inquisicyon then made fonde certeyn grete and notable defautes, grete and dewe [refor]macyone requiryng, for the reformacyone whereof we sende yowe here theise our injunccyons, comaundementes, and ordynaunces by yow to be keppede undere the peynes here by nethe writen.

1 . . . In the fyrste we commaunde, charge, and enjoyne yowe, prioresse, undere payne of grete contempte, that nyghtly ye lygge in the dormytorye to oversee your susters how thai are there governede after your rewle, and that often tyme ye come to matynes, messe, and other houres, ther to be present in the qwere but if grete sekensse or unevytable occupacyons lette yowe. And also if hit happe yow to come late to the qwere at any houre, that ye make not the qwere to begynne agayne any houre than begunne, ne that ye putte the qwere to any other observaunce in saying of devyne servyce other wyse than the laudable custome of the place has been here afore.

2 . . . Also, we enjoyne yow, pryoresse, undere the same peyne, that oftentimes ye come to the chapitere for to correcte the defautes of your susters, and that as wele then as att other tymes and places ye treyte your saide su[sters] moderlie wyth all resonable favour, and that ye rebuke ne repreve thaim cruelly ne fervently at no tyme, specyally in audience of secleres, and that ye kepe pryvye fro secleres your correccyons and actes of your chapitere.

3. Also, undere the same peyne we enjoyne yow, prioresse, that aftere your rewle ye kepe the fraytour⁸ but if resonable cause excuse yowe ther fro.

Also, we enjoyne yowe of the covent and everyche oon of yowe undere peyn of imprisonyng, that mekely and buxumly ye obeye the prioresse, procedyng discretely in hire correccyone, and also that in every place ye do hire dewe reverence, absteynyng yowe fro alle elacyone of pryde and wordes of disobeyssaunce or debate.

4. Also, we enjoyne yowe, prioresse and covente and everyche one of yowe undere peynes here above and bynethe wryten, that ye absteine yow fro all drynkenges after complyne but if sekensse cawse the contrary and that every day and on one as complyne is sayde, ye alle go to the dormytorye, not to come owte save to matynes un to pryme be runge on the morwe next aftere.

⁸ refectory.

5. And also that none of yow, the prioresse ne none of the covente, were no vayles of sylke, ne no sylvere pynnes, ne no gyrdles herneysed wyth sylvere or golde, ne no mo rynges on your fyngres then oon, ye that be professed by a bysshope, ne that none of yow use no lased kyrtels, but butonede or hole be fore, ne that ye use no lases a bowte your nekkes wythe crucyfixes or rynges hangyng by thayme, ne cappes of astate obove your vayles . . . othere then [your r]ule askes, and that ye so atyre your hedes that your vayles come downe nyghe to your yene.

6. Also, we enjoyne yow, prioresse, undere paynes of contempte and grete cursyng that ye ministre to your susters of the covent sufficyently in mete and drynke, and also in clothes to thair habite and beddes, as your religyone wylle demaunde; and also that when frendes of your sustres come to visite thaim honestly, ye receyve hem and suffre thaim to speke wyth hem so that no sclaudere ne token of evelle falle ther bye to your saide susters ne to your place. And what ever these saide frendes wyll gyfe your sustres in relefe of thaim, as in hire habyte and sustenaunce, ye suffre your sustres to take hit so that no abuse of evel come therbye noyther to the place ne to the persones therof.

7. Also, we enjoyne yowe, prioresse, undere peyne of cursyng, that fro hense forthe ye susteyne ne seculere persones wythe the commune godes of the place neyther wyth ynne ne wythe owte; and that fro hens forthe ye receyve no mo in to nunnes then may competently be susteyned of the commune godes of the place, ne that for receyvyng of any in to nunnes, ye exacte, ne receyve by pacyon, ne covenaut, or promysse none wardly gode otherwyse then thai or thaire frendes of thair charitee wylle gyfe yowe.

8. Also, we charge yow, prioresse, undere the same payne of cursyng, that ye hafte an honeste woman servaund in your kychyne, brewhowse and bakehowse, deyhowse,⁹ and selere wythe an honeste damyselle wythe hire to saruf¹⁰ yowe and your sustres in these saide offices so that your saide sustres for occupacyone in ony of the saide offices be ne letted fro divine service ne fro lernyng of thaire servyce and observaunces of religyone, lyke as we assygnede thaim a nunne to informe thaim ther yn.

9. Also, we enjoyne yowe, prioresse, undere payne of deposicyone, that fro hense forthe the commune seale and all the munymentes of your place be surely keppede in a chyste undere two lokkes of diverse forme and makyng, the keys where of oon shall remeyne in your keypyng and an other in the keypyng of dame Margery Kyrkeby, chosen ther to by the

⁹ dairy.

¹⁰ serve.

covent, and that nothyng be sealed wythe the saide seale but in the chapitere and by the fulle assent of the more parte of the covent.

10. Also, we charge yow, prioresse, undere the payne of perpetuelle privacyone fro your state and dignytee of prioressye, that fro hense forthe ye graunte, gyfe, ne selle to any manere persone fee, rente, annuytee, corrodye, ne lyverye to terme of lyve, certeyn tyme ne perpetuelly, ne that ye gyfe ne selle no wodes ne tynbere wythe owtene specyalle leve of us or our successours, bysshops of Lincolne, asked and had, and wythe the assent of the more partye of the covent . . .

11. Also, we charge yow, prioresse, unde[r] peyne of cursyng, that ye do take downe that perclose¹¹ that ye dyde make in the dormytorye and that ye oversee that every nunnes celle be open in toward the dormytory, as your rewle demaundes.

12. Also, we enjoyne yow, pryoresse, undere peyne of suspensyone fro alle administracyone in spirituele and temporele, that as ye may resonably come to aftere the suffycyence of your commune godes, ye do repare the howses and beeldynges wythe yn your place, specyally thoe that are falle to ruyne in your tyme and defawte, and also your tenementes owtward, the whiche are ryght ruynouse, as we are informede; and also that wyth yn this and the fest of Paske next folowyng,¹² ye do bryng in to the place alle the jewels of the place, as chalices, censures, psawters, and other what ever thai be the whiche ye hafe oythere lente owte or laide to wedde.¹³

13. And also that every yere be twyx the festes of Seynt Mighelle in Septembre and Seynt Martyne in Novembre ye shew to your susters in playn chapyttere or to whome you wylle assigne a fulle and playn accompte of your mynystracyone in all the commune goodes of your place what is dewe and receved and how th[ai a]re dispendede.

¹¹ screen.

¹² Easter.

¹³ I.e., in pawn.