

***A Dialogue
Concerning Heresies***

by

Sir Thomas More

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Page and line numbers correspond to
The Complete Works of St. Thomas More
(Yale University Press), volume 6.

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A complete concordance to this work can be found at
www.thomasmorestudies.org/publications.html#Concordance.

Spelling standardized, punctuation modernized, and glosses added
by Mary Gottschalk

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Punctuation

The only punctuation marks found in the original printed version of *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* are the period, question mark, slash, or “virgule” (/), and parentheses. Commas, quotation marks, semicolons, dashes, exclamation points, italics, and suspension points have been added with the goal of making the text more readily understood by present-day readers. Italics are added for titles and, occasionally, for emphasis. As for the suspension points (...), these are substitutes for many of More’s slashes. He often used a slash where we would use a comma, a semicolon, a dash, or italics; but he also, quite often, used one to indicate whether a certain phrase was meant to be connected more closely with the one preceding it or with the one following it; to call attention to parallel elements in different phrases; or simply to facilitate serious reflection. He also quite often used a slash for dramatic purposes—to indicate, perhaps, a coming sly comment, or some possibly surprising conclusion. The evident thoughtfulness with which More punctuated this book leads one to suspect that he anticipated its being often read aloud, and wanted to make sure the reader got the cadence right. He writes as though he were speaking.

A dialogue of Sir Thomas
 More, Knight, one of the
 Council of our sovereign lord the King, and Chan-
 cellor of his duchy of Lancaster. Wherein be
 treated divers matters: as of the veneration and worship of images and relics,
 praying to saints, and going on pilgrimage. With many other
 things touching the pestilent sect of Luther
 and Tyndale, by the
 one begun in
 Saxony, and
 by the
 other labored
 to be brought into England.

Newly overseen by the said Sir Thomas More,
 Chancellor of England.
 1530.

1 *of*: by 2 *one*: a member 5 *divers*: several 6 *worship*: reverencing
 9 *touching*: having to do with 18 *overseen*: edited

The Table of the First Book

Table 1.1

The First Chapter

The letter of credence sent from his friend by a trusty secret messenger. With the letter of the author answering the same.

- 5 The declaration of the credence by the mouth of the messenger; whereupon the matter of all the whole work dependeth.

The Second Chapter

Here summarily is declared what order the author intendeth to treat of the matters purposed unto him. Whereof because the first
10 was an opinion conceived in some men's heads that a certain person lately abjured of heresy for preaching against pilgrimages and images and prayers made to saints was therein greatly wronged, the author briefly declareth his mind concerning the confutation of those perilous and pernicious opinions.

15 *The Third Chapter*

- The objections of the messenger made against praying to saints, worshipping of images, and going on pilgrimages; with the answer of the author unto the same. And incidentally is it by the messenger moved that there should seem no necessity for
20 Christian folk to resort to any churches, but that all were one to pray thence or there. And that opinion by the author answered and confuted.

The Fourth Chapter

- The author declareth in the comprobation of pilgrimages that it
25 is the pleasure of God to be specially sought and worshipped in some one place before another. And albeit that we cannot attain to the knowledge of the cause *why* God doth so, yet the author proveth by great authority that God by miracle testifieth it *is* so.

3, 5 (*letter of*) *credence*: letter of introduction 3 *secret*: personal
5 *declaration*: explanation 6 *matter*: content
9 *purposed*: put forward for consideration 11 *lately*: recently
11 *abjured of heresy*: made to renounce his heresies under oath
13 *declareth his mind*: explains his thinking 17 *worshipping*: venerating
18 *incidentally*: in passing 19 *moved*: submitted // *seem*: i.e., seem to be
20 *resort*: betake themselves; go // *all were one*: it would be all the same
21 *thence*: somewhere else 24 *declareth*: explains // *comprobation*: defense
25 *sought*: gone to for help 28 *testifieth*: attests (that)

Table 1.5

The Fifth Chapter

Because pilgrimages be, among other proofs, testified by miracles... the messenger doth make objection against those miracles; partly lest they be feigned and untrue, partly lest they
5 be done by the devil if they be done at all.

The Sixth Chapter

Because the messenger thinketh that he may well mistrust and deny the miracles because reason and nature tell him that they cannot be done: therefore first the author showeth what unreasonableness
10 would ensue... if folk would stand so stiff against *all* credence to be given to *any* such thing as reason and nature should seem to gainsay.

The Seventh Chapter

The author showeth that neither nature nor reason do deny the miracles to be true, nor do not gainsay but that they may be
15 *well and easily* done.

The Eighth Chapter

The messenger allegeth that God may nothing do against the course of nature. Of which the author declareth the contrary—
20 and, over that, showeth that our Lord in working of miracles doth nothing against nature.

The Ninth Chapter

The author showeth that albeit men may mistrust some of the particular miracles, yet can there no reasonable man neither deny
25 nor doubt but that many miracles hath there been done and wrought.

The Tenth Chapter

The author proveth that many things daily done by nature or craft whereof we nothing marvel at all... be more marvelous
30 and more wonderful in deed than be the miracles that we most marvel of and repute most incredible.

The Eleventh Chapter

The author showeth that a miracle is not to be mistrusted though it be done in a small matter and seemeth upon a slight
35 occasion.

2 *testified*: corroborated 7, 18 *may*: can 7 *well*: rightly 16 *well and*: quite
18 *allegeth*: claims 19 *declareth*: shows 20 *over*: besides
20 *showeth*: asserts 26 *wrought*: worked 29 *nothing*: in no way
30 *deed*: fact; reality 34 *though*: even if // *seemeth*: i.e., seemingly

The Twelfth Chapter

Table 1.12

The author somewhat noteth the froward minds of many folk
that would be very hard to believe a man in a miracle upon his oath...
and very light in a shrewd tale to believe a woman on her word.

5 *The Thirteenth Chapter*

The author showeth the untoward mind of many men... which
in miracles so highly touching the honor of God and weal of their
own souls... will neither believe other folk that tell them... nor
themselves vouchsafe to go prove them.

10 *The Fourteenth Chapter*

The messenger maketh objection that miracles showed before a
multitude... may be feigned; and by the author showed how the
goodness of God bringeth shortly the truth of such falsehood to
light (with examples thereof, one or two rehearsed), and further showed
15 that many miracles there be which no good Christian man may deny to
be true.

The Fifteenth Chapter

The author showeth that if of those miracles that are told and
written to be done at divers pilgrimages, and commonly believed
20 for very true, we certainly knew some falsely feigned, yet were that
no cause to mistrust the remnant.

The Sixteenth Chapter

The author showeth that whoso would inquire should soon find
that at pilgrimages be daily many great and undoubted miracles
25 wrought and well known. And specially he speaketh of the great and
open miracle showed at Our Lady of Ipswich of late upon the
daughter of Sir Roger Wentworth, Knight.

The Seventeenth Chapter

The messenger layeth forth objections against miracles done at
pilgrimages... of which he confesseth many to be true. But he layeth
30 causes and reasons whereby he saith that many men be moved to
believe and think that those miracles that be done there be done by

2 *somewhat noteth*: comments a little on // *froward minds*: perverse dispositions
3 *hard to believe*: resistant to believing; slow to believe 3, 4 *in*: about
4 *light*: ready; quick // *shrewd tale*: report of something bad
4 *word*: i.e., mere word, as opposed to an oath 6 *untoward mind*: badness of attitude
7 *touching*: pertaining to // *weal*: good 9 *vouchsafe*: bother // *prove*: investigate
11 *showed*: performed 12, 20 *feigned*: faked 12 *showed*: i.e., it is shown
14 *rehearsed*: related 18, 23 *showeth*: asserts 19, 24, 30 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites
20 *certainly knew some*: knew for a fact that some were // *falsely*: deceitfully
21 *remnant*: rest 23 *inquire*: do any investigating 26 *showed*: performed
26 *of late*: recently 30 *confesseth*: acknowledges

the devil, to set our hearts upon idolatry by the worshipping of images instead of God.

Table 1.17

The Eighteenth Chapter

5 The author deferreth the answer to the aforesaid objections... and first by Scripture he proveth that the church of Christ cannot err in any necessary article of Christ's faith. And in this chapter be those words of Christ specially touched, "Super cathedram Mosi sederunt [etc.]: quae dicunt vobis, facite; quae autem faciunt, nolite facere," concerning the authority of the Church.

10 *The Nineteenth Chapter*

The author proveth that if the worship of images were idolatry, then the Church, believing it to be lawful and pleasant to God, were in a misbelief and in a deadly error. And then were the faith failed in the Church; whereof Christ hath promised the contrary, as is proved in the chapter before.

The Twentieth Chapter

20 The messenger allegeth that the perpetual being and assistance of Christ with his church to keep it out of all damnable errors... is nothing else but his being with his church in Holy Scripture; whereof the author declareth the contrary.

The Twenty-first Chapter

25 The author showeth that if it so were indeed as the messenger said—that is to wit, that Christ continued with his church none other wise but only by the leaving of his Holy Scripture to them... and that all the faith, also, were only therein—then should it yet follow that as far as the necessity of our salvation requireth, God giveth the Church the right understanding thereof. And thereupon followeth further that the Church cannot err in the right faith. Whereupon is inferred eftsoons all that the messenger would have fled from before. And thereon also specially followeth that all the texts of Holy Scripture which heretics allege against images... or any point of the common belief of Christ's Catholic Church... can nothing serve their purpose.

5, 28 *in*: with regard to 6 *necessary*: essential

7 *specially touched*: discussed in particular

7–8: "On the chair of Moses sit . . . : what they say, do; what they do, don't do" (Mt 23:2–3).

11 *worship*: veneration 12 *lawful*: licit // *pleasant*: pleasing 13 *were*: would be

13 *misbelief*: wrong belief // *deadly*: fatal 17 *assistance*: active presence

22 *showeth*: points out

26 *the . . . requireth*: i.e., the requirements for our salvation render necessary

28 *in*: with regard to 29 *eftsoons*: for a second time // *would*: wanted to

30 *specially*: in particular 31 *allege*: cite

32 *common*: universal // *nothing*: in no way

The Twenty-second Chapter

Table 1.22

Because the messenger had in the beginning showed himself desirous and greedy upon the text of Scripture... with little force of the old fathers' glosses, and with dispraise of philosophy and almost all the seven liberal sciences: the author therefore incidentally showeth what harm hath happed sometimes to fall to divers of those young men whom he hath known to give their study to the Scripture *only*, with contempt of logic and other secular sciences, and little regard of the old interpreters. Wherefore the author showeth that in the study of Scripture, the sure way is with virtue and prayer... first to use the judgment of natural reason, whereunto secular literature helpeth much. And secondly, the comments of holy doctors. And thirdly—above allthing—the articles of the Catholic faith, received and believed through the church of Christ.

The Twenty-third Chapter

The messenger objecteth against the counsel of the author... in that he would that the student of Scripture should lean to the commenters and unto natural reason—which he calleth enemy to faith. And thereupon the answer of the author to those objections, specially proving that reason is *servant* to faith, and not enemy... and must with faith and interpretation of Scripture needs be concurrent.

The Twenty-fourth Chapter

The messenger maketh objections against the author... in that he counseled the student of Scripture to bring the articles of our faith with him for a special rule to construe the Scripture by. And the author confirmeth his counsel given in that behalf, declaring that without that rule, men may soon fall into great errors in the study of Holy Scripture.

The Twenty-fifth Chapter

The author, taking occasion upon certain words of the messenger, declareth the preeminence, necessity, and profit of Holy Scripture... showing, nevertheless, that many things have been taught by God without writing, and many great things so

1 *desirous and greedy upon*: eager for and avidly focused on 3 *force*: taking into account
 4, 9 *old*: early 4 *glosses*: explanations; interpretations // *dispraise*: disparagement
 5 *all the seven liberal sciences*: all seven of the liberal arts
 5–6 *incidentally showeth*: mentions in passing 6 *fall to*: befall // *divers*: some
 10 *showeth*: asserts // *sure way*: safe course 12 *comments*: commentaries
 13 *holy doctors*: biblical exegetes // *allthing*: everything 14 *received*: accepted
 14 *through*: throughout 17 *lean to*: rely on 18 *commenters*: commentators
 20 *specially proving*: proving in particular 22 *concurrent*: compatible
 28 *declaring*: showing 31 *words of*: statements made by
 32 *declareth*: affirms 33 *showing*: pointing out 34 *without*: not in

Table 1.25

remain—yet unwritten—of truths necessary to be believed. And that the New Law of Christ is the law so written in the heart... that it shall never out of his *church*. And that the law *there* written by God is a right rule to interpret the words written in his Holy
 5 Scripture. Which rule with reason and the old interpreters... the author showeth to be the very sure way to wade with... in the great stream of Holy Scripture.

The Twenty-sixth Chapter

10 The messenger saying that him seemed he should not believe the Church if he saw the Church say one thing and the Holy Scripture another thing, because the Scripture is the word of God: the author showeth that the *faith* of the *Church* is the word of God as well as the Scripture... and therefore as well to be believed. And that
 15 the faith and the Scripture well understood be never contrary. And further showeth that upon all doubts rising upon Holy Scripture concerning any necessary article of the faith, he that cannot upon all that he can hear in the matter on both the sides
 20 perceive the better and truer part... hath a sure and undoubtable refuge provided him by the goodness of God to bring him out of all perplexity, in that God hath commanded him in all such doubts to believe his Church.

The Twenty-seventh Chapter

25 The author proveth that God hath commanded us in allthing necessary to salvation to give firm credence and full obedience unto his church. And a cause why God will have us bound to believe.

The Twenty-eighth Chapter

30 The messenger eftsoons objected against this—that we should believe the Church in anything where we find the words of Scripture seeming plainly to say the contrary, or believe the old doctors' interpretations in any necessary article... where they seem to us to say contrary to the text—showing that we may perceive the Scripture as well as they might. And the answer of the author, proving the authority of the old interpreters and the infallible
 35 authority of the Church in that God teacheth it every truth requisite

3 *out of*: depart from; not be in 5, 31, 34 *old*: early 6 *very sure*: really safe
 6 *to wade with*: by which to wade 9 *him seemed*: to him it seemed that
 13 *as well as*: as much as is // *as well to*: as much to
 14 *be never contrary*: are never in contradiction to one another
 15 *doubts*: difficulties 16, 24, 31 *necessary*: essential
 18 *perceive the better and truer part*: tell which is the better and more correct view
 20 *in all*: with regard to all 21 *doubts*: unclear things 23, 31 *in*: with regard to
 23 *allthing*: everything 28 *eftsoons*: for a second time 30, 34 *old*: early
 31 *doctors'*: exegetes' 32 *showing*: asserting // *may*: can
 32 *perceive*: understand 33 *might*: could

to the necessity of man's salvation. Which he proveth by a deduction partly depending upon natural reason.

Table 1.28

The Twenty-ninth Chapter

5 The author proveth by Scripture that God instructeth the church of Christ in every truth necessarily requisite for our salvation.

The Thirtieth Chapter

10 Whereas the messenger had thought before that it were hard to believe anything certainly save Holy Scripture, though the Church did agree therein and command it: the author showeth that saving for the authority of the Church, men could not know what scripture they should believe. And here is it showed that God will not suffer the Church to be deceived in the choice of the very scripture of God from any counterfeit.

The Thirty-first Chapter

15 In that the Church cannot err in the *choice* of the true scripture, the author proveth—by the reason which the King's Highness, in his noble and most famous book, objecteth against Luther—that the Church cannot err in the necessary *understanding* of Scripture. And finally the author in this chapter doth briefly recapitulate certain of the principal points that be before proved; and therewith endeth the First Book.

The Second Book

The First Chapter

25 The messenger, recapitulating certain things before proved, and, for his part, agreeing that "the church of Christ" cannot in any necessary article of the faith fall in any damnable error, doth put in doubt and question which is the *very* church of Christ... alleging that they, peradventure, whom we call heretics will say that themselves is "the Church," and we not. Whereof the author showeth the

1 *the necessity of*: what is needed for 7 *were*: would be
 8 *certainly*: with certainty // *though*: even if 9 *agree*: concur
 9–10 *showeth that saving*: points out that were it not 11 *showed*: pointed out
 12 *suffer*: allow // *deceived*: mistaken 12, 15 *choice*: distinguishing; picking out
 12 *very*: actual; authentic 15, 18 *in the*: regarding the 16 *reason*: argument
 17 *noble and most famous book*: I.e., his *Defense of the Seven Sacraments*.
 17 *objecteth*: pits 25 *in*: with regard to 26 *necessary*: essential // *in*: into
 27 *very*: true 28 *peradventure*: perhaps

contrary, declaring whereby we may know that they cannot be “the Church.”

Table 2.1

The Second Chapter

5 The author showeth that no sect of such as the Church taketh for heretics can be “the Church,” forasmuch as the Church was before all them—as the tree from which all those withered branches be fallen.

The Third Chapter

10 The messenger moveth that the *very* church peradventure is not the people that *we* take for it, but a secret, unknown sort of such only... as be by God predestined to be saved. Whereunto the author answereth, and declareth that it cannot be so.

The Fourth Chapter

15 The messenger moveth that though “the Church” be not the number of folk, only, predestined to bliss, yet may it peradventure be the number of good and well-believing folk, here and there, unknown—which may be, peradventure, those whom we condemn for heretics for holding opinion against images. Whereof the author proveth the contrary.

20 *The Fifth Chapter*

The author showeth and concludeth that this common-known multitude of Christian nations not cut off nor fallen off by heresies... be the very church of Christ—good men and bad together.

The Sixth Chapter

25 The messenger moveth that since the *church* is this known multitude of good men and bad together... of whom no man knoweth which be the one sort and which be the other: that it may be, peradventure, that the good sort of the Church be they that believe the worship of images to be idolatry, and the bad sort they that believe the contrary. Which objection the author doth answer and confute.

30

The Seventh Chapter

The author somewhat doth corroborate the truth against the heresies holding against images; and recapitulating somewhat

1 *declaring whereby we may*: showing how we can 5 *was*: existed
 9, 14, 25 *moveth*: submits 9, 23 *very*: true 9, 15, etc. *peradventure*: perhaps
 10, 27, etc. *sort*: set; group 12 *declareth that*: explains why
 16 *well-believing*: right-believing 21 *showeth*: states // *concludeth*: proves
 29 *worship*: veneration 30 *objection*: contention
 33 *somewhat doth corroborate*: does some defending of

briefly what hath been proved, so finisheth and endeth the proof of his part.

Table 2.7

The Eighth Chapter

5 The author entereth the answer to the objections that had been before laid by the messenger against the worship of images, and praying to saints, and going on pilgrimages. And first he answereth, in this chapter, the objections made against praying to saints.

The Ninth Chapter

10 The messenger yet again objecteth against relics; and putteth great doubt in canonizing. Whereunto the author maketh answer.

The Tenth Chapter

15 The messenger objecteth many things against pilgrimages and relics and worshipping of saints... because of much superstitious manner used therein, and unlawful petitions asked of them, and harm growing thereupon.

The Eleventh Chapter

20 The author answereth all the objections proposed by the messenger in the tenth chapter. And some of them touched by the messenger more at large in other parts before.

The Twelfth Chapter

25 The author confirmeth the truth of our faith and usage in the worship of images... by the consent of the old holy doctors of the Church approving the same (as appeareth well in their writings) whom God hath by many miracles testified to be saints. The messenger eftsoons doubteth whether we can be sure that the miracles told by them were true or not... or themselves saints or not. Whereupon the author proveth that of any miracles told by any saints, we may be most sure of theirs... and, consequently, by their miracles most sure of them that they be surely saints. And in this chapter also proveth that the miracles and consent of those holy doctors do prove... that this must needs be the very, true church... in which they have written and miracles have been done. Whereupon is finally concluded, eftsoons, the truth of the principal question; 35 and therewith finisheth the Second Book.

2 *part*: side of the argument 4 *entereth*: commences 5, 23 *worship*: veneration
 10 *putteth*: expresses // *in*: about 13 *objecteth many things*: makes many objections
 14 *worshipping*: venerating 14–15 *much . . . used*: a lot of superstitious behavior exhibited
 15 *unlawful*: illicit 16 *growing thereupon*: ensuing therefrom 19 *them*: those
 19 *touched*: discussed 20 *more at large*: at greater length 22 *usage*: practice
 23, 31 *consent*: consensus; agreement 23 *old*: early 23, 32 *doctors*: theologians
 26, 34 *eftsoons*: once again 27, 28 *by*: about 32 *very*: real; authentic

The Third Book

Table 3.1

The First Chapter

The messenger, having in the meanwhile been at the university, showeth unto the author an objection which he learned there against one point proved in the First Book—that is to wit, that in the necessary points of the faith, equal credence is to be given to the Church and to the Scripture. Which objection the author answereth and dissolveth.

The Second Chapter

Incidentally somewhat is there touched the superstitious fear and scrupulosity that the person abjured did, as it is said, begin with. The weariness whereof drove him to the delight of such liberty as brought him to the contempt of the good devout things used commonly in Christ's church. And in this chapter is somewhat touched the good mean manner... between scrupulous superstition and reckless negligence... that would be used in the singing or saying of Divine Service.

The Third Chapter

The author showeth that men ought not to be light in mistrusting of any judgment given in the Court. And that much less ought any man to be bold in the reprovng of a common law. And he showeth also the cause why that the law admitteth more slight witnesses in heinous criminal causes than in slighter matters of covenants or contracts.

The Fourth Chapter

The author showeth upon what ground and cause the man was convicted. And also divers other things not then brought in judgment... whereby it may well appear that he was greatly guilty. And so he showeth incidentally wherefore it were not reason in a detection of heresy... to suffer, after the witnesses published and the crime well proved, any new witnesses to be received for the party that is accused.

The Fifth Chapter

The author proveth that the spiritual judges did the man marvelous favor—and almost more than lawful—in that they

4 *showeth*: relates 5 *necessary*: essential 7 *dissolveth*: disposes of 9, 13 *touched*: discussed
 10 *abjured*: made to renounce his heresies under oath 12 *devout*: devotional 14 *mean*: middle
 15 *would*: should 15–16 *Divine Service*: the Divine Office 18 *light*: quick
 20 *reproving*: criticizing 21 *more slight*: less reliable
 21–22 *heinous criminal causes*: cases of high crime 22 *covenants*: pacts
 27 *may well appear*: can be clearly shown 28 *were not reason*: would not make good sense
 28–29 *in a detection*: with regard to an accusation 29 *suffer*: allow
 29 *published*: (have been) slated 33 *spiritual*: ecclesiastical 34 *marvelous*: extraordinary

admitted him to such an abjuration as they did... and that they did not, rather, leave him to the secular hands.

Table 3.5

The Sixth Chapter

5 The author showeth that the person abjured—for his own worldly honesty, and for the more fruit of his preaching if he be suffered to preach in time to come, it were much better for him openly and willingly to confess the truth. And that now, by the standing still in the denial, he both shameth himself and should if he preached slander the word of God.

10 *The Seventh Chapter*

The messenger moveth a question: if a man be sworn by a judge to say the truth of himself in a crime whereof he is had suspect, whether he may not lawfully on his oath swear untruth... where he thinketh the truth cannot be proved against him. Whereunto the
15 author answereth that he is bound upon peril of perjury to say and confess truth. And the much more sin and folly both... was it, then, for the man that thus was abjured to forswear himself in the thing that he wist well *would* be proved; and a *shameless* folly to stand still by his perjury... when he saw the matter so clearly
20 proved indeed. And with this finisheth he the matter of his abjuration.

The Eighth Chapter

The author showeth why the New Testament of Tyndale's translation was burned. And showeth for an example certain words
25 evil, and of evil purpose, changed.

The Ninth Chapter

The author showeth another great token that the translation was perilous... and made for an evil purpose.

The Tenth Chapter

30 The author showeth that the translation of Tyndale was too bad to be emended.

The Eleventh Chapter

The messenger findeth fault with the clergy... in that he saith they have made a constitution provincial that no Bible in English

2 *hands*: authorities 4, 17 *abjured*: made to renounce his heresies under oath
5 *honesty*: reputation 7 *willingly*: voluntarily 9 *slander*: bring into discredit 11 *moveth*: poses
12 *say the truth of*: tell the truth about 12, 17 *in*: with regard to 12 *had*: held
13 *lawfully*: licitly 16, 18 *folly*: idiocy 17 *forswear*: perjure 18 *wist*: knew
23 *showeth*: explains 24 *showeth*: gives 25, 28 *evil*: ill 27 *showeth*: points out
27 *token*: indication 28 *perilous*: terrible 30 *showeth*: states 34 *provincial*: synodal

should be suffered. And in this chapter incidentally the messenger much reproveth the living of the clergy. Whereunto the author somewhat showeth his mind, deferring for the while his answer to the objection made against the constitution.

Table 3.11

5 *The Twelfth Chapter*

The author toucheth one special prerogative that we have by a priest, be he never so bad: in that his naughtiness cannot take from us the profit of his Mass. Whereupon is by the messenger moved a doubt: whether it were better to have fewer priests and better,
10 with fewer Masses, or more and worse for to have the more Masses. Whereunto the author answereth.

The Thirteenth Chapter

The messenger moveth that it would do well that priests should have wives. Whereunto the author maketh answer.

15 *The Fourteenth Chapter*

The author answereth the doubt moved before (in the eleventh chapter) concerning the constitution provincial... and that the clergy is therein far from the fault that is imputed to them in that point; showing also that the clergy hath *not* forbidden the Bible to be made and read in
20 English.

The Fifteenth Chapter

The messenger moveth against the clergy that though they have made no *law* thereof, yet they will in deed suffer none English Bible in no man's hand, but use to burn them where they find
25 them—and sometimes to burn the man too. And for example he layeth one Richard Hunne, showing that the chancellor of London murdered him in prison and after hanged him (feigning that he hanged himself), and after condemned him of heresy... because he had an English Bible; and so burned the Bible and him together. Whereunto
30 the author answereth.

The Sixteenth Chapter

The messenger rehearseth some causes which he hath heard laid by some of the clergy wherefore the Scripture should not be suffered in English. And the author showeth his mind—that it were convenient

1, 23, 33 *suffer(ed)*: allow(ed) 1 *incidentally*: in passing 2 *reproveth*: criticizes
2–3 *whereunto*... *showeth*: about which... speaks 6 *toucheth*: discusses
6 *prerogative*: advantage; blessing // *have by*: get with 7 *naughtiness*: badness; immorality
8, 16 *moved*: raised 9, 16 *doubt*: question 9, 34 *were*: would be 10 *worse*: less good
13 *moveth*: submits 18 *fault*: blameworthiness 19 *made*: written
22 *moveth*: makes the accusation 23 *deed*: fact 24 *use*: are wont 25 *layeth*: cites
26 *showing*: stating 27 *feigning*: falsely claiming 32 *rehearseth*: relates // *laid*: alleged
34 *showeth his mind*: says what he thinks // *were convenient*: would be good

to have the Bible in English—and therewith endeth the Third Book.

Table 3.16

The Fourth Book

The First Chapter

- 5 The author showeth wherefore it were not well done to suffer Luther's books—or any other heretic's—to go abroad and be read among the people... though there were some good things in them among the bad.

The Second Chapter

- 10 The author showeth many of Luther's heresies to be so abominable... and some part also so peevish... that the very bare rehearsal is enough, without any further dispicion thereupon, to cause any good man abhor them... and to be ashamed also to seem so foolish as to hold them. And for an example the author rehearseth divers...
15 whereof some be newly set forth by Tyndale in his English books... worse yet, in some part, than his master Luther is himself.

The Third Chapter

- 20 The author showeth by what occasion that Luther first fell to the devising of these heresies. And that the occasion was such as well declareth that he was pricked thereto by malice... and ever proceeded from evil to worse, not witting where to hold him; and that he refuseth to stand to the judgment of any folk earthly concerning the truth or falsehood of his opinions... save only himself.

25 *The Fourth Chapter*

The author showeth how that Luther, in the book that himself made of his own acts at the city of Worms in Almaine, doth so madly oversee himself that he discloseth unawares certain follies of himself which a man will well laugh at, and marvel much to see it.

30 *The Fifth Chapter*

The author showeth the perpetual inconstancy of Luther, and his contrariety and repugnance against himself.

5 *showeth* . . . *suffer*: explains why it would not be good to allow 6 *go abroad*: get out there
7 *though*: even if 11 *peevish*: silly // *the very bare rehearsal*: just the mere mention
12 *dispicion*: discussion // *cause*: make 13 *abhor*: shudder at
14 *rehearseth*: relates // *divers*: several 18 *showeth*: tells
20 *well declareth*: makes it quite clear // *pricked*: spurred 21 *evil*: bad
21 *witting*: knowing // *hold him*: settle 23 *opinions*: theses 26 *himself*: he himself
27 *made of*: wrote about // *Almaine*: Germany 28 *oversee*: forget // *follies*: idiocies
28 *of*: about 29 *marvel* . . . *it*: be very surprised to see 32 *repugnance*: opposition

The Sixth Chapter

Table 4.6

The author showeth how that Luther hath been fain for the defense of his indefensible errors... to go back and forsake all the manner of proof and trial... which he first promised to stand to. And
 5 now, like a man shameful and shameless, hath no proof in the world but his own word... and calleth that the word of God.

The Seventh Chapter

The author showeth what things caused the people to fall into Luther's fond and furious sect. And he showeth also what mischief
 10 the followers of that sect have done in Almaine, Lombardy, and Rome.

The Eighth Chapter

The messenger saith that the malice of the men is not to be imputed to the sect, since that of every sect, some be naught. And the author showeth that in the Lutherans, the sect itself is
 15 the cause of the malice that the men fall to.

The Ninth Chapter

The author showeth that it is a great token that the world is near at an end... while we see the people so far fallen from God that they can abide it to be content with this pestilent frantic sect...
 20 which no people, Christian or heathen, could have suffered before our days.

The Tenth Chapter

The author inveigheth against this detestable article of this ungracious sect whereby they take away the liberty of man's
 25 free will and ascribe allthing to destiny.

The Eleventh Chapter

The messenger saith that howsoever Luther and his followers in Almaine believe, yet he cannot think that such as be Lutherans in
 30 *England*—of whom some, he saith, have seemed good and honest—be so mad and unhappy to believe that all hangeth upon destiny. Whereupon the author showeth the contrary... and that they be naught in deed, seem they never so good. And for proof that howsoever they color their

2 *fain*: forced 3 *forsake*: abandon // *all the*: the whole 4 *stand*: submit
 8, 9 *showeth*: tells 9 *fond*: ridiculous // *furious*: crazy // *mischief*: evil things
 10, 28 *Almaine*: Germany 13, 31 *naught*: bad 14 *in*: in the case of
 15 *fall to*: go in for 17 *showeth*: points out // *token*: indication 18 *while*: when
 19 *content*: all right // *pestilent*: pernicious // *frantic*: lunatic 20 *suffered*: tolerated
 24 *ungracious*: wicked 25 *allthing*: everything 29 *good and honest*: quite decent
 30 *unhappy*: wretched // *to*: as to // *all hangeth upon*: everything depends on
 31 *in deed*: in reality 32 *never so*: no matter how

Table 4.11

words, they mean that all dependeth upon only destiny, he rehearseth a certain dispicion had with a heretic detected to the bishop and examined—the author being present—where the heretic, being learned and a preacher, made many shifts to make it seem that in his evil words he meant but well.

The Twelfth Chapter

The author inveigheth against the most pestilent sect of these Lutherans, which ascribe our salvation and damnation, and all our deeds, to destiny.

The Thirteenth Chapter

The author showeth his opinion concerning the burning of heretics... and that it is lawful, necessary, and well done; and showeth also that the *clergy* doth not procure it... but only the good and politic provision of the *temporality*.

The Fourteenth Chapter

The author somewhat showeth that the clergy doth no wrong in leaving heretics to secular hand... though their death follow thereon. And he showeth also that it is lawful to resist the Turk and such other infidels—and that princes be bound thereto.

The Fifteenth Chapter

That princes be bound to punish heretics... and that fair handling helpeth little with many of them.

The Sixteenth Chapter

Of simple, unlearned folk that are deceived by the great good opinion that they have, percase, in the learning and living of some that teach them errors.

The Seventeenth Chapter

The author showeth that some which be Lutherans and seem to live holily, and therefore be believed and had in estimation, intend a further purpose than they pretend... which they will well show if they may once find their time.

1 *upon only*: solely on 2 *rehearseth*: relates // *dispicion*: discussion
 2 *detected*: reported; informed on 5 *evil words*: bad statements 7 *the*: i.e., that
 11 *showeth*: states 12 *lawful*: licit // *well*: rightly 13 *showeth also*: also points out
 14 *temporality*: laity; i.e., secular authorities 16 *showeth*: explains how it is
 17 *secular hand*: the civil authorities 18 *lawful*: licit
 19 *princes be bound thereto*: rulers are obligated to do so 21–22 *fair handling*: nice treatment
 24 *of*: about // *deceived*: led astray 25 *percase*: perchance // *in*: regarding
 25 *living*: way of living; personal conduct 28 *showeth*: points out
 29 *had in estimation*: held in high regard 30 *intend . . . pretend*: have a further objective than they claim to have
 31 *may once*: can ever // *time*: opportunity

The Eighteenth Chapter

Table 4.18

5 The author showeth that in the condemnation of heretics, the
clergy might lawfully do much more sharply than they do; and
that in deed the clergy doth now no more against heretics...
than the Apostle counseleth... and the old holy doctors did.

Finis tabulae

3 *might . . . sharply*: could legitimately act much more harshly 4 *deed*: fact
5 *the Apostle*: Saint Paul // *old holy doctors*: early theologians
6 *Finis tabulae*: end of the table (of contents)

The First Book

1. Preface

One business begetteth another. **I**t is an old-said saw that one
business begetteth and bringeth forth another.

Which proverb, as it happeth, I find very true by myself,
5 which have been fain by occasion first of one business...
after to take the second, and upon the second... now to take the
third. For, whereas a right worshipful friend of mine sent
once unto me a secret, sure friend of his, with certain credence to
be declared unto me... touching many such matters as, being in deed
10 very certain and out of doubt, be nevertheless of late by lewd
people put in question (the specialties whereof do so far forth in the
first chapter of this book appear that we shall here need no rehearsal
thereof), I thought it first enough to tell the messenger my mind by
mouth, accounting that after our communication ended, I
15 should never need further business therein. But after that the messenger
was departed, and I felt my stomach well eased, in that I reckoned all
my labor done—bethinking myself a little while thereon, my
business that I took for finished, I found very far from that
point... and little more than begun. For when I considered what
20 the matters were... and how many great things had been treated
between the messenger and me... and in what manner fashion—albeit
I mistrusted not his good will... and very well trusted his wit, his
learning well serving him to the perceiving and reporting of
our communication—yet, finding our treaty so diverse and so long,
25 and sometimes such wise intricate, that myself could not
without labor call it orderly to mind, methought I had not well
done... without writing, to trust his only memory; namely since
some parts of the matter be such of themselves as rather need to be
attentively read and advised than hoverly heard and passed over.
30 And over this, I considered that though I nothing suspect the
messenger—as in good faith I do not (and, to say the truth, am of
myself so little mistrusting... that he were likely very plainly to show

2 *it is an old-said saw*: there is an old saying 4 *by*: of; with regard to 5 *which*: who
5 *fain*: forced 7 *whereas*: given that // *right*: very
7 *worshipful*: distinguished / devout 8 *secret*: personal // *sure*: reliable
8 *credence*: credentials 9 *touching*: concerning // *in deed*: in fact; actually
10 *out of*: beyond // *lewd*: base; vile 11 *specialties*: particulars
12 *rehearsal*: relating 14 *accounting*: figuring 14, 24 *communication*: conversation
16 *stomach*: spirit 22 *wit*: intelligence 23 *perceiving*: understanding
24 *treaty*: discussion 27 *his only memory*: solely his memory // *namely*: especially
28 *matter*: content (of the conversation) 29 *advised*: reflected on
29 *hoverly*: superficially 30 *over*: in addition to // *though*: even if
30 *nothing*: in no way 31 *in good faith*: in all sincerity // *say*: tell
31–32 *of myself*: by nature 21/32—22/1 *that . . . bad*: i.e., that for me to take someone
for bad, he would probably have to very clearly prove himself wicked

1. Preface

himself naught... whom I should take for bad)—yet, since no man can
Deem the best. look into another's breast, as it is therefore
 well done to deem the best... so were it not
 much amiss in such wise to provide for the worst... as, if a man
 5 hap to be worse than we take him for, our good opinion turn
 us to no harm. For this cause methought that for the more
 surety, my part were to send our communication to my said
 friend in writing. Whereby, if it had happed that his messenger had,
 for any sinister favor borne toward the wrong side, purposely
 10 mangled the matter, his master should not only know the truth...
 but also have occasion the better to beware of his messenger—which
 else might hap to hurt, while he were mistaken for good. Now,
 when I had, upon this deliberation taken with myself, written
 all the matter and sent it to my friend... then had I, methought, all
 15 done... and my mind full set at rest. But that rest rested not
 long. For soon after, it was showed me... that of all my writings
 were written divers copies... and one also carried over the sea.
 Where when I remembered what a shrewd sort of our apostates are
 assembled (part run out of religion... and all run out of the
 20 right faith), methought great peril might arise if some of that
 company, which are confederated and conspired together in the
 sowing and setting forth of Luther's pestilent heresies in this
 realm, should maliciously change my words to the worse... and so
 put in print my book... framed after their fantasies; which when
 25 I would afterward reprove and show the difference, I might
 peradventure seem for the color of my cause... to have amended
 mine own upon the sight of theirs. For eschewing whereof I am
 now driven, as I say, to this third business of publishing and
 putting my book in print myself; whereby their enterprise (if
 30 they should any such intend) shall (I trust) be prevented and
 frustrated. And this have I done not all of mine own heed, but after
 the counsel of others, more than one—whose advice and counsel, for
 their wisdom and learning, I asked in that behalf... and which have,
 at my request, vouchsafed to read over the book ere I did put it forth.

6, 14, 20 *methought*: it seemed to me 7 *my part were*: what I should do was
 7 *communication*: conversation 9 *sinister*: surreptitious 10 *mangled*: distorted
 10 *the matter*: the content; i.e., what was said // *master*: employer 12 *hurt*: do harm
 12 *while*: as long as 14 *all the matter*: the whole thing 16 *showed*: told
 18 *shrewd*: depraved 19 *run out of*: having run away from // *religion*: religious life
 21 *which*: who 23 *so*: thus 24 *framed*: (re)fashioned 24, 31 *after*: according to
 24 *fantasies*: wild ideas 25 *reprove*: criticize
 26 *for the color of my cause*: to make my case look better
 34 *vouchsafed*: been so good as // *put it forth*: put it out; i.e., publish it

1. Preface

For albeit that I dare be somewhat bold to commune in familiar manner
with such as for their fantasies like to ask me of such matters any

1 Pt 3:15

question (according to the counsel of
Saint Peter bidding us be ready to give

- 5 a reckoning, and to show a reasonable cause, to every man, of the
faith and hope that we have), yet to make and put forth any *book*
wherein were treated any such things as touch our faith... would
I not presume... but if better learned than myself... should think it
either profitable or at the leastwise harmless. To whose examination
10 and judgment I did the more studiously submit this work...
for two things in special, among divers others. The one, for the
liberal allegations of the messenger for the wrong part, so laid
out at large... that of myself, I stood half in a doubt whether it were
convenient to rehearse the words of any man so homely... and in manner
15 sometimes irreverently spoken against God's holy hallows and
their reverent memories. The other was certain tales and merry
words which he mingled with his matter—and some such on
mine own part, among—as occasion fell in communication. In
which albeit I saw no harm... yet somewhat doubted I lest they should
20 unto sad men seem over light and wanton for the weight and gravity
of such an earnest matter. Wherefore, in these two points though I
had already seen some examples of right holy men... which, in
their books answering to the objections of heretics in their
time, have not letted to rehearse the very, formal words of them
25 whose writings they made answer to... being sometimes of such
manner and sort as a good man would not well bear... and have not,
also, letted to write a merry word in a right earnest work—of
which two things I could out of godly men's books and holy
saints' works gather a good sort—yet in mine own work I
30 determined that I would nothing allow nor defend that the
judgment of other virtuous and cunning men would in any wise
mislike. And therefore, after that such had read it and severally
said their advice, I found, as it often happeth, that something
which one wise and well-learned man would have out, twain of

2 *for their fantasies*: i.e., because of those apostates' wild ideas // *like*: want

2 *of such matters*: on such subjects 6 *make and put forth*: write and publish

8 *but if*: unless (people) 11 *special*: particular 12 *part*: side

14 *convenient*: appropriate // *rehearse*: relate // *homely*: unconstrained; uncircumspect

15 *hallows*: saints 16–17, 27 *merry word(s)*: joking statement(s)

18 *among*: now and then // *fell in communication*: came up in (our) conversation

19 *doubted*: feared 20 *sad*: dignified // *over*: too // *wanton*: playful / lascivious

21, 27 *earnest*: serious 22 *which*: who 23 *objections*: contentions

24, 27 *letted*: scrupled 24 *rehearse*: relate // *very*: actual // *formal*: exact

29 *sort*: collection 31 *cunning*: knowledgeable // *wise*: way

32 *mislike*: disapprove // *severally*: separately 34 *twain*: two

1. Preface

like wisdom and learning specially would have in—neither side
lacking good and probable reasons for their part. Wherefore, since
it became not me to be judge over the judgment of them... whom
I took and chose for my judges... being such, of themselves, as
5 hard were it for any man to say which of them before the others
he could in erudition, wit, or prudence anything prefer: I

Lean to the more part. could no further go... but lean to the more
part. Which I so far forth have followed...

that likewise as I divers things put out or changed by their
10 good advice and counsel, so let I nothing stand in this book... but
such as twain advised me specially to let stand... against any one
that any doubt moved me to the contrary. And thus much have I
thought necessary for my declaration and excuse to advertise you, all
that shall happen to read this rude, simple work—praying you of
15 patience and pardon; whom God, of his especial grace, grant as
much profit in the reading... as my poor heart hath meant you and
intended in the making.

The First Chapter

The letter of credence sent from his friend by a trusty
20 secret messenger. With the letter of the author answering the
same. The declaration of the credence by the mouth of the
messenger; whereupon the matter of all the whole work
dependeth.

The Letter of Credence

25 **M**aster Chancellor, as heartily as I possibly can, I recommend
me to you. Not without a thousand thanks for your good company
when we were last together. In which forasmuch as it
liked you to spend some of your time with me in familiar communication—
whereof some part I trust so to remember as myself
30 shall be the better, and some others never the worse... which shall
have cause, and have already, to give you great thanks therefor—I am
bold at this time to send you my special secret friend, this bearer, to

2 *probable*: cogent // *reasons*: arguments // *part*: view

7 *lean to*: defer to; go along with 7–8 *the more part*: the majority

12 *any doubt moved me*: expressed to me any misgiving 13, 21 *declaration*: explanation

13 *advertise you*: make you aware of 14 *rude*: rough 17 *making*: writing

19, 21, 24 (*letter of*) *credence*: letter of introduction

20, 32 *secret*: personal 22 *matter*: content

25–26 *recommend me to you*: commend myself to your remembrance

28 *liked*: pleased // *communication*: conversation 31 *therefor*: for it

32 *bold*: taking the liberty

break with you somewhat further, partly of the same matters, partly
of some others such as are happed there since... whereof great speech
and rumor runneth here... whereby ye shall have occasion more at
length (if your leisure will serve) to touch certain doubts moved
5 since, of the matters treated between us before. Wherein, were
it not for your other business, I would be bold on your goodness to
desire you to take good time with him. And yet nevertheless do
require you heartily—as your leisure will serve you—to satisfy him
at the full. For he shall (how long soever he tarry therefor) give
10 attendance unto you... days and hours, as ye may spare him
time; which cannot in these things be but well bestowed,
In matters concerning God, set considering that the matters be such...
worldly businesses aside. and so touching to God... as they were well
worthy to set worldly business aside—
15 especially in such need. For I assure you, some folk here talk very
strangely of the things that he shall move you. Not only for such
words as they tell that come from thence, but also, most especially,
through the occasion of some letters lewdly written hither out of
London by a priest or two... whom they take here for honest. But whatsoever
20 *any* man tell or write, I shall, for the confidence and trust
that I have in you, surely take and tell forth for the very truth whatsoever
ye shall affirm unto my friend; whom I send unto you...
not so much because I may not come myself (howbeit, therefore
too) as for because I long to have him talk with you. To whom
25 whatsoever ye say, reckon it said to myself—not only for his
troth and secretness, but also for his memory; with whom to
commune, I trust shall not mislike you. For either mine affection
blindeth me... or ye shall find him wise and, as others say that
can better judge it than I, more than meanly learned; with one thing
30 added wherewith ye be wont well to be content: a very merry
wit! He is of nature nothing tongue-tied. And I have in these
matters bidden him be bold, without any straining of courtesy—
whereof the ceremonies in disputation marreth much of the matter,
while one studieth more how he may behave him... than what he
35 shall say. I have, I say, therefore bidden him more to mind his
matter than his courtesy, and freely to lay forth not only what he

1 *break*: speak freely 4 *touch*: address // *doubts moved*: questions raised
5 *of*: on 6 *be bold*: presume 6–7 *to desire*: and ask 8 *require*: entreat
9 *at*: to // *tarry therefor* (may have to) stick around for this 11 *bestowed*: spent
13 *so touching*: so much having to do with 13–14 *were well worthy*: would be well worth
14 *to set worldly business aside*: setting worldly activity aside for
16 *of*: about // *move*: bring up to
17 *words . . . come*: i.e., spoken statements as are related by people who come here
17 *thence*: there (i.e., London) 18 *lewdly*: evilly // *hither*: to here
19 *honest*: upstanding 23 *may not*: cannot 26 *troth*: trustworthiness
26 *secretness*: discretion 27 *mislike*: displease
29 *more than meanly learned*: more learned than the average person
30 *be wont well to be content*: are likely to be very happy
30–31 *very merry wit*: great sense of humor 31 *of*: by // *nothing*: not at all
32 *bold*: frank // *straining of*: i.e., holding back out of
33 *whereof*: on account of which (concern for politeness) // *ceremonies*: rituals
33 *disputation*: formal debate // *marreth*: ruin // *matter*: content 34 *while*: when

thinketh, but also what him list—giving no foot in disputing
unto your authority... but if he be borne back with reason. Thus
may ye see I am bold on your goodness... to put you to labor and
business... and send one to face you in your own house! But so
5 much am I bolder... for that in such challenges I know you for a ready
and sure defender. And of such labor your wisdom well seeth...
that God is the rewarder; who long preserve you and all yours!

The Letter of the Author Sent with the Book

10 **R**ight worshipful sir [after most hearty recommendation], albeit
that of late I sent you my poor mind by the mouth of your trusty
friend... to whom ye desired me, by your letters, to give no less
credence than to yourself, concerning all such things as he
broke of and communed with me in your behalf; and that (for the
confidence that ye have in him, the wit and learning that I
15 found in him, and honesty that I so much the more think him
to be of... in that I perceive you, being of such wisdom and
virtue, to have him in so special trust) I neither do nor can
believe the contrary but that he hath of all our communication
made you faithfully plain and full report: yet, since I suppose in
20 myself that if we had might conveniently come together, ye
would rather have chosen to have heard my mind of mine own
mouth than by the means of another, I have since, in these few
days in which I have been at home, put the matter in writing, to
the end ye may not only hear it by the mouth of your friend,
25 but also (which better is than suddenly once to hear it of mine
own mouth) read it (if ye list) more often, at your best leisure,
advisedly, from mine own pen. Which thing I verily thought myself
so much the more bound to do... for that it liked you, of your
special favor and affection toward me, so greatly to regard and
30 esteem my mind and answer in those matters... that no rumor
there running, or tales in your country told, or letters thither written,
nor reasons or arguments there made to the contrary, should let or
withstand but that ye would (as ye wrote) take that thing for
undoubted truth that I should (by your friend) ascertain you.

1 *what him list*: whatever he wants to 2 *but if*: unless 3 *am bold*: presume
4 *one*: someone // *face*: confront 9 *recommendation*: greetings
11 *desired*: asked 13 *broke . . . in*: disclosed to me, and talked with me about, on
14 *wit*: intelligence 15 *honesty*: honorableness 18 *communication*: conversation
20 *we . . . together*: you and I could have conveniently gotten together
25 *suddenly*: extemporaneously 26 *list*: want to 27 *advisedly*: reflectively
28 *liked*: pleased 31 *thither*: to there 32 *reasons*: reasonings // *let*: hinder
34 *ascertain you*: assure you of

And surely, sir, in this point ye may make yourself sure: that I shall never willingly deceive your trust. And lest I might hap to do it of oversight, unawares; albeit I nothing said unto your friend by mouth but that I was right well informed of the truth: yet, forasmuch
 5 as I perceived by him that some folk doubted lest many things were laid to the charge... not only of that man ye wrote of, but also of Luther himself... otherwise than could be proved, I did so much therein that I was suffered to see and show him as well the books of the one... as the very acts of the court concerning the
 10 other—that we might both, by so much, the more surely warrant you the truth. Wherein if ye find any man that yet doubteth whether he told you, and I write you, the truth or not: I shall, if he understand the Latin tongue, find the means at your pleasure... that he shall so see the books himself... that were he never so full of mistrusting, he shall not fail to be fully content and satisfied. And
 15 this warranty will I make you as far forth as concerneth any act done here. But as for things reasoned and disputed between us—the conclusions self be so sure truths that they be not disputable. But whether the *reasons* by me made in them be effectual or insufficient—albeit your friend, either for that of truth he thought so or for
 20 that of courtesy he said so, accepted them for good—yet without prejudice of the principal matters, ye may yourself be judge. And thus I pray you take in good worth the little labor and great good will of him... whom in anything that may do you pleasure... ye
 25 may to the uttermost of his little power well and boldly command. And thus our Lord send you, with my good lady your bedfellow and all yours, as heartily well to fare as you would all wish.

Your friend first after your letter read, when I demanded him his credence, showed me that ye had sent him to me not
 30 for any doubt that yourself had in many of those things that he should move unto me, but for the doubt that ye perceived in many others—and in some folk plain persuasion to the contrary... whom ye would be glad to answer with the truth—albeit some things, he said, were also there so talked... that ye wist not well yourself

1 *in*: of // *may make yourself sure*: can rest assured 2 *willingly*: deliberately
 2 *deceive*: betray 5 *doubted lest*: suspected that 8 *suffered*: allowed
 18 *self*: themselves // *sure*: certain 19 *reasons*: reasonings
 21 *good*: valid 23 *in good worth*: for what it is worth
 28 *demand*: asked of 29 *credence*: letter of introduction // *showed*: told
 30 *in*: with regard to 31 *move unto me*: bring up to me for discussion
 34 *wist not well*: did not really know

which part ye might believe. For it was there not only
 spoken, but also thither written by divers honest priests out of
 London, that the man ye write of was of many things borne
 wrong in hand, and therein so sore handled that he was forced to
 5 forswear and abjure certain heresies—and openly put to penance
 therefor—where he never held any such. And all this done for
 malice and envy... partly of some friars (against whose abusions
 he preached), partly for that he preached boldly against the pomp
 and pride and other inordinate living (that more men speak of than
 10 preach of) used in the clergy. And they take for a great token
 that he should not mean evil... the proof and experience which
 men have had of him... that he lived well, and was a good, honest,
 virtuous man—far from ambition and desire of worldly
 worship, chaste, humble, and charitable, free and liberal in
 15 almsdeed—and a very good preacher... in whose devout
 sermons the people were greatly edified. And therefore the people
 say that all this gear is done but only to stop men's mouths
 and to put every man to silence that would anything speak of the
 faults of the clergy. And they think that for none other cause
 20 was also burned, at Paul's Cross, the New Testament lately translated
 in English by Master William Hutchins, otherwise called
 Master Tyndale, who was (as men say) well known ere he went
 over the sea... for a man of right good living... studious and well
 learned in Scripture... and in divers places in England was very well
 25 liked and did great good with preaching. And men mutter among
 themselves that the Book was not only faultless, but also very well translated...
 and was devised to be burned because men should not be
 able to prove that such faults as were at Paul's Cross declared to
 have been found in it were never found there in deed, but untruly
 30 surmised. And yet such as they were (some men say) were no
 faults at all if they had been so translated indeed, but blame
 laid and fault found with things nothing blameworthy... only
 to deface and infame that holy work, to the end that they might
 seem to have some meet cause to burn it.

1 *part*: side // *might*: should 2 *thither*: to there 2, 12 *honest*: honorable; upstanding
 3–4 *borne wrong in hand*: falsely accused // 4 *sore handled*: badly treated
 5 *openly*: publicly 6 *therefor*: for them 7 *abusions*: corrupt practices
 9 *inordinate living*: out-of-line behavior 9, 10 *of*: about 10 *used in*: engaged in by
 10 *token*: indication 11 *evil*: ill // *proof*: personal knowledge
 12 *well*: in a good manner 14 *worship*: prestige // *liberal*: generous
 15 *almsdeed*: almsgiving 17 *gear*: stuff // *stop men's mouths*: shut people up
 19 *faults*: misdeeds
 20, 28 *Paul's Cross*: the outdoor pulpit at Old St. Paul's Cathedral, in London
 20 *lately*: recently 21 *in*: into 22 *as men say*: according to what people say
 23 *over the sea*: overseas // *living*: personal conduct 26 *faultless*: free of error
 26 *well*: rightly 27 *because*: so that 28, 31 *faults*: errors
 29 *in deed*: in reality 29–30 *untruly surmised*: falsely alleged
 30 *were no*: would have been no 32 *nothing*: in no way 33 *deface*: discredit
 33 *infame*: bring into infamy 34 *meet*: just

And that for none other intent but for to keep out of the
 people's hands all knowledge of Christ's Gospel, and of God's
 law, except so much only as the clergy themselves list now
 and then to tell us. And that—little as it is, and seldom showed—yet, as
 5 it is feared, not well and truly told, but watered with false glosses,
 and altered from the truth of the very words and sentence of Scripture,
 only for the maintenance of their authority.

And the fear lest this thing should evidently appear to the
 people if they were suffered to read the Scripture themselves in
 10 their own tongue... was (as it is thought) the very cause not only for
 which the New Testament translated by Tyndale was burned... but
 also that the clergy of this realm hath before this time, by a constitution
 provincial, prohibited any book of Scripture to be
 translated into the English tongue, fearing men with fire as heretics,
 15 whoso should presume to keep them—as though it were
 heresy for a Christian man to read Christ's Gospel.

“And surely, sir,” quoth he, “some folk that think this dealing of the
 clergy to be thus (and good men to be mishandled for declaring
 the truth, and the Scripture itself to be pulled out of the people's
 20 hands... lest they should perceive the truth) be led in their
 minds to doubt whether Luther himself—of whose opinions
 (or, at the least, of whose works) all these businesses began—wrote indeed
 so evil as he is borne in hand. And many men there be that
 think he never meant such things; but that because he wrote
 25 against the abusions of pardons... and spoke somewhat liberally
 against the court of Rome... and generally against the vices of the
 clergy—therefore he was brought in hatred... and first cited to
 Rome. And when that, for fear of bodily harm with wrong
 (whereof it would have been too late to look for remedy after... if he had
 30 once been burned up before), he durst not come thither—then was he
 accursed, and his books damned... and, under great pains, forbidden
 to be read. And that thing done because it should not be
 known what wrong he had... and that he neither meaneth nor saith
 such odious and abominable heresies as the people be borne

3 *list*: care 4 *showed*: stated 5 *well and truly*: good and accurately

5 *watered*: diluted 6 *very*: actual // *sentence*: meaning 9 *suffered*: allowed

10 *very cause*: real reason

12–13 *constitution provincial*: decree made by the bishops of the province

14 *fearing men with fire*: threatening to burn people 15 *whoso*: whoever

22 *businesses*: commotions 23 *evil*: ill

23 *borne in hand*: accused of (having done)

25 *abusions of*: wrongdoings concerning

25 *pardons*: (services held for the granting of) indulgences // *liberally*: freely

27 *brought in hatred*: made hated // *cited*: summoned 28 *with wrong*: unjustly inflicted

30 *come thither*: go there (i.e., to Rome) 31 *accursed*: excommunicated

31 *damned*: condemned // *under great pains*: on pain of severe penalties

32 *because*: so that 33 *had*: i.e., had been done

29/34—30/1 *borne in hand*: led to believe (he does)

in hand to induce them to hatred of him—as it would peradventure appear if his books were suffered to be read.

“And they say that it were no mastery to make it seem that a man should be a heretic... if he may be borne in hand that he saith the thing . . . —which he never said; or peradventure one line taken out among many, and misconstrued, not suffering the remnant to be seen, whereby it might more clearly appear what he meaneth. By which manner of dealing, a man, they say, might lay heresy to Saint Paul, and find a fault in Saint John’s Gospel.

“And yet, they say, the worst of all is this: that the clergy cease not hereby, nor hold themselves content with the condemning of Luther, and forbidding of his books, but further abuse the hatred of his name against every man that is, in preaching of the word of God, anything such as should be; that is to wit, plain and bold, without gloss or flattering. Where if they find a man faulty—let them lay his fault to *his* charge. What needeth to call him a ‘Lutheran’? Though Luther were a devil, yet might a man percase say as he saith in *something*... and say true enough. For never was there heretic that said *all* false. Nor the devil himself lied not... when he called Christ God’s Son. And therefore men think that this name of ‘a Lutheran’ serveth the

Mk 3:11 clergy for a common cloak of a false crime; that where they lack special

matter to charge one with by judgment, they labor to bring him first in the infamy of that name, that compriseth (as they make it seem) a confused heap of heresies, no man can tell what.

“And yet in such dealing they wound their own matter another way. For while they defame for ‘Lutherans’ men that be of known virtue and cunning, what do they thereby but one of the twain—either cause the people (that have, for good living and learning, those men in great reputation) to think that the clergy for malice and envy doth untruly defame them... or else that Luther’s doctrine is good, while so cunning men, and good men, lean thereto.

“And therefore it were wisdom... not to call them ‘Lutherans,’ but rather, when they teach and hold any such opinions as the people know for Luther’s, let it either be dissembled... or they secretly, by fair ways, induced to the contrary, if the points that they teach of

1–2 *as it would peradventure appear*: as would perhaps become obvious

2 *suffered*: allowed 3 *were no mastery*: would take no genius

4–5 *may . . . which*: can be made to appear to say the thing “Such and such”—which

6 *remnant*: rest 8–9 *lay heresy to Saint Paul*: accuse Saint Paul of heresy

9 *fault*: error 10–11 *cease not hereby*: do not stop here 12 *abuse*: wrongly use

16–17 *what needeth*: what need is there 17 *though*: even if

18 *percase*: perchance 24 *by judgment*: in a trial 26 *confused*: jumbled

27 *wound their own matter*: hurt their own case 28, 33 *while*: when

29 *cunning*: learning // *the twain*: these two things 32 *untruly*: untruthfully

33 *so*: such // *cunning*: learned // *lean thereto*: subscribe to it

34 *were wisdom*: would be wise 36 *dissembled*: ignored

36 *secretly*: privately 37 *fair*: nice

his be naught. Lest by calling good and cunning men ‘Lutherans,’
 they may peradventure bring themselves in suspicion of malice and
 envy... and Luther among the people into good opinion;
 thinking, as they begin to do already, that either Luther said not
 5 as evil as is surmised upon him... or else that those things that he
 saith, as odious as they seem, be good enough in deed.”

He said also that it seemed unto many men a sore thing, and far unreasonable,
 that “poor simple and unlearned men—although they fell
 into errors, and were led out of the right way, by that they leaned to
 10 the authority of such men as they believed to be *virtuous* and *cunning*—
 should instead of teaching... be beaten cruelly, with abjurations and open
 shame... with peril of burning, also, if a few false witnesses shall
 after such abjuration depose that they have heard him fall in
 relapse.”

15 Finally he said that many “good and well-learned” men thought
 plainly “that the clergy seemeth far out of all good order of
 charity, and that they do contrary to the mildness and merciful
 mind of their Master, and against the example of all the old
 holy fathers, in that they cause for any error or wrong opinion in
 20 the faith... any one man or other to be put to death.

“For they say that the old holy fathers used only to *dispute*
 with heretics, teaching them, and convicting them, by
 Scripture... and not by fagots. And that by that way... the
 faith went well toward, and one heretic so turned did turn
 25 many others; whereas now, men abhor this cruelty in the
 Church... and they that *seem* turned think still the things

Of the ashes of one heretic that they dare not say... and of the ashes of
springeth up many. one heretic springeth up many. And
 that now we make the fashion of Christendom

30 to seem all turned quite upside down. For whereas Christ made
 infidels the persecutors... and his Christian people the sufferers, *we* make
 the *Christian* men the persecutors... and the *infidels* the sufferers—
 whereby men think that secretly Christ’s order yet standeth still,
 though it be not so taken and so perceived. For the *people* take it
 35 that still those that persecute be the miscreants... and those poor

1 *naught*: bad 1, 10 *cunning*: learned 5 *evil*: ill // *surmised upon*: alleged of
 6 *good enough in deed*: actually plenty valid 7 *sore*: terrible // *far*: extremely
 9 *by that they leaned*: through their subscribing 11, 13 *abjuration(s)*: (forced) recanting(s)
 11 *open*: public 18–19, 21 *old holy fathers*: early fathers of the Church
 23 *fagots*: bundles of sticks, that convicted heretics were made to carry
 24 *toward*: ahead 33 *secretly*: in a hidden way 35 *miscreants*: misbelievers

people that suffer it be (under the false name of ‘heretics’) the true-believing men—and very Christian martyrs.

“Christ also, they say, would never have any man compelled by force and violence to believe upon his faith; nor would that men should fight for him or his matters. In so far forth that he would not suffer Saint Peter to fight for his own self... but reproved him for

Mt 26:51–54; Jn 18:10 striking Malchus. Nor would not defend himself; but, healing the ear again of

Malchus his persecutor... which Peter had smitten off, and giving all his holy body to the patient sufferance of all the painful torments that his cruel enemies would put to it, showed us, as well by his effectual example of his death as by his godly counsel in his life—and after that, confirmed by the continual passion and martyrdoms of his holy martyrs—that his will and pleasure is that we should not so much as *defend* ourselves against heretics and infidels, were they pagans, Turks, or Saracens. And much less, then, should we *fight* against them and *kill* them; but that we should persevere in setting forth his faith against miscreants and infidels... by such ways as himself began it; keep it, and increase it, as it

By patience and sufferance was gotten. And that was by patience and *the faith was divulgated.* sufferance—by which the faith was divulgated and spread almost through the world in little while. Not by war and fighting—which way hath (as they say) well near already lost all... that the other way won.”

When your friend had thus declared his credence, he desired me, both on your behalf and on his own, in such things as were percase not well said... to take them as they were indeed: the mind of *others*, whom ye would fain answer, and satisfy, with reason—which ye trusted to be the better able to do by mine answer—and neither the mind and opinion of you nor him, which did and would in allthing “stand and abide” by the faith and belief of Christ’s Catholic Church. But as for such parts of this matter as concerned “not any part of our belief,” but the “dealing of this world”—as the justice or injustice of “some spiritual persons” in the “pursuing and condemning men for heretics, or their works for heresies”—he thought, he said, as of himself, that men might “without any peril of heresy,” for “their own part,” notwithstanding

2 *true-believing*: right-believing // *very*: actual 4 *upon*: in 5 *matters*: causes
 5 *suffer*: allow 6 *his*: i.e., Christ’s 12 *effectual*: powerful
 18 *miscreants*: misbelievers 19 *keep*: maintain 21 *sufferance*: tolerance
 22 *divulgated*: taken abroad 24 *as they say*: according to these people; say these people
 25 *declared his credence*: made his introduction // *desired*: asked
 27 *percase*: perchance 28 *would fain*: would like to 31 *allthing*: everything
 34 *as*: such as 34–35 *spiritual persons*: members of the clergy

“any man’s judgment given,” yet well and reasonably
 doubt therein. For though he “thought it heresy” to think the
 opinions of any man to be good and Catholic which be
 “heresies indeed,” yet might a man, he thought, “without any peril of
 5 heresy” doubt whether he were a heretic or no... that were “by
 man’s judgment” condemned for one, since it might well happen
 that he never held those opinions that were “put upon him,” but
 that he was either by “false depositions of wrongful witnesses” or
 by “the error or malice of unjust judges” condemned. And that
 10 sometimes, percase, the “ignorance” of some judges would condemn
 for heresy such articles as “wiser and better-learned” would in point
 of judgment allow for good and Catholic... and of the other
 judgment discern and judge the contrary.

Howbeit, he said that ye had in me and my “learning” so
 15 special “trust and confidence”... that in any of all these things, whatsoever
 ye had heard, or should hear, elsewhere, ye were fully
 determined to give “full credence” to me... and take for the truth
 “such answer” as he should bring you from me; wherein ye “right
 heartily desired” me to “take some pain,” that ye might in “these
 20 matters” by his mouth know my mind “at large.”

After this, ere I made any answer to his words, I demanded him
 what manner acquaintance was between him and you. And thereupon
 perceiving him to have your sons at school... inquiring
 further of him to what faculty he had most given his study, I
 25 understood him to have given diligence to the Latin tongue. As
 for other faculties, he rought not of. For he told me merrily that
 logic he reckoned but “babbling”; music, to “serve for singers”;
 “arithmetic meet for merchants, geometry for masons...
 astronomy good for no man.” And as for philosophy: “the most
 30 vanity of all.” And that it and logic had lost “all good divinity”
 with the “subtleties of their questions” and “babbling of their dispicions”—
 building all upon *reason*, which “rather giveth
 blindness than any light.” For man, he said, “hath no light but
 of Holy Scripture.” And therefore he said that besides the Latin tongue,
 35 he had been (which I much commend) studious in Holy Scripture;
 which was, he said, “learning enough for a Christian man; with

1 *well and*: quite 3, 7 *opinions*: contentions; views 21 *demanded*: asked

24 *faculty*: discipline; branch of knowledge

26 *rought not of*: had no interest in (them) 28 *meet*: suitable

30 *lost*: destroyed // *divinity*: theology 31 *dispicions*: disputations

which the apostles held themselves content.” And therein, he said,
 he labored not only to can many texts thereof by heart, but also
 to ensearch the sentence and understanding thereof... as far as he
 might perceive by himself. For as for interpreters, he told me
 5 that neither his time would well serve him to read... and also he
 found “so great sweetness in the text itself” that he could not
 find in his heart to “lose any time” in the glosses. And as touching
 any difficulty, he said that he found by experience that the best
 10 *The surest interpretation of Scripture* and surest interpretation was to lay and
 confer one text with another, “which
 fail not among them well and sufficiently
 to declare themselves.” And this way he said that he used,
 which he found sufficient and surest... “for so should it most surely
 tarry, when it were found out and learned by a man’s own labor.”
 15 And that he said every man was able enough to do “with help of
 God, which never faileth them that faithfully trust in his promise;
Mt 7:7–8 and he hath promised that if we seek, we
 shall find, and if we knock, we shall
 have it opened to us. And what shall be opened but that book which,
 20 *Rv 3:7; 5:1–7* as Saint John saith in the Apocalypse, is so
 shut, with ‘seven clasps,’ that it cannot be
 opened but by the Lamb—that when he shutteth, then can no man
 open it, and when he openeth it, then can no man shut it!”
 Upon these words and other like... when I considered that your
 25 friend was studious of Scripture—and although I now have a very
 good opinion of him, nor at that time had not all the contrary—yet,
 to be plain with you and him both, by reason that he set the
 matter so well and lustily forward... he put me somewhat in doubt
 whether he were (as young scholars be sometimes prone to new
 30 fantasies) fallen into Luther’s sect; and that ye, peradventure, somewhat
 fearing the same, did of good mind the rather send him to
 me... with such a message... for that ye trusted *he* should be somewhat
 answered and satisfied by me. I therefore thought it not meet, in so
 many matters and weighty, to make him an unadvised answer; but,
 35 with good words welcoming him for the time, pretending lack of
 leisure for other present business, required him to return on the

2 *can*: learn 3 *sentence*: meaning // *understanding*: i.e., right understanding
 4 *might*: could 7 *as touching*: as regards 9 *lay*: put 10 *confer*: compare
 11 *well and*: quite 12 *declare themselves*: make themselves clear
 14 *tarry*: stick with one 15 *of*: from 16 *which*: who
 28 *well and*: good and; very // *lustily*: energetically 30 *fantasies*: wild notions
 33 *meet*: advisable; a good idea 34 *unadvised*: unpremeditated; extemporaneous
 35 *pretending*: claiming (a) 36 *leisure*: free time // *for*: on account of
 36 *required*: asked

morrow—against which time I would so order mine affairs that we would have conference together... of all his errand at length. And he in this wise being departed... I began to gather in mind the whole effect, as my remembrance would serve me, of all that he had purposed. And because I would have it the more ready at mine eye, so that I might the more fully and effectually answer it, leaving no part untouched: in such order as he had purposed it (that is to wit, after the manner that I have above rehearsed), I briefly committed it to writing.

10 *The Second Chapter*

Here summarily is declared what order the author intendeth to treat of the matters purposed unto him. Whereof because the first was an opinion conceived in some men's heads that a certain person lately abjured of heresy for preaching against pilgrimages and images and prayers made to saints was therein greatly wronged, the author briefly declareth his mind concerning the confutation of those perilous and pernicious opinions.

On the morrow, when he was come again (somewhat before seven of the clock; for so I appointed him), taking him with me into my study—and my servants warned that if any others should happen to desire to speak with me (certain except, of whom I gave them knowledge), they should defer them till another leisure—I set him down with me, at a little table. And then I showed unto him that whereas he had purposed, on your behalf, in short words... many long things... whereof the rehearsal were loss of time, to him that so well knew them already: I would, all superfluous recapitulation set apart, as briefly as I conveniently could... show him my mind in them all. And first begin where he began: at the abjuration of the man he spoke of. Secondly would I touch the condemnation and burning of the New Testament... translated by Tyndale. Thirdly, somewhat would I speak of Luther and his sect

1 *against*: in anticipation of 2 *errand*: relayed message 4 *effect*: gist
 5, 7, etc. *purposed*: put forward for consideration 5 *because*: so that
 7 *untouched*: not discussed 8 *rehearsed*: related 14 *lately*: recently
 14 *abjured of heresy*: made to renounce his heresies under oath
 17 *declareth his mind*: explains his thinking 21 *warned*: notified
 22 *certain except*: except certain individuals 23 *leisure*: (span of) free time
 24 *showed*: said 25 *whereas*: given that // *words*: statements
 26 *rehearsal*: enumeration // *were loss*: would be a waste
 28 *conveniently*: appropriately // *show*: tell 29 *at*: with 30 *touch*: discuss
 32 *somewhat would I speak of*: I would say something about

in general. Fourthly and finally, the thing that he touched last: that is to wit, the war and fighting against infidels, with the condemnation of heretics unto death; which two points himself had combined and knit together.

- 5 And first, as touching the matter of the man's abjuration,
 "Whereas it is reported that the spirituality did him wrong; and
 for to make that seem likely, there is laid in them displeasure,
 malice, and envy toward him... for preaching (as ye say)," quoth I,
 10 "against their vicious living; and in him is, on the other side,
 alleged much cunning, virtue, and goodness: I will neither enter
 into the praise of them nor into the dispraise of him; wherein
 standeth nothing the effect of this matter. For if there did, I would
 not pass over some part thereof so shortly.
- "But, now, for this matter—although the whole spirituality (wherein
 15 no man doubteth to be many a right virtuous and godly man) were
 in their living far worse than devils, yet if they did *that* man
 no wrong, there hath for *this* matter no man against them any
 cause to complain. And, over this, if that man were in all his *other*
 20 living as innocent as a saint—yet if he were infected and faulty in
 these *heresies*, he had, then, in *this* matter no wrong. And yet besides
 all this, if he not only were in all other things very virtuous, but
 also were in all these heresies whereof he was detected... utterly clean
 and faultless: yet if it were by sufficient witness (were they never
 so false in deed... seeming honest and likely to say true) proved in
 25 open court that he was faulty therein—albeit in such case his
witnesses had wronged him, yet had his *judges* done him but right.
 And therefore letting pass, as I say, the praise or dispraise of
 either his judges or him... as things impertinent to the point: I
 will show you that they not only did him no wrong, but also
 30 showed him, in my mind, the greatest favor, and used toward
 him the most charitable mercy, that ever I wist used to any man in
 such case.
- "And first, as for any wrong that his judges did him... I marvel me
 much wherein they that report it could assign it. For if any were
 35 done him, it must needs have been in one of the two things: either
 in that *he* was untruly judged... to have *preached* such articles as he

1 *touched*: mentioned 5 *as touching*: as regards 6, 14 *spirituality*: clergy 7 *laid*: alleged
 8 *envy*: hostility; enmity // *as ye say*: you say; according to you // *quoth*: said
 9 *vicious*: immoral 9, 16, 19 *living*: personal conduct 10 *cunning*: learning
 19 *infected and faulty in*: infected with and guilty of 20 *had*: was done
 22 *detected*: accused 23 *faultless*: innocent 24 *false*: dishonest // *deed*: actuality
 24 *say true*: tell the truth 25 *faulty*: guilty 28 *impertinent to*: irrelevant to; beside
 30, 31 *used*: exercised 31 *wist*: knew // *to*: toward
 33–34 *marvel me much*: very much wonder 34 *assign*: pinpoint
 35 *the*: i.e., these 36 *untruly*: wrongfully

was detected of, whereas he preached none such in deed; or else in that some such *articles* as he preached... were judged and condemned for *heresies*, whereas they were none in deed. Except that any man would say that though he were proved and convicted of heresy, yet
 5 he should have been put to no penance at all... or else to no such as he was. And of that point if any man so think... I shall speak in the Fourth Part, where we shall touch in general the order that the Church taketh in the condemnation of heretics. But as for the other points: first, if any priest wrote out of London into your
 10 country... that any such article of his *preaching* was by his judges declared for heresy... as were in deed good and not against the faith of Christ's church, let him name what article. And either ye shall find that he shall name you such as the man was not charged with... or else shall ye find that such as he shall name you were
 15 such indeed as yourself shall perceive for heresies at your ear.
Three manifest heresies For the articles wherewith he was charged... were that we should do no worship to any images... nor pray to any saints... or go on pilgrimages; which things I suppose every good Christian man
 20 will agree for heresies. And therefore we shall let that point pass, and so resort to the second... to see whether it were well proved that he preached them or no.”
 “Sir,” quoth your friend, “I would for my part well agree them for heresies, but yet have I heard some ere this that would not do so. And
 25 therefore, when we call them heresies, it were well done to tell why, since some men would, I ween, if they might be heard, stiffly say nay... which now hold their peace, and bear themselves full coldly, that would take the matter more hot... save for burning of their lips.”
 30 “Now, forsooth,” quoth I, “whosoever will say that these be no heresies—he shall not have me to *dispute* it, which have no
What becometh a layman cunning in such matters, but (as it best becometh a layman to do in *all* things) lean and cleave to the common faith and belief of Christ's church.
 35 And thereby do I plainly know it for a heresy... if a heresy be a sect and a side way taken, by any party of such as be baptized

1 *detected*: accused 1, 3, 11 *deed*: fact 4 *though*: even if // *proved*: tried (for)
 7 *touch*: discuss // *order*: procedure 10 *country*: part of the country
 11 *good*: valid 15 *yourself*: you yourself // *at your ear*: as soon as you hear them
 18 *worship*: reverence 21 *resort*: go on
 25 *were well done*: would be a good thing to do 26 *ween*: believe
 26 *might*: i.e., could with safety 27 *full coldly*: very coolly
 28 *take the matter more hot*: get more heated on the subject
 31 *dispute*: debate // *which*: who 32 *cunning*: expertise
 34 *lean*: side with; go by 36 *sect*: heterodoxy // *side way*: detour

- and bear the name of Christian men, from the common faith and belief of the whole Church beside. For this am I very sure and perceive it well—not only by experience of mine own time... and the places where myself hath been, with common report of other honest men... from all other places of Christendom, but by books also, and remembrances, left of long time, with writing of the old holy fathers... and now saints in heaven—that from the apostles' time hitherto, this manner hath been used, taught, and allowed... and the contrary commonly condemned... through the whole flock of all good Christian people.
- “And as touching such texts as these heretics allege against the worshipping of images, praying to saints, and going on pilgrimages—as they lay the law given to the Jews, ‘Non facies tibi sculptile’ (‘Thou shalt carve thee none image’), and the psalm ‘In exitu Israel de Aegypto,’ and ‘Soli Deo honor et gloria’ (‘Only to God be honor and glory’), and ‘Maledictus qui confidit in homine’ (‘Accursed is he that putteth his trust in man’), with many such other like... which heretics have of old ever barked against Christ’s Catholic Church—very sure am I that Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Saint Basil, Saint Gregory, with so many a godly cunning man as hath been in Christ’s church from the beginning hitherto, understood those texts as well as did those heretics. Namely having as good wits; being far better learned; using in study more diligence; being a heap to a handful; and (which most is of all) having (as God by many miracles beareth witness) besides their learning... the light and clearness of his especial grace... by which they were inwardly taught of his only Spirit... to perceive that the words spoken in the Old Law to the Jewish people, prone to idolatry—and yet not to all them, neither, for the priests then... had the images of the angel cherubim in the secret place of the Temple—should have no place to forbid images among his Christian flock, where his pleasure would be to have the image of his blessed body hanging on his holy cross... had in honor and reverent remembrance; where he would vouchsafe to

2 *whole Church beside*: whole rest of the Church // *this*: i.e., of this

4 *honest*: reputable 6–7 *old holy fathers*: early fathers of the Church

8 *allowed*: approved of 9 *commonly*: universally 11 *as touching*: as regards

11 *allege*: cite 12 *worshipping*: venerating 13 *lay*: adduce; bring forward

15–16 “*In exitu Israel de Aegypto*”: “When Israel went forth from Egypt.”

23 *cunning*: learned 25 *namely*: especially // *wits*: intellects

28 *clearness*: clarity 29 *of*: by

- King Abgar* send unto the king Abgar the image
The vernicle of his own face; where he liked to leave
the holy vernicle, the express image also
of his blessed visage, as a token to remain in honor among
5 such as loved him... from the time of his bitter Passion hitherto.
Which as it was by the miracle of his blessed, holy hand expressed and
left in the sudarium: so hath it been, by like miracle, in that thin, corruptible
cloth... kept and preserved uncorrupted this fifteen hundred years,
fresh and well perceived, to the inward comfort, spiritual
10 rejoicing, and great increase of fervor and devotion in the hearts of
good Christian people. Christ also taught his holy evangelist Saint
Luke... to have another manner mind toward images... than have
these heretics, when he put in his mind to counterfeit and
express in a table... the lovely visage of our blessed Lady, his Mother.
15 *St. Amphibalus* He taught also Saint Amphibalus, the
master and teacher of the holy first martyr
of England, Saint Alban, to bear about and worship the crucifix.
St. Alban Who showed also Saint Alban, himself,
in a vision, the image of the Crucifix,
20 but God?—which thing wrought in that holy man so strongly... that
he, with few words of Saint Amphibalus, at the sight of that
blessed image (which our Lord had before showed him in his sleep)
was clean turned to Christendom. And in the worshipping of
the same image... was taken and brought forth to judgment, and
25 afterward to martyrdom.
“I would also fain wit... whether these heretics will be
content that the blessed name of Jesus be had in honor and
reverence, or not. If not—then need we no more to show what
wretches they be, which dare despise that holy name that the
30 devil trembleth to hear of. And on the other side, if they agree
The name of Jesus that the name of Jesus *is* to be revered
Jas 2:19; Phil 2:9–11 and had in honor: then, since that name
of ‘Jesus’ is nothing else but a *word*... which,
by writing or by voice, *representeth* unto the hearer the person of our
35 Savior Christ, fain would I wit of those heretics—if they

2 *liked*: was pleased 3 *vernicle*: the handkerchief with which Saint Veronica wiped Jesus’ face
6 *expressed*: imprinted 7 *sudarium*: vernicle (See above.)
9 *comfort*: encouragement 13 *counterfeit*: portray 14 *table*: painting
17 *bear*: carry // *worship*: venerate 19 *the Crucifix*: Christ on the cross
20 *wrought*: worked 21 *words of*: words from 23 *clean*: completely
23 *turned*: converted // *Christendom*: Christianity // *worshipping*: venerating
24 *judgment*: trial 26 *fain wit*: like to know 27, 32 *had*: held
29 *despise*: slight; make little of 35 *fain would I wit of*: I would like to know from

give honor to the *name* of our Lord... which name is but an image representing his person to man's mind and imagination—why and with what reason can they despise a *figure* of him, carved or painted, which representeth him and his acts... far more plainly and more expressly?"

"Sir," quoth he, "as touching the cost done upon the ark and the Temple and the priests' apparel by the commandment of God, there is a proper book, and a very contemplative—written in English, and entitled *The Image of Love*—which was made, as it seemeth, by some very virtuous man, contemplative and well learned. In which book that reason of yours is not only well answered... but also turned again against you. For therein that good, holy man layeth sore against these carved and painted images, giving them little praise, and specially least commending such as be most costly, curiously, and most workmanly wrought. And he showeth full well that

Images laymen's books images be but laymen's books; and
therefore that religious men and folk of more perfect life, and more instructed in spiritual wisdom, should let all such dead images pass, and labor only for the lively, quick image of love and charity. And very sore he speaketh there against all these costly ornaments of the church—whereof the money were (as he saith) better bestowed upon poor folk. And he showeth that the saints and holy doctors of old time would suffer no such superfluity in the paraments of the church, but only see that they were clean and pure... and not costly. And therefore he saith that in their time they had treen chalices and golden priests... and now have we golden chalices and treen priests!"

"Surely," quoth I, "that book have I seen; whereof who was the maker, I know not. But the man might peradventure mean well and run up so high in his contemplation spiritual... that while he thought he sat in God Almighty's bosom up on high in heaven... he contemned and set at naught all earthly things, and all temporal service done to God here beneath among poor seely men in earth. And verily, of his intent and purpose I will not much meddle. For a right good man may hap at a time, in a fervent indiscreet, to say something, and write it, too, which when he considereth after more advisedly, he would be very fain to change. But this dare I be bold to say: that his words go somewhat further than he is able to defend. For I doubt it not but that in the days of those holy saints...

3 *despise*: disdain 8 *proper*: fine; excellent // *contemplative*: thought-provoking
 9 *made*: written 11 *reason*: argument 12 *again*: back
 12 *layeth sore*: comes down hard 14 *curiously*: elaborately 15 *workmanly*: skillfully
 19 *dead*: inanimate // *lively*: dynamic 20 *quick*: live // *sore*: strongly
 21 *ornaments*: furnishings 22 *were*: would be // *as he saith*: according to him
 22 *bestowed*: spent // *showeth*: points out 23 *holy doctors*: theologians
 24 *superfluity*: extravagance // *paraments*: decorations
 25 *pure*: free of defect 26, 27 *treen*: wooden 28 *surely*: assuredly // *maker*: author
 31 *contemned*: scorned 32 *set at naught*: placed no value on // *service*: public worship
 33 *beneath*: below // *seely*: pitiful // *in*: on // *of*: with 34 *meddle*: concern myself
 35 *a fervent indiscreet*: A humorous illustration of such a mistake (two adjectives, no noun).
 37 *advisedly*: carefully // *be very fain*: very much like to 37–38 *be bold*: venture

ornaments in churches of Christ were not only pure and clean, but also very costly. And it might well be—and so have I read that it hath been in some great dearth of corn and famine of people—that some good, holy bishops have relieved poor people with the sale of some of

5 *Note* the vessels and plate of the church. But I suppose he shall never find (except in some such great, urgent cause chancing upon some occasion) that ever those holy men refused to have God served in his churches with the best and most precious of such metals as his goodness

10 giveth unto man; of which it is very right and good reason that man
 Gn 4:2–7; 1 Jn 3:12 serve him with the best... and not do as Cain did—keep all that aught is for himself... and serve his Master and his Maker with the worst. And, because he nameth Saint Ambrose... I ween there will no man

15 doubt of the emperor Theodosius, a man so devout unto God as he was, that he would be served himself in cups of gold... and suffer his and our Savior Christ in the church of Milan, where himself resorted and Saint Ambrose was bishop, to be served in chalices of tree. Nor, verily, I can scant believe that any

20 Christian people... all were they *very* poor... would at this day suffer the Precious Blood of our Lord to be consecrated and received in *tree*—where it should cleave to the chalice and sink in, and not be clean received out by the priest. But that word I ween he set in for the pleasure that he had in that proper comparison between treen

25 chalices and golden priests of old... and now golden chalices and treen priests. But of truth, I think he saith truth—that the chalices *were* made of treen when the priests were made of gold—and shall find that then were, of old time, many more chalices made of gold... than he findeth now priests made of tree. If he look well

30 in Platina's *De vitis pontificum*, I ween he shall well perceive that Christ was served with silver and gold in the vessels, utensils, and ornaments of his church... long time ere Saint Ambrose was born, or the eldest of those 'old' doctors that he speaketh of. And I dare make me bold to warrant that they themselves used not to say Mass in

35 chalices of tree. And methinketh that the pleasure of God cannot in this point better appear... than by his own words written in Holy Scripture; as in the ark of the testament and the ornaments of

1, 31 *ornaments*: furnishings 3 *dearth*: scarcity 5 *plate*: utensils
 12 *ought is*: is worth anything 13 *worst*: least valuable 14 *nameth*: mentions
 14, 23 *ween*: suppose 15 *doubt*: suspect 18 *resorted*: went to
 19, 21, 29, 35 *tree*: wood 19 *scant*: scarcely 20 *all were they*: even if they were
 22 *clean*: completely 23 *word*: statement // *set*: put 24 *had*: took
 24 *proper*: splendid 24, 26 *treen*: wooden 26 *of truth*: actually
 26 *he saith truth*: what he says is true 27 *treen*: wood
 27 *when . . . gold*: I.e., there never having been a time when the priests were made of gold.
 30 *ween*: think 31 *ornaments*: furnishings 33 *doctors*: theologians
 33–34 *make . . . warrant*: venture to guarantee 34 *used not*: did not make it their practice
 37 *testament*: covenant // *ornaments*: vestments

the priest, and the cost and riches bestowed about the temple of Solomon.”

“Marry,” quoth he, “that is the thing that is in the book of the ‘images of love,’ as I was about to tell you, very well and clearly answered!”

5 “In what wise?” quoth I.

“Marry,” quoth he, “for first, when the ark was made, there were no poor men to bestow that riches upon; for while the children

Ex 16:15; Dt 8:2–4 of Israel were in desert, they were fed with manna... and their clothes never

10 wasted, nor were the worse, in all that forty years. And as for the riches of the temple made by Solomon, could make no matter to the people... for there was then no poor folk neither. For as the very words of the Scripture showeth, there was in his days so great plenty of gold that ‘silver was not set by.’”

15 *1 Kgs 10:21* “Forsooth,” quoth I, “the man maketh a proper answer for the ark. But I would

fain wit of him... though there were no poor folk among them at the time of the *making*... was there never none among them after the time of the *keeping*? I ween he will not say nay. And then if

20 there were: since God would, by his reason, rather have commanded to give that gold to poor men if there had been such... than to make it in the ark, he would by the same reason after, when there *were* such, have commanded then to break it again and give it them... rather than to keep it in the ark. And as for the riches bestowed upon the temple of Solomon—whereas he said that there were then no poor men, because there were so great plenty of gold that ‘silver was not set by’—every man may well wit... that if every man had in his time been rich... he had not had so many workmen!

25 But weeneth he that because there was in his days so much gold... that therefore all the people had enough thereof? *I* rather fear me that because *he* was so rich, his people were the poorer! For albeit he had great gifts sent him... and also used not his own people, of the children of Israel, for bondsmen and slaves, yet it is likely that he set great and sore impositions upon them... whereby he gathered
35 great riches... and they grew in great poverty. And if any man think the contrary, let him then look after Solomon’s death, in the beginning of his son’s reign, whether all the people did not so

1, 7, etc. *richesse*: wealth 3, 6 *marry*: indeed 3 *of*: about 5 *wise*: way
10 *wasted*: wore out 13 *showeth*: say 16 *proper*: good
17 *fain wit*: like to know // *though*: even if 19 *ween*: think
20 *his*: i.e., this man’s 20, 22 *reason*: reasoning
22 *make it in*: put it into the making of // *after*: afterward
23 *break it again*: tear it back down 27 *may well wit*: can be quite certain
28 *had not*: would not have 29 *weeneth he*: does he suppose
34 *great and sore impositions*: high and oppressive taxes 35 *grew in*: came into

sore complain thereof that (because they could not get a promise
1 Kgs 12:4-20 of amendment, as sad men advised the
king, but, by the lewd counsel of young
lads that then led the young king to folly, were with a proud,
5 rigorous answer put in fear of worse) of the twelve tribes of Israel, ten
fell clearly from him... and left him no more but twain. And,
therefore, by the riches and royalty of the prince to prove that
there was no poor people in his realm... is a very poor proof. For so
may it hap that the prince may be most rich when his people be
10 most poor, and the riches of the one *causing* the poverty of the
other, if the people's substance be gathered into the prince's purse.
And for conclusion, it is little doubt but Solomon might have
found poor folk enough to have given his gold unto that he
bestowed upon the temple of God. And therefore that answer
15 answereth not well the matter."

"Well," quoth your friend, "yet hath that book one answer that
assoileth all the whole matter. For as it is said there, all those things
that were used in the Old Law... were but gross and carnal... and were
all as a shadow of the law of Christ; and therefore the worshipping
20 of God with gold and silver and such other corporeal things ought
not to be used among Christian people, but, leaving all that shadow,
we should draw us to the spiritual things... and serve our Lord
Jn 4:24 only in spirit and spiritual things.

For so he saith himself: that God, as himself
25 is spiritual, so seeketh he such worshippers as shall worship
him 'in spirit and in truth'—that is, in faith, hope, and charity of
heart; not in the hypocrisy and ostentation of outward observance,
bodily service, gay and costly ornaments, fair images, goodly
song, fleshly fasting, and all the rabble of such unsavory ceremonies,
30 all which are now gone as a shadow. And our Savior
himself, whose faith is our justification, calleth upon our soul...
and our good-faithful mind... and setteth all those carnal things
at naught."

"The book," quoth I, "saith not fully so far as ye rehearse; howbeit, indeed,
35 many other men do. But these men that make themselves so
'spiritual,' God send grace that some evil spirit inspire not to
their hearts a devilish device—which, under a cloak of special

2 *sad*: sober; mature 3 *lewd counsel*: bad advice 5 *rigorous*: harsh
6 *clearly*: completely (away) 7, 10 *richesse*: richness
17 *assoileth all the whole matter*: resolve the whole entire issue 18 *gross*: material
18, 32 *carnal*: physical 21 *used*: practiced 28 *service*: homage
28 *gay*: showy // *ornaments*: furnishings // *fair images*: nice statues
28–29 *goodly song*: magnificent music 29 *all the rabble*: the whole slew
29 *ceremonies*: rituals 32 *good-faithful mind*: mindset of right faith
37 *devilish device*: diabolical scheme

- zeal to ‘spiritual’ service, go first about to destroy all such devotion
 as ever hath hitherto showed itself, and uttered the good
 affection of the soul, by good and holy *works* unto God’s honor
 wrought with the *body*. These men be come into so high point of
 5 perfection... that they pass all the good men that served God in old
 time. For as for that good, godly man Moses, *he* thought that to pray
Ex 15:1–18; 2 Sm 6:14–23 not only in mind but with mouth also...
 was a good way. The good king David
 thought it pleasant to God... not only to pray with his mouth... but
 10 also to sing, and dance too, to God’s honor; and blamed his
 foolish wife... which did at that time as these foolish heretics do
 now, mocking that bodily service. Holy Saint John the Baptist
Mt 3:4 not only baptized and preached, but also
 fasted, watched, prayed, and wore hair. Christ our Savior himself...
 15 not only prayed in mind, but also with mouth—which kind
 of prayer these holy, ‘spiritual’ heretics now call ‘lip labor,’ in
 mockage. And the fasting which they set at naught... our Savior
Lk 4:2 himself set so much by... that he continued
 it forty days together. Now, as
 20 for the images, which ye call one of the shadows—”
 “Nay, by Saint Mary,” quoth he, “I called gay ornaments of the church,
 and such other outward observances and ‘bodily ceremonies,’ as
The Image of Love calleth them—such things I called, as the book
 doth, ‘shadows of the Old Law.’ But as for images, the book adviseth
 25 men either clean let pass and leave off... or, if we will needs have any,
 care not how simple it be made; for as well may the most rude
 image and most simply wrought... put us in mind of Christ... and
 our Lady... and any other saint... as may the most costly and most
 curious that any painter or carver can devise.
 30 “And verily, to say the truth, as for images, they be no *shadows*
 of the Old Law, but things therein plainly and clearly *forbidden*—
Ex 20:4 as well in divers other places of Scripture...
Psalms 114 and 115 as in the texts lately remembered by
 yourself. ‘Non facies tibi sculptile’—‘Thou
 35 shalt carve thee, nor engrave thee, none image.’ And by all the whole
 psalm ‘In exitu Israel de Aegypto’ is it with great execration and
 malediction prohibited.”

1, 12 *service*: homage // 9 *pleasant*: pleasing 11 *which*: who
 14 *watched*: kept vigils // *hair*: haircloth 16 *lip labor*: lip service
 19 *together*: in a row 21 *gay ornaments*: showy furnishings
 22 *ceremonies*: rituals 26 *most rude*: roughest; most crude
 29 *curious*: elaborate 33 *lately*: recently // *remembered*: called to mind
 34 *yourself*: you yourself 35 *all the whole*: the whole entire

“First,” quoth I, “ye may not take those words for such a precise prohibition as should forbid utterly *any* images to be made; for as I showed you before, they had in the Temple the images of cherubim;

What images were prohibited but it was prohibited to make such

5 images as the Egyptians and other paynims did—that is to wit, the idols of false gods. For that

appeareth in the psalm itself, where he layeth for the cause of the prohibition, ‘Quoniam omnes dii gentium daemonia; Dominus,

10 autem, caelos fecit’—‘For all the gods of the *paynims* be *devils*; but our *Lord* hath made the heavens.’ Doth it not by these words well

appear what images were in that psalm forbidden?—that is to wit, the images and idols only of those paynim gods! For else—I pray you

15 tell me what reason were this: if one would say, ‘Make none image of Christ... nor of our Lady... nor of any Christian saint, in no wise; for all the gods of the paynims be but devils’? Were not this a wise reason well concluded?

“There is also in these prohibitions intended... that no man shall worship any image as God. For if he should—then should he fall in the contempt of the precept of God by which we be commanded

20 *Ex 20:3–5* to worship only one God, and forbidden to worship any false gods. And therefore

where it is written ‘Non facies tibi sculptile’ (‘Thou shalt engrave thee none image’), it goeth next before, ‘Non habebis deos alienos’—‘Thou

Lv 19:4 shalt have no false gods.’ And it is also

25 written, ‘Nolite converti ad idola, neque deos conflatiles faciatis vobis’ (‘Turn not to idols, nor make not for yourself any gods of metal cast in a mold’). And where it is

forbidden to *worship* any image—there is the word that signifieth the honor and service only pertaining to God. And therefore

30 neither may we do *any* worship to any image and idol of any false paynim... nor with honor and service done as to *God* may we neither

worship image of any saint... nor yet the saint himself. But I suppose neither Scripture nor natural reason doth forbid that a man may

How images may be revered do *some* reverence to an image... not

35 fixing his final intent in the image,

but referring it further, to the honor of the person that the image representeth... since that in such reverence done unto the image, there

1 *precise*: strict 3 *showed*: pointed out to 6, 12, etc. *paynim(s)*: pagan(s)

13 *what reason were this*: what sense this would make 14 *in no wise*: by no means

15–16 *were not this a wise reason*: wouldn’t this be a brilliant argument 18 *in*: into

23 *it goeth next before*: what comes right before that is 29, 31 *service*: homage

29 *only pertaining*: due only 30 *worship*: reverence // *false*: lousy

32 *worship*: venerate // *yet*: even

is none honor withdrawn neither from God nor good man... but
both the saint honored in his image and God in his saint.

When a mean man, an ambassador to a great king, hath much
honor done him, to whom doth that honor redound—to the
5 ambassador, or to the king?

“When a man at the receipt of his prince’s letter putteth off his
cap and kisseth it, doth he this reverence to the paper, or to his
prince?

10 “In good faith, to say the truth, these heretics rather trifle than
reason in this matter. For whereas they say that images be but laymen’s
books—they cannot yet say nay but that they be necessary
if they were but so. Howbeit, methinketh that they be good books
both for laymen and for the learned too. For as I somewhat said unto
you before, all the words that be either written or spoken... be but
15 images representing the things that the writer or speaker conceiveth
in his mind; likewise as the figure of the thing framed
with imagination and so conceived in the mind... is but an
image representing the very thing itself that a man thinketh on.
As, for example, if I tell you a tale of my good friend your master,
20 the imagination that I have of him in my mind... is not your master
himself, but an image that representeth him. And when I name
you him... his name is neither himself nor yet the figure of him
which figure is in mine imagination, but only an image representing
to you the imagination of my mind. Now, if I be too
25 far from you to *tell* it you—then is the writing not the name itself...
but an image representing the name. And yet all these names
spoken, and all these words written, be no natural signs or
images, but only made by consent and agreement of men... to betoken
and signify such thing; whereas images painted, engraved, or
30 carved may be so well wrought, and so near to the quick and to the
truth, that they shall *naturally* and much more effectually
represent the thing than shall the name either spoken or written.
For he that never heard the name of your master... shall if ever he
saw him be brought in a right full remembrance of him by his
35 image well wrought and touched to the quick. And surely, saving
that men cannot do it—else, if it might commodiously be done, there

3 *mean*: intermediary 6 *at the receipt*: upon the receiving // *prince's*: sovereign's
6 *putteth*: takes 11 *say nay but*: deny 12 *howbeit*: however
13–14 *for . . . before*: See 39/32—40/2. 18 *very*: actual
19 *a tale of*: something about 19, 20, 33 *master*: employer 22 *yet*: even
30, 35 *wrought*: executed 30–31 *near to the quick and to the truth*: true-to-life
31 *effectually*: effectively 35 *touched to the quick*: capturing a living likeness
36 *commodiously*: conveniently

Effectual writing

were not in this world so effectual
writing as were to express allthing in
imagery. And now, likewise as a book well made, and well written,
better expresseth the matter than doth a book made by a rude man that
5 cannot well tell his tale, and written with an evil hand: so doth an
image well workmanly wrought better express the thing than
doth a thing rudely made... but if it move a man for some other
special cause—as, peradventure, for some great antiquity, or the great
virtue of the workman... or for that God showeth at the place some
10 special assistance of his favor and grace. But, now, as I began to
say: since all names spoken or written be but images, if ye set
aught by the name of Jesus spoken or written... why should ye set
naught by his image painted or carved, that representeth his holy
person to your remembrance as much, and more, too, as doth his
15 name written? Nor these two words ‘Christus crucifixus’ do not so
lively represent us the remembrance of his bitter Passion as doth
a blessed image of the Crucifix—neither to lay man nor unto a
learned. And this perceive these heretics themselves well enough.
20 *Why heretics speak against images* Nor they speak not against images for
any furtherance of devotion, but
plainly for a malicious mind... to
diminish and *quench* men’s devotions. For they see well enough
that there is no man but if he love another, he delighteth in his
image or anything of his. And these heretics that be so sore
25 against the images of God and his holy saints... would be yet right
angry with him that would dishonestly handle an image made in
remembrance of one of themselves... whereas the wretches forbear not
villainously to handle, and cast dirt in despite upon, the holy
crucifix: an image made in remembrance of our Savior himself—
30 and not only of his most blessed Person... but also of his most
bitter Passion.
“Now, as touching prayer made unto the saints, and worship
done unto them... much marvel is it what cause of malice these

1 *effectual*: effective 2 *allthing*: everything 3, 4 *made*: composed
3, 5 *written*: written out; transcribed 4 *rude*: uneducated
5 *with an evil hand*: in a bad handwriting 6 *well workmanly*: very skillfully
7 *rudely*: crudely; amateurishly // *but if*: unless 8 *special cause*: particular reason
8 *peradventure*: perhaps 11–12 *set aught by*: place any value on
12–13 *set naught by*: place no value on 16 *lively*: vividly
17 *the Crucifix*: Christ crucified // *lay*: unlearned 24 *sore*: strongly
26 *dishonestly*: disrespectfully 28 *dirt*: excrement 28 *despite*: contempt
32 *as touching*: as regards // *worship*: reverence
47/33–48/1 *much . . . them*: one really has to wonder what reason these heretics have
for their malice toward them

heretics have to them. We see it common in the wretched condition of this world... that one man of a pride in himself hath envy at another, or for displeasure done... beareth to some other

A devilish hatred

malice and evil will. But this must

5 needs be a devilish hatred: to hate him whom thou never knewest; which never did thee harm; which, if he could now do thee no good where he is, yet either with his good example gone before thee... or his good doctrine left behind him... doth thee (but if thou be very naught of thyself) great good
10 in this world for thy journey toward heaven. And this must needs be an envy coming of a high, devilish pride... and far passing the envy of the devil himself. For he never envied but such as he saw and was conversant with—as when he saw man and the glory of God. But these heretics envy them whom they never
15 saw nor never shall see... but when they shall be sorry and ashamed in themselves of that glorious sight.

“For whereas they pretend the zeal of God’s honor himself—as though God, ‘to whom only all honor and glory is to be given,’ were dishonored in that some honor is done to his holy saints—

20 they be not so mad nor so childish as they make themselves. For if all honor were so to be given ‘only’ to

Mk 7:10

God... that we should give none to no

creature—where were, then, God’s *precept*... of honor to be given to our father and mother; to princes, governors, and rulers here

25 *1 Pt 2:13–17; Rom 12:10* in earth; and, as Saint Paul saith, every man to other?

How the Church

worshippeth saints

“And well they wot that the Church

worshippeth not saints as *God*, but as

God’s good *servants*—and therefore the

30 honor that is done to them redoundeth principally to the honor of their Master; like as in common custom of people, we do reverence sometimes, and make great cheer, to some men for their master’s sake... whom else we would not haply bid once ‘Good morrow.’

35 “And surely if any benefit or alms done to one of Christ’s poor folk for his sake... be by his high goodness reputed and accepted... as

3 *at*: of // *displeasure*: an offense 4 *evil*: ill 6 *which*: who

7 *if*: i.e., even if 9 *but if*: unless // *naught of thyself*: bad-natured

13 *was conversant with*: knew something about 15 *in*: of 16 *of*: at

17 *pretend the zeal of God’s honor*: claim as justification a zeal for honoring God

20 *make themselves*: i.e., make themselves out to be 25 *in*: on

27 *wot*: know 28 *worshippeth*: venerates

32 *make great cheer*: give a very warm reception 33 *haply*: perhaps

done unto himself; and that whoso receiveth one of his apostles
or disciples receiveth himself: every wise man may well consider
that in like wise, whoso doth honor his holy saints for his sake
doth honor himself. Except these heretics ween that God

5 were as envious as they be themselves... and that he would be wroth
to have any honor done to any other... though it thereby redounded
unto himself. Whereof our Savior Christ well declareth the contrary;
for he showeth himself so well content that his holy saints shall be
partners of his honor... that he promiseth his apostles that at the
10 dreadful Doom—when he shall come in his high majesty—they
shall have their honorable seats... and sit with himself upon
the judgment of the world.

“Christ also promised that Saint Mary Magdalene should be worshipped
‘through the world,’ and have here an honorable remembrance,
15 for that she bestowed that precious ointment upon his
holy head. Which thing, when I consider it, maketh me marvel of the
madness of these heretics that bark against the old, ancient
customs of Christ’s church, mocking the setting up of candles...
and with foolish facetiae and blasphemous mockery demand
20 whether God and his saints lack light, or whether it be night with
them, that they cannot see without candle. They might as well ask
what good did that ointment to Christ’s head. But the heretics

Mt 26:6–13; Mk 14:3–9 grudge at the cost now... as their brother
Judas did then... and say it were better

25 spent in alms upon poor folk. And this say many of them... which
can neither find in their heart to spend upon the one nor the
other. And some spend, sometimes, upon the one for none other
intent but to the end that they may the more boldly rebuke and
rail against the other. But let them all by that example of that
30 holy woman, and by these words of our Savior, learn that God
delighteth to see the fervent heat of the heart’s devotion boil out by
the body... and to do him service with all such goods of fortune
as God hath given a man.

“What riches devised our Lord God himself... in the making
35 and garnishing of the Temple, and in the ornaments of the altar,

1, 3 *whoso*: whoever 2 *every wise man*: everyone with any sense
4 *himself*: i.e., God himself // *except*: unless // *ween*: suppose 5 *wroth*: infuriated
6 *though*: even if 7 *declareth*: makes clear 7–12: See Matthew 19:28.
9 *partners of*: sharers in 10 *dreadful Doom*: fearful Last Judgment
13 *worshipped*: venerated 16 *of*: at 17 *ancient*: long-established
19 *foolish facetiae*: silly wisecracks // *demand*: ask
21 *might as well*: could as justifiably 23 *grudge at*: complain about
24 *were*: would be 25 *which*: who 28 *rebuke*: condemn
31 *boil out by*: bubble out through 32 *service*: homage 34 *devised*: stipulated
34 *making*: constructing 35 *garnishing*: adorning // *ornaments of*: furnishings for

and the priests' apparel—what was himself the better for all this? What for the beasts that himself commanded to be offered him in sacrifice? What for the sweet odors and frankincense? Why do these heretics more mock at the manner of Christ's church... than they do at the manner of the Jews' synagogue... but if they be better Jews than Christian men?

"If men will say that the money were better spent among poor folk, 'by whom he more setteth, being the quick temples of the Holy Ghost, made by his own hand, than by the temples of stone, made by the hand of man'—this would be, perchance, very true... if there were so little to do it with... that we should be driven of necessity... to leave the one undone. But God giveth enough for both, and giveth diverse men diverse kinds of devotion—and all to his

1 Cor 3:16; Rom 12:6–8 pleasure. In which, as the apostle Paul saith, let every man for his part

abound and be plenteous in that kind of virtue that the Spirit of God guideth him to. And not to be of the foolish mind that Luther is... which wisheth, in a sermon of his, that he had in his hand all the pieces of the Holy Cross... and saith that if he so had,

Luther's villainy to the Holy Cross he would throw them thereas never sun should shine on them. And for what worshipful reason would the wretch do

such villainy to the Cross of Christ? Because (as he saith) that there is so much gold now bestowed about the garnishing of the pieces of the Cross... that there is none left for poor folk! Is not this a high reason? As though all the gold that is now bestowed about the pieces of the Holy Cross would not have failed to have been given to poor men if they had not been bestowed about the garnishing of the Cross! And as though there were nothing lost... but that is bestowed about Christ's cross!

"Take all the gold that is spent about all the pieces of Christ's cross through Christendom. Albeit many a good Christian prince, and other godly people, hath honorably garnished many pieces thereof, yet if all that gold were gathered together, it would appear a poor portion in comparison of the gold that is bestowed upon cups—what

1, 2, 3 *what*: how 1, 2 *himself*: he himself 1 *better*: better off 5 *but if*: unless
 5–6 *be better Jews than Christian men*: are more Jewish than they are Christian
 7 *were*: would be
 8 *by whom he more setteth, being*: whom he cares more about, they being // *quick*: living
 10 *perchance*: perchance 12 *the one*: i.e., either the one thing or the other
 20 *thereas*: where 22 *worshipful*: pious 23 *villainy*: insult
 23 *as he saith*: according to him
 24, 28–29 *bestowed about the garnishing*: put into the adorning
 26 *high*: weighty 31 *spent about*: expended on
 33 *honorably*: out of respect 35 *of*: with // *what*: why

speak we of cups? In which the gold, albeit that it be not
 given to poor men, yet is it saved... and may be given in alms
 when men will—which they never will. How small a portion,
 ween we, were the gold about all the pieces of Christ's cross... if it
 5 were compared with the gold that is quite *cast away*, about the
 gilding of knives, swords, spurs, arras, and painted cloths—
 and (as though these things could not consume gold fast enough)
 the gilding of posts and whole roofs... not only in the palaces of
 princes and great prelates, but also many right mean men's
 10 houses! And yet among all these things could Luther spy no
 gold that grievously glittered in his bleared eyes... but only about
 the cross of Christ. For *that* gold... if it were thence, the wise man weeneth
 it would be straight given to poor men. And that where he daily
 seeth that such as have their purse full of gold... give to the poor not
 15 one piece thereof, but if they give aught, they ransack the bottom,
 among all the gold... to seek out here a halfpenny, or in his
 country a brass penny—whereof four make a farthing. Such goodly
 causes find they that pretend holiness for the color of their
 cloaked heresies!"

20 *The Third Chapter*

The objections of the messenger made against praying to
 saints, worshipping of images, and going on pilgrimages;
 with the answer of the author unto the same. And
 incidentally is it by the messenger moved that there should
 25 seem no necessity for Christian folk to resort to any churches,
 but that all were one to pray thence or there. And that opinion
 by the author answered and confuted.

At this point your friend, desiring me that whatsoever he
 should say, I should not reckon it as spoken of his own opinion,
 30 but that he would partly show me what he had heard some others say
 therein, to the end that he might the better answer them with that
 he should hear of me—this protestation and preface made, he

3 *when men will*: i.e., whenever people want it to be 4 *ween we*: do we suppose
 4 *were*: would be 4, 11 *about*: around 5 *about*: on 6 *arras*: tapestries
 7 *consume*: use up 9 *right mean*: quite ordinary 12 *thence*: out of there
 12 *wise*: brilliant // *weeneth*: supposes 15 *ought*: anything
 16 *here a halfpenny*: In England, halfpennies were made of silver.
 17 *goodly*: notable; significant 18 *pretend*: profess
 18 *for the color of*: as a pretext for 22 *worshipping*: venerating
 24 *incidentally*: in passing // *moved*: submitted 25 *seem*: i.e., seem to be
 25 *resort*: betake themselves; go 26 *all were one*: it would be all the same
 26 *thence*: somewhere else 28 *desiring*: asking of 30 *show*: tell
 31 *with that*: with what 32 *should*: would // *of*: from

said that albeit no good man would agree that it were well done to
do unto saints or their images despite or dishonor, yet to go
in pilgrimages to them, or to pray to them, not only seemed “in
vain (considering that all they—if they can anything do—can yet
5 do no more for us among them all... than Christ can himself alone,
that can do all; nor be not so ready at our hand to hear us... if they
hear us at all... as Christ, that is everywhere; nor bear us half the
love and longing to help us... that doth our Savior, that died for
us; whom, as Saint Paul saith, we have for advocate before the
10 *Rom 8:34; 1 Jn 2:1* Father), but, over this, it seemeth to smell of
idolatry when we go on pilgrimage to
this place and that place... as though God were not like strong,
or not like present, in every place; but as the devils were of old,
under the false name of ‘gods,’ present and assistant in the idols
15 and maumets of the pagans, so would we make it seem that God
and his saints stood in this place and that place, bound to this
post and that post cut out and carved in images. For when we reckon ourselves
to be better heard with our Lord in Kent than at Cambridge,
at the north door of Paul’s than at the south door, at one image of
20 our Lady than at another... is it not an evident token—and, in manner,
a plain *proof*—that we put our trust and confidence in the image
itself, and not in God or our Lady? Which is as good in the one place
as in the other... and the one image no more like her than the other, nor
cause why she should favor the one before the other. But we blind
25 people instead of God and his holy saints themselves... cast our
affections to the *images* themselves, and thereto make our prayers, thereto
make our offerings... and ween these images were the very saints
themselves, of whom our help and health should grow; putting our full
30 *Necromancers* trust in this place and that place as
necromancers put their trust in their
circles... within which they think themselves sure against all the
devils in hell. And ween if they were one inch without, that then
the devil would pull them in pieces, but as for the circle, he dare
not, for his ears, once put over his nose.

1 *agree*: assent // *were well done*: would be right 2 *despite*: insult

10 *over*: in addition to // *smell*: smack 12, 13 *like*: equally

14 *assistant*: actively attendant 15 *maumets*: graven images

19 *Paul’s*: Old St. Paul’s Cathedral 20 *evident token*: obvious indication

22 *which*: who 27, 32 *ween*: think 28 *health*: healing // *grow*: come

31 *sure against*: safe from 32 *without*: outside (the circle)

“And men reckon that the clergy is glad to favor these ways... and to nourish this superstition under the name and color of ‘devotion,’ to the peril of the people’s souls... for the lucre and temporal advantage that themselves receive of the offerings.”

5 When I had heard him say what him liked, I demanded if he minded ever to be priest. Whereunto he answered, “Nay, verily. For methinketh,” quoth he, “that there be priests too many already but if they were better. And therefore when God shall send time, I purpose,” he said, “to marry.”

10 *Twice-married cannot be a priest.* “Well,” said I, “then since I am already married twice, and therefore never can be priest... and ye be so set in mind of marriage that ye never will be priest... we two be not the most meet to ponder what might be said in this matter for the priests’

15 part.
“Howbeit, when I consider it, methinketh surely that if the thing were such as ye say—so far from all frame of right religion, and so perilous to men’s souls—I cannot perceive why that the clergy would for the gain they get thereby... suffer such abusion
20 to continue. For first, if it were true that no pilgrimage ought to be used... none image offered unto... nor worship done, nor prayer made, unto any saint: then if none of all these things had ever been in ure, or now were all undone—if *that* were the *right* way, as I wot well it were wrong—then were it to me little question but
25 Christian people being in the true faith, and in the right way to-God-ward, would thereby nothing slake their good minds toward the ministers of his church... but their devotion should toward them more and more *increase*. So that if they now get by this way one penny, they should (if this be wrong and the other right) not
30 fail instead of a penny now, then to receive a groat. And so should no lucre give them cause to favor this way and it be wrong... while they could not fail to win more by the right.

“Moreover, look me through Christendom... and I suppose ye shall find the fruit of those offerings a right small part of the living

2 *nourish*: foster // *color*: guise 3 *temporal*: worldly

5 *what him liked*: what he wanted to // *demanded*: asked (him)

6 *minded ever to be priest*: ever thought about becoming a priest 7 *but if*: unless

8 *time*: the opportunity // *purpose*: intend 13–14 *most meet*: best suited

19 *abusion*: wrongdoing 21 *used*: made // *worship*: reverence 23 *ure*: use

23 *undone*: done away with 24 *wot*: know // *were*: would be 26 *nothing*: in no way

26 *slake* . . . *toward*: lessen their good dispositions toward; make them think less of

30 *groat*: fourpence 31 *and*: if 32 *while*: when 33 *look*: i.e., look for

of the clergy. And such as though some few places would be glad to retain, yet the whole body might without any notable loss easily forbear.

- “Let us consider our own country here... and we shall find of these
 5 pilgrimages far the most part in the hands of such religious persons, or such poor parishes, as bear no great rule in the convocations. And besides this, ye shall not find, I suppose, that any bishop in England hath the profit of one groat of any such offering within his diocese. Now standeth, then, the continuance or
 10 the breaking of this manner and custom... specially in them... which take no profit thereby. Which if they believed it to be such as ye call it—superstitious and wicked—would never suffer it continue to the perishing of men’s souls; whereby themselves should destroy their own souls... and neither in body nor goods
 15 take any commodity. And over this, we see that the bishops and prelates themselves visit those holy places and pilgrimages... with as large offerings, and as great cost in coming and going, as other people do; so that they not only take no temporal advantage thereof... but also bestow of their own therein!
- 20 “And surely I believe this devotion so planted by God’s own
The Church hand in the hearts of the whole Church—that is to wit, not the clergy only, but the whole congregation of all Christian people—that if the spirituality were of the mind to leave it, yet would not the temporalty
 25 suffer it.
- “Nor if it so were that pilgrimages hung only upon the covetousness of evil priests (for evil must they be that would for covetousness help the people forward to idolatry), then would not good priests and good bishops have used them themselves. But I am very sure that many
 30 a holy bishop—and therewith excellently well learned in Scripture, and the law of God—have had high devotion thereto.
- “For whereas ye say men reckon that it smelleth of idolatry to visit this place and that place, as though that God were more

3 *forbear*: do without 5, 16 *pilgrimages*: places to which pilgrimages are made
 8 *groat*: fourpence 10 *breaking*: putting an end to 10, 11 *which*: who
 12 *suffer it*: allow it to 15, 18 *take*: receive 15 *commodity*: benefit
 15 *over this*: moreover 18 *temporal*: worldly // *advantage*: benefit / gain
 19 *bestow of*: spend 20 *so*: i.e., to be so 23 *spirituality*: clergy
 24 *leave*: drop // *temporalty*: laity 25 *suffer*: allow
 26, 27 *covetousness*: greed 27 *evil*: bad 29 *used*: gone on; made
 32 *smelleth*: smacks

mighty, or more present, in one place than in another... or that God
 or his saints had bound themselves to stand at this image or
 that image; and that by men's demeanor, thereby should appear
 that the pilgrims put their trust in the place or the image itself,
 5 taking that for very God, or for the very saint... of whom they seek
 for help, and so fare like necromancers that put their trust in

Note

their circle: surely, sir, holy Saint Augustine,
 in an epistle of his (which he wrote to the

clergy *and* the people), taketh pilgrimages for a more earnest and a
 10 far more godly thing. And saith that though the cause be to us
 unknown *why* God doth in some place miracles, and in some
 place none—yet is it no doubt but he so *doth*. And therein had that
 good holy doctor so great confidence... that, as he saith himself,
 he sent two of his priests in pilgrimage, for the trial of the truth
 15 of a great matter in contention and debate between them, out of
 Hippo (in Africa) unto St. Stephen's Church in Milan—
 where many miracles were wont to be showed—to the end that God
 might there, by some means, cause the truth to be declared and
 made open by his power... which by no means known to man he
 20 could well find out.

“Nor they that go on pilgrimage do nothing like to those
 necromancers to whom ye resemble them, that put their confidence
 in the roundel and circle on the ground... for a special
 belief that they have in the compass of that ground... by reason of
 25 foolish caractes and figures about it; with invocations of evil
 spirits, and familiarity with devils, being enemies to God. And the

Necromancy by God forbidden

Ex 22:18; Jer 27:9

craft and ways of all that work... by
 God himself prohibited and forbidden
 (and that upon pain of death!), what

30 likeness hath that unto the going of good men unto holy places... not
 by enchantment dedicated to the devil... but, by God's holy ordinance,
 with his holy words consecrated unto himself? Which two
 things if ye would resemble together, so might ye blaspheme

3 *demeanor*: behavior 5 *very God*: God himself // *the very saint*: the actual saint

9 *earnest*: respectable 13 *holy doctor*: theologian

14 *in*: on (a) // *trial*: finding out 15 *of a*: concerning a 18 *declared*: made known

19 *open*: manifest 22, 33 *resemble*: liken

23 *roundel and circle*: circle and circumference 25 *caractes*: charms

and have in derision all the devout rites and ceremonies of the Church—both in the Divine Service, as incensing, hallowing of the fire, of the font, of the paschal lamb... and, over that, the exorcisms, benedictions, and holy, strange gestures used in consecration or administration of the blessed sacraments. All which holy things—
 5 great part whereof was from hand to hand left in the Church... from the time of Christ's apostles, and by them left unto us... as it was by God taught unto them—men might now, by that means, follily misliken unto the superstitious demeanor and fond fashion of
 10 jugglery. Nor the flock of Christ is not so foolish as those heretics bear them in hand—that, whereas there is no dog so mad but he knoweth a very cony from a cony carved and painted, Christian people... that have reason in their heads, and thereto the light of faith in their souls... should ween that the images of our Lady were our Lady
 15 herself. Nay, they be not, I trust, so mad; but they do reverence
 Reverence to the image to the image for the honor of the person
 whom it representeth—as every man delighteth in the image and remembrance of his friend. And albeit that every good Christian man hath a remembrance of Christ's Passion
 20 in his mind... and conceiveth by devout meditation a form and fashion thereof in his heart—yet is there no man, I ween, so good, nor so well learned, nor in meditation so well accustomed, but that he findeth himself more moved to pity and compassion upon the beholding of the holy crucifix... than when he lacketh it. And if
 25 there be any that for the maintenance of his opinion will, peradventure, say that he findeth it otherwise in himself—he should give me cause to fear that he hath of Christ's Passion neither the one way nor the other... but a very faint feeling, since that the holy fathers before us did, and all devout people about us do, find and
 30 feel in themselves the contrary.
 “Now for the reason that you allege,” quoth I, “where ye say that in resorting to this place and that place, this image and that image, we seem to reckon as though God were not in every place

1 *have*: hold // *devout*: devotional 2 *as*: such as // *hallowing*: blessing
 4 *strange*: esoteric 8 *follily*: foolishly 9 *demeanor*: behavior
 9 *fond*: idiotic // *fashion*: procedure 10 *jugglery*: witchcraft; sorcery
 11 *bear them in hand*: make them out to be 12 *very*: real // *cony*: rabbit
 13 *thereto*: in addition to that 14 *ween*: think 21 *ween*: feel sure
 25 *peradventure*: perhaps 31 *reason*: argument // *allege*: advance
 32 *resorting*: betaking ourselves

like mighty, or not like present—this reason proceedeth no more
against pilgrimages... than against all the churches in Christendom.

For God is as mighty in the stable as in the temple. And as he is not

God is everywhere present. comprehensible nor circumscribed nowhere...

so is he present everywhere. But
this letteth not heaven, be it a corporeal thing or not, to be the place
of a special manner and kind of his presence... in which it
liketh him to show his glorious majesty... to his blessed, heavenly
company... which he sheweth not unto damned wretches in hell;

10 *Ex 13:21-22; Ps 77:14* and yet is he never thence. So liked it his
 goodness to go with his Chosen People
through the desert in the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by
night; yet was he not ‘bound,’ as ye resemble it, like the damned
spirits to the old idols of the paynims.

15 “It liked him also to choose the ark that was carried with his
people; at which ark specially, by miracle, he divers times
declared his special assistance... the ark being translated
from place to place.

20 “Was it not also his pleasure to be specially present in his temple of Jerusalem... till he suffered it to be destroyed for their sins? And instead of that one place of prayer (to which he would before that all his people should come!), he hath vouchsafed to spread himself abroad into many temples, and in more acceptable wise to be worshipped in many temples, throughout his Christian flock.”

25 Here said your friend that the temple of Christ “is, as Saint Paul
2 Cor 6:16; Jn 4:21, 23 saith, man’s heart,” and that God “is not
Christ’s very temple included nor shut” in any place. “And so himself
said to the woman of Samaria... that
very worshippers should worship in ‘spirit’ and in ‘truth,’ not in
30 ‘the hill’ or in ‘Jerusalem,’ or any other temple of stone.”

Whereunto I showed him that I would well agree that no temple
of stone was unto God so pleasant as the temple of man's heart,
“but yet that nothing letteth or withstandeth but that *God will*
that his Christian people have in sundry places sundry temples and
35 churches... to which they should, besides their private prayers,
assemble solemnly, and resort in company, to worship him

1 *like*: equally // *reason*: argument // *proceedeth*: militates

2 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites; shrines 4 *comprehensible*: containable

6 *letteth not . . . to be*: does not keep . . . from being 8 *liketh*: pleases

10 *thence*: not there 10–11 *so . . . goodness*: it so pleased him, in his goodness.

13 *resemble*: liken 14 *paynims*: pagans 15 *liked*: pleased

17 *declared*: made manifest // *assistance*: active presence // *translated*: transported

20 *suffered*: allowed // *for*: on account of 27 *included*: enclosed

27 *shut*: confined // *himself*: he himself 29 *very*: true

29–30 *in “the hill”*: on “the mountain” 31 *showed*: told 32 *pleasant*: pleasing

33 *nothing ... but*: in no way hinders or prevents it from being the case

36 *resort*: betake themselves

together—such as dwell so near together that they may conveniently resort to one place.

- “For albeit our Savior said,” quoth I, “unto the woman of whom ye spoke, that the time should come in which they should neither
 5 worship God in that hill of Gerizim nor in Jerusalem neither— which places were after destroyed and desolate... and the pagan manner of worshipping of the one, and the Jewish manner of worshipping in the other, turned both into the manner of worshipping of Christian faith and religion—yet said he not to her that
 10 they should never after worship God in none *other* temple. But
 Jn 4:21, 24 he said that the time should come, and then
 was come already, when the very,
 true worshippers should worship God in spirit and truth. And that as God is a spiritual substance, so looked he for worshippers...
 15 that should in such wise worship him. In which words our Savior reproveth all false worship... as was used after paganism in that hill in Samaria... and all such worship as was done in any place with opinion that God might not be worshipped elsewhere. Those that so believe, they be such as ‘bind’ God to a place; which our Lord
 20 *God in heart may everywhere* reproveth... showing that God may in heart
 be worshipped; Mt 6:5–6 truly and spiritually be worshipped
 everywhere. But this excludeth not... that
besides that, he will be worshipped in his holy temple; no more than when he gave counsel that for avoiding of vainglory, a man
 25 shall not stand and pray ‘in the street,’ to gather worldly praise, but rather, secretly pray in his ‘chamber,’ this counsel forbade not the Jews to whom he gave it... that they should never after come into the *Temple* and pray.
- “And surely, albeit that some good man here and there, one
 30 among ten thousand, as Saint Paul and Saint Anthony and a few such other like, do live all heavenly, far out of all fleshly company; as far from all occasion of worldly wretchedness... as from the common temple or parish church: yet if churches and congregations of Christian people resorting together to God’s Service were once
 35 abolished and put away, we were likely to have few good temples of

2 *resort*: betake themselves // *one*: the same 5, 16–17 *in that hill*: on that mountain
 6 *after*: later // *desolate*: deserted 16 *used after*: practiced in the manner of
 20 *showing*: stating 26 *chamber*: private room 30 *as*: such as
 30 *Saint Paul*: i.e., Saint Paul the Hermit (229–342) 35 *were*: would be

God in men's souls... but all would within a while wear away clean
and clearly fall to naught. And this prove we by experience: that
those which be the best temples of God in their souls, they most

*What they are that come not to
the church*

use to come to the temple of stone; and
those that least come there... be well known
for very ribalds and unthrifths—and

openly perceived for temples of the devil! And this not in our
days only, but so hath been from Christ's days hither. I trow no
man doubteth but that Christ's apostles were holy temples of God in
their souls... and as well understood the words of their Master
spoken to the woman of Samaria... as the thing which their
Master after told them himself; or else how could some of them
have *written* that communication... which none of them heard, as
appeareth by the Gospel? But they, not in their Master's days only,
but also after his resurrection—and after that they had received the
Holy Ghost... and were by him instructed of every truth belonging to
the necessity of their salvation—were not content only to pray
secretly by themselves in their chambers... but also resorted to the
Temple to make their prayers. And in that place as a place pleasant
to God did they pray in spirit and in truth—as well appeareth in the
book of Saint Luke written of the acts of Christ's holy apostles. So that
no doubt is there but that yet unto this day and so forth to the
world's end, it is and shall be pleasant unto God... that his chosen
people pray to him and call upon him in temple and church. Whereof
himself witnesseth with the prophet, 'Domus mea domus
orationis vocabitur' ('My house shall be called a house of prayer').

"Now maketh your reason, as I said, no more against pilgrimages...
than against every church. For as God is not bound
to the place; nor our confidence bound to the place, but unto *God*,
though we reckon our prayer more pleasant to God in the church
than without... because his high goodness accepteth it so: in like
wise do not we reckon our Lord bound to the place or image where
the pilgrimage is, though we worship God there... because himself
liketh so to have it."

1 *wear*: erode // *clean*: entirely 2 *clearly*: completely // *prove*: find

3–4 *most use to*: (are the ones who) most regularly 6 *ribalds*: lowlives

6 *unthrifths*: good-for-nothings 8 *trow*: trust; am sure

10–14: See John 4:21–24, 27–38. 13 *communication*: conversation

16–17 *belonging to the necessity of*: pertaining to what was necessary for

18 *chambers*: private rooms 18–21: See Acts 2:46. 18 *resorted*: went

19, 23, 30 *pleasant*: pleasing 24–26: See Isaiah 56:7 and Matthew 21:13.

27 *maketh*: militates // *reason*: argument // *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites

31 *without*: outside (it) 32–33 *where . . . is*: to which the pilgrimage is made

The Fourth Chapter

1.4

The author declareth in the comprobatation of pilgrimages that it is the pleasure of God to be specially sought and worshipped in some one place before another. And albeit that we
 5 cannot attain to the knowledge of the cause *why* God doth so, yet the author proveth by great authority that God by miracle testifieth it *is* so.

10 **W**ith this your friend asked me what reason were there that God would set more by one place than by another; or how know we that he so doth—namely if the one be a church as well as the other.

Whereunto I answered that *why* God would do it, I could make him no answer; no more than Saint Augustine saith that he could. I was never so near of his counsel... nor dare not be so bold to ask
 15 him. But that he so doth indeed, that I am sure enough; yet not for that he setteth more by that place... for the soil and pavement of that place, but that his pleasure in some place is... to show more his assistance, and to be more specially sought unto, than in some other.

20 Then he asked me whereby was I so sure of that. Whereupon I demanded him that if it so were that, the thing standing in debate and question, it would like our Lord to show a miracle for the proof of the one part, “would ye not,” quoth I, “reckon then the question were decided, and the doubt assoiled, and that part
 25 sufficiently proved?”

“Yes, marry,” quoth he, “that would I.”

“Well,” quoth I, “then is this matter out of doubt long ago. For God hath proved my part in divers pilgrimages by the working of many more than a thousand miracles, one time and other. In the
 30 *Jn 5:4* Gospel of John, the fifth chapter, where we read that the angel moved the water... and whoso next went in was cured of his disease—was it not a sufficient

2 *declareth*: explains // *comprobatation*: defense 3 *sought*: gone to for help

7 *testifieth*: attests (that)

9 *set . . . another*: assign more value to one place than to another

10 *namely*: especially 14 *so near of his counsel*: that much taken into his confidence

18 *assistance*: active presence // *sought unto*: appealed to; petitioned

21 *demanded*: asked 22 *like*: please 23, 24, 28 *part*: side (of the debate)

24 *assoiled*: resolved 26 *marry*: indeed

28 *in divers pilgrimages*: at several pilgrimage sites 32 *whoso*: whoever

32 *disease*: ailment

proof that God would they should come thither for their

Why God doth miracles in certain places health... albeit no man can tell *why* he sent the angel rather thither, and there did his miracles, than in another

- 5 water? But whensoever our Lord hath in any place wrought a miracle... although he nothing do it for the place, but for the honor of that *saint* whom he will have honored *in* that place; or for the faith that he findeth with some that prayeth in that place; or for the increase of faith... which he findeth falling and decayed
- 10 in that place, needing the show of some miracles for the reviving—*whatsoever* the *cause* be, yet I think the affection is to be commended of men and women that with good devotion run thither where they see or hear that our Lord *showeth* a demonstration
- Jn 11:45* of his special assistance. And
- 15 when he showeth many in one place, it is a good token that he would be sought upon and worshipped there. Many *Jews* were there... that came to Jerusalem to see the miracle that Christ had wrought upon Lazarus, as the Gospel rehearseth. And surely we were worse than Jews... if we would be so negligent... that where
- 20 God worketh *miracles*, we list not once go move our foot thitherward. We marvel much that God showeth no *more* miracles nowadays, when it is much more marvel that he doth vouchsafe to show any at all among such unkind, slothful, deadly people as list not once lift up their heads to look thereon; or that our
- 25 *incredulity* can suffer him nowadays to work any.”

The Fifth Chapter

- Because pilgrimages be, among other proofs, testified by miracles... the messenger doth make objection against those miracles; partly lest they be feigned and untrue, partly
- 30 lest they be done by the devil if they be done at all.

Then said your friend, “Well I perceive, then, the force and effect of all the proof standeth all in miracles! Which I will agree

1 *would they should*: would have them 2 *health*: healing 5 *water*: pool
 5, 18 *wrought*: worked 6 *nothing*: in no way 9 *decayed*: deteriorated
 11 *affection*: disposition; attitude 14 *assistance*: active presence
 16 *good token*: valid sign // *would*: wants to // *sought upon*: gone to for help
 18 *rehearseth*: relates 19 *were worse*: would be less good // *negligent*: indifferent
 23 *unkind*: ungrateful // *deadly*: lifeless; apathetic 24 *list . . . lift*: care . . . to lift
 25 *incredulity*: unwillingness to believe 27 *testified*: corroborated

to be a strong proof... if I saw them done... and were sure that God or good saints did them. But first, since that men may, and haply do, of miracles make many a lie, we must not prove this matter by the miracles but if we first prove that the miracles were true. And
 5 over this, if they were done indeed: yet, since the angel of darkness may transform and transfigure himself into an angel of light, how shall we know whether the miracle were done by God, to the increase of Christian devotion, or done by the craft of the devil, to the advancement of misbelief and idolatry... in setting men's
 10 hearts upon stocks and stones instead of saints—or upon saints themselves, that are but creatures, instead of God himself?"

I answered him that the force of my tale was not the miracles, but the thing that I hold stronger than any miracles; which, as
 15 I said in the beginning, I reckon so sure and fast, and therewith so plain and evident unto every Christian man, that it needeth none other proof. And that thing is, as I said before, the faith of Christ's church, by the common consent whereof these matters be
 20 *To worship saints and images is meritorious.* decided and well known—that the worship of saints and images be allowed, approbated, and accustomed for good Christian and meritorious virtues, and the contrary opinion not only reprov'd by many holy doctors, but also condemned for heresies by sundry general councils.

25 "And this in the beginning I told you," quoth I, "was and should be the force and strength of my tale; albeit, of truth, I said unto you besides... that methought that the miracles wrought by God were sufficient proof and authority therefor... although there were none other. Which thing since ye seem to impugn, I shall, as I
 30 can, make you answer thereunto."

"Nay, sir," said he, "I pray you take me not so, as though that *I* did impugn it; but, as I showed you before, I rehearsed you what I have heard some *others* say."

35 "In good time," quoth I. "Then, because *they* be not here, I pray you defend and bear out their part... with all that ye have heard them

2, 6 *may*: can 2, 21 *good*: bona fide

10 *stocks and stones*: chunks of wood and stone; i.e., statues

13 *my tale*: what I was saying 14 *hold*: consider

15 *sure and fast*: certain and reliable 16 *plain and evident*: clear and obvious

18 *common consent*: universal agreement 19 *worship*: veneration

20 *allowed*: commended 21 *approbated*: officially approved

21 *accustomed for*: adopted into custom as 23 *reprov'd*: censured

23 *holy doctors*: theologians 26 *my tale*: what I had to say // *of truth*: admittedly

27 *were*: would have been 28 *although*: even if 32 *showed*: told

32 *rehearsed*: related to 34 *in good time*: very well // *pray*: ask that

35 *bear out*: substantiate // *part*: side

say, and set thereto also all that ever your own mind giveth you...
that they may more hereafter say, lest you return not fully furnished
for your purpose.”

1.5

The Sixth Chapter

5 Because the messenger thinketh that he may well mistrust
and deny the miracles because reason and nature tell him
that they cannot be done: therefore first the author showeth
what unreasonableness would ensue... if folk would stand so
stiff against *all* credence to be given to *any* such thing as
10 reason and nature should seem to gainsay.

“**A**nd first where ye say—”

“Nay,” quoth he, “where *they* say...”

“Well,” quoth I, “so be it; where *they* say. For here ever my tongue
trippeth. But now, therefore, first where *they* say... that they never
15 saw any of these miracles themselves... and therefore the miracles be
no proof to them, which, while they never saw them, are not
bound to believe them: they seem either very negligent, if they
nothing inquire when they mistrust and doubt of the truth in
such a weighty matter, or, if they have diligently made search,
20 then must it needs be... that they have heard of so many told and
rehearsed by the mouths and writings of so good and credible
persons... that they seem unreasonably suspicious if they think
altogether lies... that so many true men, or men likely to be true, so
faithfully do report. If these men were judges, few matters would
25 take end at their hand—or, at the least, the plaintiff should have
evil speed—if they would believe nothing but that were
proved... nor reckon nothing proved but that they see themselves.

“Thus may every man reckon himself unsure of his own *father*,
if he believe no man... or because all the proof thereof standeth but
30 upon one woman, and that upon her which, though she can tell
best, yet if it be wrong, hath greatest cause to lie. Let the knowledge
of the father alone, therefore, among our wives’ mysteries; and let us
see, if we believe nothing but that we see ourselves, who can reckon

1 *set thereto*: add to that // *your own mind giveth you*: it occurs to you

2 *furnished*: equipped 5 *may*: can // *well*: rightly 16 *which*: who

16 *while*: given that 17 *bound*: obliged 18 *nothing inquire*: do no investigating

18 *mistrust and doubt of*: have doubts and suspicions regarding

19 *search*: investigation 21 *rehearsed*: related 23 *true*: truthful; honest

24 *faithfully*: earnestly // *matters*: cases 26 *evil speed*: a bad outcome

26, 27, 33 *that*: that which

himself sure of his own *mother*. For possible it were that he were changed in the cradle... and a rich man's nurse bring home her own child for her master's... and keep her master's for her own, to make her own a gentleman good cheap. And this were
 5 no great mastery while the mother hath of her own child no earmark."

"Sir," quoth your friend, "if I should answer them thus, and by these examples prove them that they were of reason bound to believe such miracles as were reported, because many credible men tell
 10 them; forasmuch as else we should believe nothing but that we see ourselves, and then were all the world full of confusion, nor no judgment could be given but upon things done in the judge's sight—I should, I fear me, very feebly satisfy them. For they would soon say that the examples be nothing like the matter; but 'as it is
 15 reason that I should believe honest men in all such things as *may* be true, and wherein I see no cause why they should lie: so were it *against* all reason to believe men... be they never so many, seem they never so credible... whereas reason and nature (of which twain every one is alone more credible than they all) sheweth me plainly
 20 that their tale is untrue; as it must needs if the matter be impossible—as it is in all these miracles. And in such case though I can perceive no *profit* that they can receive thereby, yet when I well see that it *could* not be true, I must well see that it *was* not true. And thereby must I needs know that if they can take no profit by lying, they
 25 lie not for any covetousness, but even only for their special pleasure.'"

"Forsooth," quoth I, "this is right merrily answered. And to say the truth, as far as we be yet gone in the matter of these miracles, not much amiss, nor very far from the point. But since this thing is much
 30 material... as whereupon many great things do depend, we shall not so shortly shake it off; but we shall come one step or twain nearer to the matter. And first I will say to them that it were hard for them, and not very sure, to believe that every man lieth... which telleth them a tale for true that reason and nature seemeth to show them to be false and
 35 impossible. For in this wise shall they in many things err and clearly deceive themselves... and sometimes while they make themselves

2 *changed*: exchanged // *nurse*: wet-nurse 3 *master's*: employer's

4 *good cheap*: on the cheap // *were*: would be

5 *great mastery*: difficult achievement // *while*: when

5–6 *of her own child no earmark*: no way of identifying her own child

8 *bound*: obliged 10 *that*: that which

11 *were all the world*: would everyone in the world be 13 *I fear me*: I'm afraid

14 *matter*: matter in question 14–15 *is reason*: is reasonable; makes sense

18 *whereas*: wherever 19 *every one is alone*: each one by itself is // *showeth*: tell

20 *matter*: thing 21 *in all*: with regard to all 25 *covetousness*: greed // *even*: just

25 *special*: personal; own 27 *right merrily*: very wittily 29 *much*: very

30 *material*: pertinent; germane // *as*: i.e., as something 32 *matter*: real issue

32 *were*: would be 33 *sure*: safe // *which*: who 36 *clearly deceive*: completely delude

36 *while*: when 64/36—65/1 *make themselves sure*: convince themselves

sure of the wrong side, if they would with wagers contend and strive therein... they should upon the boldness of nature and reason lose all that ever they were able to lay thereon. If there were a man of India that never came out of his country... nor never had seen any white man or
 5 woman in his life... and since he seeth innumerable people black—he might ween that it were against the nature of man to be white. Now, if he shall, because nature seemeth to show him so, believe therefore that all the world lied if they would say the contrary, who were in the wrong—he that believeth his reason and nature, or they
 10 that against his persuasion of reason and nature shall tell him as it is of truth?”

Your friend answered that “*reason* and *nature* told not the man of India that all men should be black, but he believed so *against* reason, and *against* nature; for he had nothing to lead him to it but
 15 because himself saw no white—which was no reason—and he might by nature perceive, if he had learning, that the heat maketh his country black... and that of like reason, the cold of other countries must make the people white.”

*What maketh black and
 white men*

“Well,” quoth I, “and yet he cometh to his
 20 persuasion by a syllogism and reasoning almost as formal as is the argument by which ye prove the kind of man reasonable; whereof what other collection have you, that brought you first to perceive it, than that this man is reasonable... and this man... and this man... and
 25 so forth, all whom ye see? By example whereof, by them whom ye know... presuming, thereby, no man to be otherwise... ye conclude that every man is reasonable. And he thinketh himself surer in his argument than he thinketh you in yours. For he saw never other but black people... whereas ye see many men fools. As for that he
 30 heareth of others that there be white men elsewhere, this serveth nothing for your purpose if ye believe no witness against the thing that *your* reason and experience showeth you. And whereas ye say if the man of India had learning, he should perceive that it is not against nature, but, rather, consonant with nature, that some
 35 other men should in other countries be white... though all his countrymen be black: so, peradventure, those whose part ye do

1 *strive*: compete 2 *the boldness of*: their confidence in
 3, 13, 33 *India*: Ethiopia 6 *ween*: suppose; think // *were*: was 7 *show*: tell
 7, 13 *so*: that 8 *all the world lied*: everyone was lying 9 *were*: would be
 15 *no reason*: not a rational reason 21 *formal*: according to rule
 22 *the kind of man*: mankind 22, 24, 27 *reasonable*: (to be) endowed with reason
 23 *collection*: line of reasoning 27 *surer*: safer 29 *that*: the fact that
 30 *of*: from 32 *showeth*: tell 36 *peradventure*: perhaps
 36 *part*: side (of the argument)

sustain... if they had some learning that they lack... should well
 perceive that of reason they should give credence to credible
 persons... reporting them things that seem far against reason
 because they be far *above* reason; whereof we may peradventure
 5 have more perceiving in our communication hereafter, ere ever
 we finish that we have in hand. But in the meanwhile, to show
 you further what necessity there is to believe other men in things
 not only unknown, but also seeming impossible: The man of
 10 India that we speak of can by no learning know the course of the
 sun, whereby he should perceive the cause of his blackness, but
 if it be by astronomy; which cunning who can learn that
 nothing will believe that seemeth to himself impossible? Or who
 would not ween it impossible but if experience had proved it, that
 the whole earth hangeth in the air... and men walk foot against foot...
 15 and ships sail bottom against bottom—a thing so strange, and
 seeming so far against nature and reason, that Lactantius, a man
 right wise and well-learned, in his work which he writeth *De*
divinis institutionibus, reckoneth it for impossible... and letteth not to
 laugh at the philosophers for affirming of that point... which is
 20 yet now found true by experience of them that have in less
Glass, and whereof it is made than two years sailed the world roundabout.
 Who would ween it possible that
 glass were made of fern roots? Now, if those that ween it impossible
 by reason... and never saw it done... believe no man that tell it them:
 25 albeit that it be no peril to their soul, yet so much have they
 knowledge the less, and *unreasonably* stand in their error, through
 the mistrusting of the truth.
 “It is not yet fifty years ago since the first man, as far as men have
 heard, came to London that ever parted the gilt from the silver,
 30 consuming shortly the silver into dust with a very fair water. In
 so far forth that when the refiners and goldsmiths of London heard
 first thereof... they nothing wondered thereof... but laughed thereat as at
 an impossible lie; in which persuasions if they had continued
 still... they had yet at this day lacked all that cunning.
 35 “Yet will I not say nay but that a man may be too light in belief... and

5 *in our communication hereafter*: later on in our conversation 6 *that*: that which
 10–11, 13 *but if*: unless 11, 34 *cunning*: science 13, 22, 23 *ween*: think
 15 *strange*: surprising 17 *right wise*: very intelligent // *well-learned*: well-educated
 18 *letteth not*: does not forbear 29 *parted*: separated
 30 *consuming shortly*: quickly reducing // *fair water*: pure liquid 34 *all that*: that whole
 35 *say nay but*: deny // *light in belief*: quick to believe; unthinking in belief

- be by such examples brought into belief too far. As a good fellow and friend of mine lately, in talking of this matter of marvels and miracles, intending merrily to make me believe for a truth a thing that could never be, first brought in what a force the fire
- 5 hath that will make two pieces of iron able to be joined and cleave together... and with the help of the hammer be made both one—which no hammering could do without the fire. Which thing because I daily see, I assented. Then said he further... that yet was more marvel
- 10 that the fire shall make iron to run as silver or lead doth... and make it take a print. Which thing I told him I had never seen... but because he said he had seen it, I thought it to be true. Soon after this... he would have me to believe that he had seen a piece of silver of two or three inches about, and in length less than a foot,
- 15 drawn by man's hand through strait holes made in an iron... till it was brought in thickness not half an inch about... and in length drawn out, I cannot tell how many yards. And when I heard him say that he saw this himself—then I wist well he was merrily disposed."
- "Marry, sir," quoth your friend, "it was high time to give him over,
- 20 when he came to that!"
- "Well," said I, "what if I should tell you now... that I had seen the same?"
- "By my faith," quoth he merrily, "I would believe it at leisure, when I had seen the same. And in the meanwhile, I could not let you to say your pleasure in your own house; but I would think that ye were
- 25 disposed merrily to make me a fool."
- "Well," said I, "what if there would, besides me, ten or twenty good, honest men tell you the same tale... and that they had all seen the thing done themselves?"
- "In faith," quoth he, "since I am sent hither to believe *you*, I would in
- 30 that point believe yourself alone... as well as them all."
- "Well," quoth I, "ye mean ye would believe us all alike. But what would you then say if one or twain of them would say more?"
- "Marry," quoth he, "then would I believe them less!"
- "What if they would," quoth I, "show you that they have seen that the piece
- 35 of silver was over gilded... and, the same piece being still drawn through

1 *fellow*: colleague 3 *merrily*: for fun 4 *brought in*: brought up; adduced
 8 *assented*: accepted 13, 15 *about*: around 14 *strait*: narrow // *an*: a piece of
 17 *wist well*: well knew 17–18 *merrily disposed*: being facetious
 19, 33 *marry*: goodness 19 *give him over*: be done with him
 22 *at leisure*: given enough time
 23–24 *let you to say your pleasure*: keep you from saying whatever you please
 25 *disposed merrily to make me a fool*: being facetious to make a fool out of me
 27 *honest*: reputable 29 *hither*: here 34 *show*: tell 35 *over gilded*: gilded over

the holes, the gild not rubbed off... but still go forth in length with the silver, so that all the length of many yards was gilded of the gilding of the first piece not a foot long?"

5 "Surely, sir," quoth he, "those twain that would tell me so much more, I would say were not so cunning in the maintenance of a lie... as was the pilgrim's companion... which, when his fellow had told at York that he had seen of late at London a bird that covered all Paul's churchyard with its wings, coming to the same place on the morrow... said that he saw not that bird (but
10 he heard much speech thereof), but he saw in Paul's churchyard an egg so great that ten men could scant move it with levers. This fellow could help it forth with a proper side way; but he were no proper underpropper of a lie... that would diminish his credence with affirming all the first and setting a louder lie
15 thereto."

"Well," said I, "then I have espied if ten should tell you so, ye would not believe them."

"No," quoth he, "not if twenty should."

"What if a hundred would," quoth I, "that seemed good and credible?"

20 "If they were," quoth he, "*ten thousand*, they were worn out of credence with me when they should tell me that they saw the thing that myself knoweth by nature and reason impossible. For when I know it *could* not be done, I know well that they lie all—be they never so many—that say they saw it done."

25 "Well," quoth I, "since I see well ye would not in this point believe a whole town, ye have put me to silence... that I dare not now be bold to tell you that I have seen it myself. But surely if witness *would* have served me... I ween I might have brought you a great many good men that would say, and swear, too, that they have seen it themselves. But
30 now shall I provide me—tomorrow, peradventure—a couple of witnesses... of whom I wot well ye will mistrust neither nother."

"Who be they?" quoth he. "For it were hard to find... whom I could better trust than yourself; whom, whatsoever I have merrily said, I could not in good faith but believe... in that you should tell me
35 earnestly, upon your own knowledge. But ye use, my master saith,

1 *still*: always 2 *all the*: the whole 5 *so cunning*: as clever

5 *maintenance*: supporting 6 *fellow*: comrade 7 *told*: said // *at*: in

8, 10 *Paul's churchyard*: the churchyard of Old St. Paul's Cathedral 9 *morrow*: next day

10 *much speech thereof*: a lot of talk about it 11 *great*: big // *scant*: hardly

12 *could* . . . way: could have helped the story along with an apt digression

13–14 *that would diminish his credence with*: who would lessen his credibility by

14 *all the first*: i.e., the whole first lie

14–15 *setting a louder lie thereto*: i.e., adding to it a more flagrant one 16 *if*: i.e., that if

20 *were worn out of credence*: would have run out of credibility 26 *be bold*: venture

28 *ween*: think // *might*: could 30 *peradventure*: perhaps 31 *wot well*: well know

31 *mistrust*: distrust; be skeptical of // *neither nother*: neither the one nor the other

32 *were*: would be // *whom*: anyone whom 33 *merrily said*: said in fun

34 *in good faith*: actually (do anything) // *in that*: regarding what // *should*: would

35 *earnestly*: seriously // *use*: are wont // *master*: employer

to look so sadly when ye mean merrily... that many times men doubt whether ye speak in sport... when ye mean good earnest."

"In good faith," quoth I, "I mean good earnest now; and yet, as well as ye dare trust me, I shall, as I said, if ye will go with me, provide a couple of witnesses of whom ye will believe any one better than twain of me. For they be your near friends, and ye have been better acquainted with them; and such as, I dare say for them, be not often wont to lie."

"Who be they," quoth he, "I pray you?"

"Marry," quoth I, "your own two eyes! For I shall, if you will, bring you where ye shall see it... no further hence than even here in London! And as for iron and latten to be so drawn in length, ye shall see it done in twenty shops, almost, in one street!"

"Marry, sir," quoth he, "*these* witnesses indeed will not lie. As the poor man said by the priest—if I may be so homely to tell you a merry tale by the way..."

"A merry tale," quoth I, "cometh never amiss to me."

"The poor man," quoth he, "had found the priest over-familiar with his wife; and because he spoke it abroad and could not prove it, the priest sued him before the bishop's official, for defamation; where the poor man upon pain of accursing... was commanded that in his parish church, he should upon the Sunday, at High Mass time, stand up and say, 'Mouth, thou liest!' Whereupon, for fulfilling of his penance, up was the poor soul set in a pew... that the people might wonder on him... and hear what he said. And there, all aloud, when he had rehearsed what he had reported by the priest, then he set his hands on his mouth... and said, 'Mouth, mouth, thou liest!' And by and by thereupon, he set his hand upon both his eyes and said, 'But eyes, eyes,' quoth he, 'by the Mass, ye lie not a whit!' And so, sir, indeed... and ye bring me *those* witnesses, they will not lie a whit.

"Howbeit, sir, and though this be true—as in good faith I believe and am sure that it is—yet am I never the more bound by reason to believe them that would tell me a miracle. For though *this*

1 *sadly*: serious // *mean merrily*: mean something in jest

1–2 *men* . . . *earnest*: people think you might be joking... when you are dead serious

5 *any*: either 6 *near*: close 10, 14 *marry*: indeed 10 *will*: want

11 *hence*: away // *even*: right 15, 27 *by*: about

15 *be so homely*: take the liberty 16, 17 *merry tale*: funny story

20 *spoke it abroad*: said it in public 22 *accursing*: excommunication

25 *fulfilling*: carrying out // *that*: so that 26 *might wonder on*: could stare at

27 *rehearsed*: repeated 29 *by and by thereupon*: immediately after that

31 *and ye*: if you 33 *howbeit*: however // *and though*: even if

34 *never the more bound*: not at all the more obliged 35 *tell*: report to

thing be incredible to him that heareth it... and strange and marvelous to him that seeth it—yet is it a thing that may be done. But he that telleth me a *miracle*... telleth me a thing that cannot be done.”

“I showed you,” quoth I, “this example to put you in mind that in being overly hard of belief of things that by reason and nature seem and appear impossible, where they be reported by credible witnesses having no cause to lie, there is as much peril of error as where men be too light of credence. And thus much have I proved you onward: that if ye believe no man in such things as may not be, then must it follow that ye ought to believe no man in many things that *may* be; for all is one to you, whether they may be or may not be, if it seem to you that they may not be. And of truth, ye cannot tell whether they may be or may not be... except they be two such things as imply contradiction; as one self thing in one self part to be both white and black at once. For else, many things shall seem to you such as all reason will resist... and nature will in no wise admit... and yet they shall be done well enough—and be in some other place in common use and custom. But, now, because all your shift standeth in this—that of a miracle told you, ye may with reason believe that all men lie... because reason and nature, being more to be believed than all they, telleth you that they say wrong... in that the thing reported for a miracle cannot be done—I have showed you that nature and reason doth show you that many things ‘may not be done’... which yet indeed *be* done; so far forth that when ye see them done, ye may right well account them as *miracles*, for anything that reason or nature can show you by what natural order and cause it could be done; but that ye shall still see reason stand quite against it: as in the drawing of the silver or iron.”

30 *The Seventh Chapter*

The author showeth that neither nature nor reason do deny the miracles to be true, nor do not gainsay but that they may be *well and easily* done.

35 “**S**ir, saith he,” yet hit we not the point. For albeit that many things be well done... and by nature... in which neither my wit

1 *strange*: surprising 2 *marvelous*: amazing 2, 11, etc. *may*: can
 4 *showed*: gave 5 *hard of belief of*: resistant to believing 7 *peril*: danger
 8 *be too light of credence*: give their credence too readily 9 *onward*: further
 11 *all is one*: it's all the same 14 *except*: unless 15 *self*: same
 17 *in no wise*: by no means 19 *all your shift*: your whole dodge
 27 *order*: procedure 33 *well and*: quite 35 *wit*: intellect

- nor, haply, no man's else can attain so near to nature's
counsel that we can therein perceive her craft; but, like as some
rude people muse upon a clock that hath the spring (which is
the cause of its moving) secretly conveyed and closed in the
5 barrel, so marvel we and wonder on her work: yet always all those
things differ and be unlike to miracles, in that yourself will
agree with me—that when I believe that reason and nature teacheth me
surely that *miracles* be things that cannot be done, I am not in
10 *this* deceived, though I may be in such other things deceived...
as *seem* impossible and yet may be done. And therefore, as concerning
miracles—in which yourself will agree that I am not
by any mistaking of reason and nature deceived—ye may not
yourself, methinketh, say nay but that I may well, with
reason, believe them twain... against all them that will tell me they
15 have seen such things done... as yourself doth agree that they
twain (that is to wit, nature and reason) doth verily and truly
show me... cannot be done.”
“What manner of things be those?” quoth I.
“Marry, *miracles*!” quoth he. “Such as yourself will agree to be done
20 against nature!”
“Give us thereof,” quoth I, “some example.”
“As if men,” quoth he, “would now come tell me that at Our Lady of
Rouncivalle there were a dead child restored again to life.”
“Let that,” quoth I, “be one; and let another be that a bishop in the
25 building of his church, finding one beam cut a great deal too
short for his work, drew it forth, between another man and him,
four feet (and ye will) longer than it was... and so made it serve.”
“Be it, by my troth,” quoth he.
“Will we,” quoth I, “take for the third... that a man was by miracle in
30 a Pater Noster while... conveyed a mile off, from one place to another?”
“Be it so,” quoth he. “Now, they that should tell me,” quoth he, “that
they had seen these three miracles—were I bound to believe them?”
“Whether ye were *bound*,” quoth I, “or no, we shall see further after.
But, now, why should ye not of reason trust them, if the men be
35 credible... and earnestly report it... and peradventure on their
oaths depose it... having no cause to feign it... nor likely to lie and be
forsworn for naught?”

1–2 *attain* . . . *counsel*: get so taken into nature's confidence

2 *her craft*: how she does it 3 *rude*: uneducated // *muse upon*: are bewildered by

4 *secretly*: invisibly // *conveyed*: carried // *closed*: enclosed 5 *barrel*: case

6 *that*: that which 6, 11, 15, 19 *yourself*: you yourself

7 *agree with me*: grant me 8 *surely*: definitely 8, 9 *in*: with regard to

9 *deceived*: mistaken 10, 13 *may*: can 12 *mistaking*: wrong understanding

12 *mistaken*: led astray 13 *say nay but*: deny // *well*: justifiably

15–16 *they twain*: the two of them 16 *verily*: really 17 *show*: tell

19 *marry*: good heavens 22 *as*: such as 23 *restored again*: brought back

27 *and ye will*: if you like 28 *by my troth*: i.e., by all means

30 *a Pater Noster while*: the time it takes to say an Our Father 32 *were I*: would I be

32, 33 *bound*: obliged 33 *further after*: later on 35 *earnestly report it*: report it seriously

36 *feign it*: make it up 36–37 *be forsworn*: commit perjury 37 *naught*: nothing

“I will,” quoth he, “*not* believe them, because that nature and reason are two records more to be believed than all they that bear witness against them.”

“Why,” quoth I, “what doth reason and nature tell you?”

5 “They twain tell me,” quoth he, “that those three things cannot be done which those men say they saw done.”

“Wot you well,” quoth I, “that reason and nature tell you so?”

“Yea, marry,” quoth he, “that I wot well they do. And I think yourself will agree that they tell me so.”

10 “Nay, by Saint Mary, sir,” quoth I, “that will I not! For I think that *neither* reason *nor* nature telleth you so... but, rather, both two tell you clean the contrary; that is to wit, that they both bear witness... that those three things and such other like... be things that may be *well and easily* done.”

15 “Yea?” quoth he. “Marry, this is another way! Then have we walked wrong a while, if ye prove that!”

“Methinketh,” quoth I, “nothing more easy to prove than that! For I pray you tell me,” quoth I, “doth reason and nature show you that there is a God, or not?”

20 “*Faith* showeth me that, surely,” quoth he, “but whether nature and reason show it me or no, that I doubt, since great-reasoned men and philosophers have doubted thereof. And some of them have been plainly persuaded and in belief... that there was none at all; and the whole people of the world, in effect, fallen from knowledge or belief of
25 *God*... into idolatry and worship of maumets.”

“Nay,” quoth I, “there is little doubt, I trow, but that nature and reason giveth us good knowledge that there *is* a *God*. For albeit the Gentiles worshipped among them a thousand false gods—yet all that proveth that there was and is in all men’s heads a
30 secret consent of nature... that God there is; or else they would have worshipped none at all. Now, as for the philosophers, though a very

One swallow maketh not summer. few doubted, and one or twain thought there was none, yet as one swallow maketh

2 *records*: witnesses 7 *wot you well*: do you really know 7, 9 *so*: that

8 *marry*: indeed // *yourself*: you yourself

12 *clean the contrary*: the complete opposite 14 *may*: can

14 *well and*: quite 15 *marry*: goodness // *another way*: a different tack

15–16 *walked wrong*: gone wrong; been off-track 18, 20, 21 *show(eth)*: tell(s)

21 *doubt*: question // *great-reasoned men*: great thinkers

22 *doubted thereof*: had doubts about that 23 *in*: of the

23–24 *and . . . effect*: and that virtually the entire population of the world has

25 *maumets*: graven images 26 *trow*: feel sure 27 *good*: bona fide

30 *secret consent of nature*: mysterious natural consensus

not summer, so the folly of so few maketh no change of the
 matter... against all the whole number of the old philosophers which,
Acts 17:22–29; Rom 1:19–20 as Saint Paul confesseth, found out by
 nature and reason... that there *was* a God...

- 5 either Maker or Governor, or both, of all this whole engine of the
 world; the marvelous beauty and constant course whereof
 showeth well that it neither was made nor governed by chance.
 But when they had by these visible things knowledge of his invisible
 Majesty, then did they as we do: fall from the worship of
 10 him to the worship of idols; as now do Christian men... not, as
 heretics lay to the charge of good people, in doing reverence to
 saints... or honor to their images, but in doing as do those
 heretics themselves—making our belly or beneath-our-belly... or our
The idolatry of heretics goods, or our own blind affection
 15 toward other creatures, or our own
 proud affection and dotage toward ourselves... our maumets and
 idols and very false gods. But surely both nature and reason
 will declare and teach us that a God there is.”
 “Well,” quoth he, “I will not stick in this, since Saint Paul saith so.”
 20 “Then,” quoth I, “if reason and nature show you that there is a God,
 doth not reason and nature show you also that he is almighty and
 may do what he will?”
 “Yes,” quoth he, “that is both natural to his Godhead... and by reason it
 may well be perceived.”
 25 “Then followeth it,” said I, “that reason and nature doth not show
 you that those three miracles that we were agreed should stand for
 examples... precisely could not be done; but they taught you only
 that they could not be done by *nature*. But ye may (as ye now see)
 perceive that they themselves teach that they may be done by *God*...
 30 since they teach you that there *is* a God, and that he is *almighty*. And
 therefore when ye will in no wise believe them that tell you they
 have seen such miracles done, ye refuse not to believe such things
 as *cannot* be done, but ye mistrust causeless the credence and faith of
 honest men... in the report of such things... as by him that they said
 35 did it... may *well and easily* be done.”

2 *all the whole*: the whole entire // *old*: early // *which*: who

5 *all this whole engine*: this whole entire mechanism

16 *dotage toward*: excessive fondness for // *maumets*: graven images

18 *declare*: show 19 *stick in*: balk at // *so*: that 20, 21, 25 *show*: tell

22, 24, etc. *may*: can 22 *what he will*: whatever he wants to

23 *to his Godhead*: i.e., with respect to his Godhood 27 *precisely*: absolutely

31 *in no wise*: by no means

33 *mistrust causeless*: are doubting without cause // *credence*: credibility

33 *faith*: truthfulness 34 *honest*: reputable 35 *well and*: quite

The Eighth Chapter

1.8

The messenger allegeth that God may nothing do
against the course of nature. Of which the author declareth
the contrary—and, over that, showeth that our Lord in
5 working of miracles doth nothing against nature.

“Sir,” quoth he, “ye come, indeed, somewhat near me now. But yet
seemeth me that reason and nature teach me still that I shall in no wise
believe them that tell me they have seen such miracles done. For
first if ye will grant me that they teach me that if they should
10 be done, they must be done by God against the course of *nature*:
so is it, then, that *reason* showeth me that God hath set all things, already
from the first creation, to go forth in a certain order and
course... which order and course men call ‘nature’; and that hath he of
his infinite wisdom done so well, and provided that course to go
15 forth in such a manner and fashion, that it cannot be amended.
And therefore seemeth it that reason showeth me that God never will
anything do against the course... which his high wisdom, power,
and goodness hath made so good... that it could never be broken to the
better. For if it might—then had our Lord not made his order and
20 course perfect in the beginning. And therefore doth, as I say,
reason and nature yet bear record against them that shall say
they see such miracles, since God will never work against the course
of nature, which himself hath already set in so goodly an order
that it were not possible to be better, and the goodness of God will
25 make no change to the worse.”

“Surely,” quoth I, “ye go now very far wide. For neither doth reason
prove you that God—although it cannot otherwise be but that anything
of the making of his goodness must needs be good—hath made,
therefore, everything to be of sovereign perfection. For then must
30 every creature be equal. Nor, also, that the whole work of his creation—
though it have in itself sufficient and right wonderful perfection—
that therefore it is wrought to the utterest point of sovereign goodness
that his Almighty Majesty could have made it of. For since he
wrought it not naturally but *willingly*, he wrought it not to the uttermost

2 *allegeth*: claims // *may*: can 3 *declareth*: shows 4 *over*: besides
4 *showeth*: asserts 6 *come . . . me*: are indeed somewhat gaining on me
7 *seemeth me*: it seems to me // *in no wise*: by no means 11, 16 *showeth*: tells
15 *amended*: improved upon 18 *broken to*: suspended for 19 *might*: could
21 *record*: witness 23 *goodly*: excellent 26 *surely*: certainly; assuredly
26 *wide*: astray 34 *naturally*: by his nature // *willingly*: by his will; volitionally

of his power, but with such degrees of goodness as his high pleasure liked to limit. For else were his work of as infinite perfection as *himself*. And of such infinite, equal perfection was there

Note

by God brought forth nothing but only

- 5 the two Persons of the Trinity—that is to wit, the Son and the Holy Ghost—of which two the Son was first by the Father begotten; and after, the Holy Ghost by the Father and the Son (‘after,’ I say, in order of beginning, but not in time) produced and brought forth. And in this high generation and production did
- 10 the Doers work both willingly *and* naturally... and after the utterest perfection of themselves; which they did only therein and in none other thing. And therefore God might break up the whole world, if he would, and make a better by and by, and not only change in the natural course of this world some things to the better. Howbeit,
- 15 God in working of miracles doth nothing *against* nature, but some special benefit *above* nature. And he doth not against you that doth another a good turn which ye be not able to do. And therefore, since God may do what he will, being almighty; and in doing of miracles, he doth for the better: neither reason nor nature showeth
- 20 you that they which say they saw such miracles do tell you a thing that cannot be done, since ye have no reason to prove that God either cannot do it... or will not do it. For since he *can* do it, and it may be that he *will* do it, why should we mistrust good and honest men that say they *saw* him do it?”

25 *The Ninth Chapter*

The author showeth that albeit men may mistrust some of the particular miracles, yet can there no reasonable man neither deny nor doubt but that many miracles hath there been done and wrought.

- 30 “**F**orsooth,” quoth he. “And yet, as for miracles, *I* were not, for all this, bound to believe any. For I spoke never yet with any man that could tell me that ever he saw any.”
- “It may,” quoth I, “fortune you... to live so long that ye shall find

2 *liked to limit*: chose to allot 10 *willingly*: volitionally // *after*: according to

12 *might*: could 13 *would*: wanted to // *by and by*: immediately

16 *doth not*: acts not; i.e., does nothing 18 *may*: can // *will*: wants

19 *showeth*: tells 20 *they which*: those who 21 *reason*: reasoning by which

23, 26 *mistrust*: doubt 23 *honest*: reputable 29 *wrought*: worked

30 *were not*: would not be 31 *bound*: obliged

31 *believe any*: i.e., believe any of them to be genuine

33 *fortune you*: be your fortune

no man that was by at your christening; nor when ye were
bishops, neither.”

“Marry,” quoth he, “for aught I wot, I have lived so long already.”

5 “Why doubt ye not, then,” quoth I, “whether ye were ever christened or
not?”

“For every man,” quoth he, “presumeth and believeth that I am
christened, as a thing so commonly done that we reckon ourselves
sure that no man leaveth it undone.”

10 “If the common presumption,” quoth I, “sufficiently serve you to set
your mind in surety—then, albeit miracles be nothing commonly
and customably done, nor that no presumption can sufficiently
serve for the proof of this miracle or that, yet hath there ever from
the beginning of the world, in every nation, Christian and heathen, and
15 almost every town, at sundry times so many miracles and marvels
been wrought beside the common course of nature... that I think through
the world it is as well believed universally that miracles and
marvels there be... as anything is believed that men look upon.
So that if common presumption serve you, ye may, as I said, as
20 well believe that miracles be done... as that yourself was ever
christened. For I dare well say that there are a thousand that believe
there hath been miracles done... against one that believeth that ye were
ever christened—or ever wist whether ye were born or not.

“Nor the doctors of Christ’s church did never mistrust the
wonders and marvels that the paynims tell and write to have
25 been done by their false gods; but assigneth them to have been
done by the devil through God’s sufferance, for the illusion of
them that with idolatry had deserved to be deluded. And whether
they be *miracles*—by which name we commonly call the wonders
30 *Miracles* wrought by God—or marvels done by the
Marvels devil, it forceth not for this purpose of
ours. For if ye grant that the devil may
do any by God’s sufferance, ye cannot say nay but God may
much more easily do them himself.

35 “And since ye be a Christian man and receive Scripture, I might in
this matter,” quoth I, “have choked you long ago... with the manifold
miracles and marvels that be showed there.”

2 *bishoped*: confirmed 3 *marry*: goodness // *for aught I wot*: for all I know
3 *so*: that 11 *customably*: customarily 15 *beside*: outside
21 *against*: i.e., for every one person 22 *wist*: knew 23 *doctors*: theologians
23 *mistrust*: doubt 24 *paynims*: pagans 25 *assigneth*: account
26, 32 *sufferance*: passive allowance; refraining from preventing him from doing this
26 *illusion*: deluding 30 *forceth*: matters 31, 32 *may*: can
32 *say nay but*: deny that 34 *receive*: accept // *might*: could
35 *choked you*: silenced you 36 *showed*: related

The Tenth Chapter

1.10

The author proveth that many things daily done by nature or craft whereof we nothing marvel at all... be more marvelous and more wonderful in deed than be the miracles that we most marvel of and repute most incredible.

“Nay,” quoth he, “surely—though it hath done me good to hear what ye would say—yet I neither doubt nor, I suppose, no good man else... but that God hath beside the common course of nature wrought many miracles.

“But yet of those that men tell of as done in *your* time... by which ye would it should seem that it were well proved that the praying to saints, going on pilgrimages, and worshipping of images were well and sufficiently proved... although there were none other proof thereupon—of *these* miracles did I mean; in the report of which methinketh I need not believe a common fame of this miracle and that, begun by some silly woman seeking Saint Zita when she sigheth for miscasting of her keys. Of *these* miracles I speak, and all such as men say nowadays be done at divers pilgrimages by divers saints or divers images, in which methinketh that such as be told to be done... which nature and reason saith be impossible, I may well mistrust the tellers. Or else how many of them shall make me a sufficient proof of an impossible matter? One or two, or three either, seemeth me too few, to trust their credence in a thing so incredible. And if I shall not believe them till I find *many* records, I ween I were fain to wander the world about ere I proved many miracles sufficiently—of such, I say, as ye prove your pilgrimages by.”

“Your few words,” quoth I, “have wrapped in them many things... that seem somewhat, as they be couched together. Which when we see them unfolded, and consider each part asunder, then may we better examine them and better see whereof they serve.

“First ye speak of seeking to saints for slight causes, as for the

3 *craft*: skill // *nothing*: in no way 4 *deed*: fact; reality 9 *beside*: outside
 12 *would it should*: would have it 14, 27, 28 *prove(d)*: validate(d) 14 *although*: even if
 15 *of . . . mean*: these are the miracles I had in mind 16 *common fame*: widespread rumor
 17 *seeking*: seeking the help of; i.e., going to the shrine of
 18 *sigheth for miscasting*: is distressed over a misplacing 19 *divers*: various
 20 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites 22 *may well mistrust*: can justifiably be skeptical of
 24 *matter*: thing 24–25 *their credence*: i.e., the credibility of 25 *in*: with regard to
 25 *believe them*: i.e., believe supposed miracles to be authentic ones
 26 *records*: witnesses // *ween I were fain to*: think I would have to
 30 *somewhat*: to be something; to have some merit // *couched*: lumped
 31 *asunder*: separately 33 *seeking to saints*: going to saints' shrines // *slight*: trivial

loss or miscasting of Kit's keys. Then ye would wit how many
ye must hear say they saw a miracle ere ye should of reason believe
it. Thirdly, ye think ye were likely to go long ere ye should find any
proved true. Finally, when ye say that ye mean only those
5 miracles that men tell of as done at pilgrimages, ye seem to put
still a difference between those miracles wrought in pilgrimages...
and such as are wrought by God elsewhere. The cause whereof I must
further ask you after. For I perceive not well what ye mean by
that.

10 "But first, whereas ye speak still as though ye might mistrust
them, were they never so many, because they tell you a thing
that reason and nature saith is 'impossible'—methinketh that ye
A miracle is impossible should now change that word. For I have
to nature. already proved that reason and nature say not
15 that a miracle is impossible, but only that
it is impossible to *nature*. And they confess, both, that miracles be
possible to *God*; and they that report them do report them for things
done by *God*. And therefore, they do report you none impossible
tale.

20 "For the clearer consideration whereof, let us resort to the miracles
which we were agreed should stand for examples. And first, if men
should tell you that they saw before an image of the Crucifix a
dead man raised to life, ye would much marvel thereof—and so
might ye well. Yet could I tell you somewhat that I have seen myself
25 that methinketh as great a marvel—but I have no lust to tell
you, because that ye be so circumspect and wary in belief of *any*
miracles... that ye would not believe it for me... but mistrust me for it."

"Nay, sir," quoth he, "in good faith, if a thing seemed me never so
far unlikely, yet if ye would earnestly say that yourself have seen
30 it, I neither would nor could mistrust it."

"Well," quoth I, "then ye make me the bolder to tell you. And yet will
I tell you nothing... but that I would, if need were, find you good
witness to prove it."

"It shall not need, sir," quoth he. "But I beseech you, let me hear it."

35 "Forsooth," quoth I, "because we speak of a man raised from death to

1 *miscasting*: misplacing // *Kit*: A general term for "girl" or "woman."

1 *would wit*: want to know 3 *go*: travel // *long*: a long way / a long time

5, 6 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites 5 *put*: posit 8 *after*: later

8 *perceive not well*: do not quite understand 10 *might*: could (rightly)

20 *resort*: turn 22 *the Crucifix*: Christ on the cross 24 *somewhat*: something

25 *methinketh*: seems to me // *lust*: desire 26 *because that*: because

27 *for*: on account of 28 *in good faith*: really and truly

28–29 *never so far*: no matter how extremely

29 *earnestly say*: say in all seriousness

34 *it shall not need*: that will not be necessary

life... There was in the parish of Saint Stephen's in Walbrook (in London, where I dwelled before I came to Chelsea) a man and a woman—which are yet quick and quething—and young were they both. The eldest, I am sure, passed not twenty-four. It happed them, as doth
 5 among young folk, the one to cast the mind to the other. And after many lets (for the maiden's mother was much against it), at last they came together and were married in Saint Stephen's Church—which is not greatly famous for any miracles; but yet yearly, on Saint Stephen's Day, it is somewhat sought unto and visited with folks'
 10 devotion. But, now, short tale to make... this young woman (as manner is in brides, ye wot well) was at night brought to bed with honest women. And then after that went the bridegroom to bed; and everybody went their ways, and left them twain there alone. And the same night—yet abide, let me not lie; now, in
 15 faith, to say the truth, I am not very sure of the time. But surely, as it appeared afterward, it was of likelihood the same night, or some other time soon after... except it happened a little before."

"No force for the time," quoth he.

"Truth," quoth I. "And as for the matter, all the parish will
 20 testify for truth, the woman was known for so honest. But for the conclusion: the seed of them twain turned in the woman's body... first into blood... and after into shape of man-child. And then waxed quick, and she great therewith. And was within the year delivered of a fair boy; and forsooth, it was not then (for I saw it
 25 myself) passing the length of a foot. And I am sure he is grown now an inch longer than I!"

"How long is it ago?" quoth he.

"By my faith," quoth I, "about twenty-one years."

"Tush," quoth he, "this is a worthy miracle."

30 "In good faith," quoth I, "never wist I that any man could tell that he had any other beginning. And methinketh that this is as great a miracle as the raising of a dead man."

"If it seem so," quoth he, "to you, then have you a marvelous seeming; for I ween it seemeth so to no man else."

3 *which*: who // *quick and quething*: alive and able to talk 4 *eldest*: elder of them

4 *passed not*: was not over 5 *the one*: i.e., each of them

5 *cast the mind to*: take a fancy to; get smitten with 6 *lets*: hindrances

9 *sought*: resorted 11 *wot*: know // *with*: by 12 *honest*: reputable

14 *yet abide*: but wait 17 *except*: unless

18 *no force for the time*: the time makes no difference 19 *matter*: thing itself

19 *all the*: the whole 20 *honest*: truthful 23 *waxed quick*: grew animate

24 *fair*: beautiful

29 *this is a worthy miracle*: this is an impressive miracle; i.e., some miracle this is

30 *in good faith*: really and truly // *wist*: knew

33–34 *marvelous seeming*: a peculiar way of seeing things 34 *ween*: suppose

“No?” quoth I. “Can ye tell what is the cause? None other, surely, but
 that the acquaintance and daily beholding taketh away the
 wondering; as we nothing wonder at the ebbing and flowing of
 the sea, or the Thames, because we daily see it. But he that had *never*
 5 seen it... nor heard thereof... would at the first sight wonder sore
 thereat, to see that great water come wallowing up against the
 wind... keeping a common course to and fro... no cause perceived
 that driveth it. If a man born blind had suddenly his sight,
 what wonder would he make to see the sun, the moon, and the
 10 stars; whereas one that hath seen them sixteen years together...
 marveleth not so much of them all... as he would wonder at the
 first sight of a peacock’s tail. And very cause can I see none... why
 we should of reason more marvel of the reviving of a dead man...
 than of the breeding, bringing forth, and growing of a child
 15 unto the state of a man. No more marvelous is a cuckoo than a cock...
 though the one be seen but in summer and the other all the year. And I
 am sure if ye saw dead men as commonly called again by miracle
 as ye see men brought forth by nature, ye would reckon it less marvel
 to bring the soul again into the body... keeping yet still its
 20 shape, and its organs not much perished... than of a little seed
 to make all that gear newly—and make a new soul thereto. Now, if
 ye never had seen any gun in your days, nor heard of any before:
 if two men should tell you, the one that he had wist a man in a Pater
 Noster while conveyed and carried a mile off, from one place to another,
 25 by miracle, and the other should tell you that he had seen a
 stone more than a man’s weight carried more than a mile in as
 little space by craft—which of these would you, by your faith, take
 for the more incredible?”
 “Surely,” quoth he, “both twain were very strange. But yet I could
 30 not choose but think it were rather true that God did the one than
 that any craft of man could do the other.”

“Well,” quoth I, “let us, then, to our third example. If it were showed

5 *sore*: greatly 6 *water*: body of water 10 *together*: in succession
 17, 19 *again*: back 21 *gear*: stuff // *thereto*: as well 23 *wist*: known
 23–24 *a Pater Noster while*: the time it takes to say an Our Father 27 *space*: time
 27, 31 *craft*: skill 29 *were very strange*: would be very astonishing 32 *to*: turn to
 32 *showed*: told

you that Saint Erconwald, or his sister, drew out a piece of timber...

1.10

Note

that was cut too short for the roof in making

Barking Abbey, should this be so incredible

to you to believe—that they drew in length a piece of wood by the

- 5 power and help of God’s hand—when we see daily a great piece of
silver, brass, latten, or iron drawn alength into small wire... as
wonderfully by man’s hand?”

The Eleventh Chapter

- 10 The author showeth that a miracle is not to be mistrusted
though it be done in a small matter and seemeth upon a slight
occasion.

- “Now, though ye would peradventure (as ye seem to do) reckon
this cause very slight for God to show such a high miracle... since
there might have been without miracle a longer piece of timber
15 gotten; and so ye would haply mistrust it for the slender occasion,
resembling it to the miscasting of some good housewife’s keys—God
hath, I ween, so much wit of himself... that he needeth not our
advice to inform him what thing were sufficient occasion to
work his wonders for. But and if ye read in the books of Cassian,
20 Saint Gregory, Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, and many other holy,
virtuous men, ye shall (except ye believe them not) learn and
know that God hath for his servants done many a great
miracle... in very small matters. And so much the more are we
bounden to his *goodness* in that he vouchsafeth so familiarly in
25 small things to show us so great a token of his mighty Godhead. And
no reason were it... to withdraw his thank and honor because of
his familiar goodness. And if ye peradventure would not believe *their*
writings... go to Christ’s Gospel, and look on his first miracle...
whether he might not have provided for wine without miracle. But

5 *great*: big 6 *drawn alength*: elongated // *small*: thin

7 *wonderfully*: astonishingly 10 *though*: even if // *seemeth*: i.e., seemingly

15 *for*: on account of // *slender*: unimportant 16 *resembling*: likening

16 *miscasting*: misplacing 17 *ween*: think

17 *so much wit of himself*: so much sense on his own 18 *were*: would be (a)

19 *and if*: if 21 *except*: unless 24 *bounden*: beholden

25 *Godhead*: Godhood; divinity 26 *no reason were it*: no sense would it make

26 *withdraw*: withhold (from him) // *thank*: credit 27 *familiar*: down-home

27 *their*: i.e., those Church fathers’ 28 *on*: at 29 *might*: could

case that there came ten diverse honest men, of good substance, out of
 ten diverse parts of the realm... each of them with an offering... at
 one pilgrimage (as, for example, at Our Lady of Ipswich), and
 each one of them affirming upon their oath a miracle done upon
 5 themselves... in some great sudden help... well appearing to pass the
 power of craft or nature. Would you not believe that among them
 all, at the leastwise twain of those ten said true?"

"No, by our Lady," quoth he—"not and there were ten and twenty."

"Why so?" quoth I.

10 "Marry," quoth he, "for, were they never so many, having none
 other witness... but each man telling his tale for himself, they be
 but single all—and less than single. For every miracle hath but one
 record... and yet he not credible in his own cause. And so never a
 miracle well proved."

15 "Well," said I, "I like well your wisdom, that ye be so circumspect...
 that ye will nothing believe without good, sufficient, and full
 proof.

A merry supposed tale

"I put you, then," quoth I, "another case:

that ten young women not very specially

20 known for good, but taken out at adventure, dwelling all in one
 town, would report and tell that a friar of good fame, hearing their
 confessions at a pardon, would have given them all in a penance to
 let him lie with them. On your faith, would ye not believe... that
 among so many, some of them said true?"

25 "Yes, that I would," quoth he, "by the Mary Mass: believe they said true all
ten—and durst well swear for them and they were but two!"

"Why so?" quoth I. "They be as single witnesses as the others of whom I
 told you before. For none of them can tell what was said to another.

30 And yet they be unsworn, also; and therewith be they but
 women, which be more light and less to be regarded; dwelling
 all in one town, also, and thereby might they the more easily conspire
 a false tale."

"They be," quoth he, "witnesses good enough for such a matter, the
 thing is so likely of itself—that a friar will be womanish, look
 35 the holy whoreson never so saintly."

1 *diverse*: different // *honest*: reputable

1 *of good substance*: substantial; of a high caliber 3 *pilgrimage*: pilgrimage site; shrine

5 *help*: cure // *well appearing to pass*: quite obviously beyond 6 *craft*: skill

7 *said true*: was telling the truth 8 *and*: (even) if 10 *marry*: indeed

12, 27 *single*: solitary; unsupported in their witness 13 *record*: witness

20 *taken out*: come upon outdoors // *at adventure*: at random 20, 31 *one*: the same

21 *fame*: repute 22 *pardon*: indulgence festival // *in*: for

25 *Mary Mass*: Mass in honor of our Lady 26 *durst well*: would well dare

26 *and they*: if they 29 *yet they*: they even 29 *unsworn*: not put under oath

30 *which . . . and*: who carry less weight (as witnesses, in the eyes of the law) and are

34 *womanish*: a womanizer 35 *never so*: no matter how

“Ye deny not,” quoth I, “but God may as easily do a good turn by miracle... as any man may do an evil by nature?”

1.12

“That is true,” quoth he, “and he list.”

5 “Well,” quoth I, “see now what a good way ye be in... that are, of your own good, godly mind, more ready to believe two simple women... that a man will do naught, than ten or twenty men... that God will do good!”

The Thirteenth Chapter

10 The author showeth the untoward mind of many men... which in miracles so highly touching the honor of God and weal of their own souls... will neither believe other folk that tell them... nor themselves vouchsafe to go prove them.

15 “**B**ut since that this kind of proof will not suffice you... I dare say if ye would seek and inquire, ye should find many done in *your* days... in the presence of much people.”

“Where should I see that?” quoth he.

20 “Ye might,” quoth I, “upon Good Friday, every year these two hundred years till within these five years... that the Turks have taken the town, have seen one of the thorns that was in Christ’s crown... bud and bring
Note this miracle of the thorn. forth flowers in the Service time, if ye would have gone to the Rhodes—”

“So far?” quoth he. “Nay, yet had I liefer have God’s blessing to believe that I see not... than go so far therefor.”

25 “I am well apaid,” quoth I, “thereof. For if ye had liefer believe than take the pain of a long pilgrimage, ye will never be so stiff in any opinion... that ye will put yourself in jeopardy for pertinacity and stubborn standing by your part.”

30 “Nay, marry,” quoth he, “I warrant you that I will never be so mad to hold till it wax too hot. For I have such a fond fantasy of mine own: that I had liefer shiver and shake for cold in the midst of summer... than be burned in the midst of winter.”

1, 2 *may*: can 2 *an evil*: a bad one 3 *and he list*: if he wants to

5 *simple*: mere 6 *naught*: evil

9 *untoward mind*: intractable mindset; badness of attitude 10 *which*: who

10 *touching*: pertaining to 11 *weal*: good; well-being 12 *vouchsafe*: bother

12 *prove*: investigate 18 *might*: could 23, 24 *so*: that

23 *yet had I liefer*: I would even rather 24 *that*: what // *therefor*: i.e., for seeing it

25 *well apaid* . . . *thereof*: am very happy . . . about that

25, 31 *had liefer*: would rather 26 *pain*: trouble // *stiff*: unyielding

28 *part*: side (of the dispute) 29 *marry*: indeed 30 *to*: as to // *hold*: hold on

30 *wax*: gets // *such a fond fantasy*: a similar whimsical notion

“Merrily said!” quoth I. “But yet in earnest, where such a solemn yearly miracle is wrought... so wondrously, in the face of the world, before so great a multitude—it is a great untowardness, in a thing so highly touching the honor of God and health of our own soul,
5 both to mistrust all them that say they have seen it... and, either of sloth or incredulity, not vouchsafe himself to prove it.”

“If I should have gone,” quoth he, “and found it a lie—then had I walked a wise journey! And on the other side, if I should have seen there such a thing myself—yet could I scanty reckon myself
10 sure.”

“No?” quoth I. “That were a strange case.”

“Not very strange,” quoth he. “For where ye speak of miracles done before a multitude—a man may be deceived therein right well.”

The Fourteenth Chapter

15 The messenger maketh objection that miracles showed before a multitude... may be feigned; and by the author showed how the goodness of God bringeth shortly the truth of such falsehood to light (with examples thereof, one or two rehearsed), and further showed that many miracles there be
20 which no good Christian man may deny to be true.

“Some priest, to bring up a pilgrimage in his parish, may devise some false fellow feigning himself to come seek a saint in his church... and there suddenly say that he hath gotten his sight. Then shall ye have the bells rung for a miracle. And the fond
25 folk of the country soon made fools. Then women coming thither with their candles. And the parson, buying of some lame beggar three or four pairs of their old crutches, with twelve pennies spent in men and women of wax... thrust through, divers places, some with arrows and some with rusty knives, will make his offerings for
30 one seven-year... worth twice his tithes.”

“This is,” quoth I, “very truth, that such things may be... and sometimes,

1 *merrily*: wittily // *in earnest*: seriously // *solemn*: awe-inspiring

3 *untowardness*: badness of attitude 4 *touching*: concerning // *health*: well-being

6 *sloth*: laziness // *vouchsafe himself to prove it*: bother to check it out oneself

7–8 *had* . . . *journey*: some sensible journey would I have taken // *side*: hand

9 *scantly*: scarcely 11 *were*: would be // *case*: situation

15 *showed*: performed 16 *feigned*: faked 17 *showed*: i.e., it is shown

19 *rehearsed*: related 21 *bring up* . . . *in*: attract . . . to

22 *devise* . . . *saint*: get some sorry lowlife to come in disguise to a saint's shrine

24 *fond*: gullible 25 *country*: area 26 *of*: from 28 *in*: on

30 *seven-year*: i.e., seven-year period

- peradventure, so be indeed. As I remember me that I have heard my father tell, of a beggar... that in King Henry's days (the Sixth) came with his wife to Saint Alban's, and there was walking about the town begging a five or six days before the king's coming thither... saying that he was born blind and never saw in his life... and was warned in his dream that he should come out of Berwick (where he said he had ever dwelled) to seek Saint Alban... and that he had been at his shrine... and had not been helped. And therefore he would go seek him at some other place... for he had heard some say since he came... that Saint Alban's body should be at *Cologne*; and indeed, such a contention hath there been. But of truth, as I am surely informed, he lieth here at Saint Alban's... saving some relics of him which they there show enshrined. But, to tell you forth: when the king was come and the town full, suddenly this blind man... at Saint Alban's shrine... had his sight again... and a miracle solemnly rung... and Te Deum sung... so that nothing was talked of in all the town but this miracle. So happened it
- Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester* then... that Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, a great, wise man and very well learned,
- having great joy to see such a miracle, called the poor man unto him. And first showing himself joyous of God's glory so showed in the getting of his sight, and exhorting him to meekness... and to none ascribing of any part the worship to himself... nor to be proud of the people's praise... which would call him a good and a godly man thereby—at last he looked well upon his eyes... and asked whether he could never see nothing at all... in all his life before. And when as well his wife as himself affirmed fastly no, then he looked advisedly upon his eyes again... and said, 'I believe you very well; for methinketh that ye cannot see well yet.'
- "'Yes, sir,' quoth he, 'I thank God and his holy martyr, I can see now as well as any man!'
- "'Ye can?' quoth the Duke. 'What color is my gown?' Then, anon, the beggar told him.
- "'What color,' quoth he, 'is *this* man's gown?' He told him also; and so forth, without any sticking, he told him the names of all

1 *remember me*: recall 3 *about*: around 4 *a*: about 6 *warned*: notified
 7 *seek*: i.e., seek the help of 9 *seek him*: seek his help 10 *should be at*: was in
 12 *surely*: reliably // *saving*: except for 23 *the worship*: (of) the credit
 25 *looked well upon*: took a good look at 27 *fastly*: steadfastly
 28 *advisedly upon*: intently at 32 *anon*: immediately 35 *sticking*: hesitation

the colors that could be showed him. And when my lord saw that,
 he bade him walk faitour, and made him be set openly in the
 stocks. For though he could have seen suddenly by miracle the *difference*
 between diverse colors, yet could he not by the sight so
 5 suddenly tell the *names* of all these colors... but if he had known
 them before; no more than the names of all the men that he should
 suddenly see.”

“Lo, therefore I say,” quoth your friend, “who may be sure of such
 things, when such pageants be played before all the town?”

10 I remember me now what a work *I* have heard of... that was at
 Leominster in the King’s father’s days; where the prior brought
 privily a strange wench into the church, that said she was sent
 thither by God... and would not lie out of the church. And after,
 she was grated within iron grates, above in the rood loft; where it
 15 was believed she lived without any meat or drink—only by angels’
 food. And divers times she was houseled (in sight of the people) with
 a host unconsecrated... and, all the people looking upon, there was a
 device with a small hair that conveyed the host from the paten of the
 chalice... out of the prior’s hands into her mouth, as though it came
 20 alone; so that all the people, not of the town only, but also of the
 country about, took her for a very quick saint... and daily sought so
 thick to see her that many that could not come near to her cried
 out aloud, ‘Holy maiden Elizabeth, help me!’ and were fain to
 throw their offering over their fellows’ heads, for press. Now lay the
 25 prior with holy maiden Elizabeth nightly in the rood loft... till she
 was after taken out and tried in the keeping by my lady the King’s mother.
 And by the longing for meat, with voidance of that she had eaten (which
 had no saintly savor), she was perceived for no saint... and
 confessed all the matter.”

30 “In faith,” quoth I, “it had been great alms the prior and she had been
 burned together at one stake! What came of the prior?”

Quoth he, “That can I not tell; but I ween he was put to such punishment
 as the poor nun was... that had given her in penance to say

2 *bade him walk faitour*: dismissed him as an impostor

2 *made him be set openly*: had him publicly set 5 *suddenly*: promptly // *but if*: unless

6–7 *should suddenly see*: would soon be seeing 8 *may*: can

9 *pageants be played*: charades are put on 10 *remember me*: recall // *work*: production

12 *privily*: sneakily // *strange*: unknown // *wench*: young woman 13 *thither*: there

13 *lie*: lodge; dwell // *out*: outside // *after*: later

14, 25 *rood loft*: choir loft 15, 27 *meat*: food 16 *houseled*: given Communion

16 *in sight of the people*: as the people saw it 18 *small hair*: thin wire

20 *alone*: on its own 21 *country about*: surrounding areas // *very quick*: real live

22 *come*: get 23 *were fain to*: had to 24 *fellows*: companions’

24 *for press*: because of the crowdedness 26 *tried in the keeping*: tested in confinement

27 *that*: that which 28 *savor*: aroma 29 *all the matter*: the whole thing

30 *had been great alms*: would have been a very good deed if

31 *one*: the same // *came*: became 32 *ween*: expect

Ps 56:1

this verse— “Miserere mei, Deus, quoniam
conculcavit me homo”—with a great threat

1.14

that and she did so anymore, she should say the whole psalm. But as
for holy Elizabeth, I heard say she lived and fared well... and was a
5 common harlot at Calais many a fair day after—where she laughed
at the matter full merrily.”

“The more pity,” quoth I, “that she was so let pass.”

“That is truth,” quoth he. “But, now, what say you? What trust can we
have—or at the least way, what *surety* can we have—in such things,
10 when we see them feigned so shamefully in the face of the world...
so openly, and so much people abused so far... that they would not
have letted to swear, and some to jeopard their lives thereon, that
all this work was wrought by God’s own hand... till the truth
came to light, and the drab driven out of the church in the
15 devil’s name?”

“Verily,” said I, “there was abusion in the one side... and great folly
in the other side. And as that noble duke Humphrey wisely found
out the falsehood of that bisson beggar, so did that noble lady the
King’s mother prudently decipher... and found out that beastly
20 filth. And to say the truth, there was cause enough in both
these parties whereof the people might reasonably gather so much
suspicion that if they had made thereupon sufficient inquisition
and search, they could never have been so far abused. For both
might they well mistrust a beggar’s word... whom they had but
25 newly known—and well likely to lie for to win, first, favor, and after,
money—and also men might well think that a young she-saint...
was not meetly to be enshrined quick... in a monastery, among a
meinie of monks. And yet in conclusion, because no such feigned
wonders should infame God’s very miracles, his goodness shortly
30 brought them both to knowledge. And so doth his especial cure
and providence bring ever shortly such falsehood and faitery to
light, to their shame and confusion; and as he did in Bern, a great
city in Almaine, bring to knowledge the false ‘miracles’ whereby
certain friars abused the people... for which they were openly
35 burned. And so God always bringeth such false ‘miracles’ to light.”

“Nay, nay,” quoth he, “there be many such, I warrant you, that never
come to light, and are still taken for very good.”

1–2 “*Miserere . . . homo*”: “Have mercy on me, God, for man has trampled me down.”

2 *great*: big 3 *and she did so anymore*: if she ever did the same thing again

3 *should*: would have to 4 *heard say*: heard it said that

6 *at the matter*: about the whole thing // *full*: quite 9 *surety*: certainty // *in*: about

10, 28 *feigned*: faked 11 *much*: many // *abused so far*: so badly deceived

12 *letted*: hesitated // *jeopard*: stake 14 *drab*: slut (was) 16 *abusion*: deception

16, 17 *in*: on 17 *wisely*: astutely 17–18, 19 *found out*: uncovered

18 *bisson*: supposedly blind 19 *prudently*: sagaciously // *decipher*: do some detective work

22 *inquisition*: inquiry 23 *search*: investigation // *far abused*: badly deceived

27 *meetly*: appropriately // *quick*: alive 28 *meinie*: bunch // *because*: so that

29 *infame*: discredit // *very*: real; bona fide 30 *cure*: care 31 *faitery*: fakery

32 *confusion*: embarrassment 33 *Almaine*: Germany

34 *abused*: took a bad advantage of // *openly*: publicly 37 *good*: genuine

“Ye cannot very well warrant it,” quoth I. “For since God brought to light the false, feigned miracle of the priests of the idol Bel in the old time (as appeareth in the fourteenth chapter of the prophet Daniel), it is more likely that among Christian men he will suffer no such things long lie hidden. And also, how can ye warrant that *many* of those miracles be false? For while there is no doubt but many be true, and ye know not any which ye precisely know for false, ye be not sure whether *any* be such or not!”

“Marry,” quoth he, “that reason holdeth as well on the other side! For since I know not any which I precisely know for true, I know not whether *any* be true or not.”

“Nay,” quoth I, “that argument will not serve you so. For though no man bindeth you to believe that *every* thing is true that is told for a miracle—yet some there be of which ye must needs reckon yourself sure, and of which ye cannot, if ye be a Christian man, have any scruple or doubt.”

“Yea?” quoth he. “Fain would I wit which were one of those.”

“Marry,” quoth I, “all that are written in the Gospel!”

“Marry,” quoth he, “that I wot well. But them we speak not of; for they were done by God himself.”

“Why,” quoth I, “be they not so all? If ye will not agree that ye be sure of any which be told by saints... what say you by the miracles of the apostles, written by Saint Luke?”

“Nay,” quoth he, “ye mistake me yet; for I do not mean any mistrust in the miracles done of old time by God for his apostles or holy martyrs, in corroboration and setting forth of the faith. I mean only these miracles that men tell and talk of *nowadays*, to be done at those images... where these pilgrimages be—and where we see some of them ourselves... proved plainly false. And yet told for so true, and so many false shrews to affirm it, so many simple souls trust it, so much foolish folk believe it, that a man may well with reason mistrust all the remnant!”

2 *feigned*: faked 6 *while*: since 7, 10 *precisely know for*: know for a fact are
 9 *marry*: well 17 *fain would I wit*: I would love to know 18 *marry*: good heavens
 19 *marry*: of course // wot: know 21 *why*: well 22 *by*: about
 24 *ye mistake me yet*: you're still getting me wrong 28 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites
 30 *false shrews*: fraudulent scoundrels 32 *mistrust*: be skeptical of // *remnant*: rest

“Ye have,” quoth I, “more often than once spoken of a difference between the miracles done by God in old time... and these miracles that are done,

Pilgrimages were fourteen or told to be done, nowadays at
hundred years ago. pilgrimages. But surely if ye grant the

5 miracles done of ‘old’ time, we need no more for the proof of all our matter. For I trow that pilgrimages, and miracles done at them, be very old things... and not things newly begun nowadays... except ye call a thousand years ago, or fourteen hundred years ago, ‘nowadays.’ For I am very sure that so long
10 ago, and yet longer, too, did good Christian people pray to saints, and go in pilgrimage to their holy relics, and had images in great veneration; and many wonderful miracles did our Lord work for the comprobation of his high pleasure, to the conservation and increase of the devotion of his Christian people, therein—as we find
15 largely written and reported in the godly books of holy Saint Gregory, Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Saint Eusebius, Saint Basil, Saint Chrysostom, and many another old holy doctor of Christ’s church whose books were not unwritten this thousand years. And whereas ye say that of miracles many be nowadays
20 feigned, so may it be that some were then also—but neither then nor now, neither, were nor be *all* feigned. And any being true, all were they right few, sufficed for our purpose. For if God had but with one miracle declared that the thing contenteth and pleaseth him in his church, it must needs suffice for the Church against all
25 the heretics in the world that ever would bark against the Church therein. And therefore there can be no doubt in the matter where God hath declared his pleasure by so many a thousand; and that in every time, not only nowadays, but also a thousand years, or fourteen hundred years, and yet more, too, before our days. And as
30 for feigned miracles, of which ye speak so much: albeit that some such hath been, yet I verily think that neither of old time nor now, Christ among Christian people suffereth not such things to happen often, nor such delusion to last long, but shortly (to their shame, as it hath appeared in some) doth utter and make open
35 their falsehood; as himself said of all such—‘That ye whisper one in another’s ear shall be preached out aloud upon the ridge of the house roof.’”

4, 6 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites 6 *all our matter*: our whole case // *trow*: believe

8 *except*: unless 11 *had*: held 13 *comprobation*: attestation

15 *largely*: extensively 17 *old holy doctor*: early theologian

18 *were not unwritten*: did not go untranscribed 20, 21, 30 *feigned*: faked

21–22 *all . . . sufficed*: even had they been very few, would have sufficed

23 *contenteth*: is all right with 27 *where*: given that // *declared*: made known

32 *suffereth not*: does not allow

34 *as it hath appeared in*: as has been made apparent with // *utter*: reveal

34 *open*: manifest 35 *that*: that which; what

The Fifteenth Chapter

1.15

The author showeth that if of those miracles that are
told and written to be done at divers pilgrimages, and
commonly believed for very true, we certainly knew some
5 falsely feigned, yet were that no cause to mistrust the
remnant.

“**B**ut be it that among so many miracles as be daily told and
written done at divers pilgrimages... between which miracles and
others why ye put a difference, we shall, as I said before, know
10 further your mind hereafter; and be it also that of such as long
have been reputed and still taken for true, yourself undoubtedly
knew some for very false: would ye therefore think that among all
the remnant, there were never one true? What if ye find some
fair woman painted... whose color ye had went were natural?
15 Will ye never after believe that any woman in the world hath a fair
color of herself? If ye find some false flatterers that long seemed
friendly, will ye take ever after all the world for such? If some
prove stark hypocrites... whom the world would have sworn for
good and godly men, shall we therefore mistrust all others for their
20 sake, and ween there were none good at all?”
“By my troth,” quoth he, “I rode once in good company (and, to
A merry tale say the truth, *for* good company) to
Walsingham in pilgrimage, where a good
fellow’s horse so fell in halting... that he was fain to hire another...
25 and let him go loose—which was so lean and so poor, and halted so sore,
that empty as he was, he could scant keep foot with us. And when we
had went we should have left him behind, suddenly he spied a
mare—and forth he limped on three legs so lustily that his
master’s horse with four feet could scant overtake him. But
30 when he caught him and came again, he swore in great anger all
the oaths he might swear... that he would trust ‘halting Sir Thomas’
the worse while he lived.”

2 *showeth*: asserts 3, 8 *pilgrimages*: places to which pilgrimages are made
4 *certainly knew some*: knew for a fact that some were
5 *falsely feigned*: deceitfully faked // *yet were that*: that would yet be
5 *mistrust*: be skeptical of 6, 13 *remnant*: rest 11 *undoubtedly*: definitely
14, 15 *fair*: lovely 14 *painted*: to be wearing makeup 14, 27 *went*: thought
14 *were*: was 16 *some*: i.e., some to be // *false*: two-faced // *that*: who
17 *all*: everyone in 19–20 *for their sake*: on their account 20 *ween*: think
21 *by my troth*: actually; well, as a matter of fact 22 *say*: tell 24 *fell in*: started
24, 31 *halting*: hobbling; faltering 24 *was fain to hire*: had to rent 25 *sore*: badly
26 *empty*: unladen // *could scant keep foot*: had a hard time keeping up
29 *could scant overtake*: had a hard time overtaking 30 *again*: back
31 *might*: could 32 *worse*: less // *while*: as long as

“What was that ‘halting Sir Thomas’?” quoth I.

1.15

“Marry,” quoth he, “their parish priest; as he told us, ‘as lean and as poor and as halting as his horse—and as holy, too.’ But since he would while he lived mistrust the halting priest for his halting horse—if
5 I find a holy whoreson halt in hypocrisy, I shall not fail while *I* live... to trust all his fellows the worse!”

“Well,” quoth I, “ye speak merrily... but I wot well ye will do better,

A merry tale

whatsoever ye say. Nor, I am sure, though
ye see some white sapphire or beryl so well

10 counterfeited, and so set in a ring, that a right good jeweler will take it for a diamond—yet will ye not doubt, for all that, but that there be in many other rings already set right diamonds indeed. Nor ye will not mistrust Saint Peter for Judas. Nor, though the Jews were, many, so naughty... that they put Christ to death—yet ye be
15 wiser, I wot well, than the gentlewoman was... which in talking once with my father, when she heard say that our Lady was a Jew, first could not believe it, but said, ‘What? Ye mock, iwis! I pray you, tell truth!’ And when it was so fully affirmed that she at last believed it—‘And was she a Jew,’ quoth she, ‘so help me God and
20 halidom, I shall love her the worse while I live!’ I am sure ye will not do so... nor mistrust all for some, neither men nor miracles.”

The Sixteenth Chapter

The author showeth that whoso would inquire should soon find that at pilgrimages be daily many great and
25 undoubted miracles wrought and well known. And specially he speaketh of the great and open miracle showed at Our Lady of Ipswich of late upon the daughter of Sir Roger Wentworth, Knight.

30 “**A**nd as for the point that we spoke of concerning miracles done in our days at divers images where these pilgrimages be: yet could I tell you some such done so openly, so far from all cause

2 *marry*: indeed 4, 5, 20 *while*: as long as 6 *fellows*: i.e., fellow priests
6, 20 *worse*: less 7 *merrily*: wittily 7, 15 *wot*: know 12 *right*: genuine
13, 21 *for*: on account of 14 *naughty*: wicked 15 *wiser*: more sensible
16 *heard say*: heard it said 17 *first*: at first // *ye mock, iwis*: surely you are joking
19 *and was she*: if she was 20 *halidom*: all things holy // *so*: that
23 *showeth*: asserts // *whoso*: whoever // *inquire*: do any investigating
24, 30 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites 26 *open*: done in public
26 *showed*: performed 27 *of late*: recently 30 *divers*: various

of suspicion, and thereto testified in such sufficient wise, that
 he might seem almost mad that, hearing the whole matter, will
 mistrust the miracles. Among which I durst boldly tell you for one...
 the wonderful work of God that was, within these few years,
 5 wrought in the house of a right worshipful knight, Sir Roger Wentworth,
 upon divers of his children, and especially one of his
 daughters—a very fair young gentlewoman of twelve years of age, in
 marvelous manner vexed and tormented by our ghostly enemy the
 devil; her mind alienated and raving, with despising and blasphemy
 10 of God, and hatred of all hallowed things... with knowledge and
 perceiving of the hallowed from the unhallowed, all were she nothing
 warned thereof. And after that... moved in her own mind, and
 admonished by the will of God, to go to Our Lady of Ipswich. In
 the way of which pilgrimage, she prophesied and told many
 15 things done and said at the same time in other places... which
 were proved true; and many things said lying in her trance...
 of such wisdom and learning... that right cunning men highly
 marveled to hear of so young an unlearned maiden, when herself
 wist not what she said, such things uttered and spoken... as well-learned
 20 men might have missed with a long study; and finally,
 being brought and laid before the image of our blessed Lady, was
 there, in the sight of many worshipful people, so grievously tormented,
 and in face, eyes, look, and countenance so grisly
 changed, with her mouth drawn aside, and her eyes laid out
 25 upon her cheeks, that it was a terrible sight to behold.
 “And after many marvelous things... at the same time showed
 upon divers persons by the devil (through God’s sufferance): as
 well all the remnant as the maiden herself, in the presence of all
 the company, restored to their good state, perfectly cured and
 30 suddenly.
 “And in this matter no pretext of begging, no suspicion of
 feigning, no possibility of counterfeiting, no simpleness in
 the seers; her father and mother, right honorable and rich, sore
 abashed to see such chances in their children; the witnesses...
 35 great number, and many of great worship, wisdom, and good
 experience; the maiden herself too young to feign; and the fashion

1 *thereto*: in addition; also // *testified*: testified to; attested
 4 *wonderful*: astonishing 5 *right worshipful*: very distinguished
 6, 27 *divers*: several 6 *especially*: in particular 7 *fair*: lovely
 8 *marvelous manner*: a terrible way // *ghostly*: spiritual
 9 *alienated*: possessed 10, 11 *hallowed*: blessed 11 *perceiving*: distinguishing
 11–12 *all . . . thereof*: when she had been given no information as to which was which
 13 *admonished*: enjoined // *in*: along 17 *right cunning*: very learned
 18 *of*: from 19 *wist*: knew // *uttered*: disclosed 21 *image*: statue
 22 *worshipful*: reputable 26 *marvelous*: terrifying // *showed*: visited
 27 *sufferance*: refraining from preventing all this 28 *the remnant*: the rest; these others
 30 *suddenly*: instantaneously 32 *feigning*: fakery // *counterfeiting*: subterfuge
 32 *simpleness*: gullibility 33–34 *sore abashed*: extremely embarrassed
 34 *chances in*: things happen to 35 *worship*: prestige
 36 *feign*: be putting on an act // *fashion*: behavior

itself too strange for any man to feign. And the end of the matter
 virtuous: the virgin so moved in her mind with the miracle...
 that she forthwith, for aught her father could do, forsook the world
 and professed religion in a very good and godly company at the
 5 Minoress, where she hath lived well and graciously ever since."

1.16

The Seventeenth Chapter

The messenger layeth forth objections against miracles
 done at pilgrimages... of which he confesseth many to be
 true. But he layeth causes and reasons whereby he saith that
 10 many men be moved to believe and think that those miracles
 that be done there be done by the devil, to set our hearts upon
 idolatry by the worshipping of images instead of God.

"**B**ut, now, albeit, as I said, that I might allege you this miracle,
 and prove it you in such wise that I wot well ye would be as
 15 far out of all doubt thereof... as ye would be deep in the marvel of
 the miracle—and peradventure divers others could I show you
 done of late at divers pilgrimages, and prove *them* well, too—yet
 would I fain first hear of you what distinction and difference is
 that that ye make, and wherefore ye make it, between the miracles
 20 done of old time and these that be nowadays done at these
 pilgrimages."

"Sir," quoth he, "somewhat, a little, I touched it in the beginning,
 and made, in manner, a glance thereat. But loath were I to hit it with
 a full shot and a sharp, as I have seen some with such reasons
 25 cleave the prick in twain... that they seemed to bear over the butt and
 all. Which reasons I would be loath in so sore manner to allege,
 lest I might haply give you some occasion to think that
 either I set to somewhat of mine own... or else, at the leastwise,
 liked well that side and were a favorer of that faction."

30 "Nay, nay," quoth I, "fear not that, hardily; for neither am I so
 suspicious to mistrust that one thinketh evil because he defendeth

1 *strange*: abnormal // *for any man to feign*: for anyone to fake
 5 *Minoress*: convent of the Poor Clares // *well and graciously*: very holily
 8, 17, 21 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites // *confesseth*: acknowledges
 13 *might*: could // *allege*: cite 14 *wot*: know 18 *fain*: like to // *of*: from
 19 *wherefore*: why 22 *touched*: touched on 23 *in manner*: so to speak
 23 *a glance thereat*: an oblique stab at it
 24 *a full shot and a sharp*: a full-force and direct shot 24, 26 *reasons*: arguments
 25 *cleave the prick in twain*: split the target in two // *bear*: knock // *butt*: support
 26 *sore*: strong (a) // *allege*: adduce 27 *haply*: perhaps
 28 *set to*: was adding in // *somewhat*: something 30 *hardily*: by no means
 31 *to*: as to // *mistrust*: suspect // *one*: someone // *evil*: badly

the worse part well by way of argument and reasoning...

and also, I trust that all their shots shall be so far too feeble to bear over the butt... that few of them shall touch the mark—many too faint to pierce the paper. And some too high... and some too short... and some walk too wide of the butt by a bow! And therefore I require you spare not to bring forth all that ever ye have heard, or that ye think *may* be said, in the matter.”

“Sir,” quoth he, “since ye can hear it so indifferently, I shall not spare to speak it. And surely, to begin with, all that I think true... I will not fail to confess. For albeit that I have long stuck with you... to withstand *any* credence to be given to miracles done nowadays—in which I have much the longer stuck because of some whom I have known, ere this, so far from the belief of any miracles at all... that in good faith, they put me half in doubt whether they believe that there were any God at all... if they durst for dread and shame have said all that they seemed to think—yet, to say the truth, I never heard anything said so sore therein... that ever moved me to think that any reason would bear the importunate mistrust of them that among so many an open miracle as is daily in divers places done... would ween that none at all were true. But verily, as I began a little to touch in the beginning, whether these miracles be made by God, and for good saints, or by the devil for our deceit and delusion—albeit I believe, and ever will, as the Church doth—yet some men, among, some such things say therein... that I am driven to do as I do in other articles of the faith: lean fast unto belief, for any reason that I find to make them answer with. For first they take for a ground that the devil may do miracles. Or if we list not to suffer them called by that name...

Miracles

the matter shall be thereby nothing amended; for if we will have only called by the name of ‘miracles’ things by God done above nature—yet will we not deny but that God suffereth the devil to work *wonders*... which the people cannot discern from miracles. And therefore when they see them, ‘miracles’ shall they call them, and for miracles shall they take them. Now, since it so is that the devil *may* do

1 *worse part*: less good side 2 *bear*: knock 3 *butt*: support 5 *require*: ask that
 7 *may*: could 8 *indifferently*: dispassionately 10 *confess*: admit (that I think it true)
 11 *stuck* . . . *given*: persisted in arguing with you against the giving of *any* credence
 13 *stuck*: remained resistant
 16 *if* . . . *said*: if dread and shame did not keep them from daring to say
 17–18 *so* . . . *moved*: on that subject that was so weighty as to move
 18 *reason*: rational argument // *bear*: support
 19 *importunate mistrust*: relentless skepticism // *them that*: those who
 20 *ween*: believe 21 *verily*: truthfully // *touch*: get at 22 *good*: bona fide
 24 *among*: now and then 25 *therein*: on that subject // *in*: with regard to
 26 *lean*: stick; hold // *for any reason*: i.e., for lack of any argument
 27, 35 *may*: can 28 *list not to suffer them*: don’t want to let them be
 29 *the* . . . *amended*: that will not get us anywhere 33 *discern*: distinguish

such things: whereby shall we be sure that *God* doth them? And since the devil *may* do them, and we be not sure that *God* doth them: why may not we as well believe that the devil doth them?"

- "Marry," said I, "ye told me that ye set naught by logic... but
 5 now ye play the logician outright! Howbeit, that argument men may turn on the other side, and say that since God may do them much better than the devil, and we be not sure that the devil doth them, why should we not rather believe that *God* doth them—which may do them better? And much more reason it is where a
 10 wonderful work is wrought... there to ascribe it to God, the Master
The devil doth nothing but of all masteries, rather than the devil,
by sufferance. that can do nothing but by sufferance...
 except we see some cause that cannot suffer
 that work to be reckoned God's."
- 15 "Well," quoth he, "then is it reason that we show you some such
Ex 20:4 cause. It is," quoth he, "cause enough... in
Ps 114:1; 115:4-12 that we see that God hath in *Scripture*
forbidden such imagery—and that under
 20 great malediction; as in the law which yourself spoke of before,
 'Non facies tibi sculptile.' And in the psalm 'In exitu Israel de
 Aegypto,' where he first by the mouth of the prophet describeth the
 folly of such as worshippeth those images... that 'hath ears, and cannot
 hear,' 'hands, and cannot feel,' 'feet, and cannot go,' 'mouth, and
 cannot speak.' All which absurdities and unreasonable follies appeareth
 25 as well in the worship of our images as in the paynims' idols. And
 after, he sheweth the maledictions that shall fall thereupon, saying,
 'Like might they be to them—all such as make them, and all such as
 putteth their trust in them.' And forthwith he declareth in whom
good men have their trust... and the profit that proceedeth thereupon...
 30 saying, 'Domus Israel speravit in Domino; adiutor eorum et protector
 eorum est' ('The house of Israel hath put their trust in our Lord; the
 helper and defender of them is he'). Now, when the words of God be
 clear, openly and plainly upon this side—what reason is it to believe the
 comments and glosses of men such as ye brought forth right now...

2, 6, 9 *may*: can 4 *marry*: goodness // *set naught by*: have no use for
 9 *which*: who // *much more reason it is*: it makes much better sense
 10 *wonderful*: wondrous 11 *masteries*: wondrous feats
 12 *by sufferance*: i.e., without God's letting him do it 13 *except*: unless
 13–14 *suffer that work*: allow for that work 15 *is it reason that we*: reason calls for us to
 20 "*Non facies tibi sculptile*": "You shall not carve for yourself a graven image."
 20–21 "*In exitu Israel de Aegypto*": "When Israel went forth from Egypt."
 22 *folly*: foolishness 23 *go*: walk 24 *unreasonable*: irrational // *follies*: idiocies
 25 *paynims*: pagans' 33 *reason is it*: sense does it make
 34 *comments*: commentaries // *brought forth*: brought up // *right*: just

wherewith ye would wind out against the true texts of God? What
 should we give credence to the example of men's doings against
 the plain commandment of God's writings? And when that
 only Christ is our Savior and our Mediator to bring our nature
 5 again to God... and our only proctor and advocate before his Father...
 and may help us best, and will help us most: what shall we make
 either our Lady or any other creature our advocate, or pray to them—
 which of likelihood hear us not? For there can none of them be
 present at so many places at once... as they be called upon. And if
 10 they were, yet are they no nearer us than God himself—nor so fain
 would that we did well as he that died for us. And therefore when
 we not only do them reverence (which I were content were done
 them... for God's sake, as ye said before), but also *pray* to them—we
 do Christ and God great injury. For if we pray to them as mediators
 15 and advocates for us, we take from Christ his office and give it them.
 If we ask help and health of them—then make we them
 plain *gods*, and betake to them the power of the Godhead.
 For only *God* is it that giveth all good, as witnesseth Saint James:
 'Every good and very perfect gift cometh from above, descending
 20 from the Father of lights.' And surely if we consider how we
 behave us to them—though ye say that all the honor given to saints
 redoundeth unto God (since it is done, as ye say, not for their own
 sakes, but for his), yet would not I ween... God be well content that we
 should for his sake do to any creature like honor as to himself.
 25 For Scripture saith that he will not give his glory from him, nor
 to any other creature like honor as to himself. And therefore
 the schools, as I hear say, devise a treble difference in worshipping,
 Dulia calling the one *dulia*, the reverence or
 Hyperdulia worship that man doth to man, as the
 30 *Latria* bondsman to the lord; the second, *hyperdulia*,
 that a man doth to a more excellent
 creature, as to angels or saints; the third, *latria*, the veneration,
 honor, and adoration that creatures doth only to God. In which
 of these parts ye put the worshipping of saints, I am neither so
 35 well seen therein to tell nor so curious greatly to care. But this I see

1 *wind out against*: get around 1, 6 *what*: why 2 *against*: as opposed to
 3 *when*: given 4 *only Christ*: Christ alone 5 *again*: back // *proctor*: procurator
 6 *may*: can 10–11 *so fain would that we did well*: so ardently want us to do well
 12–13 *I were content were done them*: would be fine with me that they be done
 14 *injury*: insult 16 *ask . . . of them*: ask of them help and healing
 19–20: James 1:17. 23 *would not I ween*: I would not think // *be*: is
 25–26: See Isaiah 42:8. 27 *schools*: universities // *treble*: threefold
 29 *worship*: obeisance 34 *worshipping*: veneration
 34–35 *so well seen therein*: well enough versed in them

well: If any of all these three kinds of worship be better than other...
 the images hath it. For they have all that ever we can do. For what
 do we to God when we do worship him in that fashion that they call
latria... but we do the same to saints and images both? If it stand
 5 in kneeling... we kneel to saints and their images. If in praying...
 we pray as bitterly to them as to God. If in censuring and setting up
 of candles... we cense them also—and set some saint seven candles
 against God's one. So that whatsoever fashion of worshipping *latria*
 be, the same is as largely done to saints and images as to God. And
 10 this not unto images only—which, though they have no life, have
 yet some shape and fashion after man—but, as men ween, unto pigs'
 bones also, sometimes. For what reverent honor is there daily done
 under the name and opinion of a saint's relic... to some old
 rotten bone that was haply sometime, as Chaucer saith, a bone of
 15 some 'holy Jew's sheep'! See we not that some one saint's head is showed in
 three places? And some one whole saint's body lieth in diverse countries,
 if we believe the lies of the people. And in both the places is the one
 body worshipped, whereas the one or the other is false... and one body
 mistaken for another—an evil man, haply, for a good. And yet
 20 will the priests of both places take offerings and toll men thither
 with miracles, too. In which case either must ye say that the miracles
 of the one place be false and feigned... or else that miracles make not your
 matter good, nor prove your pilgrimages true. And yet might all
 this gear be much the better borne if it were true that ye defend
 25 the things with... when ye say that in worshipping of saints and
 images, men worship neither the one nor the other as gods, but
 the images for the saints and the saints for God. But, now, as it
 seemeth, the matter is in deed far otherwise. For the people pray to
 the saints for their *necessities*—putting, thereto, trust for their petitions
 30 in the saints themselves, as though *God* gave it not, but *they*.

Note

And in the *images* put the people their
 trust instead of the saints themselves. For albeit
 that it might stand with reason, as ye have answered me, that, presupposed
 the miracles in these pilgrimages to be done by God, the

1 *worship*: veneration 2, 4, etc. *images*: statues 2 *hath* / *have*: get
 3, 26 *worship*: venerate 4 *stand*: consist 6 *bitterly*: intensely 9 *largely*: liberally
 11 *some shape and fashion after man*: some humanlike shape and features
 11 *ween*: suspect 13–15: See the prologue to the Pardoner's Tale.
 14, 19 *haply*: perhaps 14 *sometime*: at one time 15 *showed*: displayed
 20 *toll*: lure 22 *the one place*: i.e., the one place or the other // *feigned*: faked
 22–23 *make not your matter good*: do not substantiate your contention
 23 *true*: legitimate 24 *gear*: stuff 25 *worshipping*: venerating
 28 *deed*: fact; actuality 29 *thereto*: moreover 33 *with*: to

people might then with reason go seek and visit such places as
 God by miracle declared that he would have himself or his holy
 saints sought and honored in—yet, now, this answer toucheth
 the point but in part, and matcheth not the whole matter. For the
 5 people do not only visit these places and there do all the worship
 to the saints that they can possibly do to God (with hope of their
 help from the saints themselves... which they should well wit only to be
 given by God), and thus, by this demeanor, make the saints God's
 fellows—that is to say, the servants matches with their Master,
 10 and the creatures mates to the Maker—but also use themselves in as
 religious fashion, and as fervent affection, to the images of stone or
 tree... as either to saint or God. And plainly take these images for the
 saints themselves and for God himself. And put in these images of their
 pilgrimages their full hope and whole trust, that they should put in
 15 God.

“Which, besides that I have said before, appeareth well in this:
 that they will make comparisons between Our Lady of Ipswich
 and Our Lady of Walsingham... as weening that one image more of
 power than the other; which they would never do but if instead of
 20 *our Lady* they put their trust in the image itself. And the people in
 speaking of our Lady... ‘Of all Our Lady’s,’ saith one, ‘I love best Our
 Lady of Walsingham.’ ‘And I,’ saith the other, ‘Our Lady of Ipswich.’ In
 which words what meaneth she but her love and affection to
 the *stock* that standeth in the chapel of Walsingham or Ipswich?

25 “What say you when the people speak of this fashion in their pains
 and perils: ‘Help, Holy Cross of Bradman!’ ‘Help, our dear Lady of
 Walsingham!’ Doth it not plainly appear that either they trust in the
 images in Christ’s stead and our Lady’s—letting Christ and our Lady
 go—or take, at the leastwise, those images so... that they ween they
 30 were verily, the one Christ, the other our Lady herself? And so, every
 way, the faith and devotion withdrawn from God, that should have
 it, and our hearts by these images blinded and set upon the dead
 stocks and stones! Now see the good fruit, also, that followeth thereupon.
 I let pass over the faistry and falsehood that is therein used among—
 35 sometimes by the priests, sometimes by beggars—in feigning of false
 miracles. Look what devotion men come thither with. *With* the

1 *with*: in accord with // *seek*: seek out 2 *declared*: made known
 3 *sought*: approached 3–4 *toucheth the point but in part*: is only partly on-target
 4 *matcheth not the whole matter*: does not take care of the whole problem
 5 *worship*: reverence 7 *wit*: know 8 *demeanor*: behavior
 9 *fellows*: colleagues; confreres // *matches*: peers 10 *mates*: equals
 10 *use*: conduct 11 *as fervent*: i.e., show as fervent an
 11, 12, etc. *image(s)*: statue(s) 11 *of*: i.e., made of 12 *tree*: wood
 13 *of*: at 14 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites 16 *that*: what
 18, 29 *ween(ing)*: think(ing) 19 *but if*: unless
 24 *stock*: tree stump (as a contemptuous term for “statue”) 25 *of*: in
 28 *in Christ’s stead and our Lady’s*: instead of in Christ and our Lady
 30 *every*: either 31 *withdrawn*: withheld // *that*: who 32 *dead*: lifeless
 34 *faistry*: fraud // *falsehood*: deception // *used*: perpetrated
 34 *among*: on occasion 35 *feigning*: making up

most come they that most abuse themselves; such, I mean, as most
 trust have, and blind faith, in these blind images. But the *most*
 part that cometh... cometh for no devotion at all, but only for
 good company, to babble thitherward and drink drunk there... and
 5 dance and reel homeward. And yet here is not all. For I tell you
 nothing now of many a naughty pack, many a fleck and his make,
 that maketh their images' meetings at these wholesome hallows.
 And many that seemeth an honest housewife at home... hath help of a
 bawd to bring her to mischief as she walketh abroad about her
 10 pilgrimages. I heard once, when I was a child, the good Scottish
 Friar Donald friar Father Donald, whom I reckon surely
 for a saint... if there be any in heaven—I
 heard him preach at Paul's Cross that 'our Lady was a virgin, and
 yet at her pilgrimages be made many a foul meeting.' And loud
 15 *Mark this, ye Londoners!* he cried out, 'Ye men of London, gang on
 yourselves with your wives to Willesden, in
 the devil's name, or else *keep* them at *heme* with you—with sorrow!'
 And surely so... many good men ween it *were* best, considering that
 those voyages be but wandering-about vanity or superstitious
 20 devotion—and the next door to idolatry, when men have their
 affections instead of *God* bound to *blocks* and *stones*! And, now,
 since that this gear is such, what marvel is it though (as I said
 before) the devil be glad to give attendance thereon, and do for his
 part what he may to help his own devices forward? Or what
 25 marvel is it though God in this accursed world, when we fall from
 him to others, and from the honor of himself to his saints; when
 we do as the paynims did—instead of God, worship maumets—
 and all this by falling to follow men's glosses before his own
 texts; what wonder is it though God again serve us as he served
 30 them... and suffer the devil delude us as he did them, and make us
 lean to false *miracles* as we fall willfully to false *gods*? Thus say
 they," quoth he, "that speak on that side. And yet much more than I
 can call to mind. But surely, since ye willed me to forbear nothing, I
 have, as I could, rather set to somewhat... not of mine own opinion,
 35 but of mine own invention... than anything left out that I

1 *most come they that*: majority come those who // *abuse*: delude
 2 *most*: most numerous 4 *thitherward*: on the way there // *drink*: i.e., drink themselves
 6 *naughty pack*: wicked set of people // *fleck*: lowlife // *make*: paramour; illicit lover
 7 *images*': ostensible // *hallows*: shrines 8 *honest*: chaste; virtuous
 9 *bawd*: procurer 13 *Paul's Cross*: the outdoor pulpit at Old St. Paul's Cathedral, in London
 14 *pilgrimage*: pilgrimage sites 15 *gang*: go 17 *heme*: home (Scottish accent)
 17 *with sorrow*: or you'll be sorry 18 *ween*: think // *were*: would be
 19 *voyages*: pilgrimages 22 *gear*: stuff 22, 25, 29 *though*: if 24 *may*: can
 24 *help his own devices forward*: advance his own schemes 27 *paynims*: pagans
 27 *maumets*: graven images 28 *falling*: starting 29 *again*: in return
 29 *serve(d)*: treat(ed) 30 *suffer*: let 31 *lean to*: fall for 33 *surely*: assuredly
 33 *willed*: wanted // *forbear nothing*: hold nothing back
 34 *set to somewhat*: added in a little // *opinion*: thinking 35 *invention*: thinking up

could remember which I had ever heard any man lay to prove the miracles done at pilgrimages to be uncertain by whom they be wrought—or, rather, to prove that they should not be God’s miracles, but the devil’s wonders.”

1.17

5

The Eighteenth Chapter

The author deferreth the answer to the aforesaid objections... and first by Scripture he proveth that the church of Christ cannot err in any necessary article of Christ’s faith. And in this chapter be those words of Christ specially

10

touched, “Super cathedram Mosi sederunt [etc.]: quae dicunt vobis, facite; quae autem faciunt, nolite facere,” concerning the authority of the Church.

15

“Surely,” quoth I, “for my part, I can you very good thank; for ye have not faintly defended your part, as though it were a corrupted advocate... that would by collusion handle his client’s matter feebly for the pleasure of his adversary, but ye have said therein... I cannot tell whether as much as any man *may* say, but certainly, I suppose, as much as ye either have heard any man say or can yourself say. And at the leastwise much more than I have heard of any

20

man else... or could have said of myself. And undoubtedly (as ye spoke of shooting, in the beginning), this gear, how near it goeth to the prick, we shall see after. But this I promise you: it would fain bear over the butt and all. For if it might hold and be bidden by, and were as well able to be proved true... as I trust to prove it false, the butt

25

we shot at were quite gone... for any surety that we could reckon of our faith and Christendom. But, now, to come to the point... Since it is agreed already, between us, that at these images and pilgrimages, ‘miracles’ be there... either showed by God, for the comprobatation of his pleasure therein, or wonders wrought by the devil, for our

30

delusion and damnation: if it may either appear to us that they be not done by the devil... then will it well follow that they be done

9–10 *specially touched*: discussed in particular

10–11: “On the chair of Moses sit . . . : what they say, do; what they do, don’t do” (Mt 23:2–3).

13 *surely*: assuredly // *can you very good thank*: thank you very sincerely

15 *advocate*: defense attorney 17 *may*: could 19 *of*: from 20 *of myself*: on my own

20 *as*: since 21 *gear*: stuff 22 *prick*: bull’s-eye // *after*: later

22–23 *it . . . all*: i.e., in hitting bull’s eye it would have to knock over the support and all

23 *might*: could // *bidden*: abided 24 *butt*: target 25 *were*: would be

25 *quite*: entirely // *surety that we could reckon*: sureness that we could count on having

26 *Christendom*: Christianity 27 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites 28 *showed*: performed

28 *comprobatation*: confirmation 30 *may*: can // *appear*: be made evident

by God; or if it be proved to be done by God for the good of his church... then will it be clear enough that they be no wonders wrought by the devil, to the deceit of Christian people. And since that either other of these parts proved... implieth the reproof of
5 your purpose, I will assay to show, and trust right well to prove you, the truth of our side... by some one of these ways, or, peradventure, by both: that is to wit, as well in proving that *God* doth these miracles... as in reprovng and confuting that they should be done by the devil. And first would I fain meet with your objections and
10 answer them forthwith, while they be fresh, saving that meseemeth better for the while to defer them... forasmuch as some things there be whereupon it will be requisite that we first be both agreed; without which we were likely to walk wide in words and run all at riot, so loose that our matter could neither have
15 ground, order, nor end.
“Now, if I were in this matter to dispute with a paynim... that would make the question between their miracles and ours: albeit I should have a clear matter in the end, yet must it needs be a long matter, and much intricated, ere it should come at the end. And whole books would it
20 hold, both the confuting of theirs... and unto them the assertion of our own—especially for that they receive not our Scripture... and between them and us nothing common to ground upon but reason. And if we should dispute with a Jew, less labor should we have, since that we should have with him, though he deny the New
25 Testament, yet reason and the Old Testament agreed upon—wherein we should not vary for the text... but for the sentence and understanding. For therein we should have him stiffly withstand us.
“But, now, since we shall in our matter dispute and reason with those that agree themselves for Christian men, our dispicions are so much
30 the shorter... in that we must needs agree together in more things. For we must agree in reason where faith refuseth it not; and, over that, we shall agree upon the whole corpus of Scripture—as well the New Testament as the Old. But in the interpretation we may, peradventure, stick. Is it not so?”

4 *other*: the one or the other // *reproof*: disproof 5 *purpose*: proposition
5 *assay*: attempt // *show*: demonstrate 8 *reproving*: disproving 9 *fain*: want to
9 *meet with*: tackle 13–14 *walk wide in words*: argue at cross purposes
14 *all at riot*: completely wild 14, 18, 28 *matter*: case 15 *ground*: basis
15 *order*: procedure // *end*: conclusion 16 *in*: on // *paynim*: pagan // *that*: who
19 *much intricated*: very involved // *at the end*: to a conclusion 20 *hold*: take up
20 *assertation*: making 21 *for that*: since // *receive*: accept 22 *common*: in common
22 *ground upon*: base (anything) on 26 *vary*: differ; have disagreements // *for*: about
26 *sentence and understanding*: meaning and interpretation 28 *reason*: argue
29 *agree themselves for*: identify as // *dispicions*: discussions 34 *stick*: hit a snag

“Yes,” quoth he.

“Well,” quoth I, “is there any other thing wherein ye think that we shall vary... but the interpretation of the Scripture?”

“Not that I remember,” quoth he, “except the conclusion itself whereupon we talk—as of the worshipping of images, or praying to saints—in which men think there can be no great question... if the Scripture

That that was said to the be well interpreted.”

apostles was said to their successors. “Ye do,” quoth I, “agree that such things as are mentioned in the Gospel... spoken by

Christ unto Saint Peter and other his apostles and disciples... were not only said to themselves, nor only *for* themselves, but to them for their successors in Christ’s flock... and, by them, to us all; that is to wit, every man as shall appertain to his part?”

“Whereby mean you that?” quoth he.

Mt 5:20; 19:17–23

“I mean,” quoth I, “as, for example, when he said, ‘Nisi abundaverit iusticia vestra

plus quam scribarum et Phariseorum, non intrabitis in regnum caelorum’ (‘Except your justice abound and exceed the justice of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall never come in heaven’); and where he saith, ‘If thou wilt enter into the kingdom of heaven, keep the commandments’—did not he say such things to them for all Christian men that should come after?”

“I think yes,” quoth he, “for the second word, concerning the commandments.

But as for the first, that their justice should be better than the justice of the scribes and Pharisees... peradventure he spoke specially to his apostles themselves—that they should not be like the scribes and Pharisees, which commanded others many things... and did nothing themselves.”

“That is in my mind,” quoth I, “well taken; and so doth holy Saint Augustine expound it. But, since ye think he said that word to his apostles specially, rather than to all his whole flock: whether think you that he said it only to them, or else to all others, also, that should after come in their places and succeed them in office?”

3 vary: differ 5 *worshipping*: venerating 7 *well*: rightly

15 *whereby mean you that*: what do you mean by that 19, 25, 26 *justice*: righteousness

24 *word*: statement 27, 32 *specially*: specifically 28 *which*: who

31 *said that word*: addressed that statement 32 *all his whole*: his whole entire

“Nay, before God,” quoth he, “to all the bishops he said it—and prelates and spiritual rulers of his church... that ever shall be in the Church—forbidding them to bind and lay upon other poor men’s backs importunable burdens... to the bearing whereof themselves will not once put forth a finger.”

“Very well said,” quoth I. “What think you, then, of that he said, ‘Do ye such things as they bid you do; but do not as ye see them do’?”

“In that would our Lord,” quoth he, “that all the people should do all that the prelates should command... as far as was commanded in the Law, by

God; but he meant no further. And therefore he said that they sat ‘upon the chair of Moses’... and he willed that they should for *that* cause be obeyed. And therein

he meant in such things only as they should command... that were by God commanded the people... in the law given to Moses. And that Christian men, in like wise, obey the bishops and prelates... commanding only such things as himself hath commanded his people in his Gospel and his own law.”

“And in nothing else?” quoth I. “What meaneth it, then, that our Lord, in the parable of the Samaritan bearing the wounded man into the inn (of his

Church), and delivering him to the host after that himself had dressed his wounds with ‘wine and oil’ and left with the host the two groats (of the two Testaments), promised the host

besides: that whatsoever the host would bestow upon him more, he would, when he came again, recompense him therefor? And also, in

that place that we spoke of, our Savior said that the scribes and Pharisees besides the law of Moses (on whose seat they sat)... did lay great fardels,

and fast bound them, on other men’s backs... to the bearing whereof they would not move a finger themselves; and yet, for all that, he bade the people do what their prelates would bid them...

though the burden were heavy... and let not to do it though they should see the bidders do clean the contrary. For which he added, ‘But as they *do*... do not you.’”

“By our Lady,” quoth he, “I like not this gloss! For it maketh all for the

4 *importunable*: onerous 16, 20 *himself*: he himself 19 *bearing*: carrying
 20, 22, 23 *host*: innkeeper 22 *groats*: coins 23 *bestow upon*: spend on
 24 *again*: back // *therefor*: for that 27 *great fardels*: big packs
 31 *let not*: not omit // *though*: even if 32 *bidders*: people giving the orders
 32 *clean the contrary*: the exact opposite 34 *gloss*: interpretation

bonds by which the laws of the Church bind us to more ado...

than the *Jews* were, almost, with Moses' law! And I wot well *Christ*

Mt 11:28; Acts 15:10; Gal 5:13; said, 'Come to me... ye that be overcharged...

Rom 8:21; Jas 2:12 and I shall refresh you.' And his *apostles*

5 said that the bare law of Moses—besides

the ceremonies that were set to by the scribes and the Pharisees—

were more than ever they were able to bear and fulfill; and therefore

Christ came to call us into a law of liberty. And that was in taking

away the band of those weary ceremonial laws. And therefore

10 saith our Savior of the law that he calleth us unto—'My yoke,' saith

Mt 11:30 he, 'is fit and easy, and my burden but

light.' Whereby it appeareth that he meant

to take away the strait yoke and put on a more easy, and to take off

the heavy burden and lay on a lighter. Which he had not done if he

15 would lade us with a fardelful of men's laws... more than a cart can

carry away."

"The laws of Christ's church," quoth I, "be made by *himself* and his

Holy Spirit... for the governance of his people—and be not, in

hardness and difficulty of keeping, anything like to the laws

20 of Moses. And thereof durst I, for need, make yourself judge. For

if ye bethink you well... I ween if ye were at this age now to choose,

you would rather be bound to many of the laws of Christ's

The laws made by the Church church... than to the circumcision alone.

are of less difficulty than Nor, to as much ease as we ween that

25 *the laws made by Christ.* Christ called us, yet be not the laws that

have been made by his church of half the

pain, nor half the difficulty, that his own be... which himself

putteth in the Gospel, though we set aside the counsels. It is, I trow,

more hard not to swear at all... than not to forswear; to forbear

30 each angry word than not to kill; *continual* watch and prayer...

than a few days appointed. Then, what an anxiety and solicitude

is there in the forbearing of every idle word! What a hard threat,

after the worldly account, for a small matter! Never was there, almost,

so sore a word said unto the Jews by Moses... as is to us by Christ

35 in that word alone... where he saith that we shall of every idle

3 *overcharged*: overburdened 5 *the bare law of Moses*: just the law of Moses by itself

5 *besides*: apart from 6 *ceremonies*: observances // *set to*: added 9 *band*: bond

9 *weary*: wearisome 11 *fit*: made-to-fit 12 *appeareth*: is made clear

13 *strait*: tight-fitting 15 *fardelful*: sackful 21, 24 *ween*: think 28 *though*: even if

28–31: See Matthew 5:21–22, 33–37; and Luke 18:1; 21:36. 28 *trow*: think

29 *forswear*: commit perjury 30 *watch*: vigil-keeping 31–35: See Matthew 12:36–37.

32 *hard*: severe 33 *after the worldly account*: from an earthly point of view

33 *matter*: thing 34 *sore*: distressing // *word said*: thing said

35 *word*: statement

word give account at the Day of Judgment. What say ye, then, by
Mt 19:3–9 divorces restrained, and liberty of divers
 wives withdrawn, where they had
 liberty to wed for their pleasure... if they cast a fantasy to any that they
 5 took in the war?"

"One of that ware is enough," quoth he, "to *make* any one man war!"

"Now, that is merrily said," quoth I—"but though one eye were enough
 for a fletcher... yet is he, for store, content to keep twain; and would
 though they were sometime sore both... and should put him to some
 10 pain. What ease, also, call you this: that we bound to abide all
 sorrow and shameful death, and all martyrdom, upon pain of perpetual
 damnation, for the profession of our faith? Trow ye that these easy
 words of his 'easy yoke' and 'light burden' were not as well spoken to his
 apostles as to you? And yet what ease called he them to? Called he not
 15 them to watching, fasting, praying, preaching, walking; hunger,
 thirst, cold, and heat; beating, scourging, imprisonment, painful
 and shameful death? The ease of his yoke standeth not in *bodily* ease,
 nor the lightness of his burden standeth not in the slackness of any
bodily pain (except we be so wanton... that whereas himself had
 20 not heaven without pain, we look to come thither with play!), but

Look not to come to heaven it standeth in the sweetness of *hope*... whereby
with play. we feel in our pain a pleasant taste of
Note heaven. *This* is the thing, as holy Saint
 Gregory Nazianzen declareth, that refresheth

25 men that are laden and maketh our yoke easy and our burden
 light; not any delivering from the laws of the Church—or from
 any good temporal laws, either—into a lewd liberty of slothful
 rest. For that were not an *easy* yoke, but a pulling of the head *out* of
 the yoke! Nor it were not a *light* burden... but *all* the burden
 30 *discharged*—contrary to the words of Saint Paul and Saint Peter
 both... which as well understood the words of their Master as these
 men do, and as a thing consonant and well agreeable therewith do
 command us obedience to our superiors and rulers, one and other, in

1 *by*: about 2 *restrained*: (being) prohibited // *of divers*: of having several
 4 *for their pleasure*: as they pleased // *cast a fantasy*: took a fancy
 5 *took*: captured 6 *ware*: set 7 *merrily*: wittily 8 *fletcher*: archer
 8 *for store* . . . *twain*: willing to keep two in store 10 *bound*: obliged
 10 *abide*: endure 10, 11 *all*: whatever kind 12 *trow ye*: do you believe
 12 *easy*: comforting 13 *words*: expressions 15 *watching*: vigil-keeping
 15 *walking*: traveling 18 *slackness*: letup 19 *except*: unless // *wanton*: spoiled
 22 *pleasant*: pleasurable 24 *declareth*: explains 26 *delivering*: setting free
 27 *temporal*: civil // *lewd*: base; sorry 28 *were*: would be
 30 *discharged*: removed 31 *which*: who 32 *well agreeable*: quite consistent
 33 *one and other*: i.e., of the one kind and the other

things by God not forbidden... although they be hard and sore.

1.18

“But see for God’s sake how we be run a great way further than I thought to go when I began... and have left that we should go forth with.”

“It is no loss,” quoth he, “for there is a good thing well touched by the way.”

“Well,” quoth I, “let us go back again where we left. Since ye agree that Christ spoke his words not to his apostles only, for their own time, but such things as he said to them, he meant to all that should follow them—and thereof somewhat he spoke to them for the priests

Mt 5:13 only (as when he said, ‘Vos estis sal terrae’; ‘Ye be the salt of the earth’),

and somewhat to the whole flock (as when he said, ‘Mandatum novum do vobis: ut diligatis invicem sicut ego dilexi vos’; ‘I give you a

Jn 13:34; Lk 22:31–32 new commandment: that you love together as I have loved you’)—tell me, then, I require

you: when Christ said to Saint Peter, ‘Satan hath desired to sift ye as men sift corn; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith shall not fail,’ said he this to him as a promise of the faith to be by God’s help perpetually kept and preserved in Saint Peter only?

The whole Church Or else in the whole Church—that is to wit, the whole congregation of Christian people

professing his name and his faith, and abiding in the body of the same... not being precided and cut off—meaning that his faith should never so utterly fail in his church but that it should whole and entire abide and remain therein?”

“Marry,” quoth he, “this is good to be advised of. For though Christ, for the more part, such things as he spoke to one spoke to all—

Mk 13:37 according to his own words ‘Quod uni dico, omnibus dico’ (‘That I say to one, I say to all’)—yet *some* things he said and meant *particularly*, as he spoke it.

Mt 14:28 As when he bade Saint Peter come upon the water to him, he bade not the remnant

come so. And so may it peradventure be that *this* word was spoken and meant toward Peter alone.”

1 *although*: even if 2 *sore*: distressing 4, 8 *left*: veered off (from)

4, 31 *that*: that which; what 4 *go forth*: be going ahead 6 *touched*: treated of

6 *by*: along 8 *where*: to where

11 *thereof*... *them*: in some part, what he said to them was

14 *somewhat*: in some part 16 *together*: one another 17 *require*: ask of

19 *corn*: wheat 25 *precided*: excommunicated 28 *marry*: wow

28 *good to be advised of*: a good thing to reflect on 29 *more*: most

34 *remnant*: rest 35 *word*: thing

“That will be,” quoth I, “very hard to hold. For his faith after failed. But since that upon his first confession of the right faith, that Christ was God’s Son, our Lord made him his universal vicar

- Peter head of the Church* and, under him, head of his church; and that
 5 for his successor he should be the first,
 upon whom and whose firmly confessed faith he would build his
 church... and (of any that was *only* man) make him the first and chief
 head and ruler thereof: therefore he showed him that his faith—that is to
 wit, the faith by him confessed—should never fail in his church.
 10 Nor never did it, notwithstanding his denying. For yet stood still
 the light of faith in our Lady, of whom we read in the Gospel
 continual assistance to her sweetest Son, without fleeing or flitting.
 And in all others we find either fleeing from him one time or other...
 or else doubt of his resurrection after his death—his dear mother
 15 *Our Lady’s candle* only except. For the signification and
 remembrance whereof the Church yearly,
 in the Tenebrae lessons, leaveth her candle burning still... when all the
 remnant, that signifieth his apostles and disciples, be one by one
 put out. And since *his* faith in effect failed, and yet the faith that he
 20 professed abode still in our Lady, the promise that God made was, as it
 seemeth, meant not to him... but as head of the Church. And therefore
 our Lord added thereto, ‘And thou being one of these days
 converted... confirm and strengthen thy brethren.’ In which, by these
 words, our Savior meant and promised that the faith should stand forever;
 25 so that the gates of hell should not prevail thereagainst. Or
 else might ye say that *these* words spoken to Saint Peter—‘Feed my
 sheep’—was meant but for himself... and no commandment to any
 successor of his, or any bishop or prelate. And by that means might
 ye say also that these words of Christ’s promise made unto his
 30 disciples—that the Holy Ghost should instruct them of all things—
 were only meant for themselves in their own persons, and not that
 ever he should instruct his church after their days. And
 when he said, ‘Wheresoever be two or three gathered together in
 my name, there am I myself among them,’ we shall say by this
 35 means... that he meant but of his own disciples in his own time,
 while he was here with them; and not that he would be likewise

1 *after*: later 2 *since that*: since 8 *showed*: told
 12 *assistance*: active presence // *flitting*: faltering 18 *remnant*: rest
 26, 28 *might*: could 26–27: See John 21:17.
 28, 35 *means*: stratagem 31 *in their own persons*: personally
 33–34: See Matthew 18:20. 35 *meant but of*: meant this to apply just to

present with such other congregations in his church after.

And finally, then were these words frustrate—where he said, ‘Lo, I am with you all the days to the world’s end’—if he should mean it but with them that heard him speak it. Then should it appear... that he
5 had intended a church only of them and for their time. And then, from their death hither, all were done.”

“Verily, sir,” quoth he, “I can well agree that all such things was spoken by Christ to make them sure that the faith should never fail in his church. Howbeit, if I durst doubt in that point, one
10 thing is there that somewhat sticketh in my mind.”

“Doubt on,” quoth I, “between us twain, and spare not; nor let not to tell me what moveth you.”

“Sir,” quoth he, “I think that God setteth no more by faith than he doth by charity. But as for charity and good works, with virtuous living—
15 shall cool and decay in the Church, as our Savior saith in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew: ‘Because iniquity shall abound, the charity of many men shall cool.’ And surely methinketh it is well near all gone already.”

“God forbid!” quoth I. “For albeit that it greatly day by day decayeth...
20 and much people naught... yet be there many good men about—and shall be always, though they be few in comparison of the multitude. And yet is it not all one, of *other* virtues and of *faith*—that is to wit, of knowledge and belief of the articles of our faith; I mean of such articles as we be of necessity bound to believe. For albeit that the
25 flock of Christ shall never lack good and devout, virtuous people, yet shall both the best be sinners... and also, much more the multitude shall ever have the faith that I speak of... than shall have the goodness of living.”

“Why so?” quoth he.

“For two causes,” quoth I. “One, the malice of the people whereby they will not be so ready to live well as to believe well. For the people themselves
30 *It is less labor to believe* will better keep the faith than other
than to work well. virtues, since it is a thing of less labor to know what they should believe—and to
35 believe it, also, when they know it—than it is to work well. For

2–3: See Matthew 28:20. 4 *but with them that*: only with reference to those who
4 *appear*: become evident 6 *hither*: on out to this day
6 *all were done*: everything was over 7 *verily*: truly 8 *make them sure*: assure them
9 *howbeit*: however // *durst*: dare // *doubt in*: express a misgiving on
10 *somewhat sticketh*: doesn’t set well 11 *let*: hesitate 12 *moveth*: is bothering
13 *setteth no more*: sets no higher a value 13, 14 *by*: on 15, 19 *decay(eth)*: wane(s)
16–17: See Matthew 24:12. 20 *much*: a lot of // *naught*: (are) bad
21 *in comparison of*: in relation to 22 *one*: the same 26 *more*: i.e., more of
30 *malice*: bad quality 31, 35 *well*: right 35 *work*: act

though the knowledge and belief bring many men to the labor
of good works, yet the world, commonly, and the frailty of our
flesh, with the enticement of our ghostly enemies, make us
willingly and wittingly, well knowing and believing the good,
5 yet to walk in the worse; as doth sometimes the sick man that,
believing his physician, and having had also, right often, good
proof by his own experience to his pain before, that some
certain meat or drink shall do him harm... doth yet, of an importunate
appetite, fall for his little pleasure to his great pain and hurt.
10 “Another cause is,” quoth I, “the goodness of God, which, how far soever
his people fall from the *use* of virtue, shall not, yet, as himself
hath promised, suffer them to fall from the *knowledge* of virtue; not only
for the manifestation of his justice—that their own conscience may
condemn them in doing the things that themselves know to be naught—
15 but also to the intent they may still have among them a perpetual
occasion of amendment. For if the *faith* were once gone, and the
church of Christ fallen in that error... that they believed vice to be virtue,
and idolatry to be the right way of God’s worship—then had they no
rule to guide them to better. And therefore, while we be not in
20 error of understanding and faith, howsoever we fall... or how
often soever we sin... we see the way to turn again by grace to
God’s mercy. But if *faith* were gone, *all* were gone; and then had
God here no church at all.”

The Nineteenth Chapter

25 The author proveth that if the worship of images were
idolatry, then the Church, believing it to be lawful and
pleasant to God, were in a misbelief and in a deadly
error. And then were the faith failed in the Church;
whereof Christ hath promised the contrary, as is proved in the
30 chapter before.

“Surely, sir,” quoth he, “that God made not his church for a while,
but to endure till the world’s end—that is there no Christian man but

3 *ghostly*: spiritual 4 *willingly*: deliberately // *wittingly*: consciously
4 *believing*: believing in 5 *to walk in the worse*: choose the wrong course
7, 9 *pain*: grief 8 *meat*: food 9 *hurt*: harm 10 *which*: who
11 *use*: practice 14 *naught*: immoral 18 *of God’s worship*: to worship God
18 *had they*: they would have 19 *while*: as long as 21 *again*: back
22–23 *had God*: God would have 25 *worship*: veneration 26 *lawful*: licit
27 *pleasant*: pleasing // *were*: would be // *misbelief*: wrong belief // *deadly*: fatal

he will well agree. And since his church cannot stand without faith, which is the entry into Christendom (for as Saint Paul saith,

Heb 11:6

‘Accedentem ad Deum oportet credere’;

Faith shall be always in the Church.

‘Whoso will come to God must needs

5 believe’), no man will deny but that faith is, and always shall be, in his church. And that his church not in faith only, and the knowledge of the truths necessary to be known for our soul health, but also to the doing of good works and avoiding of evil... is, hath been, and ever shall be specially guided and
10 governed by God and the secret inspiration of his Holy Spirit.”

“Well,” quoth I, “then... if the Church have faith, it erreth not in belief.”

“That is truth,” quoth he.

15 “It should err,” quoth I, “if it believed not *all* the truths that we be bound to believe.”

“What else?” quoth he.

“What and we believed,” quoth I, “all that is true... and, over that, some other thing not only false, but also displeasing to God? Did we not then err in our necessary belief?”

20 “Whereby mean you that?” quoth he.

“As thus,” quoth I: “if that one believed in all the three Persons of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—and therewith were persuaded that there were a fourth Person besides, equal and one God with them.”

25 “He must,” quoth he, “needs err in his necessary belief, by which he is bound to believe in the *Trinity*. And that fellow believeth in a Quaternity!”

“That is,” quoth I, “the whole Trinity and one more.”

30 “But we be not only not bound,” quoth he, “to believe in any more... but also bound *not* to believe in any more.”

“Very well,” quoth I, “then erreth he as much, and as far lacketh his right belief, that believeth too much... as he that believeth too little; and he that believeth something that he should not... as he that believeth not something that he should.”

35 “What else?” quoth he. “And what then?”

“Marry, this,” quoth I: “If we believe that it were lawful and well done to

1 *agree*: grant 10 *secret*: unperceivable 15, 29, 30 *bound*: obliged

17 *what and*: what if // *over*: in addition to 18 *displeasing*: offensive

20 *whereby mean you that*: what do you mean by that

36 *marry*: good heavens // *were lawful and well done*: is a legitimate and right thing to do

- pray to saints, and to reverence their images, and do honor
to their relics and visit pilgrimages; and then where we do
these things, they were in deed not well done... but were displeasing
to God... and by him reputed as a diminishment, and a withdrawing, of
5 the honor due to himself... and therefore, before his Majesty, reprov'd
and odious and taken as idolatry: were not this opinion
a deadly, pestilent error in us... and a plain lack of right faith?"
- "Yes, before God," quoth he.
- "But ye grant," quoth I, "that the Church cannot err in the right
10 faith necessary to be believed, which is given and always kept in
the Church by God."
- "Truth," quoth he.
- "Then followeth it," quoth I, "that the Church in that it believeth saints
to be prayed unto, relics and images to be worshipp'd, and pilgrimages
15 to be visited and sought... is not deceived, nor doth not err;
but that the belief of the Church is true therein. And thereupon also
followeth that the wonderful works done above nature... at such
images and pilgrimages, at holy relics, by prayers made unto
saints... be not done by the devil, to delude the church of Christ
20 therewith, since the thing that the Church doth... is well done and not
idolatry, but by the great honor done unto saints... God himself
the more highly honored, in that his servants have so much
honor for his sake. And thereof followeth it... that himself maketh
the miracles, in comprobation thereof.
- 25 "Also, if it be true that ye have granted—that God keepeth, and ever
shall keep, in his church the right faith and right belief by the help
of his own hand, that hath planted it—then can it not be that he
shall suffer the devil to work wonders like unto his own miracles
to bring his whole church into a wrong faith. And then, if those
30 things be not done by the devil, I trow ye will not then deny
but they be done by God. And so is yet again our purpose doubly
proved. First, in that ye grant that God will not suffer his church to
err in his right faith; secondly (which pursueth thereupon), by that
he hath by many a visible miracle declared... that this faith and manner
35 of observance is very pleasant and acceptable unto him—which

2, 14, 18 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites 3 *deed*: fact // *well*: rightly
3 *displeasing*: offensive 4 *reputed*: regarded
5 *reprov'd*: blameworthy 7 *deadly*: lethal; mortal // *pestilent*: pernicious
13–14 *saints to be*: that saints are to be 14 *worshipp'd*: venerated
15 *sought*: resorted to // *deceived*: mistaken 16 *true*: correct
17 *wonderful*: wondrous 20 *well*: rightly 22 *have*: receive
23 *himself*: he himself 24 *comprobation*: confirmation 30 *trow*: trust
31 *purpose*: case 33 *pursueth thereupon*: follows therefrom
34 *declared*: made it clear 35 *pleasant*: pleasing

miracles, since they be proved to be done upon good ground and cause, appear well to be done by *God*, and not by our ghostly enemy.”

1.19

The Twentieth Chapter

The messenger allegeth that the perpetual being and assistance of Christ with his church to keep it out of all damnable errors... is nothing else but his being with his church in Holy Scripture; whereof the author declareth the contrary.

“How think you?” quoth I. “Is there anything in this matter amiss?”

“I cannot well tell,” quoth he, “what I might answer thereto. But yet methink that I come to this point by some oversight in granting.”

“Well,” quoth I, “men say sometimes, when they would say or do a thing and cannot well come thereon, but miss, and oversee themselves, in the assay—‘It maketh no matter,’ they say; ‘ye may begin again and amend it; for it is neither Mass nor Matins.’ And albeit in this matter ye have nothing granted but that is in my mind as true as the Matins or the Mass either—yet if ye reckon yourself over-swift in granting, I give you leave to go back and call again what ye will.”

“In good faith,” quoth he, “full hard were it in mine own mind... otherwise to think but that God shall always keep the right belief in his church. But yet, since we come to this conclusion by the granting thereof... let us look once again thereupon. And what if men would say (as I heard once one say myself) that God doth, peradventure, *not* keep always faith in his *church*... to give them warning with... when they do well and when the contrary; but since he hath given them, and left with them, the *Scripture*—in which they may sufficiently *see* both what they should believe and what they should do—he letteth them alone therewith, without any other special cure of his upon their faith and belief. For therein they may see all that them needeth, if they will look and labor therein. And if they will not—the fault is their own sloth and folly! And whoso be willing to amend and be better... may always have light to see *how*... by recourse to the reading of Holy Scripture; which

2 *appear well*: are clearly shown // *ghostly*: spiritual 4 *allegeth*: claims

5 *assistance*: active presence 7 *declareth*: asserts 9 *matter*: argument

10 *well*: really // *might*: could 11 *methink*: it seems to me

11 *oversight*: careless mistake 12 *would*: want to 13 *well come thereon*: quite get at it

13 *oversee themselves*: slip up 14 *assay*: attempt // *maketh no matter*: doesn't matter

14–15 *may begin again*: can start over 18–19 *call . . . will*: retract whatever you want to

20–21 *full . . . but*: it would in my own view be very hard to think otherwise than

23 *let us look once again thereupon*: let's take another look at it 24 *one*: someone

26 *warning*: notice // *when they*: i.e., as to when they 28, 31, 33 *may*: can

30 *cure . . . upon*: tending . . . to 31 *them needeth*: is necessary for them

32 *sloth*: laziness // *folly*: foolishness 33 *whoso*: whoever

shall stand him in like stead as ye said before that God kept the
faith for, by his special means, in his church.”

“If this,” quoth I, “were thus, whereof should Christ’s promise serve,
Mt 28:20 ‘Ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus usque

5 ad finem saeculi’ (‘I am with you all the
days till the end of the world’)? Wherefore should he be here with
his church... if his being here should not keep his right faith and
belief in his church?”

10 “Marry,” quoth he, “these words well agreeth withal! For God is, and
shall be until the world’s end, with his church in his Holy Scripture!

Lk 16:29 As Abraham answered the rich man in
hell, saying, ‘They have Moses and the

15 prophets’... not meaning that they had *them* all at that time present
with them... but only that they had their *books*. And so Christ, forasmuch
as the Scripture hath his faith comprehended therein (according

Jn 5:39 to his own words, ‘Scrutamini
scripturas, quia scripturae sunt quae

20 testimonium perhibent de me’; ‘Search you the Scriptures, for they
bear witness of me’), *therefore* he said, ‘Ego vobiscum sum usque ad
finem saeculi’ (‘I am with you to the end of the world’)—because his
Holy Scripture shall never fail... as long as the world endureth.

Mt 24:35 ‘Heaven and earth,’ saith he, ‘shall pass
away, but my words shall never pass

away.’

25 “And therefore in his Holy Writing is he with us still; and therein
he keepeth and teacheth us his right faith if we list to look for it;

Mt 28:20 and else, as I said, our own fault and
folly it is.”

30 “If God,” quoth I, “be none otherwise with us but in Holy Scripture,
then be those words of Christ ‘I am with you to the world’s end’

somewhat strangely spoken... and unlike the words of Abraham
whereunto ye resemble them. For Christ left never a book behind
him of his own making... as Moses did, and the prophets. (And in
their books was he spoken of, as he was in the Gospel.) Wherefore, if

35 he had spoken and meant of Scripture, he would have said that

3 *whereof should Christ’s promise serve*: then to what avail would be Christ’s promise

5 *wherefore*: why 5, 6 *should*: would 8 *marry*: good heavens

8 *well agreeth withal*: are quite compatible with that

14 *comprehended*: contained 25 *list*: care 31 *resemble*: liken

32 *making*: writing 34 *spoken and meant of*: been speaking of and meaning

they should have with them still his evangelists and writers of his gospels, as Abraham said ‘they have Moses and the prophets’ ...

which were the writers of the Books that the Jews had. Christ, also, said ‘I *am* with you till the end of the world’—not ‘I *shall* be,’

5 *"I am"* but 'I am'... which is the word appropriated
to his Godhead. And therefore that word

am is the name by which our Lord would, as he told Moses,

Ex 3:9–15

be named unto Pharaoh, as a name which
from all creatures (since they be all

10 subject to time) clearly discerneth his Godhead—which is ever
being and present, without difference of time past or to come.

In which wise... he was not in his Holy Scripture; for that had beginning... and at those words spoken, was not yet all written.

For of the chief part, which is the New Testament, there was yet at

15 that time never one word written. And also, we be not sure, by any
promise made, that the Scripture shall endure to the world's end...

albeit I think verily the substance shall. But yet, as I say, *promise*

Mt 24:35

have we none thereof. For where our Lord
saith that his ‘words’ shall not pass away...

20 nor one iota thereof be lost, he spoke of his promises made, indeed, as his faith and doctrine taught: by mouth and inspiration. He meant not that of his holy scripture in *writing* there should never an iota be lost—of which some parts be *already* lost; more, peradventure, than we can tell of. And of that we have, the books in

25 some part corrupted with miswriting. And yet the substance
of those words that he meant be known... whereas some part of the
writing is unknown. He saith also that his Father and he should
send the Holy Ghost... and also that he would come himself. Whereto
all this, if he meant no more but to leave the books behind them and go
30 their way? Christ is also present among us bodily, in the Holy

Christ is bodily present

Sacrament. And is he there present with us for nothing? The Holy Ghost taught

in the Sacrament.

many things... I think unwritten, and whereof some part was

never comprised in the Scripture yet unto this day—as the article

35 which no good Christian man will doubt of... that our blessed Lady
was a perpetual virgin, as well after the birth of Christ as before.

3 *which*: who 10 *discerneth*: distinguishes

13 *at those words spoken*: i.e., at the time that those words (“I am with you . . .”) were spoken

15 *never*: not // *sure*: assured 20 *spoke*: was speaking 21 *taught*: i.e., were taught

24 *that*: that which 25 *with miswriting*: through miscopying 27 *should*: would

28 *whereto*: to what end 29 *but to*: than that they would

33 *unwritten*: not in writing 34 *comprised in*: incorporated into // *as the*: such as that

35 *doubt of*: i.e., doubt the truth of

“Our Savior also said unto his apostles that when they should be accused and brought in judgment, they should not need to care for answer; it should even then be put in their minds. And that he meant... *not* only the remembrance of Holy Scripture (which before the paynim judges were but a cold and bare alleging), but such words newly given them by God, inspired in their hearts, so effectual... and confirmed with miracles... that their adversaries, though they were angry thereat, yet should not be able to resist it. And thus, with secret help and inspiration, is Christ with his church—and will be to the world’s end—present and assistant. Not only spoken of in writing.”

The Twenty-first Chapter

The author showeth that if it so were indeed as the messenger said—that is to wit, that Christ continued with his church none other wise but only by the leaving of his Holy Scripture to them... and that all the faith, also, were only therein—then should it yet follow that as far as the necessity of our salvation requireth, God giveth the Church the right understanding thereof. And thereupon followeth further that the Church cannot err in the right faith. Whereupon is inferred eftsoons all that the messenger would have fled from before. And thereon also specially followeth that all the texts of Holy Scripture which heretics allege against images... or *any* point of the common belief of Christ’s Catholic Church... can nothing serve their purpose.

“**B**ut now would I wit... since ye reckon him none other wise present than in Holy Scripture... whether, then, doth he give his church the right *understanding* of Holy Scripture, or not?”

“What if he do not?” quoth he.

“Marry,” quoth I, “then yourself seeth well... that they were as well

1–8: See Matthew 10:19–20 and Luke 21:12–15. 2, 3, 8 *should*: would
 2 *in judgment*: to trial 2–3 *care for answer*: worry about what answer they should give
 3 *even*: right 4–5 *which . . . alleging*: i.e., any quoting of which would have left the
 pagan judges cold and done no good 8 *though*: even if 9 *secret*: unperceivable
 10 *assistant*: active 13 *showeth*: points out
 17–18 *the . . . requireth*: the requirements for our salvation render necessary
 20 *in*: with regard to 21 *eftsoons*: for a second time // *would*: wanted to
 22 *specially*: in particular 23 *allege*: cite // *images*: i.e., the venerating of images
 24 *common*: universal 25 *nothing*: in no way 26 *would I wit*: I would like to know
 26 *reckon him*: suppose him to be // *none other wise*: in no other way
 30 *marry*: good heavens // *yourself*: you yourself // *were as well*: would be as well off

without! And so should the Scripture stand them in as good stead
as a pair of spectacles should stand a blind friar!”

1.21

“That is very truth,” quoth he. “But therefore hath his wisdom and
goodness provided it so to be *written* that it may be well understood...
5 by the collation and consideration of one text with another.”

“May it not also be,” quoth I, “that some of them which do read it
diligently... and diligently compare and consider every text, how
it may stand with other... may yet, for all that, mistake and misunderstand
it?”

10 “Yes,” quoth he, “it may be so. For else had there not been so many
heretics as there hath been.”

“Very truth,” quoth I. “But, now, if all the faith be in Holy Scripture...
and no part thereof anywhere else... but that it must be therein, altogether,
learned: were it then sufficient to understand some part aright...
15 and some other part wrong... in the necessary points of
our faith? Or must we, as far forth as concerneth the necessity thereof,
misunderstand *no* part?”

“We must,” quoth he, “mistake *no* part, as far as necessarily concerneth
our faith; but we must have so the right understanding
20 of altogether... that we conceive no damnable error.”

“Well said!” quoth I. “Then if we *must*, we *may*. For if we may not...
we must not. For our Lord bindeth no man to an impossibility.”

“We may,” quoth he.

25 “If we may,” quoth I, “then may we either by good hap fall into the
right understanding... or else by natural reason come to it... or else by
supernatural grace be led into it.”

“That is truth,” quoth he. “Needs must it be one of these ways.”

30 “Well,” quoth I, “we will not yet search which; but I would first
wit whether Christ have a church in the world continually, and
so shall have to the world’s end, or else hath one sometimes... and
sometimes none at all. As we might think that he had one while
he was here himself... and peradventure a while after... and haply
none at all never since, nor shall not again—we wot ne’er when.”

35 “Nay,” quoth he, “that cannot be, in no wise, but that he must needs
have his church continue still somewhere. For else how could he

1 *without*: i.e., without it 3, 12 *very truth*: quite true 4, 21, etc. *may*: can
4 *well*: rightly 5 *collation*: comparison 6 *them which*: those who
8 *stand*: accord // *other*: another // *mistake*: misinterpret 12 *all the*: the whole
15 *necessary*: essential 20 *altogether*: the whole thing 24 *hap*: luck
27 *needs must it*: it must necessarily 29 *wit*: (like to) know 32 *haply*: perhaps
33 *wot ne’er*: have no idea 34 *in no wise*: by no means 35 *still*: uninterruptedly

be with them continually to the world's end—in Scripture or otherwise—
if they with whom he promised to be... and continue to the
world's end... should not continually so long endure? Or how

Mt 28:20

could those words of Christ be true,

5 'Lo, I am with you all the days to the
world's end,' if before the world's end he were away some
days?—as he were indeed from the Church some days, if in some
days he had no church."

10 "Well," quoth I, "yet would I wit one thing more: can he have a
church without faith?"

"Nay," quoth he, "that were impossible."

Church

"Forsooth," quoth I, "so were it. For his

Faith

church is a congregation of people

Reason

gathered *into* his faith. And faith is the

15 first substantial difference discerning

Christian men from heathen—as reason is the difference dividing man
from all the kinds of brute beasts. Now, then, if his church be, and
ever shall be, continual, without any times between (in which there
shall be none); and without faith it may never be; and no part of the
20 faith is (as ye say) elsewhere had but in Holy Scripture... and *all* it
must be had; and also, as we were agreed a little while before, there
must be none error adjoined thereto; and therefore, as far as
toucheth the necessity of faith, no part of Scripture may be mistaken,
but all must be understood rightly... and may be rightly understood
25 either by hap, reason, or help of grace: it necessarily
followeth that by one or other of these ways, the church of Christ hath
always, and never faileth, the right understanding of Scripture, as
far as belongeth for our necessity."

"That followeth indeed," quoth he.

30 "Well," quoth I, "let pass for the while what followeth further;
and since the Church so *hath*... let us first agree by *which* of these
three ways the Church hath it: whether by hap, reason, or grace."

"By hap," quoth he, "were a poor having. For so might it hap to
have and hap to fail."

15 *discerning*: distinguishing 17 *kinds*: species 19, 23, 24 *may*: can

20 *as ye say*: according to you

23 *toucheth the necessity of faith*: concerns the essentials of the faith

23 *mistaken*: misinterpreted 25, 32 *hap*: luck 27 *faileth*: lacks

33 *by hap*: by luck // *were*: would be

33–34 *hap to have and hap to fail*: happen to have it and happen to lack it

“Then,” quoth I, “since it hath it *ever*, it cannot be by hap. What think you, then, of reason?”

“As little,” quoth he, “as any man thinketh! For I take reason for plain enemy to faith!”

5 “Ye take, peradventure, wrong,” quoth I. “But thereof shall we see further after. But now since ye so think... ye leave but the third

The Spirit of God leadeth the way, which is the help of grace.”

Church into all truth.

“No, surely,” quoth he.

“Verily,” quoth I, “where reason may

10 between divers texts stand in great doubt which way to lean, I think that God with his Holy Spirit leadeth his church into the consent of the truth... as himself said that the Holy Ghost (whom he

Jn 16:13

would send) should lead them into all

truth. He said not that the Holy Ghost

15 should at his coming *write* them all truth, nor tell them all the whole truth by mouth, but that he should by secret inspiration *lead* them *into* all truth. And therefore surely, for a true conclusion, in such means by God himself—by the help of his grace (as yourself granteth)—the right understanding of Scripture is ever

20 preserved in his church from all such mistaking whereof might follow any damnable error concerning the faith. And thereof doth there first follow that besides the Scripture itself, there is another present assistance and special cure of God... perpetual with his church... to keep it in the right faith, that it err not by misunderstanding

25 of Holy Scripture—contrary to the opinion that ye purposed when ye said that Christ’s being with his church was only the leaving of his Holy Scripture to us. And over this, if God were no other wise present than ye speak of, yet since it is proved that his church, for all that, ever hath the right understanding

30 of Scripture, we be come to the same point again that ye would so fain flit from. For if the Scripture (and nothing but the Scripture) doth contain allthing that we be bound to believe,

1 *hap*: luck 10 *divers*: different 11 *consent*: consensus

13 *should*: would 16 *secret*: unperceivable 23 *cure of*: care given by

26 *purposed*: put forward for consideration 27 *over this*: furthermore

28 *wise*: way 31 *so fain flit from*: so much like to escape from

32 *allthing*: everything // *bound*: obliged

- and to do, and to forbear; and that God also therefore provideth for
his church the right understanding thereof, concerning
everything necessary for us that is contained in Scripture: then
must there needs follow thereupon... the thing that ye feared lest
5 ye had wrongly and unadvisedly granted; that is to wit, that
God always keepeth the right faith in his church. And thereupon followeth
further... the remnant of all that is in question between us:
that the faith of the Church in the worship that it believeth to be
well given unto saints, relics, and images... is not erroneous, but
10 right. And thereupon followeth also that the miracles done at such
places be none illusions of damned spirits, but the mighty
hand of God—to show his pleasure in the corroboration thereof,
and in the excitation of our devotion thereto.”
“Indeed,” quoth he, “we be come back here with going forward,
15 as men walk in a maze.”
“Ye have not, yet,” quoth I, “lost all that labor. For though ye have
half a check in this point, yet have ye (if ye perceive it) *mated*
me in another point... by one thing that is agreed between us
now.”
20 “What is that?” quoth he.
“This,” quoth I, “that I have agreed as well as you: that God hath
given his church the right understanding of Scripture in as far forth
as belongeth to the necessity of salvation.”
“In what point,” quoth he, “hath that mated you?”
25 “Why,” quoth I, “see you not that? Nay, then will I not tell you... but if
ye hire me; or if I tell you, yet shall ye not win the game thereby.
For since ye see it not yourself, it is but a blind-mate.”
“Let me know it yet,” quoth he, “and I am agreed to take none
advantage thereof.”
30 “On that bargain be it,” quoth I.
“Ye wot well,” quoth I, “that against the worshipping of images
and praying to saints, ye laid certain texts of Scripture... to
prove it forbidden... and reputed of God for idolatry. For answer
whereof... when I laid that men must lean to the sentence that the
35 Church and holy doctors of the Church give to those texts, ye

1 *forbear*: refrain from doing 5 *wrongly and unadvisedly*: incorrectly and rashly
7 *remnant*: rest 8 *worship*: veneration 9 *well*: rightly
16 *lost all that labor*: wasted all that effort 17, 18, 24 *in*: on 18 *agreed*: settled
21 *agreed*: assented to // *as you*: i.e., as you have 23 *belongeth*: pertains
23 *necessity of*: essentials for 25 *why*: oh // *but if*: unless
26 *hire me*: pay me (to) 31 *against*: with regard to // *worshipping*: venerating
32, 34 *laid*: claimed 33 *reputed of God for*: regarded by God as
34 *lean to*: go along with // *sentence*: meaning(s) 35 *holy doctors*: theologians

The Church cannot misunderstand the Scripture. said they were but men's false glosses against God's true texts. And now, since ye grant, and I also, that the Church

cannot misunderstand the Scripture to the hindrance of the
 5 right faith, in things of necessity; and that ye also acknowledge
 this matter to be such... that it must either be the right belief,
 and acceptable service to God, or else a wrong and erroneous
 opinion and plain idolatry: it followeth of necessity that the
 Church doth not misunderstand those texts that ye or any
 10 other can allege and bring forth for that purpose, but that
 all these texts be so to be taken and understood... as they
 nothing make against the Church, but all against your own
 opinion in this matter.

"And thus have ye suddenly answered *yourself*... to all those texts,
 15 out of hand, with a gloss of your own... as true as any text in the
 Bible, and which all the world will never avoid... except they would
 make the Scripture serve the Church of naught—or rather to their
 hindrance than furtherance in the faith. For so *were* it... if it
 might be that God giveth them not the good understanding
 20 thereof, but suffereth them to be deceived and deluded in errors...
 by the mistaking of the letter."

"Marry," quoth he, "this is a blind-mate indeed!"

"Surely," quoth I, "these two things seem to me two as true points...
 and as plain to a Christian man... as any petition of Euclid's geometry
 25 is to a reasonable man. For as true as it is that every whole
 thing is more than its own half: as true is it indeed—and to
 every Christian man, faith maketh it as certain—

*Two things most perfect
 and true*

"First, that Christ's church cannot err
 30 in any such article as God upon pain
 of loss of heaven will that we believe; and
 thereupon necessarily followeth that there is no text of Scripture
 well understood... by which Christian people are commanded to do
 the thing which the Church believeth that they may lawfully
 leave undone, nor any text whereby we be forbidden anything
 35 which the Church believeth that they may lawfully do."

4 *hindrance*: obstruction; detriment 6 *this matter*: i.e., the venerating of relics and statues

7 *acceptable service to God*: i.e., regarded by God as an acceptable way of worshipping him

8 *opinion*: tenet 9–10 *any other*: anyone else 10 *allege*: adduce

12 *nothing make*: go not at all 14 *suddenly*: promptly; at once

15 *a gloss*: an explanation

16 *all the world will never avoid*: no one in the world will be able to get around

16 *except*: unless 17 *of naught*: not at all 19 *good*: valid

20 *suffereth*: allows 21 *letter*: literal meaning (of the text) 22 *marry*: goodness

23 *surely*: assuredly 24 *petition*: axiom

25 *a reasonable man*: anyone able to reason 29 *in*: with regard to 32 *well*: rightly

33, 35 *lawfully*: licitly

The Twenty-second Chapter

1.22

Because the messenger had in the beginning showed himself
 desirous and greedy upon the text of Scripture... with
 little force of the old fathers' glosses, and with dispraise
 5 of philosophy and almost all the seven liberal sciences:
 the author therefore incidentally showeth what harm hath
 happed sometimes to fall to divers of those young men whom
 he hath known to give their study to the Scripture *only*,
 with contempt of logic and other secular sciences, and little
 10 regard of the old interpreters. Wherefore the author showeth
 that in the study of Scripture, the sure way is with virtue and
 prayer... first to use the judgment of natural reason, whereunto
 secular literature helpeth much. And secondly, the
 comments of holy doctors. And thirdly—above allthing—
 15 the articles of the Catholic faith, received and believed
 through the church of Christ.

“And for because we speak of Scripture now... and that the Church
 in things needly requisite to salvation hath the right understanding
 of Holy Scripture; wherein I perceive ye be studious of the text
 20 alone, without great force of the old fathers' interpretations, or any
 other science—of which ye reckon all seven, save grammar, almost to
 serve for naught—I have of *you* so good opinion... that I trust all
 your study shall turn you to good. But surely I have seen to some
 folk so much harm to grow thereof... that I never would advise
 25 any man *else* in the study of Scripture to take that way.”

“Why so?” quoth he.

“For I have known,” quoth I, “right good wits... that hath set all
 other learning aside—partly for sloth, refusing the labor and
 pain to be sustained in that learning; partly for pride, by which
 30 they could not endure the redargution that should sometimes fall
 to their part in dispicions. Which affections... their inward,
 secret favor toward themselves... covered and cloaked under the

3 *desirous and greedy upon*: eager for and avidly focused on

4, 20 *force*: taking into account 4, 10, 20 *old*: early

4 *glosses*: explanations; interpretations // *dispraise*: disparagement

5 *all the seven liberal sciences*: all seven of the liberal arts

6 *incidentally showeth*: mentions in passing 7, 30–31 *fall to*: befall

7 *divers*: some 10 *showeth*: asserts 11 *sure way*: safe course

14 *comments*: commentaries // *holy doctors*: biblical exegetes

14 *allthing*: everything 15 *received*: accepted 16 *through*: throughout

18 *needly*: necessarily 19 *be studious of*: are studying

21–22 *almost to serve for naught*: to be of almost no use

24 *to grow thereof*: come of that 27 *wits*: minds; intellects

28 *for sloth*: out of laziness // *refusing*: shunning // *labor*: effort

30 *redargution*: refutation 31 *part*: side // *dispicions*: debates

31 *affections*: dispositions 32 *favor*: partiality

pretext of simplicity... and good Christian devotion borne to the
 love of Holy Scripture alone. But in little while after, the damnable
 spirit of pride that unawares to themselves lurked in their hearts...
 hath begun to put out his horns and show himself. For then
 5 have they longed... under the praise of Holy Scripture... to set out to
 show their own study. Which because they would have seem the
 more to be set by... they have first fallen to the dispraise and derision
 of all other disciplines. And because in speaking or preaching of
 such common things as all Christian men know, they could not
 10 seem excellent, nor make it appear and seem that in their study
 they had done any great mastery: to show themselves therefore
 marvelous, they set out paradoxes and strange opinions...
 against the common faith of Christ's whole church. And because they
 have therein the old holy doctors against them... they fall to the
 15 contempt and dispraise of them, either preferring their own
 fond glosses against the old cunning and blessed fathers' interpretations—
 or else lean to some words of Holy Scripture that seem
 to say for them... against many more texts that plainly make against
 them; without receiving or ear giving to any reason or authority
 20 of any man quick or dead, or of the whole church of Christ, to the
 contrary. And thus once proudly persuaded a wrong way, they
 take the bridle in the teeth and run forth like a headstrong
 horse, that all the world cannot pluck them back; but with
 sowing sedition, setting forth of errors and heresies, and
 25 spicing their preaching with rebuking of priesthood and
 prelacy... for the people's pleasure—they turn many a man to ruin,
 and themselves also. And then the devil deceiveth them in their
 blind affections.
 “They take for good zeal to the people their malicious envy. And
 30 for a great virtue their ardent appetite to preach; wherein they
 have so great pride for the people's praise... that preach I ween they
 would... though God would his own mouth command them the
 contrary.”
 “Why should ye ween so?” quoth he. “Or whereby can ye be sure that ye

4 *his*: its // *himself*: itself 5–6 *set out to show*: put on display; show off
 7 *set by*: esteemed // *fallen to*: applied themselves to 7, 15 *dispraise*: disparagement
 11 *done any great mastery*: accomplished any great feat 12 *marvelous*: extraordinary
 12 *strange*: startling; unconventional 14 *old holy doctors*: early theologians
 15 *preferring*: pitting 16 *fond*: idiotic // *cunning*: learned
 17 *lean to*: base themselves on 18 *say for them*: back them up // *make*: go
 19 *receiving*: accepting // *ear giving*: (even) listening // *reason*: reasoning
 20 *quick*: living 23 *that*: so that // *pluck*: pull 25 *rebuking*: criticizing
 27 *in*: with regard to 28 *blind affections*: reckless passions
 29 *zeal to*: strong concern for 31, 34 *ween*: think 32 *though*: even if
 32 *his*: i.e., with his 34 *so*: that

do not now misconstrue their good mind? Hard is it, oftentimes, to
 judge another man's deed that hath some appearance of evil,
 because the purpose and intent may make it good. And what peril
 is it, then, where the deed appeareth *good*, there to judge the mind and
 intent for naught... which who can see but God? As the Scripture
 5 *1 Sm 16:7; 1 Cor 4:5* saith, 'Dominus autem intuetur cor' ('Only
 God beholdeth the heart'). And therefore
 saith our Savior, 'Judge not before the time.'"
 "I judge not," quoth I, "but upon open things and well apparent. For
 10 I speak but of those whose erroneous opinions in their preaching...
 and their obstinate pride in the defense of their worldly worship...
 well declareth their minds. And some have I seen which, when
 they have for their perilous preaching been by their prelates
 prohibited to preach, have, that notwithstanding, proceeded on
 15 still... and, for the maintenance of their disobedience, have
 amended the matter with a heresy, boldly and stubbornly
 defending... that since they had cunning to preach, they were by
 God *bound* to preach... and that no man, nor no law that was made
 or could be made, had any authority to forbid them. And this
 20 they thought sufficiently proved by the words of the Apostle
Acts 5:29 'Oportet magis oboedire Deo quam hominibus.'
 As though these men were apostles
 now specially sent by God to preach heresies and sow sedition
 among Christian men... as the very apostles were indeed sent
 25 and commanded by God to preach his very faith to the Jews!
 One of this sort, of this new kind of preachers, being demanded
 why that he used to say in his sermons about... that nowadays
 men preached not well the Gospel, answered that he thought so...
 because he saw not the preachers persecuted, nor no strife nor
 30 business arise upon their preaching. Which things, he said and
Mt 10:34 wrote, was the fruit of the Gospel, because
 Christ said, 'Non veni pacem mittere, sed
 gladium' ('I am not come to send peace into the world, but the
 sword'). Was not this a worshipful understanding—that because
 35 Christ would make a division among *infidels*, from the remnant
 of them to win some, therefore *these* apostles would sow some
 cockle of dissension among the *Christian* people... whereby Christ might

1, 12 *mind(s)*: intention(s) 5 *naught*: bad
 9 *open things and well apparent*: quite clear and obvious things 11 *worship*: repute
 12 *declareth*: show // *which*: who 13 *perilous*: terrible
 15 *maintenance*: validation; defense 17 *defending*: contending // *cunning*: the ability
 18 *bound*: obliged 20 *the Apostle*: Saint Paul
 21: "We must obey God rather than men." 23 *specially*: expressly 24, 25 *very*: true
 26–27 *being . . . about*: upon being asked why he was going around saying in his sermons
 28 *preached not well*: were not really preaching // *so*: this 29 *strife*: conflict
 30 *business*: commotion // *arise upon*: ensue from 34 *worshipful*: pious / respectable
 35 *remnant*: rest

How strife and persecution lose some of them? For the fruit of strife
doth grow among Christian men among the hearers and persecution of the
 preacher cannot lightly grow among
 5 *Christian men* but by the preaching of some strange novelties, and
 bringing up of some newfangled heresies, to the infection of our
 old faith.

1.22

“One wist I that was for his pertinacity in that opinion... that he
 would and might and was bound to preach, any prohibition notwithstanding—
 when he was, after divers bold and open defenses
 10 thereof, at last before folk honorable and few... reasoned with,
 and not only the law showed him to the contrary of his opinion
 (which law was made at a general council), but also by plain
 authority of Holy Scripture proved that his opinion was erroneous:
 he so perceived himself satisfied... that he meekly acknowledged his
 15 error, and offered to abjure it and to submit himself to penance.
 But on the morrow, when he came forth in open presence of the
 people... and there saw many that had oft heard him preach: of his
 secret pride, he fell in such an open passion of shame that those
 should hear him go back with his word... which had before had
 20 his sermons in great estimation, that at the first sight of the people...
 he revoked his revocation... and said aloud, that he might well
 be heard, that his opinion was true... and that he was the day
 before deceived in that he had confessed it for false. And thus he
 held his own stubbornly, without reason... till the books were
 25 showed him again... and himself read them before all the people...
 so that he perceived the audience that stood about him... to feel
 and understand his proud folly... in the defense of his indefensible
 error. And thereupon at the last... yielded himself again. Such
 secret pride had our ghostly enemy conveyed into the heart of him...
 30 which, I assure you, seemed in all his other outward manner as meek
 a simple soul as a man should have seen in a summer’s day. And some
 of them let not with lies and perjury to defend themselves; and
 some to stand in defense of their errors, or false denying of their
 own deed, to their great peril of the fire... if their judges were
 35 not more merciful than their malice deserveth. And all this
 done because (as themselves doth at last confess) they think if they
 abjure, they shall after be suffered to preach again. Such a scabbed

1 *strife*: conflict 3 *lightly*: easily; readily 4 *strange*: alien
 5 *bringing up*: bringing in; introducing 7 *wist I*: I knew 8 *might*: could
 8 *bound*: obliged 9 *divers*: several // *open*: public
 11 *to the contrary of*: that runs counter to
 12 *a general council*: This was the Fourth Lateran Council, held in 1215; see its third canon.
 14 *perceived*: considered 18 *in such an open passion*: into such an obvious feeling
 19 *with*: on // *which had before had*: who before had held 21 *aloud*: loudly
 22 *opinion*: contention // *true*: correct 23 *deceived*: mistaken
 24 *without reason*: irrationally 25 *himself*: he himself 29 *ghostly*: spiritual
 32 *let*: scruple 35 *deserveth*: merits 37 *after*: afterward // *suffered*: allowed
 37 *scabbed*: scabby

itch of vainglory catch they in their preaching... that though all the world were the worse for it, and their own life lie thereon, yet would they long to be pulpited. And this, I say, hath come of some that have with contempt of all other learning... given them to
 5 Scripture alone. Whose affections of pride and sloth hath not in the beginning been perceived to themselves... but have accounted their vices for devotion.”

“Would ye, then,” quoth he, “condemn that manner of study... by which a man hath so great affection to the Scripture alone... that he, for the
 10 delight thereof, feeleth little savor in anything else? But that we should lose time in philosophy—the mother of heresies!—and let Scripture alone?”

*Nothing can be compared
 to Scripture.*

“Nay,” quoth I, “that mind am I not of. There was never thing written in this
 15 world that can in any wise be comparable

with any part of Holy Scripture. And yet I think other liberal sciences a gift of God also... and not to be cast away... but worthy to wait, and as handmaids to give attendance, upon divinity. And in this point I think not thus alone. For ye shall
 20 find Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine, Saint Basil, and *many* of the old holy doctors, openly and plainly of the same opinion. And of divinity reckon I the best part to be contained in Holy Scripture. And this I say for him that shall have time thereto... and from youth intendeth to-the-Church-ward, and to make himself, with
 25 God’s help, meet for the office of a preacher. Howbeit, if any man either happen to begin so late... that he shall, peradventure, have no time thereto; or else, any man of youth to have that fervent appetite unto Scripture... that he cannot find in his heart to read anything else (which affection whoso happeth to have given

Very good counsel

him... is very fortunate, if he with grace and meekness guide it well)—then would I

counsel him... specially to study for the virtuous framing of his own affections... and using great moderation and temperance in the preaching to other men. And in allthing to flee the desire of
 35 praise and show of cunning, ever mistrusting his own inclinations,

2 *lie thereon*: be put at risk by it 3 *hath come*: is what has become

4 *them*: themselves 5, 29 *affection(s)*: disposition(s)

6 *to themselves*: (as such) by them // *have*: i.e., they have

7 *for devotion*: as devoutness 9 *so great affection to*: such a great passion for

10 *feeleth little savor*: has little interest 11 *lose time in*: waste time on

11 *let*: leave 15 *wise*: way 19, 22 *divinity*: theology

21 *old holy doctors*: early theologians 23 *time thereto*: the time for it

23–24 *from youth*: while still young

24 *intendeth to-the-Church-ward*: is aiming for the priesthood 25 *meet*: fit

29 *whoso*: whoever 32 *framing*: ordering 33 *affections*: passions

34 *allthing*: everything 35 *cunning*: learning

- and live in dread and fear of the devil's subtle sleight
and inventions. Who though he lie in continual wait upon
every preacher, to catch him into pride if he can—yet his highest
enterprise and proudest triumph standeth in the bringing
5 of a man to the most abuse of that thing... that is of his own nature
the best. And therefore great labor maketh he, and great boast if
he bring it about, that a good wit may abuse his labor...
bestowed upon the study of Holy Scripture.
- “For the sure avoiding whereof, my poor advice were in the
10 study thereof... to have a special regard to the writings and
comments of old holy fathers. And yet ere he fall in hand with
the one or the other... next grace and help of God (to be gotten with
abstinence and prayer and cleanness of living), before all things
15 were it necessary to come well and surely instructed in all such
points and articles as the Church believeth. Which things once
firmly had, and fastly for undoubted truths presupposed, then
shall reason and they be two good rules to examine and expound all
doubtful texts by, since the reader shall be sure that no text is so to be
20 understood as it standeth against them both... or against any
point of the Catholic faith of Christ's church. And, therefore, if it
seem to stand against any of them, either shall the light of natural
reason with the collation of other texts... help to find out the
truth, or else (which is the surest way) he shall perceive the truth
25 in the comments of the good holy doctors of old, to whom God
hath given the grace of understanding; or, finally, if all that he can
either find in other men's works... or invent, by God's aid, of
his own study... cannot suffice to satisfy, but that any text yet
seem unto him contrary to any point of the Church's faith and
30 belief, let him then, as Saint Augustine saith, make himself
very sure that there is some fault either in the translator... or in the
writer... or, nowadays, in the printer—or, finally, that for some
Lean to the faith of the one let or other, he understandeth it not aright.
Church. And so let him reverently acknowledge
his ignorance—lean and cleave to the
35 faith of the Church as to an undoubted truth, leaving that text

1 *sleight*: trickery 2 *inventions*: schemes 5 *most abuse*: worst misuse
5, 7 *his*: its 6, 7 *labor*: effort 7 *wit*: mind; intellect // *abuse*: misuse
8 *bestowed upon*: spent on 9 *were*: would be 11, 24 *comments*: commentaries
11 *old holy fathers*: early fathers of the Church
11 *ere he fall in hand*: before he gets involved 12 *the one*: i.e., either the one
12 *next*: next to; right after 14 *well and surely*: very solidly 16 *fastly*: steadfastly
18 *doubtful*: unclear; question-raising // *so*: in such a way 19, 21 *stand(eth)*: go(es)
22 *with . . . of*: i.e., along with a putting together of this scriptural text with others
22 *find out*: arrive at 23 *surest*: safest 24 *holy doctors*: theologians
26 *invent*: come up with // *of*: by 27 *study*: reflection
29–30 *make himself very sure*: completely rest assured
30 *there is some fault*: i.e., some mistake has been made 30, 31 *in*: i.e., by
31 *writer*: transcriber // *for*: because of 32 *let*: hindrance

to be better perceived when it shall please our Lord with his light
to reveal and disclose it. And in this wise shall he take a sure way...
by which he shall be sure of one of two things: that is to wit,
either to perceive and understand the Scripture right... or else, at
5 the leastwise, never in such wise to take it wrong... that ever may
turn his soul to peril.”

The Twenty-third Chapter

The messenger objecteth against the counsel of the
author... in that he would that the student of Scripture
10 should lean to the commenters and unto natural reason—
which he calleth enemy to faith. And thereupon the
answer of the author to those objections, specially
proving that reason is *servant* to faith, and not enemy...
and must with faith and interpretation of Scripture needs
15 be concurrent.

“**S**ir,” quoth he, “I will not say nay but this way will do well. Howbeit,
I fear me that we were likely to build up many errors if we
square our timber and stones by these three rules—men’s glosses,
reason, and faith... not that we find *in* Scripture, but that we bring
20 with us *to* Scripture. For first, as for the commenters that ye speak of,
either their comments tell us the same tale that the text doth...
or else another. If they tell me the same: I believe them only because
the text saith the same. And if they tell me another: then believe
I them not at all; nor naught I should, except I should believe men
25 better than God. And as for reason, what greater enemy can ye find
to faith than reason is?—which counterpleadeth faith in every
point! And would ye then send them twain forth to school together,
that can never agree together... but be ready to fight together and
either scratch out other’s eyes by the way? It seemeth also somewhat
30 strange... that when God hath left us in his Holy Scripture well and
sufficiently his doctrine whereby he would we should have

5–6 *in . . . peril*: to take it wrong in such a way as might put his soul in danger

10 *lean to*: rely on 10, 20 *commenters*: commentators

12–13 *specially proving*: proving in particular 14 *needs*: necessarily

15 *concurrent*: compatible 16 *say nay but*: deny that

21 *comments*: commentaries 24 *naught*: not at all // *except*: unless

25 *better than*: i.e., more than I believe 26 *counterpleadeth*: contradicts

28 *together*: with one another

29 *either scratch out other’s eyes*: scratch each other’s eyes out

29 *by the way*: on the way (to school) 30 *strange*: bizarre

30 *well and*: good and; quite

warning of all such things as he would we should believe and

1.23

What is left us in Scripture do, or leave undone, and hath left us the
Scripture for none other cause but for that

it should stand unto us for the witness of his will (declared us by
5 writing, that we should not say nay but we were warned), and none other
cause why the Scripture should be given us but to tell us his pleasure
and stir us to fulfill it... we shall now not shape our faith after the
Scripture... but first frame us a faith ourselves, and then shape the
Scripture of God thereby, and make it agree thereto. This were indeed a
10 good, easy way for a slothful mason that were an evil workman—
to make him a square, and a ruler, of lead... that when he list not to
take the labor to hew the stone to the square, he may bend the
square to the stone, and so shall he yet bring them together, at the
leastways.”

15 “As for the old commenters,” quoth I, “they tell you the same tale
that the text doth; but they tell it you more plain, as we shall more
talk of after. But surely ye beguiled me now, in that ye set reason so
short; for verily, I would never have went that ye would in Scripture
like worse a wise man than an unreasonable reader. Nor I cannot see
20 why ye should reckon reason for an enemy to faith... except ye reckon
every man for your enemy... that is your better and hurteth you not. Thus
were one of your five wits enemy to another, and our feeling should
abhor our sight... because we may see further by four miles than we
may feel. How can reason (but if reason be unreasonable) have more
25 disdain to hear the truth of any point of faith... than to see the
proof of many things natural... whereof reason can no more attain
to the cause than it can in the articles of the faith; but still, for any
power that reason hath to perceive the cause, she shall judge it impossible
after she prove it true... but if she believe her eye better than
30 her wit.

An adamant stone

“When ye see the adamant stone draw
iron to it, it grieveth not reason to look
thereon... but reason hath a *pleasure* to behold the thing that passeth
her power to perceive. For it is as plainly against the rule of reason

1 *warning*: notification // *would we should*: would have us 4 *by*: in
5 *say nay but*: deny that // *warned*: notified; informed 7 *after*: according to
8 *frame*: fashion 9, 22 *were*: would be 10 *way*: course of action // *evil*: bad
11 *that*: so that 11–12 *list* . . . *hew*: doesn't want to go to the trouble of hewing
12, 23, 24 *may*: can 15 *old commenters*: early commentators 17 *after*: later
17 *now*: i.e., just now // *set*: sold 18 *went*: thought 19 *worse*: less well
19 *wise*: intelligent // *an unreasonable reader*: a reader who is not able to reason
20 *except*: unless 22 *wits*: senses 23 *abhor*: loathe 24, 29 *but if*: unless
24 *unreasonable*: irrational 30 *wit*: understanding
31 *the adamant stone*: i.e., a magnet 33 *passeth*: surpasses
34 *perceive*: understand

- that a heavy body should move alone any other motion than downward...
 or that any bodily thing should draw another without
 touching... as is any article of the faith. Nor never was there yet
 cause by reason assigned that men may perceive for probable... but
 5 only that it is a secret property of the stone—which is as much to
 say as ‘I wot ne’er what.’ And yet, as I say, reason can believe that
 thing well enough... and be not angry therewith, nor strive against it.
 And yet all the rules that ever she learned tell her still that it may not
 be.”
- 10 “Yea,” quoth he, “but a man’s own *eyes* tell him that it *may* be. And
 that must needs content him.”
- “May a man, then, better trust his eyes,” quoth I, “than his wit?”
- “Yea, marry!” quoth he. “What may he better trust than his eyes?”
- “His eyes may,” quoth I, “be deceived and ween they see that they see
 15 not, if reason give over its hold... except ye think the juggler blow
 his galls through the goblet’s bottom... or cut your girdle before your
 face in twenty pieces and make it whole again... and put a knife into his eye
 and see never the worse. And turn a plum into a dog’s turd in a
 boy’s mouth.”
- 20 Now happened it madly that even with this word came one of
 my folk and asked whether they should make ready for dinner!
- “Abide,” quoth I, “let us have better meat first!” And therewith your
 friend and I began to laugh.
- “Well,” quoth I, “make no haste yet for a little while.” And so went
 25 he his way, half out of countenance, weening that he had done or
 said somewhat like a fool—as he was one that was not very wise indeed...
 and wont so to do. And then said I to your friend, “Now ye
 see that reason is not so proud a dame as ye take her for. She seeth
 done indeed by nature that she cannot perceive how... and is well
 30 contented therewith. She seeth a fond fellow deceive her sight and
 her wit therewith, and taketh it well and merrily, and is not angry
 that the juggler will not teach every man his craft. And ween ye then
 that she will take it so highly that God himself, her Master and
 Maker, should do what him list... and then tell her what, and tell her not
 35 how? I pray you,” quoth I, “that our Lord was born of a virgin, how
 know you?”

4 *probable*: plausible 5 *secret*: hidden 6 *wot ne’er*: have no idea
 7 *strive*: put up a fight 8 *may not*: cannot 10, 12, etc. *may*: can 12 *wit*: mind
 13 *marry*: of course 14, 25, 32 *ween(ing)*: think(ing) 14 *that*: that which; what
 15 *except*: unless 15, 32 *juggler*: magician 16 *galls*: oak apples; i.e., little balls
 16 *girdle*: belt 18 *worse*: less well
 20 *even with this word*: at the very moment that this was said 21 *folk*: servants
 22 *abide*: wait // *let us have better meat*: let’s get better food
 25 *out of countenance*: flustered 26 *wise*: sensible 30 *fond*: silly
 31 *wit*: understanding // *well and merrily*: quite cheerfully
 33 *so highly*: with such indignation 34 *what him list*: what he pleases 35 *pray*: ask

- “Marry,” quoth he, “by Scripture!”
 “How know you,” quoth I, “that ye should believe the Scripture?”
 “Marry,” quoth he, “by faith!”
 “Why,” quoth I, “what doth faith tell you therein?”
 5 “Faith,” quoth he, “telleth me that Holy Scripture is things of truth
 written by the secret teaching of God.”
 “And whereby know you,” quoth I, “that ye should believe God?”
 “Whereby?” quoth he. “This is a strange question. *Every* man,” quoth he,
 may well wot that!”
 10 “That is truth,” quoth I. “But is there any horse, or any ass, that
 wotteth that?”
 Balaam’s ass “None,” quoth he, “that I wot of... but if
 Nm 22:28–30 Balaam’s ass anything understood thereof.
 For he spoke like a good reasonable ass.”
 15 “If no brute beast can wit that,” quoth I, “and every man may, what
 is the cause why that man may and other beasts may not?”
 “Marry,” quoth he, “for man hath reason and they have none!”
 “Ah, well, then,” quoth I, “reason must he needs have, then, that shall
 perceive what he should believe. And so must reason not resist
 20 faith, but walk with her... and as her handmaid so wait upon
 her... that, as contrary as ye take her, yet of a truth, faith goeth
 Faith goeth never without never without her. But likewise as if a
 reason. maid be suffered to run on the bridle, or
 be cup-shotten, or wax too proud, she
 25 will then wax copious and chop logic with her mistress...
 and fare sometimes as she were frantic: so if reason be suffered to
 run out at riot... and wax overly high-hearted and proud, she will
 not fail to fall in rebellion toward her mistress’s faith. But on
 the other side, if she be well brought up and well guided and kept
 30 in good temper, she shall never disobey faith, being in her right
 mind. And therefore let reason be well guided, for surely faith goeth
 never without her.
 “Now, in the study of Scripture—in devising upon the sentence,
 in considering what ye read, in pondering the purpose of divers
 35 comments, in comparing together divers texts that seem contrary
 and be not—albeit I deny not but that grace and God’s especial

1, 3, 17 *marry*: goodness 9, 15, 16 *may*: can 9, 11, 12 *wot(teth)*: know(s)
 12 *but if*: unless 14 *reasonable*: rational 15 *wit*: know
 23, 26 *suffered*: allowed 23 *run on the bridle*: is allowed to get out of control
 24 *be cup-shotten*: get drunk 24, 25, 27 *wax*: become
 25 *copious*: profuse in speech // *chop*: bandy 26 *fare*: act // *as*: as if
 26 *frantic*: delirious 27 *out at riot*: wild // *high-hearted*: high-spirited
 28 *in*: into 30 *temper*: composure 31 *surely*: certainly
 33 *devising*: reflecting // *sentence*: meaning 34 *purpose*: gist(s)
 35 *comments*: commentaries // *contrary*: contradictory

- help is the great thing therein, yet useth he for an instrument
 man's reason thereto. God helpeth us to eat, also... but yet not without
 our mouth. Now, as the hand is the more nimble by the use of some
 feats, and the legs and feet more swift and sure by custom of
 5 going and running, and the whole body the more wieldy and lusty
 by some kind of exercise, so is it no doubt but that reason is by
 Reason by liberal arts is study, labor, and exercise of logic,
 quickened. philosophy, and other liberal arts corroborated
 and quickened... and the judgment
 10 both in them and also in orators, laws, and stories much
 ripened. And albeit poets be with many men taken but for painted
 words, yet do they much help the judgment... and make a man
 among other things well furnished of one special thing...
 without which all learning is half lame."
 15 "What is that?" quoth he.
 "Marry," quoth I, "a good mother wit! And therefore are, in mine
 opinion, these Lutherans in a mad mind... that would now
 have all learning save 'Scripture only' clean cast away... which
 things (if the time will serve) be, as me thinketh, to be taken and had,
 20 and with reason brought, as I said before, into the service of divinity.
 Note And as holy Saint Jerome saith, 'the
 Ex 3:22 Hebrews well despoil the Egyptians'
 when Christ's learned men take out of the pagan writers the riches
 and learning and wisdom that God gave unto them, and employ the
 25 same in the service of divinity about the profit of God's chosen
 children of Israel the church of Christ, which he hath of the
 hard, stony paynims made the children of Abraham."

The Twenty-fourth Chapter

- The messenger maketh objections against the author...
 30 in that he counseled the student of Scripture to bring the
 articles of our faith with him for a special rule to construe
 the Scripture by. And the author confirmeth his counsel
 given in that behalf, declaring that without that rule,

3 *is*: i.e., is made // *use*: practice 4 *feats*: actions; exercises
 5 *going*: walking // *lusty*: healthy 8 *corroborated*: strengthened
 9 *quickened*: invigorated 10 *stories*: historical writings
 11 *ripened*: matured // *painted*: flowery 16 *marry*: indeed
 20, 25 *divinity*: theology 26 *of the*: out of the
 27 *paynims*: pagans 32 *confirmeth*: reaffirms 33 *declaring*: showing

men may soon fall into great errors in the study of Holy Scripture.

1.24

- With this your friend held, as he said, himself “somewhat content” that reason was not “so great an enemy to faith” as she seemed; but yet he thought that she should have need rather to be well bridled than to bear much rule in the interpretation of Scripture. But as for the other point—that we should needs bring the faith with us already, as a rule to learn the Scripture by, when we come to the Scripture to learn the faith by—that thing he thought in no wise convenient, but a thing, he said, “much like as if we would go make the cart to draw the horse.”
- “Well,” quoth I, “we shall see anon whether the cart draw the horse or the horse the cart. Or whether we be yet haply so blind that we see not well which is the cart, which is the horse.”
- “First,” quoth I, “tell me, how old would ye that one were ere he come to the study of Scripture?”
- “By my faith,” quoth he, “I would have a Christian man’s child begin therein very young... and therein continue all his life.”
- “In good faith,” quoth I, “that like I not amiss... so that ye do not mean that ye would have him all his life learn nothing else. And yet that could I suffer too, and allow right well, in some. But yet, if he did never in his life learn aught else... how old think ye that he should be... ere he learned the articles of his belief in the Bible?”
- “I cannot readily tell,” quoth he, “for I have not seen it assayed.”
- “Well,” quoth I, “since we be not sure how long it would be in learning there... were it not best, then, that for that while, he were taught his Creed before, in his own mother tongue?”
- “I deny not that,” quoth he, “that he should con his Creed before, because every Christian man’s child, by the law, should know his faith as soon as he could. But I say he should not therewith take upon him to judge and examine Holy Scripture thereby.”

4 *content*: satisfied; in agreement 9–10 *in no wise*: by no means
 10 *convenient*: proper; fitting 12 *anon*: soon 13 *haply*: perhaps
 15 *would ye that one were ere*: would you have someone be before
 19 *like I not amiss*: I see nothing wrong with // *so that*: so long as
 21 *yet that*: even that // *suffer*: go along with
 21 *allow right well*: quite well approve of 22 *ought*: anything
 23 *should*: would 24 *it assayed*: this put to the test 28 *con*: learn by heart

“Well,” quoth I, “let this Christian child of ours alone for a while; and let us consider, if there were a good old idolater that never had heard in all his life anything of our belief, or of other god than only the man in the moon... whom he had watched and worshipped every frosty night—if this man might suddenly have the whole Bible turned into his own tongue, and read it over, think ye that he should thereby learn all the articles of the faith?”

“I think,” quoth he, “that he might.”

“Think ye so?” quoth I. “I put case that he believed that all the Book were lies!”

“Marry,” quoth he, “that may he by the Book itself learn the contrary! For the Book in telling its tale affirmeth its tale and teacheth it to be true.”

“Ye say very truth,” quoth I, “if it were all one to read a thing and learn a thing. But now might there be another book made also, with lesser wonders and fewer, and thereby less unlikely... and yet all untrue. And how should his mind give him then that this book telling so incredible wonders should be true?”

“Nay,” quoth he, “that thing must he needs believe, or else he can perceive nothing.”

“Well,” quoth I, “then is there one point of faith, one great lesson, to be learned *without* the Book—that must be learned somewhere, either by God or man—or else the whole Book will do us little service. And of whom we shall learn that... we shall see hereafter. But now suppose that this old idolater were thoroughly persuaded in his mind that all the Book were true. Think you, then, that he should find out therein all the articles of our faith?”

“I think,” quoth he, “that he should.”

“Think ye so?” quoth I. “Be it so, then. But think ye that he shall find them out all in a week?”

“Nay,” quoth he, “that can he not do.”

“Well,” quoth I, “then... since he shall not, at the leastwise, find them out all on a *day*... let us leave him a little while in seeking... and we shall return again after to him, and look what he shall have found.

And in the mean season we shall go look again upon our good little godson, the boy, pardie, that we christened right now and

5, 8 *might*: could 6 *turned into his own tongue*: put into his own language

9, 25 *all the*: the whole 9, 11, etc. *Book*: Bible

11 *marry*: good heavens // *that may he*: of that he can 11, 22 *by*: from

14 *all one*: entirely the same 22 *without*: outside of 34 *after*: later

34 *look*: see 35 *mean season*: meantime 36 *pardie*: by golly // *right*: just

taught him his Creed and set him to Scripture. Were it need that this child knew no more of his faith but his Creed before he go to Scripture?"

"Methinketh," quoth he, "that it were enough."

5 "Be it so, then," quoth I.

"What if it should fortune him to find some text of Scripture that should seem to him to be contrary to his Creed? As, for example,

Ps 82:6 if he happened upon the reading of these words—'Dii estis, et filii Excelsi omnes'

10 ('Gods be ye all, and the children of the High God')—what if he would ween that since in these words it is said *all* good men be the 'children' of God, our Savior Christ were not God's only-begotten Son, but his son in such wise as God by the prophet calleth all good men?"

15 "That could he not think," quoth he. "For he should in other parts of Scripture find many places that should show him well the contrary."

"Well said," quoth I, "and very truth. But, now, in the meantime... will ye that he shall believe as that text shall seem to sound to him, against his Creed... till he have found another text in Scripture... that answereth it, and seemeth to him to say more plainly the contrary?"

*God's children by generation
and acceptation*

"Nay," quoth he, "not one hour! For he seeth that though other good men be called 'God's children' and 'gods,' yet

25 as they be not *very* gods, so be they not God's very, natural children, by generation... but by acceptation; whereas the Creed saith of our *Savior* that *he* is God's 'only-begotten Son'—that signifieth him to be his son by generation!"

30 "That is," quoth I, "very true... and well and reasonably considered... and according unto the very, right faith. But now consider... that ye make him by and by fall to the squaring of his stones... like that slothful mason that ye spoke of, with his leaden rule. For now ye make him to examine the truth of this text of the Psalm... by the article

35 of the faith... which he brought with him—and by a collection and discourse of reason. And so, forthwith, ye find *both* these rules

6 *it should fortune him to*: he should by chance 11 *ween*: thin

19–20 *seem to sound to him*: seem to him to imply

21 *answereth it*: goes against that understanding of his 26 *very*: actual; real

29 *that signifieth him to be*: which implies that he is

30 *well and reasonably considered*: very logically thought out

31 *according unto*: in accord with // *very*: true 32 *by and by*: immediately

32 *fall to*: set about 33 *slothful*: lazy // *leaden rule*: ruler made of lead

35 *collection*: deducing 36 *discourse of reason*: process of reasoning

36 *forthwith*: right away

necessary to the discussion of Scripture. Of which twain ye would
in the beginning admit neither nother.

1.24

“But now go further. What if he would upon this text, ‘Homines
Ps 36:6 et iumenta salvabis, Deus’ (‘God, thou shalt

5 save both man and beasts’), ween that
beasts had immortal souls, as men have... and that man and beast should
be both saved at last—and so, that no deadly sin should be
punished with everlasting pain—till he came to other texts that
10 should prove well the contrary? Were that best? Or else were it better
that besides his Creed, he had knowledge before of these articles of our
faith—that only *our* souls be immortal, and not beasts’ also, and that
the pain of hell shall be for sinners everlasting—and that he may
thereby, with reason joined thereto, perceive that this text, ‘Thou
15 shalt save both men and beasts,’ is meant by some other kind of
saving and preserving here in *this* world, and not of bringing both
to heaven?”

“All this may he know,” quoth he, “by Scripture itself well enough!”

“That wot I well,” quoth I. “And yet, as plain as Christ speaketh of
Origen hell in the Gospel, Origen, for all that,

20 which neither was a naughty man nor
unlearned in Scripture, could not so clearly see it... but that he said
the contrary. And took the words of Christ in a wrong sense. And
would, peradventure, with one that would stick only upon the
words of Scripture (leaving the right *sense* thereof, which God and
25 his Holy Spirit hath taught his Church) bring him to a bay
therein... that he should be fain—not our child only, but also a well
elderly man and in Scripture well forward—to take him in conclusion
to the faith of Christ’s church.

“Now, if our child should read on the text of Scripture without
30 care of the comments, and without any further instruction
of the points of our faith than be specified in our common
Our common creed was made creed... made in the beginning, as a brief
by the apostles. remembrance, by the apostles... not
setting out in so short a thing, and
35 clearly declaring, *all* that we be bound to believe: albeit that

2 *neither nother*: neither the one nor the other 3 *upon*: on the basis of

5 *ween*: think 6, 7 *should*: would 7 *deadly*: mortal

14 *by*: with reference to 18 *wot*: know 20 *which*: who // *naughty*: bad

23 *one*: someone // *stick*: fix; focus 24 *leaving*: prescinding from

25 *to a bay*: to such an impasse 26 *fain*: constrained // *well*: very

27 *well forward*: very advanced

27 *take him in conclusion*: betake himself in the end 29 *read on*: keep reading

30 *care of the comments*: concerning himself with the commentaries

31 *of the*: on the 32 *made*: composed 33 *remembrance*: reminder

35 *declaring*: explaining // *bound*: obliged

he should well find in Scripture many plain and open texts
 whereby the Godhead of our Savior, and his equality with his
 Father, may well and sufficiently be proved—yet were he not unlikely
 by such *other* texts as seem to show him to be *less* than
 5 his Father... to fall into the sect and heresy of the Arians. And
 against those other texts proving his equal Godhead... to devise such
 false glosses as they did. Whereas being before taught and confirmed
 by the *faith* of the *Church*... that our Savior is one God,
 and one equal substance, with his Father, he shall well perceive and
 10 understand *thereby* that all the texts that seem to make him
 less... be nothing to be understood of his Godhead, but of his
 manhood only. As when we commonly speak of ourselves, and of
 our own nature, and say ‘we’ shall die, and worms eat ‘us’ up
 and turn ‘all’ to dust... we mean all this by our body only, and
 15 nothing intend thereby to deny the immortality of our
 soul.

“We may not dine today if I should reckon you the tenth part
 of such things as we must needs (upon loss of heaven) believe...
 which neither our child with his only Creed, and much less
 20 our old idolater without creed, should so find out by Scripture...
 but that they were both well likely to take the Scripture to the
 wrong part... except we take with us for a rule of interpretation
 the articles of our faith.”

The Twenty-fifth Chapter

25 The author, taking occasion upon certain words of
 the messenger, declareth the preeminence, necessity, and
 profit of Holy Scripture... showing, nevertheless, that many
 things have been taught by God without writing, and
 many great things so remain—yet unwritten—of truths
 30 necessary to be believed. And that the New Law of Christ is
 the law so written in the heart... that it shall never out of
 his *church*. And that the law *there* written by God is a
 right rule to interpret the words written in his Holy
 Scripture. Which rule with reason and the old interpreters...

1 *open*: clear 2, 6, 11 *Godhead*: divinity 3 *well and*: good and; quite
 7 *confirmed*: settled in mind; made certain 10 *make him*: indicate that he is
 11, 15 *nothing*: not at all 11 *of*: as pertaining to 14 *by*: with reference to
 17 *may*: could // *reckon*: name // *the tenth part*: one-tenth
 19 *his only*: only his 21–22 *to the wrong part*: as backing up the wrong side
 22 *except*: unless 25 *words of*: statements made by 26 *declareth*: affirms
 27 *showing*: pointing out 28 *without*: not in
 31 *out of*: depart from; not be in 34 *old*: early

the author showeth to be the very sure way to wade with...
in the great stream of Holy Scripture.

1.25

- “Why, then,” quoth he, “this were as much to say as that God had not well written his Holy Scripture, if he have caused it to be written
5 so as men may be so soon deceived therein... that they were as likely—and as it seemeth by you, *more* likely—to fall into a *false* way than find out the true! And better were it, then, that God had not given us the Scripture at all... than to give us a way to walk wherein we were more likely to sink than save ourselves!”
- 10 “Holy Scripture,” quoth I, “both *is* such as I have said... and yet nothing followeth it thereupon that God hath not caused it to be written well, or that it had been better to have kept it from us. And albeit that in this point were a great occasion of a long tale... in declaring and making open that God hath in that writing of Holy
15 Scripture used so high wisdom, and showed such a wonderful temperance, that the very strange/familiar fashion thereof... may to good men and wise well declare... that as it was written by men... so was it indited by God—yet, passing over the praise, I will speak one word or twain for the answer of such blame as ye lay thereto.
- 20 For it is almost a common thing among men to speak sometimes... as though they could amend the works of God. And few men be there, I ween, but they think that if they had been of God’s counsel in the making of the world... though they dare not be so bold to say that they could have made it better... yet if they might
25 have ruled it, he should have made many things of another fashion. And for all that, if he would yet call us all to counsel... and change nothing till we were upon everything all agreed, the world were well likely till Doomsday to go forth on as it goeth already—saving that I wot ne’er whether we would all agree to be
30 winged.
- “But as for the Scripture, shortly: God hath so devised it that he hath given the world therein an inestimable treasure as the case standeth. And yet we should haply nothing have needed thereof... if the wounds of our own folly had not of our great necessity and
35 God’s great goodness required it. For at our creation he gave but

1 *very sure*: really safe // *to wade with*: by which to wade

5 *may be so soon deceived*: can so easily get tripped up 8 *walk*: proceed

11 *nothing followeth it thereupon*: in no way does it follow from that

13 *in . . . tale*: this point provides a great opportunity for a long discourse

14 *declaring*: explaining // *open*: evident 15 *used*: employed // *so*: such

15 *showed*: wrought; accomplished // *wonderful*: wondrous; astonishing

16 *temperance*: mingling; putting together // *strange*: foreign; unfamiliar

17 *declare*: show 18 *indited*: composed 19 *answer*: rebuttal

19 *blame*: blameworthiness 21 *works*: doings 22 *ween*: suspect

22 *of God’s counsel*: consulted by God 24 *to*: as to // *might*: could

25 *should*: would // *of*: in

29 *saving . . . would*: only I don’t know that we wouldn’t

31 *shortly*: to put it succinctly

33 *nothing have needed thereof*: have had no need of it 34 *necessity*: poverty

than to follow their own hurt and ours too. As it had been
better for our father Adam and us all... that he had suffered his
wife, our mother Eve, to be sad and angry both—and, like a woman,
to weep too—than to have eaten the apple for fellowship, to please her
with.

“Now did all the sin anon spring up, for the more part, upon
the occasion of feeding and engendering; whereof sprung covetousness,
gluttony, sloth, wrath, and lechery. And many times
pride and envy, as one perceiving himself in these things in
better condition or worse than another... so began to conceive a
setting by himself... with contempt of other, or envy and hatred
to some other—saving that pride sometimes also sprang out of the
soul, and so liked itself that it envied the *better*, as Cain did
Abel; and for to be the *more* set by, pride longed superfluously to
get by covetousness and greediness many folks’ livings in his own
hands, to make other folks serve him and honor and hang
upon him for necessity.

“And of all these mischiefs was always sensuality ready to administer
The windows of the body matter... and by all the doors and windows
of the body—by feeling, tasting,
smelling, sight, and hearing—ceased never to send in occasions
to the soul; nor the devil never ceased, for his part, diligently
to put forward. Against whom did reason resist... with good
counsel given to the soul; and good spirits appointed by
God... gave their help also; and God assisted with his aid and
grace... where he found the person willing to work therewith.
And in this manner continued man long time—not without
revelation of Christ once to come. Which faith delivered to
the father... went by the mouth to the son... and so, from child
to child, heard and believed among them. And whatso were
God’s pleasure besides (that nature and reason could not plainly
show them), God, of his goodness, by special message gave them
undoubted knowledge—as he did to Noah, Lot, and Abraham,
and divers others—whereof some be since written and comprised
in Scripture... and of likelihood not all. For well probable is it

1 *follow*: pursue // *hurt*: harm 2 *suffered*: allowed 6 *anon*: soon
6 *more*: most 9 *one*: someone 10–11 *a setting by*: an evaluating of
12 *to*: toward 14 *superfluously*: without measure 18 *of*: for
18–19 *administer matter*: supply fodder 23 *put forward*: offer (them)
28 *once*: one day 30 *whatso*: whatever 33 *undoubted*: sure
34 *divers*: several // *comprised*: contained 35 *well probable*: quite plausible

that the patriarchs in divers things that they did... as in their divers marriages, and some such other things as then were by them

1.25

Note

well done for the time—were to them appointed specially by God, for causes

- 5 well known to himself... and unknown to us, and the things now forbidden us... and therefore to us unlawful, except God's like ordinance or dispensation should hereafter, in general or particular, be revealed to the contrary.

- 10 "But so was it after... that the world waxing worse, right good and virtuous lineages declined and decayed. And by the lewd conversation of evil people, fell by disorder in such a blindness... that albeit some were there always that perceived well their duty, yet were the common people of the children of Israel by custom of sin so darkened in their natural knowledge... that they lacked in many things the right perceiving... that reason, had it not been by evil custom corrupted, might verily well have showed them.

"For the remedy whereof, God, of his endless mercy, by the law

Ex 31:18

written with his own finger unto Moses in the tables of stone—by the Ten Commandments—

- 20 put in remembrance again certain conclusions of the law of nature... which their reason (overwhelmed with sensuality) had then forgotten. And to the end that they should

Why God gave unto the Jews heaps of laws

keep his behests the better, he gave them a great heap of the laws—and ceremonies—

- 25 more, to keep them in straitly, for straying abroad in riot. And wrought great wonders that they should well see... that those things were his own deed—whereby they might have the more dread to transgress them. And there, in writing, he gave a warning also of Christ: that God would once send them one springing of themselves... to whom they should give hearing in stead of Moses. Of whom also (as well before as after), by patriarchs and prophets, by figures and prophecies, God ceased not in such wise to foreshow his coming, his cause, his living, his

3 *well*: morally 6 *except*: unless (and until) 9 *after*: later // *waxing*: getting

10 *decayed*: deteriorated // *lewd conversation*: vile consorting

11 *disorder*: breach of public order // *in*: into 19 *tables*: tablets

20 *conclusions*: dictates 24 *ceremonies*: rituals

25 *keep them in straitly*: tightly restrain them in

25–26 *for straying abroad in riot*: lest they should wildly stray all over the place

27 *deed*: doing 28 *dread*: fear 28–29 *a warning*: an intimation

29 *once*: one day 29–30 *one springing of themselves*: a descendant of theirs

31 *stead*: (the) place 33 *foreshow*: foretell; prognosticate

dying, his resurrection, and his holy acts... that if pride and envy had not letted it... the figures and prophecies set and compared with his coming, conversation, and doings might well have made all the Jews to know him. And for the perceiving and good understanding of the law written, he sent always some good men whose words, well living, and sometimes also manifest miracles showed therewith, never left them destitute of sufficient knowledge that longed to learn the Law... not to plead it, and for glory to dispute it, but to teach it again meekly—and, as man's frailty could suffer it, especially to fulfill and keep it.

“Yet after all this—when the world was in a more decay and ruin of all virtue—then came our Savior Christ to redeem us with his death... and leave us his New Law, whereof was long before
Jer 31:31–33 prophesied by the prophet Jeremiah.
 ‘Lo, the days be coming,’ said our Lord, ‘when I shall order and dispose to the house of Israel and the house of Judah a new covenant’ (or ‘testament’). ‘I shall give my law in their minds. And I shall write it in their heart. And I will be their Lord, and they shall be my people.’ This law written in men's hearts... was, according to the words of the prophet, first brought
Unto whom Christ was specially sent by our Savior to the house of Israel and the house of Judah, to whom, as himself saith, he was specially sent. ‘I am not sent,’ saith our Lord, ‘but unto the sheep that are perished of the
Mt 15:24, 26 house of Israel.’ And also he said, ‘It is not good to take the bread from the board of the children and cast it to dogs.’ But yet not only the ready towardness of some paynims... caused them to be partakers of that bread, but also, soon after, the stubbornness and obstinate infidelity of
Acts 13:46 the Jews... caused Saint Paul and the apostles to say unto their face, ‘The Gospel of Christ was ordained by God to be first preached unto you. But since that ye refuse it—lo, we depart from you to the Gentiles.’ And so was in their stead... the Church gathered of all the world abroad. All which notwithstanding, both were there at that time out of the Jews converted and made many a good Christian man—

2 *letted*: prevented 3 *conversation*: demeanor 6 *well*: upright
 8 *plead*: push // *dispute*: argue over 10 *suffer it*: allow
 11 *more decay*: worse (state of) decline 20 *according to*: in accordance with
 22 *himself*: he himself 23 *specially*: expressly 26 *board*: meal table
 27 *towardness*: tractableness 28 *paynims*: pagans 29 *infidelity*: unbelief
 35 *abroad*: at large

and many of the same people turned unto Christ since—and in conclusion the time shall come... when the remnant that shall be then left... shall save themselves by the same faith.

5 “This is called the law of Christ’s faith, the law of his holy Gospel. I mean not only the words written in the books of his evangelists... but, much more specially, the substance of our faith itself; which our Lord said he would write in men’s ‘hearts’... not only because of the secret operation of God and his Holy Spirit in justifying the good Christian—either by the working with
10 man’s good will... to the perfection of faith in his soul, or with the good intent of the offerers... to the secret infusion of that virtue into the soul of an innocent infant—but also for that he first without writing revealed those heavenly mysteries by his blessed mouth... through the ears of his apostles and disciples into their holy hearts.
15 Or rather, as it seemeth, it was inwardly infused into Saint *Peter*’s heart... by the secret inspiration of God, without either writing or any outward word.

“For which cause, when he had, upon Christ’s question demanding, ‘Of whom say you that I am?’ answered and said,
20 ‘Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, which art come into this world’—

Mt 16:15–17

“Our Savior said again unto him,
‘Thou art blessed, Simon, the son of John... for neither flesh nor blood hath revealed and showed this
25 to thee... but my Father, that is in heaven.’ And thus it appeareth that the *Peter, prince of the apostles* faith came into Saint *Peter*’s heart—as to the *prince* of the apostles—without hearing, by secret inspiration; and into the remnant by his
The law, ere ever it was confession and Christ’s holy mouth. And
30 *written in the Book, was* by them in like manner—first without
written in men’s hearts. writing, by only words and preaching—so was it spread abroad in the world...
that his faith was by the mouths of his holy messengers put into
35 men’s ears, and by his holy hand written in men’s hearts, ere ever any word thereof, almost, was written in the Book. And so was it

1 *conclusion*: the end 2, 28 *remnant*: rest 8, 11, 16 *secret*: unperceivable
11 *offerers*: baptismal sponsors 18 *demanding*: asking
22 *again unto him*: to him in reply 24 *showed*: told 31 *words*: spoken words
35 *Book*: Bible

convenient, for the law of *life* rather to be written in the lively
minds of men... than in the dead skins of beasts. And I nothing
doubt but all had it so been that never Gospel had been written,
yet should the substance of this faith never have fallen out of Christian
folks' hearts, but the same Spirit that planted it, the same should
have watered it, the same should have kept it, the same should have
increased it.

"But so hath it liked our Lord... after his high wisdom to provide
that some of his disciples have written many things of his holy
life, doctrine, and faith; and yet far from all. Which, as Saint
Jn 21:25 John saith, the world could not have
comprehended.

These books are tempered, by the secret counsel of the Holy Ghost,
so plain and simple... that every man may find in them that he
The difficulty of Scripture may perceive; and yet so high, again,
and so hard... that no man is there so
cunning but he may find in them things far above his reach,
far too profound to pierce unto. Now were to the Christian people
the points of Christ's faith (with which points our Lord would
have them charged) known, as I say, and planted, before; and by
reason thereof, they far the better understood those books. And
although there might haply be some texts which were not,
yet, of necessity for them to perceive—yet by the points of their
faith were they warned, that no text might there be construed
contrary to their faith.

"And none evangelist was there, nor none apostle, that by
writing ever sent the faith to any nation... but if they were
first informed by *word*, and that God had begun his church in
that place.

"And for my part, I would little doubt but that the evangelists
and apostles both... of many great and secret mysteries spoke
much more openly and much more plainly by mouth, among
the people, than ever they put it in writing, forasmuch as their
writings were likely enough at that time to come into the
hands of pagans and paynims—such hogs and dogs as were
not meet to have those precious pearls put upon their noses, nor
that holy food to be dashed in their teeth. For which cause Saint

1 *convenient*: fitting // *lively*: living

2–3 *nothing doubt but all*: have no doubt that even

3 *never Gospel had*: not one Gospel had ever 6 *kept*: tended

8 *liked*: pleased // *after*: in accord with 12 *comprehended*: contained

13 *tempered*: made up; composed (in such a way as to be)

14–15 *that he may*: what he can 15, 23 *perceive*: understand

17 *cunning*: knowledgeable 22 *haply*: perhaps 23 *points*: articles

24 *warned*: put on guard // *that*: so that 27 *but if*: unless

28 *word*: spoken word 31 *secret*: esoteric 35 *paynims*: heathens

35–37: See Matthew 7:6.

Peter in his first sermon unto the Jews... abstained from the
 declaration of Christ's Godhead and equality with his Father—as our
 Savior himself, when the Jews that were unworthy to hear it...
 were offended with that he told them plainly, that he was the Son
 5 of God, withdrew the doctrine from them again... and covered it
 The "sons of the high God" with the verse of the prophet, 'I have
 said ye be gods, and sons of the high
 God, all'; as though he would say, 'What grieveth it you that name in
 Ps 82:6; Jn 10:34 me... which name God by the prophet
 10 hath given to all good men?' In which
 demeanor he denied not the truth that he had said of himself...
 but he blinded their willfully winking eyes... in hiding and
 putting up again the jewel that he began to bring forth and
 show them, the bright luster whereof their bleared eyes might not
 15 endure to behold.
 "And what marvel though the apostles thus did in their speech
 before infidels, or writing that might come into pagans' hands,
 when it appeareth upon the epistles of Saint Paul... that among the
Christian flock, where he taught them by mouth, he told them not all
 20 the truths at one tale—not only for that it were too long, but also
 for that in the beginning they could not, haply, well have
 Jn 6:60; 16:12 abided it. And therefore, as Christ said to
 his disciples, 'I have more to say to you,
 but ye be not able to bear it yet' (which once appeared, what time
 25 that, upon the disclosing of the great mystery of the Holy Sacrament,
 the Holy Flesh of his Body, the hearers said, 'Who can
 abide this hard word?' and therewith went, almost all, their
 1 Cor 2:6; 3:2 way), so did Saint Paul, I say, by the
 Corinthians: not teach them all at once.
 30 And therefore he saith in his epistle to them, 'I have given you
 hitherto but milk, and not strong meat'; and 'wisdom speak
 we,' saith he, 'among folk that be perfect.' Nor I mean not this—
 that there were any points of the substance of the faith which
 he showed to the clergy, that he kept from the lay people... or showed
 35 unto one man, that he kept from another—but that to no man,

2 *declaration*: disclosing; making known // *Godhead*: divinity

4 *with that*: by that which 5 *withdrew* . . . *again*: took the doctrine back from them

11 *demeanor*: behavior 12 *winking*: closed

13 *putting up again*: putting back away // *began*: (had) started 14 *might*: could

16 *marvel though*: wonder (is it) that 18 *appeareth upon*: is shown in

20 *at one tale*: in one discourse 20, 21 *for that*: because

20 *were*: would have been 21 *haply*: perhaps

21–22 *well have abided it*: have taken it well 24 *appeared*: became apparent

24 *what*: that 27 *abide*: tolerate // *hard word*: offensive language 28 *by*: with

29 *all*: everything 31 *strong meat*: solid food // *wisdom*: high-level instruction

32 *perfect*: mature 34 *showed*: made known

- lightly, he showed all at once. But because some came from the Jews,
and some came of the Gentiles: therefore, as they were, so were they
handled, not only by grace but also by wisdom; and not only in
the points of the faith, but also in the rites and ceremonies...
- 5 either of the Church or of Moses' law—whereof some ceremonies
were forthwith abolished; some not by and by; and some taken into
the church of Christ and observed still. But in conclusion, when
they were meet therefor, they were *all* taught *all* that God would
have them bound to believe. And then doubt I nothing but
- 10 that many things that now be very dark in Holy Scripture... were
by the apostles (to whom our Lord 'opened their wits that they
might understand Scripture') so plainly declared that they were
by the people well and clearly understood. I say not all the whole
Scripture, in which it may be that many a secret mystery lieth
- 15 yet covered... concerning the coming of Antichrist, and the
The manner of the Final day, manner, and fashion of the Final
Judgment doth lie covered. Judgment... which shall never be fully
disclosed till the times appointed by
God's high Providence meet and convenient for them. And from
- 20 time to time, as it liketh his Majesty to have things known or
done in his church, so is it no doubt but he tempereth his revelations...
and in such wise doth insinuate and inspire them into
the breasts of his Christian people... that by the secret instinct of the
Holy Ghost, they consent and agree together in one—except heretics,
- 25 that rebel and refuse to be obedient to God and his church.
Heretics Who be thereby cut off from the lively tree
of that vine... and, waxing withered
branches, be kept but for the fire—first here, and after in hell—
except they repent and call for grace... that may graft them into the
- 30 stock again. But as it may be that many things be there not all at
once revealed and understood in the Scripture, but by sundry
times and ages more things and more by God unto his church disclosed
(and that as it shall like his high goodness and wisdom to
dispense and dispose); and as it may be, also, in things to be *done*...

1 *lightly*: probably 2 *of*: from 3 *wisdom*: instruction
6 *forthwith*: immediately // *by and by*: immediately // *taken into*: adopted by
7 *in conclusion*: in the end 8 *meet*: fit // *therefor*: for it 9 *nothing*: not at all
10 *dark*: obscure 11–12: See Luke 24:45. 11 *wits*: minds
12 *declared*: explained 13 *well and*: good and; quite 18 *appointed*: decreed
19 *meet*: right // *convenient*: suitable 20, 33 *like(th)*: please(s)
23 *secret*: unperceivable // *instinct*: prompting 24 *consent*: concur
24 *agree together in one*: come into accord as one 26 *lively tree*: living wood
27 *waxing*: turning into 29 *except*: unless // *that may*: which can
29–30 *into the stock again*: back into the stem
32 *more things and more*: more and more things

may fall in his church variety, mutation, and change: so am I
 very sure that the Holy Ghost that God sent into his church—and
 Christ himself, that hath promised unto the end of the world
 to persevere and abide in his church—shall never suffer his catholic
 5 church neither to agree to the making of any law that shall be to
 God damnably displeasing... nor of any truth that God would were
 believed, to determine or believe the contrary. For then had Christ,
 which is all truth, broken his promise... and (which were
 blasphemy and abominable to think) were waxen untrue.
 10 And therefore, over this, as it may be that, as I said before, some things
 in Holy Scripture be not yet fully perceived and understood, so am
 I very sure that the Church neither doth nor can do damnably
 construe it wrong—which it should if they should construe it so as it
 should make an article of misbelief and of a false, erroneous
 15 faith. As if they should by misconstruction of the Scripture
 bring up and believe that Christ were one God, and equal, with his
 Father, and with the Holy Ghost... if the truth were otherwise in deed.
 And therefore, since the Church (in which Christ is assistant, and his
 Holy Spirit) cannot to God's displeasure and their damnation
 20 fall in any false belief... in any such substantial point of the
 faith: it must needs be, therefore, that Arius and all other heretics
 be drowned in damnable errors. The contrary opinion of whose
 execrable heresies... the Church was in the beginning taught... by
 the mouth of Christ himself. And after, of his blessed apostles...
 25 which read and declared the Scriptures among the people in their
 time, showing them in what wise the words of Holy Scripture
 proved the truth of such articles of the faith... as they taught them
 by mouth. And how such texts as seemed the contrary... were not
 contrary in deed. And therewith declared them of those texts the
 30 right understanding.
 “And albeit that our Savior showed and plainly proved that in
 the Scripture was given good tokens and sufficient knowledge of
 him, yet to the intent we should well know that his own word
 and ordinance needeth none other authority but *himself*, but is
 35 to be believed and obeyed be it written or not written, some

1 *fall*: come about 3 *that*: who 4 *suffer*: allow 6 *damnably*: mortally
 6 *displeasing*: offensive 8 *which is*: who is // *were*: would be
 9 *were waxen untrue*: would have turned untruthful 10 *over this*: furthermore
 12 *can do*: can // *damnably*: condemnably; mortally
 15 *misconstruction*: misinterpretation 16 *bring up*: come up with
 17 *otherwise in deed*: actually otherwise 18 *assistant*: actively present
 20 *fall in*: fall into // *in any*: with regard to any 22 *drowned*: sunk; submerged
 22 *damnable*: condemnable; mortally sinful 25 *which*: who
 25 *read*: interpreted // *declared*: explained 26 *wise*: way(s)
 29 *deed*: fact // *declared*: made known to 31 *showed*: stated
 32 *good tokens*: authentic portents

- things did he therefore bid to be done... and some things also
to be believed... whereof we have in Holy Scripture no writing in
2 *Thes 2:15* the world. Saint Paul commandeth
the people of Thessalonica, in his epistle,
5 to keep the traditions that he took them either by his writing or by
1 *Cor 11:23* his bare word. For the words that he
said among them... our Lord had told
them him for them. And therefore he writeth unto the Corinthians
that of the holy housel, the Sacrament of the Altar, he had showed
10 them the matter and the manner by mouth... as our Lord had himself
There was more things taught taught it to him. And therefore no doubt
of the Sacrament than was is there but that by the apostles was the
written. Church more fully taught of that matter...
than ever was written in all the Scripture.
15 There was learned the manner and form of Consecration. There was
Of the water put with the learned much of the mystical gestures
wine in the chalice and ceremonies used in the Mass. And
if any man doubt thereof, let him
consider where should we else have the beginning of the water put
20 with the wine into the chalice. For well we wot that the Scripture
biddeth it not. And every wise man may well wit, then, when
the Gospel speaketh only of wine... there durst no man in this
world have been so bold to put anything else thereto. For when
the Gospel speaketh of wine only... turned into his Precious Blood,
25 what man would adventure to make any mixture of water? And now
is the Church so well ascertained of God's pleasure therein without
any Scripture... that they not only dare put in water, but also dare
not leave it out. And whereby knew the Church this thing... but by
God and his holy apostles... which taught it in their time? And
30 so went it forth from age to age, continued in the Church until
this day, begun by God in the beginning... without any mention
made in Holy Scripture.
"Howbeit, Luther saith because it is not 'commanded by Scripture,'
we may choose therefore whether we will do it or leave it. For
35 *The ground of all Luther's* this one point is the very fond foundation
heresies and ground of all his great heresies:
that a man is not bound to believe anything

5 *took*: handed on to 6 *his bare word*: just his spoken word // *words*: things
8 *him*: to him 9 *housel*: Eucharist // *showed*: made known to
13 *of that matter*: on that subject 17 *ceremonies*: rituals 20 *wot*: know
21 *biddeth*: commands // *every wise man*: everyone with any sense // *may*: can
21 *wit*: know 23 *put*: add 25 *adventure*: venture
25 *make any mixture of water*: mix in any water 26 *ascertained*: assured
29 *which*: who 34 *leave it*: not do it; drop it 35 *fond*: foolish
37 *bound*: obliged

but if it may be proved evidently by Scripture. And thereupon
 goeth he so far forth... that no scripture can be evident to
 prove anything that he list to deny. For he will not agree it for
 evident, be it never so plain. And he will call evident for him
 5 that text that is evident against him. And sometimes, if it be too
 plain against him, then will he call it no scripture—as he
 playeth with the Epistle of Saint James. And because the old holy
 doctors be full and whole against him... he setteth them all at naught.
 And with these worshipful, wise ways he proclaimeth himself a
 10 conqueror... whereas, besides all the remnant, wherein every
 child may see his proud, frantic folly, he is shamefully put to flight
 in the first point: that is to wit, that nothing is to be believed for
 a sure truth but if it appear proved and evident in Holy Writ. And
 yet had that point at the first face some visage of probability. Howbeit,
 15 to say the truth, he were a lewd lorel that would nothing
 do that his master would bid him, nor nothing believe that his
 master would tell him, but if he take it him in writing—as Luther
 playeth with Christ. Of whose words or acts he will believe nothing...
 except he find it in Scripture... and that plain and evident.
 20 Now must he by that means condemn the church of Christ for
 that they sanctify not the Saturday, which was the Sabbath
 day instituted by God among the Jews—*commanding* the ‘Sabbath
 Of the changing of the day’ to be kept holy. And albeit
 Sabbath day the matter of the precept is moral, and the
 25 day legal... so that it may be changed,
 yet will there, I ween, no man think that ever the Church would
 take upon them to change it without special ordinance of God.
 Whereof we find no remembrance at all in Holy Scripture. By what
 scripture is evidently known that every man and woman hath
 30 power to administer the Sacrament of Baptism? Let it be showed...
 either by commandment, counsel, license, or example expressed
 in Scripture.
 “Many things are there like... which, as holy doctors agree, were
 taught the apostles by Christ, and the Church by the apostles,
 35 and so come down to our days by continual succession from
 theirs. But I will let all others pass over, and speak but of one.

1, 17 *but if*: unless 1, 11, 25 *may*: can 1, 4, etc. *evident(ly)*: conclusive(ly)
 2–3 *evident to prove*: conclusive proof of 3 *list*: wishes
 3–4 *agree . . . plain*: admit it to be conclusive, no matter how obviously it is
 6 *plain*: obviously 7 *old*: early 7–8, 33 *holy doctors*: theologians
 8 *setteth them all at naught*: dismisses them all as worthless
 9 *worshipful*: impressive // *wise*: ingenious // *ways*: tactics
 10 *remnant*: rest 11 *frantic*: delirious
 13 *but . . . Writ*: unless it shows up as conclusively proved in Scripture
 14 *face*: sight // *visage*: semblance // *probability*: plausibility 15 *lewd*: sorry
 15 *lorel*: scoundrel 17 *take it*: give it to 26 *ween*: suppose
 28 *remembrance*: commemorative mention 31 *license*: permission
 33 *many things are there like*: there are many similar things

- “Every good Christian man, I doubt not, believeth that our blessed Lady was a perpetual virgin—as well after the birth of Christ as before. For it were a strange thing that she should *after* that blessed birth... be less minded to cleanness and purity, and set less by her holy purpose and promise of chastity... vowed and dedicated unto God, than she did before. For surely whoso considereth the words
Lk 1:31–34 of the Gospel in Saint Luke shall well perceive that she had vowed virginity. For when the angel had said unto her,
- 10 ‘Lo, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a child, and thou shalt call his name Jesus,’ she answered him, ‘How may this be? For as for man, I know none’; which, though it be spoken but for the time then present—yet must it needs signify that she never *would* know none, after the manner of speaking. By which a nun
- 15 might say, ‘As for man, there meddleth none with me,’ signifying that never there shall. And in common speech is that figure much in use, by which a woman saith of one whom she is determined never to marry, ‘We may well talk together, but we wed not together,’ meaning that they never shall wed together. And in
- 20 such wise meant our Lady when she said, ‘How may this be? For I know no man,’ meaning that she never would meddle with man; or else had her answer nothing been to purpose. For the angel said not, ‘Lo, thou *art* conceived’; which if he had said, she might well have marveled only for that she knew no man already.
- 25 But when he said, ‘Thou *shalt* conceive,’ this could be no marvel unto her for that she knew no man already. And therefore, since she marveled how it might be that *ever* she should conceive and have a child, it must needs be that her answer meant that she *never* would meddle with man. And *therefore* she marveled—because
- 30 he said it should be, and she knew not how it could be... but that way by which she was at full point with herself that it should never be. So that then he showed her how it should come about: by the Holy Ghost coming into her, and the power of God on high shadowing her. And *then* she assented, and said, ‘Lo here the
- 35 *Lk 1:38* handmaid of God; be it done to me after thy word, as thou tellest me.’ And thus

3 *were*: would be 4 *set less by*: attach less importance to 5 *purpose*: intention
 11, 20 *may*: can 12 *know none*: have no carnal knowledge of any
 14 *after the manner of speaking*: according to common usage
 15 *meddleth none*: is none who has intercourse // *signifying*: implying
 16 *common*: ordinary // *figure*: kind of expression 17 *one*: someone
 21, 29 *meddle with*: have intercourse with a
 22 *had . . . purpose*: her answer would have been not at all to the point
 24 *marveled*: have been astonished // *only*: simply 24, 26 *for that*: because
 26 *marvel*: astonishing thing 27 *marveled*: wondered // *might*: could
 29 *marveled*: was astonished
 31 *was at full point with herself*: had her mind completely made up 32 *showed*: told
 34 *shadowing*: overshadowing // *lo*: behold 35 *after*: according to

appeareth it evidently... that she had then a fully determined purpose of virginity. And that, as it seemeth, such as she thought not lawful to change. For else when the angel did the message... she might have inclined thereto though she had before been in another mind.

- 5 Now, when she had *then* so full and fast a purpose of perpetual virginity, *before* the birth of her blessed Child—which came, among his other heavenly doctrines, to call and exhort the world from all pleasure of the flesh to the purity and cleanness of the body and soul, and from the desire of carnal generation to a
- 10 ghostly regeneration in grace—more were it then wonder if she should have then more regard of fleshly delight, or cure of worldly procreation, than ever she had before her celestial conception of her
- 15 *Maker*... made man in her blessed womb! Or what man could think it that ever *God* would suffer any earthly man after... to be conceived in that holy closet taken up and consecrated so specially to *God*? This reverent article of our Lady's perpetual virginity... the church of Christ, being taught the truth by Christ, perpetually hath believed since the time of Christ. And yet is there no word thereof in Christ's Gospel written... but rather, divers texts so sounding to the
- 20 contrary... that by the wrong understanding of them, the heretic *Helvidius' error* Helvidius took the occasion of his heresy by which he would that our Lady after the birth of Christ had other children by Joseph. How can we then say that we could without the learning of the faith before... find out all
- 25 the points in the Scripture, when there be some that all Christendom believe—and believe themselves bound to believe—whereof the Scripture giveth no plain doctrine, but rather, seemeth to say the contrary?
- 30 “But, as I began to say, the holy apostles, being taught by their great master Christ, did teach unto the Church as well the articles of the faith... as the understanding of such texts of Scripture as was meet and convenient for the matter. Whereby it is not unlikely that the Gospel of Saint John and the epistles of Saint Paul were then better understood among the common people... than they be,
- 35 peradventure, now with some that take themselves for great clerks.

1 *evidently*: conclusively 1, 5 *purpose*: intention 2 *lawful*: licit 3 *did*: gave
 3–4 *might . . . though*: i.e., might have been inclined to change it even though
 4 *in*: of 5 *fast*: steadfast; firm 6 *which*: who 10 *ghostly*: spiritual
 11 *cure of*: concern for 15 *closet*: private place
 32 *meet and convenient for the matter*: pertinent and applicable to the article in question
 35 *peradventure*: perhaps // *clerks*: scholars

And as the apostles at that time taught the people, so did ever some of them that heard them teach forth... and leave their doctrine and traditions to others that came after. By reason whereof... not only came the rites and sacraments, and the articles of our faith, from

- 5 *By whom came the* hand to hand... from Christ and his
 understanding of Scripture apostles unto our days, but also the great
 part of the right understanding of Holy
 Scripture by good and godly writers of sundry times. By whose good
 and wholesome doctrine set forth by their virtue with God's good
10 inspiration, grace, and help of the Holy Ghost... we have also the
 knowledge and perceiving what was the faith of Christ's church
 in every time since. And thereby perceive we that these heretics
 be not only barkers against the faith that now is... but also that
 hath been ever since Christ died.
- 15 "And therefore is Holy Scripture, as I said, the highest and the best
 learning that any man can have... if one take the right way in the
 learning.
- "It is (as a good, holy saint saith) so marvelously tempered... that a
 mouse may wade therein... and an elephant be drowned therein. For
- 20 *How a man may wade* there is no man so low... but if he will
 through Scripture seek his way with the staff of his faith
 in his hand, and hold that fast and
 search the way therewith... and have the old holy fathers also for his
 guides... going on with a good purpose and a lowly heart... using
25 reason and refusing no good learning... with calling of God for
 wisdom, grace, and help that he may well keep his way and follow
 his good guides—then shall he never fall in peril, but well and surely
 wade through... and come to such end of his journey as himself
 would well wish. But surely, if he be as long as Longinus, and
30 have a high heart and trust upon his own wit—as he doth (look
 he never so lowly) that setteth all the old holy fathers at naught—
 that fellow shall not fail to sink over the ears and drown. And
 of all wretches, *worst* shall he walk... that, forcing little of the faith of
 Christ's church, cometh to the Scripture of God to look and try
35 therein whether the Church believe aright or not. For either
 doubteth he whether Christ teach his church true... or else whether
 Christ teacheth it at all or not. And then he doubteth whether Christ

9 *virtue*: skill; capability 18 *tempered*: composed 19 *may*: could
 23, 31 *old holy fathers*: early fathers of the Church 27 *well and surely*: quite safely
 29 *Longinus*: The name traditionally given to the soldier who pierced Jesus' side with a lance.
 30 *high*: haughty // *upon his own wit*: in his own intelligence
 31 *setteth . . . at naught*: has for . . . no regard 33 *walk*: go; proceed
 33 *forcing little of*: attaching little importance to 34 *look*: see // *try*: test

in his words did say true... when he said he would be with his
The thing that made church till the end of the world. And
heretics to err surely the thing that made Arius,
 Pelagius, Faustus, Manichaeus, Donatus,
 5 Helvidius, and all the rabble of the old heretics to drown themselves
 in those damnable heresies... was nothing but high pride of
 their learning in Scripture—wherein they followed their own wits
 and left the common faith of the Catholic Church, preferring
 their own gay glosses before the right, catholic faith of all Christ's
 10 church, which can never err in any substantial point that God
 would have us bound to believe. And therefore, to end where we
 began, whoso will not unto the study of Scripture take the points
 of the Catholic faith as a rule of interpretation, but of diffidence
 and mistrust study to seek in Scripture whether the faith of the
 15 Church be true or not: he cannot fail to fall in worse errors, and
 far more jeopardous, than any man can do by philosophy—whereof
 the reasons and arguments in matters of our faith have nothing
 in like authority."

The Twenty-sixth Chapter

20 The messenger saying that him seemed he should not
 believe the Church if he saw the Church say one thing
 and the Holy Scripture another thing, because the Scripture
 is the word of God: the author showeth that the *faith*
 of the *Church* is the word of God as well as the Scripture...
 25 and therefore as well to be believed. And that the faith and the
 Scripture well understood be never contrary. And further
 showeth that upon all doubts rising upon Holy Scripture
 concerning any necessary article of the faith, he that
 cannot upon all that he can hear in the matter on both the
 30 sides perceive the better and truer part... hath a sure and
 undoubtable refuge provided him by the goodness of God to
 bring him out of all perplexity, in that God hath commanded
 him in all such doubts to believe his Church.

9 *gay*: specious 13 *diffidence*: wariness; misgiving 15 *in*: into
 16 *jeopardous*: dangerous 17 *reasons*: reasonings
 17–18 *nothing in like*: nothing like the same 20 *him seemed*: to him it seemed that
 24 *as well as*: as much as is 25 *well*: much
 26 *be never contrary*: are never in contradiction to one another
 27 *doubts*: difficulties 28 *necessary*: essential
 30 *perceive the better and truer part*: tell which is the better and more correct view
 33 *in*: with regard to // *doubts*: unclear things

“**T**ruly, sir,” quoth he, “methinketh it is well said, that ye have said.

And in good faith, to say the truth, I see not what I should answer it with. And yet, when I look back again upon Holy Scripture...

and consider... that it is God’s own words (which I wot well ye

5 will grant), I find it hard in my heart to believe all the men in the whole world... if they would say anything whereof I should see that the Holy Scripture saith the contrary, since it is reason that I believe God alone far better than them all.”

10 “In that,” quoth I, “ye say very truth. But now I put case that God would tell you two things. Whither of them would ye believe best?”

“Neither other,” quoth he, “but I would believe them both firmly, and both alike.”

“What if neither other,” quoth I, “were likely to be true... but seemed, both twain, impossible?”

15 “That should,” quoth he, “make little force to me. For that once known—that *God* telleth them—seemed they never so far unlikely, nor never so far impossible, I neither should nor could have any doubt but that they were, both twain, true.”

20 “That is well said,” quoth I. “But, now, and it so were... that those two things seemed the one to the other clean contrary, what would ye then think, and which would ye then believe?”

“Yet could I not,” quoth he, “doubt anything but that they were very true both; but I would verily think that I did not well understand the one of them.”

25 “What would ye then do,” quoth I, “if he bade you believe them both?”

“Marry,” quoth he, “then would I pray him tell me first how he understandeth them both. For though I believe that they be both true in that sense and purpose that he taketh his own words, and may, in that manner understood, well stand and agree together: yet

30 can I not believe them both in that sense and understanding... wherein they repugn and be directly contrary each to other.”

“That is,” quoth I, “so well said that, in my mind, no man can amend it.”

1 *that*: what 4 *wot*: know 7 *it is reason*: reason dictates 10 *whither*: which

11, 13 *neither other*: neither the one nor the other 15 *force*: difference

16, 17 *never so far*: no matter how extremely 19 *and*: if

20 *clean contrary*: completely contradictory 22 *doubt anything but*: doubt at all that

23 *well*: rightly 24 *the one*: the one or the other 25 *bade you*: told you to

26 *marry*: goodness // *pray him*: ask him to // *how he understandeth*: what he means by

28 *purpose*: intention // *taketh*: puts into

29 *well stand and agree together*: be quite consistent and compatible with each other

31 *repugn*: clash with // *each to other*: to each other

32–33 *no man can amend it*: no one could improve upon it

“But now would I wit,” quoth I, “whether that the faith of the Church be the word of God, and by God spoken to the Church, or not.”

“Yes,” quoth he, “God speaketh to his church in the *Scripture*.”

5 “And is nothing God’s words,” quoth I, “but *Scripture*? The words that God spoke to Moses—were they not God’s words all... till they were written? And the words of Christ to his apostles—were they not his words till they were written?”

10 “Yes, *then*,” quoth he. “But *now*, since he hath perfected and finished the corpus of Holy *Scripture*, allthing that he would Christian people should believe—and all that he would the Church should do, and all that he would the Church should eschew—all this hath he left them his mind sufficiently in Holy *Scripture*.”

15 “And none otherwise,” quoth I, “besides? I had went we had been at another point... in that ye see the Sabbath day changed into Sunday without any word of *Scripture* giving any commandment of the change in the New Testament... from the commandment given for the Saturday in the Old. And also for the point that we spoke of touching the perpetual virginity of our Lady, whereof is no word written in *Scripture*. But since I perceive that the great
20 affection and reverence that ye bear to the *Scripture* of God... not without great cause, but without any measure... maketh you in the case that ye take all authority and credence from every word of God spoken beside the *Scripture*, I would ask you, therefore, this question: If God in Holy *Scripture* tell you two things that seem the one contrary
25 to the other—as, for example, if he tell you in one place that he is less than his Father, and in another place that he and his Father be all one—which of these will you believe?”

30 “Marry,” quoth he, “both twain! For they may stand together well enough. For he was less as *man*, and was all one and equal as *God*.”

“Very truth it is,” quoth I, “that ye say. But, now, if ye had been born in the days of Arius the heretic, he would not have received, nor held himself content with, this answer; but he would have agreed you the first part and put you further to prove

1 *would I wit*: I want to know 5, 7 *till*: before 9 *allthing*: everything
9–10 *would Christian people should believe*: would have Christian people believe
10, 11 *would the Church should*: would have the Church
13 *none otherwise*: in no other way // *besides*: as well // *went*: thought
18 *touching*: concerning 21–22 *maketh you in the case*: put you in the position
22 *take*: take away 23 *beside*: outside 25–27: See John 10:30 and 14:28.
26, 29 *all*: entirely 28 *marry*: good heavens // *twain*: of the two // *may*: can
33 *received*: accepted // *held himself content with*: considered himself satisfied by
34 *agreed*: granted // *put you*: made you go

the second part. And unto that text he would have made you a gloss that ‘his Father and he were one not in substance, but in will.’

And that gloss he would have fortified and made somewhat seemly with another word of Christ, in which he prayed his Father saying, ‘As thou and I be both one, so make thou that they and we may be made one,’ meaning by his Christian people, which shall never be one with him in substance. So that for the inequality of Christ by reason of his manhood... ye must agree with him; but for unity of Godhead... he will not agree with you, but put you always to prove it.”

“Well,” quoth he, “and though he so did... yet if I were provided therefor, there be texts enough that plainly prove it.”

“That is,” quoth I, “very truth. But yet is there none but he shall always set you another against it... and a gloss as fast for yours as ye shall have an answer for his, in such wise as he may abuse a right wise and well-learned man—as he did in his own days, and many days after, many a thousand. Then if it so were that in that dispicion ye could not make your audience to discern the truth... nor, peradventure, persuade them to believe the truth... because the false part might hap to have, to the minds of many, a more face of truth, as it had at that time to many that then were of that sect: what way would ye wind out?”

“Marry,” quoth he, “I would believe well myself the truth, and go to God, and let them that would believe the false part go to the devil!”

“Ye should,” quoth I, “have taken therein a good, sure way. But, now, if ye had been *in* that time (albeit ye be *now* fast and sure in the truth), ye might have happed while the matter was in question... and many great clerks and well-scriptured men, and some seeming right holy, set on the wrong side—ye might have happed, I say, so to have been moved with the reasons on both the sides... that ye should not have wist on which part to determine your belief. And what would ye then have done?”

Quoth he, “Ye put me now to a pinch! And I shall answer you as

Doctor Mayo I have heard say that Doctor Mayo, sometime almoner to King Henry VII,

3–4 *made somewhat seemly*: made look somewhat good 4 *word of*: thing said by

4 *prayed*: prayed to 5–6: See John 17:22–23. 6 *meaning by*: referring to

11 *and though*: even if // *provided therefor*: prepared for that 15 *may*: can

15 *abuse*: delude 16, 29 *right*: quite 16 *wise*: intelligent

16 *well-learned*: well-educated 18 *dispicion*: debate

20, 24, 32 *part*: side (of the debate) 21 *more face*: greater semblance

22 *what way would you wind out*: how would you get yourself out of that situation

23 *marry*: goodness 29 *clerks*: scholars

29 *well-scriptured men*: men well versed in Scripture

30–31 *so . . . sides*: to have found the arguments on both sides so persuasive

31 *should*: would 32 *wist*: known // *determine*: settle

35 *Doctor Mayo*: Probably Richard Mayew, Bishop of Hereford, who also held several academic positions.

answered once the King at his table. It happed that there was fallen in communication the story of Joseph, how his master's (Potiphar's) wife... a great man with the king of Egypt... would have pulled him to bed, and he fled away.

5 “‘Now, Master Mayo,’ quoth the King’s Grace, ‘ye be a tall, strong man, on the one side, and a cunning doctor on the other side—what would ye have done if ye had been... not Joseph, but in Joseph’s stead?’

10 “‘By my troth, sir,’ quoth he, ‘and it like Your Grace, I cannot tell you what I *would* have done, but I can tell you well what I *should* have done.’

15 “‘By my troth,’ quoth the King, ‘that was very well answered.’ And since that answer served him well there, I shall make the same serve me here. For surely if I had been in Arius’ days, in the point that ye spoke of... what I *would* have done, that wot I ne’er. But what I *should* have done—that can I well tell you, and surely trust I would have done so, too.”

“What is that?” quoth I.

“Marry, I would have believed the best!” quoth he.

20 “The best?” quoth I. “That were best indeed... if ye wist which it were. But the case is put... that the reasons grounded upon Scripture seemed unto you in such wise... each to impugn and answer other... that ye stood in such a doubt... that ye could in no wise discern whither side said best.”

25 “By God,” quoth he, “I had forgotten that! Well, then were it best,” quoth he, “and so would I have done, I think... kneel me down and make my special prayer to God that it might please his goodness in so great a peril not to leave me perplexed, but vouchsafe to incline mine assent unto that side that *he* knew were true... and would I should believe to be true. And then would I boldly believe the one which God should have put in my mind. Had not this been the best way?”

30 “If it were not,” quoth I, “the best, it might peradventure serve for a second.”

1–2 *was fallen in communication*: came up in conversation 2–4: See Genesis 39:1–12.

3–4 *would have pulled*: was trying to pull 6 *cunning*: learned // *doctor*: professor

8 *stead*: place 9, 12 *troth*: word 9 *and it like*: if it please

15 *wot I ne’er*: I don’t at all know 19 *marry*: good heavens

20 *were best indeed*: would indeed be best // *wist*: knew 21 *reasons*: arguments

22 *each to impugn and answer other*: to oppose and refute each other

23 *in no wise*: by no means 24 *whither*: which

29–30 *would I should*: would have me 30 *boldly*: confidently

33 *peradventure*: perhaps

Two seconds

“A second?” quoth he. “Then ye take it for naught!”

1.26

“Nay!” quoth I. “There be *two* seconds, after two manner countings.

One next unto the worst; another next unto the best. And your way
5 is surely far from the worst. But yet dare I not assent that it were the
best till I understand it better. And therefore I pray you tell me this:
If after your special prayers made... ye wrote the one part in one
paper and the other part in another, and laid them both on the
ground, and then set up a staff between them both—would ye be
10 then indifferent to take the one side or the other after... as it should
hap your staff to fall?”

“Why not?” quoth he. “Or else put it upon two lots, and then at
adventure draw the one and take it. For when I have done as much
as mine own wit will serve... and have heard, thereto, all that I can
15 of other men... and yet by neither can perceive the better opinion:
what should I do, or what *could* I do, further than pray for grace to
guide my choice... and so, at adventure, boldly take the one and hold
it fast, doubting nothing but God assisted my choice... if I have a
firm faith in his promise... by which he promiseth that if we ask,
20 we shall have—asking, as Saint James saith, without any doubt. And
why should *not* I, in such perplexed case, after help called for of God,
Jn 16:24; Jas 1:6–8; Acts 1:24–26 take the one part at adventure by lot,
as did the apostles in the choosing of a
new... to fulfill the place of the traitor Judas?”

Lots

“Lots,” quoth I, “be well lawful in the
choice of such two things as be both
so good that we be likely to choose well enough whithersoever we
take. But, now, if ye were in the case that I have heard my father
merrily say every man is at the choice of his wife—that ye should put
30 your hand into a blind bag full of snakes and eels together, seven
snakes for one eel—ye would, I ween, reckon it a perilous choice to
take up one at adventure though ye had made your special prayer
to speed well. Nor ye ought not in such case to adventure it upon
your prayer and trust in God without necessity.”

“That is peradventure truth,” quoth he. “But in our case there *is*

2 *naught*: bad 3 *after two manner countings*: according to two ways of counting
6 *pray you*: ask you to 7, 8, 22 *part*: view; contention 7, 8 *in*: on
8 *paper*: i.e., piece of paper 10 *indifferent to*: i.e., so unbiased as to just
10–11 *it should hap your staff*: your staff should happen
12–13, 17, etc. *at adventure*: at random 13, 22 *the one*: the one or the other
14 *mine own wit will serve*: my own intellect will allow // *thereto*: moreover
15 *of*: from 18 *nothing*: not at all 20 *have*: receive
21 *perplexed case*: a state of confusion 24 *new*: i.e., new apostle
24 *fulfill the place of*: take the place of; fill the position vacated by
25 *be well lawful*: are quite legitimate 26 *choice of*: choosing between
27 *whithersoever*: whichever 28, 33 *case*: (a) situation 29 *merrily*: jokingly
30 *a blind bag*: a bag that one cannot see into; a grab bag 31 *ween*: think
32 *though*: even if 33 *speed well*: meet with good fortune // *adventure*: hazard
35 *is peradventure truth*: may be true

necessity. For there were none other way to avoid the perplexity...
but even take the one by prayer and firm trust in God, which
never deceived them that trust in him.”

1.26

5 “If there were,” quoth I, “none other way, somewhat were it, then, that
ye say. But now consider your case again. And when it so
were that ye could not, upon that ye heard the Arians and the
Catholic part argue together, perceive whither part were the
better; and therefore, of those two tales told you by God in many
10 texts of Holy Scripture—some seeming plainly to say that
Christ was not equal with his Father, some seeming as plainly to say
the contrary—ye could in no wise find any reason... whereby ye
could find yourself moved to take the one part for more probable
than the other: I put case, then, that God would himself say to you, ‘I
15 have showed the truth of this matter to such a man, and how my
Scripture is to be understood concerning the same. Go thy way,
therefore, to him, and that thing that he shall tell thee, that thing
believe thou.’ Would ye say, ‘Nay, good Lord, I will ask no man but
thyself; and therefore tell me thine *own* mouth, or else I will
20 take the one part at all adventures... and think that thou would
have it so’? Or else would ye think that God were your good Lord, and
had done much for you, in that it liked him so graciously for
your surety to bring you out of such a great perplexity... whereby
ye should for your own mind have remained in an insoluble doubt
in a matter of the faith... wherein it is damnable to dwell in doubt—
25 or (which yet much worse were) have declined, peradventure, into
an invincible error?”

“Verily,” quoth he, “great cause should I have had highly to thank
God.”

30 “Ye would not, then,” quoth I, “first make your prayer and then with
good hope (that grace shall guide your fortune) take the one part
at adventure by lot... but ye would in your prayer thank God for that
provision. And then would ye get you to that man as fast as ye
could.”

“Very truth,” quoth he.

35 “Then if that man should tell you that Arius and his company were

1 *were*: would be // *avoid the perplexity*: escape the confusion 2 *even*: just (to)

2, 30 *the one*: the one or the other

2–3 *which never deceived them that*: who has never let down those who

4–5 *somewhat were it, then, that ye say*: then there would be something in what you say

7 *part*: side // *whither*: which 11 *in no wise*: by no means

11 *reason*: consideration 12, 30 *part*: view; contention 12 *probable*: plausible

14 *showed*: made known // *such*: such and such 17 *no man*: no one

19 *at all adventures*: completely at random 21 *liked*: pleased 22 *surety*: security

23 *insoluble*: unresolvable 25 *were*: would be // *declined*: fallen (from there)

26 *invincible*: insuperable

heretics all... and took texts of Scripture wrong, ye would believe him?"

1.26

"Yea, verily," quoth he, "that would I."

5 "I put case," quoth I, "that ye had not doubted before... but had been in yourself at clear point... that the Arians' opinion were the truth. Yet ye would against Arius and all his, and against your own mind also, lean unto his word whom God had bidden you believe."

"What else?" quoth he.

10 "What if ye asked him," quoth I, "whether God have sufficiently showed that point in Scripture... so that it may by the words of Holy Writ well and evidently be proved; and that he told you yea? And that thereupon he would bring in all the texts that ye had well in remembrance already; and that ye laid against them all that
15 you could lay for the contrary; so far forth that when each of you had laid all your texts and all your glosses that either of you both could bring forth... till ye both confessed that neither of ye both could any further thing find therein, he saying still that his way were the truth, and that he had by Scripture well
20 proved it unto you, and yourself, on the other side, for all that ever ye had heard him say, perceiving in your own mind none other but that ye had by Scripture better proved the other part—which would ye now believe? That way that, as far as ye see, God saith himself in Holy Scripture? Or else that man whom God
25 sent you to and bade you believe?"

"Nay, verily," quoth he, "I would believe him."

"Well said," quoth I. "But whether would ye only believe him that the truth of the matter were against the Arians... or else would you believe him further, in that he said he had so proved it unto you
30 by Scripture?"

"I would," quoth he, "believe him therein also. For since God so had commanded me, and had showed me that he had himself instructed that man in what sense the Scripture were to be understood, I could none otherwise think but that were true—
35 and though it appeared to mine own reason the contrary."

4–5 *had been in yourself at clear point*: had yourself become fully convinced

7 *lean unto his word*: go by the word of him // *bidden you*: told you to

12 *well and evidently*: good and conclusively 32 *showed*: told 35 *and though*: even if

- “Very well said,” quoth I. “Now, if God had said unto you that ye should believe that man concerning the matter itself... and of Scripture had nothing spoken, then would ye have believed him yet in the matter? Would ye not although he should have told you that he understood no Scripture at all?”
- 5 “That is true,” quoth he.
- “Now, if he should then have told you that the Arians were heretics in that point, and their opinion erroneous and false, ye would have believed him?”
- 10 “What else?” quoth he.
- “What if he had told you therewith,” quoth I, “that he wist ne’er whether it might be well proved by Scripture or not?”
- “Yet would I,” quoth he, “nevertheless believe to be true the matter itself that he had told me.”
- 15 “What would you then think,” quoth I, “of those texts that ye did reckon before well and plainly to prove the contrary?”
- “I would,” quoth he, “then reckon that they were meant some other ways than I could understand. For I could not doubt but being truly understood, they could never witness against the truth.”
- 20 “In good faith,” quoth I, “ye say marvelously well. Do ye not,” quoth I, “take it for all one... whether God bid you do a thing by his own mouth or by Holy Scripture?”
- “Yes,” quoth he, “saving that I take the bidding by Scripture for the more sure. For there wot I well God speaketh and I cannot be illuded.”
- 25 “Now,” quoth I, “this man that God biddeth you go to and in allthing believe him—will it make any change in the matter whether it be man or woman?”
- “No change at all,” quoth he.
- “What if it were a certain known company of men and women together?” quoth I. “Would that make any difference?”
- 30 “Never a whit,” quoth he.
- “Then,” quoth I, “in case it appear unto you (as I suppose it doth to you and to every Christian man else) that in all points of faith, both in things to be believed above nature... and in things also that are
- 35 of necessity to be known and believed... which may be perceived by

2–3 *of Scripture had nothing spoken*: had said nothing about Scripture

3–4 *have believed him yet*: still have believed him 4 *in*: concerning

4 *although*: even if 11 *wist ne’er*: had no idea 12 *might*: could

16 *reckon before well and plainly to prove*: previously consider to prove quite clearly

18 *truly*: correctly 20 *in good faith*: in all sincerity; really and truly

20 *say*: are speaking // *well*: rightly 21 *one*: the same 24 *wot*: know

24 *illuded*: misled 25 *allthing*: everything 32 *appear . . . doth*: is evident . . . is

In all doubts believe the Church. reason given us with nature, God giveth us in *commandment* that we shall believe his *church*: then are ye fully answered.

1.26

For then have ye the man that ye *must* needs resort unto for your
 5 final answer and solution of all points and doubts in any wise
 concerning the salvation of your soul. Of which points no
 man can deny but one of the most especial points is to take in
 Holy Scripture always the right sense. Or else, if we cannot attain
 the right understanding, yet then at the leastwise to be sure that
 10 we shall avoid and eschew all such mistaking as might
 bring us into any damnable error.”

The Twenty-seventh Chapter

The author proveth that God hath commanded us in allthing
 necessary to salvation to give firm credence and full
 15 obedience unto his church. And a cause why God will have
 us bound to believe.

“**T**hat is truth,” quoth he, “if this may appear. But where shall it
 appear that God commandeth us in all such things to believe the
 Church? For first, methinketh that were a very strange manner of
 20 commanding. For *of* the Church be all we that should (as ye say)
 be by God commanded to *believe* the Church; and all we together
make the whole Church. And what reason were it, then, to command
 us to believe the Church? Which were no more, in effect, but to
 bid us all believe us all, or each of us to believe other. And then if
 25 we fell at diverse opinions, why should the one party more believe the
 other... than be believed of the other, since both the parties be of the
 Church and make the Church among them... saving that always
 that party seemeth to be believed which best and most clearly can
 allege the Scripture for their opinion? For the words of *God* must

5 *doubts*: questions; unclear things // *wise*: way

13 *in allthing*: with regard to everything 17 *may*: can

17, 18 *appear*: be made evident; be shown 19, 23 *were*: would be

20 *as ye say*: according to you 22 *what reason were it*: what sense would it make

24 *each of us to believe other*: us to believe each other 26 *believed of*: believed by

29 *allege the Scripture for their opinion*: back up its opinion with Scripture

break the strife! *He* is, *only*, to be believed—and his only Son, of whom
Mt 3:17; 17:5 himself commanded, ‘*Ipsium audite*’;
 ‘Hear him,’ said the Father at the time of his

baptism. And therefore the man that ye speak of, whom God
 5 sendeth me to... and whom he biddeth me hear and believe, is our
 Savior Christ only, and not any congregation of men. Whose
 words if we believe before the words of God, and in the stead of the
 Scripture of God put our trust and confidence in the doctrine and
 ordinance of the Church, it were haply to be feared lest we fall
 10 in the reproof that is touched in the Gospel, where is said, ‘In vain
 worship they me with the doctrine of men’; and where our Savior
 also reproveth the scribes and the Pharisees, saying unto them,
 ‘Wherefore do you break and transgress the commandment of God
 for your traditions?’”

15 “I trust,” quoth I, “yet at last we shall agree. But much ado, methinketh,
 it is to come to it! But since we must, as ye say, and truth it is, hear
 our Savior Christ and believe him: is it enough to hear him and believe
 him? Or be we, besides that, also bound to *obey* him?”

20 “To obey him also,” quoth he. “For else were he better
 unheard!”

“Well said,” quoth I. “But whether are we bound to hear him and
 obey him in *some* things, or in *all* things?”

“In all things,” quoth he, “without exception, that he commandeth us
 to do.”

25 “Then if Christ,” quoth I, “bid us believe and obey his church... be
 we not bound so to do?”

“Yes,” quoth he.

Note

Mt 17:5; Lk 10:16

30 “Then may we,” quoth I, “no more doubt
 to be true whatso the Church biddeth
 us believe... than the thing that our Savior himself biddeth us
 believe... if he bid us hear his church as his Father bade us hear him.”

“That is truth,” quoth he, “if he so do. But methinketh it were a
 strange bidding, as I said, to bid each of us believe other.”

35 “It seemeth not,” quoth I, “so strange a thing to Saint Paul. For he
1 Cor 1:10 marvelously effectually beseecheth Christian
 people to ‘agree together all in one mind,’

1 *break the strife*: end the dispute 3, 5, etc. *hear*: listen to

9 *were haply to be feared lest we*: it is perhaps to be feared that we will

9–10 *fall in*: bring upon ourselves 10 *touched*: spoken of 13 *wherefore*: why

15 *trust* . . . *yet at last*: still trust . . . that in the end

32 *were*: would be 33 *each of us believe other*: us to believe each other

35 *marvelously effectually*: with striking earnestness

and in the faith to tell one tale, suffering no sects or schisms among them. Which agreement and consent can never be where no man giveth credence to other. But among Christian people it will *soon* be... if every man give credence to the Church.”

5 “But yet,” quoth he, “since all be of the Church, of diverse parties which shall believe which?”

“Ye take that,” quoth I, “for a great doubt and a thing very perplex... which seemeth me very plain. For either first the Church hath the truth and believe all one way till some one or some few begin
10 the change—and then, though all be yet of the Church... till some by their obstinacy be gone out or put out, yet is it no doubt but if I will believe the Church, I must believe them that still believe that way which all the whole believed before—

“Or else, if there were anything that was, peradventure, such that in
15 the Church sometime was doubted, and reputed for unrevealed and unknown; if after that, the whole Church fall in one consent upon the one side, either by common determination at a general council... or by a perfect persuasion and belief so received through Christendom that the Christian people think it a damnable error to
20 believe the contrary: then if any would after that take the contrary way... were it one or more, were it few or many, were they learned or unlearned, were they lay people or of the clergy... yet can I nothing doubt which party to believe if I will believe the Church.”

“That is truth,” quoth he, “but ye prove me not yet that God hath
25 bidden me believe the Church.”

“Ye somewhat interrupted me,” quoth I, “with your other subtlety... by which ye would it should seem an *absurdity* to bid us believe the Church, forasmuch as thereby, ye said, it should seem that we were commanded nothing else but each to believe other... and then in
30 diverse opinions taken, we could not wit which party should believe which. Whereof since I have showed you the contrary, and removed that block out of the way for stumbling, we shall, I think, soon see the other point: that *Christ commandeth* us to believe his church. For as his Father said of himself ‘Hear him,’ so
35 said he of his church when he sent it abroad to be spread forth.

“For when he had gathered his church of his apostles and his

1 *suffering no*: not allowing there to be any 2 *consent*: consensus

4, 33 *soon*: readily 7 *doubt*: difficulty // *perplex*: convoluted

15 *sometime*: at one time // *doubted*: in question // *reputed for*: regarded as

16 *fall in one consent*: comes into a unanimous accord

22–23 *nothing doubt*: have no doubt as to 26 *subtlety*: ingenious ploy

27 *would it should*: would have it 29 *in*: with regard to 30 *diverse*: divergent

30 *wit*: know; tell 32 *for stumbling*: lest it should be stumbled over

34 *hear*: listen to 35 *abroad*: out

disciples, and thereupon sent them forth to preach, said he not unto them, 'He that heareth you heareth me'? Did he not also command that whoso would not hear the Church should be reputed and taken as paynims and publicans?"

5 "That was," quoth he, "where men would not amend their living."

"Was it not," quoth I, "general, where a man would not amend *any* damnable fault?"

"Yes," quoth he.

"Is misbelief," quoth I, "none such?"

10 "Yes, marry," quoth he.

"Then is," quoth I, "the Church his judge upon his belief, to show him whether it be true or false?"

"So it seemeth," quoth he.

"Hath his living," quoth I, "nothing ado with faith?"

15 "How mean you that?" quoth he.

"Thus," quoth I: "as if Luther, lately a friar and having now wedded a nun, were commanded to amend his lewd living and put away that *harlot* whom he abuseth in continual incest and sacrilege under the name of a wife; and he would say that he did well enough... and that their vows could not bind them—were he not bound to believe the Church, and obey, thereto, as well concerning his belief as his living?"

"Yes, verily," quoth he.

Mt 18:17

"Then appeareth it," quoth I, "that we be by

25 Christ commanded to hear, believe, and

obey the Church as well in matters of faith as of manners. Which

thing well appeareth also by that our Lord would that whoso were

disobedient should be taken as 'a paynim or a publican'—of which

two the one offended in misbelief, the other in lewd living. And

30 thus it appeareth that not only Christ is the man that ye be sent unto and

commanded by God to believe and obey... but also the Church is the

person whom ye be by Christ commanded to hear and believe and

obey. And therefore, if ye will in faith or living... or avoiding of all

damnable error that ye might fall in by misunderstanding

3, 25, 32 *hear*: listen to 4, 28 *paynim(s)*: pagan(s) 5, 17, etc. *living*: conduct

10 *marry*: of course 11 *show*: tell 14 *ado*: to do 16 *lately*: formerly

17, 29 *lewd*: vile

18 *incest*: So considered because in canon law, monks and nuns are regarded as siblings.

19–20 *did well enough*: was acting plenty rightly

20–21 *were he not bound*: would he not be obliged 21 *thereto*: moreover

24 *appeareth it*: it is evident 25, 32 *hear*: listen to 26 *manners*: morals; behavior

27 *well appeareth also by*: is also well shown by the fact

30 *appeareth*: is apparent; is obvious 34 *in*: into

A sure and infallible way of Scripture... take a sure and infallible way, ye must in all these things hear, believe, and obey the *Church*—which is, as I say, the person whom Christ sendeth you to for the sure solution of all such doubts, as to the man in whose mouth he speaketh himself... and the Holy Spirit of his Father in heaven.

“And surely *this* is much to be marked, for it is the perpetual order which our Lord hath continued in the governance of good men from the beginning: that, like as our nature first fell by pride to the disobedience of God with inordinate desire of knowledge like unto God, so hath God ever kept man in humility, straining him with the knowledge and confession of his ignorance and binding him to the obedience of belief of certain things whereof his own wit would verily ween the contrary. And therefore are we bound not only to believe against our own reason... the points that God showeth us in Scripture, but also that *Believe the Church without scriptures.* God teacheth his church without Scripture; and against our own mind also... to give diligent hearing, firm credence, and faithful obedience to the church of Christ... concerning the sense and understanding of Holy Scripture. Not doubting but since he hath commanded his sheep to be fed, he hath provided for them wholesome meat and true doctrine; and that he hath, therefore, so far inspired the old holy doctors of his church with the light of his grace for our instruction... that the doctrine wherein they have agreed, and by many ages consented, is the very, true faith and right way to heaven, being put in their minds by the holy hand of him ‘qui facit unanimes in domo’—‘that maketh the church of Christ all of one mind.’”

The Twenty-eighth Chapter

The messenger eftsoons objected against this—that we should believe the Church in anything where we find the words of Scripture seeming plainly to say the contrary, or believe the old doctors’ interpretations in any necessary

4 *solution*: clearing up 11 *straining*: bridling 14 *wit*: intellect // *ween*: think
 17 *without*: outside of 22 *his sheep to be fed*: that his sheep be fed
 23 *meat*: food 24, 34 *old*: early
 24 *holy doctors*: theologians 26 *agreed*: concurred
 26 *by many ages consented*: i.e., which through many ages has been the consensus
 26 *very*: authentic 28–29: Psalm 67:7 (Vulgate). 31 *eftsoons*: for a second time
 34 *doctors*: exegetes’ // *necessary*: essential

article... where they seem to us to say contrary to the text—
showing that we may perceive the Scripture as well as they
might. And the answer of the author, proving the authority
of the old interpreters and the infallible authority of the

- 5 Church in that God teacheth it every truth requisite to the
necessity of man's salvation. Which he proveth by a deduction
partly depending upon natural reason.

10 “It seemeth me,” quoth he, “that all this goeth well, that we should believe
the Church as Christ, as long as they say as Christ saith. For so, methinketh,
meant our Lord.

“But, now, if they tell me tales of their *own*, whereof Christ never
spoke word, nor mention made thereof in Holy Scripture, I may
Jer 23:21 then say with the prophet Jeremiah, ‘Non
mittebam prophetas, et ipsi currebant.

- 15 Non loquebar ad eos, et ipsi prophetabant’—‘Those prophets,’ quoth our
Lord, ‘ran forth of their own head, and I sent them not; and prophesied
of their own heads, when I spoke nothing to them.’

And then how much may I more say so if they say me a thing...

- 20 whereof Christ or Holy Scripture saith the *contrary*? Shall I believe the
Church above Christ? Were that a good humility—to be obedient
more to men than to God? More ought I, methinketh, to believe God
alone speaking in his Holy Scripture himself... than all the old
fathers if they make a gloss against the text. Nor they do not themselves
for their opinions say and write that they have them by

- 25 inspiration, or by revelation, or by miracle... but by wisdom,
study, diligence, and collation of one text with another. By
all which means men may now perceive the sentence of Scripture
as well as they might then! And if ye will, peradventure, say that
grace helped them—which I will well agree—then will I say again
30 that God's grace is not so far worn out yet but that it may as
well help us as it helped them... and so may we be for the right understanding
of Scripture equal with them... and peradventure one ace
above them. Whereby when we perceive that they went wrong and
others after them, shall we then call it humility so to captivate and

2 *showing*: asserting 2, 27 *may*: can // *perceive*: understand 3, 28 *might*: could
4, 22 *old*: early 5–6 *the necessity of*: what is needed for
7 *depending upon*: based on 12 *made*: i.e., is made 16 *head*: accord
17 *of*: out of 25 *wisdom*: erudition 26 *collation*: comparison 29 *agree*: grant
29 *again*: in reply 30 *worn out*: exhausted; used up 32 *one ace*: a notch

subdue our understanding, whereby God hath haply given us
light to perceive their errors, that without thanks given him
therefor, we shall so set his gift at naught that we shall believe them
before himself. . . and tell him that himself bade so? And therefore
methinketh where the old doctors or the whole Church telleth me the
tale that *God* doth—there he biddeth me believe them. But where God
saith one thing in Scripture and they tell me another, it thinketh
me that I should in no wise believe them.”

“Well,” quoth I, “then in *somewhat*, ye say, ye will believe the Church,
but not in all. In anything beside Scripture ye will not; nor in the
interpretation of Scripture ye will not. And so, whereas ye said that ye
believe the Church in somewhat, in very deed ye believe the Church in
right naught. For wherein will ye believe it if ye believe it not in the
interpretation of Scripture? For as touching the text, ye believe
the Scripture itself, and not the Church.”

“Methinketh,” quoth he, “the text is good enough and plain enough,
needing no gloss, if it be well considered and every part compared
with other.”

“Hard it were,” quoth I, “to find anything so plain that it should
need no gloss at all.”

“In faith,” quoth he, “they make a gloss to some texts that be as plain
as it is that twice two make four!”

“Why,” quoth I, “needeth that no gloss at all?”

“I trow so,” quoth he. “Or else the devil is on it.”

“Iwis,” quoth I. “And yet, though ye would believe one that would
tell you that twice two ganders made always four geese, yet ye would
be advised ere ye believed him that would tell you that twice two
geese made always four ganders. For therein might ye be deceived.
And him would ye not believe at all. . . that would tell you that twice
two geese would always make four horses.”

“Tut,” quoth he, “this is a merry matter! They must be, all the twice
twain, always of one kind. But geese and horses be of diverse.”

“Well,” quoth I, “then every man that is neither goose nor horse seeth
well that there is one gloss, yet!”

“But, now,” quoth I, “the geese and the ganders be both of one kind. . .
and yet twice two geese make not always four ganders.”

“A sweet matter!” quoth he. “Ye wot what I mean well enough!”

3 *therefor*: for it // *set his gift at naught*: disregard his gift

5, 16 *methinketh*: it seems to me (that) 5 *old doctors*: early exegetes

7–8 *it thinketh me*: it seems to me 8 *in no wise*: by no means

9, 12 *somewhat*: something 10 *beside*: apart from 12 *very deed*: actual fact

13 *right naught*: absolutely nothing 14 *as touching*: as regards

19 *hard it were*: it would be hard 21 *in faith*: honestly 23 *why*: oh

24 *trow*: expect // *on*: in on 25 *iwis*: indeed // *one*: someone

27 *be advised*: take thought // *ere*: before 28 *be deceived*: be mistaken; go wrong

31 *tut*: pooh // *merry matter*: matter of jest 32, 35 *one kind*: the same species

32 *diverse*: different 37 *a sweet matter*: oh, very cute // *wot*: know

“I think I do,” quoth I. “But I think if ye bring it forth, it will make another gloss to your text, as plain as your text is; and ye will in all Holy Scripture have no gloss at all. And yet will ye have collation made of one text with another... and show how they may be agreed together—as though all *that* were no gloss!”

“Yea,” quoth he, “but would you that we should believe the Church if it set a gloss that will in no wise agree with the text, but that it appeareth plainly that the text well considered saith clean the contrary?”

“To whom doth that appear,” quoth I, “so plainly... when it appeareth one to you... and to the whole Church another?”

“Yet if *I* see it so,” quoth he, “though holy doctors and all the whole Church would tell me the contrary... methinketh I were no more bound to believe them all, that the Scripture meaneth as they take it, than if they would all tell me that a thing were white which I see myself is black.”

“Of late,” quoth I, “ye would believe the Church in something. And now not only ye would believe it in nothing... but also, whereas God would the Church should be your judge, ye would now be judge over the Church. And ye will by your wit be judge whether the Church in the understanding of Holy Scripture—that God hath written *to* his Church!—do judge aright or err. As for your white and black, never shall it be that ye shall *see* the thing black that all others shall see white; but ye may be sure that if all others see it white and ye *take* it for black, your eyes be sore deceived. For the Church will not, I think, agree to call it other than it seemeth to them. And much marvel were it if ye should in Holy Scripture see better than the old holy doctors and Christ’s whole Church.

“But first,” quoth I, “ye must consider that ye and I do not talk of one doctor or twain, but of the consent and common agreement of the old holy fathers. Nor that we speak not of the doctrine of one man or two in the Church, but of the common consent of the Church. We speak not, also, of any sentence taken in any text of Holy Scripture... whereby riseth no doubt or question of any necessary article of our faith or rule of our living (for in other, by matters... may there be taken of one text ten senses, peradventure, and all good enough, without warranty of the best), but we speak of such two diverse and

1 *bring it forth*: give utterance to it

3 *will in all Holy Scripture have*: want to have for all of Holy Scripture

4 *collation*: comparison 5 *may be agreed*: can be made to fit

6 *would you that we should*: would you have us 11 *one*: one way

12, 28, 30 (*holy*) *doctor(s)*: theologian(s) / exegete(s) 12 *all the whole*: the whole entire

17 *of late*: a little while ago 19 *would the Church should*: would have the Church

20 *wit*: understanding 25 *sore deceived*: terribly wrong

27 *much marvel were it*: very surprising would it be

28, 31 *old*: early 30, 32 *consent*: consensus // *common*: universal

30 *agreement*: accord 31 *holy fathers*: fathers of the Church 33 *sentence*: meaning

34 *riseth*: arises // *doubt*: difficulty // *of any*: concerning any // *necessary*: essential

35 *in*: with regard to // *by*: incidental 37 *warranty of*: any guarantee as to which is

37 *diverse*: divergent

contrary senses taken... as if the one be true, the other must needs be false—and that, as I say, concerning some necessary point of our faith or rule of our living... which is also depending upon faith and reducible thereto. As if one would boldly break his vow
 5 for that he thought that no man were bound to keep any. Such points... I say let us consider they be that we speak of. And this remembered between us, then will we somewhat see what your saying doth prove.

“I shall not much need,” quoth I, “to stick with you in disputing
 10 by what means the Scripture is understood, since ye be agreed with nature and diligence the grace of God must needs go... or else no diligence or help of nature can prevail. Nor I will nothing deny you but that God may and will also give his grace now to us as he gave of old to his holy doctors... if there be as much
 15 towardness and no more let or impediment in ourselves than was in them. I will also grant you that we may now by the same means by which they might then... understand the Scripture as well as they did then; and I will not much stick with you for one ace better. And were it not for the sins that we sink in, we
 20 might percase understand it better by cater-trey-deuce, having their labors therein and our own therewith. But since I am so genteel to grant you so many things, I trust ye will grant me this one: that if in any such point of our faith as God would have men bound to believe... they did understand the Scripture one way and
 25 we another, being the one to the other so clean contrary that if the one were true, the other must needs be false—ye will then grant, I say, that either they err or we.”

“That must needs be,” quoth he.

“Ye will also grant,” quoth I, “that in such points as we speak of,
 30 the error were damnable. For we speak of those points only... to the belief whereof God will have us bound.”

“I grant,” quoth he. “For damnable were it in such case to believe wrong. And wrong should they or we believe if they or we believed a wrong article... because they or we thought that the Scripture
 35 affirmed it. And as damnable were it, and yet much more, if we

2 *necessary*: essential 3 *depending upon*: based on 4 *reducible*: referable
 4 *one*: someone 5 *for that*: because // *no man were bound*: no one was obliged
 7–8 *what your saying doth prove*: what is proved by what you’re saying
 9, 18 *stick*: quibble 12 *nothing*: not at all 13, 16 *may*: can
 14 *holy doctors*: biblical exegetes 15 *towardness*: cooperativeness
 15 *let*: obstruction 17 *might*: could 18 *for one*: over that (die with) one notch
 20 *percase*: perchance // *cater-trey-deuce*: (a throw of dice of) four, three, two
 21 *genteel*: courteous (as)

believed a thing whereof we believed that the Scripture affirmeth the contrary. For then believed we that the Scripture were false!"

"This is," quoth I, "very well said. But for the more plainness, let us put one example or twain. And what point rather than the article touching the equality in Godhead of our Savior Christ with his Father? For if the contrary belief were true... then were *this* always damnable, and plain idolatry."

"Very truth," quoth he.

"May not," quoth I, "the other example be the matter that we have in hand... concerning saints' relics, images, and pilgrimages? Which things if it be (as ye say many reckon it) idolatry... then is it yet *worse* to do therein as we do... than if our belief were wrong in the other point. And that as much worse... as the saints, or the images either, be worse than the holy manhood of Christ."

"That is," quoth he, "very true."

"Then," quoth I, "let the first point alone, because therein we be all agreed, and speak of the second: if the old fathers took the Scriptures one way and we the contrary. Though it might be that we were able to understand the Scriptures as well as they, yet if they so understood them that they thought this kind of worship not forbidden, but commanded, and pleasant to God; and we new men, on the other side, thought it utterly forbidden and held for idolatry: the one party did not in deed understand the Scripture right, but were in a damnable error."

"That will no man deny," quoth he.

"I doubt not, now," quoth I, "but that yourself seeth very well how many things I might here lay for them, to prove you that they

The differences between the erred not so. First, their wits, as much
old doctors and the new as our new men's; their diligence as
great; their erudition greater; their

study as fervent; their devotion hotter; their number far greater; their time continued longer, by many ages persevering; the contrary opinions in few, and those always soon faded; they taken always for Catholic, the contrary part for heretics. Here might

I lay you the holiness of their life, and the plenty of their grace well

2 *believed we*: we would be believing 5 *touching*: concerning // *Godhead*: divinity
11–13: I.e., if Christ was only human and not God, there would be less incongruity and sin in according saints and even images the honor due him. 14 *be worse than*: are inferior to
14 *the holy manhood of Christ*: I.e., a nature infinitely superior to theirs, since it belongs to a divine Person. 17 *old*: early 20 *worship*: veneration 21 *pleasant*: pleasing
21, 29 *new*: modern 22 *side*: hand 23 *the one party*: either the one party or the other
23 *deed*: fact 27, 35 *lay*: submit (to) 28 *wits*: mental faculties // *much*: good
32 *by*: through

appearing thereby. And that our Lord therefore opened their eyes and suffered and caused them to see the truth; and albeit he used therein none open miracle nor sensible revelation (whereof, as ye say, they none allege or pretend for the proof of their opinions in their interpretations of Holy Scripture), yet used he the secret supernatural means by which his grace assistant with good men that labor therefor... by motions insensible to themselves... inclineth their assent unto the true side. And that thus the old holy fathers did, in the point that we speak of and in such others, perceive the right sense of Holy Scripture so far forth, at the leastwise, as they well knew that it was not contrary to their belief. And here might I lay you also that if it had been otherwise, and that they had therein damnably been deceived: then, living and dying in damnable errors, they could not have been *saints*—as God hath showed them to be, by many a thousand miracles both in their lives and after their deaths. With this might I also lay, and very well conclude, that since those holy doctors and the Church... be (as by their books plainly appeareth) all of one faith in this point and such others—that thereby well appeareth that the Church is in the truth, and is not in the understanding of the Scripture that speaketh of the matter anything deceived; but they clearly deceived that do understand those texts of Holy Scripture to the contrary. These things, as I say, and yet many others more might I lay. But since ye did yourself put the Church and them both in one case... and so they be indeed: I will rather prove you the truth of them by the truth of the Church... than the truth of the Church by the truth of them. And so seemeth me good reason. For surely, since they were but members of his church, God had his special cure upon them most especially for the profit of his church; by whose whole corps he more setteth than by any member thereof—saint, apostle, evangelist, or other. And therefore must I yet ask you again whether the Church may have any damnable error in the faith, by mistaking of Scripture or otherwise.”

“That is,” quoth he, “somewhat hard to tell.”

“Now,” quoth I, “somewhat I marvel that ye remember not that yourself
Lk 22:32 hath agreed already that these words of Christ spoken unto Peter, ‘I

2 *suffered and caused*: i.e., allowed and even caused 3 *open*: obvious
 3 *sensible revelation*: revelation perceptible to the senses 4 *allege*: adduce
 4 *pretend*: claim 6 *assistant*: actively present 7 *labor therefor*: strive for this
 7 *motions*: promptings // *insensible*: imperceptible 11, 16, 23 *might*: could
 12, 16, 23 *lay*: adduce (to) 17 *well*: rightly // *doctors*: theologians / exegetes
 17–18 *as . . . appeareth*: as is clearly evidenced by their books
 18 *one faith*: the same belief // *in*: with regard to 19 *well appeareth*: it is quite evident
 21 *anything*: at all // *deceived*: mistaken // *clearly*: completely
 24 *put . . . case*: assume both the Church and them to be in the same position
 25, 26 *truth*: correctness 27 *so . . . reason*: that seems to me good sense
 28 *cure*: care 29 *profit*: benefit // *corps*: mystical body
 29 *more setteth*: sets more store 31 *may*: can 32 *mistaking*: a misinterpreting
 35 *somewhat I marvel*: I am somewhat surprised 36 *agreed*: granted

have prayed that thy faith shall never fail,' were not only meant by
the faith in Peter's own person, but also by the faith of the
Peter head of the Church Church. For to him was it spoken as head
of the Church."

1.28

5 "Yes, I remember," quoth he, "right well that I agreed it. But I remember
also that, notwithstanding mine agreement, ye were content that
we should ensearch again and again the matter otherwise besides...
wherein mine agreement should not bind me."

10 "Lo," quoth I, "that had I forgotten again! But let it, then, alone for the
while, and tell me this: Did not Christ intend to gather a flock and
congregation of people that should serve God and be his special people?"

"Yes," quoth he, "that is very truth. For so saith plain Scripture of
Christ, in sundry places. As where the Father of heaven saith unto
Christ in the psalm, 'Postula a me, et dabo tibi gentes hereditatem
15 tuam' ('Ask of me, and I shall give thee paynim people for thine
inheritance'), and many other places. And else undoubtedly his whole
coming had been, in manner, frustrate and in vain."

"That people," quoth I, "which should be an inheritance—did he
intend should endure for his own days only, while he lived here,
20 or else that it should go forth and continue long after?"

"Nay," quoth he, "that shall continue while the world lasteth here,
till Doomsday, and after in heaven eternally."

"Shall this people," quoth I, "have among them the knowledge and
understanding what he would they should do to please God with?"

25 "Yea," quoth he.

"Whether shall they," quoth I, "have this knowledge for a while, in the
beginning, and then lose it; or shall they have it still as long as
they continue?" Here he began a little to stagger.

30 "Why," quoth I, "can ye call them his people any longer if they lose the
knowledge how to serve him and please him? If they forslath to *do*
their duty, as slack servants sometimes do, yet may they amend
and do better another time. But if they lose the *knowledge* of their
duty, then wot they ne'er which way to amend. As he that
knoweth fornication for sin... may fall by frailty to fornication;

1, 2 *by*: with reference to 2 *in*: within 5 *agreed*: granted
6, 8 *agreement*: granting (of that) 7 *ensearch*: examine 9 *lo*: oh
10 *while*: time being 12 *very truth*: certainly true 15 *paynim*: pagan
19, 21 *while*: as long as 24 *would they should*: would have them
27 *still*: continually 28 *stagger*: waver 29 *why*: well
30 *forslath*: out of laziness neglect 33 *wot they ne'er*: they have no idea
34 *for*: to be a

but since he knoweth it for naught, though he sinned more in the doing than if he had not known the prohibition... yet doth the knowledge give him warning, and occasion of repentance and amendment, which must needs lack if he had lost the knowledge.”

5 Upon this he granted that it must needs be that this people must needs have always the knowledge how to serve and please our Lord... or else they ceased to be his people.

“Is not this people,” quoth I, “called the Church?”

“Yes,” quoth he.

10 “Then the Church,” quoth I, “always hath, and always shall by your reason have, the knowledge and understanding how God may be served and pleased.”

“Truth,” quoth he.

15 “Is,” quoth I, “that knowledge fully had without the knowledge of such things as God bindeth us to believe?”

“Nay,” quoth he.

“What if we knew them in such wise,” quoth I, “as we could rehearse them on our fingers’ ends... and yet believed them not to be true? Would this knowledge serve?”

20 “In no wise,” quoth he. “For if ye believed them to be false, though ye so knew them that ye could rehearse them by row... ye could take no warning by them to please and serve God with them—which is the cause wherefore the Church should of necessity know them.”

25 “*This is,*” quoth I, “very well said. Then, since ye grant that the Church shall ever endure, and that it could not endure without the knowledge of such things as please God, nor those things can be all known if knowledge lacked of those things that God bindeth us to believe, nor the knowledge of *them* anything serve to the knowledge and warning given us of God’s *pleasure* but if we not

30 only can tell them, but also believe them, which belief ye grant is called ‘faith’: of this it consequently followeth that the Church always hath, and always shall have, the knowledge and belief of such things as God will have it bound to believe.”

35 “*That is truth,*” quoth he, “because God hath left *Holy Scripture* to the Church... and therein is all... and the Church believeth that to be true. And therefore therein and thereby hath the Church all that

1 *for naught*: to be immoral 3, 22, 29 *warning*: notice; notification

7 *ceased*: would cease 11 *reason*: thinking

17–18 *rehearse them on our fingers’ ends*: tick them off on our fingertips

20 *in no wise*: by no means 21 *rehearse them by row*: recite them one after the other

29 *but if*: unless

warning and learning of God's pleasure that ye speak of... without
Faith was before Scripture. which it cannot endure."

1.28

- "Are ye there yet again?" quoth I. "We have sundry ways proved and agreed between us that this knowledge
 5 and faith was *before* Scripture and writing; and many things of necessity to be believed and done that are not in Holy Scripture. And yet after all this (too long to be repeated!), ye return again to the first point (so often confuted!), that nothing is learned nor known but by Holy Scripture. But, now, go to and suppose it
 10 were so. What should ye win thereby? For what if God," quoth I, "had left the Scripture to the Church locked up in a close chest... and that no man should look therein? Would that have served?"
- "Nay, pardie!" quoth he.
 "What if he had left it open, and written in such wise that no
 15 man could read it?"
- "That were all one," quoth he.
 "What if every man," quoth I, "could read it, and no man understand it?"
- "As little would it serve," quoth he, "as the other."
 20 "Then," quoth I, "since it *serveth* the Church to learn God's pleasure therein; and that can it not, as ye grant yourself, but if the Church understand it: it followeth of this that the *Church understandeth* it. And thus, every way, for the faith and knowledge of God's pleasure—if it be, as ye say, all known by the Scripture, and no part
 25 otherwise—yet always to this point ye bring it in the end: that
The Church hath the sure the Church hath the sure knowledge
knowledge of Scripture. thereof. And then, if that be so, ye shall not (as ye lately said ye should) in any diverse texts of Scripture seeming to make a doubtful article of our faith and to bring in
 30 question what we be bound to believe, after ye have read in Scripture all that can be read... and heard on both sides all that can be said, then take which part seemeth to yourself most probable; nor if ye stand still, for all that, in a doubt, then after your bitter prayers made to God for his grace and guidance in the
 35 choice... go take you the one part at adventure and cleave thereto, as though ye were sure by your confidence in God... that his grace had

1 *warning*: notification 5 *was before*: came before; preexisted
 9 *go to*: go ahead 11 *close*: hidden-away 13 *pardie*: by George; indeed
 14 *wise*: a way 16 *were all one*: would be just the same 21 *but if*: unless
 22 *of*: from 28 *lately*: a little while ago // *in*: with regard to // *diverse*: different
 29 *make a doubtful article of our faith*: cast doubt on an article of our faith
 32 *which part*: whichever interpretation 33 *probable*: plausible
 33 *stand*: remain 34 *bitter*: earnest
 35 *the one part*: the one interpretation or the other // *at adventure*: at random
 35 *cleave thereto*: stick to it 36 *by*: on account of

inclined your assent to the surer side; but, since I have showed you plainly, by reason, that he hath given his church in all such things knowledge of the truth, ye shall take the sure way and put yourself out of all perplexity... if in the point itself and the scriptures that touch it, ye take for the truth that way that the Church teacheth you therein, howsoever the matter seem beside unto yourself or to any man else.”

The Twenty-ninth Chapter

The author proveth by Scripture that God instructeth the church of Christ in every truth necessarily requisite for our salvation.

“**T**ruly,” quoth he, “ye wind it well about; but yet ye made as though ye would have showed that God had in *Scripture* told me that he had and ever would tell his church the truth in all such matters—and now ye bring it to the point... not the Holy Scripture telleth me the tale, but man’s reason. And surely, as I showed you before, I dare not well trust reason in matters of faith and of Holy Scripture.”

“*I began,*” quoth I, “to prove it you by Scripture... and ye then put me out, in the beginning. Howbeit, this reason hath Scripture for its foundation and ground. And though it somewhat build further thereon... yet is not reason always to be mistrusted, where faith standeth not against it, nor God saith not the contrary. Except reason be so far out of credence with you that ye will not now believe it if it tell you that twice twain make four. I ween ye will fare by reason as one did once by a false shrew. He swore that he would not for twenty pounds hear him say his Creed, for he knew him for such a liar that he thought he should never believe his Creed after... if he heard it once of his mouth.

5 *touch*: bear upon 6 *beside*: otherwise 12 *wind it well about*: well turn it around
 16 *surely*: certainly // *showed*: told 19–20 *put me out*: distracted me; got me off-track
 20 *howbeit*: however // *reason*: reasoning 25 *except*: unless 27 *ween*: suspect
 27 *fare*: take the stance // *by*: toward // *one*: someone
 28 *false shrew*: dishonest scoundrel 30 *of*: out of

“Howbeit,” quoth I, “let us yet see whether God himself in Scripture
Mt 28:20 tell you the same tale or no. God telleth

you in Scripture that he would be with
his church to the end of the world. I think ye doubt not thereof
5 but those words he spoke to the whole church that then was... and ever
shall be, from the apostles’ days, continued till the end of the
world.”

“That, in good faith,” quoth he, “must needs be so.”

10 “Then were this, in good faith, enough,” quoth I, “for our purpose,
since no man doubteth *wherefore* he will be with his church. Except
we should think that he would be therewith for nothing, wherefore
should he be with it but to keep it and preserve it, with the assistance
of his gracious presence, from spiritual mischief especially—and of
all other, especially from infidelity and from idolatry?
15 Which was the special thing from which he called his church
out of the Gentiles—which else, as for moral virtues and political,
if they had not lacked the right cause and end of referring their
acts to God, were many of them not far under many of us. Let us
go further. Doth he not in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of Saint
20 John again and again repeat that after his going he will come
Jn 14:18, 23, 28; 15:1–5; 16:16, 22 again to them? And saith he will not
leave them orphans, as fatherless children,
but will come again to them himself? Let us add now thereunto
the words before rehearsed, that he will be with them till the world’s
25 end, and it appeareth plain that he meant all this by his whole church that
should be to the world’s end.

Jn 15:15

“When he said unto them, ‘I call you
friends, for all that I have heard of my Father
I have made known to you,’ he spoke as to his perpetual church, and
30 not to the apostles alone... but if he said to them alone these words
also—‘I command that ye love each other’—so that none should love
each other after but only they. Now, lest the things that he taught
them should by the Church after be forgotten (which was more to
be doubted than of themselves that heard it), he said unto them also—
35 ‘These things,’ quoth he, ‘have I spoken to you abiding here with you.

8, 9 *in good faith*: really and truly 10, 11 *wherefore*: to what end

10 *except*: unless 13 *mischief*: harm 15 *special*: specific

16 *which else*: who otherwise 18 *under*: beneath

21, 23 *again*: back 24 *before rehearsed*: previously quoted

25 *appeareth plain*: is clearly shown // *by*: with reference to 28 *of*: from

30 *but if*: unless 34 *doubted*: feared

Jn 14:16–17; 25–26

But the Comforter—which is the Holy Ghost,
whom my Father shall send in my

1.29

name—he shall teach you allthing, and he shall put you in mind
and remembrance of allthing that I shall have said unto you.’

- 5 So that here ye see that he shall again always teach the Church of
new... the old lessons of Christ. And he said also to them that this
Comforter, the Holy Ghost, the ‘Spirit of truth,’ should be sent to
abide with them ‘forever’; which cannot be meant but of the whole
Church. For the Holy Ghost was not sent hither, into the earth, here to
10 dwell with the *apostles* forever... for they dwelled not so long

The Church cannot err.

here. Now, if the ‘Spirit of truth’ shall
dwell in the Church *forever*, how can

the Church err in perceiving of the truth—in such things, I
mean, as God will bind them to know, or shall be necessary for them
15 to know? For only of such things meant our Lord... when he said
that the Holy Ghost shall teach them ‘allthing.’ For as Saint Paul

1 Cor 12:7; Jn 16:12–13

saith, the manifestation and showing
of the Spirit is to the utility and profit.

- 20 This Holy Spirit also was not promised by our Savior Christ that he
should only tell his church *again* his words, but he said further—‘I
have,’ quoth he, ‘besides all this, many things to say to you; but ye be not
able to bear them now. But when he shall come that is the Spirit of
truth, he shall lead you into all truth.’ Lo, our Lord said not that
the Holy Ghost should *write* unto his church all truth, but that
25 he should *lead* them, by secret inspiration and inclination of their
hearts, *into* all truth—in which must needs be conceived both
information and right belief of every necessary article... and
of the right and true sense of Holy Scripture, as far as shall be requisite
to conserve the Church from any damnable error.

- 30 *Jn 14:16, 18; 17:21–22; Mt 28:20* “Now, when the Holy Ghost shall, by

God’s promise, be for this purpose
abiding in the Church forever; and Christ himself hath also
said that *he* will not leave his church as orphans, but will come
himself... and be with it ‘unto the end of the world,’ and saith also

- 35 that his Father is in him and he is in his Father, and that his Father and
he be both one thing—not both one person, but both one

3, 4, 16 *allthing*: everything 25 *secret*: unperceivable 27 *necessary*: essential
36 *thing*: entity

substance—and, with the Holy Ghost, both one God: then must it
The whole Trinity is resident needs follow that to the world's end...
with the Church. there is with the Church resident the whole
 Trinity. Whose assistance being to the
 5 Church perpetual, how can it at any time fall from true faith to
 false errors and heresies?"

1.29

The Thirtieth Chapter

Whereas the messenger had thought before that it were
 hard to believe anything certainly save Holy Scripture,
 10 though the Church did agree therein and command it: the
 author sheweth that saving for the authority of the Church,
 men could not know what scripture they should believe.
 And here is it showed that God will not suffer the Church to
 be deceived in the choice of the very scripture of God from
 15 any counterfeit.

“Now is it, I suppose, well and clearly proved by Scripture, the thing
 that I promised: that is to wit, that the Church cannot err in any
 such substantial article as God will have us bound to believe.

20 “But yet, forasmuch as ye regard nothing but Scripture only,
 this would I fain wit of you: whether ye believe that Christ was
 born of a virgin.”

“What else?” quoth he.

“Why believe you that?” quoth I.

“The Gospel sheweth me so,” quoth he.

25 “What if it did not?” quoth I. “Were then your Creed out of credence...
 but if it bring witness with him?”

“The Creed,” quoth he, “is a thing by itself.”

30 “Yet is it,” quoth I, “no part of the Gospel as the Pater Noster is. And
 yet I think if gospel had never been written... ye would have believed
 your Creed.”

“So think I too,” quoth he.

“And wherefore,” quoth I, “but for because the *Church* should have
 showed you so? But let our Creed alone a while, and go we to the

4 *assistance*: active presence 8 *were*: would be 9 *certainly*: with certainty

10 *though*: even if // *agree*: concur

11 *showeth that saving*: points out that were it not 13 *showed*: pointed out

13 *suffer*: allow 14 *deceived*: mistaken // *choice*: distinguishing; picking out

14 *very*: actual; authentic 16 *well and*: good and; quite 17 *in*: with regard to

20 *fain wit of*: like to know about 24 *showeth*: tells

25 *were then your Creed out of credence*: would your Creed then have no credibility

26 *him*: it 27 *a thing*: something 32 *wherefore*: for what reason

33 *showed*: told

Gospel itself. Which gospel telleth you that Christ was born of a virgin?"

1.30

"The Gospel of Saint Luke," quoth he.

"How know you that?" quoth I.

5 "For I read it so," quoth he, "in the book."

"Ye read," quoth I, "such a book. But how know you that Saint Luke made it?"

"How know I," quoth he, "other books... but by that they bear the names of their authors written upon them?"

10 "Know you it well thereby?" quoth I. "Many books be there that have false inscriptions... and are not the books of them that they be named by."

"That is truth," quoth he. "But yet, though men did peradventure err and fail in the name—as if he should repute a book of stories to be made by Titus Livius which *he* never made, but some other honest cunning man—yet were the books neither less elegant nor less true therefor. Nor, in like wise, if the Church did mistake the very name of some evangelist and gospel... yet were the gospel nevertheless true."

20 "That is," quoth I, "well said. But how be ye sure that the *matter* of the book is true?"

"Marry," quoth he, "for I am!"

"That is," quoth I, "the reason that a maiden layeth for her own knowledge of her maidenhood. But she could tell another how she knoweth she hath it, saving that she is loath to come so near as to be aknownd... that she could tell how she might lose it. But here is no such fear. Tell me, therefore—whereby wot ye that the matter of that book is true?"

"I think," quoth he, "that God showeth me so."

30 "That is well thought," quoth I. "But he told it you not mouth to mouth."

"No," quoth he. "But he hath told it to others in the beginning—or *else* it was well known in the beginning, when he wrote it. And he was known and believed by his living... and the miracles that God did for him. And after that it was once known, the knowledge went forth from man to man. And God hath so wrought with us that we believe it because the whole Church hath always done so before our days."

7, 15 *made*: wrote / written 11–12 *be named by*: are attributed to

14 *fail in the name*: get the name wrong // *book of stories*: historical book

16 *honest*: honorable // *cunning*: learned // *were the books*: would the books be

17 *therefor*: on that account // *mistake*: get wrong 18 *very*: actual; real

18–19: *were . . . true*: would that gospel nevertheless be true 20, 27 *matter*: content

22 *marry*: good heavens // *for*: because 23 *layeth*: gives

23, 24 *maiden(hood)*: virgin(ity) 24 *another*: someone else

25 *come so near*: become so intimate 26 *aknown*: i.e., known to still have her virginity

27 *whereby*: by what means // *wot*: know 29 *showeth*: tells

30–31 *mouth to mouth*: face to face; in a personal conversation (with you)

33 *else*: otherwise // *he*: i.e., Luke 34 *by his living*: on account of the way he lived

36 *wrought with*: brought things about; worked in

“Now come you,” quoth I, “to the very point. For many things hath been true... that in process after hath left to be believed. And many a thing hath in the beginning been known for false... and yet hath after happed to be believed. But the Gospels and Holy Scripture,

5 God provideth that though percase some of it may perish

Faith doth stand without and be lost, whereby they might have
Scripture. harm... but not fall in error—for the

faith should stand though the Scriptures were *all* gone—yet shall he never suffer his church to be deceived in that point... that they shall take for Holy Scripture any book that is not. And therefore saith holy Saint Augustine, ‘I should not believe the Gospel but if it were for the Church.’ And he saith good reason. For were it not for the Spirit of God keeping the truth thereof in his church, who could be sure which were the *very* gospels? There were many that wrote the gospel. And yet hath the Church by secret instinct of God... rejected the remnant and chosen out these four... for the sure, undoubted true.”

“That is,” quoth he, “surely so.”

“This is,” quoth I, “*so* surely so... that Luther himself is driven of necessity to grant this; or else he perceiveth that there were no hold nor surety in Scripture itself, if the Church might be suffered by God to be deceived in that point... and to take for Holy Scripture that writing that in deed were not. And therefore he confesseth that this must needs be a sure, infallible ground: that God hath given this gift unto his church, that his church can always discern the word of God from the word of men.”

A singular great gift “In good faith,” quoth he, “that must needs be so, or else all would fail.”

Quoth I, “Then ye, that would believe the Church in nothing... nor give sure credence to the tradition of the Church but if it were proved by Scripture, now see it proved to you that ye could not believe the *Scripture*... but if it were proved to *be* Scripture by the judgment and tradition of the Church.”

“No,” quoth he, “but when I have learned once of the Church... that it *is* Holy Scripture, and the word of God—*then* I believe *it* better than I believe all the Church. I might by a light person sometime know a

1 *very*: real 2 *in process after hath left*: in the course of time have later ceased

5 *percase*: perchance 6 *they*: i.e., the Church // *might have*: could suffer

7 *in*: into 9, 21 *suffer(ed)*: allow(ed) 9, 22 *deceived*: mistaken

11–12: *Against the Fundamental Epistle of Manichaeus*, 5. 11 *should*: would

11–12 *but if it were*: were it not 12 *he saith good reason*: what he says makes good sense

14 *very*: authentic; bona fide 15 *secret*: unperceivable // *instinct of*: prompting from

16 *remnant*: rest 21 *might*: could 23 *deed*: actuality 25 *discern*: distinguish

27 *in good faith*: really and truly 28 *all would fail*: everything would collapse

34 *of*: from 36 *by . . . know*: at some time through a person of little account come to know

much more substantial man. And yet when I know him, I will believe him much better than him by whom I know him... if they varied in a tale and were contrary.”

1.30

5 “Good reason,” quoth I. “But the Church biddeth you not believe the *contrary* of that the Scripture saith; but it telleth you that in such places as ye would ‘better believe the Scripture than the Church,’ there ye understand not the Scripture. For whatsoever words it speaketh, yet it meaneth not the contrary of that the Church teacheth you. And the Church cannot be deceived in any such
10 weighty point.”

“Whereby shall I know?” quoth he.

15 “Why be we at *that* point yet?” quoth I. “Have we so soon forgotten the perpetual assistance of the Trinity in his church... and the prayer of Christ to keep the faith of his church from failing... and the Holy Ghost sent of purpose to keep in the Church the remembrance of Christ’s words and to lead them into all truth? What
20 would it have profited to have put you in the remembrance of the assistance of God with the children of Israel—walking with them in the cloud by day, and in the pillar of fire by night, in their earthly voyage—and thereby to have proved you the much more special assistance of God with his *Christian* church in their *spiritual* voyage... wherein his especial goodness well declareth his tender diligence... by that he doth vouchsafe to assist and comfort us with the continual
25 *The presence of Christ’s* presence of his Precious Body in
Body in the Sacrament the Holy Sacrament? All this would not help... if manifest reason that I made you... and evident Scripture that I rehearsed you... cannot yet print in your heart a perceiving that the assistance of God in his church must needs preserve his church from all damnable errors in the
30 faith... and give his church so far forth the understanding of Scripture... that they may well perceive that no part thereof, well understood, standeth against any article that the Church believeth as parcel of their Christian faith.”

35 “Nay,” quoth he, “I perceive it well when I remember it; but it was not ready in remembrance.”

The Thirty-first Chapter

In that the Church cannot err in the *choice* of the true scripture, the author proveth—by the reason which the

3 *varied in a tale*: told a different story // *were contrary*: said opposite things
4 *reason*: reasoning // *biddeth you not*: does not tell you to 5, 8 *of that*: of what
9 *deceived*: mistaken; wrong 13, 18, etc. *assistance*: active presence
18 *walking*: going 22 *declareth*: shows 23 *by*: in
26 *manifest reason*: the clearly correct argument 27 *evident*: conclusive
27 *rehearsed*: quoted // *print*: imprint 29 *preserve*: keep; safeguard
31 *well*: rightly 32 *standeth*: goes 33 *parcel*: a constituent part
35 *ready in remembrance*: at the forefront of my memory
37 *choice*: distinguishing; picking out // *in the*: regarding the 38 *reason*: argument

King's Highness, in his noble and most famous book, objecteth
against Luther—that the Church cannot err in the necessary
understanding of Scripture. And finally the author in
this chapter doth briefly recapitulate certain of the principal
5 points that be before proved; and therewith endeth the
First Book.

1.31

“Yet would I,” quoth I, “ask you one thing. Wherefore, think you,
will not Christ suffer his church to be deceived in the discerning of
Holy Scripture from other writing... and suffer them to take a book of
10 Holy Scripture... that were none in deed?”

“Lest men might,” quoth he, “of some false book reputed of Holy
Scripture... have great occasion given them to conceive the wrong
doctrine, and wrong opinions of the faith, if God would suffer
his church to take a false, devised book for Holy Scripture and for his
15 own holy words.”

“Ye say,” quoth I, “very truth. Now, what if in the *very* scripture he
should suffer his church mistake the very sentence, in a matter
substantial of our faith? Were they not in like peril to fall by
misunderstanding into like errors... as they might by false
20 writings?”

“Yes, that they were,” quoth he.

“Forsooth,” quoth I, “so were they—and in much *more*. For in a false
book mistaken for Scripture, though they had it in never so
high reverence for some good things that they found in it... and
25 thereby should have great occasion to believe the false errors written
The Church shall always in the same—yet having, as the Church
have the true faith. always shall have, the true faith
first in heart, they should find many
shifts to keep out the errors. But, now, if they falsely should
30 understand the *true* scripture, there were no way to escape from
damnable errors. And therefore may I say to you... as the King's
Highness most prudently laid unto Luther: Since God will not suffer
his church to mistake a book of Scripture for peril of damnable

1 *noble and most famous book*: I.e., his *Defense of the Seven Sacraments*.

1 *objecteth*: pits 2 *in*: with regard to 7, 8, 12, 31 *suffer*: allow

7 *be deceived*: make a mistake 8 *of*: as being 9 *deed*: actuality

10, 13, 18, 21 *false*: spurious // *reputed*: thought to be part 12 *opinions*: ideas

13 *devised*: fabricated 15, 16 *very*: actual 16 *suffer*: let

17 *were they not in like peril to fall*: would they not be in the same danger of falling

18 *might*: could 21 *so were they*: so they would be // *more*: i.e., more danger

22 *though*: even if // *had*: held // *never so*: no matter how

23 *for*: on account of 24 *false*: deceitful 28 *shifts*: means; tactics

29 *were*: would be 31 *prudently*: astutely // *laid*: put forward

32 *mistake a book of*: wrongly take a book as

errors that might ensue thereon, and like peril may there ensue

1.31

Note

by the misconstruing of the sentence as

by the mistaking of the book, it must

needs follow that God will in things of our faith no more suffer them

5 to take a false sentence for true... than to take a false book for
Scripture. And with this reason His Highness concluded him so clearly...
that he durst never since, for shame, touch that point again, nor
any color could lay... but that, upon his own confession, in all
substantial points concerning the faith or knowledge of virtue,
10 pleasant to God... the Church hath so right understanding of
Scripture... that it well and truly perceiveth... that no text therein
can be rightly understood... against any article that the Church
believeth for thing to be believed of necessity. And this
point durst he never since touch, nor make answer thereto... albeit
15 that the King's Highness with this one point alone plainly turneth
up and destroyeth the ground and foundation of all the heresies
that Luther would have believed. And therefore of all things had
Luther greatest cause to answer this point earnestly—and would,
undoubtedly, if he had wist how."

20 "Surely," quoth your friend, "I marvel not though he did not. For
this point is so clear, he *could* not; and I am herein fully satisfied."

*The faith of the Church is a
right rule to the study of
Scripture.*

"Then be you," quoth I, "satisfied in this

also: that the faith of the Church is a
right rule to carry with you to the study

25 of Scripture—to shape you the understanding
of the texts by, and so to take them as they may always
agree therewith."

"Be it," quoth he.

30 "Then are ye," quoth I, "also fully answered in this: that whereas ye said
ye should not believe the Church telling a 'tale of their own,' but
only telling you Scripture, ye now perceive that in such things
as we speak of—that is to wit, necessary points of our faith—if
they tell you a tale which if it were false were damnable, ye must
believe, and may be sure, that since the Church cannot in such

2, 5 *sentence*: meaning 3 *mistaking*: wrong taking 5 *false*: spurious

5 *true*: the real one 6 *reason*: argument // *concluded*: confuted

6 *clearly*: thoroughly 7 *touch*: bring up

8 *any color could lay*: any spin could come up with 10 *pleasant*: (of what is) pleasing

11 *well and truly*: quite correctly 12 *against*: i.e., to go against

17 *would have believed*: would have people believe 18 *earnestly*: zealously

19 *wist*: known 20 *surely*: assuredly // *marvel not though*: am not surprised that

28 *be it*: right 31 *perceive*: realize

things err... it is very true, *all* that the Church in such things telleth you. And that it is not their *own* word, but the word of *God*, though it be not in Scripture.”

1.31

“That appeareth well,” quoth he.

5 “Then are ye,” quoth I, “as fully satisfied that, whereas ye lately said that it were a disobedience to God, and preferring of the Church before himself, if ye shall believe the Church in such things as ‘God in his Holy Scripture saith himself the contrary’—ye now perceive it can in no wise be so; but since his church in such things as we
10 speak of cannot err, it is impossible that the Scripture of God can be contrary to the faith of the Church.”

“That is very true,” quoth he.

“Then it is as true,” quoth I, “that ye be, further, fully answered in the principal point—that the scriptures laid against images and
15 pilgrimages and worship of saints... make nothing against them. And also that those things—images, I mean, and pilgrimages, and praying to saints—are things good and to be had in honor in Christ’s church... since the Church believeth so. Which, as ye grant and see cause why ye so should grant, can in such points not be
20 suffered, for the special assistance of God and instruction of the Holy Ghost, to fall in error. And so be we for this matter, at last, with much work, come to an end. And therefore will we now to dinner. And your other objections that ye have laid... by which ye would prove those things reprobable and make them seem
25 idolatry... which we deferred before, those will we talk of after dinner.”

“By my troth,” quoth he, “I have another tale to tell you... that, all this gear granted, turneth us yet into as much uncertainty as we were in before!”

30 “Yea?” quoth I. “Then have we well walked after the ballad ‘The further I go, the more behind’! I pray you, what thing is that? For that long I to hear yet ere we go.”

“Nay,” quoth he, “it were better ye dine first. My lady will, I ween, be angry with me that I keep you so long therefrom. For I hold it now
35 well toward twelve. And yet more angry would wax with me... if I

3 *though*: even if 4 *appeareth well*: is quite clear

5 *lately said*: said a little while ago 6 *were*: would be 14 *laid*: adduced; cited

15 *worship*: veneration // *make nothing*: do not at all militate 17 *had*: held

20 *suffered*: allowed // *for*: on account of // *assistance*: active presence 21 *in*: into

22 *now to*: now go to 23 *laid*: put forward 24 *reprobable*: reprehensible

27 *by my troth*: oh my goodness // *another tale*: something else 28 *gear*: stuff

30 *well walked after the ballad*: really borne out that saying 31 *pray*: ask

33 *ween*: expect 34 *I keep*: i.e., I’ve kept // *hold it*: believe it’s

35 *twelve*: i.e., noon // *wax*: (she) get

should make you sit and muse at your meat—as ye would, I wot well,
muse on the matter if ye wist what it were.”

1.31

5 “If I were,” quoth I, “like my wife, I should muse more thereon *now*,
and eat no meat for longing to know! But come on, then, and let us
dine first... and ye shall tell us after.”

The end of the First Book

1 *meat*: meal // wot well: well know 2 *wist*: knew 4 *meat*: food

The Second Book

2.1

The First Chapter

The messenger, recapitulating certain things before
 proved, and, for his part, agreeing that “the church of Christ”
 5 cannot in any necessary article of the faith fall in any
 damnable error, doth put in doubt and question which
 is the *very* church of Christ... alleging that they, peradventure,
 whom we call heretics will say that themselves is “the
 Church,” and we not. Whereof the author sheweth the contrary,
 10 declaring whereby we may know that they cannot
 be “the Church.”

After dinner we walked into the garden. And there shortly,
 sitting in an arbor, began to go forth in our matter... desiring him
 to show what thing might that be that made our long forenoon
 15 process frustrate and left us as uncertain as we began.

“Sir,” quoth he, “that shall I shortly show you. Whereas there was
 principally in question whether worshipping of images and
 relics, and praying to saints, and going on pilgrimages,
 were lawful or not; and that I put you in mind that men laid
 20 against them certain texts of Holy Scripture; and also said unto
 you that it seemed the texts themselves, which be the words of God, were of
 more authority *against* them than the glosses of men... that in such
 wise expound the texts as they may seem to make *for* them: ye
 laid on the other side the consent and agreement and common, catholic
 25 faith of the Church; which ye said—and indeed, to say the
 truth, both by reason and by Scripture ye *proved*—that it could
The Church cannot err in not be erroneous, and that the Church
faith. could not err in the faith that God would
 have known and believed. Ye proved the
 30 matter also by miracles. In which when I laid divers things

5 *cannot in*: cannot with regard to // *necessary*: essential // *fall in*: fall into
 7 *very*: true // *peradventure*: perhaps
 10 *declaring whereby we may*: showing how we can
 13 *go forth in our matter*: proceed with our subject of concern // *desiring*: I asking
 14 *show*: say 15 *process*: discussion // *began*: started out
 16 *shortly show*: briefly tell 17 *worshipping*: venerating 19 *lawful*: licit
 19, 24 *laid*: adduced 23 *wise*: ways 24 *consent*: consensus
 24 *agreement*: accord // *common*: universal 30 *in*: with regard to
 30 *laid*: brought up // *divers*: several

moving men to doubt... partly lest they were not true, but especially lest they were not done by God, for corroboration of the faith, but were percase, by God's sufferance, done by the devil for our delusion... deserving so to be served by our falling from

5 *Miracles must needs be* the worship of God himself to the
 done by God. worship of his creatures: ye proved me yet
 again that the miracles were true... and
 that they must needs be done by God. And that ye proved me by this:
 that it should else follow that the Church had a wrong belief and a
 10 damnable. Which eftsoons ye proved well and substantially to be
 impossible. And forasmuch as there fell in the way occasion to
 speak of the contrariety that seemed sometimes to fall between the
 texts of Holy Scripture itself and the common persuasion and faith
 of the Church; whereas I said that it was thought reasonable to
 15 believe the Scripture, being God's own words rather than the
 words of men: ye therein proved that the common faith of the
 The common faith of the Church was as well God's own words
 Church is God's own words. as was Holy Scripture itself—and of as
 great authority—and that no student in
 20 Scripture should presume to try, examine, and judge the catholic
 faith of Christ's church by the Scripture, but by the catholic
 faith of Christ's church should examine and expound the texts of
 Scripture. And that in the study of Scripture this were the sure way...
 wherein should give, ye said, great light the writing of the old
 25 holy doctors, whereby we be ascertained that the faith that the
 Church hath now is the same faith, and the same points, that
 they had then of old, in every age and every time. And in this part
 The Church hath the right ye proved yet again by reason and Holy
 understanding of Scripture. Scripture... that the Church hath by the
 30 teaching of God and the Holy Ghost the
 right understanding of Scripture... in all points that are of necessity
 to be known. And thereupon eftsoons ye deduced and proved
 that no text of the Scripture, well understood, could stand
 against the worshipping of images and relics and the seeking of
 35 pilgrimages, but that all these things be well proved good and
 pleasant to God... and the miracles done in such places, done by
 God... since his special assistance so informeth and instructeth his

1 *doubt*: fear 1, 2 *lest*: that 3 *percase*: perchance // *by*: with
 3 *sufferance*: passive permission; refraining from interfering
 4 *for our delusion*: i.e., for the deluding of those of us // *served*: treated; done to
 10, 32 *eftsoons*: once again 10 *well and*: quite // *substantially*: solidly
 12 *contrariety* . . . *fall*: contradiction there sometimes seemed to be
 13 *persuasion*: view 15 *being*: i.e., it being 24 *old*: early
 25 *holy doctors*: theologians / biblical exegetes // *ascertained*: made certain; assured
 33 *well*: rightly // *stand*: go 34 *worshipping*: venerating
 34 *seeking*: visiting; going to 35 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites; shrines
 36 *pleasant*: pleasing 37 *his* . . . *assistance*: i.e., by his special, active presence he

Church in so great and so substantial an article, so highly touching the honor or dishonor of God, that it cannot be suffered to fall to superstition and idolatry instead of faith and honor done to God.

5 “And this is,” quoth he, “as far as I remember, the whole sum and effect of all that hath hitherto been proved between us.”

“Very true,” quoth I. “And this is of you very well remembered, and well and summarily rehearsed.”

10 “But, now,” quoth he, “all this gear granted, we be never the nearer!”
“Why so?” quoth I.

“Marry,” quoth he, “for a man that believed the worship of images to be wrong and unlawful might grant that—that ‘the Church doth not err,’ and that ‘the Church hath the right faith,’ and that ‘the Church doth not mistake the Scripture’—and when all
15 this were agreed, he might say that ‘the Church’ peradventure doth not believe as ye say it doth. For he might haply deny the *Church* to be that people that ye take it for... and say that it is the people that believeth as *he* believeth—that is to wit, all these kinds of worship to be wrong... and that believeth them whom
20 ye take for ‘the Church’ to believe wrong.”

“If he and his company,” quoth I, “be the *Church*, he must tell where his fellows be!”

“Why so?” quoth he. “If men should ask you and me where the Church is, we could tell no one place, but many diverse countries.”

25 “Let him,” quoth I, “in like wise assign some companies that be known for congregations together in diverse countries.”

“Why,” quoth he, “in the beginning and a good while after, the church of Christ in every place hid itself, that men could not tell in any country where they were; nor durst not come out and
30 show themselves.”

“That was in the beginning,” quoth I, “while the persecution lasted. But when the persecution ceased once, it was soon known in every country where the Church was.”

35 “Marry,” quoth he, “if I should take that part, I would haply say that in that case it is still... and that the *Church* is that company, peradventure, that ye which *call* yourselves the Church do use to call heretics—which now do know one another well enough... and call themselves, and their fellows about the world, the *very*

1 *so highly touching*: having such a bearing on 6 *hitherto*: up till now
8 *well and summarily rehearsed*: good and succinctly reiterated 9 *gear*: stuff
9 *be never the nearer*: have gotten nowhere 11 *marry*: good heavens // *for*: because
11, 19 *worship*: veneration 12 *unlawful*: illicit 14 *mistake*: misinterpret
15 *agreed*: granted 21, 35 *company*: party 22, 38 *fellows*: confreres
24 *diverse*: different 27 *why*: well 28 *that*: so that 31 *while*: as long as
32 *ceased once*: finally came to an end 34 *marry*: goodness // *part*: tack; approach
34 *haply*: maybe 35 *case*: situation 36 *peradventure*: perhaps
36, 37 *which*: who 36 *use to*: habitually 38 *very*: true

church; though they dare not profess it openly, because that ye
(that call yourselves ‘the Church’ and them ‘heretics’) do persecute
them as the church of the paynims did in the beginning. And
therefore they do hide themselves as the *Church* did in the beginning.

5 But and if ye would cease your persecution once, and let
them live in rest, ye should see them flock together so fast that
they should soon show you the *Church* with a wet finger!”

“They might,” quoth I, “peradventure show a shrewd sort within
a while, if they were suffered; and the church that the prophet
10 *Ps 26:5* David speaketh of—‘*Odi ecclesiam malignantium*’
(‘I hate the church of malicious
men’). But they shall never show themselves the church of
Christ.

“The church of Christ, wheresoever it was in all the persecution,
15 used to come together to the preaching and prayer... though it were
What things the Church used privily, in woods or secret houses. They
used also the sacraments among themselves,
as Baptism, Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders... priests
and bishops among them; fastings, vigils kept, the Sundays
20 hallowed; the Mass said, Holy Service sung, and their people houseled—
as well appeareth not only by the stories of the Church, but
also of the paynims. And partly well appeareth by an epistle of Pliny
written to the emperor Trajan. And such things must there be
therein... if it be any church or congregation of Christ. Now, these
25 people that ye speak of use no such things among themselves,
and therefore they cannot be the church of Christ.”

“They preach,” quoth he, “privily, among themselves; and all the
remnant they do in our churches.”

“This,” quoth I, “plainly proveth that they cannot be the church of
30 Christ. For the church of Christ ever fled and forbore the temples
A plain renaying of Christ in which idols and maumets were. And
it was a plain *renaying* of Christ’s faith...
to do any observance thereto, though they did it only with their
body, for fear, and thought the contrary with their heart. For our
35 Lord saith, ‘He that denieth me before the world, I will deny

3, 22 *paynims*: pagans 5 *and if*: if // *once*: once and for all 6 *rest*: peace
7 *with a wet finger*: with the greatest of ease 8 *shrewd sort*: bad lot; pack of evildoers
9 *suffered*: tolerated 12 *the*: i.e., to be the 16 *privily*: secretly // *secret*: secluded
17 *used also*: also celebrated 20 *hallowed*: kept holy
20 *Holy Service*: the Divine Office // *houseled*: given Communion
21 *stories*: historical writings 22 *of the*: i.e., by those of 25 *use*: practice
27 *privily*: in private 28 *remnant*: rest 31 *maumets*: graven images
32 *renaying*: renouncing 33 *observance thereto*: i.e., venerating of the idols
33 *though*: even if

Mt 10:33

Ws 1:5

him before my Father in heaven.” And Holy
Scripture saith, ‘Spiritus Sanctus effugiet
fictum’ (‘The Holy Ghost fleeth from feigning’).

2.1

But these men whom *you* call ‘the Church’ come to the
5 churches where the images be... which they take for idols, and
there they come to Service with us... whom they take for idolaters.
And whereas they teach among themselves that we do naught... they
come to our church, as I say, and in face of the world they do the
same: kneel to images as we do, set up candles as we do, pray to
10 saints as we do—and haply more loudly with their mouths while
they mock them with their hearts. And over this, many mock also
the sacraments which they receive.

“And this putteth me in mind also that besides all this, ye cannot
say that these be ‘the Church’ whom we call heretics; but ye
15 must tell which *kind* of them is ‘the Church.’ For all cannot be,
since *the* church is and must be all of one belief, and have all one
faith. And as it was written in the Acts of the Apostles, ‘Erat multitudo
Acts 4:32; Ps 67:7 (Vulgate) credentium anima una et cor unum’
(‘The multitude of faithful, believing men
20 were all of one mind and of one heart’). And in *the* church is the
Holy Ghost, ‘qui facit unanimes in domo’ (‘which maketh all of one
mind in the house of God’—that is, in *the* church). But as for among
heretics, there be as many diverse minds, almost, as there be
men.

“The church of Christ also is a thing that always hath stood and
continued. But the sects of heretics and their churches never
continued, but ever shortly decayed and vanished quite away; so
far forth that of all the old heretics the books also be gone
and lost... when there was no law made yet to burn them; so that
30 it is easy to see that God himself destroyed them... and the world
clean gave them up... at some time, though new heretics now,
long after, take them up again. For if their opinions had anywhere
continually endured, *there* would their books have been
continually reserved... which be now quite gone many years ago.
35 And thus may ye well see that there can no such folk be ‘the
Church’... that in so many years have no church nor come to none...

but to theirs in which they say themselves that they worship
idols.”

2.1

“Well,” quoth he, “peradventure they will not stick much to assign
you a place and show you a company and congregation... which
5 they will say *is* the *very* church. For what if they will show you
Bohemia, and now in Saxony, where Luther is, and peradventure in a
good part of Germany?”

“Marry,” quoth I, “if they say so... then leap they like a flounder out of
a frying pan into the fire. For in Saxony, first, and among all

10 *Behold the inconstancy* the Lutherans, there be as many heads,
of heretics! as many wits. And all as wise as wild
geese. And as lately as they began... yet be

there not only as many sects, almost, as men, but also the masters
themselves change their minds and their opinions every day,

15 and wot ne’er where to hold them. Bohemia is also in the same case.

One faith in the town, another in the field. One in Prague, another
in the next town. And yet in Prague itself, one faith in one
street, another in the next. So that if ye assign it in Bohemia, ye
must tell in what town. And if ye name a town, yet must ye

20 tell in what street. And yet all they acknowledge that they cannot
have the sacraments administered... but by such priests as be made by

The pope, head of the Church authority derived and conveyed from
the pope, which is, under Christ, vicar
and the head of our church.”

25 *The Second Chapter*

The author sheweth that no sect of such as the Church
taketh for heretics can be “the Church,” forasmuch as
the Church was before all them—as the tree from which all
those withered branches be fallen.

30 “**T**hat none of all these can be ‘the Church’ shall well appear also
by another means. Whether will ye say that the *very* church and
congregation of Christ was before all the churches and congregations

3 *stick much*: find it too difficult // *assign*: name 4 *show*: point out to

5 *show*: tell 8 *marry*: goodness // *so*: that

10–11 *as many heads, as many wits*: i.e., as many ways of believing as there are individuals

11 *wise*: sensible 12 *lately*: recently 15 *wot ne’er*: never know

15 *hold*: settle; fix // *case*: situation 17 *yet*: even 18 *assign*: locate

23 *which*: who 28, 32 *was*: existed 31 *very*: true

of heretics, or some church of heretics before the church of Christ?"

2.2

"Marry," quoth he, "there might be some church of heretics before the church of Christ. For there might be some among the
5 Jews, before the birth of Christ. And such, I suppose, were the Sadducees, that believed not the resurrection, nor the immortality of the soul."

"If we should go," quoth I, "to *that* reckoning, we might fetch the church of Christ far above... and begin it at Adam. For from the
10 first good man to the last... all shall in conclusion be his Church Triumphant in heaven. But I speak of Christ's church now as of that congregation that, bearing his name, and having his right faith, and being begun to be gathered by himself and spread abroad by his apostles, hath and doth, and shall till his coming to the dreadful
15 Doom, continue still in this world. Whether was *this* church before all the churches and congregations of heretics, or some one of them before it?"

"Nay," quoth he, "I think it was before them all."

"Whereby may we," quoth I, "be sure of that?"

20 "Marry," quoth he, "for always the heretics came out of it!"

"That is," quoth I, "true. For they could be no *heretics* but by being first therein... and after coming out. And it appeareth by the
Mt 13:24–30; 1 Jn 2:19 Gospel in which the good husbandman
'went forth to sow his seed, and when he
25 had sowed good seed, then the enemy sowed his evil after, and they grew up together.' It appeareth also by the words of the apostle and holy evangelist Saint John, where he said of heretics, 'Ex nobis profecti sunt, sed non erant ex nobis'; 'They be gone,' he said, 'out of us, but they were none of us'; meaning that ere ever they professed
30 themselves openly for heretics—yet being such indeed, since the church of Christ is a people of *one* faith—these folk that have another, special faith by themselves... varying and gainsaying the other... be not perfectly *of* the Church though they be for the while *in* it. So it is now that any member of that body till it be cut off for
35 fear of corruption of the remnant... hangeth on it, in a manner, and

3 marry: actually

6 that believed not the resurrection: i.e., who did not believe in the resurrection of the body

10 in conclusion: in the end 14–15 dreadful Doom: fearful Last Judgment

15 was this church: did this church exist 20 marry: goodness

22 after: afterward; later 23 husbandman: farmer 25 evil: bad (seed)

28 out of: out from among 32 varying: differing from

32 gainsaying: going against 35 remnant: rest

- some little light or life hath by the Spirit of God, that upholdeth
the body of his Church; being ever in case to take occasion of
amendment by some vein of that wholesome moisture of God's
grace... that specially spreadeth throughout that holy body. But those
5 that by the profession of heresies and infidelity fall off from that
body, or, for fear of corrupting the remnant, be by curse cast out of
the body, they plainly dry up and wither away. Our Savior saith
Jn 15:1-6 himself—'I am,' saith he, 'a very vine...
and my Father is a gardener. I am the vine,
10 and ye be the branches. And every branch that beareth in me no
fruit, my Father taketh it away. And every branch that beareth
fruit, he purgeth it to make it bring the more fruit. And as the
branch can do no good being taken from the tree, right so can
ye do no good, nor serve for naught but for the fire, except ye abide
15 *We must work with faith.* in me.' By these words of our Savior (and
many more there spoken at length) though
it appeareth that whoso keep the faith, yet except he work well therewith,
God will pluck him out; and whoso by faith abiding in the
stock *doth* work good works, the more he doth the more
20 grace and help shall have of God to grow the better and to do the
more—yet appeareth it also... that all the good works that may be
done... will not serve if we be out of the stock. And out of the
stock of the vine be all... that be not grafted in by faith; or fallen
off by open profession of heresy; or cut off and cast out for infidelity.
25 For faith is the gate into God's church... as misbelief is the
Without faith we cannot gate into the devil's church. For as the
come to God. Apostle saith, 'Accedentem ad Deum oportet
Heb 11:6 credere'—'A man cannot come to God
without faith.' And therefore whoso
30 professeth a false belief, let him be sure that he is gone out of the
gate of God's church before actual excommunication, and
fallen off the body of the vineyard. And if they be secret, neither
professing their heresies nor actually being accursed and cast
out, they be in the Church, but not perfectly of it. But in such wise,
35 in manner, be they... as a dead hand is rather a burden in the

2 *case*: a position 5, 24 *infidelity*: unbelief 6 *corrupting*: i.e., their corrupting
6 *curse*: excommunication 7 *plainly*: completely 8 *very*: real 13 *tree*: stem; stock
14, 17 *except*: unless 14 *abide*: remain 17 *appeareth*: is made evident
30 *be sure*: know for a fact 31, 33 *actual(ly)*: official(ly); formal(ly) 32 *secret*: covert
33 *accursed*: excommunicated 35 *dead*: benumbed

body than verily any member, organ, or instrument thereof. And

1 Jn 2:19

therefore saith Saint John, as I said

before, that ‘the heretics be gone out

of us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would

5 have tarried with us.’ Meaning thereby not, as some would have it
seem, that a good man is not of the Church, nor in God’s favor, while
he is good... because he happeth to wax worse afterward; but he
meaneth that in that they went their way from us, they showed that
they were naught in deed while they were with us. And so though

10 they were *with* us, yet were they not *of* us. For though heretics
and infidels be *among* faithful and well-believing people, yet
be they, pardie, none *of* them. And so it appeareth, as ye said before,
that the church of Christ is before all the churches of heretics...
and that all congregations of heretics have come out of the

15 church of Christ.”

“That is very true,” quoth he.

“Well,” quoth I, “if that be true, as it is indeed, then can no sect in
Bohemia be the right church. For the church which *we* call ‘the
Church,’ that believeth as we believe, was there before them all. And
20 never a church had any church of heretics yet... but it was
built by our church to their hands. So that it is evident that
none of all them can be Christ’s church, but Christ’s church must
needs be that church that was before all them... and out of which all
they have sprung... and since severed themselves; which is the
25 church that all they deny not... to believe against them... the
points which we believe and they reprove.”

The Third Chapter

The messenger moveth that the *very* church peradventure
is not the people that *we* take for it, but a secret, unknown
30 sort of such only... as be by God predestined to be saved.
Whereunto the author answereth, and declareth that it cannot
be so.

3–4 *out of*: out from among 5 *tarried*: stayed

7 *wax worse*: change for the worse 9 *naught in deed*: in reality wicked

10 *though*: even if 11 *infidels*: unbelievers // *well-believing*: right-believing

12 *pardie*: by George // *appeareth*: is evident 13 *is before*: preexists

21 *to their hands*: with no effort on their part 26 *reprove*: reject

28 *moveth*: submits // *very*: true // *peradventure*: perhaps 30 *sort*: set

31 *declareth that*: explains why

- “Peradventure,” quoth he, “there might be said that it needeth not to assign any *place* where the very church and true Christian congregation is; but since every place is indifferent thereunto... it may be that all the good men, and chosen people of God, that be predestined to be saved—in what part soever they be, and howsoever they be scattered, here one and there one, here two and there two—that *these* be the *very* church of Christ. And be in this world unknown as yet, while the church doth but wander in the pilgrimage of this short life.”
- 10 “Marry,” quoth I, “this gear groweth from worse to worse! And in very deed... yet is this point their sheet anchor. For first, they see plainly that they must needs grant that the very church can neither be deceived in the right faith... nor mistake Holy Scripture, or misunderstand it, to the introduction of infidelity and false belief. And this ground find all the heretics themselves so sure and fast... that they perceive well except they would openly and utterly deny Christ altogether... it cannot be undermined. And since they manifestly see that, and as evidently see therewith that the church which is the very church indeed... damneth all their ways—whereof, since ‘the Church’ cannot err in discerning the truth, it must needs follow that *they* mistake, themselves, all the whole matter, and be quite in a wrong way—therefore be they driven to deny for ‘the Church’ the people that be known for ‘the Church,’ and go seek another, they neither know what nor where; build up in the air a church all so spiritual... that they leave therein at length neither God nor good man. And, first, where they say that there be none therein but they that be predestined to be saved—if the question were of the Church triumphant in heaven, then said they well. But we speak of the church of Christ militant here in earth; and therefore goeth their frame as far wide from the place they should set it on... as heaven and earth stand asunder. For first would I wit, if ‘the Church’ be none but those that be predestined, whether all that be predestined be members thereof.”
- 35 “Why not?” quoth he.

1 *it needeth not*: there is no need 2 *assign*: identify

2, 7, etc. *very church*: true church

3 *indifferent thereunto*: of neutral significance in that regard 5 *part*: part of the world

10 *marry*: goodness

10 *this gear groweth from worse to worse*: this stuff is going from bad to worse

10–11 *very deed*: actual fact 14 *be deceived in*: be wrong with regard to

14 *mistake*: err in the identifying of (which books are) 17 *except*: that unless

19 *evidently*: clearly 29 *said they well*: what they say would be correct

32 *would I wit*: I want to know

“Then,” quoth I, “he that is predestined to be saved... whether may he, or not, be divers times a sinner in his days?”

“What if he may?” quoth he.

5 “May he not,” quoth I, “be also divers times in his days in a wrong belief and a false heresy... and after turn, repent, and amend... and so be saved at last, as God hath predestined him to be?”

“What then?” quoth he.

10 “Marry,” quoth I, “for then shall it follow that he shall be a member of the very church, and so still continue, and never can be cast out... being a stark heretic!”

“Yet,” quoth he, “is he all that while a quick member of ‘the Church’... by reason of God’s predestination, since though *he* be not sure... yet it is in deed sure that he is and ever shall be one of the very church!”

15 “It is,” quoth I, “sure in deed, and well known to God, that he so *shall* be. But as sure is it that for the *while*, he is *not*—except that allthing that ever shall be... is already present in deed... as it is present to God’s knowledge. And then were Saint Paul as good while he was a persecutor... as when he was apostle. And as verily a

20 member of Christ’s church ere he was born... as he is now in heaven.”

“Well,” quoth he, “though that peradventure *all* those that be living and predestined to be saved be not in it, yet may it be that there be none others in it than predestinates.”

25 “But it may be,” quoth I, “that, as men be changeable, he that is predestined may be many times in his life naught; and he that will at last fall to sin and wretchedness, and so, finally, cast himself away, shall in some time of his life be good... and therefore, for the time, in God’s favor. For God blameth nor hateth no man for that he *shall* will; but for that malicious will that he hath, or hath

30 had, already. And thus shall there by this reason be good men out of Christ’s church and naughty men therein, faithful men out of it and heretics in it, and both the one and the other without reason or good cause why.”

2, 4 *divers times*: at various times 5 *false*: loathsome 7 *what then*: so what

8 *marry*: good heavens 9, 13 *very*: true 9 *still*: always 11 *quick*: living

12 *sure*: constant; steadfast 13, 15, 17 *in deed*: in actuality

13, 15, 16 *sure*: certain 13 *one*: a member 16 *while*: time being

16 *except that allthing*: unless everything

18 *and then were Saint Paul*: in which case Saint Paul was 22 *though that*: even if

26, 32 *naught(y)*: bad 27 *at last*: ultimately // *finally*: in the end

30 *that he*: that which he 31 *this reason*: this reasoning (of yours)

32 *faithful*: right-believing

The Fourth Chapter

2.4

The messenger moveth that though “the Church” be not the number of folk, only, predestined to bliss, yet may it peradventure be the number of good and well-believing folk, here and there, unknown—which may be, peradventure, those whom we condemn for heretics for holding opinion against images. Whereof the author proveth the contrary.

“Well,” quoth he, “yet may it be that the *very* church of Christ is all such as believe aright and live well wheresoever they be—though
 10 2 Tm 2:19 the world know them not, and though
 few of them know each other. For God, as
 Saint Paul saith, ‘knoweth who be his.’ And Christ saith that
 Mt 16:18 against his church ‘the gates of hell shall
 not prevail’; but the gates of hell do
 15 prevail against sinners. And therefore it appeareth well that there
 can be no sinners *in* his church, nor that there be none *of* his
 church but good folk. And unto them our Lord is present, and keepeth
 them from errors, and giveth them right understanding of his
 holy scriptures. And where they be forceth not; how few they be
 20 Mt 18:20; 1 Kgs 19:18 together maketh no matter. For our Savior
 saith, ‘Wheresoever be two or three
 gathered together in my name, there am I also, among them.’ And
 so is his very church here and there, of only good men... to the
 world unknown, and to himself well known. And though they
 25 be few in comparison... yet make they about in all the world a
 good many among them. As God said when the children of
 Israel were fallen in idolatry and worshipped the idol Baal so
 far forth that it seemed *all* were in the case, and men knew not who
 were otherwise—yet said our Lord (as appeareth in the nineteenth
 30 chapter, the Third Book of the Kings), ‘I shall reserve for myself
 seven thousand that have not bended their knee before Baal.’ So that where

2 *moveth*: submits 4 *well-believing*: right-believing 8, 23 *very*: true
 9 *well*: uprightly 9, 10 *though*: even if 19 *forceth not*: makes no difference
 20 *together*: all together; in all // *maketh no matter*: does not matter
 25 *about*: out there 28 *the case*: that state 30 *chapter, the*: chapter of the
 30 *the Third Book of the Kings*: I.e., what is now called I Kings.

- the synagogue and church was then... it was unknown to man, but it was well known to God. And they were not his church that seemed to be, but a company ungathered, that no man was aware of... nor would have went. And so may it be, peradventure, now... that the very
- 5 church of Christ is not, nor many days hath not been, the people that seemeth to be ‘the Church,’ but some good men scattered here and there, unknown... till God gather them together and make them known; and haply those that believe against images, and whom we now call heretics.”
- 10 “This is,” quoth I, “a reason that Luther maketh himself. By which he would bring the very church of Christ out of knowledge, and would put it in doubt whether the saints that the Church honoreth... were good men or not. And would that it might seem peradventure
- 15 nay, but that *they* were haply *not* good, but the good men and saints indeed... were some others whom the world for their open lewd living reputed for naught. But where he saith that the church or synagogue of the right belief was then unknown—that is not true. For it was well known in Jerusalem and Judaea, though it had been unknown who were faithful in Samaria. And
- 20 the scripture also saith not that these seven thousand whom he would leave yet in Israel, that had not bowed their knees before Baal, were secret and unknown; but he saith only that such a number of such folk he would leave. But, now, for our purpose, since ye will have the very church a secret, unknown... not company and congregation,
- 25 but a disparkled number of only good men: will you that those good men which after your reckoning make the very church... shall have the same faith and none other than we have which be now reputed for ‘the Church,’ or else a faith and belief different?”
- 30 “What if they have the same?” quoth he.
- “Marry,” quoth I, “then will your new-built church nothing help your purpose; but they shall as fast confirm the worship of images, praying to saints, and seeking to pilgrimages as we. And as deeply condemn for heresy your opinion to the contrary.”
- 35 “That is very truth,” quoth he. “But it may be that of that *very* church... the faith and belief shall be that all this gear is erroneous and as plain idolatry as was the worshipping of Baal.”

1 *it was*: i.e., this was 2 *that*: who 4 *went*: guessed
 4–5, 11, etc. *very church*: true church 5 *many*: i.e., for many
 10 *a reason*: an argument 15 *for*: on account of 16 *lewd living*: vile conduct
 16 *naught*: bad 19 *though it had been*: even if it was
 25 *disparkled*: scattered; dispersed 26, 28 *which*: who 26 *after*: according to
 31 *marry*: goodness // *nothing*: not at all 32 *fast*: steadfastly
 32 *worship*: veneration 33 *seeking to pilgrimages*: visiting of pilgrimage sites
 36 *gear*: stuff

- “If it were so,” quoth I, “then had Christ not kept him seven thousand from the worship of Baal in all the regions that bear the name of Christendom... except these new folk of Saxony and Bohemia which yourself grant to be the heretics, as sects come out of the Church.
- 5 And more than wonder were it if all the church of Christ should be clean among infidels and heretics, and no part at all thereof among the great unchangeable Christian countries... which have kept their faith in one constant fashion derived from the beginning. For this am I sure: that in all *those* regions, as I say, if any
- 10 have any such opinion against images and saints, yet cometh he to the church among his neighbors... and there boweth his knees to Baal (if the images be Baal) as his neighbors do. But go to, let us forth on a little further. And supposing that there were some such secret ‘good’ folk as ye speak of... that had the ‘right’
- 15 belief, and were the ‘right’ church; and that they were so dispersed asunder that they were to the world unknown: hath not God set an order in his church that some shall preach to the remnant for exhortation of good living, and information... wherein good living standeth—as in faith and good works?”
- 20 “Yes,” quoth he.
 “Bade not Christ,” quoth I, “sacraments also to be administered in his church, by the priests of the same?”
 “Yes,” quoth he.
 “Now,” quoth I, “if some infidels as Turks or Saracens, having heard
- 25 of Christ’s name... did long to know his scripture and his faith; and hearing that there were many people that professed themselves for Christian men—whole nations—but they were all open idolaters and in a misbelief, and clearly deceived and beguiled, and that especially by the clergy that teacheth them; howbeit, there were yet
- 30 a few good folk, and right-believing, which were not deceived, which among them be the very, true church; but who they be, or where they be, or how to ask for them, or if he happen on them... yet whereby to know them, that can no man tell him: how should these infidels come to the faith, and of whom should they
- 35 hear it? For they—being warned before that there were many sects

3 *new*: modern 4 *come*: i.e., that have come 5 *all*: i.e., all of
 6 *clean*: completely // *infidels*: unbelievers 7 *unchangeable*: undeflectable
 8 *derived from*: going back to 9 *this*: i.e., of this 12–13 *go to*: come
 17 *remnant*: rest
 18–19 *wherein good living standeth*: as to what good living consists in
 24 *as*: such as 27 *open*: blatant 28 *clearly*: completely
 28, 30 *deceived*: in error 30, 31 *which*: who 31 *very*: real 34 *of*: from
 35 *warned*: informed

of heretics, and but one true church—would never be so mad to learn of them that they might ween were wrong. And how should they now come to the *right*... when the true church is unknown?”

5 “They might,” quoth he, “take the Scripture.”

“They should,” quoth I, “be therein like to Eunuchus, that could not
Acts 8:30–31 understand without a reader. And then

if they took a wrong reader of a wrong church, all were marred. And also, they would not trust the scriptures,
10 nor reckon that they had the right books of Scripture, among false sects... but would look to receive the true scripture of the right and true church. And thus here it appeareth if it were thus... God had left none ordinary way for his gospel and faith to be taught. But let go these infidels and speak of ourselves... which are (if this way
15 were true) as false as they. Where be, then, preachers of this *very* church that should preach and teach us better? For it is no church if it have no preachers.”

“It hath,” quoth he, “some that preach sometimes—but ye will not suffer them! Ye punish them and burn them!”

20 “Nay,” quoth I, “they be wiser than so. They will not be burned for us; for they will rather swear on a Book that they never said so—or else that they will no more say so. And in this appeareth that there is no such secret, unknown church of Christ... that having such opinions is the *very* church. For the *very* church hath ever had
25 some that hath abided by their faith and their preaching... and would never go back with God’s word, to die therefor. And this church that we be of that take your church for heretics... have had many such martyrs therein... that believed as we do against your opinions—as appeareth by the histories and by many of their
30 books—whereas of your ‘secret’ church I never yet found, or heard of, anyone in all my life but he would forswear your faith to save his life. Where be, also, your priests and your bishops? For such must they have if they be the church of Christ. Now, such can your church have none; ye be each to other unknown. And though
35 some of such churches have a false opinion that every man is a priest, and

2 *to*: i.e., as to 2, 11 *of*: from 2 *ween*: think 5 *might*: could
5 *take*: come upon 6 *that*: (the unnamed man) who 7, 8 *reader*: an interpreter
8 *took*: came upon 9 *all were marred*: everything would be distorted
12, 22, 29 *appeareth*: is made clear (that) 12 *had*: would have
13 *ordinary*: established; normative 14 *which*: who 19 *suffer*: tolerate
20 *wiser than so*: smarter than that 20–21 *for us*: on our account 21 *Book*: Bible
21 *so*: such and such 22 *so*: that 24, 29 *opinions*: tenets 24 *very*: true
25 *abided*: stood; stuck 26 *go back with*: retract; take back
26 *to die therefor*: i.e., even if the refusal meant their death
28 *against*: regarding 29 *histories*: historical accounts
31 *forswear*: renounce under oath

- every woman, too—yet this heresy, false as it is, will not serve this
 unknown church. For the holders of that opinion do put that no
 man may, for all that, take upon him to preach or meddle as priest... till
 he be chosen by the congregation. And where can that be in this
 5 imaginary church... of which no man knoweth other? And whereas
 our Lord saith, ‘Wheresoever be two or three gathered together
 Mt 18:20 in my name, there am I with them,’ he
 spoke not as though every two or three whatsoever-they-were
 should make his church; but that wheresoever
 10 there came together two or three in his name that be of his church,
 there is he with them. And so doth the one text of the Scripture in
 the Gospel plainly declare—as it is well set out and opened by the
 holy doctor and glorious martyr Saint Cyprian, in his epistle
 against Novatian.
- 15 “When our Savior saith also that he which would not amend by
 Mt 18:15–17 his fault showed him before two or three
 witnesses... should be complained upon unto
 ‘the church,’ did he mean a secret church... which no man wist
 1 Cor 6:4 where to find? Now, when the Apostle
 20 writeth unto the Corinthians that,
 rather than they should plead and strive in the law before the
 infidels, they should set such as were in ‘the church’ little set by
 to be judges in their temporal suits, of what church did he speak?
 Of such one as no man wist where to seek it? This ‘unknown’
 25 church which they be driven to seek that be loath to know *the*
 church... will never serve. But the church of *Christ* is a church well
 “*The church*” cannot be known. And his pleasure was to have it
 hidden: Mt 5:14. known, and not hidden. And it is built upon
 so high a hill of that holy stone—I mean
 30 upon Christ himself—that it cannot be hidden. ‘Non potest abscondi
 civitas supra montem posita’—‘The city cannot be hidden that is set on
 a hill.’ And he would have his faith divulged and spread abroad
 openly—not always whispered in hugger-mugger. And therefore he
 bound his preachers to stand thereby, and not to revoke his word for
 35 *Lk 11:33; 12:49* no pain. For he said that he did not light
 that candle to put it and hide it under a

2 *put*: claim 3 *meddle*: officiate 11 *the . . . Scripture*: that same scriptural text
 12 *opened*: explicated 13 *doctor*: exegete 15 *which*: who // *by*: upon having
 16 *his fault showed him*: having his fault pointed out to him
 17 *be complained upon*: have a complaint lodged against him
 18, 24 *wist*: knew 19 *the Apostle*: Saint Paul 21 *plead*: enter pleas
 21 *strive*: wrangle // *law*: i.e., law courts
 22 *were in “the church” little set by*: had little standing in “the church”
 23 *temporal*: civil 24, 25 *seek*: look for 33 *in hugger-mugger*: furtively
 34 *revoke*: retract

bushel; for so would no man do; but he had kindled a fire which
 he would not should lie and smolder as coals doth in quench, but he
 would it should burn and give light. And therefore folly were it to say that
 Christ, which would have his church spread through the world... and
 5 everywhere gathered in company, would have it turned to a
 secret, unknown, single sort... severed asunder and scattered about in
 corners, unknown to all the world and to themselves too. Now, where
 they say that there is none of 'the church' but only those that be good
 folk—this would make 'the church' clearly unknown, were the people
 10 never so many and the place never so large. For who can know of the
 multitude... who be good indeed, and who be naught, since the bad may
 suddenly be amended, unawares to the world, and the good as suddenly
 waxen worse? Now lay they for the proof of that opinion the words
 of Christ... which Luther allegeth also, for the same intent, in his book that
 15 *Mt 16:18* he made against Ambrosius Catharinus;
 that is to wit, the words wherein our Lord
 said unto Saint Peter that against his church the gates of hell should
 not prevail; by which words Luther doth (as he thinketh, and saith
 himself) marvelously gaily prove that there can be no man *of* 'the
 20 church' but he that sinneth not. For this argument he maketh: Christ
 saith that the 'gates of hell' shall not 'prevail' against 'the church'; but
 the 'gates of hell' is nothing but the devil, and he prevaieth against
 all folk that sin; ergo, no folk that sin be 'the church.' And by this worshipful
Luther's foolish argument argument it is a world to see what
 25 boast the madman maketh... that he hath
 clearly proved that 'the church' is not these people whom *we* take for 'the
 church'... because they be sinners. Which argument hath so many
 follies and faults therein, and so much inconvenience and absurdity
 following thereupon, that it is more than marvel that a child of one
 30 week's study in sophistry could for shame find in his heart to bring
 it in place for any earnest argument. For first, if men deny him that the
 'gates of hell' do in that place signify the devil... then he can never
The gates of hell prove it... and then is all his reason wiped
 quite away. Now do there indeed divers
 35 old commenters and doctors of the Church take in that place for the 'gates
 of hell'... the great tyrants and heretics by whose persecutions and

1 *bushel*: bushel basket 2 *would not should*: would not have
 3 *would it should*: would have it // *folly were it*: it would be foolish 4 *which*: who
 5 *company*: community // *to*: into 6 *single*: individualistic; unconnected // *sort*: set
 7 *corners*: out-of-the-way places 8 *none*: no one (who is) 9 *clearly*: completely
 11 *naught*: bad 13 *waxen worse*: changed for the worse // *opinion*: contention
 14 *allegeth*: quotes 15 *made*: wrote 19 *marvelously gaily*: in a wondrously brilliant way
 23 *by*: about // *worshipful*: impressive 28 *follies and faults*: fallacies and flaws
 28 *inconvenience*: incongruity 29 *more than marvel*: more than amazing
 31 *earnest*: serious 33 *all his reason*: his whole line of reasoning 34 *divers*: several
 35 *old commenters and doctors*: early biblical commentators and exegetes

heresies—as it were, by two gates—many a man hath gone into hell; and our Savior promiseth in that place that neither of those two gates (that is to wit, neither paynim tyrant nor christened heretic) should prevail against ‘the church’; for though they have destroyed, and shall
 5 destroy, many *of* ‘the church,’ yet shall they not be able to destroy ‘the church,’ but ‘the church’ shall stand and be by God preserved in despite of all their teeth. And thus ye see how soon Luther’s special arguments were overthrown with truth. But if a man would grant
 10 him that the ‘gates of hell’ did here signify the devil, yet should we not need to grant him that the devil, as he is called of God by the name of the ‘gates’ (which is not done for naught), doth prevail against every man that sinneth. For he that sinneth and riseth again out of sin (and so cometh within the gates... as yet the gates cannot hold him, but that he breaketh out of the gates), the gates do not
 15 prevail against him, but he prevaieth against the gates. And thus is Luther’s wise argument which he groundeth upon the text... avoided again. It appeareth also that it is a very *frantic* argument. For where he saith that against the ‘church of Christ’ the gates of hell prevail not, but they prevail against *our* church—that is
 20 to wit, all the Christian people whom *we* call ‘the church’... under obedience of the pope, ergo they be not ‘the church’—this argument proveth that there is in earth no church at all. For what church can he find or imagine in earth that doth not sin? And especially if that were true that himself saith among his other heresies...
 25 where he holdeth stiffly that all the good works of good men be sins, and that men sin in that they do good! And thus he would both have ‘the church’ to be only a secret, unknown sort of folk that do not sin... and yet he confesseth that there be none such! And so, as he goeth about to take away the *very* church, that is well known,
 30 making as though he would find out a better—he leaveth in conclusion no church at all. And to such a fond and false end must they needs bring it all... that will make it a number of only such as be good men and do not sin. For if he should be in it always when he is out of sin, and out of it when he is in sin, then should a man
 35 peradventure be in it in the morning and out of it at noon... and in

2 *place*: passage 3 *paynim*: pagan 5 *many of*: i.e., many members of
 6–7 *in despite of all their teeth*: despite all their opposition 10 *as*: since // *of*: by
 11 *naught*: nothing 12 *again*: back 16 *wise*: brilliant 17 *avoided*: refuted
 17 *appeareth*: is evident // *very frantic*: really insane 22, 23 *in*: on
 25 *stiffly*: adamantly 26 *that they do good*: what they do that is good
 27 *sort*: set 28 *confesseth*: professes
 29 *goeth about to take away*: attempts to do away with // *very*: true
 30 *find out*: discover // *in conclusion*: in the end 31 *fond*: foolish
 35 *peradventure*: maybe

again at night. So that who were in it... or where it were...

who could tell? And of that uncertainty must needs grow all

such inconveniences, and contradiction unto *Scripture*, as is

What "*the church*" is before rehearsed. 'The church' therefore must

5 *Mt 13:24–30, 47–50* needs be the common-known multitude of

Christian men, good and bad together, while 'the church' is here in

earth. For this net of Christ hath for the while good fishes and

bad. And this field of Christ beareth for the while good corn and

cockle... till it shall at the Day of Doom be purified, and all the bad

10 *1 Cor 5:1–5* cast out, and the only good remain.

And therefore when the Apostle wrote unto

the Corinthians of him that had lain with his mother-in-law, he

commanded that he should be separated out of the *church*. Which

he never was after the deed done... till the excommunication denounced;

15 but was still, for all his sin, one of 'the church'... though

Jn 13:10 he was naught, and out of God's favor.

Christ himself said to his apostles, 'Now
be you clean, but not all'—and yet were they all *of* his church, albeit

Jn 6:70 that one of them was, as our Savior said

20 himself, a devil. 'Did I not,' said he,

'choose twelve of you, and one of you is a devil?' And if there were

none of 'the church' but good men as long as they were good... then

had Saint Peter been once no part of 'the church' after that Christ

had appointed him for chief!

25 "But our Lord in this his mystical body of his church... carrieth

his members... some sick, some whole, and all sickly. Nor they be not

for *every* sin clean cast off from the body, but if they be, for

fear of infection, cut off... or else willingly do depart and separate themselves,

as do these heretics... that either refuse the Church willfully themselves...

30 or else for their obstinacy be put out. For till their stubborn

hearts do show them incurable, the body beareth them yet about, sick

and naughty and key-cold as they be, to prove whether the warmth of

grace going through this whole mystical body of Christ's church

might get yet, and keep, some life in them. But when the time shall

35 come that this church shall wholly change her place and have heaven for

2 *grow*: come 3 *inconveniences*: incongruities 6 *while*: for as long as // *in*: on

7, 8 *while*: duration 8 *corn*: grain 9 *at the Day of Doom*: on Judgment Day

11 *the Apostle*: Saint Paul 14 *denounced*: (was) pronounced 15 *one*: a member

16, 32 *naught(y)*: wicked 22 *of*: i.e., who were of 23 *after that*: after

26 *whole*: well // *sickly*: susceptible to illness; apt to get sick

28 *infection*: i.e., their infecting the rest of the body

28 *willingly*: of their own volition 32 *key-cold*: i.e., stone-cold // *prove*: see

her dwelling instead of earth; after the final judgment pronounced
 and given, when God shall with his Spouse, this church of Christ, enter into
 the pleasant wedding chamber, to the bed of eternal rest: then shall
 all these scaly and scabbed pieces scale clean off, and the whole body of
 5 Christ's holy Church remain pure, clean, and glorious... without wem,
 wrinkle, or spot; which is—and for the while, I ween, will be, as long as
 she is here—as scabbed as ever was Job... and yet her loving Spouse
 leaveth her not, but continually goeth about by many manner
 medicines (some bitter, some sweet; some easy, some grievous; some
 10 pleasant, some painful) to cure her.”

The Fifth Chapter

The author showeth and concludeth that this common-known
 multitude of Christian nations not cut off nor fallen off by
 heresies... be the very church of Christ—good men and bad
 15 together.

“**A**nd finally, to put out of question which is Christ's very church:
By the Church we know since it is agreed between us (and granted
the Scriptures. through Christendom, and a conclusion very
 true) that by ‘the church’ we know the Scripture—
 20 *which church is that by which ye know the Scripture? Is it not this*
company and congregation of all these nations... that without factions
taken, and precision from the remnant, profess the name and faith
of Christ? By this church know we the Scripture; and this is the very
church; and this hath begun at Christ... and hath had him for their head,
 25 *Peter, Christ's vicar* and Saint Peter, his vicar after him, the head
 under him... and always since, the successors
 of him continually... and have had his holy faith and his blessed sacraments
 and his holy scriptures delivered, kept, and conserved therein by
 God and his Holy Spirit. And albeit some nations fall away, yet
 30 likewise as how many boughs soever fall from the tree, though they

3 *pleasant*: delightful 4, 7 *scabbed*: scabby 5 *wem*: blemish
 6 *while*: duration // *ween*: think 8 *manner*: kinds of 9 *easy*: i.e., easy to take
 9 *grievous*: very hard to take 10 *pleasant*: pleasurable 12 *showeth*: states
 12 *concludeth*: proves 14, 16, 23–24 *very church*: true church
 22 *precision*: cutoff // *remnant*: rest 24 *at*: with
 206/30—207/1 *though* . . . *left*: even if a greater number fall than are left

fall more than be left thereon... yet they make no doubt which is the very tree... although each of them were planted again in another place and grew to a greater than the stock it came first of: right so, while we see and well know that all the companies and sects of heretics and schismatics, how great soever they grow, came out of this church that I spoke of, we know evermore that the *heretics* be they that be severed, and the *church*, the stock that all they came out of. And since that only the church of Christ is the 'vine' that Christ spoke of in the Gospel... which he taketh for his Body Mystical; and that every branch severed from that tree loseth its lively nourishing: we must needs well know that all these branches of heretics fallen from the Church (the vine of Christ's Mystical Body), seem they never so fresh and green, be yet indeed but witherings, that wither and shall dry up, able to serve for nothing... but for the fire."

15 *The Sixth Chapter*

The messenger moveth that since the *church* is this known multitude of good men and bad together... of whom no man knoweth which be the one sort and which be the other: that it may be, peradventure, that the good sort of the Church be they that believe the worship of images to be idolatry, and the bad sort they that believe the contrary. Which objection the author doth answer and confute.

When I had said...

"Sir," quoth he, "ye have, in good faith, fully satisfied me concerning the sure and undoubted knowledge of the very church here in earth. But yet thinketh me that one little doubt remaineth for our principal matter."

"What is that?" quoth I.

"Marry, sir," quoth he, "it is this: that though the very faith be in 'the church'... and 'the church' cannot err therein; nor 'the church' cannot be deceived, against the faith, in any text of Scripture, nor no scripture is there that (being well understood) doth, or can do,

1 *make*: create // *which*: as to which 2 *very*: i.e., original // *although*: even if
 3 *to a greater than the stock*: i.e., to become a bigger tree than the trunk 3, 7 *of*: from
 3 *right*: just 4 *while*: when 7 *stock*: trunk // *since that*: given that
 10 *lively*: vital // *nourishing*: nourishment 13 *wither*: shrivel 16 *moveth*: submits
 18, 19, 21 *sort*: set; segment 19 *peradventure*: perhaps 20 *worship*: veneration
 22 *objection*: contention 23 *had said*: was finished speaking
 24 *in good faith*: in all honesty 25, 29 *very*: true 25 *in*: on
 26 *thinketh me*: it seems to me // *doubt*: difficulty; problem 29 *marry*: indeed
 31 *deceived*: mistaken // *against*: as concerns // *in*: about
 32 *well*: rightly // *can do*: can

- What “the church” is stand against the faith of ‘the church’;
and that also ‘the church’ is none other
- but, as ye say, and as I see it is indeed, but this whole common congregation
of Christian people good and bad... not separating themselves
- 5 for frowardness, nor being put out for their obstinate faults; yet—
since it appeareth well that, though the right faith be *in* the Church,
it is not in every man *of* the Church... and though the Church cannot
err in such things, yet some *of* the Church may—now seemeth
it to some men that it may well, peradventure, happen that the good
- 10 men well-believing and undeceived... be those that believe the
worship of images and praying to saints to be idolatry; and on the
other side, that those which believe the contrary be that part of
the Church that be the naughty men... misbelievers and foully
deceived.”
- 15 “That were a very strange work,” quoth I. “Ye would right now,” quoth
I, “that in ‘the church’ we should think that there were none other
but good men. Will ye now agree that there be therein *some* good men?”
“Yea,” quoth he, “that must needs be.”
“Well,” quoth I, “whether be they good men that do naught?”
- 20 “Nay,” quoth he.
“Do they well,” quoth I, “that do idolatry in deed... though it be against
their hearts?”
“Nay,” quoth he.
“But *all*,” quoth I, “come to church and worship images; and *all* pray
- 25 to saints. Wherefore, if that be idolatry, then the church of Christ
is *all* naught! For thus do they that be of the contrary side, for fear of
being perceived. Also, if one do well or preach well, is he a good man
if he deny it for fear?”
“Nay,” quoth he.
- 30 “But, now,” quoth I, “all that are of that sort, if they happen to adventure
somewhat and be spied... they will first perjure themselves, and after
abjure their opinion; so that if their opinion were good—yet were
themselves naught.”
“But yet,” quoth he, “if their opinions be good—then be not they so
- 35 evil in hiding their intents for fear... as they that against their

1 *stand*: go 5 *for frowardness*: out of perverseness 6 *appeareth well*: is quite evident
7 *man*: i.e., member 8 *some of*: i.e., some members of; some people in // *may*: can
10 *well-believing*: right-believing // *undeceived*: not in error 11 *worship*: veneration
13, 26, 33 *naught(y)*: bad 13–14 *foully deceived*: abominably in error 15 *were*: would be
15 *work*: business; state of affairs // *would right now*: were wanting just now
19 *whether* . . . *naught*: i.e., now I ask you this: those who do evil—are they good people?
21 *do they well*: do those act rightly 24 *worship*: venerate 26 *naught*: bad (people)
27 *perceived*: recognized as such // *do well*: is acting rightly
27 *preach well*: is preaching rightly 30 *sort*: stripe
30–31 *adventure somewhat and be spied*: take some risks and get caught
34–35 *so evil*: as bad

true opinions do and preach openly, and pursue them for saying truth.
As some that fainted and fled from martyrdom... were not so evil as they
that pursued them.”

5 “Very truth,” quoth I, “if these men’s opinions were true. But yet,
though *they* were true, yet were these *men* naught!”

“And the others worse!” quoth he.

10 “That is well said,” quoth I. “But they and the others be the whole Church.
And if yours be naught (as ye grant, and must needs grant, they be),
if the others were naught too... then were in the Church none good. But
yourself deny not but in the Church it must needs be... that there be
some good. And there can be none... but either your party or the
other. Ergo, since yours be naught: those that be good must needs be
the other. But none of those that be of the other could be good men...
if they were idolaters and pursued your party for saying the truth, and
15 compelled them to deny the truth; ergo, the other party be *not*
idolaters... nor the opinion of your party, for which they pursue
your party, be not true. And thus it appeareth, as me seemeth, that good
men of the Church be *against* you, and the naughty *with* you.”

The Seventh Chapter

20 The author somewhat doth corroborate the truth against the
heresies holding against images; and recapitulating somewhat
briefly what hath been proved, so finisheth and endeth
the proof of his part.

25 “**A**nd yet speak I nothing of all the good men... and well *known* for
good men, and holy men, and now saints in heaven... that have condemned
your party and written against you. And your party therefore
be so sore against saints again... because they see their
heresies impugned and condemned by their holy writings. Nor,
besides this, have I nothing spoken of the general councils condemning
30 your party by good and substantial authority comprobated
and corroborated by the whole body of Christendom—led thereunto, both

1, 4, etc. *true*: correct 1, 4, 16 *opinion(s)*: contention(s) 1 *do*: act
1, 3, etc. *pursue(d)*: persecute(d) 1, 14 *saying*: telling (the)
2 *fainted*: chickened out // *so evil*: as bad 5 *though*: even if
5, 8, etc. *naught(y)*: bad 9 *were in*: there would be in // *none*: no one
17 *appeareth*: is evident // *as me seemeth*: it seems to me
20 *somewhat doth corroborate*: does some defending of 23 *part*: side of the argument
27 *be so sore against saints again*: is in turn so strongly against saints
30 *comprobated*: confirmed

long before and ever since, through the secret operation of the Holy Ghost, who could never suffer (as yourself agreeth) the church of Christ to continue so wholly and so long in so damnable idolatry... as this were if it were superstition, and not a part of very faith and true devout religion. Wherefore, since I have proved you that the Church cannot err in so great a point, nor against the right faith mistake the sentence of Holy Scripture; and also that these people that believe images to be worshipped be the very church of Christ; and that of his church the good and bad both doth use it, and the good men doth it truly, and the bad falsely; and that all the good men of old hath allowed and used this way, and condemned the contrary... which hath also been declared for false heresy by the whole general council of Christendom... approved by the faith and custom of all the people, besides growing into such consent by God's Holy Spirit, that governeth his church: I never need to go further or touch your texts or arguments to the contrary. For this side thus proved good, it must needs follow that the other side is naught—except ye have against this any further thing to say. Which if ye have, never let to bring it forth. For I will for no haste leave any corner of the matter unransacked, as far as we can any doubt find therein."

"In good faith, sir," quoth he, "I am in this matter even at the hard wall, and see not how to go further."

"Now, I assure you," quoth I, "if I could myself find any further objection, I would not fail to bring it in. But in good faith, I suppose we be waded in this matter as far... as we can both find. And, I am sure, as far as ever Luther found, or any that ever I have seen that anything have said or written on that side."

The Eighth Chapter

The author entereth the answer to the objections that had been before laid by the messenger against the worship of images, and praying to saints, and going on pilgrimages. And first he answereth, in this chapter, the objections made against praying to saints.

1 *secret*: mysterious; unperceivable 2 *suffer*: allow 4 *as this were*: as this would be
 4, 8 *very*: authentic; true 5 *devout*: commendably pious 6, 17 *against*: with regard to
 7 *sentence*: meaning 8 *images to be worshipped*: in the licitness of image veneration
 8–9 *and . . . it*: and that both the good and the bad members of his church do practice it
 10 *truly*: sincerely // *falsely*: insincerely 11 *allowed*: approved of
 11 *used this way*: taken this approach 12 *false*: loathsome 13 *approved*: confirmed
 14 *growing*: coming // *consent*: consensus 15 *touch*: comment on
 17 *naught*: bad // *except*: unless 18 *let*: hesitate 19 *forth*: up
 19 *haste*: being in a hurry 20 *doubt*: questionable thing
 21, 24 *in good faith*: in all honesty 21 *even at the hard wall*: with my back against the wall
 23 *find*: think of 24 *in*: up 25 *find*: get 26 *found*: got // *any*: anyone
 29 *entereth*: commences 30 *worship*: veneration

“Now, therefore, as I say, further need I not to go. But yet will I somewhat
 touch the things which, as ye say, do move many men to take
 the worship of images for idolatry. And it so taken and their opinion
 so reputed, they reckon it a ground to think the miracles done at
 5 the images, or by invocations of saints, to be illusions of the
 devil. And first will we begin at the saints themselves; and by the way
 shall we speak of their relics, images, and pilgrimages, as there shall
 occasion rise in our matter. And for the first: in good faith, saving that
 the books and writings of holy doctors condemn these men’s
 10 heresies, the displeasure and anger whereof setteth them on a fire to
 study for the diminishing of their estimation that so stand in their
 light—else would I much wonder what these heretics mean, to
 impugn the worship of saints and forbid us to pray to them. And
 albeit I now see the cause of their malice, yet can I not much the less
 15 marvel of their madness... that show their evil will so openly... that
 they neither have reason nor good color to cloak or cover it with.
 First they put in doubt whether saints can hear us. And if they do...
 yet whether they can help us. And, finally, if they could... yet would
 they we should think it folly to desire them, because God can do it
 20 better and will do it sooner himself than they all. Now, where they
 doubt whether saints hear us, I marvel whereof that doubt ariseth...
 but if they think them dead as well in soul as body. For if their
 holy souls live... there will no wise man ween them worse, and of
 less love and charity to men that need their help, when they be now
 25 in heaven... than they had when they were here in earth. For all that
 while, were they never so good, yet the best was worse than the
 Mt 11:11 worst is now. As our Savior said by Saint
 John the Baptist... that there was no woman’s
 son greater than he, yet the least that was already in *heaven* was his
 30 better. We see that the nearer that folk draw thitherward, the
 more good mind bear they to men here. And therefore Saint
 Stephen when he saw heaven open for him... he began to pray for
 them that maliciously killed him. And think we, then, that being
 in heaven, he will not vouchsafe to pray for them that devoutly
 35 *honor* him, but hath less love and charity being there than he

1–2 *somewhat touch*: say something about 3, 13 *worship*: venerating
 4 *so reputed*: being held in such high regard // *reckon* . . . *think*: consider it a basis for thinking
 6 *at*: with // *by*: along 7 *pilgrimages*: shrines 8 *matter*: discussion
 8 *in good faith*: in all seriousness 9 *holy doctors*: (sainted) theologians
 10 *on a fire*: on fire 11 *for* . . . *so*: how to diminish the reputation of them that thus
 15, 21 *marvel (of)*: wonder (at)
 15 *their madness* . . . *will*: the madness of these men who show their ill will
 16 *reason*: a rational argument // *good color*: a plausible pretext
 17 *put in doubt*: call into question 18–19 *would they we should*: they would have us
 19 *folly*: foolishness // *desire them*: ask them to 22 *but if*: unless
 23 *no wise man*: no one with any sense // *ween*: think 23, 26 *worse*: less good
 25 *in earth*: on earth 25–26 *all that while*: in all that time
 26 *were they never so good*: no matter how good they were 27 *worst*: least good
 27 *by*: about 31 *more* . . . *to*: better disposed they are toward 34 *vouchsafe*: be so good as

had going thitherward? If the rich man that lay in hell... had,
yet, not only for fear of increase of his own punishment... by his
brothers' damnation growing of his evil example in sin, but
also of carnal love and fleshly favor towards his kin (which
5 fleshly affection being without grace or virtue may, peradventure,
stand with the state of damnation) had a cure and care of his five
brethren: were it likely that *saints*, then, being so full of *blessed*
charity in heaven, will nothing care for their brethren in Christ...
whom they see here in this wretched world? Now, if there be no
10 doubt (as I trow none there is) but their holy souls be alive,
they would we did well; and as little doubt but that they be alive
if God be their God... as he is indeed—and he not the God of dead men
Mt 12:27 but of living, as our Savior saith in the
Whether saints can help us Gospel, for all men live still, and ever
15 shall, that he hath taken to him and once
given life unto—there resteth, then, no further to see but whether
they can do us any good or no... either for that they cannot hear us... or
for that they cannot help us. And first, I marvel much if they
think they cannot help us. For while they were here, they could;
20 as appeareth in the Acts of the Apostles. And since imbecility and
lack of power is here part of our misery, and strength and plenty
of power... is one great part of wealth—they were well furthered in
that point if they were now less able to do good to them whom
they fain would were helped than they were before! For whether
25 they be able there... to do it themselves... or only by their intercession,
made unto God—this maketh no force for our matter, so that by their
means, the one way or the other, we take help by our devotion
toward them, and prayer made unto them.”
“I think,” quoth he, “they may do indeed much more than they
30 might, both by power and prayer. But it is hard, somewhat, to
think that they should hear us and see us—and especially in so many
places at once. For though they be not circumscribed in place (for
lack of bodily dimension and measuring), yet are they, and
angels also, definitively so placed where they be for the time...
35 that they be not at one time in divers places at once—as saints

1 *thitherward*: to there 3 *growing*: coming // *evil*: bad 6 *stand*: coexist
6 *cure and care of*: care and concern for 8 *nothing care for*: not at all care about
10 *trow*: believe 11 *would we did well*: would have us do well 16 *resteth*: remains
16 *no*: nothing 17, 18 *for that*: because 18 *I marvel much*: to me it's really weird
20 *imbecility*: incapacity 21 *plenty*: abundance 22 *great*: big // *wealth*: well-being
22–23 *they were well furthered in that point*: a lot they would have gained on that score
24 *fain would were helped*: very much wanted helped
26 *maketh no force for our matter*: does not affect our case
26–27 *so that by their means*: so long as by means of them 27 *take*: receive
27 *by*: as a result of 29 *may*: can (now) 30 *might*: could (before)
35 *divers*: several

be in sundry countries, and very far asunder, *called* upon at once.”

2.8

“Ye marvel,” quoth I, “and think it hard to be believed, that saints
Whether saints hear us hear us. And I... while we see that the things
 5 we pray for, we obtain... marvel much
 more how men can doubt whether the prayers be heard or not.
 When saints were in this world at liberty and might walk the
 world about, ween we that in heaven they stand tied to a post?
 But the wonder is how they may see and hear in sundry places
 10 at once. If we could no more but feel, and neither see nor hear,
 we would as well wonder—or if we could not wonder thereof... because
 we could not hear thereof, yet should we be far from any conceiving
 in our mind—that it were possible for man to see or hear
 further than he can feel. For we that prove it, and do see and hear indeed,
 15 cannot, yet, see the cause, nor in no wise cease to wonder by
 what reason and means it may be, that I should see two churches, or two
 towns, each of them two miles asunder—and both twain as far
 from me as each of them from other—and measure so great quantities
 with so small a measure... as is the little apple of mine eye. And of
 20 hearing many men’s voices... or any man’s words coming at
 once into many men’s ears... standing far asunder, hath like
 difficulty to conceive. And when all the reasons be made—either of
 beams sent out from our eyes to the things that we behold, or the
 figure of the things seen... multiplied in the air from the thing
 25 to our eye, or of the air struck with the breath of the speaker... and
 equally rolling forth in roundels to the ears of the hearers—when all
 the reasons be heard, yet shall we rather delight to search than be
 able to find anything in these matters that were able to make us
 perceive it. Now, when we may with our fleshly eye and ear, in this
 30 gross body, see and hear things far distant from us, and from sundry
 places far distant asunder: marvel we so much that blessed
 angels and holy souls, being merely spiritual substances, uncharged
 of all burdenous flesh and bones, may in doing the same...
 so far pass and exceed us and our powers natural... as the lively
 35 soul itself exceedeth our deadly body? Nor cannot believe they hear

3, 5 *marvel*: wonder 4 *while*: when 6 *doubt*: have any doubt as to
 7–8 *might walk the world about*: could travel all over the place
 8 *ween we*: do we think 9, 16, etc. *may*: can 14 *prove*: experience
 16 *reason*: logic 17 *each of them two miles asunder*: two miles away from each other
 17 *both twain*: both of the two 18 *so great quantities*: such large amounts of space
 19 *apple*: pupil 21 *asunder*: apart 22, 27 *reasons*: explanations
 22 *of*: about 26 *roundels*: circles
 27–28 *to . . . to*: in investigating these matters than be able to find anything in them that could
 29 *perceive*: understand 30 *gross*: dense; unwieldy
 31 *asunder*: i.e., from one another 32 *merely*: solely // *uncharged*: unencumbered
 34 *so*: as // *pass*: surpass // *lively*: (perpetually) living 35 *deadly*: mortal

us, though we find they help us, but if we perceived by what

*The means how saints
do hear us*

means they do it (as whether they see and
hear us coming hither to us... or our
voice coming hence to them; or whether

5 God hear and see all, and show it them; or whether they behold it
in him... as one doth in a book the thing that he readeth; or whether
God by some other way doth utter it unto them as one doth in
speaking)—except we may know the means, we will not else believe
the matter? As wise as were he that would not believe he can see... because
10 he cannot perceive by what means he may see!”

“Yet see I,” quoth he, “no cause or need why we should pray to them,
since God can as well, and will as gladly, both hear us and help us...
as any saint in heaven.”

“What need you,” quoth I, “to pray any physician to help your fever,
15 or pray and pay any surgeon to heal your sore leg, since God can
hear you and help you, both, as well as the best, and loveth you
better and can do it sooner, and may afford his plasters better
cheap... and give you more for your words than they for your
money?”

20 “But this is his pleasure,” quoth he: “that I shall be helped by the
means of them as his instruments; though indeed all this he
doth himself, since he giveth the nature to the things that they
do it with.”

“So hath it,” quoth I, “pleased God in like wise... that we shall ask
25 help of his holy saints, and pray for help to them. Nor that is
not a making of them equal unto God himself, though they do
it by his will and power... or he at their intercession. Though God
will (as reason is) be chief and have no match, yet forbiddeth he

Jn 5:22; Mt 19:28 not one man to pray for help of another.
30 And though the Father hath given all the
judgment to his Son, yet doth he delight to have his holy saints
partners of that honor... and at the Day of Judgment to have
them sit with him. Was Elisha made equal to God because the

2 Kgs 4:8–37; Mt 10:1 widow prayed him to revive her dead
35 son? Were the apostles equal to Christ

1 *but if we perceived*: unless we could tell 4 *hence*: from here 5 *show it*: tell it to
7 *utter*: communicate 8 *except*: unless 8, 10, 17 *may*: can 9 *matter*: thing
9 *as wise as were he*: i.e., that's as sensible as would be he 14, 15 *pray*: ask
14 *help*: cure 15 *surgeon*: doctor 16, 20 *help(ed)*: heal(ed)
17 *afford his plasters*: supply his salves 17–18 *better cheap*: at a lower cost
28 *as reason is*: as stands to reason 29 *pray . . . another*: ask another for help
32 *partners of*: (be) sharers in 34 *prayed*: begged

because that they were prayed unto for help after his death—and in his
Acts 5:12–16; Mk 9:14–29 life also? And many things did they at
 folks' prayer. And sometimes they were
 prayed unto and assayed it, also... and yet could not do it, but the
 5 parties were fain to go from them to their Master therefor. And
 yet was he content that they were prayed unto. And for proof
 thereof, suffered them at men's devout instance and prayer... to do
 many miracles. And sometimes were they prayed to be intercessors
 to their Master. As where they came to Christ and said, 'Dimitte
 10 *Mt 15:23* illam, quia clamat post nos' ('Dispatch this
 woman, for she crieth upon us'). And think
 you, then, that he being content and giving men occasion to pray
 to them while they were with him in earth, he will be angry if
 we do them as much worship when they be with him in heaven?
 15 Nay, but I think, on the other side, since his pleasure is to have his
 saints had in honor, and prayed unto, that they may be for us
 intercessors to his high Majesty... whereunto ere we presume to
 approach, it becometh us, and well behooveth us, to make friends of
 such as he hath in favor: he will disdain once to look on us if
 20 we be so presumptuous and malapert fellows... that upon boldness of
 familiarity with himself, we disdain to make our intercessors
 his especially beloved friends. And whereas Saint Paul exhorteth us
 each to pray for other... and we be glad to think it well done to
 pray every poor man to pray for us... should we think it evil done
 25 to pray holy saints in heaven to the same?"
 "Why," quoth he, "by that reason I might pray not only to saints,
 but also to every *other* dead man!"
 "So may ye," quoth I, "with good reason, if ye see none other likelihood
 but that he died a good man. And so find we, as I remember, in the
 30 *Dialogues* of Saint Gregory, that one had help by prayer made unto
 a holy man late deceased which was himself yet in purgatory.
 So liked it our Lord... to let the world know that he was in his
 special favor... though he were yet in pain of his purgation.
Note For our Lord loved him nevertheless...
 35 though he left not for him the order of

1, 4, etc. *prayed*: petitioned; appealed 3, 7 *prayer*: beseeching
 4 *assayed it*: tried to do what was asked of them 5 *were fain*: had // *therefor*: for it
 6 *was he content*: it was all right with him 7 *suffered*: allowed // *instance*: urging
 10–11 *dispatch this woman*: get this woman taken care of
 11 *crieth upon us*: keeps calling out after us 12 *content*: all right with this 13 *in*: on
 14 *worship*: honor 16 *had*: held 19 *hath*: holds // *once*: ever 20 *so*: such
 20 *malapert fellows*: impudent boors
 21–22 *make . . . friends*: make his especially beloved friends our intercessors
 23 *each to pray for other*: to pray for one another // *well done*: a good thing to do
 24 *evil done*: a bad thing to do 26 *reason*: reasoning 28 *likelihood*: indication
 30 *one had*: someone received 31 *late*: recently // *which*: who
 32 *so liked it*: it thus pleased 35 *left not*: did not dispense with

his merciful justice. And therefore let no man take his trouble or

2.8

How sickness is a token sickness as a token of God's hatred... but
of God's hatred if he feel himself grudge and be
 impatient and evil-content with it. For

5 then is it a token of wrath and vengeance... and is to the sufferer as
 fruitless as painful. And in effect nothing else but the beginning
 of his hell, even here. But, on the other side, if he take it patiently, it
 purgeth; if gladly, it greatly meriteth; and glad may he be that is with
 meekness... glad of God's punishment. Saint Augustine (as is written
 10 by Possidius), lying sore sick himself of an access, cured another
 with his prayer... and yet he died of his sickness himself. Wherein
 there was to him more mercy and favor showed than if himself
 had been cured too; for now, instead of health, he had heaven, where
 he should nevermore be sick again."

15 "Marry," quoth he, "but I have ever heard it said that we should not
 pray to any dead man but with this condition: 'If thou be a saint,
 then pray for me.'"

"Why so," quoth I, "more than praying to a quick man, where I am
 not bound to say, 'If thou be a good man, pray for me'? But since I may
 20 reasonably think *him* good while I know him not the contrary...
 so may I think him that is dead."

"Why," quoth he, "whereof serveth canonizing, then? If this be true, I
 am never advised to be canonized while I live!"

25 "Ye do the better," quoth I—"nor seven years after, neither. For it would
 be but a business for you."

"But why be they canonized, then?" quoth he.

"Those," quoth I, "that be not canonized, ye may, for the more part,
 both pray *for* them and pray *to* them. As ye may for and to them that be

30 *Pray to those that be canonized.* yet alive. But one that *is* canonized—ye
 may pray to him to pray for *you*, but ye
 may not pray for *him*. For... as I remember,

Saint Augustine... saith that he that prayeth for a martyr doth the
 martyr injury. And of every man ye may trust well and be seldom
 certain; but of the canonized ye may reckon you sure."

2, 5 *token*: sign; indication 2–3 *but if*: unless 3 *grudge*: be disgruntled

4 *evil-content*: ill-content 7 *even*: right // *side*: hand

9–11: See Saint Possidius, *Life of Saint Augustine*, 29. 10 *access*: ague; intermittent fever

10 *sore*: terribly // *another*: someone else 11 *sickness*: illness 15 *marry*: sure; right

18 *quick*: living 19 *bound*: obliged 20, 23 *while*: as long as

22 *whereof serveth*: of what use is

22–23 *I am never advised to be*: I'll never think of being

24 *ye do the better*: i.e., you'd better not 25 *business*: nuisance

27 *for the more part*: in the majority of cases

32–33 *doth the martyr injury*: is insulting the martyr 33, 34 *may*: can

33 *trust well*: hope for the best 34 *reckon you*: consider yourself

The Ninth Chapter

2.9

The messenger yet again objecteth against relics; and putteth great doubt in canonizing. Whereunto the author maketh answer.

- 5 **“H**ow can I,” quoth he, “be sure thereof? May the taking up of a
man’s bones... and setting his carcass in a gay shrine... and then
kissing his bare scalp... make a man a saint? And yet are there
some unenshrined—for no man wotteth where they lie. And some that
10 men doubt whether ever they had any body at all or not. But, marry,
to recompense that with, there be some again that have two bodies,
to lend one to some good fellow that lacketh. For as I said before,
some one body lieth whole in two places far asunder... or else the
monks of the one be beguiled. For both the places plainly affirm
that it lieth there; and at either place they show the shrine; and in
15 the shrine they show a body... which they say is *the* body, and boldly
abide thereby, that it is it, alleging old writing, and miracles also, for
the proof. Now must we confess that either the miracles at the
one place be false, or done by the devil, or else that the same saint
had two bodies indeed. And then were that, in my mind, as
20 great a miracle as the greatest of them all. And therefore is it likely
somewhere a bone worshipped for a relic of some holy saint... that
 Mt 23:29–31 was, peradventure, a bone, as Chaucer
 saith, of some holy Jew’s sheep. Our
Savior also seemeth in the Gospel to blame and reprove the
25 Pharisees... for making fresh the sepulchres of holy prophets... and
making shrines of their graves. Whereby it appeareth that he would
not have the dead bodies worshipped and set in gay golden shrines.
And yet besides this, ye shall find many more worshipped, I ween,
than enshrined; many enshrined that ye find not canonized, though
30 ye seek up all the registries in Rome. And when they be enshrined and
canonized too, yet since the Church in the canonization useth a
means that may beguile them—for they stand to the record of men
both of their lives and of their miracles... which men may,
peradventure, lie—why may it not, then, be that the Church be

3 *putteth*: expresses // *in*: about 6, 27 *gay*: showy 7 *bare*: bald
8 *wotteth*: knows 9 *ever . . . not*: i.e., they ever even existed // *marry*: indeed
11 *lacketh*: doesn’t have one 12 *asunder*: apart from each other
13 *the one*: one of the places 14 *either*: each 16 *abide*: stand // *alleging*: citing
17–18 *the one place*: i.e., the one place or the other
20–23: See the prologue to the Pardoner’s Tale. 21, 27, 28 *worshipped*: venerated
25 *making fresh*: refurbishing 26 *appeareth*: is made evident 28 *ween*: think
29 *though*: even if 30 *seek up*: i.e., try to look them up in // *registries*: record books
32 *stand to*: go by // *record*: witness 33 *of*: as to

deceived in the canonization? And that they may, for lack of true knowledge, believing untrue men, canonize for saints

A saying of Saint Augustine such folk, sometimes, as be full far therefrom?
I dare not say so much as saith

5 Saint Augustine. For he letteth not to say plainly that many bodies be worshipped for saints here in earth... whose souls be buried in hell!"

"Ye have," quoth I, "said many things very stoutly. But yet let us first consider whereunto altogether weigheth. For it stretcheth no further—if it were all true—but that we *might* be deceived in
10 *some* that we should take for saints; and it neither proveth that there be *no* saints (which I wot well no wise man will say) nor that if any be, they should not be worshipped nor prayed unto. Except ye would say that if we might by possibility mistake some, therefore we should worship none. And then should you, by that
15 reason, never take any physician... since ye might happen upon a dog leech, for lack of knowledge of the cunning. For in records of men ye might be as well deceived there as here. Now suppose, then, first... that of saints and of relics, some were true and some were false. Yet the worship that ye would we should do
20 to them *all*... should be because (that standing, as they do, unknown and undiscerned) ye reckoned them all true, and all for God's well-beloved servants. For if ye knew of them which were true and which false, then would ye worship the true... and tread the false underfoot."

25 "That is no doubt," quoth he.

"Then," quoth I, "if we were beguiled in some, I see no great peril grow toward us thereby. For if there came a great many of the King's friends into your country, and ye for his sake made them all great cheer; if there came among them, unawares to you, some
30 spies that were his mortal enemies—wearing his badge... and seeming to you, and so reported, as his familiar friends—whether would he blame you for the good cheer ye made his enemies... or thank you for the good cheer ye made his friends?"

"He would, I think," quoth he, "thank me for the good treating of
35 them both, since both seemed good to me and both had of me their cheer but for they seemed his friends, and for his sake."

1 *deceived*: mistaken 2 *untrue*: untruthful 3 *full*: very

5 *letteth not*: does not forbear // *plainly*: straight-out 6, 12 *worshipped*: venerated

6 *for*: as // *in earth*: on earth

8 *whereunto* . . . *weigheth*: what all of them put together amount to

9, 13, 17 *might*: could 9 *deceived in*: wrong about 11 *wot*: know

11 *no wise man*: no one with any sense 13 *except*: unless 14, 23 *worship*: venerate

15 *reason*: reasoning // *take*: have recourse to 16 *dog leech*: quack

16 *the cunning*: i.e., who the skilled doctors are 16, 26 *in*: with regard to

16 *records*: testimonies 17 *be as well deceived*: go as far wrong 19 *worship*: reverence

19 *would we should*: would have us 27 *grow*: come 28 *country*: neck of the woods

28–29 *made* . . . *cheer*: gave them a very warm reception; showed them great hospitality

30 *his mortal enemies*: mortal enemies of his 31 *as* . . . *friends*: to be close friends of his

32, 33 *good cheer ye made*: warm reception you gave 35 *had of*: received from

36 *cheer*: hospitality // *but for*: only because

“Ye say,” quoth I, “good reason. But I put case now that ye had an inkling—or else a plain warning—that some of them were his enemies... that seemed his best friends; but which they were, no man can tell you. What would you now do? Make them all cheer, and
5 honorably treat them all? Or else, showing them that ye hear say plainly that some of them be naught, therefore bid them be walking all with sorrow?”

“Nay,” quoth he, “no doubt were it but that I should look for thank if I cherished his enemies for his friends... rather than despitefully
10 to handle his friends for his enemies.”

“Very well,” quoth I. “And this were true although ye had warning that some of them *were* his *enemies*. But what thank would ye then deserve if ye should shake off both... where ye had no such warning at all, but would say that ye durst not make any of them cheer...
15 because ye *thought* that peradventure it *might* be that some were worse than they were taken for? For in such case be you here! Ye *know* not that any man worshipped for a saint is none, but only ye *think* that ye be not *sure* whether all be or some not.”

“Yes,” quoth he, “Saint *Augustine*, as I told you, giveth me warning
20 that many be none!”

“Ye be,” quoth I, “deceived therein, as I shall tell you after. But in the meanwhile, mark me well this, and let it stand for a sure ground: that all your objection, if it were true, serveth not against worshipping of saints or saints’ relics, but against the worshipping
25 of such as were no saints... nor no saints’ relics—and that after it were proved. And now, this thing that is in question being first confessed and agreed between us for a thing nothing able to hurt our principal matter, let us go further therein, and search whether we find any such cause of doubt in any... or have
30 good cause to reckon ourselves sure that all be saints indeed... whom the church of Christ hath in honor and veneration for saints. First, as for the authority that ye allege of Saint Augustine, I have heard it often alleged in like wise for the same purpose. But surely they that so take Saint Augustine be foully deceived. I durst
35 be bold to say that Saint Augustine did never write such words, but it is a word run in many men’s mouths... begun by mistaking... and believed without examination. For surely the

1 *ye say* . . . *good reason*: what you say . . . makes good sense 2 *plain*: explicit
4, 14 *make*: give // *cheer*: hospitality 5 *honorably treat them all*: treat them all respectfully
5 *showing*: telling 5–6 *ye hear say plainly*: you’ve heard it said straight-out
6 *naught*: no good 6–7 *bid* . . . *sorrow*: tell them all to get out of there or they’ll be sorry
8 *look for thank*: expect to be given credit 9, 10, 17 *for*: as
9 *despitefully*: contemptuously 10 *handle*: treat 11 *were*: would be
11 *although*: even if 12 *thank*: credit 16 *worse*: less good
17 *worshipped*: venerated 21 *deceived*: mistaken 24 *worshipping*: venerating
27 *nothing*: not at all 28 *matter*: case 31 *hath*: holds 32 *authority*: quote
32 *allege of*: ascribe to 33 *alleged*: cited // *wise*: manner
34 *foully deceived*: badly mistaken 34–35 *durst be bold*: dare venture
36 *word*: statement 37 *mistaking*: misunderstanding

words whereof they took the occasion, which he writeth in the
 First Book *de Civitate Dei*... and repeateth again in his book of that
 cure and care that men should have for them that be dead—those
 words, I say, go far wide from all such purpose. For there he
 5 speaketh only of costly burying, and making of sumptuous sepulchres,
 and doing the dead corpses of rich men worldly worship
 in the carrying forth and interring of the body; as it plainly and
 evidently appeareth by the matter that he writeth of.

“And surely, since our Lord never would among his Chosen People
 10 give the glory of his name to another, nor never so suffer idolatry
 among the Jews... but that either he forthwith punished and
 purged it... or so severed the flock of idolaters that it might well
 appear where his faithful flock remained (as it did when that,
 Samaria falling to idolatry, the right synagogue of the Jews remained
 15 in Jerusalem and in Judaea), this were full unlikely: that
 this Holy Spirit being sent unto his church here to remain and
 instruct it... and himself also therewith being and giving his
 special assistance unto the end of the world... should either suffer
 his church to be unknown or in such wise to err and be deceived...
 20 as to give honor to the devil instead of himself, or to his
 enemies instead of his friends. And therefore when the Church by
 diligent search... findeth the life of a man holy; and that thereto
 it is well witnessed that God by his miracles testifieth the man’s
 blessedness and the favor in which he standeth with him in heaven,
 25 declaring by the boot and profit which he doth to many men
 for his sake... that he will have him honored and had for hallowed in
 his church here in earth; and this thing (either by them that hath
 the cure of his church, after such diligence used, being by the
 canonization declared unto the people... or, peradventure, without
 30 canonization growing thereof, by the holiness well known... and
 miracles many seen) so sure a common persuasion through the whole
 people of Christendom that the person is accepted and reputed for
 an undoubted saint... be the bones translated or not, his body found
 or not: albeit, by possibility of nature, it might be that men
 35 were in such things deceived, as ye have said—yet we boldly may,
 and well we ought, in this case to trust that the grace and aid of

1–2 *in . . . Dei*: i.e., in *City of God*, Book I 2 *of*: about 3 *cure*: concern
 2–3: *De cura gerenda pro mortuis* (*On Care to Be Had for the Dead*).
 4 *from all such purpose*: of any such mark 6 *worship*: honor
 7–8 *as it plainly and evidently appeareth*: as is clearly and conclusively shown
 10 *suffer*: tolerate; put up with 11 *forthwith*: right away 15 *were*: would be
 15 *full*: highly 19 *be deceived*: go wrong 22 *search*: investigation
 23 *testifieth*: testifies to 25 *declaring*: showing
 25 *boot and profit*: relieving and benefiting
 26 *had for hallowed*: held as sainted 27 *in*: on 28 *cure*: charge
 28 *after such diligence used*: after the exercise of such diligence
 30 *growing thereof*: coming of it
 31 *so sure a common persuasion*: (becomes) such a firm and universal conviction
 33 *translated*: transported; relocated 35 *in*: about // *deceived*: mistaken

God and his Holy Spirit assisting his church hath governed the judgment of his ministers and inclined the minds of his people to such consent. And that he hath not suffered them to err in a thing so nearly touching *his honor and worship*... either truly
 5 to be applied, where his will were it should—upon himself, or his holy saints for his sake—or to be withdrawn thence, and, by erroneous mistaking of truth... necessary, meet, and convenient to be perceived of the Church for God's honor (which kind of truth God sent the Holy Ghost to teach his church), the same worship to be bestowed
 10 upon them whom he would in no wise should have it... but whom he reserveth for eternal shame. For the body enshrined or not maketh no doubt of the saint. No man doubteth of our Lady, no man doubteth of Saint John the Evangelist, though their bodies be not found. And yet if they were, then were there, I think, no good
 15 Christian man but he would be contented they were enshrined and had in honor.

“For whereas ye would take the reverence from all relics because that some be doubtful... in that some saint's head is, as ye say, and of some the whole body, showed at two sundry places—it may fortune, for
 20 all this, that of one head there may be sundry parts... and either part, in the common speech of people, called ‘the head.’ For at Amiens
 “*Saint John's head*” is ‘Saint John's head’ (the Baptist), as men call it in talking—even they that have been there and seen it. But then if they be asked further question
 25 thereof, they tell that the nether jaw lacketh. This may well happen also, and so doth it hap indeed, by some saint of whom in two diverse countries be diverse shrines; and there be reckoned and reported that in either of them be laid the whole body... and the pilgrims at neither place do look into the coffin of that shrine to see
 30 whether it be all or part. In some place, peradventure, lay the body, and by some occasion the body translated thence, of old... and yet the shrine showed still with some of the relics remaining therein. It may well hap also that there were two good, holy men in diverse countries, both of one name. And percase in some place may there

3 *consent*: a consensus 4 *nearly touching*: vitally affecting // *truly*: correctly
 4, 9 *worship*: veneration 5 *were it should*: would have it be 6 *thence*: from there
 7 *meet*: fitting // *convenient*: proper 8 *of the*: by the 11 *body*: i.e., body's being
 12 *maketh no doubt of the saint*: does not bring the saint into question
 12, 13 *doubteth of*: has any doubt about
 15 *contented they were*: fine with their being 16 *had*: held 17 *take*: take away
 18 *doubtful*: dubious 19 *showed at*: on display in 19, 20 *sundry*: different
 19 *fortune*: happen 20, 28 *either*: each 25 *nether jaw lacketh*: lower jaw is missing
 26 *by*: with 27, 33 *diverse*: different
 31 *translated thence*: (was) removed from there // *of old*: long ago
 34 *both of one name*: i.e., who both had the same name // *percase*: perchance

be some very relics unknown and misnamed. For in old time,
 when men at the incursion of infidels did hide holy saints' relics—
 at the finding again, the names haply decayed, some relics
 might rest unknown; or some, peradventure, lost or mistaken.
 5 As myself saw at the Abbey of Barking (beside London)—to my
 remembrance, about thirty years past—in the setting an old image
 in a new tabernacle. The back of the image, being all painted
 over and of long time before inlaid with beaten gold, happened to
 crease in one place, and out there fell a pretty little door... at which
 10 fell out also many relics that had lain, unknown, in that image,
 God wot how long. And as long had been likely to lie again...
 if God by that chance had not brought them to light. The bishop
 of London came then thither, to see there were no deceit therein. And
 I, among others, was present there while he looked thereon and
 15 examined the matter. And in good faith, it was to me a marvel to
 behold the manner of it. I have forgotten much thereof, but I
 remember a little piece of wood there was, rudely shaped in cross,
 with thread wrapped about it. Writing had it none; and what it was
 we could not tell; but it seemed as new-cut as if it had been done
 20 within one day before. And divers relics had old writings on
 them, and some had none; but among others were there certain
 small kerchiefs which were named there our Lady's... and of her
 own working. Coarse were they not... nor they were not large...
 but served, as it seemed, to cast in a plain and simple manner upon her
 25 head. But surely they were as clean seams, to my seeming, as ever I
 saw in my life... and were, therewith, as white, for all the long lying,
 as if they had been washed and laid up within one hour. And
 how long that image had stood in that old tabernacle, that
 could no man tell; but there had in all the church none, as they
 30 thought, stood longer untouched. And they guessed that four or five hundred
 years ago... that image was hidden when the abbey was burned by
 infidels... and those relics hidden therein; and after, the image
 found and set up—many years after, when they were gone that had
 hidden it. And so the relics remained, unknown, therein till now
 35 that God gave that chance that opened it. And thus, as I say, may
 it peradventure happen... some names to be forgotten, or haply to be

1 *very relics unknown and misnamed*: authentic relics that are unidentified or misidentified
 1 *old time*: times of old 3, 36 *haply*: perhaps worn off 3 *decayed*: worn off
 4 *rest unknown*: remain there unidentified // *mistaken*: wrongly identified
 5 *beside*: near 5–6 *to my remembrance*: as I recall 6 *past*: ago
 6 *in the setting an old image*: i.e., when an old statue was being placed
 7, 10, etc. *image*: statue 9 *crease*: crack // *pretty*: cleverly made
 10, 34 *unknown*: unbeknownst 11 *wot*: knows 12, 35 *chance*: happenstance
 15 *in good faith*: really and truly 17 *rudely shaped in*: roughly in the shape of a
 18, 20 *writing(s)*: inscription(s) 20 *divers*: several
 22 *named there*: identified there as 23 *working*: making 24 *cast*: (be) put
 25 *clean seams*: fine pieces of needlework // *to my seeming*: in my judgment
 32, 33 *after*: later 36 *haply*: perhaps

mistaken... and yet God well content that the relics be had in
 reverence, since he specially favoereth their *persons*... and needeth
 nothing their names to know them by. As he shall once so fully
 restore again many a glorious body... that they shall not lose the
 5 least hair of their head that may serve to their beauty... of whom
 the names, haply, the whole world hath long ago forgotten. And the
 name is not so very requisite but that we may mistake it
 without peril... so that we nevertheless have the relics of holy
 men in reverence. But as for pigs' bones for holy relics, or
 10 damned wretches to be worshipped for saints: albeit that if it
 happened, yet it nothing hurt the souls of them that mistake
 it... no more than if we worship a host in the Mass which percase
 the negligence or malice of some lewd priest hath left unconsecrated—
 yet is it never to be thought, though such a thing might
 15 happen suddenly, that ever God will suffer such a thing to last
 and endure in his Church.

“For albeit that his Church useth one means that might, as ye say,
 beguile them—which is the record and witness of men—yet hath
 it in such things, as Saint Thomas and other holy doctors write,
 20 another means besides... which never can beguile them. And that is
 the assistance of God and the Holy Ghost. For else might the Church
 be most easily beguiled in the receiving of the very Scripture—
 wherein they take outwardly but the testimonies of men, from mouth
 to mouth and hand to hand, without other examination. But that
 25 secret means that inclineth their credulity to consent in the believing
 all in one point, which is the secret instinct of God—this is the
 sure means that never can in any necessary point fail here in
 Christ's church. For if it might—all were quite at large. And that
 point once taken away—Scripture and all walketh with it. And in this
 30 mind, as it seemeth, was very sure and fastly confirmed the holy
1 Cor 1:10 apostle Saint Paul, which in his
 First Epistle to the Corinthians writeth
 in this wise: ‘Obsecro vos, fratres, per nomen Domini nostri Iesu
 Christi, ut idipsum dicatis omnes, et non sint in vobis schismata, sed
 35 sitis integrum corpus, eadem mente et eadem sententia’; ‘I beseech you,
 my brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you say all

1 *mistaken*: gotten wrong 3 *nothing*: not at all // *once*: one day 6 *haply*: perhaps
 7, 11–12 *mistake it*: get it wrong 8 *so that*: so long as 10 *worshipped for*: venerated as
 11 *nothing hurt*: would not at all harm 12 *worship*: venerate // *percase*: by some chance
 13 *lewd*: bad 14 *though*: even if 14, 17, etc. *might*: could
 15 *suddenly*: at some moment // *suffer*: allow 17, 28 *might*: could
 18 *record*: testimony 19 *holy doctors*: theologians
 21 *assistance*: active presence 22 *beguiled*: misled // *very*: authentic; bona fide
 25, 26 *secret*: unperceivable 25 *credulity*: credence // *consent*: a consensus
 25–26 *the believing all in one point*: everyone's believing the same thing
 26 *instinct*: prompting 27 *necessary*: essential
 28 *all were quite*: everything would be completely // *at large*: unsettled; up in the air
 29 *Scripture and all walketh with it*: there goes with it Scripture and all
 30 *sure and fastly*: good and steadfastly 31 *which*: who
 223/36—224/1 *say all one thing*: all say the same thing

one thing, and let there be no schisms’—or ‘several sects’—

‘among you, but be ye one whole, entire body, of one mind and one

Gal 1:8

sentence.’ Truth is it that he *taught* them
and others the *right* way—so far forth that

5 he boldly forbade an angel of heaven to be believed... if any would
come and preach another gospel. But yet in this place I note much
that he called upon them only for *agreement*, bidding them only
to agree all upon ‘one thing,’ and maketh no mention of agreement
upon ‘the best,’ and upon ‘the truth,’ but only to avoid all discord and
10 division, and by common consent exhorteth them to agree all in one;

The agreement upon “one thing” meaning thereby, as me thinketh, that if
the church of Christ, intending well, do

all agree upon any one thing concerning God’s honor or man’s
soul, it cannot be but that thing must needs be true. For God’s

15 Holy Spirit, that animateth his church and giveth it life, will
never suffer it all consent and agree together upon any damnable
error. And therefore would he never suffer the Church so fully to
consent in the worship of saints and reverence of relics... if it
were a thing such as some men would have it seem; that is to wit,
20 a thing damnable, false, and feigned.

“Wherein as much as ye lay to diminish their credence... that it
might seem, as ye say well enough, that some of them were feigned,
yet wist I never proved that any such so taken, and by the Church
approved, was ever yet hitherto reprov’d... either here in Christ’s
25 church or among the Jews in their synagogue before Christ’s days;
and yet saints they had in honor, as patriarchs and prophets, and
their bodies and relics in reverence. Now, if of such as seemed
good men we never had found any for hypocrites—albeit it
might be that some were such, yet would we not, I think, suppose
30 that there were any so in deed... if we never had known it tried and
proved so. And why shall we, then, of saints or relics have doubt
and mistrust? Of whom being received by the Church for true...
we never, that I could wit, since God wrought the world tried and
proved any of both sorts untrue—neither, as I say, in the church of
35 Christ nor synagogue of the Jews; which two sorts only were
God’s chosen people. And yet had as well the Jews as we both

1 *several*: separate 3 *sentence*: judgment 6 *place*: text; passage

6 *note much*: am struck by the fact 8 *one*: the same

10 *common consent*: unanimous accord // *agree all in one*: all agree on the same thing

11 *as me thinketh*: as it seems to me 12 *intending*: meaning 16 *suffer*: let

16 *consent*: be in accord 18 *consent in*: give its assent to

18 *worship*: venerating // *reverence*: reverencing 20 *false*: fallacious

20 *feigned*: involving deceit 22 *well*: rightly // *feigned*: sham; fake

23 *wist I never*: I never knew it to be // *such so taken*: i.e., of those taken to be saints

24 *reprov’d*: disproved 26 *as*: such as 30 *deed*: fact; actuality

30 *it tried*: this to be put to a test 32 *received*: accepted

33 *could wit*: know of; have been able to ascertain // *wrought*: created

33–34 *tried* . . . *untrue*: examined any of either group and proved them inauthentic

35 *sorts*: sets (of people) // *only*: alone

saints, as I said, in honor and their relics in great reverence,
as appeareth as well by the Gospel as by the Old Testament.

Jacob, that holy patriarch, commanded his children in his deathbed

Gn 49:29; 50:5–14 to carry his body to the burial out of
5 *2 Kgs 13:21* that country of Egypt; and so they did.

And Joseph also required his brethren
that when they should after depart out of Egypt, they should carry
his bones with them. The dead bones of the prophet Elisha, as the
Bible mentioneth, raised a dead body to life. And think you then
10 that those bones were not there honored for holy relics?

“Nor our Savior Christ blameth not the Jews in the Gospel for
that they garnished the sepulchres of the old prophets—with whose
honor he was well content!— but for that they condemned
themselves in following the condition of them that *slew* them, intending
15 to kill Christ as their forefathers did his holy prophets.

For as for the dead bodies of the holy prophets, that God would have
them had in honor and reverence he declared well by that he raised
a dead body by the touch of the dead bones of the prophet Elisha, as
I said to you before.

20 “Did not our Lord, in the finding of that holy relic his Holy Cross,
declare by miracle and make his own cross known from the crosses
of the two thieves by the raising of a dead man with the touch thereof?
Wherein is to be noted, by the way, that there was between his and theirs
no notable difference, but they nailed, as he was; or else had it been no
25 doubt upon the first sight which of them was his. Was not the body
of Saint Stephen found out by miracle, and the head of Saint John
the Baptist also? Yes, of surety, and many another holy martyr more...
that else had lain unknown. Whereby well appeared that God would
have not their souls only, but also their bodies—and, in a manner, the
30 very soles of their shoes—set by for their sakes, and themselves for
his. Was not the woman healed by the touch of our Lord’s garments?

Lk 8:44–46; Mk 6:56 Hath there not, both among the Jews and
Christian people also, many men marvelously

35 been helped by the only touch of holy saints’ vestures? And doubt
we then whether God would we should worship them, when he so well
and above nature rewardeth us for the worship we do them?”

3 *commanded his children in his deathbed*: on his deathbed commanded his children
6 *required his brethren*: directed his relatives 7 *after*: later 12 *garnished*: adorned
14 *following the condition of them that*: adopting the mentality of those who
17 *declared well*: made quite clear 21 *declare*: manifest 24 *notable*: noticeable
24 *they nailed*: i.e., those two men were nailed // *had it been*: there would have been
26 *found out*: discovered 30 *set by*: prized 31, 34 *touch*: touching
34 *by the only touch*: just by the touching // *vestures*: clothes
35 *would we should*: would have us // *worship*: venerate 36 *worship*: reverence

The Tenth Chapter

2.10

The messenger objecteth many things against pilgrimages
and relics and worshipping of saints... because of
much superstitious manner used therein, and unlawful petitions
5 asked of them, and harm growing thereupon.

“Sir,” quoth he, “ye have in my mind very well touched the matter
concerning that it is not in vain to pray to saints, nor to worship
them and to have their relics in some reverence. But, sir, all this is
far from the great sore. For though saints may hear us, and help
10 us, too, and are glad and willing so to do, and God also contented
that they, and their relics and images also, be had in honor—yet
can neither he nor they be content with the *manner* of the worship.
First, taking away his own worship in that we do them the same
worship, in every point, that we do to God. And secondly, taking
15 their worship from *them* then, also, in that we do to their images
the same that we do to themselves—taking their images *for* themselves—
and so make not themselves only, but also their images, fellows
and matches to God; wherewith, as I have said before, neither God
nor good saint can, nor good man ought to be, content and
20 pleased.”

“In faith,” quoth I, “therein if it so be... ye say very true.”

“What say we then,” quoth he, “of the harm that goeth by going of
pilgrimages—roiling about in idleness, with the riot, reveling,
and ribaldry, gluttony, wantonness, waste, and lechery? Trow ye
25 that God and his holy saints had not liefer they sit still at home
than thus to come seek them, with such worshipful service?”

“Yes, surely,” quoth I.

“What say we then,” quoth he, “to that I spoke not of yet... in which we
do them little worship, while we set every saint to his office and
30 assign him a craft such as pleaseth us? Saint Eligius we make a
horse leech... and must let our horse rather run unshod and mar his
hooves than to shoe him on his day—which we must, for that point,
more religiously keep high and holy than Easter Day! And because

2 *objecteth many things*: makes many objections 3 *worshipping*: venerating
4 *much superstitious manner used*: a lot of superstitious behavior exhibited
4 *unlawful*: illicit 5 *growing thereupon*: ensuing therefrom 6 *mind*: opinion
6 *touched*: covered 7 *in vain*: irreverent; blasphemous // *worship*: venerate
8 *have*: hold 9 *from the great sore*: from being the main sore point
9 *though*: even if // *may*: can 10 *God also contented*: it is also all right with God
12 *content*: happy 13, 15 *worship*: veneration 14, 29 *worship*: reverence
14 *point*: respect 17 *fellows*: peers 18 *matches*: equals
19 *content*: all right; acquiescent 22 *goeth by going of*: comes of the going on
23 *roiling*: (the) gadding // *riot*: carousing 24 *ribaldry*: debauchery
24 *waste*: vandalism // *trow ye*: do you believe 25 *had not liefer*: would not rather
25 *sit still at*: always stay 26 *seek*: approach // *worshipful service*: pious rituals
28 *that*: that which 29 *while*: when // *office*: function 30 *craft*: profession
31 *leech*: doctor // *mar*: injure 32 *day*: feast day

one smith is too few at a forge, we set Saint Hippolytus to help him.
 And on Saint Stephen's Day we must let all our horses' blood with a
 knife... because Saint Stephen was killed with stones. Saint Apollonia
 we make a tooth-drawer, and may speak to her of nothing but of
 5 sore teeth. Saint Zita women set to seek their keys. Saint Roch
 we set to see to the great sickness, because he had a sore. And with him
 they join Saint Sebastian... because he was martyred with arrows.
 Some serve for the eye only. And some for a sore breast. Saint Germanus
 only for children. And yet will he not once look at them
 10 but if the mothers bring with them a white loaf and a pot of good
 ale. And yet is he wiser than Saint Wilgefortis; for she, good soul, is,
 Why women seek upon as they say, served and content with oats.
 Saint Unencumber Whereof I cannot perceive the reason...
 but if it be because she should provide a
 15 horse for an evil husband to ride to the devil upon. For that is
 the thing that she is so sought for, as they say. Insomuch that women
 hath therefore changed her name, and instead of 'Saint Wilgefortis'
 call her 'Saint Unencumber'—because they reckon that for a peck of oats
 she will not fail to unencumber them of their husbands. Long
 20 work were it to rehearse you the divers manners of many pretty
 pilgrimages; but one or two will I tell you. The one, Pontano
 speaketh of in his *Dialogues*: how Saint Martin is worshipped. I have
 forgotten the town, but the manner I cannot forget, it is so strange. His
 image is, on his day, borne in procession about all the streets. And if
 25 it be a fair day, then use they as he cometh by... to cast rose water and
 all things of pleasant savor upon his image. But and it happen to
 rain—out pour they piss-pots upon his head, at every door and
 every window. Is not this a sweet service and a worshipful worship?
 And this, as I say, Pontano writeth, and telleth where it is. But
 30 this that I shall now tell you, I dare as boldly make you sure of
 as if I had seen it myself. At St. Valery's, here in Picardy,
 there is a fair abbey, where Saint Valery was monk. And upon a
 furlong off, or two... up in a wood... is there a chapel... in which
 the saint is especially sought unto for the stone—not only in those
 35 parts, but also out of England. Now was there a young gentleman
 which had married a merchant's wife. And having a little wanton

4 *tooth-drawer*: tooth-puller; i.e., dentist 6 *great sickness*: plague
 6 *a sore*: i.e., a sore caused by the plague 10, 14 *but if*: unless
 11 *wiser*: more sensible 14 *should*: is supposed to 15 *evil*: bad
 19–20 *long . . . you*: a long production it would be to relate to you
 20 *divers*: different 20, 23 *manner(s)*: mode(s) 20 *pretty*: nice
 22 *worshipped*: venerated 23 *strange*: bizarre 24, 26 *image*: statue
 24 *day*: feast day 25 *fair*: sunny // *use they*: it's their practice
 26 *all . . . savor*: all kinds of good-smelling things // *and*: if
 28 *service*: ritual // *worshipful worship*: devout devotion
 30 *boldly make you sure of*: confidently assure you of
 32 *fair*: beautiful // *upon*: about
 34 *sought unto for the stone*: gone to for relief from kidney stones
 36 *which*: who // *wife*: i.e., widow // *wanton*: surplus; spending

money... which him thought burned out the bottom of his purse,
 in the first year of his wedding took his wife with him and went
 over the sea for none other errand but to see Flanders and France
 and ride out one summer in those countries. And having one in his
 5 company that told by the way many strange things of that pilgrimage,
 he thought he would go somewhat out of his way, either to
 see it if it were true... or laugh at his man if he found it false—as
 he verily thought he should have done indeed. But when they came
 into the chapel, they found it all true. And to behold, they
 10 found it fonder than he had told. For, like as in other pilgrimages
 ye see hung up legs of wax, or arms, or such other parts, so was
 in that chapel all their offerings that hung about the walls... none
 other thing but men's gear, and women's gear, made in wax. Then
 was there, besides these, two round rings of silver, the one
 15 much larger than the other, through which every man did put
 his privy members!... at the altar's end. Not every man through
 both, but some through the one and some through the other; for
 they were not both of a bigness... but the one larger than the other.
 Then was there yet a monk, standing at the altar, that hallowed
 20 certain threads of Venice gold. And then he delivered to the
 pilgrims, teaching them in what wise themselves, or their
 friends, should use those threads against the stone. That they should
 knit it about their gear... and say I cannot tell you what prayers.
 And when the monk had declared the manner... the gentleman had a
 25 servant that was a married man and yet a merry fellow, and he,
 thanking the monk for the thread, desired him to teach him
 how he should knit it about his wife's gear. Which, except
 the monk had some special craft in knitting, he thought would
 be cumbersome, because her gear was somewhat short. It need not to
 30 tell you that every man laughed then—save the monk, that cast up
 his rings and threads in a great anger and went his way. Was not
 this—abide! By God, I had almost forgotten one thing... that would
 not be left, for a groat. As this gentleman and his wife were kneeling
 in the chapel, there came a good, sad woman to him, showing
 35 him that 'one special point' used in that pilgrimage—and the

1 *which . . . purse*: i.e., that was burning a hole in his pocket 2 *wedding*: marriage
 3 *over the sea*: overseas // *errand*: purpose 4 *having one*: having someone
 5 *company*: entourage 5, 19, 25 *that*: who 5 *told*: related // *by*: along
 5 *of*: about 5, 10, 35 *pilgrimage(s)*: shrine(s) 7 *man*: servant
 9 *to behold*: i.e., on seeing it 10 *fonder*: (even) more ridiculous
 10 *told*: i.e., made it sound 13, 23, etc. *gear*: "thing(s)"; i.e., private part(s)
 13 *in*: of 18 *a bigness*: the same size 19 *hallowed*: blessed
 20 *certain*: a number of // *threads of Venice gold*: gold threads made in Venice
 20 *delivered*: gave out 21 *wise*: way // *themselves*: they themselves
 22 *friends*: loved ones // *against the stone*: to prevent or get rid of kidney stones
 23, 27 *knit*: tie and knot // *about*: around 24 *declared*: explained
 24 *manner*: procedure 26 *desired*: asked 27 *except*: unless
 28 *craft*: skill // *knitting*: making knots 29 *cumbersome*: difficult
 30 *save*: except // *that cast*: who threw 32 *abide*: wait
 32–33 *that . . . groat*: i.e., that should not for anything be left out
 34 *sad*: somber // *showing*: telling 35 *point*: technique

- ‘surest against the stone’—she wist ne’er whether he were ‘yet advertised of’; which if it were done, she durst lay her life he should never have the stone in his life. And that was, she would have the length of his gear... and that should she make in a wax candle, which
 5 should ‘burn up’ in the chapel, and certain prayers should there be said the while. And this was against the stone the ‘very sheet anchor.’ When he had heard her (and he was one that in earnest feared the stone), he went and asked his wife counsel. But she, like a good, faithful Christian woman, loved no such superstitions. She could abide
 10 the remnant well enough; but when she heard once of ‘burning up’ the candle, she knit the brows and, earnestly blessing her, ‘Beware, in the virtue of God, what ye do!’ quoth she. “‘Burn up,” quoth she? Marry, God forbid! It would waste up your gear, upon pain of my life! I pray you beware of such witchcraft!’ Is this kind of service and worship
 15 acceptable and pleasant unto God and his saints? Now, when people worship saints in such wise that they make them fellows to God, and images in such wise that they take them for the saints themselves; and then again, on the other side, honor them with such superstitious ways that the paynim gods were worshipped with no worse; finally, that
 20 worst is of all, pray to them for unlawful things, as thieves pray to the thief that hung on the right side of Christ to speed them well in their
 Dismas robbery—and have found him a name also,
 Gismas calling him ‘Dismas,’ I ween, and his fellow
 ‘Gismas,’ to rhyme withal—think you not
 25 that this gear is such among the people as rather were likely so to provoke God and his saints to displeasure... that the devil should have license and liberty therefore to work his wonders in delusion of our superstitious idolatry... than so to like and content our Lord that he should show miracles for the comprobation of that manner of worshipping which
 30 we may well perceive all reason, religion, and virtue reproveth?”

The Eleventh Chapter

The author answereth all the objections proposed by the messenger in the tenth chapter. And some of them touched by the messenger more at large in other parts before.

- 1, 3, etc. *the stone*: kidney stones 1 *wist ne’er*: didn’t know // *advertised*: informed
 2 *durst lay*: dared bet 3 *would have*: needed to know 4, 13 *gear*: “thing”
 7 *in earnest*: seriously 8 *counsel*: (her) advice 9 *loved*: went in for // *abide*: put up with
 10 *remnant*: rest // *when . . . of*: once she heard about 11 *her*: herself 12 *virtue*: name
 12 *marry*: goodness 13 *waste*: shrivel 13–14 *pray you*: beg you to
 14 *service*: devotion // *worship*: veneration 15 *pleasant*: pleasing 16 *worship*: venerate
 16 *fellows*: equals 19 *paynim*: pagan 20 *unlawful*: illicit // *as*: such as when
 22 *speed them well*: help them meet with good fortune 23 *ween*: believe
 23 *fellow*: companion 24 *withal*: therewith 25 *gear*: stuff
 27 *delusion*: mockery / befooling 28 *like*: please // *content*: gratify // *show*: perform
 29 *comprobation*: corroboration // *worshipping*: venerating 30 *may*: can
 30 *reproveth*: condemns; denounces 33 *them*: those
 33 *touched*: discussed // *more at large*: at greater length

“**Y**our whole tale, in effect,” quoth I, “containeth three things. One, that the people worship the saints, and their images also, with like honor as they do God himself; another, that they take the images for the things themselves—which points do sound to idolatry. The third is the superstitious fashion of worship, with desire of unlawful things. And since the worship that the people do to the saints and the images be such... ye conclude the thing displeasing to God and to all hallows, and that it may thereby well appear that the miracles, also, be not the works of God, but the delusion of the devil. The first point, which ye have now twice touched, is at once, soon, and shortly answered; for it is not true. For though men kneel to saints and images, and incense them, also, yet it is not true that therefore they worship them in every point like unto God.”

“What point lack they?” quoth he.

“Marry, the chief of all!” quoth I. “That is, that they worship *God* with the mind that he *is* God; which mind in worship is the only thing that maketh it *latria*—and no certain gesture nor bodily observance. Not and we would wallow upon the ground unto Christ... having therewith a mind that he were the best man that we could devise and thinking him not God. For if the lowly manner of bodily observance were the thing that would make *latria*, then were we much in peril of idolatry in our courtesy used to princes, prelates, and popes, to whom we kneel as low as to God Almighty... and kiss, some their hands—and some our *own*, ere ever we presume to touch *them*—and in the pope, his feet! And as for incensing, the poor priests in every choir be as well incensed as the Sacrament. So that if *latria*—that is, the special honor due to God—stood in such things, then were we great idolaters... not in our worship done to saints only, and their images, but also to men... one to another, among ourselves. But albeit that God ought of duty to have with our body the most humble and lowly reverence that we can possibly devise—yet is not *that* bodily worship *latria* but if we so do it that in our mind we *consider* and *acknowledge* him for God... and with that consideration and intent do him that worship. And so doth, as I think, no Christian man to image or saint either. And so is avoided the peril of idolatry, for the first point ye spoke of.

1 *tale*: account 2 *worship*: venerate 4 *sound to*: suggest; smack of
 5, 27, 33 *worship*: veneration; reverence 5 *unlawful*: illicit // *since*: on the basis that
 7 *the thing displeasing*: that it is something displeasing // *hallows*: saints
 7–8 *it may thereby well appear*: from this it is quite evident
 8–9 *the delusion of*: delusion perpetrated by 9 *touched*: brought up
 9–10 *at . . . shortly*: immediately, quickly, and briefly 12 *worship*: venerate
 14 *marry*: good heavens 15, 18 *mind*: view 17 *and*: even if
 17 *wallow*: grovel 18 *devise*: imagine 20, 27 *were we*: would we be
 21 *our courtesy used*: the obeisance we give 24 *poor*: humble; of low status
 25 *the Sacrament*: the Blessed Sacrament 27 *great*: big 31 *but if*: unless
 34 *so*: thus // *avoided*: dismissed

“Now, as touching the second—that the people take the images for the saints themselves—I trust there be no man so mad, nor woman neither, but that they know quick men from dead stones, and tree from flesh and bone. And when they prefer, as ye spoke of, ‘our Lady’ at one pilgrimage before ‘our Lady’ at another, or one rood before another, or make their invocations and vows some to the one and some to the other... I ween it easy to perceive that they mean none other but that our Lord and our Lady, or our Lord *for* our Lady, showeth more miracles at the one than at the other. And that they intend in their pilgrimage to visit some of them one place and some another, as their devotion leadeth them; or partly, sometimes, as the place lieth for them—and yet not *for* the place, but for that it liketh our Lord by manifest miracles to provoke men to seek upon him or his Blessed Mother... or some other holy saint of his... in those places more specially than in some others.

“The thing itself also showeth that they take not the images for our Lady herself. For if they so did, how could they possibly in any manner wise have more mind to the one than to the other? For they can have no more mind to our Lady than to our Lady. Moreover, if they thought that the image at Walsingham were our Lady herself, then must they needs think that our Lady herself were that image. Then if in like wise they thought that the image at Ipswich were our Lady herself, and (as they must therewith needs think) that our Lady herself were that image at Ipswich, then must they needs think therewith... that all those three were one thing. And then every two of them were one thing. And so must they by that reason suppose that the image of Ipswich were the selfsame image that is at Walsingham. Which if ye ask any of them whom ye take for the simplest, except a natural fool: I dare hold you a wager she will tell you nay. Besides this, take the simplest fool that ye can choose, and she will tell you that our Lady herself is in heaven. She will also call an image an image; and she

1 *as touching*: as regards 1, 16, etc. *image(s)*: statue(s) 3 *quick*: living

3 *dead*: inanimate // *tree*: wood 5 *pilgrimage*: shrine // *rood*: cross

7 *ween*: think 8 *showeth*: performs

11 *as the place lieth*: according to how convenient the location is

12 *that*: the reason that // *liketh*: pleases

13 *seek upon*: call upon; appeal to 18 *manner wise*: kind of way

18 *have . . . other*: think any more of the one than of the other 25, 26 *one*: the same

26 *were*: would be 27 *reason*: reasoning 29, 31 *simplest*: least intelligent

29 *a natural fool*: i.e., someone who is literally a born fool

will tell you a difference between an image of a horse and
a horse in deed. And then appeareth it well, whatsoever her words

Note

be of her pilgrimage, by a common manner
of speech to call the image of our Lady ‘our

- 5 Lady’... as men say, ‘Go to the King’s Head for wine,’ not meaning his
head in deed, but the sign—so meaneth she none other in that image
but our Lady’s image, howsoever she call it. And if ye will well
prove that she neither taketh our Lady for that image nor that image
for our Lady (as both must she take if she take the one), talk with
10 her of our Lady, and she will tell you that ‘our Lady’ was saluted with
Gabriel... and that ‘our Lady’ fled unto Egypt with Joseph... and yet
will she not in the telling say that Our Lady of Walsingham, or
of Ipswich, was saluted of Gabriel or fled into Egypt. Nor if
ye would ask her whether it were Our Lady of Ipswich or Our Lady
15 of Walsingham that stood by the cross at Christ’s Passion, she
will, I warrant you, make answer that neither of both. And if ye
demand her further, ‘Which Lady, then?’ she will name you none
image, but our Lady that is in heaven. And this have I proved often,
and ye may when ye will, and shall find it true... except it be in
20 one so very a fool... that God will give her leave to believe what she
list. And surely, for this point, I think in my mind that all those
heretics that make as though they found so much peril of
idolatry among the people for mistaking of images... do but *devise*
that fear... to have some cloak to cover their heresy... wherein they
25 bark against the saints themselves. And when they be marked, then
say they mean but the misbelief that women have in images. Now,
as touching the third point, of superstitious manner of worshipping...
or unlawful petitions desired of saints: as one example may
serve both—if women offer oats to Saint Wilgefortis to have her
30 unencumber them of their husbands—somewhat is it, indeed, that ye
say... and yet not allthing to be blamed that ye seem to blame.
For as to pray to Saint Apollonia for the help of our teeth, is no
witchcraft, considering that she had her teeth pulled out for
Christ’s sake. Nor there is no superstition in such other things
35 like. And peradventure since Saint Eligius was a farrier, it is no great
fault to pray to him for the help of our horse.”

1, 4, etc. *image(s)*: statue(s) 2 *a horse in deed*: an actual horse

2 *appeareth it well*: it is quite evident 3 *of*: about 6 *head in deed*: actual head

6–7 *meaneth* . . . *but*: she takes that statue for nothing other than 7 *will*: want to

7–8 *well prove*: clearly see for yourself 9 *the one*: either the one or the other

10, 13 *saluted with* / *saluted of*: greeted by 16 *warrant*: guarantee

17 *demand*: ask 18 *proved*: tested 19 *may* . . . *will*: can whenever you want to

19 *except*: unless 20 *very*: truly; literally 21 *list*: pleases

23 *mistaking of*: confusion about // *devise*: invent 25 *marked*: caught

26 *misbelief*: wrong belief // *in*: about 27 *as touching*: as regards

27 *worshipping*: venerating 28 *unlawful*: illicit // *desired of*: asked of; i.e., made to

30–31 *somewhat* . . . *say*: there is indeed some truth in what you say

31 *not* . . . *blame*: not everything is reprehensible that you seem to find so

35 *a farrier*: a person who shoes horses

“Well, then,” quoth he, “since Saint Crispin and Saint Crispinian were shoemakers, it were well done in like wise to pray them sit down and mend our shoes! And pray to Saint Dorothy for some flowers, because she beareth always a basketful!”

- 5 “Nay,” quoth I, “the things be nothing like. For the one thing pertaineth nothing to our necessity; the other we may do ourselves, or soon find who shall. But as for your horse, is a thing wherein as well as in our own bodies... a right good leech may fail of his craft; and is to many a man a greater loss than he may well
- 10 *Mt 6:33; Lk 14:5* recover. And albeit that God commanded
Be not careful for fear that we should chiefly seek for
of lack. heaven; and promiseth that if we so do,
all other things that we need shall be
- 15 cast unto us; and would that we should in no wise live in anxiety and trouble of mind for any fear of lack, considering that our Father in heaven provideth meat for the very birds of the air, by whom he setteth nothing so much as he doth by us: yet willed not he the contrary but we should with our bodies *labor* therefor, having our hearts all the while in heaven. And willed also that we
- 20 should ask it of him... without whose help our labor will not serve. And therefore is our daily food one of the petitions of the Pater Noster, the prayer that himself taught his disciples. And the horse he set not so little by... but that, rather than it should perish, he reckoned it no breach of the Sabbath day to pull it out of a pit.
- 25 And therefore indeed meseemeth the devotion to run somewhat too far... if the smiths will not for any necessity set on a shoe upon Saint Eligius’ Day... and yet lawful enough to *pray* for the help of a poor man’s horse. But as for your teeth, I ween if they ached well, ye would yourself think it a thing worthy, and not too simple, to
- 30 *A merry tale* ask help of Saint Apollonia, and of God too.”
“Yea, marry,” quoth he, “and of the devil too,
rather than fail—as the Lombard did for the gout. That when he had long called upon God and our Lady and all the holy company of heaven, and yet felt himself never the better, he began at last to call
- 35 as fast for help unto the devil. And when his wife and his friends,

2 *it . . . them*: it would likewise be a good thing to do to ask them in prayer that they

5 *the things be nothing like*: those things are not at all the same

6 *pertaineth nothing to our necessity*: is not about anything we need // *may*: can

8 *leech*: doctor 8–9 *fail of his craft*: find his abilities insufficient 16 *meat*: food

16–17 *by . . . us*: on which he places nowhere near as much value as on us

18 *labor therefor*: work for it 20–21 *not serve*: get us nowhere 22 *himself*: he himself

23 *set not so little by*: did not place so little value on 24 *breach*: violation

28 *ween*: think // *ached well*: were really aching 29 *worthy*: worthwhile

29 *simple*: stupid 31 *marry*: indeed 32 *fail*: languish; go without being helped

32 *Lombard*: Italian // *that*: who 35 *fast*: earnestly

sore abashed and astonied, rebuked him for calling on the devil—which he wist well was naught... and if that he helped him it should be for no good—he cried out as loud as he could again, ‘Ogni aiuto é bono!’ (‘All is good that helpeth!’).

5 “And so, I ween, would I,” quoth he, “call on the devil and all, rather than abide in pain.”

“Nay,” quoth I, “whatsoever ye say, I cannot think ye would believe in the devil as *that* Lombard did. Ye would, rather, fare like another, that when the friar apposed him in confession whether

10 he meddled anything with witchcraft or necromancy... or had
A merry tale ‘any belief in the devil,’ he answered him, ‘Credere en le diable, my sir? No;

Io grand fatigue a credere in Dio!’ (‘Believe in the devil?’ quoth he. ‘Nay, nay, sir, I have work enough to believe in God, I!’) And so would
 15 I ween that ye were far from all believing in the devil; ye have so much work to believe in God himself... that ye be loath, me think, to meddle much with his saints.”

When we had laughed a while at our merry tales, “In good faith,” quoth I, “as I was about to tell you, somewhat indeed it is, that ye say.
 20 For evil it is... and evil it is suffered, that superstitious manner of worship. And as for that ye told of Saint Martin: if it be true... it hath none excuse... but that it nothing toucheth our matter. For it is not worshipping, but despiting and *dis*worshipping, of saints. Touching the offering of bread and ale to Saint
 25 Germanus—I see nothing much amiss therein. Where ye have seen it used, I cannot tell; but I have myself seen it oftentimes... and yet am I not remembered that ever I saw priest or clerk fare the better therefor, or once drink thereof, but it is given to children or poor folk to pray for the sick child. And I would ween it were
 30 none offense in such fashion... to offer up a whole ox and distribute it among poor people. But, now, as for our merry matters of St. Valery, because the place is in France we shall leave the matter to the University of Paris to defend. And we will come home here to

1 *sore abashed and astonied*: (who were) terribly dismayed and shocked

2 *wist well*: well knew // *naught*: wicked 3 *again*: in reply 4 *all*: everything

5, 15, 29 *ween*: think 6 *abide*: stay 8 *Lombard*: Italian // *fare*: act

9 *that*: who // *apposed*: interrogated // *whether*: as to whether

10 *meddled anything*: had any involvement

14, 16 *work*: trouble // *to believe*: believing 17 *meddle much*: have much to do

18 *merry tales*: funny stories // *in good faith*: in all honesty

19 *somewhat* . . . *say*: you do indeed have something there, in what you say

20 *evil*: bad // *it is suffered*: that it is tolerated // *manner*: fashion

21 *worship*: veneration // *that ye told of*: what you related about

22 *nothing toucheth*: has no relevance to // *matter*: case

23 *worshipping*: venerating // *despiting*: insulting 24 *touching*: regarding

26 *it used*: i.e., this custom observed

27 *am* . . . *saw*: I do not recall ever seeing // *clerk*: lay church worker

28 *therefor*: for it 29 *were*: would be 30 *offense*: impropriety

- Paul's and put one example of both (that is to say, the superstitious manner and unlawful petitions): if women there offer oats unto Saint Wilgefortis... in trust that she shall unencumber them of their husbands—yet can neither the priests perceive till they find it there
- 5 that the foolish women bring oats thither... nor it is not, I think, so often done, nor so much brought at once, that the church may make much money of it above the finding of the canons' horses."
- "Nay," quoth he, "all the oats of a whole year's offering will not find three geese and a gander a week together!"
- 10 "Well," quoth I, "then the priests maintain not the matter for any great covetousness; and also, what the peevish women pray they cannot
- How women may be unencumbered of their husbands* hear. Howbeit, if they pray but to be unencumbered, meseemeth no great harm, nor unlawfulness, therein. For that may they
- 15 be more ways than one. They may be unencumbered if their husbands change their cumbersome conditions. Or if themselves, peradventure, change their cumbersome tongues... which is haply the cause of all their encumbrance. And, finally, if they cannot be unencumbered but by death... yet it may be by their own, and so their husbands
- 20 safe enough."
- "Nay, nay," quoth he, "ye find them not such fools, I warrant you! They make their covenants in their bitter prayers as surely as they were penned—and will not cast away their oats for naught."
- "Well," quoth I, "to all these matters is one evident easy answer—that
- 25 they nothing touch the effect of our matter, which standeth in this: whether the thing that we speak of (as praying to saints, going in pilgrimage, and worshipping relics and images) may be done well. Not
- Put not away the good use for the bad.* whether it may be done evilly. For if it may be well done, then though many would
- 30 misuse it, yet doth all that nothing diminish the goodness of the thing itself. For if we should for the misuse of a good thing, and for the evils that grow sometimes in the abuse thereof, not amend the misuse... but utterly put the whole use away, we should then make marvelous changes in the world.
- 35 In some countries they go on hunting, commonly, on Good Friday, in the morning, for a common custom. Will ye break that evil custom, or cast away Good Friday? There be cathedral churches into which the

1 *Paul's*: St. Paul's Cathedral // *put*: give 6, 27, 28 *may*: can 7 *money of*: profit from
 7 *above*: beyond 7, 8 *find(ing)*: feed(ing) 9 *a week together*: one whole week
 10 *maintain not the matter*: do not countenance this thing // *for*: out of
 11 *covetousness*: greediness // *peevish*: silly // *pray they*: i.e., say in their prayers the priests
 16, 17 *cumbersome*: encumbering 16 *conditions*: traits // *themselves*: they themselves
 17 *haply*: perhaps 22 *covenants*: pacts // *as surely as*: in as fixed a way as if
 23 *penned*: in writing 23, 37 *cast away*: throw out // *naught*: nothing
 24 *is*: i.e., there is 25 *nothing . . . matter*: do not affect the gist of our issue
 25 *standeth*: consists 26 *as*: such as // *in pilgrimage*: on pilgrimages
 27 *worshipping*: venerating // *images*: statues 27, 29 *well*: in a good way
 29 *though*: even if 30 *nothing*: not at all 31, 32 *for the*: on account of the
 32 *grow . . . in*: result . . . from 33–34 *put . . . away*: do away with the whole practice
 34 *marvelous*: extraordinary 36 *break*: put an end to // *evil*: bad

country cometh with procession at Whitsuntide... and the women
 following the cross with many an unwomanly song—and that, such honest
 wives as out of the procession ye could not hire to speak one such
 foul, ribaldrous word as they there sing for God's sake whole
 5 ribaldrous songs as loud as their throat can cry. Will you amend
 that lewd manner, or put away Whitsuntide? Ye speak of lewdness
 used at pilgrimages. Is there, trow ye, none used on holy days?
 And why do you not then advise us to put *them* clean away—
 Sundays and all? Some wax drunk in Lent of wigs and cracknels;
 10 and yet ye would not, I trust, that Lent were fordone. Christmas—if we consider
 how commonly men abuse it, we may think that they take it
 for a time of liberty for all manner of lewdness. And yet is not Christmas
 to be cast away among Christian men; but men, rather, admonished to
 amend their manners... and use themselves in Christmas more Christianly.
 15 Go me to Christ's own coming and giving us our faith and his holy
 Gospel and sacraments. Be there not ten the worse therefor, against
 one the better? Be not all the paynims, all the Jews, all the Turks,
 all the Saracens, all the heretics, all the evil-living people in
 Christendom, the worse (by their own fault) for the coming of Christ?
 20 I trow they be. And yet would no wise man wish that Christ had not
 come here. Nor it had been no right that God should have left the
 occasion of merit and reward that good folk would with his help
 deserve by his coming... for the harm that wretches would take thereof
 by their own sloth and malice. Nor, in like wise, right were it none that
 25 *Men do merit by worshipping* all worship of saints and reverence of holy
 of saints and relics. relics and honor of saints' images—by
 which good, devout folk do much
 merit—we should abolish and put away because some folk do
 abuse it. Now, touching the evil petitions: though they that ask
 30 them were, as I trust they be not, a great people—they be not, yet, so
 many that ask evil petitions of saints... as there be that ask the
 same of God himself. For whatsoever they will ask of any good
 saint, they will ask of God also. And commonly in the wild Irish—
 and some in Wales too, as men say—when they go forth in robbing,
 35 they bless them and pray God send them good speed, that they may
 meet with a good purse and do harm and take none. Shall we therefore

1 *country*: people of the area 1, 6 *Whitsuntide*: the week beginning with Pentecost Sunday
 2 *honest*: chaste; respectable 3 *out*: outside // *hire*: pay 4, 5 *ribaldrous*: obscene
 6 *manner*: behavior 6, 28 *put away*: do away with 6, 12 *lewdness*: base behavior
 7 *used*: engaged in // *pilgrimages*: shrines // *trow ye*: do you suppose
 9 *wax*: get // *wigs and cracknels*: wine-dipped buns and biscuits
 10 *that . . . fordone*: want Lent done away with 12 *lewdness*: base behavior
 14 *amend their manners*: mend their ways // *use*: conduct // *in*: on 15 *go me to*: look at
 16–17 *the . . . better*: the worse off for that, for every one who is the better off for it
 17 *paynims*: pagans 19 *worse*: worse off 20 *trow*: believe
 20 *no wise man*: no one with any sense 21 *it . . . right*: would it have been at all right
 21 *left*: i.e., left ungiven 22 *occasion of*: opportunity for 23 *deserve by*: earn through
 23 *for*: on account of 24 *wise*: manner // *right were it none*: i.e., would it be at all right
 25 *worship*: veneration 26 *images*: statues 29 *touching*: as for // *though*: even if
 30 *great*: large number of // *so*: as 35 *bless them*: bless themselves // *speed*: fortune

find a fault with every man's prayer, because thieves pray for
 speed in robbery? This hath, as I say, no reason although they were a
 great people that abused a good thing. And whereas the worst that ye
 assign in our matter is that... as ye say, 'the people'... do 'idolatry' in that, ye
 5 say, they take the images for the saints themselves, or the rood for Christ himself—
 which, as I said, I think none doth (for some rood hath no
 Crucifix thereon; and they believe not that the cross which they see was
 ever at Jerusalem... nor that it was the Holy Cross itself; and much less
 think they, then, that the image that hangeth thereon is the body of
 10 Christ himself)—and although some were so mad so to think...
 yet were it not, as ye call it, 'the people.' For a few doting dames
 make not the people. And over this, if it were, as ye would have it
 seem, a whole people indeed—yet were not a good thing to be put
 away for the misuse of bad folk.”

15 *The Twelfth Chapter*

The author confirmeth the truth of our faith and usage in
 the worship of images... by the consent of the old holy doctors
 of the Church approving the same (as appeareth well in their
 writings) whom God hath by many miracles testified to be
 20 saints. The messenger eftsoons doubteth whether we can be
 sure that the miracles told by them were true or not... or
 themselves saints or not. Whereupon the author proveth
 that of any miracles told by any saints, we may be most
 sure of theirs... and, consequently, by their miracles most sure
 25 of them that they be surely saints. And in this chapter
 also proveth that the miracles and consent of those holy doctors
 do prove... that this must needs be the very, true church... in
 which they have written and miracles have been done.
 Whereupon is finally concluded, eftsoons, the truth of the
 30 principal question; and therewith finisheth the Second
 Book.

“**A**nd we be very sure that the thing is good, and our way good therein,
 and our belief therein right, not only by reasons and authority (by which

2 *speed*: success // *this hath . . . no reason although*: this would make . . . no sense even if
 2–3 *they . . . thing*: those abusing a good thing were a great many people
 3 *worst*: worst thing 4 *assign*: allege // *say*: put it // *matter*: dispute 5 *images*: statues
 5, 6 *rood*: cross 7 *Crucifix*: figure of the crucified Christ 9 *image*: figure
 10 *although*: even if // *mad so to*: crazy as so to 11 *were it not*: it would not be
 11 *doting*: dotty 12 *over this*: furthermore 13 *people*: population
 13–14 *put . . . of*: done away with on account of its being misused by 16 *truth*: rightness
 16 *usage*: practice // *in*: regarding 17 *worship*: veneration
 17, 26 *consent*: consensus; agreement // *(old) holy doctors*: (early) theologians
 20, 29 *eftsoons*: once again 21, 23 *by*: about 25 *surely*: definitely
 33 *reasons*: reasonings

I have proved it you more than once already), but also by that *all* the old holy saints-and-doctors of Christ's church—as Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine, Saint Basil, Saint Chrysostom, Saint Gregory... with all such others, as plainly we read in their books—did as we do therein, and believed thereof as we believe. And since we see what *they* believed, we need not to doubt what is best that *we* believe. For if any sect believed better than other, we be sure of the best were they... that so well believed, and lived therewith, that God hath accepted them for saints... and by miracles openly declared that their faith and living liked him. Whereas, on the other side, of such as believed otherwise—
 10 as were these manifold sects of obstinate heretics—we see not one a saint among them, nor one miracle showed for them.”

“I wot ne'er,” quoth he, “whether this reason that ye make would surely satisfy the other side or no. For men may peradventure
 15 answer you that there is many a glorious saint in heaven... of whom we see no miracles in earth, nor haply never heard of their name.”

“That may well be,” quoth I, “and I suppose it very true.”

“May it not also be,” quoth he, “that though it were hard to think but that of miracles some among so many must needs be true—yet, since
 20 some also may be feigned, may it not be that those be feigned which be told to have been done by them whom ye rehearsed? Them, I mean, that of old have written for your part; I mean those whom ye call the old doctors of the Church, and whom the Church taketh for saints.”

“This,” quoth I, “were worse than anything that we spoke of yet tofore. The worst was before... that we should pray to no saints. And now ye would either that we should *have* none... or, at the least, that we should *know* none.”

“Yes,” quoth he, “ye may have saints, and know for saints, and many one since the apostles' time... though those be none whose
 30 writing ye would authorize by their sanctifying.”

“Then fall you,” quoth I, “to that point again that ye think it may be that the Church may take for saints, and worship as saints, them that be none.”

“Surely,” quoth he, “the proof that ye have laid unto me contrary, though
 35 it be somewhat probable, yet seemeth me not very strong, nor able

1 *that*: the fact that 2 *old*: early // *as*: such as 6 *doubt*: have any doubt as to
 7 *sect*: religious sector 8 *well*: rightly // *accepted*: approved 9 *living*: way of living
 10 *liked*: were to his liking 12 *showed*: performed 13 *wot ne'er*: don't really know
 13 *reason*: argument 14 *surely*: firmly // *satisfy*: convince
 16 *in earth*: in the world; i.e., at all 20 *feigned*: made up 21 *by*: on behalf of
 21 *rehearsed*: mentioned 22 *for your part*: on your side 23 *old doctors*: early theologians
 24 *were*: would be // *yet tofore*: heretofore
 29–30 *though . . . sanctifying*: even if those whose writing you would take as authoritative because of their being canonized are not saints 32 *worship*: venerate 34 *proof*: evidence
 34 *laid*: presented // *contrary*: to the contrary 35 *probable*: plausible

- and sufficient to strain a man to consent thereto. For though the assistance of God and his Holy Spirit will not suffer his whole Church to agree and consent together in any damnable error, yet may he suffer them well to err in the knowledge and worship of a saint, and mistake for a saint one that were a damnable wretch. For therein were no more danger to man's soul, nor no more honor taken from God, than when the people do worship a host unconsecrated, mistaking it, through the default of an evil priest, for the Sacred Body of our Lord himself. And this ye doubt not but it is sometimes done."
- God will not suffer his Church to agree in any damnable error.* "Forget not now, by the way," quoth I, "that ye still agree that God will not suffer his whole Church to agree in any damnable error and fall in a false faith. And therewith
- remember that though it were no damnable error to take one for a saint that were none, or a bone for a relic that were none, yet were it a damnable error to worship *any* if we *should* worship none at all. And therefore, since the Church believeth that we *should* worship them, *that* kind of belief can be none error, but must needs be true. Nor that kind of worship can be none *idolatry*, but must needs be good and acceptable to God. And so, our principal matter standing still sure and fast, we shall see somewhat further whereto your words will weigh and amount. Ye deny not," quoth I, "but there be *some* saints and *some* miracles."
- "No," quoth he.
- Wherefore miracles were wrought* "To what *purpose*," quoth I, "were miracles specially wrought by God? Was it not to the intent to make his messengers known, and the truth of his message? As when he sent Moses to Pharaoh, were not the miracles done by God to make Pharaoh to perceive thereby the truth of his word?"
- "Yes," quoth he.
- "When Christ," quoth I, "sent his disciples to preach, the power that he gave them to do miracles—was it not for the proof of the doctrine that they taught, as is well witnessed in the Gospel?"
- "Yes," quoth he.

1 *strain*: constrain // *consent*: give assent 2 *assistance*: active presence
 2, 4, 12 *suffer*: allow 3 *consent together*: concur 4 *in*: regarding
 4, 20 *worship*: veneration 5, 15 *one*: someone 5 *that were*: who was
 6, 15 *were*: would be 7, 17, 19 *worship*: venerate 8 *default*: fault // *evil*: bad
 14 *in*: into 16 *were none*: was not one 17 *were it*: it would be

- “If this be thus,” quoth I, “as indeed it is, ye have most cause to believe, of all miracles, those that are told and reported as done for the doctors of Christ’s church, since miracles were specially devised by God for a knowledge of his true messengers... and a proof of their message. So that whereas ye would we should not utterly be deceived in saints and miracles, but yet we might be deceived in doctors whom we take for saints, and in their miracles: now it seemeth on the other side—that of all others, we be of them and of theirs *most* sure.”
- “This is well said,” quoth he. “But yet always it runneth in men’s minds that miracles may be feigned.”
- “Be it so,” quoth I, “so that it run again in men’s minds that *all* be not feigned. And then if ye think *any* true... this reason abideth still: that since miracles were specially given by God for the knowledge of his doctors and declaration of his doctrine, those miracles be specially to be taken for true that be reported to be done by his doctors. For they serve for the comprobation of his holy doctrine. And for because ye say that miracles ‘may be feigned’—that we spoke of Moses and Christ’s disciples putteth me now in mind: there were of old time also false doctors and miracles falsely feigned, were there not?”
- “Yes, marry,” quoth he.
- “By whom were those miracles feigned?” quoth I.
- “Marry,” quoth he, “some by men, as there be now, and some by the devil—and haply so there be now too.”
- “Well, be it,” quoth I, “both twain, and ye will. But were there not in the old time both twain found out and vanquished by the
- Ex 7:9–12* true doctors sent by God and true miracles for them wrought by God? As
- when the serpent of Moses devoured all the serpents made by the
- Dn 14:10–21; 1 Kgs 18:19–40* witchcraft of the Egyptian jugglers.
- And when the prophet Daniel did by the steps of the false priests’ feet find out the means whereby the meat was eaten that they feigned to be eaten by the idol Bel. And

5–6 *would* . . . *saints*: would have it that we won’t be completely in error about saints
 6 *might* . . . *doctors*: could be in error about theologians 7 *in*: about 11, 18 *may*: can
 11, 13, 18, 21, 23 *feigned*: fabricated 13–14 *this reason abideth still*: this argument still stands
 15 *knowledge*: recognition 15, 17, etc. *doctors*: theologians
 15 *declaration*: elucidation 17 *by*: for // *comprobation*: confirmation
 19 *that we spoke of*: what we said about 19–20 *putteth me now in mind*: now reminds me
 21 *falsely*: deceitfully 22 *marry*: of course 24 *marry*: goodness 25 *haply*: perhaps
 26 *be it*: so be it; let’s grant that // *and ye will*: if you like 31 *jugglers*: magicians
 33 *steps* . . . *feet*: footprints made by the deceitful priests 34 *meat*: food
 34 *feigned*: made appear

- when the prophet Elijah vanquished by miracle the false prophets of Baal. And the holy apostles and disciples of Christ did at their word... *allto* break in pieces the false idols, in sight of the paynim people. So that always God hath prepared his true doctors... to destroy by plain miracle the false 'miracles' whereby men were and might be deceived. Is not this thus?" quoth I.
- "Yes," quoth he.
- "Well, then," quoth I, "if our old holy doctors were false, and their doctrine untrue, and their miracles feigned... it is not enough now to say so; but if any of them that so say be sent by God to reprove it, then must they prove that they be sent so. And that not in words only, but let some of them come forth and at their word break our images... as Christ's doctors did the paynims'. And to prove our miracles feigned... let them do some *very* miracles themselves."
- "As for miracles," quoth he, "be none article in any man's creed. And there is not so simple a sect of heretics but they might, if they were set thereon, soon match you with miracles—whereof they might feign fifteen in a forenoon. And then, as we said now, it would be thought that though *some* were untrue, yet *all* were not lies."
- "It were easy indeed," quoth I, "if men were mad... among whom they should report them, and would nothing do for the trial."
- "Iwis; yet if they *did*," quoth he, "yet might a few mean-witted men devise and feign a thing of such a fashion that it would be believed, and hard to try the truth out."
- "Let it be so," quoth I. "But yet would it not long hold among good Christian people; but God would either bring the falsehood to light... or soon cast it out of credence. What labor took Philostratus to make a book full of lies... whereby he would have had Apollonius Tianiis in miracles match unto Christ? And when he had all done... he never found one old wife so fond to believe him. But I pray you tell me," quoth I, "be there not of heresies many sects?"
- "Yes," quoth he.
- "Is there," quoth I, "any more very churches of Christ than one?"
- "No more," quoth he.

2-4: This comes from legend; no such instance is found in Scripture.

3, 12 *at their*: i.e., just with their 3 *allto*: completely 3, 12 *break (in)*: smash (into)

3-4 *in sight of*: right in front of 4, 13 *paynim(s)*: pagan(s) 6, 16, etc. *might*: could

9, 14, etc. *feign(ed)*: fabricate(d) 10 *reprove it*: do this denouncing

13 *images*: statues 14 *very*: real; bona fide 15 *be none article*: they are not an article

16 *simple*: unintelligent 18 *now*: just now

20 *it were easy indeed*: that would indeed be easy 21 *for the trial*: by way of investigation

22 *iwis*: certainly 22-23 *mean-witted men*: people of average intelligence

24 *to try the truth out*: to pry out the truth about 25 *let it be so*: all right, let's grant that

28 *make*: write 29 *match*: (appear to be) an equal 30 *fond*: foolish (as)

33 *very*: authentic

- “Is not that it,” quoth I, “that is true?”
- “Yes,” quoth he.
- “Be not,” quoth I, “then all the sects of heresies false?”
- “Yes,” quoth he.
- 5 “Who is likely,” quoth I, “to feign and lie: that company that is the true party, or some of them that be false?”
- “It is,” quoth he, “more likely that they should all lie that be false... than that company that is the true party.”
- “Then false and feigned miracles,” quoth I, “be they lies, or not?”
- 10 “What else?” quoth he.
- “Then,” quoth I, “by your argument it seemeth that they were much more likely to be among every sect of heretics than in the Church.”
- “So seemeth it,” quoth he.
- “How happeth it, then,” quoth I, “if miracles be feigned ware, that among
- 15 all the false sects of heretics—where such false stuff should be, by all reason, most rife—is none at all spoken of; but miracles told only in the church of Christ... which is only, as ye agree, the true party?”
- “There be,” quoth he, “peradventure some done—either miracles or marvels—but they dare not speak of them, for fear of persecution.”
- 20 “If they were,” quoth I, “false marvels only done by the devil, it would not help your matter. For then must you grant very miracles of God only done in Christ’s church. And if there had been very miracles of God done for any sect whom we call heretics, that sect had been no sect of heretics, but the very church. (Or else had God
- 25 by miracles testified the truth of a false faith; and that is impossible.) And thereof should have followed that except there were of Christ two churches of two contrary faiths... and both true, which were impossible—else not *some*, but *all* the miracles done, told, and wrought in one church had been either feigned or done by the
- 30 devil. Whereby should it follow that *our* church were not the *very* church, but a false sect of heretics—which were, as I have already proved you divers ways, as far impossible. But, now, for the more clearness of our part therein; and for the further proof that ours *is* the sure church, and only the doctors and the doctrine of our church approved
- 35 by miracles: Never hath there been any done for the doctors of any sects of heretics. For if there hath any true miracles been done by

14 *feigned ware*: faked commodities 16 *told*: told of
 17 *which is only*: which alone is 21 *matter*: case 21, 22 *very*: authentic
 22 *only done*: to be done only 24 *had been*: would have been 24, 30 *very*: true
 25 *the truth*: to the trueness 26 *except*: unless
 32–33 *more clearness*: further vindication // *part*: side 33 *sure*: trustworthy

God, and then that sect not a false sect but the true church, all the
 persecution that could have been... could never have quenched the fame
 thereof—as well appeareth by the miracles done in *our* church... in all
 such time as both the Jews and the paynims pursued it. Now, since
 5 there be so many false sects and but one church true, and miracles not
 spoken of in any but in one, it is a good token that the matter and substance
 of them is true. For else they were as likely to be spoken of in
 more... since of false and lying sects be so many. And then also,
 miracles being true, and being done, but in one of all those many
 10 companies each calling itself ‘the church,’ it is a good proof
 that the same one in which only they be done... is only the very,
 true church of Christ, to which his Holy Spirit and marvelous
 Majesty giveth his special assistance. And surely of all miracles
 that ever God hath wrought for his church, I see not in my
 15 mind lightly a more marvelous... than that as many sects of
 heretics as hath sprung and parted out of Christ’s church, and
 each of them laboring to be taken for the very church, yet hath
 our Lord hitherto never suffered neither the devil to do any
 wonder for them that might have the color and face of a miracle...
 20 nor, as false as they be themselves, yet hath he not suffered them
 hitherto not so much to do as feign a miracle for their party.
 Which is to my mind not only great wonder, but also, their
 confessed falsehood considered, a very clear proof that they could
 never have been kept from it but by the especial providence of
 25 God and his tender cure upon his chosen church... by which it hath
 liked him hitherto... that miracles, among other things, have been
 one good and sure mark between his church and all those erroneous
 sects that be sprung out thereof and be not his church but would
 seem to be. For as for *paynims*—Turks and Saracens, which by open
 30 profession are of another flock, and bear not the name of Christ, nor
 look for him, he suffereth the devil sometimes to delude with wonders
 and marvels. But the *Jews*, that still gape after him—their miracles,
 as far as I can hear, be gone, to the intent they may know that he
 hath left them and given them up... which was wont to work all those
 35 wonders for them. Now, as for *heretics*, which falsely feign themselves
 to be his own flock, and presume to bear and profess his name—

2 *quenched the fame*: silenced the talk 4, 29 *paynims*: pagans 4 *pursued*: persecuted
 6 *token*: indication // *matter*: sum 10 *companies*: associations 11 *only*: alone
 11 *very*: real 15 *lightly*: probably 17 *very*: true 18, 20 *suffered*: allowed
 19 *color*: semblance // *face*: appearance 21 *feign*: fake 23 *confessed*: professed
 25 *cure upon*: care of 26 *liked*: pleased // *hitherto*: to this day
 27 *mark*: mark of distinction 28 *would*: want to 29, 34, 35 *which*: who
 31 *suffereth* . . . *delude*: sometimes allows the devil to delude them
 32 *gape after*: are longingly looking for 34 *which*: who
 35 *falsely*: dishonestly / despicably // *feign*: dissemble

he keepeth them from the honor of any miracles doing, to the end
that the lack thereof among all their sects... and the doing thereof in his

*One good mark to know
heretics*

only church... may be, among many
other things, one good mark and sure
5 token whereby all these false sects of them
may be discerned and known from his very, true church; that is to
say, from the whole congregation of true Christian people in this world...
which without intermixture of obstinate heresies... profess the right,
catholic faith.

10 “Now is it not only true that miracles be wrought only in the
Church, and thereby do show which is the very church; but also
they do show that those holy doctors for whom God hath showed them...
were good men and of the right belief. For if it were as ye would of
late have had it seem—that it might, peradventure, be so that the holy
15 doctors of our faith whom we take for saints were in deed no
saints, nor saved souls... but haply those were saved souls and
saints in heaven (though it were unknown here in earth) which did
teach the doctrines here that we now call heresies—then were it a
wondrous change, that whereas God among the Jews provided that
20 in every age there were some good men by their good living
and his high miracles so notable and well known to the people that
men had them always like bright, lively stars, whose doctrine
they might boldly believe, and whose living they might surely
follow, he would now in his special church of Christ... not only
25 do nothing like, but also do clean the contrary. For if he should
take that way that ye say—to leave, ever since the apostles’ days, all
the true interpreters of his-and-their holy writing, and doctors
of the very, true faith, lie to the world unknown... and then, on the other
side, set forth with miracles, or suffer so to be set forth with marvels
30 that his church should take and accept for saints, such evil persons
or hypocrites as construed the Scripture wrong, and ever since his
apostles’ days have taught false errors, and led his flock out of the
right way in a bypath to-hell-ward with wicked heresies and
idolatry—then hath *not* God sent the Holy Ghost, and himself also
35 tarried still therein, to teach his church the truth, as he said he would;
but he then had helped to beguile them himself!... which were

3 *only church*: church alone 5 *token*: sign 6 *discerned*: distinguished
6, 28 *very*: real 8, 17 *which*: who 11 *very*: true
12, 14–15, 27 (*holy*) *doctors*: theologians 12 *showed*: performed
13–14 *of late*: a little while ago 14 *peradventure*: perhaps
14 *be so*: be the case 15 *deed*: fact; actuality 16 *haply*: maybe
19 *wondrous*: amazing 20, 23 *living*: way of living 21 *notable*: conspicuous
22 *lively*: living 23 *might*: could // *boldly*: confidently // *surely*: safely
24 *follow*: imitate 25 *clean the contrary*: the complete opposite 26 *leave*: let
27 *true*: accurate 29 *side*: hand // *suffer*: allow 32 *false*: despicable
33 *in*: onto 35 *tarried still*: continually remained 36 *had*: would have
36 *were*: would be

church. And it is also clearly proved that the matter of miracles therein
 daily done... is neither feigned by men nor done by the devil... but
 only by the mighty hand of God. And such objections as ye laid
 unto the contrary of any point aforesaid... be, as far as I can see,
 5 sufficiently answered... except that ye have any further objection to
 lay therein. Which if ye have, ye get no thank to spare.”

2.12

Whereunto he said—and swore, therewith—that he so fully felt himself
 answered and contented therein... that he thought himself
 able therewith to content and satisfy any man that he should happen
 10 to meet with that would hold the contrary. Whereupon for that
 day we departed till another time... in which we appointed to
 peruse the remnant of the things that he had in the beginning
 purposed.

The end of the Second Book

1 *matter*: phenomenon 2 *feigned*: fabricated 5 *except that*: except if; unless
 6 *get no thank to spare*: stand nothing to gain by sparing me 7 *therewith*: as well
 8, 9 *content(ed)*: convince(d) 11 *appointed*: planned 12 *peruse*: go through
 12 *remnant*: rest 13 *purposed*: put forward for consideration

The Third Book

3.1

The First Chapter

The messenger, having in the meanwhile been at the university, showeth unto the author an objection which he learned there against one point proved in the First Book—that is to wit, that in the necessary points of the faith, equal credence is to be given to the Church and to the Scripture. Which objection the author answereth and dissolveth.

- 10 **A**bout fortnight after, your friend came again in a morning, newly come from the university, where he was, as ye wot, at learning ere he came at you. And there had he now, as he said, visited some of his old acquaintances; and, upon occasion arising in communication, had again repeated with some of them very fresh-learned
- 15 men good part of our former disceptation and reasoning had between us before his departing. Which, as he said, they took great pleasure in, and much wished to have been present thereat. But, surely, he said that some of them seemed to take very sore to heart the hard handling of the man that ye write of—and the burning of the New
- 20 Testament, and the forbidding of Luther's book to be read; which were, as some of them thought, not allthing so bad as they were made for. And, finally, touching the burning of heretics... there were some that thought the clergy therein far out of right order, of charity.
- 25 "I am," quoth I, "very glad that it hath been your hap to be there. Not so much for anything that ye have showed them of our communication had already, concerning the praying of saints, worshipping of images and relics, and going in pilgrimage (wherein I think ye told them no novelty, for I doubt not but they
- 30 could have told you more of the matters themselves than ye have

4 *showeth*: relates 6 *in*: with regard to // *necessary*: essential (to salvation)
 9 *dissolveth*: disposes of 10 *fortnight after*: two weeks later
 10 *came again in a morning*: came back one morning 11 *wot*: know 12 *at*: to
 13, 26 *communication*: conversation 15 *disceptation*: disputation
 15 *reasoning*: discussion // *had*: held 17 *surely*: to be sure 18 *sore*: badly
 18–19 *hard handling*: harsh treatment 21 *allthing*: altogether
 22 *made for*: made out to be // *touching*: regarding
 23 *out of right order*: i.e., out of line with right procedure 25 *hap*: fortune
 26 *showed*: told 27 *praying of*: appealing to; petitioning of
 28 *worshipping*: venerating // *images*: statues 29 *no novelty*: nothing new
 29–30 *they . . . themselves*: they themselves could have told you more on those subjects

- heard, or could hear, of me), as for that I think that among them...
being, as ye say, so well learned... ye have either heard somewhat
whereby ye be in some part of these matters that we *shall* speak of
already satisfied—whereby our business therein may be the shorter—
5 or else ye be the more strongly instructed for the other part; whereby
our disputation shall be the fuller, and the matters the more plainly
touched, for the more ample satisfaction of such as yourself or
your master shall hereafter happen to find in any doubt of these
things that we shall now touch and treat of.”
- 10 “Indeed,” quoth he, “somewhat have they showed me their minds
therein, as in some part of the matters ye shall hear when we hap to
come to them.”
- “That shall I gladly hear,” quoth I, “and shape you such answer
as my poor wit will serve me. But yet I pray you be plain with me
15 in one thing: Were they satisfied, and held themselves content, in
those things that were at last, with much work, agreed between
us?”
- “In good faith,” quoth he, “to say the truth, all were save one;
and he in all things save one. And to your great praise and high
20 commendation, they said that in these matters—”
- “Nay,” quoth I, “let their praise pass, lest ye make me too proud. But
I pray you tell me... not which one misliked one thing, but what
one thing it was, and why he misliked it.”
- “Surely,” quoth he. “For aught that I could bend upon him, he could
25 never agree that the faith of the Church out of Scripture... should
be as sure and bind us to the belief thereof... as the words of Holy
Scripture.”
- “Why,” quoth I, “if ye remembered well what we said, ye had enough
to prove him that.”
- 30 “Truth is it,” quoth he, “so had I, and so *did* I—and in such wise that
divers ways I brought him to the bay... that he wist not how to void.
But then said he to me that he would not do with me as I had done
with you. Nor it was, he said, ‘no wisdom for a man against his
adversary to use always the buckler hand. For so must all the peril
35 be his, and his adversary stand in surety. But, on the other side, if he

1 *of*: from 2 *somewhat*: something 5 *part*: side 6 *disputation*: discussion
6–7 *plainly touched*: clearly covered 7 *such as*: whoever // *yourself*: you yourself
8 *master*: employer // *of*: about 9 *touch*: bring up 10 *showed*: told
10 *minds*: views; thinking 22, 23 *misliked*: disliked 24 *aught*: anything
24 *bend*: bring to bear 25 *out of*: apart from 26 *sure*: trustworthy
31 *divers*: several // *brought him to the bay*: backed him into a corner // *wist*: knew
31 *void*: get out of 33 *no wisdom*: not wise
34 *use . . . hand*: use always the hand that holds the shield; i.e., always be on the defensive
35 *stand in surety*: remain safe // *side*: hand

use the sword therewith, and strike among, and drive the other to his defense, so may he hap to put him in half the peril.' And likewise he said that if I proved my part so clearly to him that he could not say nay: yet if I would again answer *him* another

5 while, he might peradventure bring me to the same point on the other side; and then should the matter stand yet at large. For of two contraries if both the parts be proved... then stand they both unproved. 'And therefore,' quoth he, 'I pray you answer me this a little: When you believe the Church, *wherefore* do you believe the

10 Church? Do you not believe it because it saith truth?'
 "'Yes, marry,' quoth I. 'What else?'
 "'And how know you,' quoth he, 'that the Church saith truth? Know ye that any other wise than by Scripture?'
 "'Nay, marry,' quoth I. 'But then by plain Scripture I know it very

15 well. For the Scripture telleth me that God hath fully taught and teacheth his church and biddeth me believe his church.'
 "'Lo,' quoth he, 'for all your long process, see whereto ye be brought now. Ye would in any wise before—and ye seemed to *prove* it, too, all the while that ye argued and I answered—that the Church was, in all

20 necessary points of our faith, as much to be believed as the Scripture... and that we should not have believed the Scripture but for the authority of the Church, as ye say Saint Augustine saith. And now, when *I* argue and ye answer, I have driven you to the wall in three words, and proved unto you that the Church is not to be

25 believed, nor that *yourself* believeth it not, but for the authority of the Scripture!' And after that he had thus said, the remnant that were present allowed it much; and I was therewith astonied, and said I would advise me further thereon. But he laughed and said he would lend me this, and not to be hasty on me, for he would give

30 me respite of payment till I had spoken with you again."
 When your friend had told, "Forsooth," quoth I, "he dealt with you like a courteous creditor. And since he hath given you so long day, you shall not need, I trust, to die in his debt. And, to say the truth, ye owe him not much. For ye may bear him his own

1 *among*: now and then 3, 7 *part(s)*: side(s) 4 *again*: in turn
 4–5 *another while*: for a change 5 *peradventure*: perhaps
 6 *yet at large*: still unsettled 8 *pray*: ask that 9 *wherefore*: why
 10, 12 *saith*: speaks the 11 *marry*: of course 13 *wise*: way
 14 *marry*: indeed 17 *process*: drawn-out argument
 18 *in any wise*: by all means (have had it)
 19 *ye . . . answered*: you did the making of the arguments, and I the answering of them
 20 *necessary*: i.e., necessary for salvation 21 *should*: would
 23 *argue*: make the arguments 23–24 *in three words*: with a few words; in short order
 26–27 *remnant that were*: rest of those
 27 *allowed it much*: expressed great approval // *astonied*: stumped
 28 *advise me*: reflect 29 *this*: i.e., this one // *to be hasty*: put pressure
 31 *told*: finished speaking 32–33 *so long day*: such a long time before due date
 249/34–250/1 *may bear him his own again*: i.e., can bring him back what he lent you

- again and tell him his money is naught. But I have espied it is, as
 he saith, a great advantage for him to oppose. For he hath such
 craft in arguing... that he will soon bring the answerer to a
 perilous point... if he happen on one that will answer him handsomely,
 5 as he would have him. But on the other side, if he had
 happened on one that had answered him as frowardly as the boy
 answered one Caius, a poet at Cambridge, then had he by his
A merry disputation opposing part won nothing at all.
 For Caius, for his pleasure playing with
 10 the boy... being a young sophister, said that he would prove the
 boy an ass. Which when the boy denied, 'Well,' quoth Caius,
 'thou wilt grant me this first: that everything that hath two
 ears is an ass.'
- "Nay, marry, Master, will I not!" quoth the boy.
 15 "No wilt thou?" quoth Caius. 'Ah, wily boy, there thou wentest beyond
 me. For and thou wouldst have granted me that, I would have
 proved thee an ass anon.'
- "Marry, Master,' quoth the boy, 'ye might well; and so might every
 fool do.'
- 20 "Well,' quoth Caius, 'I will go now another way to work with thee.
 Thou wilt grant me that every ass hath two ears.'
- "Nay, marry, will I not, Master!" quoth the boy.
 "Why so, boy?" quoth he.
 "Marry, Master,' quoth he, 'for some ass may hap to have never one;
 25 for they may be cut off, both!'
- "Nay,' quoth Caius, 'I give thee over; for thou art too froward a boy
 for me.' And so, if ye had not granted what he would... he had
 nothing won at your hand."
- "Why," quoth your friend, "what thing did I grant him that I
 30 should not?"
- "Forsooth," quoth I, "no more but all that ever ye granted! For first,
 when he asked you whether the cause why we believe the Church be
 not because it is true that the Church telleth you, though your

1 *naught*: no good // *espied*: noted that 2 *oppose*: be (the one) on the offensive

3 *craft*: skill 4 *handsomely*: in an accommodating way 5 *side*: hand

6 *frowardly*: contrarily

7–8 *had he by his opposing part*: he would by his being on the offensive have

10 *being a young sophister*: who was a little smart aleck 14, 18, etc. *marry*: indeed

16 *and*: if 17 *anon*: forthwith 24 *never*: not a; not even

26 *give thee over*: give up on thee // *froward*: contrary

27 *would*: wanted (you to grant) 33 *it . . . you*: what the Church is telling you is true

answer which ye made therein was not the cause of your redargution...
nor the thing whereby ye were concluded... yet answered ye not well
thereto when ye granted it.”

5 “Why,” quoth he, “wherefore *should* I believe the Church—or any man
else—but because they tell me true?”

“Sometimes,” quoth I, “it happeth so; but sometimes it happeth otherwise.
For if a known liar tell you a known-true tale, ye will
believe him because he telleth you truth. But, now, if a known-true
man tell you an unknown truth, ye believe not him because
10 the thing is truth, but ye believe the thing to be truth because ye
believe the man to be true. And so believe you the Church... not because
it is truth that the Church telleth you, but ye believe the
truth of the thing because the Church telleth it. But yet was not
that answer of his, as I say, the thing that confounded you. For, now, if
15 ye so should have answered him as I have showed you, though ye
should have somewhat blenched him therewith... yet he might, and
would of likelihood, have gone further with you and have asked you
whereby ye know that ye should believe the Church. And what answer
would ye then have made thereunto?”

20 “Marry,” quoth he, “then might I have said that I believe the Church
because that in such necessary points of faith the Church cannot err.”

“That had been very well said,” quoth I. “But he would have asked how
ye know that.”

“Then must I,” quoth he, “have said the same that I did: that I know
25 it by plain and evident Scripture... that the Church in such things
cannot say but true. And then would I have laid him the texts
that ye alleged unto me for the same purpose before.”

“If ye so had said,” quoth I, “ye had answered him truly, but yet not
with your most advantage.”

30 “Why so?” quoth he.

“For,” quoth I, “your next answer were to say, as truth is, that ye believe
that the Church in such things cannot err... because ye believe that
God hath taught and told the same things *to* his Church.”

35 “Then would he have asked me further,” quoth your friend, “what
thing maketh me believe that *God* hath taught and told the Church
those things.”

“So would he have asked you,” quoth I, “and so might he well.”

1 *redargution*: losing the argument; downfall 2 *concluded*: overcome; put to silence

5 *tell me true*: they are telling me the truth 6 *so*: that way

8 *telleth you truth*: is telling you the truth

8–9 *a known-true man*: someone known to be truthful

9 *an unknown truth*: something you don’t already know is the truth 11 *true*: truthful

14 *confounded you*: did you in 16 *blenched him*: thrown him off; disconcerted him

16, 20 *might*: could 17 *would of likelihood*: probably would 20 *marry*: goodness

22 *had*: would have 25 *evident*: conclusive 26 *laid*: cited to

27 *alleged*: quoted 28 *ye had*: you would have // *truly*: accurately

29 *with your most*: to your best 31 *were*: would be

“Then were we come,” quoth your friend, “unto the same point again—that he should have concluded me as he did before.”

“Nay,” quoth I, “not if ye answered thereto well.”

5 “Why,” quoth he, “what could I answer else... but clearly grant him that I believe that thing for none other cause but only because the Scripture so showeth me?”

“No could ye?” quoth I. “What if never Scripture had been written in this world? Should there never have been any church or congregation of faithful and right-believing people?”

10 “That wot I ne’er,” quoth he.

“No do ye?” quoth I. “Were there never any folk that believed in God... and had a true faith, between Adam and Noah—of such as never heard God speak themselves?”

15 “Yes,” quoth he, “I suppose there were some; but it should seem there were very few. For there were few saved in Noah’s ship.”

“The world was at that time,” quoth I, “waxen worse and worse, as it waxeth now. But it is not unlikely that there were many right-believing people in the meantime.”

“That is,” quoth he, “likely enough.”

20 “Now, as for the days,” quoth I, “of Noah himself: though there were few saved alive, yet proveth not that the people to be all miscreants and without faith. For it fared by them as it fareth now by us: that there were many that believed the truth and had a faith, but they followed the flesh and sank for their sin. For there appeareth no

25 *Gn 6:4—8:22; 1 Pt 3:19–20* further upon the story in Genesis but that the world was washed with the water of the great flood for the filth of their fleshly living. And albeit that in the First Epistle of Saint Peter it might seem some incredulity in them, yet may it be that it stretched no further than to the lack of fear in the credence of God’s commination... and overmuch hope and boldness of God’s further favor and sufferance...

30 whereof they repented after, too late for this present life... and yet many, through God’s mercy, not too late for the final salvation of their

35 *Nicholas de Lyra* souls (as appeareth by the good and great clerk Nicholas de Lyra, upon the same place); which could in no wise have been so if they had lacked faith.

2 *that*: so that // *concluded*: trounced 4 *clearly*: frankly 6 *showeth*: tells

7 *no could ye?*: couldn’t you (believe it for some other reason)?

10 *wot I ne’er*: I don’t at all know 11 *no do ye?*: you don’t? 12 *true*: correct; right

16 *was*... *waxen*: had... gotten 21 *proveth not that*: that does not prove

21 *be*: i.e., have been // *miscreants*: infidels 22 *fared*: happened; was the case

22 *by*: with 24–25 *no*... *but*: in the account in Genesis nothing more about this than

27 *for*: on account of

28–29 *it*... *them*: i.e., the reason might seem to have been some lack of belief on their part

30 *commination*: warning 31 *boldness*: confident expectation

32 *after*: afterward; later 34 *appeareth*: is shown 35 *clerk*: scholar

35 *upon*: i.e., in his commentary on 36 *place*: text // *so*: the case

Which faith what Scripture had they to teach them? Or *all* the men, in effect, that any faith had from Adam hitherto? Was there also no faithful folk at all from Noah to Moses—nor himself, neither, till he had the Law delivered him in writing? Did Abraham never
 5 believe more but those things that we find in Scripture specially to have been told him by God? Was his father and *all* his friends infidels? Were there no people besides, in all that long time, that had a right faith?”

“Yes,” quoth your friend, “that I think verily there was.”

10 *The Church*

“That may ye,” quoth I, “be *sure* there was.

And why did any man then believe the church—that is to wit, the number and congregation of good and right-believing folk, of whose mouth and tradition he heard the true belief—against the wrong and misbelief that was in all
 15 the world, among infidels and idolaters, beside? Why did any man this... but because they believed that God hath taught those things to good men before, and that it was and would be still the good lesson of God? And then what thing made them to believe that God had taught them so? It was not the *Scripture* that made them
 20 believe that... as ye would that nothing can tell us that belief but the Scripture. I pray you tell me what scripture hath taught the Church to know which books be the very scripture... and to reject many others that were written of the same matters—and that in such wise written, and in the names of such men, as, saving for the
 25 Spirit of God given to his church, a natural-wise man had been likely enough either to have taken both for Holy Scripture... or to have rejected both as no Holy Scripture. And surely in the receipt of the one, and rejection of the other, there would have been at the least way such diverse opinions that the whole Church had never
 30 taken all the one sort and rejected all the other... had not that Holy
Ps 67:7 (Vulgate) Spirit inspired that consent... ‘qui facit unanimes in domo’ (‘which maketh the Church all of one mind and accord’). And therefore, albeit that against them that nothing will believe but Scripture... we prove
 35 the authority of the Church *by* Scripture—and in such wise prove it them by Scripture that they shall be fain either further to grant that they be bound to believe the Church in things not specified

2 *in effect*: for that matter // *from Adam hitherto*: from Adam’s time till then

3 *faithful*: right-believing 5 *specially*: expressly; directly

6 *friends*: relatives and friends 14 *wrong*: i.e., wrong belief

14–15 *all* . . . *beside*: all the rest of the world, among infidels and idolaters

17 *still*: always 22 *very*: true; actual 24 *wise*: a way

25 *a natural-wise man*: any normal person // *had*: would have

26, 27 *both*: i.e., both sets 27 *receipt*: acceptance

29 *had never*: would never have 30 *all*: all of // *sort*: set

31 *consent*: consensus 32 *which*: who 36 *fain*: forced

in Scripture, and as fully as they believe the Scripture itself, or
Belief was before Scripture. else they shall deny the Scripture and all—
yet should we have believed the Church if
never Scripture had been written; as those good-faithful folk did
5 that believed well before the Scripture was written. And, now, the
Scripture *itself* maketh us not *believe* the Scripture... but the *Church*
maketh us to *know* the Scripture. And God without Scripture hath
taught his Church the knowledge of his very scripture from all
counterfeit scripture. For it is not, as I say, the *Scripture* that
10 maketh us to believe the word of God written in the Scripture—for a
The Spirit of God worketh in man might (as haply many doth) read
man belief without Scripture. it altogether and believe thereof never a
whit—but it is the *Spirit of God* that,
with our own towardness and good endeavor, worketh in his
15 Church, and in every good member thereof, the credulity and belief
whereby we believe as well the Church concerning God's words
taught us by the Church, and by God engraved in men's hearts, without
Scripture... as his holy words written in his Holy Scripture. And
thus ye perceive that where ye granted him that so did oppose you...
20 that we believe the Church by none other way but by the Scripture—
there did ye not answer him well. For we beside the Scripture do
believe the Church... because that God himself, by secret inspiration
of his Holy Spirit, doth (if we be willing to learn) teach us to
believe his Church. And also, if we will walk with him, *leadeth* us
25 *into* the belief thereof, by the selfsame means by which he teacheth
us and leadeth us into the belief of his Holy Scripture. For likewise
as when we hear the Scripture or read it, if we be not rebellious
but endeavor ourselves to believe, and captivate and subdue our understanding
to serve and follow faith, praying for his gracious aid
30 and help, he then worketh with us... and inwardly doth incline our
heart into the assent of that we read... and after a little spark of our
faith, increaseth the credence in our incredulity: so doth his
goodness in like wise incline and move the mind of every like
toward and like well-willing body... to the giving of fast and firm
35 credence to the faith that the Church teacheth him in such things
as be not in the Scripture, and to believe that God hath taught his
Church those points by his holy word without writing. And, now,
if ye had answered him thus, I believe surely that ye had clearly
disarmed him and broken his gay sword in twain. Which in my

4 *good-faithful*: right-believing 5 *well*: rightly 7, 17 *without*: outside of; apart from
8 *very*: authentic 11 *might*: could 11–12 *read it altogether*: read all of it
14 *towardness*: cooperativeness 15 *credulity*: credence
19 *oppose*: go on the offensive with 21 *beside*: apart from
22 *secret*: mysterious; unperceivable 31 *that*: that which
33–34 *like . . . body*: similarly cooperative and well-meaning person
38 *surely*: with certainty // *had clearly*: would have completely
39 *gay*: flashy // *twain*: two

mind, I promise you, how gaily soever it glitter in one's eye for a flourish, yet who fight therewith shall find it neither sharp nor sure... if it fall on a good buckler, and not on a naked man."

3.1

5 "By my troth," quoth your friend, "so seemeth me, now, too. And though the brightness bleared mine eye at that time, yet I trust he shall win no worship thereof when we meet again."

The Second Chapter

Incidentally somewhat is there touched the superstitious fear and scrupulosity that the person abjured did, as it is
10 said, begin with. The weariness whereof drove him to the delight of such liberty as brought him to the contempt of the good devout things used commonly in Christ's church. And in this chapter is somewhat touched the good mean manner... between scrupulous superstition and reckless
15 negligence... that would be used in the singing or saying of Divine Service.

"**B**ut surely, sir, concerning the man's abjuration that we spoke of, they be marvelously persuaded that he had much wrong. Not in that the opinions were Catholic which were laid to his charge
20 (for therein have ye said enough), but in that he was wrongly borne in hand that he had preached them, where he did not so. And thus be they very credibly informed, both by word and writing of such as were present thereat. And therefore long I sorely, and would be very glad, to hear how those matters were proved."

25 "Now—and I am," quoth I, "for my part, very sorry, so help me God, to lose time therein, as a thing in effect fruitless... saving that it may be, peradventure, a fruitful example, that no man be light to believe such things hereafter as he shall hap to hear spoken against the Church in the favor of any man condemned of heresy... while he
30 seeth as much said against the judgment of this man... wherein, so to say, they can have no more hold than if they would say the crow were white. And in good faith, to say the truth, there cannot in my

1 *gaily*: brightly 1–2 *for a flourish*: when being flourished 2 *who fight*: whoever fights
3 *buckler*: shield // *naked*: unarmed 4 *by my troth*: by my word; really and truly
4 *seemeth me*: it seems to me 5 *bleared mine eye*: blurred my vision
6 *worship thereof*: honor by it 8, 13 *touched*: discussed
9 *abjured*: made to renounce his heresies under oath 10 *begin*: start out
10 *the weariness whereof*: his being sick and tired 12 *devout*: devotional 13 *mean*: middle
15 *would*: ought to 16 *Divine Service*: the Divine Office
18 *be marvelously persuaded*: are extremely convinced // *had much wrong*: was done very wrong
19 *the . . . charge*: the opinions he was charged with having espoused were Catholic ones
20–21 *wrongly . . . had*: unjustly accused of having 22 *word*: spoken word
24 *matters*: charges 26 *in effect*: virtually 27 *light*: quick 29 *condemned*: convicted
29 *while*: when 30 *judgment of*: verdict pronounced on

mind be a more meet example to match their words with.
 For likewise as he that would say the crow were white... must, if he
 will be believed, go tell the tale to a blind man... and may, perchance,
 with him be as well believed as one that will say the contrary,
 5 till that he be either by more men or men of more honesty put after out
 of credence: so must these folk that thus talk and write of him... seek,
 as they do indeed, such hearers as be blind in the matter and know
 nothing thereof, whom they persuade, with false suggestions, to
 conceive an evil opinion of the judges... to incline their hearts first,
 10 for pity, to the favor of the man... and after, to the favor of the
 matters that he was abjured for. I have myself seen a letter written out
 of London by a priest reputed honest—howbeit indeed, as I saw it
 proved after, a plain pestilent heretic—in which letter he wrote
 that the man we now talk of ‘did no more abjure any heresy’ than
 15 he had done himself, or the man that he wrote unto. And yet was
 his writing as false as God is true. Wherewith he labored covertly
 to make the man believe that the opinions were no heresies, and
 that he which was pretended to have abjured them had not so done
 in deed, but had well avowed them and stiffly abided by them. Lo,
 20 thus do such as are of that sect set forth their matters with
 lies. And reason is it that they so do. For since their sects be false,
 lies be for them most meet. And yet is it a mad thing of them to
 boast of him. For he forthwith forsook them... and ever before his
 judges he confessed from the beginning that the matters were plain,
 25 false heresies—and the holders, therewith, heretics—saying for himself
 that he never preached them. And so had they no cause to be proud
 of him... which in open audience, at the first word, refused and condemned
 them. But they, haply thinking that for all his denying
 with his mouth, he favored still in deed them and their
 30 heresies in his mind, pardoned, therefore, those words, which they
 thought spoken but of infirmity, for fear and faint heart. And therefore
 would they be glad yet among men that knew not the matter...
 to maintain and uphold his authority against a better time.
 And surely, this that I shall tell you... have I heard reported; howbeit,
 35 I will not warrant it for truth. But yet have I, as I say, heard
 it reported right credibly... that the man we speak of, which was

1 *meet* . . . *with*: apt metaphor to apply to their statements 3 *will*: wants to
 3 *perchance*: perchance 5 *honesty*: respectability // *after*: later
 8 *suggestions*: representations 9 *evil*: bad
 11–12 *written out of*: i.e., written in and sent from 12 *honest*: i.e., to be an upstanding one
 17 *opinions*: views (in question) 18 *pretended*: alleged 19 *deed*: fact
 19 *stiffly*: firmly; adamantly // *abided*: stuck 20 *set forth*: promote
 20, 24 *matters*: contentions; theses 21 *reason is it*: it stands to reason
 22 *meet*: fitting 23 *forthwith*: right away 24 *confessed*: admitted
 27, 36 *which*: who 27 *refused*: repudiated 28 *haply*: maybe
 29 *deed*: fact; actuality 31 *infirmity*: weakness
 32 *knew not the matter*: didn't know about all this 33 *against*: in anticipation of
 34 *surely*: assuredly 35 *warrant*: guarantee

- abjured, used among some of that sect to say, ‘Let us preach and set forth our way. And if we be accused, let us say we said not so; and yet some of them shall we win always the while.’ And albeit I will not, as I say, warrant you that he thus said, yet I assure you, to my mind his manner in his matter, before his judges, was as consonant as could be to that intent and purpose. For surely the effect of his defense was nothing else... but against a well and plainly proved matter... an obstinate shameless nay.”
- “By my troth,” quoth your friend, “I marvel me much thereof. For he was called a good man and a very devout.”
- “I will not,” quoth I, “as I told you in the beginning, go about to reprove his living, since the question standeth not but in his teaching; and yet may I be bold with you to tell you what I have heard. He was (as it was said), after that he fell from the study of the law (wherein he was a proctor, and partly well learned) unto the study of Scripture—he was, as I say, very fearful and scrupulous, and began at the first to fall into such a scrupulous holiness that he reckoned himself bound so straitly to keep and observe the words of Christ after the very letter... that because our Lord biddeth us when we will pray, enter into our chamber and shut the door to us, he thought it therefore sin to say his Service abroad, and always would be sure to have his chamber door shut unto him while he said his Matins. Which thing I, indeed, heard him once deny in an honorable presence...
- “But I heard, again, another man, more credible than twain of him (and if I had said than such *ten*, I think I lied not), and one of his best-proved friends, avow it in his face for truth. Howbeit, I tell you not this thing for any great hurt in the man. For it was more peevish and painful than evil and sinful. But surely men say that in conclusion, with the weariness of that superstitious fear and servile dread, he fell as far to the contrary. And under pretext of love and liberty waxed so drunk of the new must of lewd lightness of mind and vain gladness of heart, which he took for spiritual consolation, that whatsoever himself listed to take for good, that thought he forthwith approved by God. And so framed himself a faith, framed himself a conscience, framed himself

1 *abjured*: made to renounce his heresies under oath // *some*: i.e., some members
 2 *set forth*: promote // *said not so*: did not say such and such 3 *the while*: in the meantime
 5 *manner*: demeanor // *matter*: trial 6, 29 *surely*: certainly 6 *effect*: gist
 7 *well and*: quite 9 *troth*: word // *marvel . . . thereof*: find that very surprising
 11 *go about*: undertake 12 *reprove*: impugn // *living*: way of living
 13 *be . . . to*: go so far with you as to 14 *after that*: after // *fell*: turned
 15 *proctor*: advocate 18 *straitly*: strictly; rigorously 19 *after*: to
 20 *chamber*: bedroom 21 *Service*: Divine Office
 21 *abroad*: i.e., anywhere else 23–24 *an honorable presence*: august company
 26 *lied not*: would not have been lying 28 *hurt*: bad quality 29 *peevish*: silly
 30 *weariness*: being sick and tired 32 *waxed*: got // *must*: wine / mandate
 32 *lewd*: base 34 *listed*: chose

a devotion, wherein him list; and wherein him liked, he set himself at liberty.”

3.2

“And if it so were,” quoth your friend, “then ye see, lo, what cometh
Our Lady Church of this saying of Service!”

5 “Of saying Service?” quoth I. “This is much like as at Beverley lately, when, much of the people being at a bear-baiting, the church fell suddenly down at Evensong time and overwhelmed some that then were in it; a good fellow that after heard the tale told—‘Lo,’ quoth he, ‘now may you see what it is to
 10 be at Evensong when ye should be at the bear-baiting!’ Howbeit, the hurt was not therein—being at Evensong—but in that the church was falsely wrought. So was in him or any man else no harm, but *good*, in saying of Divine Service; but the occasion of harm is in the superstitious fashion that their own folly joineth thereunto—
 15 as some think they say it not... but if they say every psalm twice.”

“In faith,” quoth your friend, “then if I were as he, I would mumble it up apace or else say none at all.”

“That were as evil,” quoth I, “on the other side. There is a mean may serve between both.”

20 “Yea,” quoth he, “but wot ye what the wife said, that complained to her gossip of her husband’s frowardness? She said her husband was so wayward that he would never be pleased. ‘For if his bread,’ quoth she, ‘be dough-baked, then is he angry.’ ‘Marry, no marvel!’ quoth her gossip. ‘Marry, and wot ye what, gossip?’ quoth she. ‘And if I bake it all to
 25 hard coals, yet is he not content neither, by Saint James!’ ‘No,’ quoth her gossip, ‘ye should bake it in a mean.’ ‘In a mean?’ quoth she. ‘Marry, I cannot happen on it.’ And so in a pair of Matins it is much work to happen on the mean. And then to say them too short is lack of devotion; and to say them too seriously is somewhat superstitious.
 30 And therefore the best way were, in my mind, to say none at all.”

“Yea,” quoth I, “but then is God as wayward a husband as ye spoke of—that will neither be content with his bread burned to coals nor dough-baked, neither.”

35 “By our Lady,” quoth he, “but be he content or not, I ween he hath much dough-baked bread among. For the Matins, I tell you, be in some places sung faster than I can say them.”

1 *wherein*: wherever // *him list*: he wanted // *him liked*: he pleased

4, 5, 13 (*Divine*) *Service*: the Divine Office 7, 10, 11 *Evensong*: Vespers

8 *overwhelmed*: crushed 11 *hurt*: harm; problem 12 *falsely wrought*: improperly constructed

14 *folly*: foolishness 15 *but if*: unless 16 *in faith*: in all 17 *apace*: at a high speed

18, 30 *were*: would be 18 *evil*: bad 18–19 *a . . . both*: i.e., between the two extremes a happy

medium that could serve 20 *wot ye*: do you know 21, 23, etc. *gossip*: chum

21 *of*: about // *frowardness*: perverseness 22, 32 *wayward*: ornery

22 *he would never be pleased*: there was no pleasing him

23, 34, 36 *dough-baked*: doughy; underdone 23 *marry, no marvel*: well, no wonder

24 *marry . . . what*: well, but you know what // *and if*: even if 25, 33, 35 *content*: happy

26 *in*: to 26, 28 *mean*: point in between 26 *marry*: goodness 27 *pair*: set

28 *too short*: in too short a time 29 *seriously*: painstakingly 30 *mind*: opinion

35 *ween*: think // *hath much*: gets a lot of 36 *among*: now and then

“Peradventure,” quoth I, “so were it need. For if they should sing Matins no faster than *ye* say them, they should, I ween, sing very few Matins in a year!”

- 5 “In faith,” quoth he. “And some that say them make me to doubt much whether the bees in their hives use to say Matins among them! For
How God’s Service ought even such another buzzing they make.”
to be said or sung “Surely,” quoth I, “that is as true as it is evil done. For as it is a vice, and some fault, to
 10 be in the Service of God superstitious instead of religious; overly dreadful and scrupulous instead of devout and diligent: so is it a much more fault to be therein reckless and negligent. For accursed
Jer 48:10 is he, as Holy Scripture saith, that doth the work of God negligently. The peril thereof
 15 appeareth by Eutychus, the young stripling (that is spoken of by Saint *Acts 20:9–12* Luke in the Acts of the Apostles) who, falling in sleep while the apostles and the disciples
 were occupied in reading, preaching, and prayer, fell out of a high window down unto the ground, and there had died—God wot in what case—if the merits of Saint Paul had not recovered him. And, now, if
 20 he be of God accursed that *negligently* doth his work, how much is he more accursed that casteth his work away and leaveth it quite undone—such work, I say, as they be bound to do? But in this matter we spend more time than needeth. For it is not much to our present purpose—saving that if it be truth that the man whom we
 25 talk of fell first in such superstition, it is the more likely that the devil did cast him therein... for none other intent but that he might after, for very weariness thereof, bring him into a contempt of all the things that he was waxen weary of, and set him in a delight of ‘liberty’... whereby, with leaning to his own wit, he might reckon
 30 everything good or bad as himself would account it. Which was the ready way to bring him to these heresies wherein he was now fallen.”

The Third Chapter

- 35 The author showeth that men ought not to be light in mistrusting of any judgment given in the Court. And that much less ought any man to be bold in the reprovng of a

1 *peradventure*: perhaps // *so were it need*: that would be necessary
 2 *ween*: think 4 *in faith*: true // *and*: i.e., but // *to doubt much*: really wonder
 5 *use to say*: make a habit of saying 6 *even*: just 7 *surely*: to be sure; certainly
 7 *evil*: ill 8 *some fault*: something of an offense 9 *Service of God*: Divine Office
 10 *dreadful*: fearful 11 *more fault*: greater offense 14 *appeareth*: is evidenced
 16 *in sleep*: asleep 18 *had*: would have // *wot*: knows 19 *case*: state (of soul)
 19 *recovered*: revived 20 *of*: by 21 *quite*: completely 22 *bound*: obliged
 22–23 *in this matter*: on this subject 23 *spend*: are spending // *needeth*: is necessary
 25 *in*: into 28 *was waxen weary of*: had gotten sick and tired of
 29 *leaning to*: relying on // *wit*: mind 34 *light*: quick
 36 *reproving*: criticizing

common law. And he showeth also the cause why that the law
admitteth more slight witnesses in heinous criminal
causes than in slighter matters of covenants or
contracts.

- 5 “**F**allen?” quoth your friend. “What? Abide! We be now gone over the
stile ere we come at it! We be yet in question whether it were
righteously judged that he was fallen in them or not. For I think
it no sin to doubt thereof yet till I hear how the matter was proved.”
- 10 “Indeed,” quoth I, “that is, as ye say, the matter whereof we first have to
talk. And yet, if ye never heard further therein... but that he was
judged faulty; although ye had ever accounted the man in your
own mind for very virtuous and of right belief: yet, since he cannot
be good except more men than he be naught... whom ye ought no
more to misdeem than him, and especially his judges, which are elected
15 and chosen for indifferent, and which without likelihood of lucre
or loss be set to consider, examine, and by their judgment order
the cause of another man, whereas the parties may reasonably be
more mistrusted themselves—both the accuser, which may speak of
malice, and especially the party that is accused, which is well
20 likely to lie for his defense in a matter of peril if he were proved
guilty—ye therefore ought not to mistrust the judgment... except ye
knew the matter untruly judged indeed, or by very good and
substantial folk that were present and indifferent... had
plain and sure information thereof.”
- 25 “Marry,” quoth he, “men think that if any such information may
serve, they have had enough thereof by men of wisdom, learning, and
honesty... both by mouth and by writing... that were present at all the
handling of the matter.”
- 30 “Well,” quoth I, “we shall let their wisdom and their learning alone.
But as for their honesty, shall somewhat show itself... upon the
truth or untruth of their report. Wherein first I pray you, could
they say that he was not convicted by as many witnesses, and as good
and as credible, as the law requireth?”
- 35 “So many,” quoth he, “and such, as the *law* requireth? Would God,” quoth
he, “that we could as easily find good men and true... as we may find

2 *more slight*: less reliable 2–3 *heinous criminal causes*: cases of high crime
3 *slighter*: less serious // *covenants*: pacts 5 *abide*: wait 6 *ere* . . . *at*: before coming to
7 *righteously*: rightly // *in*: into 8 *matter*: charge 11 *faulty*: guilty // *although*: even if
11 *ever*: always 13, 21 *except*: except if; unless
13 *more men than he*: a greater number of men than he is // *naught*: bad
14 *misdeem*: think ill of / form a bad opinion of 14, 15, 18, 19 *which*: who
14 *elected*: selected 15 *indifferent*: (being) unbiased
15–16 *lucre or loss*: standing anything to gain or lose 16–17 *order the cause*: settle the case
18 *speak of*: be speaking out of 19 *well*: quite 20–21 *for* . . . *guilty*: i.e., to defend himself
against a charge that would put him in peril if he was found guilty of it
22 *the matter untruly judged indeed*: that the case was in fact judged wrongly
23 *indifferent*: impartial 25 *marry*: indeed 25, 35 *may*: can 26 *had*: gotten
26 *by*: from 28 *matter*: case 30 *shall*: that will 31 *pray*: ask 35 *true*: truthful

book that he should nothing use the discretion of his *brain*—he should sometimes do full evil service.

“And yet is it, as Aristotle saith, well done indeed to make the laws so sufficient that as few things as may... shall remain and
 5 be left to the discretion of the judge, since that the common laws be commonly made by many *more* than are the particular judges... and also many such as are as *wise* as judges. And over that, the laws be to the
judges a sure and substantial shield, to defend and keep them
 10 from the hatred and obloquy that else would follow their sentence on the one side or the other, were their judgments never so just. For men be so partial always to themselves... that our heart ever
 thinketh the judgment wrong... that wringeth us to the worse. For be it never so right... all reckon we wrong whereof we feel harm.

“But yet, of all things, specially the law should best content us,
 15 for that it is furthest out of all cause of suspicion. For whereas a
The causes which incline a judge to disorder judge meddleth with a matter present, and persons whom he seeth and knoweth, whereby there may percase favor, hatred,
 20 hope, or dread, pity, cruelty, meed, request, or some other affection incline him to disorder himself in the matter: the *laws* always be made for the punishment of things only that are yet to come; and who shall fall in peril, the makers cannot tell. Haply their foes, haply their friends, and (as men’s manners be mutable) peradventure themselves; for which cause the makers of the law
 25 made by the people in cases criminal... can be but indifferent. And therefore I marvel the more... since that fault ye find now is not in the judges, but in the laws themselves; wherein ye think it evil provided that, for the hatred of a heinous crime, the person
 peradventure innocent should fall in peril of a painful death by the
 30 taking of more slight witness than would be taken for sufficient in a far slighter matter. Somewhat ye said indeed if the hatred of
Why simple witnesses are taken in criminal cases the crime were all the cause. But therein ye go far wide. For the chief cause why that in heinous criminal cases, as
 35 theft, murder, treason, and heresy, the law taketh such for witnesses as it will not accept in a matter of money or other contract

1 *nothing*: not at all 2 *do full evil service*: give very bad service; do a very bad job

6 *many more than are*: a number of people that is much larger than that of

7 *over*: besides 9 *follow*: follow upon // *sentence*: verdict

10 *never so*: no matter how 12 *wringeth us to the worse*: causes us the more distress

14 *specially*: precisely 15 *for that*: because

15 *furthest out of*: the farthest removed from 16 *meddleth*: deals

18 *percase*: perchance // *favor*: favoritism 19 *meed*: bribery // *request*: entreaty

20 *affection*: motivation // *misorder*: misconduct // *matter*: case 22, 23 *haply*: maybe

23 *manners*: ways // *mutable*: subject to change 24, 29 *peradventure*: perhaps

25 *by*: about // *indifferent*: impartial 26 *marvel the more*: am the more astonished

27 *evil*: ill; wrongly 28 *for*: on account of // *heinous*: high 29 *in*: into

30 *more slight*: less reliable 31 *slighter*: less serious

31 *somewhat ye said indeed*: you would indeed have something there 33 *wide*: astray

34 *heinous criminal cases*: cases of high crime // *as*: such as

form and fashion of judgment that may be the cause of other men's wrongful trouble. Whereas in heinous criminal causes, neither is there always such cause of corruption... specially toward the condemnation upon which side only falleth the fault and peril that ye speak of... and is also, as ye see, inevitable necessity, for lack of possibility of other record and witness—till ye provide that thieves and murderers will be content to take honest witnesses with them, that may bear witness against them.”

The Fourth Chapter

10 The author showeth upon what ground and cause the man was convicted. And also divers other things not then brought in judgment... whereby it may well appear that he was greatly guilty. And so he showeth incidentally wherefore it were not reason in a detection of heresy... to suffer, after the
15 witnesses published and the crime well proved, any new witnesses to be received for the party that is accused.

“**H**owbeit, though this serve for such matters in general, yet for this one matter that we now speak of, we stand far in another case. For this man was not convicted by the words of one or twain...
20 but by the *oaths* of one or twain above *twenty*... not such men as we now speak of—Lollards and heretics—but honest men, and almost of all sorts: of religious folk, husbandmen, and gentlemen.”
“Indeed,” quoth he, “to say the truth, I heard say there were many witnesses.
25 But I heard, again, that *he* offered to bring *twice* as many—and that of such as were present as well as they, and stood as near as they... and understood as well as they, and slept no more at his preaching than a parson doth at his offering... and would depose plainly *for* him.”
30 “Whether he said so or not,” quoth I, “that can I not tell you, but this I wot well. Himself was well learned in the law, and never could say that he was denied any favor that the law would grant. And many a

1 *may*: could 2–3 *heinous criminal causes*: cases of high crime
4–5 *toward* . . . *fault*: favoring conviction of the side on which alone falls the deficiency
5 *and is also*: but also there is 6 *record*: evidence 7 *content*: willing
8, 21 *honest*: honorable; upstanding 11 *divers*: several
12 *brought in judgment*: brought up for trial // *may well appear*: can be clearly shown
13 *so*: likewise // *incidentally*: in passing // *wherefore*: why
14 *were not reason*: would not make good sense // *in a detection*: with regard to an accusation
14 *suffer*: allow 15 *published*: (have been) slated; given formal public notice
18 *far in another case*: in a far different situation 19 *words*: statements
21 *Lollards*: followers of John Wycliffe 22 *religious folk*: members of religious orders
22 *husbandmen*: farmers 23 *gentlemen*: members of the gentry
24 *heard say*: heard it said that 27, 28 *at*: during 30 *so*: that
31 *wot*: know // *himself*: he himself // *learned*: versed

witness was there to whom he laid none exception... nor could say
 the contrary but that they were at his sermons and heard him. And
 then, when he was so clearly convicted by so many... so honest and so
 far from all suspicion of corruption, it were peradventure a thing
 5 not convenient, after those witnesses published, to bring proofs afresh
 upon the principal matter. For if it so should be, then should
 either the new proofs depose the same that the others did before... or
 else they should depose the contrary... or, finally, say such thing as
 neither could make nor mar. Now, if they did the first—that
 10 is to say, depose as the first did—then were we no further than we
 were before, and that time lost and the matter delayed in vain. If
 they did the third—deposing, percase, that themselves were not
 present... or asleep... or not well understood or not well remembered the
 matter—yet were we still at one stay. Put now the second point
 15 (which were in manner the only thing that might seem to have any
 color for him): that the new proofs would depose that they
 were at the same time present, and stood near him, marked him
 well, and were also well remembered that he said not so—yea, and
 peradventure that he said the contrary. This case were possible;
 20 but surely it were so seldom likely... that it were not worth to
 change a law therefor. But, now, if it so *should* happen, here were a
 great confusion. And how could any sentence be given if they
 should believe the second as well as the first?”

“That maketh,” quoth he, “no matter. For if the matter appear upon
 25 his side thereby—either clearly or doubtfully—then may the judges acquit
 and assoil the defendant. And better were it the faulty to be
 acquitted than the faultless to be punished.”

“It were a strange thing,” quoth I, “if the law should in such a matter
 as this is, after the witnesses once published... and thereby the matter
 30 well proved, then examine other witnesses afresh upon the principal
 point. This were, in my mind, *perilous*, not only for fear of
 subornation and false instruction of witnesses (a thing easy to be
 done upon the sight of that that is deposed already before), but
 also for that if the affirmative be proved—especially in this case of
 35 heresy, being by so many sufficiently proved—that one taught and
 preached such things in his open sermons: if others that were present

1 *laid none exception*: made no objection 3 *honest*: respectable

4–6 *it . . . matter*: it perhaps would not have been a good idea to bring in, after those slated
 witnesses, new witnesses concerning the principal charge 7, 16 *proofs*: witnesses

9 *mar*: break (him) 11 *matter*: proceedings 13–14 *or . . . stay*: or did not really understand
 or quite remember what he said, we would always still be at the same impasse

15 *in manner*: just about 15–16 *have any color for him*: work at all in his favor

17–18 *marked him well*: paid close attention to him

18 *were also well remembered*: also remembered clearly // *said not so*: did not say such and such

20–21 *were . . . therefor*: would not be worth changing a law for 22 *sentence*: verdict

24 *maketh . . . no matter*: is . . . immaterial

24–25 *if . . . thereby*: i.e., if the truth thereby is shown to be on his side 25 *doubtfully*: possibly

26 *assoil*: clear; exonerate // *faulty*: guilty 27 *faultless*: innocent

29 *once published*: have already been slated 32 *false*: dishonest // *easy to be*: easily

34 *for that*: because 35 *one*: someone 36 *open*: public

- at the same sermons would now depose the contrary, it may be that the first heard the thing which the second marked not, as many times it happeth. And more likely is it, also, that one may forget the thing that he heard... than that another should remember that thing that he heard not. And if they would peradventure add thereto that he said the *contrary* of such things as was proved against him, then can it at the best be no better taken than that he in one sermon said, taught, and preached both twain—that is to wit, the truth and the heresies. In which case he well were worthy in judgment to acknowledge his fault and be corrected therefor.”
- “By my troth,” quoth he; “yet methinketh ever that it ought to be heard, all that any man will say; and take all to the best for him that is accused—and especially in heresy pretended to be preached where so many be present.”
- “Surely,” quoth I, “what were best, God wotteth; for I cannot tell. But this wot I well: that the wit of the whole world, in effect, agreeth... that in all such heinous crimes... reason is clear to the contrary and quite against your mind. And whereas ye think your mind worthy to take special place in the proof and examination of heresies, surely meseemeth that of all crimes, in heresy might it *Heresies* *least* be suffered. For well ye wot that heresies be false belief and factious ways full of busyness. And such as give themselves thereto... be sturdy and studious about the furtherance of their seditious sect. And since they be fallen from God and his true faith, they have no great care of truth... nor be very scrupulous in the lending of an oath till they need in like case to be paid again. So that if their ‘nay’ may stand against other good men’s ‘yea,’ and where the heresy is *proved* to have been preached, there men may be heard and believed in deposing the contrary, the false preacher may be bold to say what him list. For he shall never fail to have his records ready.”
- “Yea,” quoth he, “but this way would not serve him. For men might take exception to them if they were heretics.”
- “Nay,” quoth I, “not if they *be* so, but if they be *proved* so. And that shall they never be if your way were received. For each of their witnesses shall always serve other.”

2 *first*: i.e., first set of witnesses // *the thing*: i.e., this thing // *marked not*: did not notice
 6 *proved*: testified // 7 *one*: one same // 9 *well worthy in judgment*: would well deserve the sentence of having // 10 *fault*: guilt // *corrected*: punished // *therefor*: for it
 11 *by my troth*: yes indeed // *methinketh ever*: it always seems to me // 13, 17 *in*: with regard to
 13 *pretended*: purported // 15 *surely*: to be sure // 15, 16, 21 *wot(teth)*: know(s)
 16 *the wit*... *agreeth*: practically the whole world is in agreement in understanding
 17 *heinous*: high // 17–18 *is*... *quite*: dictates the exact opposite and is completely
 18 *mind*: way of thinking // 19 *proof*: trying // 21 *suffered*: gone along with
 23 *busyness*: feverish activity // *sturdy*: ruthless // 24 *studious*: assiduous
 25–26 *care of*: concern for // 27 *like case*: a similar situation // *again*: back
 28, 29, 30 *may*: can // 30–31 *be*... *list*: brazenly say whatever he wants to
 31 *records*: witnesses // 36 *were received*: i.e., gains acceptance // 37 *other*: another

“Forsooth,” quoth he, “it seemeth somewhat perilous, as ye say, if men should against the affirmative proved... lean to the contrary witnesses, for the negative, in any crime that is seditious and hath daily folk of evil conscience fervently fall in thereto. But yet I much
 5 marvel of one thing. For I have heard it credibly reported that there were twain... and both beneficed men, both very cunning men, both twain very virtuous men... which heard him preach as well as they did that had deposed against him; and those twain affirmed, and offered to depose, that he preached not the things which he was
 10 accused of. And surely, had I been judge, I would have believed those twain above other twenty... except witnesses be taken only by number and not by weight.”

“Surely,” quoth I, “my mind and yours be not far asunder. For since all witnesses serve to induce the judge’s mind to conceive a credence
 15 and an opinion—or, rather, a certain persuasion—on the one side, I could not myself but believe some twain better than some twenty. And would not fail to *weigh* them, rather than take them by tale. Howbeit,” quoth I, “of those twain that ye speak of—the one was, indeed, such as ye say. But as for the other, was neither then
 20 held very clear... and since that time, proved clearly naught. But though the one was, as he was indeed, a very good man, yet for the man’s excuse he was no very good witness; nor the other, neither, although he had been as good a man as he; nor if they had been forty men more, as good as the better of them both, saying as they
 25 did.”

“Why,” quoth he, “said they not well for him?”

“Yes,” quoth I, “for as far as they went; but they went not far enough.”

“Ah,” quoth he, “their words were of likelihood narrowly taken.”

30 “They were,” quoth I, “taken as large as they were spoken—which was that he preached not such heresies in a place where they heard him in London. But then was his detection, and the proof made thereupon, of those heresies preached at sundry places *out of* London; whereby their words went as wide for his excuse as if
 35 one that were arraigned for a felony done at Salisbury on Shrove Tuesday... brought in good witnesses to the bar that would depose and

2 *lean to*: side with 4–5 *much marvel of*: really wonder about 6 *cunning*: astute

7 *which*: who 11 *other twenty*: twenty others // *except*: unless

13 *mind*: thinking // *asunder*: apart

15 *on the one side*: i.e., on the one side or the other 18 *tale*: count

20 *held very clear*: considered very bright and shining // *clearly naught*: glaringly bad

21 *though*: even if 22 *excuse*: defense 23 *although*: even if

24 *saying*: speaking 26 *why*: oh // *said*: spoke 29 *of likelihood*: probably

30 *large*: broadly 31 *such*: such and such

32 *his detection*: the accusation made against him // *proof*: examination

33 *of those*: about those // *out of*: outside of; not in 34 *words*: statements

34 *for his excuse*: of the mark of defending him 35 *one*: someone

35–36 *Shrove Tuesday*: the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday

- swear for him that he did no such felony at Shrewsbury on Sheer Thursday, for they were with him there all that day themselves. But, for conclusion, he was convicted by more than twenty... and excused by never one. And therefore, if his judges wronged him, there was never man had right. And yet were there, besides the witnesses, some letters written of his own hand unto one of his judges—which letters I have since seen—sounding, in mine ears, to as evil heresies as those were that he was detected of. Which letters were never laid into the Court till that, after the proofs published and read, he appeared obstinate, standing still in the denial and proudly refusing to submit himself to his abjuration. For then said his judge to whom they were written... that since he refused to be reconciled to the Church, he would keep no counsel of his. And therewith brought in those letters and filed them among the records of the Court.
- “This man had also been, before that, accused unto the greatest prelate in this realm; who, for his tender favor borne to the university, did not proceed far in the matter against him, but accepting his denial... with a corporal oath that he should, from that time forth, be no setter-forth of heresies, but in his preachings and readings impugn them... dismissed him very benignly—and, of his liberal bounty, gave him also money for his costs. And yet was none of all these matters laid unto his charge. Which if they had been... would peradventure have put him to peril.
- “I was also myself, since his abjuration, present (as it happed) with an honorable prelate at such time as one that was an ancient heretic had been examined... and there had confessed that he had held, taught, and in divers countries spread about almost all the heresies that any lewd heretic holdeth—”
- “May ye not tell his name?” quoth he.
- “Which of them?” quoth I. “For he had more names than half a leaf *Heretics most commonly can hold.*”
- have divers names.* “Where dwelled he?” quoth your friend.
- “Everywhere and nowhere,” quoth I. “For he walked about, as an apostle of the devil, from shire to shire and town to town through the realm... and had in every diocese a

1–2 *Sheer Thursday*: Holy Thursday 3 *excused*: defended 4 *never*: not a
 4 *wronged him*: did him wrong 5 *man had right*: a man done right
 6 *of his own hand*: in his own handwriting 7 *to*: like // *evil*: bad
 8 *detected*: accused 9 *laid into the Court*: entered into the Court records
 9 *proofs*: testimonies // *published*: (had been) announced 13 *counsel*: confidence
 19 *corporal oath*: an oath made solemn by the touching of a sacred object (originally, the linen cloth on which the consecrated elements are placed, during the Mass)
 20 *readings*: scriptural expositions 26 *honorable*: distinguished
 26–27 *an ancient heretic*: a heretic of long standing 29 *lewd*: lousy
 30 *may*: can 31 *leaf*: sheet of paper

diverse name. By reason whereof he did many years much harm ere
 he could be found out. This heretic—touching all his other
 heresies, he acknowledged them in conclusion to be naught, and
 offered to abjure them. But as for despising of images, relics,
 5 and pilgrimages—those things, he said, were no heresies, but
 very good and true points; for he heard them preached, he said, of
 the ‘great doctor,’ naming the man we speak of... and told where.
 Confessing also that he liked so well his sermons... that he letted
 not to go twenty miles to hear him. And yet was there since that
 10 another heretic that confessed for his own part the like. So that
 ye may see that good Christian folk were offended with his preaching,
 and heretics liked his preaching... and grounded *their* heresies
upon his preaching. And then look you what manner of preaching it
 was likely to be!

15 “I told you also, right now, that one of those two that ye took for
 so good and cunning men... was after found worse than many
 men would have went. Sir, so was it, indeed, that he was detected for
 buying of many books of Luther, Lambert, and Zwingli, with others
 of that sort—and well *proved*, and by himself also *confessed*, that
 20 he had bought of those books very many—which he brought forth at
 last... where he had laid them up no less suspiciously than secretly,
 and so secretly that all the town should have sought them long ere they
 should have found them out.

“He had also set a priest of his, and a secular servant of his besides, to
 25 buy many of the same suit... and double and treble of one sort... which
 were by them uttered to divers young scholars, such as they found
 properly witted, featly learned, and newfangledly-minded. And thus
 labored to corrupt the realm. Another parish priest had he before,
 that kept his cure also as this other did, which was after proved
 30 a very pernicious heretic.”

“But what was,” quoth he, “done to the master?”

“Forsooth,” quoth I, “great favor had he—and as some men said, great
 wrong, too—that he was not openly declared. Howbeit, because he
 was in good estimation, there was of pity much regard had to the
 35 conservation of his honesty. And nothing was there, in effect,
 exacted of him... but his amendment with the acknowledging of his
 fault. For surely, that man was of such a poor spirit in Christ... that,

1 *diverse*: different 2 *touching*: as for 3 *conclusion*: the end // *naught*: evil
 4 *despising*: contemptuous scorning 6 *true points*: valid positions // *of*: by
 7 *doctor*: scholar 8–9 *letted not to go*: thought nothing of walking
 11 *offended with*: scandalized by 15 *right*: just 16 *so*: such // *cunning*: astute
 16, 29 *after*: later 16 *worse*: (to be) less good 17 *went*: thought
 17 *detected*: informed on 25 *suit*: kind
 25 *double and treble of one sort*: i.e., two and three sets of one same collection
 26 *uttered*: given out // *divers*: several 27 *featly learned*: suitably educated
 29 *kept his cure*: fulfilled his pastoral responsibilities // *which*: who
 31 *master*: ringleader 33 *openly declared*: publicly charged
 34 *in good estimation*: held in high esteem 35 *honesty*: good name
 37 *fault*: guilt // *surely*: assuredly

for any oath that could be given him, long it was ere pride would
 for shame suffer him to say the truth. After which once confessed
 with his handwriting, then—as far as I have heard, without any
 other abjuration—there was secretly his solemn oath taken in
 5 judgment... that he should do no such thing anymore, upon pain
 of a relapse; and so, with certain secret penance, dismissed. But the
 thing that I tell you my tale for is this. This man—besides that all
 the books, in effect, which he had bought of this Lutheran sect
 were diligently read over and studied, and with such manner of
 10 notes marked in the margin, and words written of his own hand
 where the worst matters were, that he left no man in doubt, that read
 them, what fervent affection he bore unto them—he had, I say,
 besides all this, divers epistles (I wot ne’er whose, but written were
 they with his own hand) wherein were plenty of pestilent
 15 heresies. And a sermon also, worse than they all, written with his
 own hand also, ready to be preached, as it seemed, if the world would
 so change that the time would serve it. And when he was in his
 examination sore pressed upon to tell for what intent he made
 such a sermon ready and laid it up so secretly: destitute at last of
 20 all excuses that might bear any color of any good cause, ‘Well,’ quoth
 he, ‘I see well I must tell all. I am loath to hurt anybody.’ And thereupon
 he told how it was made, the most part, by the man that was abjured of
 whom we specially speak. So that, now setting all this gear together—
 this man’s confession, his secret friend and companion in such
 25 matters, his old accusations of like matters, the heretics’
 confessions that founded their heresies in the same matters upon the
 authority of his sermon, and besides all this, more than twenty witnesses
 plainly proving the matter against him—I would fain wit
 who had right if he had wrong... although there had been used
 30 to him more rigor a great deal than there was.”

The Fifth Chapter

The author proveth that the spiritual judges did the
 man marvelous favor—and almost more than lawful—in
 that they admitted him to such an abjuration as they did...
 35 and that they did not, rather, leave him to the secular hands.

- 1 *given*: administered to 5 *judgment*: adjudication
 6 *a relapse*: a backsliding into heresy (with the resultant punishment)
 6 *secret*: private 8 *of*: from 10 *of his own hand*: in his own handwriting
 11 *matters*: things 13 *divers*: several // *epistles*: letters
 13 *I wot ne’er whose*: composed by I don’t know whom 13, 15 *written*: written out
 17 *serve*: be right for 20 *color*: semblance 22 *made*: composed
 23 *setting*: putting // *gear*: stuff 24 *secret*: close
 25–26 *the . . . founded*: the confessions of the heretics who based 28 *matter*: case
 28 *fain wit*: like to know 29 *had*: was done // *although*: even if
 29–30 *there . . . was*: he had been treated a great deal more severely than he was
 32 *spiritual*: ecclesiastical 33 *marvelous*: extraordinary // *lawful*: licit
 35 *hands*: authorities

“**W**hy,” quoth he, “what devil rigor could they more have showed for the first time... than make him abjure and bear a fagot?”

“Yes,” quoth I—“some man had liefer bear twain cold in his neck... than have one bear him hot, on a fire at his feet!”

5 “In faith,” quoth he, “they could not have done that to him at the first time.”

“No,” quoth I, “not if he willingly returned to the Church, acknowledging his fault... and ready to abjure all heresies... and penitently submitted himself to penance. And else, if he prove himself obstinate
10 and impenitent, the Church neither is bound nor ought to receive him, but utterly may forsake him and leave him to the secular hands! But now was he so obstinate that he would not abjure, of long time. And divers days were his judges fain, of their favor, to give him—with sufferance of some his best friends, and whom he
15 most trusted, to resort unto him. And yet scantly could all this make him submit himself to make his abjuration. And finally were they fain, for saving of his life, to devise a form of abjuration whereof I never saw the like—nor, in so plain a case, never would, were I the judge, suffer like hereafter.”

20 “What manner of abjuration was that?” quoth he.

“Marry,” quoth I, “his abjuration was such that he therein abjured and forswore all heresies, acknowledging himself lawfully convicted. But whereas they be wont to confess in their own abjuration that they have held such heresies, and be guilty thereof—that would he do in no
25 wise; but, as clearly as his fault was proved, and by as many, yet would he not, to die therefor, confess himself faulty, but always stood still upon it, in virtue of his oath, that all they belied him.”

“It might happen,” quoth he, “that he had forgotten that he so had preached.”

30 “That were,” quoth I, “great wonder. For I am sure, when he had preached so in so many places, he had not done it of a sudden adventure, but of a deliberate purpose; which except he fell mad, it were not well possible for him in so great a matter to forget. And besides this, it was also deposed... that in a place where he preached, he

1 *what devil rigor*: what the devil severity 2, 5–6 *the first time*: a first offense

2, 3, 4 *bear*: carry 2 *fagot*: bundle of sticks

3 *some man had liefer*: someone would rather // *twain cold*: two cool ones // *in*: around

5 *in faith*: well, seriously // *at*: after 8, 25 *fault*: guilt

10–11 *receive him*: take him back 12 *hands*: authorities

12 *of*: for a 13 *divers*: several // *fain*: willing // *favor*: exceptional kindness

14 *sufferance of*: permission for 15 *resort unto*: visit

16–17 *finally* . . . *to*: finally, to save his life, they had to 18 *plain*: clear

19 *suffer*: allow the 21 *marry*: indeed 25 *wise*: way

26 *to die therefor*: even if the refusal would mean his death // *faulty*: guilty

27 *stood still upon it*: kept maintaining // *in virtue of his oath*: under oath

27 *all they*: all of them // *belied*: (had) slandered

30 *were* . . . *great wonder*: would be . . . really amazing

31–32 *of a sudden adventure*: by any spur-of-the-moment accident 32 *purpose*: intent

32 *except he fell mad*: unless he went insane 34 *a place*: i.e., a certain place

- was after the sermon reasoned with forthwith. And by an honest layman had it laid unto his charge... that he had perilously preached—showing him wherein. Whereunto he made answer, not that he had not said so, nor that he had not meant so, or that they had
- 5 mistaken and wrongly understood his words, but that he would preach there again soon after... and prove his preaching true by the old doctors of the Church. And this happed him not long before that he was accused. Was it now possible, by your faith, that he could have forgotten this?”
- 10 “It was,” quoth he, “possible enough that altogether was false, and that they lied all. For so might they do by possibility, being but men... and though they had been more than they were. And then he peradventure *knowing* that they so did, why should he falsely confess a fault in himself for the falsehood of other folk?”
- 15 “That is,” quoth I, “true if he so knew it. But how could that be so... against so many proofs sworn and deposing the matter upon their oaths... being, though they were but men, yet men of wit and honesty, and some well learned, also... and men that bore him no displeasure for any other matter than his evil preaching? Men almost
- 20 all such as could have none other matter to him; folk that never had other matter with him—and many of them of little acquaintance or none the one with the other, so that there was no fear of conspiring together in one tale.”
- “Yet,” quoth he, “were it possible that they might lie all.”
- 25 “And what,” quoth I, “that he had been accused in other places before? As he was, indeed, not only to the most honorable prelate, that I told you... but besides him, unto two other bishops too!”
- “Well,” quoth he, “and yet they that so accused him might happen to lie too!”
- 30 “And what,” quoth I, “that his own secret acquaintance confessed that he made the first draft of that ungracious sermon that I told you?”
- “Heard you that yourself?” quoth he.
- “Myself,” quoth I, “nay; but such as I heard it of were men of more
- 35 worship, and truth thereto, than that any man, I ween, would mistrust their tale.”

1 *after . . . forthwith*: immediately after the sermon confronted about it
 2 *honest*: reputable // *it laid unto his charge*: it imputed to him; the accusation made to him
 2–3 *perilously preached*: preached terribly 3 *showing*: telling 4 *so*: such and such
 5 *mistaken*: erroneously taken // *words*: statements 7 *old doctors*: early theologians
 8 *by your faith*: do you seriously believe 10 *altogether*: the whole thing
 11 *they lied all*: they all were lying 12 *though*: even if // *more*: i.e., more numerous
 14 *fault*: guiltiness // *for*: on account of 16 *proofs*: witnesses 17 *wit*: intelligence
 18 *honesty*: good repute // *well*: very 19 *evil*: bad 20 *matter*: quarrel; issue
 20 *to*: with 21 *other matter with*: any other connection to
 25, 30 *what*: what about the fact 26 *honorable*: high-ranking
 27, 31–32 *told you*: told you about 30 *secret*: personal 31 *made*: wrote
 31 *ungracious*: ungodly 34 *it of*: it from 35 *worship*: prestige // *truth*: integrity
 35 *thereto*: as well // *ween*: think 36 *mistrust*: doubt // *tale*: story

- “As worshipful as they were,” quoth he, “and as trusty, too, *I* could mistrust their tale well enough sometime—for lack of indifference, peradventure, as they stood unsworn. And yet though I mistrusted not *them* all, it might be that they said true... and that the
 5 *other* lied... which for his own excuse laid the first making of that sermon to the other man.”
- “The laying thereof to him,” quoth I, “could not excuse himself. For he confessed that himself liked it and allowed it... and therefore wrote it out... and added also many things more thereto.”
- 10 “Well,” quoth he, “and yet all this might be.”
- “And what,” quoth I, “of the heretics that grounded their opinions upon his sermons?”
- “May it not be,” quoth he, “that they lied?”
- “And what,” quoth I, “of them that accused him to other prelates
 15 before?”
- “By God,” quoth he, “even as I told you before, it *might* be that they *lied*, well enough!”
- “And what then,” quoth I, “of all those twenty that deposed against him now?”
- 20 “Marry,” quoth he, “as I told you now, it might be that they did even the same!”
- “This is,” quoth I, “a strange thing to me.”
- “Why,” quoth he, “should this be strange to you? Methinketh it should be strange to no man, but very plain to every man, that it
 25 might be so. For I pray you, *might* it not so be? Were it not possible that they might all lie, and though they were as many more?”
- “Possible?” quoth I. “That I say not nay, but that it were possible though they were a thousand times as many.”
- “Well,” quoth he, “since it *might* be so, then put case it *was* so. Did not
 30 he right, then, in that he still *said* so? And if he had died therein, had he not died for the truth? For, knowing in himself that all they belied him, he was not bound to belie himself with them, and confess against himself an untruth, but had been in great sin if he so should have done. What say ye to this?”
- 35 “I say,” quoth I, “to this that all the force and effect of your conclusion hangeth upon the case which ye put—that all that ever aught said

1 *worshipful*: prestigious // *trusty*: trustworthy 2, 3 *mistrust(ed)*: doubt(ed)
 2 *tail*: story // *indifference*: impartiality
 3 *as they stood unsworn*: since they were not put under oath // *though*: even if
 4 *said true*: told the truth 5 *which*: who // *excuse*: exoneration // *laid*: ascribed
 5 *making*: writing 8 *confessed*: admitted // *allowed*: approved of
 11, 14, 18 *of*: about 11 *grounded*: based // *opinions*: tenets 16, 20 *even*: just
 20 *marry*: good heavens // *now*: just now 24 *plain*: obvious 25 *pray*: ask
 26, 27 *though*: even if 27 *that I say*: to that I say
 29 *put case*: suppose for the sake of argument that 30 *still said*: continued to say
 31 *had he not*: would he not have // *in*: within
 31–32 *all they belied him*: all of them were slandering him 32 *bound*: obliged
 32 *belie*: slander 33 *had*: would have
 273/36—274/1 *all . . . deposed*: all those who ever said or deposed anything

or deposed against him lied, all the meinie. Which case ye would
needs have *granted* because it was *possible*. And then—that case
once granted—ye deduce your conclusion very surely. And in good
faith, ye bring me therewith so to my wit's end that I wot not
5 well which way to answer you admitting your case. But ever my
mind giveth me that your case, though it be possible, were rather
to be granted at a school, in argument, than at a court, in judgment.
And I pray you for the proof thereof let me put you another case...
which, in good faith, I am half ashamed to put you, saving that ye
10 drive me to seek a shift. And yet shall not my case in my mind
be much unlike to yours. If it so were that Wilkins had laid a wager
with Simkins... that in a certain way named between them, usual
enough for men and horses both, there had gone of late a horse or two,
and that he would so clearly prove it that it could not be the contrary;
15 if Simkins said, and laid his wager, the contrary... and then
they both should choose us for judges; and we coming, all four, into
the way, Wilkins would show us on the ground, part in the clay
and part, peradventure, in the snow, the prints of horse feet, and of
men's feet also, by a long way (ten miles together, and ye will), till
20 they come at a water where went away by ship no man can
tell who nor whither (it forceth not for our wise case); but, now, if
Wilkins would say that he had won his wager, 'for lo, here ye see
the prints of the horse feet all this way shown, and all with the very
nails in them, so that it may be none otherwise but horse hath
25 gone here'—if Simkins, after all this, would say the wager were *his*,
'for it is not proved that any *horse* had gone there, for it might be
that they were geldings, or mares'—here were we fallen in a great
question of the law: whether the gray mare may be the better horse
or not... or whether he have a wise face or not that looketh as
30 like a fool as a ewe looketh like a sheep. And in this question if the
parties demurred in our judgment... we might ask advice further of
learned men and judges."

"We might," quoth he, "by suit, to be sure of the matter, make it an
Exchequer Chamber case. Or, saving the praemunire, we might have it
35 tried in the Rota, at Rome."

1 *all the meinie*: the whole lot of them 3 *surely*: confidently

3–4, 9 *in good faith*: in all honesty 4–5 *wot not well*: don't really know

7 *school*: university // *argument*: a debate // *judgment*: a trial 8 *pray*: ask that

10 *shift*: tactic 12 *in a certain way*: along a certain path // *named*: specified

12–13 *usual enough for*: i.e., traveled commonly enough by

13 *gone of late*: recently walked 16–17 *into the way*: onto the path

19 *ten miles together*: ten consecutive miles // *and*: if 20 *at a water*: to a river

21 *whither*: to where // *forceth*: matters // *wise*: brilliant 29 *wise*: intelligent-looking

31 *demurred in*: took exception to 34 *Exchequer Chamber*: i.e., arbitration

34 *saving the praemunire*: i.e., unless it would constitute a violation of the praemunire statute.
(This statute forbade appealing to any foreign entity in an attempt to override civil authority.)

- “Very well,” quoth I; “so that, I see well, by your wit and mine together... one shift or other we should find for a final end therein—if the doubt were in that point. But, now, if Simkins stuck not thereto, but would say thus—‘Lo, here ye see the *men* have gone this way; and how can ye then be sure that any *horse* went here? For I put case,’ saith he, ‘that these men which went here had horseshoes in their hands, made fast upon long steels; and always, as they went, pricked them down hard in the ground.’”
- “Tut,” quoth he, “this were a wise invention!”
- “Verily,” quoth I, “to me it would not seem very gay. But, now, if Simkins were contentious and would say the wager were his ‘except it be so proved that it can be none otherwise but that horses have of late gone there,’ and then will say to us, ‘Lo, sirs, as ye see it, it *may* be otherwise; for men *might* make with their hands all the prints of horseshoes in the ground’; and then if we would say that was never so, he would ask us how can we be *sure* thereof, while we cannot say nay but it *might* be so; and would still press upon us with this question ‘May it not be so?’”—
- “It *may*,” quoth he, “by possibility *be* so!”
- “Then,” quoth I, “when we grant him once that it *may* be so, then will he by and by put case that it *were* so. And then, if we grant him his case once for the possibility, then will he shortly conclude that the other part is not so surely proved as it must be if Wilkins should win the wager. What should we say to him now? To whom should we give the wager?”
- “In faith,” quoth he, “I wot ne’er what to say to him. And the matter is so mad that as for the wager, what I would give Wilkins I wot ne’er, but as for Simkins, except he better impugned the proof, if the wager were but a butterfly... I would never award him one wing.”
- “Surely,” quoth I, “and you shall rule the matter for me. For if ye give him naught... he getteth as little of me. But, now, what if he wax angry that his proper invention were no more set by, nor his wit no more regarded, and would thereupon help forth his part with his oath, and swear upon a Book that himself *saw* when the men made

2 *shift*: maneuver 3 *stuck not thereto*: did not make an issue of that
 5 *put case*: propose 7 *made fast upon long steels*: fastened to long poles made of steel
 9 *were*: would be // *wise*: brilliant 9, 32 *invention*: contrivance
 10 *verily*: truth to tell // *gay*: plausible 16 *while*: since 17 *say nay but*: deny that
 17 *still press upon*: keep pressing on 21 *by and by*: immediately
 21 *put case*: postulate 22 *shortly*: in short order 23, 33 *part*: side (of the argument)
 23 *surely*: definitely 23–24 *if Wilkins should*: for Wilkins to 26 *in faith*: honestly
 26, 27 *wot ne’er*: have no idea 26 *matter*: case 27 *mad*: crazy
 28 *except*: unless 30 *surely*: assuredly
 30 *you shall rule the matter for me*: it’s fine with me for you to rule the case
 31 *naught*: nothing // *of*: from // *wax*: gets 32 *proper*: excellent
 32 *were no more set by*: was not taken more seriously
 32–33 *nor his wit no more regarded*: nor his intelligence held in higher regard
 33 *forth*: along 34 *Book*: Bible

those prints in the ground with horseshoes held in their hands? What would ye then say?"

"Marry," quoth he, "then would I say—and swear, too—that besides the loss of his wager, he had like a false, foolish knave lost his honesty and his soul too!"

"In good faith," quoth I, "and for aught I see yet, I durst be bold to swear with you. And then, letting Wilkins alone with Simkins disputing their sophism themselves, let us return home again to our own matter. In which while there were so many so clear and open proofs against the man of whom we speak all this while, though it were *possible* that all they might be false... yet could there none indifferent judge so *think*... except it were so *proved*—and that by other means than the only oath of the party that is accused... swearing alone against them all."

"Yet," quoth he, "for all that, if he know indeed that he did it not, he doth but well to abide by the truth."

"Very sooth ye say," quoth I. "Nor Simkins, neither, if he saw the men print the horseshoes in the highway—though it seemed us never so unlikely, yet had he done well to say it, and swear it, too, and stiffly to stick thereby. And yet ye remember, pardie, that if he so would have sworn, ye and I both durst right now right boldly have believed that he lied. And might we not well believe the same in our case too?"

"Yes," quoth he, "that will I well. And therefore the judges did him but right to reckon him as convicted, and therefore to compel him to abjure. But yet they showed him therein no such favor as ye speak of... in that they admitted him to his abjuration without confessing of the fault. For if they had forced him thereto, they had in my mind done him plain and open wrong, because it might be that he said and swore true. And then should they have forced him against his conscience... to say of himself untrue. And that should they do not only clean against right, but also without necessity, considering that they might—as in conclusion they did—abjure him otherwise. And therefore, they took the best way, both for him and for themselves also; but since they did therein none otherwise than as they were of duty bound, it well appeareth he had therein no such favor as ye would make it seem that they showed him."

3 *marry*: goodness 4 *false*: lousy // *honesty*: respectability

6 *in good faith*: really // *ought*: anything 9 *matter*: case // *while*: when

10 *proofs*: testimonies 12 *indifferent*: unbiased // *except*: unless

13 *the only*: just the 16 *abide by*: stand by; stick with

17 *very sooth ye say*: what you say is quite true

18 *in the highway*: on that well-traveled road 20 *stiffly*: adamantly

20 *pardie*: by golly 21 *right now*: just now

24 *that will I well*: I should think so indeed

25 *reckon him as convicted*: consider him guilty 26 *favor*: exceptional kindness

27–28 *without confessing of the fault*: without his having to admit to being guilty

28–29 *had in . . . wrong*: would in my opinion have clearly and obviously done him wrong

36 *well appeareth*: is quite evident that

“Well,” quoth I, “since yourself agreeth that he had no *wrong*: albeit no
favor had been showed him, yet were your errand answered as
 far as toucheth his abjuration. And now if I should prove you that
 his judges *showed* him such favor, I fear me lest I should therewith
 5 somewhat seem to charge them that they had done... though
 not wrong, yet very near wrong; the favor appearing to be showed...
 if not against the law, yet at the least way the law for favor so
 far stretched forth that the leather could scant hold. But yet choose
 they for me. For since I have said it, I will tell you why—and so
 10 much the more boldly between us twain... for that I perceive not in
 you any such manner of mind toward them that ye would blow
 abroad any fault of unlawful favor found in them.”

“Ah, well said!” quoth he, and laughed. “Ye ween I were more ready to
 report their rigor than any point of their favor!”

15 “Well taken of you!” quoth I. “I see well a man cannot have a good
 opinion of you but your conscience construeth it to the contrary!
 But, now, for the matter, I trow we be agreed both... that all
 were it so that the man had been faultless in deed, yet were the proofs
 against him so many, so good, so clear and evident, and so much
 20 more than sufficient, that neither his judges nor ourselves neither—
 nor, I think, his own father neither, if he had heard them—could
 have thought him other than very greatly guilty.”

“Surely,” quoth he, “that is true.”

25 “Now,” quoth I, “that being true, that they could none otherwise reckon
 in him though he still swore the contrary: must it not needs be that
 in his *denying* in virtue of his *oath* the things which they could
 not but believe true, they must needs therewith believe him all that
 while to lie and be perjured?”

“That followeth,” quoth he.

30 “Now,” quoth I, “when one is accused and convicted of heresy, what
 thing will the law that the Church shall receive him to?”

“What thing?” quoth he. “Marry, to mercy!”

“Nay,” quoth I, “mercy is the thing, as it seemeth, that they receive him
 by—not the thing that they receive him *to*.”

35 “Then is it,” quoth he, “to penance.”

“That seemeth well said,” quoth I. “For the Church by mercy receiveth
 him to penance.”

1 *had*: was done // *albeit*: even if 2 *were your errand*: would your relayed message be
 3 *toucheth*: concerns 5 *charge them that they had*: be accusing of them of having
 10 *boldly*: freely 11 *manner*: kind // *mind*: disposition 11–12 *blow abroad*: broadcast
 12 *fault*: guiltiness 13 *ween*: think // *were*: would be
 14 *rigor*: severity // *point*: instance // 17 *trow*: trust that
 17–18 *all were it so*: even if it were the case 18 *faultless in deed*: in fact not guilty
 18 *proofs*: testimonies 19 *evident*: convincing 23 *surely*: assuredly
 26 *in virtue of his oath*: under oath 30 *one*: someone
 31 *that the Church shall*: have the Church 32 *marry*: of course

“But, now,” quoth I, “doth the Church openly receive to penance any person appearing and proving himself still impenitent?”

“Nay,” quoth he.

5 “Appeareth not he still impenitent,” quoth I, “that still appeareth
 Confession the first part of perjured... and still standing in perjury?
 penance And whereas the first part of penance is
 confession and humble acknowledging of the
 fault, can the Church reckon him penitent that still refuseth to
 confess his fault; that lieth falsely still, and falsely forswearth
 10 himself?”

 “The Church,” quoth he, “cannot surely know whether he swear true
 or false; and therefore they cannot surely judge him forsworn. For it
 may be, by possibility, that all the witnesses lied.”

 “It may be too,” quoth I, “by possibility, if we go this way to work,
 15 that all the men lied that ever have said they came from Rome... and
 that all the briefs and bulls were feigned that ever were supposed to be
 brought from thence... for aught that he can tell that never came
 there himself. For some one man might lie, and some one bull or
 brief might be feigned... and so some other, and one by one... and so
 20 forth, of all the remnant. For like possibility is there in *every* one
 as is in *any* one. And peradventure as for your own self, have never
 yet talked with twenty that have told you they have been at Rome.”

 “No, no,” quoth he, “nor, I ween, with ten neither.”

 “And how many bulls,” quoth I, “and briefs, have ye seen that came
 25 thence?”

 “By our Lady,” quoth he, “bulls very few, and briefs never none; for I
 never ask after them.”

 “Then,” quoth I, “might you by your own reason as well doubt
 whether there were any Rome or no... as whether that man lied and
 30 were forsworn or no. But in this point I will not long stick with
 you. For surely, standing the matter in such case that his judges
 could not otherwise think of him but that he was faulty of things
 which he still in virtue of his oath denied; all were it so that they
 might think therewith that by possibility they might be in
 35 that mind deceived; yet while they could not think, nor they

1 *openly*: publicly 6 *whereas*: given that 8, 9 *fault*: guilt
 9 *falsely*: despicably // *forswearth*: perjures 11, 12 *surely*: with certainty
 12 *forsworn*: to have committed perjury 16, 19 *feigned*: forged
 16 *supposed to be*: supposedly 17 *thence*: there
 17 *that never came*: i.e., who has never been 20 *remnant*: rest 22 *at*: to
 23 *ween*: think 25 *thence*: from there 27 *after*: about 28 *reason*: reasoning
 30 *were forsworn*: had committed perjury // *in*: over // *stick*: wrangle
 31 *standing the matter in such case*: the case standing in such a state 32 *faulty*: guilty
 33 *all were it so*: even if it were the case
 34–35 *in that mind deceived*: mistaken in that view 35 *while*: as long as

could have none other mind, but that he, though it might by possibility be true that he swore, yet was forsworn in deed, and in very deed persevered in perjury—now, the matter, I say, standing in such case—since he that with so plain-appearing *perjury* standeth in the denial of his fault and false defense of himself cannot be reckoned of his fault penitent, and unto penance ought none impenitent person to be admitted: I will not say that his judges did *wrong*, but surely methinketh I may well say that they showed him *great favor*, in that they received him to penance without the

10 *A strange fashion of* confession of his fault. And I think
 abjuration verily it was a favorable fashion of abjuration...
 and so strange that the like hath

been very seldom seen, if ever it were seen before. And that did they in hope that God shall send him more grace in time to come—

15 and so I beseech him to do. For, I promise you, for my part... I never can conceive good hope of his amendment all the while that I see that pride abide still in his heart that cannot suffer him for shame to confess his fault.”

The Sixth Chapter

20 The author showeth that the person abjured—for his own worldly honesty, and for the more fruit of his preaching if he be suffered to preach in time to come, it were much better for him openly and willingly to confess the truth. And that now, by the standing still in the denial, he both

25 shameth himself and should if he preached slander the word of God.

“It is,” quoth he, “peradventure better thus. For then should he slander himself—and the word of God also, if he should hereafter preach again.”

30 “Nay, marry,” quoth I, “then should he, rather, *deliver* himself from slander—and the word of God also. For then should every man see the devil cast clean out of his heart, and hope that he should

1 *mind*: view 1–2 *it* . . . *swore*: what he swore to could possibly be true
 2 *was forsworn in deed*: had in fact lied under oath 3 *very deed*: actual fact
 3 *persevered in perjury*: was continuing to commit perjury 5, 6, etc. *fault*: guilt
 9–10 *the confession*: his admitting to 11 *favorable*: partiality-showing
 12 *strange*: unusual; extraordinary 18 *confess*: admit to
 20 *abjured*: made to renounce his heresies under oath 21 *honesty*: reputation
 22 *suffered*: allowed // *were*: would be 23 *openly*: publicly // *willingly*: voluntarily
 25, 27, 31 *slander*: (bring into) discredit 30 *marry*: indeed

be from thence forth a very good man. Whereas now, thinking him
 to persevere in a proud perjury, we can none other think but that he
 must needs be very naught still, though we should hereafter hear
 him preach never so well. And *that* were a *sore* slander to the
 5 word of God—that men should see him whom they hear preach well...
 so proud a hypocrite, and therewith so foolish, too, that for a false
 hope of his own estimation preserved, he laboreth as much as
 in him is to make the world ween that twenty true men were
 forsworn against him. Wherein while there is no man so mad
 10 to believe him, he loseth (if he preach in this plight) all his whole
 purpose, and winneth nothing but the contrary; that is, double
 shame, of his proud perjury and high malicious mind, instead of
 the praise that he looketh and preacheth for.”

The Seventh Chapter

15 The messenger moveth a question: if a man be sworn by
 a judge to say the truth of himself in a crime whereof he
 is had suspect, whether he may not lawfully on his oath
 swear untruth... where he thinketh the truth cannot be
 proved against him. Whereunto the author answereth that he
 20 is bound upon peril of perjury to say and confess truth.
 And the much more sin and folly both... was it, then, for the
 man that thus was abjured to forswear himself in the thing
 that he wist well *would* be proved; and a *shameless* folly to stand
 still by his perjury... when he saw the matter so clearly
 25 proved indeed. And with this finisheth he the matter of
 his abjuration.

“**I**n good faith,” quoth he, “I begin in this matter to be of your mind.
 For, the matter being so plain and clearly proved, it was and is both
 sin and folly to stand in the denying. But there cometh a thing
 30 in my mind, though it be somewhat out of our matter... wherein
 I would be glad to hear what ye think.”

“What thing is that?” quoth I.

“Marry,” quoth he, “I have heard some well-learned men say if a man

1 *from thence forth*: from then on 3 *naught*: wicked // *though*: even if
 4 *never so well*: no matter how correctly // *were*: would be // *sore*: serious
 4 *slander*: discredit 5 *well*: correctly
 7 *his own estimation preserved*: salvaging his own reputation
 7–8 *laboreth as much as in him is*: tries as hard as he can 8 *ween*: believe
 8 *true*: honest 8–9 *were forsworn*: committed perjury 9 *while*: since
 9 *so mad*: so insane as 10 *plight*: state 15 *moveth*: poses
 16 *say the truth of*: tell the truth about 16, 22 *in*: with regard to 17 *had*: held
 17 *lawfully*: licitly 21, 23, 29 *folly*: idiocy
 22 *abjured*: made to renounce heresies under oath // *forswear*: perjure 23 *wist*: knew
 30 *out of*: outside // *matter*: subject matter 33 *marry*: well // *well-learned*: well-educated

were accused of a fault that were true indeed—yet if it be secret and cannot be proved, in an oath put unto him he may and ought to swear nay, because that of secret and unknown things no man can be

5 *It is sin for a man to* his judge. For only God is judge of man's
 defame himself. heart. And if he should confess it where
 he needeth not, before no competent judge—
 that is to wit, his secret fault openly before men... whereof only God is
 judge—then should he defame himself; and that were great sin.

10 *Sir 41:12* For Holy Scripture saith, 'Curam habe de
 Prv 13:3; 19:16; 22:1 bono nomine' ('Take heed of thy good
 name'); *et* "Melior est nomen bonum quam
 divitie multe" ('Better is a good name than much riches'). And it
 saith also, 'Maledictus homo qui negligit famam suam' ('Accursed is
 15 that man that careth not what men say of him'). And therefore I have
 heard some well-learned men say that in this case a man may boldly
 deny the matter upon his oath be it never so true, so that it be so
 secret as it be not able to be proved by witnesses."

 "Forsooth," quoth I, "it is a large and a long matter to speak of perjury.
 But as for this point, I hold it in my mind little question. For I
 20 hold this once, for a sure and an infallible conclusion: that a man may
 never lawfully be forsworn. Marry, truth it is that a man's oath receiveth
 interpretation, and is not always bound precisely to the words.

An oath receiveth As if a judge would swear me generally, in
 interpretation. a court, to make true answer to such
 25 things as should be asked of me, and after
 mine oath given... he would ask me certain questions of matters nothing
 belonging to him, I were not by mine oath bound to make

Whether a priest may swear him answer, forasmuch as no such thing
 that he knoweth not that he was in mine oath intended. And therefore
 30 *heard in confession* if a priest that had heard a man's confession
 were called before a judge and sworn for
 a witness, he might boldly swear he knew nothing of the
 matter. Not for the common gloss (that the confession was not made to him
 as to himself, but as to God's minister), but for that the law
 35 dischargeth him of showing any such thing... no less than if his
 oath were given him in this manner: 'What know ye of this matter out

1 *a fault that were true indeed*: a sin that he is in fact guilty of

1, 3, etc. *secret*: hidden; private 8 *defame*: be committing detraction against

8 *were*: would be 11 *et*: and 12 *richesse*: wealth 14, 26, 32 *of*: about

15 *well-learned*: well-educated 16 *matter*: charge 20 *once*: once and for all

21 *lawfully*: licitly // *be forsworn*: commit perjury // *marry, truth it is*: it is, of course, true

21 *receiveth*: admits of 22 *precisely*: absolutely

23 *swear me generally*: put me under a general oath

26–27 *nothing belonging to him*: not at all belonging to his jurisdiction

27 *were . . . bound*: would . . . be obligated 32 *might*: could // *boldly*: freely

32 *swear*: say under oath that 33 *for*: by virtue of // *gloss*: explanation

34 *for*: by reason of the fact

35 *dischargeth him of showing*: exempts him from having to disclose

36 *given*: administered to 281/36–282/1 *out of*: outside of; apart from

of confession?’ For else, if there were a tyrant that would compel him
 by express words to swear what he knew by the man’s confession,
 the confessor had in my mind no remedy but to tell him plainly,
 ‘Sir, I will not swear for you, nor in such matter make you any answer,
 5 to die therefor. Not for anything that I know in the man for this
 matter, though I told you all his whole confession anon, but for the
 evil that should grow by such a precedent. For if I should now excuse
 an innocent swearing truly that I heard no such things in his
 confession, I should in some other case either be forsworn... or by
 10 my refusing to swear, I should make the man the more suspect, in that I
 refuse to swear as much for him as I did for another. And therefore
 will I not make any answer in this, for the peril that may fall in other.’
 And with this answer, or such other, must he plainly refuse to swear,
 what pain soever he should endure therefor. And in like wise, if any
 15 judge would give an oath to any person to tell him the truth of any
 crime which were so secret as that judge had never heard anything
 thereof... but would for his only pleasure know by the man’s oath
 whether there were, peradventure, any such thing or not: the party
 may deny to swear, or to make him answer, therein. But, on the other
 20 side, if he be denounced or detected unto him, either by common
 fame or other information... with such conjectures and likelihoods
 as the law giveth the judge authority to give the party an oath
 for the further search of the matter: there is he plainly bound,
 upon pain of eternal damnation, without covering or cautel
 25 to show and disclose the plain truth... and to have more respect
 to his soul than to his shame. For as for those texts which ye alleged,
 be far from this point. For they none other mean but
 that a man should in his living avoid not only sin... but also
 all occasions whereby men might have reasonable cause falsely to
 30 defame him; and it was never meant of the shame that a man taketh
 of his own confession for his sin committed indeed. For by *that*
 he *loseth* not his good name, but *getteth* his good name, among
 good folk. And as for of evil men’s words, there is no reckoning.
 But surely, as I say, if a man had been all ill as a devil, and
 35 after repenting his sin would for part of his penance willingly

1, 15, 17 *would*: wanted to 2 *express*: explicit // *swear*: tell under oath
 3 *had* . . . *remedy*: would in my opinion have no choice 4 *swear*: take this oath
 3, 13 *plainly*: straight-out 5 *to die therefor*: even if this refusal should cost me my life
 5 *in*: about // *for*: concerning 6 *though*: even if // *anon*: right now
 7 *should grow by*: would come of 7–8 *excuse an innocent*: get an innocent person acquitted by
 8 *truly*: truthfully 9 *case*: i.e., court case // *either be forsworn*: have to either commit perjury
 10, 13 *swear*: speak under oath 15 *give* . . . *person*: put anyone under oath
 15 *of*: about 16 *secret*: unknown about 17 *for his only*: just for his 19 *deny*: refuse
 19 *swear*: be put under oath // *make him*: give him any // *therein*: on that subject
 20 *detected*: informed on 20–21 *either* . . . *fame*: by way of either widespread report
 21 *conjectures*: reasonable grounds for supposition // *likelihoods*: indications
 22 *give* . . . *an*: put . . . under 23 *search*: investigation 24 *covering*: covering up
 24 *cautel*: craftiness 25 *show*: tell // *respect*: regard 26 *alleged*: cited
 27 *from this point*: i.e., from relevant here 30 *defame*: bad-mouth
 33 *of* . . . *words*: what bad people might say // *reckoning*: telling 34 *ill*: evil
 35 *willingly*: voluntarily

offer himself to the sufferance of open shame, there were no
 good Christian man that would after that like the man the worse...
 but a great deal the better. And if all such open confession were
 sin... there was much sin used among good folk many day in
 5 Christ's church... when it was much better than it is now.

“Lo, Achan, that had committed sacrilege (whereof is written in
 Joshua), was exhorted by Joshua to confess his fault openly... and
 give glory to God, that had detected him by lots. And so *did* he,
 and meekly suffered for his sin as well the shame and wonder of the
 10 world... as the pain and bitterness of death. And therefore I no more
 doubt of *that* thief but that he is a glorious saint in heaven... than I
 doubt of that thief that Christ promised Paradise hanging on the
 cross. And surely if men's old faults were still their infamy
 after their amendment... then was Saint Peter little beholden to
 15 Saint Matthew and others of his fellows that have slandered him
 in their gospels, telling how shamefully, after all his crakes, he
 forsook his Master and forswore him both. If a good man wax
 naught, the better he was the more sin it is, and the more shame
 also. And is it not then in reason, on the other side, if a naughty man
 20 wax good—the worse he was, the better is for him, and the more worship
 also? Our Lord saith himself that for one sinner coming
 again to grace... there is more joy in heaven than upon almost a
 hundred good folk that never sinned. And reckon we then that
 man shamed by the knowledge of his sin here among sinful men...
 25 whose humble confession and meek amendment winneth him so
 much worship in heaven? Trust me—truly, when a man hath done
 evil, if he be duly sworn... it is a worshipful shame and a joyful
 sorrow to confess the truth. And good folk, though they abhor
 the sin, yet love they and commend the man... as one that was
 30 naught and is good. And the shame that he conceiveth in his heart before
 the world... getteth him great honor before God; and the short
 glowing heat in his cheeks speedily burneth up and wasteth the
It is damnable to convey a never-wasting fire of hell, standing him
fault by any cautel. further in stead of great part of his purgatory.
 35 And therefore, to the point that we
 speak of, without long process I tell you plainly my mind: that

1 *sufferance*: endurance 1, 3 *open*: public
 2 *like the man the worse*: think less of the man 4 *used*: practiced
 6–10: See Joshua 7:10–26. 6, 8, 15 *that*: who
 8 *detected him by lots*: had had him found out through drawings of lots
 9 *wonder*: the staring 13 *faults*: transgressions
 15 *fellows*: colleagues // *slandered him*: brought him into disgrace
 16 *crakes*: crowings; boasts 17–18 *wax naught*: goes bad
 19 *is it not then in reason*: does it not then stand to reason
 19, 30 *naught(y)*: bad 20 *wax*: turns 20, 26 *worship*: honor
 22 *again*: back 27 *worshipful*: honorable
 34 *further in stead of*: i.e., in further stead by taking care of a
 36 *process*: discussion

no man can be excused from the peril of endless damnation... that
 would upon boldness of any doctor's opinion... hide or cover his fault
 by any cautel... after a lawful oath given him to tell the plain
 truth therein. And whoso will say the contrary, he must needs hold
 5 plain against the law... and say that no judge may lawfully give
 an oath to the party. For whereof should the oath serve if the party
 might lawfully forswear himself? And also, if the judge may *not*
 lawfully give him the oath, then may he *refuse* to swear—and may
not first swear and then say false; which every man must, upon
 10 damnation, eschew though he follily take an oath where he
 lawfully might refuse it.”

“Forsooth,” quoth he, “methinketh ye take the sure way.”

“Well,” quoth I, “if this be so in one that is sworn where the matter,
 as he thinketh, *cannot* be well proved—how far wrong went the
 15 man that we spoke of, to forswear himself in a matter of preaching
 that he wist well was so open that it *would* be *plainly* proved what
 sin was therein? And what sin, and folly thereto, was there to
 stick still in his perjury... when he saw the matter already proved so
 clearly, and by so many... so good, so honest, and so indifferent, that
 20 he could nothing now win by the denying but evil opinion,
 and almost a despair of his amendment, in all that ever heard him?”

“In good faith,” quoth he, “all this is very truth, and therefore we shall
 let him alone till God send him better mind.”

The Eighth Chapter

25 The author showeth why the New Testament of Tyndale's
 translation was burned. And showeth for an example certain
 words evil, and of evil purpose, changed.

30 “**B**ut now I pray you let me know your mind concerning the
 burning of the New Testament in English... which Tyndale lately
 translated, and (as men say) right well, which maketh men much
 marvel of the burning.”

2 *upon boldness of*: in reliance on // *doctor's*: scholar's // *fault*: guilt
 3 *cautel*: craftiness // *a lawful oath given him*: he has been put under a lawful oath
 5, 8 *give*: administer (to) 7, 11 *might*: could 7, 15 *forswear*: perjure
 7 *may not*: cannot 8, 9 *swear*: take the oath 8 *and*: i.e., but 10 *though*: even if
 10 *follily*: foolishly 13 *in one that*: with someone who
 13, 15, 18 *matter*: case (against him) 15 *of preaching*: regarding preaching
 16 *wist*: knew // *open*: public 17 *folly*: foolishness // *thereto*: as well
 18 *matter*: i.e., thing he was charged with having done 19 *honest*: honorable
 19 *indifferent*: unbiased 20 *evil*: bad 23 *mind*: frame of mind; disposition
 25 *showeth*: explains 25–26 *the . . . translation*: Tyndale's translation of the New Testament
 26 *showeth*: gives 27 *evil*: ill 28 *pray*: ask that 29 *lately*: recently
 30–31 *much marvel of*: really wonder about

- “It is,” quoth I, “to *me* great marvel that any good Christian man having any drop of wit in his head would anything marvel or complain of the burning of that book if he know the matter. Which whoso calleth ‘the New Testament’ calleth it by a wrong name... except they will call it ‘Tyndale’s Testament,’ or ‘Luther’s Testament.’ For so had Tyndale after Luther’s counsel corrupted and changed it from the good and wholesome doctrine of Christ to the devilish heresies of their own... that it was clean a contrary thing!”
- “*That* were marvel,” quoth your friend, “that it should be so clean contrary. For to some that read it, it seemed very like!”
- “It is,” quoth I, “nevertheless contrary—and yet the more perilous. For like as to a true silver groat a false copper groat is nevertheless contrary though it be quicksilvered over... but so much the more false in how much it is counterfeited the more like to the truth: so was the translation so much the more contrary in how much it was craftily devised like, and so much the more perilous in how much it was to folk unlearned more hard to be discerned.”
- “Why,” quoth your friend, “what faults were there in it?”
- “To tell you all—that,” quoth I, “were in a manner to rehearse you all the whole book; wherein there were found and noted wrong and falsely translated above a thousand texts by tale.”
- “I would,” quoth he, “fain hear some one.”
- “He that should,” quoth I, “study for that... should study where to find water in the sea. But I will show you for example two or three such as every one of the three is more than thrice three in one.”
- “That were,” quoth he, “very strange except ye mean more in weight. For one can be but one in number.”
- “Surely,” quoth I, “as weighty be they as any lightly can be. But I mean that every one of them is more than thrice three in number.”
- “That were,” quoth he, “somewhat like a riddle.”
- “This riddle,” quoth I, “will soon be read. For he hath mistranslated three words of great weight, and every one of them is, as I suppose, more than thrice three times repeated and rehearsed in the book.”
- “Ah, that may well be,” quoth he, “but that was not well done. But I pray you, what words be they?”
- “The one is,” quoth I, “this word ‘priests’;

1 *great marvel*: a great wonder; very surprising 2 *any drop of wit*: an ounce of sense

2 *anything marvel*: at all be surprised by 3 *of the*: about the // *matter*: content

5 *except they will*: unless they want to 6 *after*: in accord with

8, 9 *clean*: completely 9 *were marvel*: would be surprising 12 *true*: genuine

12 *groat*: fourpence // *false*: falsified; counterfeited 18 *faults*: wrong things

19–20 *were . . . book*: would practically be to read you aloud the whole entire book

20 *wrong*: as wrongly // *falsely*: deceitfully

21 *above a thousand texts by tale*: a total of over a thousand passages

22 *fain*: like to 26, 30 *were*: would be 26 *except*: unless 28 *surely*: assuredly

28 *any lightly*: probably any 30 *somewhat*: something 31 *read*: solved

33 *rehearsed*: reiterated 35 *pray*: ask

the other, the ‘church’; the third, ‘charity.’ For priests—wheresoever
 he speaketh of the priests of Christ’s church, he never calleth them
 ‘priests,’ but always ‘seniors’; the Church he calleth always the ‘congregation’;
 and charity he calleth always ‘love.’ Now do these names in
 5 our English tongue neither express the things that he meant by
 them... and also there appeareth (the circumstances well considered)
 that he had a mischievous mind in the change. For first, as for
 priests and priesthood, though that of old they used commonly to choose
 well elderly men to be priests... and therefore in the Greek tongue
 10 priests were called *presbyteri* (as we might say, elder men), yet
 neither were all priests chosen old—as appeareth by Saint Paul
 1 Tm 4:12 writing to Timothy, ‘*Nemo iuventutem*
 tuam contemnat’ (‘Let no man contemn
 thy youth’)—nor every elder man is not a priest. And in our English
 15 tongue this word ‘senior’ signifieth nothing at all... but is a French
 word used in English more than half in mockage, when one will
 call another ‘my lord’ in scorn. And if he mean to take the *Latin* word
 ‘senior’—that word in the Latin tongue never signified a priest, but only
 an elder man. By which name of elder men if he would call the
 20 priests Englishly, then should he rather signify their age than
 their office—and yet the name doth in English plainly signify the
 aldermen of the cities, and nothing the priests of the Church. And
 thus may we perceive that rather than he would call a priest by the
 name of a *priest*, he would seek a new word he neither wist nor
 25 cared what!
 “Now, where he calleth the Church always the ‘congregation,’
 what reason had he therein? For every man well seeth that though
 the Church be indeed a congregation, yet is not *every* congregation
 the Church, but a congregation of *Christian* people... which congregation
 30 of Christian people hath been in England always called and
 known by the name of the *Church*; which name what good cause
 or color could he find to turn into the name of ‘congregation,’
 which word is common to a company of Christian men or a company of
 Turks?
 35 “Like wisdom was there in the change of this word ‘charity’ into

5, 9, etc. *tongue*: language 7 *mischievous mind*: pernicious intent 9 *well*: quite
 13–14 *contemn thy*: i.e., scorn you on account of your
 16 *one*: i.e., one man // *will*: wants to
 19–20 *by* . . . *Englishly*: if he would in English call priests by that name of “elder men”
 22 *nothing*: not at all 24 *wist*: knew 32 *color*: pretext

‘love.’ For though charity be always love, yet is not, ye wot well,
love always charity.”

5 “The more pity, by my faith,” quoth your friend, “that ever love was
sin! And yet it would not be so much so taken if the world were
no more suspicious than they say that good Saint Francis was,
which when he saw a young man kiss a girl once in way of good
company... knelt down and held up his hands into heaven,
highly thanking God that ‘charity’ was ‘not yet gone out of this
wretched world.’”

10 “He had,” quoth I, “a good mind, and did like a good man... that
deemed allthing to the best.”

“So say I too,” quoth he. “But how far be folk fallen from the good
mind now! Men be nowadays waxen so full of mistrust... that
some man would in faith ween his wife were naught... if he should
15 but find her in bed with a poor friar!”

“Forsooth, ye be a wanton!” quoth I. “But yet, in earnest, how like you
the change of these words?”

20 “Surely,” quoth he, “very naught. And that it was not well nor wisely
done... there will, I trow, no good wise man deny. But yet whether
Hutchins had in the translation thereof any malicious purpose or not—
therein will I, till I see further, play Saint Francis’ part... and judge
the man no worse than the matter requireth.”

“First,” quoth I, “would ye that the book should go forth and be read still
in that fashion?”

25 “Nay, in good faith,” quoth he, “that would I not, if he use it so very
often.”

“With that word,” quoth I, “ye hit the nail on the head. For surely,
if he changed the common-known word into the better, I would well
allow it. If he changed it into as good, I would suffer it. If somewhat
30 into worse, so he did it seldom, I would wink at it. But, now, when he
changeth the known, usual names of so great things... into so far
the worse; and that not repeateth seldom, but so often and so continually
inculcateth that almost in the whole book his lewd change
he never changeth: in this manner could *no* man deem other but
35 that the man meant mischievously—scant such a good, seely soul as

1 *wot*: know 6 *which*: who 10, 13 *mind*: mentality; attitude

10–11 *that deemeth allthing to the best*: who puts the best face on everything

13 *waxen*: become

14 *would* . . . *naught*: would actually believe that his wife was being immoral

16 *wanton*: rogue; bad boy // *in earnest*: seriously 18 *surely*: to be sure

18 *very naught*: (it is) very bad // *well*: rightly // *wisely*: sensibly 19 *trow*: suppose

19 *wise*: sensible / sane 20 *Hutchins*: The surname used by some of Tyndale’s ancestors,
and sometimes by Tyndale himself. // *purpose*: intent

23–24 *would* . . . *fashion*: would you have the book go out and keep being read with that wording

25 *in good faith*: in all honesty 27 *surely*: assuredly 29 *allow*: accept // *suffer*: tolerate

30 *so*: so long as // *wink at*: overlook 33 *lewd*: bad

35 *meant mischievously*: did it with pernicious intent // *scant*: scarcely // *seely*: poor

would ween all were well when he found his wife where ye said
right now. If he called charity *sometimes* by the bare name of ‘love,’ I

Charity would not stick thereat. But, now, whereas
‘charity’ signifieth in Englishmen’s

5 ears not every common love, but a good, virtuous, and well-ordered
love: he that will studiously flee from that name of *good* love, and
always speak of ‘love’ and always leave out ‘good,’ I would surely say
that he meaneth naught.”

“In good faith,” quoth he, “so is it not unlikely.”

10 “Then,” quoth I, “when ye see more, ye shall say it is much more than
likely.

“For now it is to be considered that at the time of this translation,
Hutchins was with Luther, in Wittenberg, and set certain glosses in
the margin... framed for the setting forth of the ungracious sect.”

15 “By Saint John,” quoth your friend, “if that be true, that Hutchins
were at that time with Luther, it is a plain token that he wrought
somewhat after his counsel... and was willing to help his matters
forward here. But whether Luther’s matters be so mad as they be
made for—that shall we see hereafter.”

20 “Very true!” quoth I. “But as touching the confederacy between
Luther and him, is a thing well known and plainly confessed
by such as have been taken and convicted here of heresy,
coming from thence—and some of them *sent* hither to sow that
seed about here, and to send word thither from time to time
25 how it sprang.

“But, now, the cause why he changed the name of ‘charity,’ and
of the ‘church,’ and of ‘priesthood,’ is no very great difficulty to
Luther’s heresies perceive. For since Luther and his fellows
among other their damnable heresies

30 have one that all our salvation standeth in faith alone, and
toward our salvation nothing force of good works: therefore it
seemeth that he laboreth of purpose to diminish the reverent mind
that men bear to charity... and *therefore* he changeth that name of
holy, virtuous affection into the bare name of ‘love,’ common to the

1 *ween*: think 2 *right*: just // *bare*: mere 3 *stick thereat*: object to that

8 *meaneth naught*: is up to no good; does not mean well

13, 15 *Hutchins*: See note for 287/20. 14 *framed for*: aimed at

14 *setting forth*: promoting // *ungracious*: ungodly

16 *plain token*: clear indication // *wrought*: worked 17 *after*: according to

18 *willing to help his matters forward*: wanting to help advance his theses

19 *made for*: made out to be 20 *as touching*: as for // *confederacy*: collusion

21 *is*: i.e., that is // *plainly*: openly // *confessed*: admitted

22 *such as*: i.e., people who // *taken*: arrested for 23 *thence*: there

23 *hither*: over here 24 *thither*: to there

25 *how it sprang*: as to how well it sprouted 28 *fellows*: cohorts

29 *other their*: their other 30 *standeth in*: depends on

31 *nothing force of good works*: good works count for nothing

32 *he laboreth of purpose*: what he is trying to do is 34 *bare*: mere

virtuous love that man beareth to God... and to the lewd love that is
 between fleck and his make. And for because that Luther utterly
 denieth the very, catholic church in earth... and saith that the
 church of Christ is but an unknown congregation of some folk,
 5 here two and there three, no man wot where, having 'the right faith'
 (which he calleth only his own new-forged faith): therefore
 Hutchins in the New Testament cannot abide the name of the 'church,'
 but turneth it into the name of 'congregation,' willing that it should
 seem to Englishmen... either that Christ in the Gospel had never
 10 spoken of the Church... or else that *the* church were but such a
 congregation as they might have occasion to say that a congregation
 of some such heretics were the church that God spoke of.

"Now, as touching the cause why he changed the name of 'priest'
 into 'senior,' ye must understand that Luther and his adherents
 15 hold this heresy: that all holy order is nothing. And that a priest is
 nothing else but a man chosen among the people to preach; and
 that by that choice to that office he is priest by and by, without any
 more ado—and no priest again whensoever the people choose another
 in his place—and that a priest's office is nothing but to
 20 preach. For as for saying Mass and hearing of confession, and
 absolution thereupon to be given—all this he saith that every man,
 woman, and child may do as well as any priest. Now doth Hutchins
therefore—to set forth this opinion withal—after his master's heresy
 put away the name of 'priest' in his translation, as though priesthood
 25 were nothing. Wheresoever the Scripture speaketh of the
 priests that were among the Jews, there doth he in his translation
 call them still by the name of 'priests.' But wheresoever the
 Scripture speaketh of the priests of Christ's church—there doth he
 put away the name of 'priest' in his translation, because he would
 30 make it seem that the Scripture did never speak of any priests
 different from laymen among Christian people. And he saith plainly
 in his book of *Obedience* that priesthood and all holy orders among
 Christian people be but feigned inventions, and that priests be
 nothing but officers chosen to preach, and that all the consecration

2 *fleck*: lowlife // *make*: squeeze; illicit lover 3 *very*: true // *in*: on
 5 *wot*: knows 8 *willing that it should*: wanting it to 13 *as touching*: regarding
 15 *holy order*: ordination 17 *choice*: election // *by and by*: immediately
 22 *may*: can 23 *set forth*: promote // *withal*: therewith // *after*: in accord with
 24, 29 *put away*: do away with 27 *still*: always
 32 *holy orders*: i.e., the subdiaconate, diaconate, and so forth 33 *feigned*: made-up

whereby they be consecrated is nothing worth. And for this cause, in all his translation, wheresoever he speaketh of them, the name of ‘priest’—which to us, in our own tongue, hath always signified

A priest an anointed person... and with Holy
Orders consecrated unto God—he hath

changed into the name of 'senior': no word of our language, but either used half in mockage, when we speak French in sport ('Dieu vous garde, Senior'), or at the furthest, nothing betokening but *elder*. So that it is easy to see what he meant in the turning of these names."

“In good faith,” quoth your friend, “it seemeth verily that he meant not well.”

“Surely,” quoth I, “ye would well say so if ye saw all the places, which I shall cause you to see when ye will... and ye shall soon judge them yourself. For it were too long to rehearse them all now. Nor these

have I not rehearsed you as for the *chief*, but for that they came first to mind. For else I might shortly rehearse you many things more... as far out of tune as these be. For he changeth commonly the name of ‘grace’ into this word ‘favor’—whereas every favor is not ‘grace’ in English; for in some favor is there little grace. ‘Confession’ he translateth into ‘acknowledging.’ ‘Penance’ into ‘repentance.’

A 'contrite' heart he translateth into a 'troubled' heart. And many more things like, and many texts untruly translated for the maintenance of heresy, as I shall show you some when we look in the

book. Which things we shall not now reason upon, for they be not worthy to be brought in question; but I tell you this much only for this cause: that ye may perceive that he hath thus used himself in his translation to the intent that he would set forth Luther's heresies and his own thereby. For first he would make the people

believe that we should believe nothing but plain Scripture; in which point he teacheth a plain, pestilent heresy. And then would he with his false translation make the people ween further... that such articles of our faith as he laboreth to destroy... and which be well proved by Holy Scripture... were in Holy Scripture nothing

spoken of; but that the preachers have all this fifteen hundred years misreported the Gospel, and Englished the Scripture wrong, to lead the people purposely out of the right way.”

3 *tongue*: language 7 *Dieu vous garde, Senior*: God keep you, sir. 9 *turning*: changing
13 *cause you to*: have you // *will*: wish to // *soon*: readily
14 *yourself*: i.e., for yourself // *were*: would take 14, 15, 16 *rehearse(d)*: relate(d) (to)
16 *might*: could // *shortly*: in short order 22 *untruly*: inaccurately
22 *maintenance*: support 24 *reason upon*: talk about; discuss
25 *in question*: into debate 26 *used*: conducted 27 *translation*: translating
27 *set forth*: promote 30 *laboreth*: is trying 31 *ween*: suppose 33 *nothing*: not at all
34 *misreported*: misrepresented; misstated

The Ninth Chapter

3.9

The author showeth another great token that the translation was perilous... and made for an evil purpose.

- 5 “**B**ut, to the intent ye shall yet the less doubt what good fruit
was intended by this translation... and easily judge yourself
whether it was well worthy to be burned or not, ye shall understand
that there hath been since that time another book made in English, and
imprinted, as it saith, in Almaine—a foolish railing book against
10 the clergy, and much part made in rhyme, but the effect thereof was
all against the Mass and the holy sacraments. In this book the maker
raileth upon all them that caused Tyndale’s translation of the New
Testament to be burned, saying that they burned it ‘because that it
destroyed the Mass.’ Whereby ye may see that he reckoned that translation
15 very good for their purpose toward the destruction of the Mass!”
“By Saint Mary Mass,” quoth your friend, “that book is a shrewd gloss
for the other! For it *showed* a cause for which it was well worthy to
be burned—and the maker with it—if it were made to destroy the
Mass! But who made that second book?”
20 “Forsooth,” quoth I, “it appeareth not in the book. For the book is put forth
nameless—and was in the beginning reckoned to be made by Tyndale.
And whether it so were or not we be not yet very sure. Howbeit, since
that time Tyndale hath put out in his own name another book,
entitled *Mammona*, which book *is* very *mammona iniquitatis*—
25 a very treasury and wellspring of wickedness. And yet hath he
since put forth a worse also, named *The Obedience of a Christian Man*—
a book able to make a Christian man that would believe it... leave off all
good Christian virtues and lose the merit of his Christendom. In the
preface of his first book (called *Mammona*), he saith that one ‘Friar
30 Jerome’ made the other book that we talk of; which Friar Jerome,
giving up his order (of the Friars Observant), came to him where
he was, showing him that he would cast off his habit and leave his
religion... and ‘assay now to serve God’; and that afterward he left
him and went unto Roye—which is, as I think ye know, another

2 *showeth*: points out // *token*: indication 3 *perilous*: terrible // *evil*: ill; bad
6 *yourself*: for yourself 8, 10, 18 *made*: written 9 *imprinted*: printed
9 *Almaine*: Germany 10 *effect*: gist 11, 18 *maker*: author
16 *Saint Mary Mass*: the Mass in honor of our Lady // *shrewd gloss*: poor support
18, 22 *were*: was 19, 30 *made*: wrote
20–21 *put forth nameless*: published anonymously 21 *be made*: have been written
28 *good*: bona fide // *Christendom*: Christianity 30 *talk of*: are talking about
32 *showing*: telling // *would*: was going to 33 *religion*: religious order
33 *assay*: try 34 *which*: who

apostate—by whose counsel Tyndale saith that the friar Jerome made the book; wherein Tyndale saith that he misliketh his rhymes and his ‘overmuch railing.’ And saith also that he feareth lest Friar Jerome ‘shall not well prove all that he promiseth in that book.’”

5 “Why,” quoth your friend, “is that *all* the fear that he findeth in himself, and *all* the fault that he findeth in the friar and his book?”

“Yea, in good faith,” quoth I—“every whit!”

“Then findeth he,” quoth your friend, “no fault in his apostasy?”

“No more,” quoth I, “than I show you.”

10 “Nor findeth he,” quoth your friend, “no fault in that the friar’s book saith that the New Testament of Tyndale was burned because it destroyed the Mass?”

“Never a whit,” quoth I, “more than you hear.”

15 “And feareth he,” quoth your friend, “nothing else but lest that friar should fail of performing of somewhat that his book promiseth?”

“That is all,” quoth I. “And what he promiseth therein, in faith I remember not. But it seemeth whatsoever it be... Tyndale would it were well performed.”

20 “He had,” quoth your friend, “much more cause, as me thinketh, to fear lest men should reckon high default in his translation... in that he nothing answereth to those words of the friar’s book wherein he saith that the New Testament that was burned did destroy the Mass.”

25 “Ye say,” quoth I, “very truth, in my mind; and so *would* he, of likelihood, if himself had not meant as the friar said. But surely, for the translation, I shall show you so many texts in such wise corrupted... that ye shall not, I suppose, greatly doubt what he meant in his doing.” And therewith I showed your friend a book with the places already noted—which book I had, by license, a little before lent unto me for the nonce. Wherein he saw so many corruptions... and of such manner
30 sort... that albeit upon some we somewhat reasoned in the way, yet at the last himself said whoa, and verily confessed that the book in such wise translated was very naught and nothing meet to be read.

The Tenth Chapter

35 The author sheweth that the translation of Tyndale was too bad to be mended.

2 *made*: wrote // *misliketh*: dislikes 6, 8, 10 *in*: with (the fact) 9 *I show*: i.e., I’ve told
15 *somewhat*: something 16–17 *in faith I remember not*: I honestly do not remember
20 *should* . . . *translation*: would figure that his translation must be highly defective
20 *in that*: since 24 *surely*: assuredly // *for*: as for 28 *by license*: with permission
28–29 *for the nonce*: for that express purpose 30 *reasoned*: conversed // *in*: along
32 *naught*: bad // *nothing*: not at all // *meet*: fit 34 *showeth*: states
35 *mended*: rectified

But yet he said that the faults might be by some good men amended, and then the book printed again, if nothing letted but that.

3.10

- “Surely,” quoth I, “if we go thereto... the faults be, as ye see, so many, and
 5 so spread through the whole book, that likewise as it were as soon done
 to weave a new web of cloth as to sew up every hole in a net, so were
 it almost as little labor, and less, to translate the whole book all new...
 as to make in his translation so many changes as need must be ere it
 were made good. Besides this: that there would no wise man, I trow, take
 10 the bread which he well wist was of his enemy’s hand once poisoned...
 though he saw his friend after scrape it never so clean.”

The Eleventh Chapter

- The messenger findeth fault with the clergy... in that he saith
 they have made a constitution provincial that no Bible in
 15 English should be suffered. And in this chapter incidentally
 the messenger much reproveth the living of the clergy.
 Whereunto the author somewhat showeth his mind,
 deferring for the while his answer to the objection made
 against the constitution.

- 20 “**S**ir,” quoth your friend, “I will not greatly stick with you in that
 point. But surely the thing that maketh in this matter the clergy
 most suspect, and wherein, as it seemeth, it would be full hard to excuse
 them, is this: that they not only damn *Tyndale’s* translation
 (wherein there is good cause!), but, over that, do damn all *others*... and,
 25 as though a layman were no Christian man, will suffer no layman
 have any at *all*; but when they find any in his keeping, they lay
heresy to him therefor. And thereupon they burn up the book, and
 sometimes the good man withal, alleging for the defense of
 their doing... a law of their own making: a constitution provincial...
 30 whereby they have prohibited that any man shall have any,
 upon pain of heresy. And this is a law *very* provincial; for it

1, 4 *faults*: errors 1 *might*: could 2 *amended*: corrected
 2 *letted*: stood in the way 4 *surely*: assuredly 5 *were*: would be
 6 *web of cloth*: piece of fabric 6–7 *were it*: would it be 9 *wise*: sensible
 9 *I trow*: I’m sure 10 *wist*: knew // *of*: by 11 *though*: even if
 11 *after*: afterward // *never so*: no matter how 14, 19, 29 *constitution*: decree
 14, 29 *provincial*: enacted by the bishops of the province; synodal
 15 *suffered*: allowed // *incidentally*: in passing
 16 *reproveth*: criticizes // *living*: personal conduct
 17 *whereunto* . . . *showeth*: about which . . . speaks 18 *deferring*: putting off
 20 *greatly stick* . . . *in*: much wrangle . . . over 22 *full*: quite // *excuse*: defend
 23, 24 *damn*: condemn 24 *over*: in addition to 25 *suffer*: let
 26–27 *lay heresy to him therefor*: charge him with heresy for it
 28 *withal*: therewith 31 *provincial*: local

- holdeth but here. For in all other countries of Christendom, the people have the Scripture translated into their own tongue—and the clergy there findeth no such fault therein. Wherefore either our people be worst of all people... or else our clergy is worst of all clergies.
- 5 But, by my troth, for aught that I can see here or perceive by them that have been elsewhere, our lay people be as good and as honest as be anywhere. And if any be otherwise, the occasion and example cometh of the *clergy*, among whom we see much more vice than among ourselves!
- 10 “Whereas they *should* give us example of *virtue*, and the light of learning—now their examples, what they be we see. And as for learning, they neither will teach us but seldom—and that shall be but such things as pleaseth them... some glosses of their own making—nor suffer us to learn by ourselves, but by their constitution pull
- 15 Christ’s Gospel out of Christian people’s hands. I cannot well see why but lest we should see the truth. The *Jews* be not letted to read *their* law—both learned and lewd! And yet are there in the Old Testament things for unlearned folk far more strange and perilous than in the New. And why should, then, *our* laymen be forbidden the *Gospel*...
- 20 but if they will make us worse than Jews? Wherein I can, in good *Scripture* faith, see no excuse they can find. For the Scripture is to good folk the nourisher of virtue... and to them that be naught, it is the means of amendment. And therefore while the clergy doth withdraw it us, if our
- 25 souls be in good health they take away our food; if our souls be sick they take away the medicine. And therefore, as I said, the fault is not in the damning of *Tyndale’s* translation, but in that they have by an express law forbidden that we should have any at all.”
- 30 “Your words,” quoth I, “be somewhat pugnant and sharp. But surely they prick somewhat more the men than the matter. For whereas ye touch in effect two things—one, the constitution provincial by which ye think the clergy of this realm have evil prohibited all translations of Scripture into our tongue, another the vice of the clergy in general—the first point, which indeed
- 35 toucheth our matter, I can and will with few words answer you.

2, 33 *tongue*: language 5 *troth*: word // *perceive by*: tell by way of
 6 *honest*: upright; honorable 14 *suffer*: allow 15 *cannot well*: really cannot
 16 *letted to read*: prevented from reading
 17 *learned and lewd*: the educated and the uneducated
 18 *for . . . far*: that for . . . are far // *strange*: foreign // *than*: i.e., than anything
 20 *but if*: unless // *they*: i.e., the clergy
 20 *will make us worse than*: want to make us out to be inferior to
 20–21 *in good faith*: in all honesty 23 *naught*: bad 24 *while*: as long as
 24 *withdraw it*: withhold it from 27 *damning*: condemning
 29 *pugnant*: piercing 30 *surely*: certainly 31 *whereas*: given that
 31 *touch in effect*: are in fact criticizing 32 *evil*: ill; wrongly
 34 *vice*: moral depravity 35 *toucheth*: is relevant to
 35 *matter*: concern; subject under discussion

3.11

But as for the other, which toucheth the men... as where ye accuse the clergy, in their persons, of very vicious living (as men much worse than ye say that we be)—and yet, as though their own faults were too few, charge them with ours too, whereof ye call them the cause—

5 in this point will I keep no schools with you; nor enter into dispicions thereof, nor gladly meddle with the matter. For as I told you in the beginning, since we talk but of men's *learning*... I will not meddle of men's *living*, nor in that treating of this matter either praise or dispraise any man's *manner*, except some such

10 as are for their heresies and evil doctrine cast out of Christ's church... and through all Christendom damned and defamed already by their own obstinate malice. But, yet, whereas ye speak of other countries, making an argument that our clergy is the worst of all others—I wot well the whole world is so wretched that spiritual and temporal everywhere all be bad enough; God make us all better! But yet, for that I have myself seen, and by credible folk have heard, like as ye say by our temporalty that we be as good and as honest as anywhere else: so dare I boldly say that the spirituality of

15 England, and especially that part in which ye find most fault—that is to wit, that part which we commonly call the secular clergy—is, in learning and honest living, well able to match (and, saving

20 *Comparisons be odious.* that comparisons be odious, I would say further, 'far able to overmatch'), number for number, the spirituality of any nation Christian. I wot well there

25 be therein many very lewd and naught. And surely wheresoever there is a multitude... it is not, without miracle, well possible to be otherwise. But, now, if the bishops would once take unto priesthood better laymen and fewer (for of us be they made!), all the matter were more than half amended. Now, whereas ye say that ye see more

30 vice in them than in ourselves: truth it is that everything in them is greater... because they be more bound to be better. But else the things that they misdo... be the selfsame that we sin in ourselves; which vices that, as ye say, we see more in them than in ourselves... the

35 *A fable* cause is, as I suppose, for we look more upon theirs than on our own, and fare as

1 *toucheth*: has to do with // *as*: such as
 1–2 *the clergy . . . living*: the clergy of being in their personal lives very immoral
 2 *as*: just as // *worse*: less good 4 *charge them with*: blame them for 5 *in*: on
 5 *keep no schools*: not engage in any academic discussion // *dispicions*: (any) debating
 6 *gladly meddle with the matter*: be willing to go into that subject
 8 *meddle of*: concern myself with // *living*: personal conduct
 9 *manner*: demeanor 10 *evil*: bad 11 *damned*: condemned
 11 *defamed already*: already made infamous 12 *by*: on account of 14, 24 *wot*: know
 14–15 *spiritual and temporal*: clerical and lay people 17 *by*: about // *temporality*: laity
 17, 21 *honest*: upright 18 *boldly*: confidently; with assurance
 18, 24 *spirituality*: clergy 25 *lewd*: bad // *naught*: immoral
 26 *to be*: i.e., for it to be 28 *all the matter*: the whole problem 29 *were*: would be
 29 *amended*: rectified 31 *bound*: obligated

Aesop saith in a fable—that every man carrieth a double wallet on his shoulder, and into the one that hangeth at his breast he putteth other folks' faults... and therein he tooteth and poreth often. In the other he layeth up all his own, and swingeth it at his back... which
 5 himself never listeth to look in... but others that come after him cast an eye into it among. Would God we were all of the mind that every man thought no man so bad as himself! For that
 A way to amend were the way to amend both them and
 us. Now they blame us... and we blame
 10 them... and both blameworthy... and either party more ready to find other's faults than to amend their own. For in reproach of them we be so studious... that neither good nor bad passeth unreprieved. If they be familiar, we call them light. If they be solitary, we call them fantastic. If they be sad, we call them
 15 solemn. If they be merry, we call them mad. If they be companionable, we call them vicious. If they be holy, we call them hypocrites. If they keep few servants, we call them niggards. If they keep many, we call them pompous. If a lewd priest do a lewd deed, then we say, 'Lo, see what example the clergy giveth us!'—
 20 as though that priest were the clergy. But then forget we to look what good men be therein, and what good counsel they give us, and what good example they show us. But we fare as do the ravens and the carrion crows, that never meddle with any quick flesh; but where they may find a dead dog in a ditch, thereto they flee, and
 25 thereon they feed apace. So where we see a good man, and hear or see a good thing, there we take little heed. But when we see once an evil deed, thereon we gape, thereof we talk and feed ourselves all day with the filthy delight of evil communication. Let a good man preach, a short tale shall serve us thereof... and we shall neither
 30 much regard his exhortation nor his good example. But let a lewd friar be taken with a wench, we will jest and rail upon the whole order all the year after, and say, 'Lo what example they give us!' And yet, when we have said, we will follow the same... and then say that we learned it of them—forgetting that we list not to hear and follow

3 *tooteth*: peers // *poreth*: studies 5, 34 *list(eth)*: care(s)
 6 *among*: now and then 11 *other's*: i.e., the other's
 12–13 *passeth unreprieved*: goes uncriticized 13 *familiar*: friendly // *light*: frivolous
 14 *fantastic*: odd // *sad*: serious 16 *vicious*: corrupt 17 *niggards*: misers
 18, 19 *lewd*: bad 19, 32 *lo*: look 23 *meddle*: concern themselves // *quick*: live
 25 *apace*: with gusto 28 *communication*: conversation 29 *tail*: account of it
 31 *taken*: caught // *jest*: jeer at // *rail upon*: rant about 32 *lo*: look
 33 *said*: finished speaking 34 *list*: care

some other... whose word and deed would give us light to do better
if we listed as well to learn the better as to follow the worse.”

“Indeed,” quoth he, “because ye speak of light—they say that if a
woman be fair, then is she young, and if a priest be good, then he is
5 old. But yet have I seen a priest give light to the people that was
but very young.”

“Marry,” quoth I, “God forbid else! Ye may see that often and ye will!”

“Truly,” quoth he, “it is pity that we see such light so seldom, being
this wretched world in such darkness as it is. For I never saw it
10 but once. Nor, as it seemed, few of the people, neither. For, in faith,
they wondered as fast thereon as though they had never seen it before.”

“How happed that?” quoth I.

“Marry,” quoth he, “it happed that a young priest very devoutly, in a
procession, bore a candle before the cross... for lying with a
15 wench; and bore it lighted all the long way. Wherein the people
took such spiritual pleasure and inward solace... that they laughed
apace. And one merry merchant said unto the priests that followed
him, ‘Sic luceat lux vestra coram hominibus!’—‘Thus let *your* light
shine before the people!’”

“Forsooth,” quoth I, “it were pity but that an evil priest were punished.
But yet it is as much pity that we take such a wretched pleasure
in the hearing of their sins, and in the sight of their shame. Good is
it for *them* to look on their faults; but for *us* were it better to look
less to theirs and more unto our own. But surely many of us have
25 such delight to hear of their harm... that it seemeth we be glad when

Note one of them doth any such thing as
we may have occasion to see them punished

or had in derision. Which wretched appetite and sinful
affection yet is much worse, and much more worthy the curse of God,
30 than the lewd mind of Ham, which fell into the curse of his
father, Noah, for that he made a gaud and showed forth in scorn the

Gn 9:21–23 secret members of his father, that of
adventure lay and slept uncovered;

which parts Shem and Japheth, the blessed children, reverently
35 covered, going backward to him because they would not see him. And
surely we have little cause to laugh at their lewdness. For undoubtedly,

2 *listed as well*: cared as much 3 *because ye speak*: i.e., speaking 4 *fair*: beautiful
7 *marry*: goodness // *may*: can // *and ye will*: if you want to 8 *pity*: i.e., a pity; a shame
10 *in faith*: seriously 11 *wondered as fast thereon*: stared at it as fixedly
13 *marry*: indeed 14 *bore*: carried 16–17 *laughed apace*: immediately started laughing
20 *were pity . . . punished*: would be a pity if a bad priest were not punished
21 *pity*: i.e., of a pity 23 *on*: at 24–25 *have . . . to hear*: take . . . in hearing
25 *harm*: suffering some affliction 28 *had*: held 29 *affection*: disposition
30 *which*: who // *fell into*: incurred 31 *gaud*: spectacle (of him)
32 *secret members*: private parts // *that*: who 32–33 *of adventure*: by chance
35 *going*: walking // *because they would not*: so as not to 36 *their*: i.e., the clergy’s
36 *lewdness*: immoral behavior

Master Colet if the clergy be naught we must needs be
 worse, as I heard once Master Colet, the
 good dean of Paul's, preach. For he said that it can be none other
 but that we must ever be one degree under them. For surely, as he
 5 *Mt 5:13, 14* said, it can be no lie that our Savior
 saith himself, which saith of them that
 they be salt of the earth... and if the salt once appall, the world
 must needs wax unsavory. And he saith that they be the light of
 the world; and then if the light, saith he, be darkened, how dark
 10 will then the darkness be—that is to wit, all the world beside...
 whereof he called the clergy only, the light. Howbeit, though there
 be both among us and them many very naught—whose faults be
 neither the faults of the temporalty nor of the spirituality, but of
 those lewd persons themselves—yet are, I trust, neither their party
 15 nor ours come to that point but that there be many good men
 among us... and as for among them, I wot ne'er whether I may say
 many *more* or not, but surely I think many *better*.
 "I fear me," quoth your friend, "that those 'many' be very few in comparison
 of the multitude."
 20 "I cannot," quoth I, "look into their hearts to see who is good and who
 is bad; nor have the leisure, if they were all known, to go about
 and tell them by the polls, to see which side were the more. And
 therefore in the meanwhile, I trust in God the better part is the
 greater. Howbeit, if there were indeed among them very few...
 25 yet think I verily that for those few all the world fareth the better,
 and is in their virtue and prayer, by God's great mercy, maintained
 and upheld—as we find in Scripture places more than one... declaring
 plainly the profit that a whole sinful city, or sometimes
 a whole region, taketh by the prayer of a few godly men. And no
 30 doubt is there but likewise as he that is in the clergy naught... is far
 the worse because he is therein, so he that therein is *good*... is for his
 clergy very far the *better*—and his prayer to God for himself and
 all others far the more available."

1, 12, 30 *naught*: bad; immoral 3 *Paul's*: St. Paul's Cathedral 4 *under*: below
 6 *which*: who 7 *once appall*: ever gives out 8 *wax*: become
 10 *the world beside*: the rest of the world 13 *temporality*: laity // *spirituality*: clergy
 14 *lewd*: bad 16 *wot ne'er whether*: don't know if 21 *about*: around
 22 *tell them by the polls*: do a head count 26 *maintained*: supported
 27 *places more than one*: more than one passage
 27 *declaring*: showing 32 *clergy*: priesthood; being a member of the clergy
 33 *available*: efficacious

The Twelfth Chapter

3.12

The author toucheth one special prerogative that we have by a priest, be he never so bad: in that his naughtiness cannot take from us the profit of his Mass. Whereupon
 5 is by the messenger moved a doubt: whether it were better to have fewer priests and better, with fewer Masses, or more and worse for to have the more Masses. Whereunto the author answereth.

- 10 “**A**nd be a priest never so naught, albeit that he do some way
The advantage we have by much harm both to himself and
priesthood others... yet this advantage take we by the
 privilege and prerogative of his priesthood
 (besides the administration of the sacraments unto us, the goodness
 whereof his naughtiness cannot impair): that, be he never so vicious,
 15 and therewith so impenitent, and so far from all purpose of amendment,
 that his prayers were before the face of God rejected and abhorred,
The sacrifice of the holy yet that sacred sacrifice and
Body of Christ sweet oblation of Christ’s holy Body offered
 up by his office... can take none impairing
 20 by the filth of his sin... but highly helpeth to the upholding
 of this wretched world from the vengeance of the wrath of God,
 and is to God as acceptable, and to us as available, for the thing itself...
 as though it were offered by a better man; though percase his
 prayers joined therewith neither much profit others... nor the
 25 oblation himself—as with whom God is the more greatly aggrieved...
 in that, being so bad, he durst presume to touch it.”
 “Marry,” quoth your friend, “if this be thus, I marvel, then, why ye
 said right now that it were good to make fewer priests... that they
 might be taken only of the better, and the worse refused. For if
 30 their Masses be so good for us be themselves never so naught, then
 seemeth it better for us to make yet more though they were yet worse,
 that we might have more Masses.”

2 *toucheth*: discusses // *prerogative*: advantage; blessing 3 *have by*: get with
 3, 9, etc. *never so*: no matter how 3, 14 *naughtiness*: badness; immorality
 5 *moved a doubt*: raised a question 5, 28 *were*: would be 7 *worse*: less good
 9, 30 *naught*: immoral; bad 14 *impair*: diminish // *vicious*: vice-ridden; immoral
 19 *can take none impairing*: can in no way be vitiated 22 *available*: efficacious
 23 *percase*: perchance
 24–25 *nor the oblation himself*: i.e., nor does the oblation much profit him
 25 *as with whom*: i.e., as someone with whom 27 *marry*: goodness
 27 *marvel*: wonder 28 *right*: just 29 *refused*: not accepted (into the priesthood)
 31 *though*: even if

“That reason,” quoth I, “will not hold. For though God of his goodness
 how bad soever the priest be... well accepteth the oblation of Christ’s
 holy Body for other folk, yet is he with that priest’s presumption
 highly discontented. And we never ought to seek our own commodity
 5 with our neighbor’s harm. And also, we should of our duty
 to God... rather forbear the profit that ourselves might attain by a
 Mass... than to see his Majesty disreverenced by the bold presumption
 of such an odious minister as he hath forbidden to come
 about him. Like as if ye sent a present unto a prince which were
 10 very pleasant unto him... though the messenger much misliked
 him, so far that he had been forbidden the Court: yet if ye were not
 aware thereof, your gift could not lose his thank—but his malapert
 boldness might peradventure be punished, and well were worthy
 to be. But, on the other side, if ye knew the messenger for such as the
 15 prince would not have come at him, ye would rather keep your present
 at home and forbear the thank... than wittingly to send it by
 such a messenger; or else, though your present were very great,
 your thank would be very little. And surely, in like manner wise,
 whoso surely knoweth a priest to be naught, vicious, and in
 20 deadly displeasure of God... should get, I think, little thank if he made
 him say Mass. And therefore well shall the prelates do... as much as
 they may, to provide that God shall rather be more seldom
 presented with the pleasant present of the Mass... than more often
 offended with a displeasing messenger. And verily, were all the
 25 bishops of my mind (as I know some that be), ye should not of
 priests have the plenty that ye have. The time hath been when
 there were very few in a great city, and in a monastery of five
 hundred in one house... scanty would there four monks be bold
 to be priests. Then was all holy orders in high honor. Then find
 30 we that the degree of a deacon was a great thing, and of such
 dignity... that when one of them went, sometimes, in pilgrimage, he
 would not be acknown of his Order... because he would not that folk
 should do him worship in the way. But as for nowadays, if he be
 deacon and priest too, he shall need to fear no such pride... but
 35 rather, rebuke and villainy. Which though it have happened by the
 lack of virtue among them... and decay of devotion among us,

1 *reason*: argument 4 *discontented*: displeased // *commodity*: benefit; profit
 9 *were*: would be 10, 23 *pleasant*: pleasing 10 *much misliked*: was very displeasing to
 11 *so far*: so much so // *forbidden*: i.e., forbidden admission to 12 *his*: its
 12, 16 *thank*: reward 13 *well were worthy*: would well deserve 15 *at*: to
 16 *wittingly*: knowingly 18 *your thank*: your reward / the credit you would get
 19 *naught*: bad // *vicious*: vice-ridden; immoral 19–20 *in . . . God*: mortally displeasing to God
 20 *thank*: credit 20–21 *made him*: got him to 22 *may*: can 24 *displeasing*: displeasing
 28 *be bold*: venture 29 *in*: i.e., held in 30 *degree*: rank 31 *in*: on a
 31–32 *he . . . acknown*: he would not let it be known
 32 *of his Order*: that he was ordained / that he was a deacon
 32–33 *would not that . . . way*: did not want folk to show him reverence along the way
 35 *villainy*: insult // *though it have happened*: even if it has come about
 36 *decay*: lessening // *devotion*: piety

- yet hath much of all this gear grown by the means of so great a number
of priests and so familiar among us. Which thing needs must
diminish on our part reverence and estimation toward them,
which we never have but in things rare and scarce. Gold would
5 we not set by if it were as common as chalk or clay. And whereof is
there now such plenty as of priests?”
- “In faith,” quoth he, “there is more plenty of priests than of good men,
and there be too many but if they were better chosen.”
- “Doubtless,” quoth I, “there would be more diligence used in the choice...
10 not of their learning only, but, much more especially, of their
living. For without virtue, the better they be learned the worse they
be—saving that learning is good store against God send them
grace to mend. Which else it would be then haply too late to look
for, especially if the proverb were true that ye spoke of, that ‘if a
15 priest be good, then he is old.’ But this is a very surety: that it is not
well possible to be without many very naught of that company...
whereof there is such a main multitude. The time was, as I say,
when few men durst presume to take upon them the high office
of a priest—not even when they were chosen and called thereunto.
20 Now runneth every rascal and boldly offereth himself for able.
The dignity of priesthood And whereas the dignity passeth all princes,
and they that lewd be... desireth it
for worldly winning—yet cometh that sort thereto with such a
mad mind that they reckon almost God much bounden to them,
25 that they vouchsafe to take it. But were I pope—”
- “By my soul,” quoth he, “I would ye were! And my lady your wife
popess, too!”
- “Well,” quoth I, “then should she devise for nuns! And as for me,
touching the *choice* of priests, I could not well devise better
30 provisions than are by the laws of the Church provided already—
if they were as well kept as they be well made. But for the *number*—
I would surely see such a way therein... that we should not have
such a rabble... that every mean man must have a priest in his house
to wait upon his wife; which no man, almost, lacketh now—to
35 the contempt of priesthood in as vile office as his horsekeeper!”

1 *gear*: mess // *grown*: come 3 *estimation toward*: esteem for 4 *in*: for

5 *set by*: prize 7 *in faith*: truth to tell // *more plenty*: a greater abundance

8 *but if*: unless 9 *would*: should

12 *good store against God send*: a good provision toward such time as God may send

13 *mend*: i.e., mend their ways // *haply*: perhaps 15 *very surety*: real certainty

16 *to . . . company*: for there not to be many very bad people in any group

17 *main*: huge 20 *able*: qualified 21 *passeth*: exceeds that of 22 *lewd*: lowborn

23 *winning*: gain 24 *bounden*: beholden 25 *vouchsafe*: deign 26 *would*: wish

28 *devise*: make the arrangements 29 *touching*: concerning

33 *mean man*: common man; Joe Schmoe

34–35 *to the . . . horsekeeper*: with the result that priesthood is scorned as being as low-status
an occupation as that of the man’s horsekeeper

“That is,” quoth he, “truth indeed—and in worse, too, for they keep hawks and dogs. And yet meseemeth surely a more honest service to wait on a horse than on a dog!”

5 “And yet I suppose,” quoth I, “if the laws of the Church, which Luther and Tyndale would have all broken, were all well observed and kept, this gear should not be thus, but the number of priests would be much diminished and the remnant much the better. For it is by the laws of the Church provided—to the intent no priest should unto the slander of priesthood be driven to live in such
10 lewd manner or worse—there should none be admitted unto priesthood
No man should be admitted until he have a title of a sufficient
unto priesthood without a title yearly living, either of his own patrimony
of a sufficient living. or otherwise. Nor at this day they be none otherwise accepted.”

15 “Why,” quoth he, “wherefore go there, then, so many of them a-begging?”
“Marry,” quoth I, “for they delude the law—and themselves also. For they never have grant of a living that may serve them in sight for that purpose... but they secretly discharge it ere they have it; or else they could not get it. And thus the bishop is blinded by the sight of the
20 writing; and the priest goeth a-begging, for all his grant of a good living; and the law is deluded; and the Order is rebuked by the priest’s begging and lewd living... which either is fain to walk at rovers and live upon trentals or worse... or else to serve in a secular man’s house; which should not need if this gap were
25 stopped. For ye should have priests few enough if the law were truly observed that none were made but he that were, without collusion, sure of a living already.”

“Then might it hap,” quoth he, “that ye might have too few to serve the rooms and livings that be provided for them, except the prelates
30 would provide that Orders were not so commonly given... but always receive into Orders as rooms and livings fall void, to bestow them in, and no faster.”

“Surely,” quoth I, “for aught I see suddenly, that would not be much amiss. For so should they need no such titles at all, nor should need
35 neither run at rovers nor live in laymen’s houses—by reason

2 *meseemeth surely*: it certainly seems to me // *more honest*: more respectable; higher-status
5 *broken*: abolished 6 *gear*: stuff 9 *slander*: discredit; disrepute
10 *lewd*: (a) low-class 11 *a title of*: an entitlement to 15 *why . . . wherefore*: well . . . why
16 *marry*: goodness // *for*: because // *delude*: foil 18 *discharge*: waive
18 *ere*: before // *have*: receive 20 *writing*: document
21 *deluded*: circumvented // *the Order*: i.e., the holy order of priesthood
21 *rebuked*: brought into contempt 22 *lewd living*: bad way of living
22–23 *which either is fain to walk at rovers*: who is forced either to roam helter-skelter
23 *trentals*: sets of thirty Masses said for the soul of a deceased person; i.e., stipends
24 *should not need*: would not be necessary // *gap*: i.e., gap between theory and practice
25 *stopped*: stopped up 27 *sure*: assured 28 *serve*: fill
29, 31 *rooms and livings*: positions and benefices 29 *except*: unless
30, 31 *Orders*: Holy Orders 31 *fall void*: become vacant // *bestow*: place
33 *surely*: certainly // *suddenly*: at the moment 34 *so*: that way
34 *should they need*: they would need // *titles*: entitlements
35 *at rovers*: helter-skelter

whereof there groweth, among, no little corruption in the priests' manners... by the conversation of lay people and company of women in their houses."

3.12

5 "Nay, by our Lady," quoth he, "I will not agree with you therein! For I think they cannot lightly meet with much worse company than themselves; and that they rather corrupt us than we them."

The Thirteenth Chapter

10 The messenger moveth that it would do well that priests should have wives. Whereunto the author maketh answer.

"**B**ut I would ween it would amend much part of this matter... if they might have wives of their own."

15 "Marry," quoth I, "so saith Luther, and Tyndale also—saving that they *Tyndale's books are furnished* go somewhat further forth. For Tyndale *with Luther's heresies.* (whose books be nothing else, in effect, but the worst heresies picked out of Luther's works, and Luther's worst words translated by Tyndale, and put forth in Tyndale's own name) doth in his frantic book of *Obedience*—wherein he railleth at large against all popes, against
20 all kings, against all prelates, all priests, all religious, all the laws, all the saints, against the sacraments of Christ's church, against all virtuous works, against all Divine Service, and, finally, against allthing, in effect, that good is—in that book, I say, Tyndale holdeth that priests must have wives. And that he groundeth
25 *1 Tm 3:2-4* wisely upon the words of Saint Paul where he writeth to Timothy, 'Oportet episcopum esse irreprehensibilem, unius uxoris virum'—that 'a bishop must be a man unreprouable, and the husband of one wife'—and that it must be considered whether he have well brought up his
30 children, and well governed his household. By these words doth Tyndale, after Luther, conclude for a plain matter... that priests must needs have wives, and that Saint Paul would there should in

1 *groweth*: comes about // *among*: now and then 2 *manners*: morals

3 *conversation of*: mingling with 5 *lightly*: well

8 *moveth*: submits 11 *ween*: think 12 *might*: could 13 *marry*: indeed

15, 23 *in effect*: just about 17 *words*: statements 18 *forth*: out

18 *frantic*: insane 19 *at large*: at length

22 *all Divine Service*: the whole Divine Office 23 *allthing*: everything

25 *wisely*: brilliantly 28 *unreprouable*: irreproachable

31 *after Luther*: following Luther's lead 32 *would*: would have it that

303/32—304/1 *in no wise*: by no means

no wise be none other priests but married folk. Is it not now a wonder with what spectacles Luther and Tyndale have spied this thing now in these words of Saint Paul? In which, of so many great, cunning fathers and holy saints as have often read, and deeply considered, those words before, there was never none that had either the wit or the grace to perceive that great special commandment this fifteen hundred years... till now that God hath at last, by revelation, showed this high, secret mystery to these two goodly creatures Luther and Tyndale, lest that holy friar should have lost his marriage of that holy nun, and Tyndale some good marriage that I think him toward. Tyndale nothing answereth in his book to that point... but runneth and raileth over without reason... and saith that the Scripture is plain therein for him. And ever he passeth over, as though he heard it not, that all the holy doctors that ever were in Christ's church... say that the scripture which he allegeth to be very plain for him is very plain *against* him—as it is indeed. For Saint Paul in that place... forasmuch as yet at that time, except none but young men should have been priests (which he thought not commonly convenient), else could they make no priests then but such as either were or had been married—therefore the Apostle, having in the choice of priests a special respect to chastity, and willing to go as near to 'no wife' as might be, did ordain, as God had instructed him, that whosoever should be admitted to priesthood should be 'the husband of one wife.' Meaning such as then

25 *A priest must be the husband of one wife.* had or before had had no more but one... and that never had had twain. He meant not, as mad Luther and Tyndale would now make the world so mad to believe, that a priest must needs have one, nor that he may never lack one, nor that he may have one after another, nor the only forbidding of twain at once; but he meant only that none should be admitted to priesthood but only such a man as never had had nor should have but only one. Which is the thing that ever was and hath been by those words understood. And not only where Saint Paul taught, but also

35 through Christendom... where the other apostles planted the faith, hath it ever been so observed. Which is a plain proof that concerning the prohibition of any more wives than one... and the forbidding

4 *cunning*: learned 6 *wit*: intelligence 8 *showed*: disclosed
 8 *secret*: recondite; esoteric // *goodly*: magnificent 9 *lost*: missed out on
 10 *of*: to 11 *toward*: on his way to 12 *over*: throughout
 14 *that all*: the fact that all // *holy doctors*: theologians
 14 *that ever*: i.e., that there ever 17 *place*: passage // *except*: unless
 19 *commonly*: ordinarily // *convenient*: advisable; a good idea
 20 *the Apostle*: Saint Paul 21 *respect to*: regard for // *chastity*: celibacy
 21 *willing*: wanting 31 *none*: no one

of bigamy by the wedding of one wife after another, was the special ordinance of *God*, and not of Saint Paul, whose epistles wherein he writeth anything of this matter... was, peradventure, not come to the hands of other apostles... when they took yet the

- 5 *Bigamy is a let to take Holy* same order by the same Spirit that
 Orders. taught it him. For this is certain: that
 ever and everywhere in Christendom, the
 bigamy of two wives each after other... hath been a let and impediment
 against the taking of Holy Orders—and hath of long time
 10 been a let though the one wife had been married and buried before the
 man's baptism. And now these two wise men, against the old
 holy fathers and cunning doctors, and against the continual
 custom of Christ's church so many hundred years begun and
 continued by the Spirit of God, have spied at last that Saint Paul
 15 saith and meaneth that a priest *may* marry twice, and have one wife
 after another—and that he *must* so have. For by Tyndale, a priest must
 ever have one wife at the least. And surely if we leave the true understanding
 of Saint Paul's words, and believe Tyndale... that it is
 there meant and commanded, because of this word 'oportet,' that a
 20 priest must have one: then may Tyndale, as for that place, tell us that a
 priest is at liberty to have twenty at once—or twain, and he will—because
 Saint Paul saith no more but that the bishop must be 'the
 husband of one wife.' Which words Tyndale may tell us be verified...
 if he be the husband of ten wives. For the husband of ten wives
 25 were the husband of one... as the father of ten children is the father of
 one, if the wives were as compatible as the children be—as it is no
 doubt but Luther and Tyndale would soon make them, by Scripture... if
 their own interpretation may be taken for authority... against the
 perceiving that God hath given to all good Christian people this fifteen
 30 hundred years. Now, as I say, upon Tyndale's taking, Saint Paul should
 mean not that a priest should have *but* one wife (for that 'but' is not in
 Saint Paul's words), but he should mean that a priest must have one
 at the *least*—as though Saint Paul had liefer that the priest had
 twenty, save for overcharging. Yet it seemeth that Tyndale so

1 *bigamy by the wedding of*: the bigamy of wedding 3 *of*: about
 4 *took*: adopted 5 *order*: policy // *by*: by means of 8, 10 *let*: hindrance
 11 *wise*: brilliant 11–12 *old holy fathers*: early fathers of the Church
 12 *cunning doctors*: learned exegetes 16 *by*: according to
 17 *leave*: depart from // *true*: correct 20, 23 *may*: can
 20 *as for that place*: on the basis of that text 21 *once*: one time
 21 *twain*: (at) two times // *and he will*: if he wants
 25 *were*: would be 26 *compatible*: i.e., legally and morally compatible
 27 *make them*: make them out to be
 33 *had liefer*: would prefer 34 *overcharging*: the overburdening

take it indeed... and that a priest might have divers wives at once...
 especially for the great reason that he setteth thereto. For whereas Saint
 Paul, since there was at that time little choice to make priests of
 but married men, willed therefore that in the choice of the bishop
 5 there should be considered how he had governed his own household,
 because he that had mistaught his wife and his children... were
 unmeet for a great cure: therefore saith Tyndale that never should
 there any priest be made but such as hath a wife and children
 and by the governance of them showed that he is meet to bear
 10 a rule. As though we never saw any man that never had wife...
 govern a household better than many that have had wife! And
 if the having and good ruling of a wife be so special a proof of a
 man meet to be a priest as Tyndale taketh it: then—since Saint Paul
 after Tyndale's interpretation cannot appear to forbid the having
 15 of divers together—best were it, after Tyndale, specially to make that
 man a priest that had many wives and all at once, and many
 children by each of them, if he guide them all well. For more
 proof is it of a wise governor to rule well five wives than one,
 and forty children than four. But, now, that every child may see
 20 the wisdom of Tyndale and his master Luther in the construction of
 Holy Scripture—whereof he speaketh so much and understandeth so
 little—I beseech you consider like words of Saint Paul in a much
 like matter. Saint Paul, as he writeth to Timothy that a bishop
 must be 'the husband of one wife,' so writeth he also to him... that
 25 no widow should be specially chosen and taken in to be founded of
 the goods of the Church that were 'younger than sixty years,' and that
 she should be one that had been 'the wife of one husband.' Now,
 set these two texts together, of the bishop and the widow, and
 consider the words of 'one wife' in the one... and 'one husband' in
 30 the other. If we shall, after Tyndale, take the 'one' words for the
 bishop... that Saint Paul should mean not that he have or have
 had *but* one wife, but that he must needs *have* one wife: then
 must we likewise take the words spoken by Saint Paul of the
 widow... as though Saint Paul should mean not a widow which

1, 15 *divers*: several 2 *for*: in light of // *reason*: argument // *setteth*: adds
 2 *whereas*: on the basis of the fact that 4 *willed*: decided
 6 *mistaught*: misdirected // *were*: would be 7, 9 (*un*)*meet*: (un)fit
 7 *great cure*: large curacy 9–10 *bear a rule*: hold a position of authority
 12–13 *a man meet*: a man's being fit 14 *after*: according to
 14 *appear*: be shown 15 *together*: concurrently
 15 *after Tyndale*: according to Tyndale's logic // *specially*: particularly
 20 *construction*: construing; interpreting 25 *founded of*: provided for out of
 30 *after*: in accord with 34 *which*: who

had never had *more* than one husband, but a widow that had had one husband; as though Saint Paul had nothing feared nor forbidden... but lest Timothy should take in such a widow as never had no husband at all. Were not this wisely construed?

5 Now if Tyndale will agree, as he needs must but if he be mad, that Saint Paul in giving commandment that the widow should be such as had had 'one husband' meant thereby such one as never had had more than one, then must he needs grant—and his master, Luther, too—that Saint Paul, in like wise, where he

10 said that a bishop must be a good man and the husband of 'one wife' meant that he must never have nor have had any *more* than one. And not that he must needs have one, or that he must have one at the least... and might have many more than one, either each after other or all together and he list. And in this matter hath

15 Tyndale no shift. For since this word 'one' in 'one wife' and 'one husband' was not by Saint Paul set in for naught, it must needs signify either that there should be no more but one... or that there should be one at the least. If he should mean that a bishop should have one wife at the least... and that the widow should have had one husband

20 at the least: then would he rather that they should have more than so few; which every man seeth how foolish that construction is. Now, if Tyndale will say that by this word 'one' Saint Paul meant there should be but one wife at once and one husband at once: then did Saint Paul so speak of the bishop as though he had

25 said, 'A bishop must be a good man and have but one wife at once.' In which words Tyndale had lost his purpose. For so were only a prohibition for any more than one... and no *commandment*, but a bare permission, for one. And yet were it little to purpose; for in Saint Paul's days, a layman had but one wife at once. And the folly

30 of this construction appeareth in the words spoken of Saint Paul in the choice of the widow, wherein Tyndale would by this way make Saint Paul to say thus: 'Take and choose in but such a widow as hath had but one husband at once'—as though the guise were in his days that wives might have two husbands at

35 once!"

"In faith," quoth your friend, "I think Saint Paul meant not so. For then had wives been in his time little better than grass widows be

4 *were this not wisely construed*: wouldn't this be a brilliant interpretation
 5 *but if*: unless // *mad*: crazy 13, 34 *might*: could 14 *and he list*: if he likes
 15 *shift*: escape hatch 16 *naught*: nothing 17 *but*: than
 21, 30 *construction*: interpretation 23, 25, etc. *at once*: at a time
 26 *had*: would have // *purpose*: argument // *so were*: thus there would be
 27–28 *a bare*: a mere; just a
 28 *yet were it little to purpose*: also there would be little point to it
 29 *folly*: foolishness 30 *spoken of*: spoken by 31 *in*: about
 34 *guise*: custom 36 *in faith*: seriously // *meant not so*: did not mean that
 37 *had wives been*: would wives have been // *grass widows*: women who sleep around

now. For they be yet as several as a barber's chair... and never take but one at once."

3.13

"In faith," quoth I, "the folly of such folk doth well appear that seek in the Scripture of God such new constructions against the very sense, that God hath this fifteen hundred years so taught his whole Church... that never was there pope so covetous yet that durst dispense in this point, seeing the consent of Christ's church so full and whole therein, and the mind of Saint Paul so clearly to suffer *only* one, with utter exclusion of any *more* than one, that whosoever would construe him otherwise... must needs fall into such open follies as Tyndale and Luther do. And thus ye see how substantially Tyndale and his master construe the Scripture, and with what authority they confirm this noble new doctrine of theirs... by which they would condemn all Christendom as *breakers* of the *law of God* as long as they suffer not any priest take a wife—or, rather, as long as they suffer him to be without a wife. For wives they must needs have, by Tyndale's tale, whether they will or no."

"By my troth," quoth your friend, "if Tyndale and Luther have none other hold than that place of Saint Paul, they be likely to take a fall. But I think they say more than that."

"Surely," quoth I. "Tyndale hath another reason indeed. He saith that chastity is an exceedingly seldom gift, and unchastity exceedingly perilous for that state. And thereon he concludeth that priests must needs have wives. But, now, what if a man would deny him—though chastity is a *great* gift—that, yet, it is a *seldom* gift? For
Chastity in deed is not a though it be rare and seldom in respect
seldom gift. of the remnant of the people, that have it
Mt 19:12 not, yet is it not seldom in deed; for
 many men have it. And Christ saith that
all men take it not, but he saith not that *no* man taketh it, nor that *few* men take it. And highly he commendeth them that for his sake *do* take it. What inconvenience is it, then, to take into his special service men of that sort that he most specially commendeth? Or if we granted to Tyndale that few men can live chaste—which is plainly false, for many hath done and doth—but, now, if we did, I say, grant him that thing: though he might, peradventure, thereupon

1 *several*: exclusive 2 *at once*: at a time 3 *in faith*: seriously
 3 *folly*: foolishness 4 *constructions*: construing // *very*: real; actual
 6 *covetous*: greedy 6–7 *durst* . . . *point*: dared give a dispensation in this regard
 7 *consent*: consensus 8 *mind*: intention // *to suffer*: (to be) to allow
 10 *open follies*: obvious idiocies 11 *substantially*: soundly
 15 *suffer* . . . *take*: allow . . . to take 17 *tail*: account // *will or no*: want to or not
 18 *troth*: word 19 *hold*: support; leg to stand on // *place of*: text from
 21 *surely*: as a matter of fact
 21 *hath another reason indeed*: does indeed have another argument
 22, 25 *chastity*: celibacy 22, 25, etc. *seldom*: exceptional
 26–27 *in respect of*: with respect to 27 *remnant*: rest 28 *deed*: fact; actuality
 30, 31, 32 *take(th)*: receive(s) 32 *inconvenience*: impropriety 34 *chaste*: celibate
 35 *plainly*: obviously; patently 36 *might*: (rightly) could // *peradventure*: perhaps

- conclude that there should not be so many priests made and bound to chastity as *could* not live chaste, yet could he not conclude as he now concludeth... that *no* priest should be *suffered* to live chaste, but that *every* priest must needs have a wife. For
 5 this is his argument: Few men can live chaste; ergo, every priest must take a wife. If we should impugn the form of this argument, Tyndale would rail and say we meddle with sophistry; and wise men would say we were idly occupied, to labor to show that folly that
 10 so evidently showeth itself. And therefore we shall let his wise argument alone, since it sufficeth us that every man that any wit hath... may well see that upon his unreasonable reason... one of two things must needs follow: either that Christ in commending perpetual chastity... did commend a thing not commendable... or else, if every priest must needs have a wife, then were it not
 15 lawful to make a priest of that sort that is of God's own mouth commended."
- "Surely," quoth your friend, "methink they go far therein, to say that priests must needs have wives. But methink that this they might well say, and I too: that it is not well done to bind them with a
 20 *law* that they shall have none, but it may be well done to suffer
 In Wales priests be suffered they have wives that would, as they have
 to have wives. in Wales. And I hear say that in Almaine
 they find great ease therein. For like as
 here the goodwife keepeth her husband from her maids... so there
 25 the parson's wife keepeth her husband from all the wives in the parish."
- "As for Wales," quoth I, "ye be wrong informed; for *wives* have they not. But truth it is that incontinence is there, in some places, little looked unto; whereof much harm groweth in the country. And as for
 30 Almaine, such part thereof as *that* is used in—which is only where Luther's sect is received—whoso consider well what commodity hath come to them by such ungodly ways... I think shall have no great fantasy to follow them."
- "Well," quoth he, "let Wales and Almaine go. Yet priests had wives
 35 of old, when they were better than they be now. And yet have in Greece, where they be better than they be here."

2, 13 *chastity*: celibacy 3 *suffered*: allowed 4, 5 *chaste*: celibate
 7 *meddle with sophistry*: are being pedantic // *wise*: sensible 8 *show*: point out
 8 *folly*: idiocy 9 *wise*: brilliant 10–11 *that any wit hath*: who has any sense
 11, 20 *may*: can 11 *upon his unreasonable reason*: from his irrational argument
 15 *lawful*: licit // *is of*: is by 17 *far*: i.e., too far 18 *might*: could
 19 *well*: rightly 19, 20 *well done*: a right thing to do 20 *may*: could
 20–21 *suffer them* . . . *they have*: let those get married who want to, as they do
 22 *hear say*: hear it said 22, 30, 34 *Almaine*: Germany
 23 *ease*: advantage 24 *goodwife*: housewife
 29 *much harm groweth in the country*: comes much harm in that country
 30 *used*: practiced 31 *received*: accepted // *commodity*: profit
 33 *fantasy*: inclination

- In Greece priests have wives.* “As for the priests of Greece, I will not
dispraise them,” quoth I, “for I know them
not. But somewhat was not well there, that God hath suffered all that
empire to fall into heathen men’s hands. And yet be they there not
5 so loose as ye reckon them. For though a wedded man taken there into
the clergy be not, nor cannot be, put from his wife, but is there
suffered to minister in the office of a priest notwithstanding his
marriage, yet if he be unmarried at the time that he taketh priesthood,
he then professeth perpetual continence and never marrieth after,
10 as I have learned by such as have come from thence.
“Now, where ye speak of ‘old’ time—surely ye shall understand
that there married not so many as ye would haply ween.”
“Peradventure,” quoth he, “no more there would now. Some of them
would have no wives though that law were set at large. For as a
15 good fellow said once to his friends that marveled why he married
not, and thought him unnatural if he cared not for the company
of a woman—he said unto them that he had liefer lose a finger
A merry saying than lack a woman... but he had liefer
lack the whole hand than have a wife.
20 So, if the priests were at liberty, some of the worst sort would yet, I
ween, rather have ‘women’ than wives. But others that would be more
honest would, I suppose, be married. And yet would some peradventure
live in perpetual continence, as few do now.”
“God forbid!” quoth I.
25 “Well,” quoth he, “they that would... were not restrained. But if I shall
be bold to say what I think, it seemeth me surely a very hard
thing that the Church should make a law to bind a man to
chastity maugre his teeth; to which *God* would never bind *any*
man.”
30 “The Church,” quoth I, “bindeth no man to chastity.”
“That is truth,” quoth he, “except a priest be a man.”
“Ye mistake the matter,” quoth I, “as I shall show you after.”
“There would,” quoth he, “many harms be avoided, and much good
would there grow thereof, if they might have wives that would.”
35 “What good or harm,” quoth I, “would come thereof, the proof would

2 *dispraise*: criticize; say anything against 3 *somewhat*: something // *well*: right
3, 7 *suffered*: allowed 3 *all that*: that whole
5 *so loose as ye reckon them*: as free as you think they are 6 *put*: separated
8 *marriage*: being married 10 *by such as*: from people who // *thence*: there
12 *haply*: maybe 12, 21 *ween*: imagine; suppose 13, 22 *peradventure*: perhaps
14 *though*: even if // *set at large*: let go 15 *marveled*: wondered
17, 18 *had liefer*: would rather 21 *ween*: think
21 *rather have “women” than*: have “women” rather than // *would*: wanted to
22 *honest*: respectable // *be*: get 25 *were not restrained*: would not be forced to
25 *be bold*: venture // *hard*: cruel 28, 30 *chastity*: celibacy
28 *maugre his teeth*: against his will 31 *truth*: i.e., true // *except*: unless
32 *after*: later 34 *grow*: come
34 *if they might have wives that would*: if those who wanted to could get married
35 *proof*: trying out (of this); putting of this to the test

show; wherein we might be the more bold to trust well... were it not
 that we now find it naught in Saxony, where we newly see it assayed.
 And as for that ye spoke of 'old time when the priests were better,'
 surely—as I would, if ye had not stopped me, have said further before—
 5 we perceive well by writers of old time... that of those good men,
 very few were married. And none, in effect, after that office taken.
 And many such as had wives before... willingly, with the
 assent of their wives, forbore the carnal use of them. And (since the
 good or harm growing of the matter best appeareth by the
 10 proof), besides the experience that we have now in Saxony, where this
 change is begun with an infinite heap of heresies, it is easy to
 see that the good fathers which gave their advice to the making of
 that law... with the thing almost received in general custom
 before, and with the consent of all Christendom, in effect, that ratified
 15 and received it after... *had* a good proof thereof, and found this
 the best way before the law made; and therefore I will not dispute
 with you thereupon. But forasmuch as ye lay unreasonableness
 to their charge that made it... because they bind men, as ye reckon,
 against their will, to chastity: somewhat were it that ye say... if the
 20 *The Church bindeth no man* Church compelled any man to be priest.
 to chastity. But, now, when every man is at his
 liberty not to be priest but at his pleasure,
 how can any man say that the Church layeth a bond of chastity in
 any man's neck against his will? The Church doth in effect no
 25 further but provide that, whereas men will of their own minds
 some live chaste and some will not, the ministers of the Sacrament
 shall be taken of that sort only... that will be content to profess
 chastity. Wherewith whoso findeth fault... blameth not only the
 clergy, but also the *temporality*, which be, and have been all this
 30 while, partners in the authority of the making and conservation of
 this law. Whereof there can no man blame the provision... but if
 he be either in that heresy that he think that the cleanness of
 chastity is no more pleasant to God than the carnal use of Matrimony...
 or else that he think it evil done to provide that the
 35 priests which shall serve God in his holy sacraments should be

2 *naught*: bad // *assayed*: attempted 4 *surely*: assuredly 6 *in effect*: just about; almost
 6 *were*: got 9 *growing*: coming 10 *proof*: trying out thereof 14 *consent*: concurrence
 15 *proof*: trying out; testing 16 *made*: i.e., was made
 17–18 *lay* . . . *that*: accuse of being unreasonable those who 19, 23, etc. *chastity*: celibacy
 19 *somewhat* . . . *say*: there would be something in what you say; you would have a point there
 22 *not to be priest but at his pleasure*: not to become a priest unless he wants to
 23 *bond*: shackle // *in*: around 25 *whereas*: given that
 25 *by their own minds*: of their own volition; by their own decision 26 *chaste*: celibate
 27 *of*: from // *sort*: set // *content*: willing 28 *blameth*: is casting aspersions on
 29 *temporality*: laity 30 *partners*: sharers
 31 *whereof* . . . *provision*: the provision of which no one can find fault with
 31 *but if*: unless 33 *pleasant*: pleasing 34 *evil*: ill

- taken of the purest and most pleasant sort. Whereunto the very
Note paynims had such respect... that their
priests durst not presume to the sacrifice
of their maumets but after certain time of corporeal cleanness;
5 kept from their wives. And some of them bound to *perpetual*
chastity... with the loss of that part of their body wherewith they
might do the contrary.”
“Yea, marry,” quoth he, “that was a good, sure way!”
“‘It was,” quoth I, “sure indeed, but not so good as this. For therein
10 would be lost the merit that good men have in resisting of the
devil, and the refraining of their fleshly motion. But, as I would
and was about to say, in the old law given to Moses... the
Note priests of the Temple for the time of their
ministration forbore their own house
15 and the company of their wives. And therefore they served the
Lk 1:8–9 Temple by course, as it well appeareth in
Chastity is a meet thing the beginning of Saint Luke’s Gospel.
for priests. So that chastity was thought both to God
and man a thing meet and convenient
20 for priests... among them which most magnified carnal generation.
And then how much more specially now to the priests of *Christ*,
which was both born of a virgin... and lived and died a virgin
Mt 19:12; Lk 18:29–30 himself... and exhorted all his to the
same? Whose counsel in that point since
25 some be content to follow and some to live otherwise, what
way were, I say, more meet than to take into Christ’s temple, to
serve about the Sacrament, only such as be of that sort that are
content and minded to live after the cleanness of Christ’s holy
counsel?”
30 “Truth—if they so would,” quoth he.
“‘They say,” quoth I, “that they *will*, when they come thereto being already
warned of the law. And to the intent that fewer should break
it, therefore would I, as I said, have the better respect taken to the
choosing. And since it is hard to have so many so good, I would
35 *The Church bindeth no man* have the fewer made. But to say that the
to chastity. Church ‘bindeth men to chastity against
their will’ because they take not a priest

1 *pleasant*: pleasing (to God) // *sort*: set 2 *paynims*: pagans
3–4 *durst* . . . *maumets*: dared not venture upon the offering of sacrifice to their idols
5 *kept*: i.e., of being kept away // *bound*: i.e., were bound
7 *might do*: could have done 8 *marry*: indeed 11 *refraining*: restraining
11 *motion*: impulses; urges // *would*: wanted to 16 *course*: turns
16 *as it well appeareth*: as is made quite evident 18 *chastity*: celibacy
18 *thought*: deemed // *to*: by 19, 26 *meet*: fitting 19 *convenient*: appropriate
20 *them* . . . *generation*: I.e., the Jews. // *most magnified*: made the biggest deal of
21 *to*: with regard to 22 *which*: who
28 *after the cleanness of*: i.e., in the clean manner called for by 30 *truth*: i.e., true
30 *so would*: wanted to do that 31 *will*: are willing to 32 *warned*: informed

but if he first professed chastity... is as far against reason as if he
 would say that they 'bind men to chastity against their will'
 because they will make no monks but such as will promise to
 live chaste. Which promise every man well wotteth they make of
 5 their own minds, though the Church will neither make monks
 nor priests but such as so will. And as touching whether the order
 of the Church therein be better than the contrary, good men and wise
 men both had the proof of both before the law made... and it well
 allowed through Christendom long time since. Which ere I would
 10 assent to change... I would see a better author thereof... than such a
 heretic as Luther, and Tyndale—and a better example than the seditious
 and schismatic priests of Saxony."

"Surely," quoth he, "ye have well declared the Church touching that
 law. But—whatsoever the cause be—by my troth, naught they *be*;
 15 and as far worse than we... as they be bound to be better! And
 yet be we the worse for them!"

"There be," quoth I, "many right good among them; and else were it
 wrong with *us*. And many be there bad also—and some the worse
 for us! But whither party is the better or the worse... will I not dispute.
 20 But this will I say: that it were best that they thought themselves the
 worse; and we, ourselves; and every man, himself worst.

"I would that we were all in case with our own faults... as my father
 saith that we be with our wives. For when he heareth folk blame
 wives and say that there be so many of them shrews, he saith
 25 *There is but one shrewd wife* that they defame them falsely. For he
 in all the world. saith plainly that there is but one shrewd
 wife in the world; but he saith, indeed,
 that every man weeneth he hath her... and that one is his own. So
 would I fain that every man would ween there were but one man
 30 naught in all the whole world... and that one were himself. And
 that he would thereupon go about to amend that one; and thus would
 all wax well. Which thing we should shortly do... if we would
 once turn our wallet that I told you of... and the bag with *other*
 folks' faults, cast at our back... and cast the bag that beareth our
 35 own faults—cast *it* once *before* us, at our breast. It would be a goodly
 broach, for us to look on our own faults another while. And I

1 *but if*: unless 1, 2 *chastity*: celibacy 4 *chaste*: celibate // *wotteth*: knows
 5 *minds*: volition 6 *as touching*: as for // *order*: policy 8 *proof*: testing out
 8 *of both*: i.e., of both policies: priestly celibacy mandated, and not
 8 *it*: i.e., this one has been 9 *allowed*: approved of // *through*: throughout
 9 *ere*: before 13 *surely*: certainly // *declared*: exonerated // *touching*: with regard to
 13 *Church*: i.e., clergy 14 *troth*: word 14, 30 *naught*: bad 15 *bound*: obligated
 16 *yet be we*: also we are 16, 19 *for*: because of; on account of
 17 *right good*: very good ones 19 *whither*: which // *dispute*: debate
 22 *in case*: in the same position 23 *blame*: cast aspersions on
 25 *defame them falsely*: falsely accuse them 26 *saith plainly*: states categorically
 28, 29 *ween(eth)*: think(s) 29 *would I fain*: do I really wish 30 *naught*: bad
 32 *wax*: become 33 *turn*: turn around 33, 35 *once*: for once
 36 *broach*: goad // *on*: at // *another while*: once in a while

dare boldly say, both they and we should much the better amend...
if we were so ready each to pray for other... as we be ready to seek each
other's reproach and rebuke."

3.13

"In faith," quoth he, "I trow that be true, and pray God we so may."

5

The Fourteenth Chapter

The author answereth the doubt moved before (in the eleventh
chapter) concerning the constitution provincial... and
that the clergy is therein far from the fault that is imputed to
them in that point; showing also that the clergy hath *not*
10 forbidden the Bible to be made and read in English.

"**B**ut now, to the matter we were in hand with. Ye said ye would
make answer for the law whereby the clergy of this realm hath
forbidden all the people to have any Scripture translated into our
tongue; which is, as I said, in my mind an evil-made law."

15 "Marry," quoth I, "that is soon answered. Lay the charge to them that
made it."

"Marry," quoth he, "so I do! For who made that constitution but they?"

"Surely," quoth I, "nobody else—nor they neither."

"No?" quoth he. "What? Every man knoweth it!"

20 "Verily," quoth I, "many men *talk* of it; but no man *knoweth* it. For
there is none such in deed. There is, of truth, a constitution that
speaketh of such matter... but nothing of such fashion. For ye shall
understand that the great archheretic Wycliffe—whereas the
whole Bible was, long before his days, by virtuous and well-learned men
25 translated into the English tongue, and by good and godly people with
devotion and soberness well and reverently read—took upon him, of a
Wycliffe's translation malicious purpose, to translate it of new.
of the Bible In which translation he purposely corrupted
that holy text, maliciously planting
30 therein such words as might in the readers' ears serve to the proof
of such heresies as he went about to sow; which he not only set
forth with his own translation of the Bible, but also with certain

1 *boldly*: with assurance 2 *so . . . other*: as ready to pray for one another

2–3 *seek . . . rebuke*: i.e., look for things to reproach and criticize in one another

4 *in faith*: honestly // *trow*: believe 6 *doubt moved*: question raised

7 *constitution provincial*: synodal decree // *and*: i.e., and answers

8 *fault*: blameworthiness 9 *showing*: making known 10 *made*: written

11 *to . . . with*: back to the matter we had in hand 14, 25 *tongue*: language

14 *an evil-made law*: an ill-made law; a law it was wrong to make

15, 17 *marry*: well 15 *lay the charge to them that*: put the blame on those who

18 *surely*: assuredly 20 *verily*: actually

21 *none such in deed*: in fact no such constitution 22 *nothing of*: not at all in

24 *well-learned*: well-educated 26 *devotion*: piety // *well and*: very

prologues and glosses which he made thereupon. And these things he so handled (which was no great mastery) with reasons probable and likely to lay people and unlearned... that he corrupted in his time many folk in this realm. And by other ill books, which he made in

5 Latin, being after borne into Bohemia and there taught by John Hus and others... he was the occasion of the utter subversion of that whole realm, both in faith and good living, with the loss also of many a thousand lives. And as he began again the old heresies of those ancient heretics whom and whose errors the church of Christ had condemned

10 and subdued many diverse ages before—so doth Luther again begin to set up his. For all that he hath, in effect, he hath of him. Saving that, lest he should seem to say nothing of his own, he added some things of himself of such manner sort as there was never heretic before his days neither so wicked that he would for

15 sin... nor so foolish that he durst for shame... write, say, or, I trow, *think* the like.”

“I long,” quoth he, “to hear some of them. For the man is taken for wiser than to mean so madly as men bear him in hand.”

“Well,” quoth I, “that shall we see soon, when we come thereto. But for our present purpose: After that it was perceived what harm the people took by the translation, prologues, and glosses of Wycliffe, and also of some others that after him helped to set forth his sect, then for that

It is a dangerous thing to cause—and forasmuch as it is dangerous
translate Scripture. to translate the text of Scripture out of

25 one tongue into another, as holy Saint Jerome testifieth, forasmuch as in translation it is hard always to keep the same sentence whole—it was, I say, for these causes, at a council held at Oxford, provided upon great pain that

30 no man should from thence forth translate into the English tongue or any other language, of his own authority, by way of book, libel, or treatise... nor no man, openly or secretly, any such book, libel, or treatise *read*... newly made in the time of the said John Wycliffe or since, or that should be made any time after, till the same translation were by the diocesan, or, if need should require,

35 by a provincial council, approved. And this is a law that so many so long have spoken of... and so few have in all this while rought to

1–2 *so handled*: presented in such a way

2 *was no great mastery*: was no great achievement; took no genius

2–3 *reasons . . . to*: arguments that sounded plausible, and looked good, to 4 *ill*: objectionable

5 *after*: later 8 *began again*: started back up; revived 10 *diverse ages*: different eras

10–11 *again . . . his*: start up again an elevating of his (i.e., Wycliffe’s) // *hath of*: gets from

13 *of himself*: i.e., of his own thinking up 16 *trow*: suppose 18 *wiser*: saner

18 *mean . . . hand*: i.e., mean as crazy things as people make him out to mean

22 *set forth*: propagate 25, 29 *tongue*: language 26 *testifieth*: attests

27 *sentence*: meaning // *whole*: intact 28 *provided*: stipulated

28 *upon great pain*: on pain of severe punishment 29 *from thence forth*: from then on

31, 32 *libel*: tract 34 *diocesan*: bishop of the diocese 36 *rought*: cared

seek whether they say truth or no. For I trow that in this law ye see nothing unreasonable. For it neither forbiddeth the translations to be read that were already well done of old, before Wycliffe's days, nor damneth his because it was *new*, but because it was *naught*;
 5 nor prohibiteth new to be *made*, but provideth that they shall not be read if they be *mismade*... till they be by good examination amended—except they be such translations as Wycliffe made, and Tyndale, that the malicious mind of the translator had in such wise handled it as it were labor lost to go about to amend them.”

10 “I long, by my troth,” quoth he, “and even sit on *thorns*, till I see that constitution! For not myself only, but every man else hath ever taken it far otherwise... that ever I have heard spoken thereof till now. But surely I will see it myself ere I sleep.”

15 “Ye shall be sooner eased,” quoth I. “For I cannot suffer to see you sit so long on thorns. And therefore ye shall see it by and by.”

And therewith I fetched him forth the constitutions provincial with Lyndwood thereupon, and turned him to the place in the title “De magistris.” Which when himself had read, he said he marveled much how it happened that in so plain a matter, men be so far
 20 abused “to report it so far wrong.”

“This groweth,” quoth I, “partly by malice, partly by sloth and negligence, in that folk be more glad to believe and tell forth a thing that may sound to the dispraise of the clergy... than to search and be sure whether they say true or no.”

25 *The Fifteenth Chapter*

The messenger moveth against the clergy that though they have made no *law* thereof, yet they will in deed suffer none English Bible in no man's hand, but use to burn them where they find them—and sometimes to burn
 30 the man too. And for example he layeth one Richard Hunne, showing that the chancellor of London murdered him in prison and after hanged him (feigning that he hanged himself), and after condemned him of heresy... because he had

1 *seek* . . . *no*: find out whether or not they're telling the truth about

1 *trow*: trust 4 *damneth*: condemns // *naught*: bad 5 *provideth*: stipulates

7, 9 *amend(ed)*: correct(ed) 7 *except*: unless 10 *troth*: word

10, 15 *thorns*: i.e., pins and needles 12 *spoken thereof*: speak of it

13 *ere I sleep*: before I go to bed 14 *suffer*: bear 15 *by and by*: right now

16–17 *the . . . thereupon*: i.e., the edition of the synodal decrees with Lyndwood's commentary

17 *turned . . . title*: turned for him to the section titled

18–19 *marveled much*: wondered greatly; really couldn't understand

20 *abused*: misled (as) 21 *groweth*: comes about

23 *sound . . . clergy*: seem to discredit the clergy; make the clergy look bad

24 *search . . . no*: do some investigating and ascertain whether or not what they're saying is true

26 *moveth*: makes the accusation 27 *deed*: fact 28 *suffer*: allow

28 *use*: are wont 30 *layeth*: cites 31 *showing*: stating

32, 33 *after*: afterward 32 *feigning*: falsely claiming

an English Bible; and so burned the Bible and him together.
Whereunto the author answereth.

3.15

- “**I** suppose,” quoth he, “that this opinion is, rather, grown another way:
that is to wit, by the reason that the clergy—though the law serve
5 them not therefor—do yet in deed take all translations out of every
layman’s hand. And sometimes with those that be burned, or
convicted, of heresy, they burn the English Bible, without
respect be the translation old or new, bad or good.”
- “Forsooth,” quoth I, “if this were so, then were it in my mind not well
10 done. But I believe ye mistake it. Howbeit, what ye have seen, I cannot
say. But myself have seen, and can show you, Bibles fair and old,
written in English, which have been known and seen by the bishop of
the diocese... and left in laymen’s hands—and women’s too—such as he
knew for good and Catholic folk... that used it with devotion and soberness.
15 But of truth, *all* such as are found in the hands of heretics...
they use to take away. But they do cause none to be *burned*,
as far as ever I could wit, but only such as be found faulty.
Whereof many be set forth with evil prologues or glosses maliciously
made by Wycliffe and other heretics. For no good man would, I
20 ween, be so mad to burn up the Bible wherein they found no fault...
nor any law that letted it to be looked on and read.”
- “Marry,” quoth he, “but I have heard good men say that even here in
London, not many years ago, in the days of the bishop that last
died, they burned up as fair Bibles in English as any man hath
25 lightly seen—and thereto as faultless, for aught that any man could
find, as any Bible is in Latin—and yet besides this, they burned up
the dead body of the man himself; whom themselves had hanged
in the bishop’s prison before, making as though the man had hanged
himself. And of the burning of his body had they no color... but
30 only because they found English Bibles in his house. Wherein
they never found other fault... but because they were English.”
- “Who told you this tale?” quoth I.

3 *suppose*: suspect // *is* . . . *grown*: has . . . come about in

4–5 *serve them not therefor*: does not support them in this 5 *deed*: fact

9–10 *not well done*: not a right thing to do 10 *mistake it*: are mistaken

11, 24 *fair*: nice 14 *devotion*: piety 16 *use to*: routinely

16 *do cause none to be burned*: do not have any burned 17 *wit*: ascertain

18 *evil*: pernicious 20 *ween*: believe // *to*: as to 20, 30 *wherein*: with which

21 *letted it to be looked on*: disallowed its being looked at 22 *marry*: well

22 *even*: right 24 *fair*: error-free 24–25 *hath lightly*: is likely to have

25 *thereto*: furthermore // *faultless*: free of error // *aught*: anything

26 *in Latin*: i.e., that is in Latin 27 *themselves*: they themselves

29 *of*: for // *color*: excuse 32 *tale*: story

- “Forsooth, divers honest men,” quoth he, “that saw it; and specially one that saw the man hanging in the bishop’s prison ere he was cut down. And he told me that it was well and clearly *proved* that the chancellor and his keepers had killed the man first... and then hanged him after. And that they had laid heresy to him only for hatred, that he sued a praemunire against divers persons, for a suit taken (about a mortuary) in the audience of the Archbishop of Canterbury. And then they ‘proved’ the heresy by nothing else but by the possession of a good English Bible. And, upon heresy so ‘proved’ against him whom they had hanged (lest he should say for himself), they burned up the Holy Scripture of God... and the body of a good man therewith. For I have heard him called a very honest person, and of a good substance.”
- “Forsooth,” quoth I, “of good substance. He was, I think, well worth a thousand marks. And of his worldly conversation among the people I have heard no harm. But surely as touching his faith toward Christ, methinketh I may be bold to say that he was not honest. And as touching truth in words... he that hath told you this tale was not so honest in deed as methinketh ye take him for.”
- “Why,” quoth he, “do ye know the matter well?”
- “Forsooth,” quoth I, “so well I know it, from top to toe, that I suppose there be not very many men that knoweth it much better. For I have not only been divers times present myself at certain examinations thereof, but have also divers and many times sunderly talked with almost all such, except the dead man himself, as most knew of the matter. Which matter was many times in sundry places examined. But especially at Baynard’s Castle one day was it examined at great length; and by a long time every man being sent for before... and already there—all that could be found that anything could tell, or that had *said* they could anything tell, in the matter. And this examination was had before divers great lords, spiritual and temporal, and others of the King’s honorable Council... sent thither by His Highness for the nonce, of his blessed zeal and princely desire borne to the searching of the truth. Whereunto his gracious mind was much inclined; and

1, 6, 23, 32 *divers*: several 1, 13, etc. *honest*: honorable; upstanding
 1 *saw*: witnessed // *specially*: in particular 3 *well and*: good and; quite
 4 *keepers*: guards 5 *laid heresy to him*: charged him with heresy
 6 *sued a praemunire*: filed a praemunire suit. (Praemunire was the offense of appealing to any foreign entity in an attempt to override civil authority. The statute against it was enacted primarily to curtail the authority of the Catholic Church in England.)
 7 *mortuary*: A gift that the priest presiding at a funeral service was by custom considered entitled to receive from the estate of the deceased. 11 *say for*: defend
 15 *conversations*: interactions 16 *no harm*: nothing negative // *surely*: certainly
 16, 18 *as touching*: as regards 17 *be bold*: venture 19 *tale*: story
 19 *deed*: fact; actuality 24 *divers*: at various 24–25 *sunderly talked*: talked separately
 31 *had*: held 32 *spiritual*: ecclesiastical // *temporal*: secular 33 *thither*: there
 33 *for the nonce*: expressly 35 *gracious*: godly

had been by a right honorable man informed... that there was one
 had showed a friend of his that he could 'go take him by the sleeve,
Richard Hunne that killed Hunne'—for Richard Hunne
 was his name, whom ye speak of. I was
 5 also myself present at the judgment given in Paul's... whereupon
 his books and his body were burned. And by all these things I very
 well *know* that he of whom ye have heard this matter hath told
 you tales far from the truth."

"In good faith," quoth your friend, "he told me one thing that
 10 ye speak of now: that there was one that said he could 'go take
 him by the sleeve, that killed Richard Hunne'—and that he did so
 indeed, before the lords, and came even there to the chancellor...
 and said, 'My lords, this is he!' But when he was asked how he
 knew it, he confessed that it was by such an 'unlawful craft' as was
 15 'not taken for a proof.' For it was, they say, by necromancy. (And the
 bishops that were there would have had that man burned too, for
 witchcraft.) And told me also that there was another which had
The King's almoners have seen many men that had hanged themselves:
their goods that kill a man that had been long in
 20 *themselves.* office under divers of the King's almoners—
 to whom the goods of such men as
 kill themselves be appointed by the law, and his office, as deodands,
 to be given in alms. This man, as I have heard say, showed unto
 the lords, by such experience as he had, good and plain tokens
 25 by which they perceived well that Hunne did never hang himself.
 I have heard also that a spiritual man—and one that loved well
 the chancellor, and was a laborer for that part—yet could not
 deny before all the lords but that he had told a temporal man,
 and a friend of his, that Hunne had never been accused of
 30 heresy if he had never sued the praemunire. And by Saint Mary,
 that was a shrewd word. Howbeit, in deed it went not so near
 the matter as the other two things did."

"Yes, in good faith," quoth I—"all three like near, when they were all heard.
 But of truth, many other things were there laid... that upon the
 35 hearing seemed much more suspicious than these. Which yet
 when they were answered... always lost more than half their strength.

1–2 *one had showed*: someone who had told 5 *judgment given*: trial held
 5 *Paul's*: St. Paul's Cathedral 7 *of*: from 9 *in good faith*: well, as a matter of fact
 10 *one*: someone 12 *even there*: right up 14 *unlawful*: illicit // *craft*: art; means
 17 *told*: i.e., my informant told // *another*: i.e., another man // *which*: who
 20 *divers*: several 22 *deodands*: things forfeited to the Crown for a religious or charitable use
 23 *as I have heard say*: according to what I have heard // *showed*: made known
 24 *good and*: quite // *plain*: clear // *tokens*: indications
 26 *spiritual man*: member of the clergy // *loved well*: very much liked 27 *part*: side
 28 *temporal man*: layman 29 *had never*: would never have
 30 *sued the praemunire*: filed the praemunire suit
 31 *shrewd word*: dangerous statement // *howbeit*: however
 33 *in . . . matter*: it really didn't have as much relevance to the case
 33 *in good faith*: really and truly // *like near*: i.e., had the same amount of relevance
 33 *of truth*: to tell the truth 34 *laid*: alleged

But as for these three matters, I promise you, proved very trifles—and such as if ye had heard them, ye would have laughed at them seven years after.”

“I beseech you,” quoth he, “let me hear how they proved!”

5 “I am loath,” quoth I, “to let you... and lose your time in such trifles.

Howbeit—since ye long so sore therefor—rather than ye should lose your child for them, ye shall have them, all three, as shortly as I can. First ye must understand that because the coming together of the lords from Greenwich to Baynard’s Castle

10 for the trying out of the matter should not be frustrate, there was such diligence done before... that every man that aught had said therein... was already there against their coming. Where they began with the first point that ye spoke of, as the special motion whereupon the King’s Highness had sent them thither.

15 Wherefore, after the rehearsal made of the cause of their coming, the greatest temporal lord there present said unto a certain servant of his own standing there beside, ‘Sir, ye told me that one showed you that he could “go take him by the sleeve, that killed Hunne.” Have ye brought him hither?’

20 “‘Sir,’ quoth he, ‘if it like Your Lordship, *this* man it was that told me so’—pointing to one that he had caused to come thither. Then my lord asked that man, ‘How say ye, sir? Can ye do as ye said ye could?’

25 “‘Forsooth, my lord,’ quoth he, ‘and it like Your Lordship, I said not so much; this gentleman did somewhat mistake me. But, indeed, I told him that I had a *neighbor* that told me that *he* could do it.’

“‘Where is that neighbor?’ quoth my lord.

30 “‘This man, sir,’ quoth he, bringing forth one which had also been warned to be there. Then was *he* asked whether he had said that he could do it.

“‘Nay, forsooth,’ quoth he, ‘my lord, I said not that I could do it myself, but I said that one told me that *he* could do it.’

“‘Well,’ quoth my lord, ‘who told you so?’

35 “‘Forsooth, my lord,’ quoth he, ‘my neighbor here.’

1, 4 *proved*: (they) turned out (to be) 5 *lose*: waste 6 *therefor*: for it
 7–8 *as shortly as I can*: in as short a time as I can manage 8 *because*: in order that
 10 *trying out of*: inquiry into 11 *before*: ahead of time
 11–12 *ought had said therein*: had said anything about it 12 *against*: in advance of
 12 *their coming*: i.e., the lords’ arrival
 13–14 *as the special motion*: it being the specific ground 14, 21 *thither*: there
 15 *after the rehearsal made of*: after making the speech about 16 *temporal*: secular
 17 *beside*: i.e., beside him 18, 21, 29, 33 *one*: someone 18 *showed*: told
 19 *hither*: here 20, 24 *like*: please 21, 34 *so*: that 21 *caused*: gotten
 24, 32, 35 *forsooth*: actually 24 *and*: if 29 *which*: who
 30 *warned*: summoned

“Then was that man asked, ‘Sir, know you one that can tell who killed Richard Hunne?’

5 “‘Forsooth,’ quoth he, ‘and it like Your Lordship, I said not that I knew one surely that could tell who had killed him; but I said, indeed, that I know one which I *thought* verily could tell who killed him.’

“‘Well,’ quoth the lords, ‘at the last, yet, with much work, we come to somewhat. But whereby think you that *he* can tell?’

10 “‘Nay, forsooth, my lord,’ quoth he, ‘it is a *woman*. I would she were here with Your Lordships now!’

“‘Well,’ quoth my lord, ‘woman or man, all is one. *She* shall be had, wheresoever she be.’

15 “‘By my faith, my lords,’ quoth he, ‘and she were with you, she would tell you wonders. For, by God, I have wist her tell many marvelous things ere now.’

“‘Why,’ quoth the lords, ‘what have you heard her told?’

“‘Forsooth, my lords,’ quoth he, ‘if a thing had been stolen, she would have told who had it! And therefore I think she could as well tell who killed Hunne as who stole a horse.’

20 “‘Surely,’ said the lords, ‘so think all we too, I trow. But *how* could she tell it? By the devil?’

“‘Nay, by my troth, I trow,’ quoth he, ‘for I could never see her use any worse way than looking in one’s hand.’

“Therewith the lords laughed, and asked, ‘What is she?’

25 “‘Forsooth, my lords,’ quoth he, ‘an Egyptian; and she was lodged here at Lambeth, but she is gone overseas now. Howbeit, I trow she be not in her own country yet; for they say it is a great way hence, and she went over little more than a month ago.’”

30 “‘Now, forsooth,’ quoth your friend, “this process came to a wise purpose! Here was a great post whittled to a pudding prick! But I pray you, to what point came the second matter—of him that had been in office under so many of the King’s almoners... that he knew by his own experience, and proved, that Richard Hunne had not hanged himself?”

1, 4, 5 *one*: someone 3, 9, 25 *forsooth*: actually 3, 13 *and*: if 3 *like*: please
 4 *knew one surely*: definitely knew someone 5 *which*: who 7 *at the last*: at last; finally
 7–8 *come to somewhat*: are getting somewhere
 8 *whereby think you*: what makes you think 11 *all is one*: it’s all the same
 14 *wist*: known // *tell*: i.e., to tell // *marvelous*: astonishing 16 *her told*: told by her
 17, 29 *forsooth*: indeed 20 *surely*: certainly // *trow*: feel sure
 22 *by my troth*: by my word; i.e., certainly not // *trow*: think 24 *what*: who
 25 *an Egyptian*: a Gypsy
 26 *trow*: suppose 27–28 *a great way hence*: a long way from here
 29 *this . . . purpose*: some brilliant denouement this discussion came to
 30 *great*: big 31 *pray*: ask

“Forsooth,” quoth I, “he was called in next. And then was he asked whereby he knew it. But would God ye had seen his countenance! The man had of likelihood said somewhat too far, and was much amazed—and looked as though his eyes would have fallen out of his head into the lords’ laps. But to the question he answered and said that he saw that very well... for he saw him ‘both ere he was taken down and after.’”

““What then?” quoth the lords. ‘So did there many more... which yet upon the sight could not tell that.’

““No, my lords,’ quoth he—‘but I have another insight in such things than other men have.’

““What insight?” quoth they.

““Forsooth,’ quoth he, ‘it is not unknown that I have occupied a great while under divers of the King’s almoners... and have seen and considered many that have hanged themselves; and thereby, if I see one hang, I can tell anon whether he hanged himself or not.’

““By what token can you tell?” quoth the lords.

““Forsooth,’ quoth he, ‘I cannot tell the tokens; but I perceive it well enough by mine own sight.’

““But when they heard him speak of his ‘own sight,’ and therewith saw what sight he had... looking as though his eyes would have fallen in their laps: there could few forbear laughing... and said, ‘We see well, surely, that ye have a sight by yourself.’ And then said one lord merrily, ‘Peradventure, as some man is so cunning by experience of jewels that he can perceive by his own eyes whether a stone be right or counterfeit though he cannot well make another man to perceive the tokens, so this good fellow, though he cannot tell us the marks, yet he hath such an experience in hanging... that himself perceiveth upon the sight... whether the man hanged himself or no.’

““Yea, forsooth, my lord,’ quoth he, ‘even as Your Lordship saith! For I know it well enough myself, I have seen so many by reason of mine office.’

““Why,’ quoth another lord merrily, ‘your office hath no more

2 *his countenance*: the look on his face 3 *of likelihood*: probably

3 *said somewhat too far*: gone somewhat too far in what he had said

4 *much amazed*: very terror-stricken 4, 21–22 *would have fallen*: were about to fall

8 *what then*: so what // *which*: who 13 *occupied*: served; been in employment

14 *divers*: several 15 *considered*: scrutinized 16 *one hang*: someone hanging

16 *anon*: right away 17, 18, 27 *token(s)*: indication(s)

22 *in*: into // *forbear*: keep from

23 *surely*: certainly // *by yourself*: all your own; that no one else has

24 *as*: just as 24–25 *is . . . jewels*: is by experience so knowledgeable about jewels

26 *right*: genuine 28 *marks*: signs; criteria 31 *even as*: (it is) just as

experience in hanging than hath a hangman... and yet *he*
cannot tell!

“‘Nay, sir,’ quoth he, ‘and it like Your Lordship, *he* meddleth not with
them that hang *themselves*, as I do!’

5 “‘Well,’ quoth one of the lords, ‘how many of them have ye meddled
with in your days?’

“‘With many, my lord,’ quoth he, ‘for I have been officer under two
almoners, and therefore I have seen many.’

“‘How many?’ quoth one of the lords.

10 “‘I cannot tell,’ quoth he, ‘*how* many; but I wot well I have seen
many.’

“‘Have ye seen,’ quoth one, ‘a hundred?’

“‘Nay,’ quoth he, ‘not a hundred.’

15 “‘Have ye seen fourscore and ten?’ Thereat a little he studied, as
one standing in a doubt, and that were loath to lie; and at last he
said that he thought nay, not fully fourscore and ten. Then was he
asked whether he hath seen twenty. And thereto, without any sticking,
he answered nay, not twenty. Thereat the lords laughed well, to
20 see that he was so sure that he had not seen twenty... and was in
doubt whether he had seen fourscore and ten. Then was he
asked whether he had seen fifteen. And thereto he said
shortly nay. And in like wise of ten. At last they came to five...
and from five to four... and there he began to study again. Then
came they to three... and then, for shame, he was fain to say that he
25 had seen so many and more too. But when he was asked when, whom,
and in what place, necessity drove him at last unto the truth—
whereby it appeared that he never had seen but one in all his life.
And that was an Irish fellow called Crookshank, whom he had
seen hanging in an old barn. And when all his cunning was
30 come to this, he was bidden walk like himself. And one said unto
him that because he was not yet cunning enough in the craft of
hanging, it was pity that he had no more experience thereof by one
more.’

35 “‘Forsooth,’ quoth your friend, ‘this was a mad fellow! Came
the third tale to as wise a point?’

“‘Ye shall hear,’ quoth I. ‘The temporal man that had reported it upon

3 *and*: if // *like*: please // *meddleth*: deals 10 *tell*: i.e., tell you // *wot*: know
14, 16, 20 *fourscore and ten*: ninety 14 *a little he studied*: he did a little reflecting
16 *fully*: quite 17 *sticking*: hesitation 18 *laughed well*: really laughed
21–22 *said shortly*: quickly said 23 *study*: reflect 24 *fain*: constrained
25 *so*: that 27 *appeared*: came out 29 *cunning*: expertise 30 *bidden*: told to
30 *walk like himself*: be on his way // *one*: someone 31 *cunning*: expert
32 *pity*: i.e., a pity 35 *wise*: brilliant 36 *temporal man*: layman
323/36—324/1 *upon the mouth of*: as having been said by

- the mouth of the spiritual man was a good worshipful man, and for
his troth and worship was in great credit. And surely the
spiritual man was a man of worship also... and well known both
for cunning and virtuous. And therefore the lords much marveled,
5 knowing them both for such as they were, that they should
be likely to find either the one or the other either make an
untrue report or untruly deny the truth. And first the
temporal man, before the lords, in the hearing of the spiritual person
standing by, said...
- 10 “My lords all, as help me God and holydom, Master Doctor
here said unto me his own mouth... that if Hunne had not sued the
praemunire, he should never have been accused of heresy.’
“How say you, Master Doctor?” quoth the lords. ‘Was that
true? Or else why said you so?’
- 15 “Surely, my lords,’ quoth he, ‘I said not allthing so; but marry,
this I said in deed: that if Hunne had not been accused of heresy,
he would never have sued the praemunire.’
“Lo, my lords,’ quoth the other, ‘I am glad ye find me a true man!
Will ye command me any more service?’
- 20 “Nay, by my troth,’ quoth one of the lords, ‘not in this matter; by
my will, ye may go when ye will. For I have espied, good man,
so the words be all one, it maketh no matter to you which way
they stand, but all is one to you—a horse mill and a mill horse,
“Drink ere ye go” and “Go ere you drink.”’
- 25 “Nay, my lords,’ quoth he, ‘I will not drink, God yield you.’ And
therewith he made courtesy and went his way, leaving some of the
lords laughing to see the good plain old honest man, how
that, as contrary as their two tales were, yet when he heard them
both again, he marked no difference between them, but took
30 them both for one... because the words were one.”
“By my troth,” quoth your friend, “these three things came merrily
to pass, and I would not for a good thing but I had heard
Misunderstanding them. For here may a man see that misunderstanding
maketh misreporting,
- 35 and a tale that flieth through many mouths catcheth many new
feathers... which when they be pulled away again... leave it as

1, 3, 8 *spiritual man / person*: churchman 1 *worshipful*: distinguished // *for*: because of
2 *troth*: integrity 2, 3 *worship*: distinction 2 *great credit*: high repute // *surely*: certainly
4 *cunning*: learned // *much marveled*: highly doubted 7 *untruly*: dishonestly
8 *temporal man*: layman 10 *as*: so // *holydom*: all things holy
10, 13 *Master Doctor*: (this) eminent scholar 12, 17 *praemunire*: See note for 318/6.
12 *should*: would 14 *why said you so*: why did you say that 15 *surely*: assuredly
15 *said not allthing so*: didn't say it all in that way 15–16 *marry* . . . *deed*: indeed, this is what I
actually said 18 *true*: truthful 20, 31 *troth*: word 20–21 *by my will*: as far as I'm concerned
21 *ye will*: you wish 22 *so*: (that) as long as 22 *be all one*: are all the same // *matter*: difference
22–23 *which way they stand*: what order they are in 23 *all is one*: it's all the same
25 *yield*: reward 26 *courtesy*: obeisance (to the lords) 30 *one*: the same
31–32 *came merrily pass*: turned out to be very funny
32–33 *for a good thing but I had heard them*: i.e., for anything have missed hearing them
36 *away again*: back off

pilled as a coot, and sometimes as bare as a bird's ass. But I think verily, for all this, there *was* great evidence given against the chancellor; for he was at length indicted of Hunne's death, and was a great while in prison, and in conclusion never durst abide the trial of twelve men for his acquittal, but was fain by friendship to get a pardon. But I beseech you, for my mind's sake, show me what thought yourself therein."

"Of truth," quoth I, "there were divers suspicious things laid against him—and all those well and substantially answered again for him. Howbeit, upon the telling of a tale oftentimes happeth... that when all is heard that can be said therein, yet shall the hearers some think one way and some another. And therefore, though I cannot think but that the jury, which were right honest men, found the verdict as themselves thought in their own conscience to be truth—yet in mine own mind, for aught that ever I heard thereof in my life, as help me God, I could never think it."

"If he had not been guilty," quoth your friend, "he would never have sued his pardon."

"Yes," quoth I, "right wise men have I heard say ere this... that they will never refuse neither God's pardon nor the King's. It were no wisdom in a matter of many suspicious tales, be they never so false, to stand on twelve men's mouths where one may find a surer way. But I think verily that if he had been guilty, he

King Henry VIII should never have gotten his pardon. For albeit that there was never, I trow, brought

in this world a prince of more benign nature, nor of more merciful mind, than is our sovereign lord that now reigneth (and long mote reign!) upon us, whereby never king could find in his heart more freely to forgive and forget offenses done and committed unto himself: yet hath His Highness such a fervent affection to right and justice in other men's causes, and such a tender zeal to the conservation of his subjects... of whose lives his high wisdom considereth many to stand in peril by the giving of pardon to a few willful murderers... that never was there

1 *pilled*: unfeathered 3 *at length*: eventually // *of*: with
 4 *in conclusion*: in the end 4–5 *durst* . . . *of*: dared stand trial by
 5–6 *was* . . . *pardon*: had no choice but to get via friendship a pardon
 6 *show*: tell 8 *divers*: several // *laid*: charged 9 *well and*: good and; quite
 9 *substantially*: solidly 10 *for him*: in his favor 13, 19 *right*: very
 13 *honest*: honorable; upstanding 14–15 *found* . . . *truth*: i.e., determined and
 gave the verdict that they themselves, in their own consciences, thought to be the
 right one, the one corresponding to the truth 15 *aught*: anything 16 *as*: so
 16 *it*: i.e., that it was 18 *sued*: petitioned
 20–21 *were no wisdom*: would not be wise 21 *never so*: no matter how
 22 *stand*: be dependent on // *may*: can 23 *surer way*: safer route
 24 *should*: would 25 *trow*: believe 26 *in*: into 28 *mote*: may (he)
 28 *never king*: never a king; never was there a king who 31 *affection*: passion
 31, 32 *to*: for 34 *willful murderers*: people who commit deliberate homicide

king, I believe, that ever wore the crown in this realm, which
 hath in so many years given unto such folk so few. And therefore
 I make myself sure that in such a willful, purpensed, heinous,
 cruel deed as this had been if it had been true, all the friends that
 5 could have been found for the chancellor in this world could
 never have gotten his pardon to pass in such wise... had
 it not been that upon the report of all the circumstances, the
 King's high prudence, which—without flattery!—pierceth as deep into
 the bottom of a doubtful matter as ever I saw man in my life,
 10 had well perceived his innocence. And since I verily believe that if
 he had been guilty, he never could have gotten, in such a heinous
 murder, any pardon of the King's Highness, I dare make myself
 much more bold of his innocence now. For ye shall understand
 that he *never sued pardon* therefor; but, after long examination of
 15 the matter, as well the chancellor as the others... being indicted of
 the deed, and arraigned upon the indictment in the King's bench...
 pleaded that they were not guilty, and thereupon the King's Grace—
 being well and sufficiently informed of the truth, and, of his
 blessed disposition, not willing that there should in his name any
 20 false matter be maintained—gave in commandment to his
 attorney to confess their pleas to be true without any further
 trouble. Which thing in so faithful a prince is a clear declaration
 that the matter laid to the chancellor was untrue.

“And as for myself, in good faith, as I told you before, I never
 25 heard in my life (and yet have I heard all, I ween, that well could be
 said) therein anything that moved me, after both the parties
 heard, to think that he should be guilty.

“And besides all this, considering that Hunne was (as they that
 well know him say he was indeed), though he were a fair
 30 dealer among his neighbors, yet a man high-minded and set on
 the glory of a victory... which he hoped to have in the *praemunire*—
 whereof he much boasted, as they said, among his familiar friends,
 that he trusted to be spoken of long after his days, and have his
 matter in the Years and Terms called ‘Hunne's Case.’ Which when he
 35 perceived would go against his purpose, and that in the temporal

3 *make myself*: feel // *willful*: deliberate // *purpensed*: premeditated

4 *this had*: this would have 6 *pass*: come about // *wise*: a way

8 *King's high prudence, which*: high prudence of the King, who

8 *without flattery*: i.e., this is the truth, not flattery 9 *doubtful*: unclear

12 *of*: from 12–13 *make myself much more bold*: rest much more confident

14 *sued*: petitioned a // *therefor*: for it 15 *the others*: See 318/4.

18 *well and*: good and; quite 20, 23 *matter*: charge 20 *maintained*: sustained

21 *confess*: acknowledge 22 *clear declaration*: complete making clear

23 *laid to*: made against 25 *ween*: believe

27 *heard*: i.e., were heard 29 *though he were*: even if he was

29–30 *fair dealer*: well-behaved person; i.e., a decent guy

30 *high-minded*: grandiose 31 *praemunire*: See note for 318/6.

32 *familiar*: close 34 *matter*: affair // *Years and Terms*: yearbooks; annals

35 *against his purpose*: contrary to his plan 326/35—327/1 *temporal law*: civil court

- law he should not win his spurs—and, over that, in the spiritual
 law perceived so much of his secret sores unwrapped and discovered...
 that he began to fall in fear of worldly shame—it is to me
 much more likely that for weariness of his life he rid himself
 5 out thereof (which manner of affection we see not seldom happen),
 especially since the devil might, peradventure, join therewith a
 marvelous hope of that which after happed: that the suspicion of
 his death might be laid to the charge and peril of the chancellor.
 This is, I say, much more likely to me than the thing
 10 whereof I never heard the like before: that the bishop's chancellor
 should kill in the Lollards' Tower a man so sore suspected, and convicted,
 of heresy, whereby he might bring himself in business, whereas
 if he hated the man (for kill him he would not, ye wot well, if he
 loved him), he might easily bring him to shame and peradventure
 15 to shameful death also.”
- “In good faith,” quoth your friend, “wist I that it were true that he
 was a heretic indeed, and in peril to be so proved, I would
 well think that in malice and despair he hanged himself.”
- “God,” quoth I, “knoweth of allthing the truth. But what I have
 20 heard therein, that shall I show you.
- “Myself was present in Paul's when the bishop, in the presence
 of the mayor and the aldermen of the city, condemned him for
Hunne was convicted of a heretic after his death. And then
heresy. were there read openly the depositions,
 25 by which it was well proved that he was convicted as well of divers
 other heresies as of misbelief toward the Holy Sacrament of the
 Altar. And thereupon was the judgment given that his body
 should be burned; and so was it.
- “Now this is,” quoth I, “to me a full proof. For I assure you, the bishop
 30 was a very wise man, a virtuous, and a cunning.”
- “By Saint Mary,” quoth he, “the proof is the better by so much!”
- “I shall tell you,” quoth I, “another thing... which when ye hear, ye
 shall peradventure believe it yet the better.”
- “That would I gladly know,” quoth he. “For as far as I can hear,
 35 never man had him suspect of any such thing before.”

1 *should*: would // *over*: besides 1–2 *spiritual law*: ecclesiastical court
 3 *in*: into 5 *manner of affection*: kind of turn of mind 7 *marvelous*: bizarre
 11 *sore*: strongly 12, 14 *might*: could 12 *bring himself in business*: get himself in trouble
 13 *wot*: know 16 *in good faith*: truth to tell; in all honesty
 16 *wist I that it were*: if I knew that it was 17 *in peril to be*: in danger of being
 19 *of allthing the truth*: the truth about it all 20 *show*: tell
 21 *Paul's*: St. Paul's Cathedral 25 *convicted*: found to be guilty // *divers*: several
 26 *toward*: regarding 30 *very . . . cunning*: very sensible, virtuous, and astute man
 35 *never man*: not one person // *had*: held

“Forsooth,” quoth I, “that can I not tell. But so it happed that—as I remember,
 six or seven years after that Hunne was thus hanged and
 his body burned for a heretic—there was one in Essex, a carpenter
 that used to make pumps, which had intended, with others
 5 such as he was himself, to do great robbery; and thereupon was
 he brought unto the Court. Where, by the commandment of the
 King’s Grace, a great, honorable estate of this realm and myself
 had him in examination. Wherein, among other things, he
 confessed that he had long held divers heresies... which he
 10 said that his brother, being a clerk of a church, had taught both
 his father and him. And I promise you, those heresies were of a
 height. Then he showed us what other cunning masters of that
 school he had heard read, and specially in a place which he named
 us in London... where he said that such heretics were wont to
 15 resort to their readings, in a chamber, at midnight. And when
 we asked him the names of them that were wont to haunt those
 midnight lectures, he rehearsed us divers—and among others he
 named Richard Hunne. Whereof we somewhat marveled in our
 minds; but nothing said we thereto, but let him rehearse on, all
 20 such as he could call to mind. And when he stopped and could
 remember no more, then asked we of them that he had named...
 what they were and where they dwelled. And he told us of some
 of them that were convicted, and some that were fled, and some
 that were yet at that time dwelling still in the town. And in the
 25 way, when we asked him what man was that ‘Hunne’ that he spoke of,
 he told us his person and his house. ‘And where is he now?’ said we.
 ‘Marry,’ quoth he, ‘I went to Tournai, and when I came thence again,
 then heard I say that he was hanged in the Lollards’ Tower, and his
 body burned for a heretic.’ And thus there learned we long after...
 30 that Hunne had haunted heretics’ lectures by night long before;
 which we declared unto the King’s Highness as he had confessed.
 And His Highness, though he was sorry that any man should
 be so lewd, yet highly did rejoice that the goodness of God brought
 such hidden mischief more and more to light. So after had we (by
 35 the King’s commandment) that man’s brother in examination;
 which did, indeed, confess nothing, neither of the felonies nor
 of the heresies; but yet his brother did abide by them and avowed

3 *one*: someone 4 *intended*: set out 5 *do great robbery*: commit grand larceny
 7 *honorable estate*: prestigious dignitary 9, 17 *divers*: several 10 *being*: who was
 10 *clerk of a church*: a parish clerk 11 *promise*: assure 11–12 *of a height*: serious (ones)
 12 *showed*: told // *cunning masters*: learned teachers 13 *read*: give lectures
 13 *specially*: particularly 15 *resort*: go // *readings*: lectures // *chamber*: private room
 17 *rehearsed*: named 18 *whereof we somewhat marveled*: which we somewhat wondered at
 19 *rehearse*: i.e., keep giving names 21 *of them*: about those 22 *what*: who 25 *in*: along
 26 *his person and his house*: what he looked like and what house he lived in 27 *marry*: goodness
 27 *thence again*: back from there 28 *heard I say*: I heard it said 31 *declared*: related
 31 *he*: i.e., that man 33 *lewd*: wicked 34 *mischief*: evildoing // *after*: afterward
 36 *which*: who 36, 37 *of*: about 36 *felonies*: their crimes of grand larceny
 37 *abide by them*: i.e., stand by what he had said about them

- them in his face... with such marks and tokens as it might well appear that he said truth. And surely marvel were it if he would falsely have feigned such heinous things against his own brother, his own father, and himself, being thereto nothing compelled,
- 5 nor put either in pain or fear. Now was the father dead; and others could we not come by... whom we might further examine of that night school, saving that he which, as I told you, confessed this matter... showed us also, at the first time, of one man in London, taken for good and honest, which was, as he said, a scholar also of
- 10 his brother in those heresies; which man, for his honesty, we forbore to meddle with till we should have the other brother. Whom as soon as we had in hands, and that he was committed to the Marshalsea, this other man which was, as I told you, detected unto us for a heretic and a scholar of his... came to me to labor and sue
- 15 for him, pretending that he did it for charity. And forasmuch as we thought we could not fail of him when we would have him, we forbore, therefore, to examine him till we should have examined the other whom he labored for. But then were we not aware in what wise we should be disappointed of him. For so mishapped
- 20 it indeed... that, after his being at me to labor for him whose scholar in heresy he was detected to be, he was in his own house suddenly struck and slain. And that wretched end had he. What conscience he died with, God knoweth; for I can tell you no further.”
- 25 “By Saint John!” quoth your friend. “But, upon the whole tale, it seemeth to me very clear that Hunne was himself not clear of the matter.”
- “Surely,” quoth I, “so seemed it, as far as I could wit, unto as many as ever heard it; and would yet, I ween, have seemed so more
- 30 clearly if they had been present at the examinations... and seen under what manner the man came forth therewith.”
- “But yet,” quoth your friend, “as for his English Bible... though Hunne were himself a heretic, yet might the *Book* be good enough.

1 *them in*: i.e., it to // *marks*: observations // *tokens*: indications

2 *said*: was telling the // *surely marvel were it*: of course it would be surprising

3 *falsely*: deceitfully / treacherously // *feigned*: made up

4 *nothing*: not at all 6 *of*: concerning 7, 9, 13 *which*: who 8 *showed*: told

9 *honest*: respectable 9, 14, 21 *scholar*: pupil; student

10 *for his honesty*: on account of his good reputation

11 *forbore to meddle with*: decided not to deal with 13 *detected*: informed on

14, 18, 20 *labor(ed)*: advocate(d); intercede(d) 14 *sue*: petition; put in a good word

15 *pretending that he did it for*: claiming to be doing this out of

16–17 *fail . . . have him*: fail to get hold of him when we wanted to

19 *wise*: way // *be disappointed of*: lose out on 20 *being at*: coming to

21 *detected*: reported 26–27 *clear of the matter*: free of guilt in that affair

28 *surely*: certainly // *wit*: discern 29 *ween*: believe 33 *Book*: Bible

And no good reason is there why a good Book should be burned with an evil man.”

3.15

“Ye call me well home,” quoth I, “and put me well in mind. For that was the thing whereby ye took occasion to talk of Hunne; of whom we talked so long... that at last I had forgotten wherefore and whereupon we entered into that communication. And yet make those Books not a little to the matter that we had in hand; I mean, toward the perceiving what opinion that Hunne was of. For surely, at such time as he was denounced for a heretic, there lay his English Bible open (and some other English books of his), that every man might see the places noted with his own hand—such words... and in such wise... that there would no wise man that good were... have any great doubt, after the sight thereof, what naughty minds the men had, both he that so noted them and he that so made them. I remember not now the specialties of the matter, nor the formal words as they were written. But this I remember well: that, besides other things framed for the favor of divers other heresies, there were in the prologue of that Bible such words touching the Blessed Sacrament... as good Christian men did much abhor to hear, and which gave the readers undoubted occasion to think that the Book was written after Wycliffe’s copy... and by him translated into our tongue. And yet whether the Book be burned or secretly kept I cannot surely say. But truly, were the clergy of my mind, it should be somewhere reserved... for the perpetual proof of the matter, there hath gone so much suspicious rumor thereof. Which, as I believe, were all well answered and the mind fully satisfied of any man that wise were and good therewith... that once had overlooked, read, and advisedly considered that Book.”

30 *The Sixteenth Chapter*

The messenger rehearseth some causes which he hath heard laid by some of the clergy wherefore the Scripture should not be suffered in English. And the author sheweth his mind—that it were convenient to have the Bible in English—
35 and therewith endeth the Third Book.

3 *call . . . home*: well put me back on track // *put . . . mind*: well refresh my memory
 6 *communication*: discussion 6–7 *make . . . little*: those Bibles have no little relevance
 9 *surely*: assuredly 11, 14 *noted*: annotated 11 *with . . . hand*: in his own handwriting
 12–13 *no . . . were*: i.e., no good person with any sense 14 *naughty minds*: wicked intentions
 15 *made*: wrote // *specialties*: particulars 16 *matter*: content // *formal*: exact
 19 *words touching*: statements regarding
 21 *written . . . copy*: i.e., a copy of the edition put out by Wycliffe 22 *tongue*: language
 26 *were*: would be 27–28 *any . . . therewith*: i.e., anyone both sensible and good
 28 *overlooked*: examined; inspected // *advisedly*: carefully
 31 *rehearseth*: relates 32 *laid*: alleged // *wherefore*: why 33 *suffered*: allowed
 33–34 *showeth his mind*: says what he thinks 34 *were convenient*: would be good

“Sir,” quoth your friend, “yet, for all this, can I see no cause why the clergy should keep the Bible out of laymen’s hands... that can no more but their mother tongue.”

5 “I had went,” quoth I, “that I had proved you plainly that they keep it
What manner of English them... but such translation as be either
Bibles are kept from men not yet approved for good... or such as
 be already reprov’d for naught—as
 10 Wycliffe’s was, and Tyndale’s. For as for other, old ones, that were
 before Wycliffe’s days, remain lawful—and be in some folks’ hands
 had and read.”

“Ye say well,” quoth he. “But yet, as women say, somewhat it was
 always that the cat winked when her eye was out. Surely so is it not
 for naught that the English Bible is in so few men’s hands...
 15 when so many would so fain have it.”

“That is very truth,” quoth I. “For I think that though the favorers of
 a sect of heretics be so fervent in the setting forth of their sect...
 that they let not to lay their money together and make a purse among
 them for the printing of an evil-made or evil-translated book...
 20 which though it hap to be forbidden and burned, yet some be
 sold ere they be spied, and each of them lose but their part: yet
 I think there will no printer lightly be so hot to put any Bible
 in print at his own charge—whereof the loss should lie wholly in his
 own neck—and then hang upon a doubtful trial whether the
 25 first copy of his translation was made before Wycliffe’s days or
 since. For if it were made since, it must be approved before the
 printing. And surely how it hath happened that in all this while,
 God hath either not suffered or not provided that any good, virtuous
 man hath had the mind in faithful wise to translate it, and
 30 thereupon either the clergy or at the leastwise some one bishop to
 approve it, this can I nothing tell. But howsoever it be, I have
 heard, and hear, so much spoken in the matter... and so much doubt
 made therein... that peradventure it would let and withdraw any one
 bishop from the admitting thereof... without the assent of the
 35 remnant. And whereas *many* things be laid against it, yet is

2–3 *laymen’s . . . tongue*: i.e., the hands of lay people who know no language but their native one

4 *went*: thought 5 *showed*: told 7, 8 *for*: as

8 *reprov’d*: condemned // *naught*: no good 9 *were*: came into existence

10 *remain*: i.e., they remain 12 *ye say well*: what you say is true

12–13 *somewhat it was always*: somehow it always happened 13 *her eye*: i.e., one of her eyes

14 *naught*: nothing 15 *fain*: love to 16 *very truth*: i.e., very true // *though*: even if

16 *favorers*: partisans 17 *setting forth*: promoting 18 *let not*: do not forbear // *lay*: put

18 *purse*: fund 19 *evil*–: ill–; perniciously // *made*: written

21 *ere they be spied*: before they are caught sight of // *their part*: their own share (of the cost)

22 *lightly*: likely 23–24 *in his own neck*: on his own shoulders

24 *hang upon*: be at the mercy of // *doubtful trial*: dicey investigation as to

28 *suffered*: let it happen 31 *nothing*: not at all 32 *in*: on

32–33 *doubt made therein*: apprehension expressed about it 33 *let*: hinder

33 *withdraw*: deter; keep back 34 *admitting*: allowing

35 *remnant*: rest // *whereas*: while // *laid*: adduced

- Why the clergy doth not
suffer the Bible to be had in
English*
- there in my mind not one thing that more
putteth good men of the clergy in doubt
to suffer it than this: that they see, sometimes,
much of the worse sort more fervent in
- 5 the calling for it... than them whom we find far better. Which
maketh them to fear lest such men desire it for no good, and lest if
it were had in every man's hand, there would great peril arise,
and that seditious people should do more harm therewith... than good
and honest folk should take fruit thereby. Which fear, I promise
- 10 you, nothing feareth *me*... but that, whosoever would of their malice or
folly take harm of that thing that is of itself ordained to do all men
good, I would never for the avoiding of their harm... take from
others the profit which they might take and nothing
deserve to lose. For else, if the abuse of a good thing should cause the
- 15 taking away thereof from others that would use it well, Christ should
himself never have been born, nor brought his faith into the
world... nor God should never have *made* it, neither... if he should,
for the loss of those that would be damned wretches, have kept
away the occasion of reward from them that would with help of
- 20 his grace endeavor them to deserve it.”
- “I am sure,” quoth your friend, “ye doubt not but that I am fully and wholly
of your mind in this matter, that the Bible should be in our English
tongue. But yet, that the clergy is of the contrary and would *not* have
it so—that appeareth well in that they suffer it not to *be* so. And over
- 25 that, I hear in every place, almost, where I find any learned man of
them, their minds all set thereon to keep the Scripture from us.
And they seek out for that part every rotten reason that they can
find... and set them forth solemnly to the show... though five of
- Gn 3:1–7, 22–24; Mk 4:33–34*
- 30 those reasons be not worth a fig. For
they begin as far as our first father,
Adam... and show us that his wife and he fell out of Paradise
with desire of knowledge and cunning. Now, if this would
serve, it must from the knowledge and study of Scripture drive
every man—priest and other—lest it drive all out of Paradise.
- 35 Then say they that God taught his disciples many things apart...
because the people should not hear it; and therefore they
would the people should not now be suffered to read all. Yet they

2–3 *doubt to suffer*: apprehension about allowing 9 *honest*: upright
 10 *nothing feareth me*: does not at all so frighten me 11 *folly*: foolishness
 11 *of that*: from that 12 *harm*: i.e., getting harmed 13 *nothing*: do not at all
 17 *it*: i.e., the world 18 *for*: i.e., to prevent
 20 *endeavor them to deserve it*: exert themselves to earn it
 23 *tongue*: language 24 *suffer it not*: do not allow it // *over*: besides
 25–26 *learned man of them*: i.e., well-educated clergyman 27 *seek*: search
 27 *part*: stance 28 *find*: come up with // *solemnly to the show*: with a straight face
 30 *as far*: i.e., as far back 31 *show*: point out to 32 *cunning*: learning
 35 *apart*: i.e., in private 36 *because*: so that
 37 *would . . . suffered*: would have the people not now be allowed
 37 *all*: i.e., everything in the Bible

say further that it is hard to translate the Scripture out of one tongue
 into another—and especially, they say, into ours. Which they call a
 tongue vulgar and barbarous. But of all things, especially they say
 that Scripture is the food of the soul... and that the common people be as
 5 infants, that must be fed but with milk and pap; and if we
 have any stronger meat, it must be champ(ed) before by the nurse, and
 so put into the baby's mouth. But methink though they make us all
 infants, they shall find many a shrewd brain among us... that
 can perceive chalk from cheese well enough, and if they would once
 10 take us our meat in our own hand, we be not so evil-toothed but
 that within a while they shall see us champ it ourselves as well as they.
 For let them call us young babies and they will—yet, by God, they shall,
 for all that, well find in some of us that an old knave is no child!”
 “Surely,” quoth I, “such things as ye speak... is the thing that, as I
 15 somewhat said before, putteth good folk in fear to suffer the
Why Scripture is not suffered Scripture in our English tongue. Not for
in our English tongue the reading and receiving... but for the
 busy champing thereof, and for much
 20 meddling with such parts thereof as least will agree with their
 capacities. For undoubtedly, as ye spoke of our mother Eve, inordinate
 appetite of knowledge is a means to drive any man out of Paradise.
 And inordinate is the appetite when men unlearned though they
 read it in their language... will be busy to ensearch and dispute
 the great secret mysteries of Scripture... which though they hear,
 25 they be not able to perceive. This thing is plainly forbidden us
 that be not appointed nor instructed thereto. And therefore holy
 Saint Gregory Nazianzen, that great, solemn doctor, sore toucheth
 and reproveth all such bold, busy meddlers in the Scripture, and
Ex 20:19; 24:2–3 showeth that it is in Exodus... by Moses
 30 ascending up upon the hill, where he
 spoke with God, and the people tarrying beneath... signified that the
 people be forbidden to presume to meddle with the high mysteries of
 Holy Scripture, but ought to be content to tarry beneath and meddle
 no higher than is meet for them, but, receiving from the height

1, 3, 16 *tongue*: language 3 *vulgar*: low-class; pedestrian 6 *stronger*: tougher
 6, 10 *meat*: food 6, 11 *champ(ed)*: chew(ed) 6 *nurse*: nursemaid
 7 *make us all*: i.e., make us all out to be 8 *shrewd*: serious
 10 *evil-toothed*: ill-toothed; poorly equipped with teeth 12 *and*: if
 14 *surely*: to be sure 15 *somewhat*: to some extent // *to suffer*: about allowing
 18 *busy champing*: importunate chewing 19 *meddling*: occupying themselves
 20 *spoke of*: said about 20–21 *inordinate appetite of*: an inordinate desire for
 23 *busy*: solicitous // *ensearch*: search out // *dispute*: discuss
 25 *perceive*: understand 27 *solemn*: august // *doctor*: exegete
 27 *sore*: strongly // *toucheth*: attacks 28 *reproveth*: criticizes
 28 *busy*: officious // *meddlers*: dabblers 29 *showeth*: points out
 31 *tarrying beneath*: staying below 32 *meddle*: grapple
 33–34 *meddle no higher*: have no higher involvement 34 *meet*: fitting

- of the hill, by Moses, that that is delivered them—that is to wit, the laws and precepts that they must keep, and the points they must believe—look well thereupon, and often, and meddle well therewith... not to dispute it, but to fulfill it. And as for the high, secret
- 5 mysteries of God, and hard texts of his Holy Scripture, let us know that we be so unable to ascend up so high on that hill... that it shall become us to say to the preachers appointed thereto as the people said unto Moses—‘Hear you God, and let us hear you.’ And surely, the blessed holy doctor Saint Jerome greatly complaineth and
- 10 rebuketh that lewd homely manner that the common lay people—men and women—were in his days so bold in the meddling, disputing, *Holy Scripture cannot be* and expounding of Holy Scripture... and *understood without a reader.* showeth plainly that they shall have evil proof therein... that will reckon themselves to
- 15 understand it by themselves, without a reader. For it is a thing that requireth good help, and long time, and a whole mind given greatly thereto. And surely, since, as the holy apostle Saint Paul in *1 Cor 12:28–30; Eph 4:11* divers of his epistles saith, God hath by his Holy Spirit so instituted and ordained
- 20 his church that he will have some readers, and some hearers; some teachers, and some learners: we do plainly pervert and turn upside down the right order of Christ’s church when the one party meddleth with *Note* the other’s office. Plato, the great philosopher, specially forbiddeth such as be not
- 25 admitted thereunto nor men meet therefor... to meddle much and embusy themselves in reasoning and disputing upon the temporal laws of the city; which would not be *reasoned* upon but by folk meet therefor, and in place convenient. For else, they that cannot very well attain to *perceive* them... begin to mislike,
- 30 dispraise, and condemn them. Whereof followeth the breach of the laws, and disorder of the people. For till a law be changed by authority, it rather ought to be observed than contemned; or else the example of one law boldly broken and set at naught
- 35 *The common people long to live all at liberty.* waxeth a precedent for the remnant to be used like. And commonly the best laws shall worst like much of the common

3 *thereupon*: at all of that // *meddle well therewith*: get plenty involved with it
 4 *dispute*: discuss // *secret*: esoteric 8 *surely*: indeed 9 *holy doctor*: theologian
 9 *complaineth*: bemoans 10 *rebuketh*: castigates // *lewd*: loathsome
 10 *homely*: offhand 11 *meddling*: tackling // *disputing*: discussing
 13 *showeth plainly*: states straight-out 13–14 *evil proof*: a bad outcome
 15 *a reader*: (the help of) an expert 18 *divers*: several
 20 *some*: i.e., some be 22 *meddleth with*: encroaches upon 24 *specially*: expressly
 25, 28 *meet*: qualified 25–26 *meddle* . . . *embusy*: much involve and busy
 26 *reasoning*: discussing // *disputing*: holding debates 27 *would*: should
 28 *place convenient*: an appropriate place 29 *attain*: manage
 29 *perceive*: understand // *mislike*: dislike 30 *dispraise*: criticize
 30, 32 *contemn(ed)*: scorn(ed) 30 *breach*: breaking 33 *set at naught*: disregarded
 34 *waxeth*: becomes // *remnant*: rest 35 *used like*: treated the same way
 36 *worst like*: least please // *much*: a lot

people... which most long (if they might be heard and followed) to live all at liberty, under none at all. Now, if Plato, so wise a man, so thought good in *temporal* laws, things of men's making: how much is it less meet for every man boldly to

5 meddle with the exposition of Holy *Scripture*—so devised and indited by the high wisdom of God... that it far exceedeth, in many places, the capacity and perceiving of man! It was also provided by the Emperor, in the law civil, that the common people should never be so bold to keep dispicions upon the faith or Holy *Scripture*;

10 nor that any such thing should be used *among* them, or *before* them. And therefore, as I said before, the special fear in this matter is lest we would be too busy in 'champing' of the *Scripture* ourselves—which ye say we were able enough to do; which undoubtedly the wisest and the best-learned... and he that therein hath by many years

15 bestowed his whole mind... is yet unable to do. And then far more unable must he needs be... that boldly will upon the first reading, because he knoweth the *words*, take upon him therefore to teach other men the *sentence*, with peril of his own soul and other men's too... by the bringing men into mad ways, sects, and

20 heresies... such as heretics have of old brought up and the Church hath condemned. And thus, in these matters, if the common people might be bold to 'champ' it, as ye say, and to dispute it, then

Note should ye have the more blind the more bold; the more ignorant the more busy;

25 the lesser wit the more inquisitive; the more fool the more talkative of great doubts and high questions of Holy *Scripture* and of God's great and secret mysteries—and this not soberly, of any good affection, but presumptuously and unreverently, at meat and at meal. And there, when the wine were in and the wit out, would

30 they take upon them with foolish words and blasphemy to handle Holy *Scripture* in more homely manner than a song of Robin Hood. And some would, as I said, solemnly take upon them, like as they were ordinary readers, to interpret the text at their pleasure—and therewith fall themselves, and draw down others with them, into seditious

35 sects and heresies; whereby the *Scripture* of God should lose his honor and reverence, and be, by such unreverent and unsitting demeanor, among much people quite and clean abused... unto the contrary of that holy purpose that God ordained it for. Whereas if

4 *meet*: fitting 5 *meddle*: occupy himself // *exposition*: expounding 6 *indited*: composed
 7 *perceiving*: understanding 9 *to keep dispicions*: as to engage in disputations
 10 *used*: held; engaged in 11 *special*: main 12, 22 *champ(ing)*: chew(ing)
 13 *were*: would be 14 *by*: for 15 *bestowed*: invested 18 *sentence*: meaning
 18 *with peril of*: i.e., along with jeopardizing 20 *brought up*: introduced 22 *might*: could
 22 *dispute*: engage in debates about 24 *busy*: importunate 25 *wit*: intellect
 26 *doubts*: unclear things; difficulties 27 *secret*: recondite 28 *affection*: disposition
 28–29 *at meat and at meal*: at the dining-room table; at their meals 29 *wit*: right mind
 31 *homely*: casual // *song of*: ballad about 32 *like as*: as if
 33 *ordinary readers*: established experts // *at their pleasure*: as they pleased 35 *his*: its
 36 *unsitting*: unbecoming 37 *demeanor*: behavior // *much*: a lot of
 37 *quite . . . abused*: utterly and completely misused

- 3.16
- How laymen should read the Scripture* we would no further meddle therewith but well and devoutly read it... and in that that is plain and evident, as God's commandments
- and his holy counsels, endeavor ourselves to follow,
- 5 with help of his grace asked thereunto; and in his great and marvelous miracles consider his Godhead; and in his lowly birth, his godly life, and his bitter Passion, exercise ourselves in such meditations, prayer, and virtues as the matter shall administer us occasion, acknowledging our own ignorance where we find a
- 10 doubt; and, therein leaning to the faith of the Church, wrestle with no such text as might bring us in a doubt and weresty of any of those articles wherein every good Christian man is clear: by this manner of reading can no man nor woman take hurt in Holy
- 15 *The things that the unlearned cannot attain unto* Scripture. Now, then, the things, on the other side, that unlearned people can never by themselves attain—as in the Psalms
- and the prophets and divers parts of the Gospel... where the words be sometimes spoken as in the person of the prophet himself, sometimes as in the person of God, sometimes of some others (as
- 20 angels, devils, or men), and sometimes of our Savior Christ (not always of one fashion, but sometimes as God, sometimes as man; sometimes as head of this mystical body his Church Militant here in earth, sometimes as head of his Church Triumphant in heaven; sometimes as in the person of his sensual parts of his own
- 25 body, otherwhile in the person of some particular part of his body mystical), and these things, with many others, oftentimes interchanged, and suddenly sundry things of diverse matters diversely mingled together—all these things which is not possible for unlearned men to attain unto, it were more than madness for
- 30 them to meddle with... but leave all these things to them whose whole study is beset thereupon, and to the preachers appointed thereunto... which may show them such things in time and place
- 35 *Temper thy sermon after thy audience.* convenient, with reverence and authority, the sermon so tempered as may be meet and convenient always for the present

1 *meddle*: deal 2 *well and*: very 3 *plain and evident*: clear and obvious
 3, 16 *as*: such as 4 *endeavor*: exert 6 *consider*: reflect on // *Godhead*: divinity
 10 *doubt*: difficulty; something that is not clear to us // *leaning to*: relying on; going by
 11 *in a doubt and weresty of*: into a state of doubt and uncertainty about
 12 *wherein*: about which 13 *hurt*: harm 15 *side*: hand
 16, 29 *attain (unto)*: get a good grasp of 17 *divers*: several
 19–20 *as angels*: such as angels 23 *in earth*: on earth
 24 *sensual*: sensorially perceptible 25 *otherwhile*: other times
 27 *interchanged*: alternated // *suddenly*: extemporaneously
 27, 28 *diverse(ly)*: different(ly) 28 *mingled*: mixed 29 *attain unto*: get at
 29 *were*: would be 30 *meddle*: occupy themselves // *but*: i.e., but they should
 31 *beset*: focused 32 *which*: who // *show*: make known
 33, 35 *convenient*: suitable 34 *meet*: fitting

audience. Whereunto it appeareth that our Savior himself, and his
apostles after him, had ever special respect. And therefore, as I
say, forsooth, I can in no wise agree with you that it were meet for
men unlearned to be busy with the ‘champing’ of Holy Scripture... but
5 to have it ‘champed’ unto them. For that is the *preachers’* part—and
theirs that after long study are admitted to read and expound it.
And to this intent weigh all the words, as far as I perceive, of all
holy doctors that anything have written in this matter. But
10 *There can be no reason why* never meant they, as I suppose, the forbidding
the Bible should not be of the Bible to be read in any
translated into English. vulgar tongue. Nor I never yet heard any
reason laid why it were not convenient
to have the Bible translated into the English tongue... but all those
reasons, seemed they never so gay and glorious at the first sight, yet
15 when they were well examined, they might, in effect, for aught that
I can see, as well be laid against the holy writers that wrote the
Scripture in the Hebrew tongue, and against the blessed evangelists
that wrote the Scripture in Greek, and against all those, in like wise,
that translated it out of every of those tongues into Latin, as to their
20 charge that would well and faithfully translate it out of Latin into
our English tongue. For as for that our tongue is called barbarous,
is but a fantasy. For so is, as every learned man knoweth, every
strange language to other. And if they would call it barren of
words—there is no doubt but it is plenteous enough to express
25 our minds in anything whereof one man hath used to speak with
another. Now, as touching the difficulty which a translator
findeth in expressing well and lively the sentence of his author—
which *is* hard always to do so surely but that he shall sometimes diminish,
either of the sentence or of the grace that it beareth in the former
30 tongue—that point hath lain in their light that have translated
the Scripture already, either out of Greek into Latin or out of Hebrew
into any of them both, as by many translations which we read
already... to them that be learned appeareth. Now, as touching the
harm that may grow by such blind bayards as will, when they
35 read the Bible in English, be more busy than will become them:
they that touch that point harp upon the right string, and

2 *respect*: consideration 3 *were meet*: would be fitting 4 *be busy*: busy themselves
4 *champing*: chewing // *but*: i.e., but rather, it would be for them fitting 5 *part*: province
6 *admitted*: officially authorized // *read*: interpret 8 *holy doctors*: theologians
8 *in*: on 11 *vulgar*: vernacular 11, 13, etc. *tongue(s)*: language(s) 12 *laid*: alleged
12 *convenient*: advisable; good 14 *never so*: no matter how // *gay*: brilliantly good
15 *might*: could // *in effect*: actually // *ought*: anything 16 *laid*: adduced
19 *every*: each 19–20 *their . . . would*: the charge of those who want to
20, 27 *well and*: good and // *faithfully*: accurately 22 *fantasy*: baseless supposition
23 *strange*: foreign 25 *used*: been wont 26, 33 *as touching*: as regards
27 *lively*: vividly 27, 29 *sentence*: meaning 28 *surely*: exactly
28 *diminish*: lose something 30 *in . . . that*: in the full view of those who 32 *any*: either
34 *may grow*: can be caused // *blind bayards*: cockily self-confident ignoramuses
35 *busy*: inquisitive 36 *touch*: touch on

touch truly the great harm that were likely to grow to some
 folk—howbeit, not by the occasion, yet, of the English translation,
 but by the occasion of their own lewdness and folly; which yet were
 not, in my mind, a sufficient cause to exclude the *translation*, and
 5 to put other folk from the benefit thereof, but, rather, to make provision
 against such *abuse*... and let a good thing go forth. No wise
No good thing ought to be put away because of the misuse thereof. man were there that would put all weapons
 away because manquellers misuse them.
 10 Nor this letted not, as I said, the Scripture
 to be first written in a vulgar tongue. For
 the Scripture, as I said before, was not written but in a vulgar tongue,
 such as the whole people understood; nor in no secret ciphers, but such
 common letters as almost every man could read. For neither was the
 Hebrew nor the Greek tongue, nor the Latin, neither, any other speech
 15 than such as all the people spoke. And therefore if we should lay
 that it were evil done to translate the Scripture into our tongue...
 because it is vulgar and common to every Englishman: then had it
 been as evil done to translate it into Greek or into Latin, or to write
 the New Testament first in Greek or the Old Testament in Hebrew,
 20 because both those tongues were as very vulgar as ours. And yet should
 there by this reason also not only the Scripture be kept out of our
 tongue... but, over that, should the reading thereof be forbidden both all
 such lay people and all such priests, too, as can no more than their
 grammar... and very scantily that. All which company, though they
 25 can understand the words, be yet as far from the perceiving
 of the sentence in hard and doubtful texts... as were our women...
 if the Scripture were translated to our own language. Howbeit, of
 truth, seldom hath it been seen that any sect of heretics hath
 begun of such unlearned folk as nothing could else but the
 30 language wherein they read the Scripture; but there hath always
 commonly these sects sprung of the pride of such folk... as had
 with the knowledge of the tongue some high persuasion in themselves
 of their own learning besides. To whose authority some other
 folk have soon after—part of malice, part of simpleness, and
 35 much part of pleasure and delight in newfangledness—fallen in, and

1 *touch truly*: are right on key about // *were likely to grow*: would be likely to come

3 *lewdness*: ignorance // *folly*: foolishness 3–4 *were not*: would not be

5 *put . . . from*: deprive . . . of 6 *wise*: sane

7–8 *put all weapons away*: do away with all weapons 8 *manquellers*: murderers

9–10 *this letted not . . . to be*: this concern did not prevent . . . from being

10, 11 *vulgar*: vernacular 10, 11, etc. *tongue*: language 12 *secret*: mysterious

12 *ciphers*: characters 15 *lay*: claim 16, 26 *were*: would be

16 *evil done*: ill done; a bad thing to do 17, 20 *vulgar*: pedestrian

17 *had it*: it would have 18 *as evil done*: as ill done; as bad a thing to do

20 *very*: truly 21 *reason*: argument 22 *over*: in addition to

23–24 *can no more than their grammar*: i.e., know no more of Latin than just the grammar

24 *though*: even if 26 *sentence*: meaning // *doubtful*: puzzling 27 *to*: into

29 *nothing could else but*: knew nothing more than 34 *simpleness*: gullibility

35 *fallen in*: subscribed

- increased the faction; but the head hath ever commonly been either some
 proud learned man... or at the least, besides the language, some proud
smatterer in learning. So that if we should for fear of heretics that
 might hap to grow thereby... keep the Scripture out of any tongue, or
 5 out of unlearned men's hands: we should for like fear be fain to
 keep it out of *all* tongues, and out of *learned* men's hands, too—and
 wot not whom we might trust therewith. Wherefore there is, as methinketh,
 no remedy but if any good thing shall go forward...
 somewhat must needs be adventured. And some folk will not fail
 10 *A commodity ought not to be* to be naught. Against which things
kept back for the harm that provision must be made... that as much
may come of it. good may grow, and as little harm
 come, as can be devised; and not to keep
 the whole commodity from any whole people... because of harm that by
 15 their own folly and fault may come to some part. As though a
 lewd surgeon would cut off the leg by the knee to keep the toe
 from the gout, or cut off a man's head by the shoulders to keep him
 from the toothache. There is no treatise of Scripture so hard but that a
 good, virtuous man—or woman, either—shall somewhat find therein
 20 that shall delight and increase their devotion. Besides this: that
 every preaching shall be the more pleasant and fruitful unto
 them when they have in their mind the place of Scripture that
A preacher in his preaching they shall there hear expounded. For
must use discretion. though it be—as it is indeed—great
 25 wisdom for a preacher to use discretion
 in his preaching, and to have a respect unto the qualities and
 capacities of his audience: yet letteth that nothing... but that the
 whole audience may without harm have read and have already the
 scripture in mind that he shall in his preaching declare and
 30 expound. For no doubt is there but that God and his Holy Spirit
 hath so prudently tempered their speech through the whole corpus of
 Scripture... that every man may take good thereby, and no man harm...
 but he that will in the study thereof lean proudly to the folly of his own
 wit. For albeit that Christ did speak to the people in parables and
 35 expounded them secretly to his especial disciples—and sometimes
 forbore to tell some things to them also, because they were not as

3 *smatterer*: dabbler 4 *grow*: come about 4, 6 *tongues(s)*: language(s)

5 *fain*: forced 7 *wot*: know // *might*: could

9 *somewhat must needs be adventured*: some risk must necessarily be taken

10 *naught*: bad 12 *grow*: result 13 *devised*: managed

14 *commodity*: benefit // *people*: population 16 *lewd*: foolish; idiotic

16, 17 *by*: at 18 *treatise*: book 19 *somewhat*: something

21 *preaching*: sermon // *pleasant*: agreeable; palatable 22 *place*: passage

26 *have a respect unto*: take into consideration // *qualities*: social positions

27 *letteth that nothing... but*: this in no way rules out... that

29 *declare*: elucidate 35 *secretly*: in private

yet able to bear them—and the apostles, in like wise, did sometimes
 spare to speak to some people the things that they did not let
 plainly to speak to some others: yet letteth all this nothing the translation
 of the Scripture into our own tongue, no more than in the
 5 Latin. Nor it is no cause to keep the corpus of Scripture out of the
 hands of any Christian people so many years fastly confirmed in faith...
 because Christ and his apostles used such provision in their
 utterance of so strange and unheard mysteries either unto Jews,
 paynims, or newly christened folk—except we would say that all the
 10 expositions which Christ made himself upon his own
 parables... unto his secret servants and disciples, withdrawn from
 the people... should now, at this day, be kept in like wise from the
 commoners, and no man suffered to read or hear them but those that
 in his Church represent the state and office of his apostles. Which
 15 there will, I wot well, no wise man say... considering that those
 things which were then commonly most kept from the people... be
 now most necessary for the people to know. As it well appeareth by
 all such things, in effect, as our Savior at the time taught his
 apostles apart. Whereof I would not, for my mind, withhold the
 20 profit that one good, devout unlearned layman might take by the
 reading, not for the harm that a hundred heretics would fall in by
 their own willful abusion; no more than our Savior letted for the
 weal of such as would be, with his grace, of his little chosen flock...
 to come into this world and be ‘*lapis offensionis, et petra scandali*’
 25 *1 Pt 2:7–8* (‘the stone of stumbling, and the stone of
 falling’)—and ruin—to all the willful
 wretches in the world beside. Finally, methinketh that the
 constitution provincial of which we spoke right now hath
 determined this question already. For when the clergy therein
 30 agreed that the English Bibles should remain which were
 translated before Wycliffe’s days—they consequently did agree
 that to have the Bible in English was no hurt. And in that
 they forbade any new translation to be read till it were approved
 by the bishops, it appeareth well thereby that their intent was
 35 that the bishop should approve it if he found it faultless—and
 also, of reason, amend it where it were faulty... but if the man were

1, 12 *wise*: manner 2 *spare to speak*: refrain from saying // *let*: hesitate
 3 *speak*: say 3–4 *letteth* . . . *translation*: all this in no way stands in the way of the translating
 4 *tongue*: language // *in*: into 7 *provision*: discretion 8 *so*: such
 8 *strange*: singular; extraordinary // *unheard*: unheard-of 9 *paynims*: pagans
 9 *except*: unless 11 *secret*: close-to-him; own // *withdrawn*: away / kept from
 13 *suffered*: allowed 15 *wot*: know // *wise*: sane
 17 *as it well appeareth*: as is well evidenced 18 *in effect*: just about; almost
 22 *abusion*: misuse // *letted*: forbore 23 *weal*: well-being
 27 *world beside*: rest of the world 28 *constitution provincial*: synodal decree
 28 *spoke right now*: were speaking just now 29 *determined*: settled
 32 *to . . . hurt*: there was nothing wrong with having the Bible in English
 35 *faultless*: free of error 36 *of reason*: as stands to reason // *amend*: correct
 36 *faulty*: erroneous // *but if*: unless

a heretic that made it, or the faults such and so many as it were more easy to make it all new than mend it. As it happed, for both points, in the translation of Tyndale.

- Now, if it so be that it would haply be thought not a thing
 5 meetly to be adventured to set all on a flush at once, and dash rashly out Holy Scripture in every lewd fellow's teeth—yet thinketh me there might such a moderation be taken therein... as neither good, virtuous lay folk should lack it... nor rude and rash brains
 10 *Good counsel* abuse it. For it might be with diligence well and truly translated by some good Catholic and well-learned man—or by divers, dividing the labor among them... and after, conferring their several parts together, each with other. And after that might the work be allowed and approved by the ordinaries, and by their authorities so put
 15 unto print... as all the copies should come, whole, unto the bishop's hand. Which he may, after his discretion and wisdom, deliver to such as he perceiveth honest, sad, and virtuous... with a good admonition and fatherly counsel to use it reverently, with humble heart and lowly mind, rather seeking therein occasion of devotion
 20 than of dispicion. And providing as much as may be... that the Book be after the decease of the party brought again and reverently restored unto the ordinary. So that, as near as may be devised, no man have it but of the ordinary's hand... and by him thought and reputed for such as shall be likely to use it to God's honor and
 25 merit of his own soul. Among whom if any be proved after to have abused it, then the use thereof to be forbidden him, either forever or till he be waxen wiser.”
- “By our Lady,” quoth your friend, “this way misliketh not me. But who should set the price of the Book?”
- 30 “Forsooth,” quoth I, “that reckon I a thing of little force. For neither were it a great matter for any man, in manner, to give a groat or twain above the mean price for a book of so great profit... nor for the bishop to give them all free—wherein he might serve his diocese with the cost of ten pounds, I think, or twenty marks. Which sum,
 35 I dare say, there is no bishop but he would be glad to bestow about a thing that might do his whole diocese so special a pleasure with such a spiritual profit.”

1 *faults*: errors // *as*: i.e., that 2 *were*: would be // *mend*: fix
 2–3 *as . . . in*: as was the case, on both counts, with 5 *meetly*: suitably
 5 *adventured*: ventured // *set all on a flush*: put everyone in a flash flood
 6 *in . . . teeth*: into the teeth of every worthless lout 8 *rude*: inept 10 *well and*: good and
 10 *truly*: accurately 11 *well-learned*: well-educated // *divers*: several
 12 *after*: afterward 12–13 *conferring . . . together*: bringing together their respective sections
 13 *might the work be allowed*: the result could be accepted 14 *ordinaries*: bishops
 14 *authorities*: authorizations 15 *whole*: i.e., the whole set of them 16 *may*: could
 16 *after*: according to // *deliver*: hand out 17 *honest*: upright // *sad*: sober-minded
 20 *dispicion*: debate 21 *again*: back 22 *restored*: returned // *may*: can
 22 *devised*: managed 27 *he be waxen wiser*: he's become more sensible
 28 *misliketh not me*: I have no objection to 30 *force*: importance 31 *in manner*: just about
 31 *groat*: fourpence 32 *mean*: average 33 *free*: for free 35–36 *bestow about*: spend on

“By my troth,” quoth he, “yet ween I that the people would grudge to have it on this wise delivered them, at the bishop’s hand... and had liefer pay for it to the printer than have it of the bishop free.”

5 “It might so happen with some,” quoth I. “But yet, in mine opinion, there were in that manner more *willfulness* than wisdom, or any good mind, in such as would not be content so to receive them. And therefore I would think, in good faith, that it would so fortune in few. But, before God, the more doubt would be lest they would grudge, and hold themselves sore aggrieved, that would require it and
10 were haply denied it. Which I suppose would not often happen unto any honest householder... to be by his discretion reverently read in his house. But though it were not taken to every lewd lad in his own hands, to read a little, rudely, when he list, and then cast the Book at his heels—or, among others such as himself, to keep a
15 *A pot parliament* quodlibet and a pot parliament upon—I trow there will no wise man find a fault therein. Ye spoke right now of the Jews, among whom the whole people have, ye say, the Scripture in their hands. And ye thought it no reason that we should reckon Christian men less worthy thereto
20 than them. Wherein I am, as ye see, of your own opinion. But yet would God we had the like reverence to the Scripture of God that they have! For I assure you, I have heard very worshipful folk say which have been in their houses... that a man could not hire a Jew to sit
How reverently the Jew down upon his Bible of the Old Testament;
25 *doth use the Scripture* but he taketh it with great reverence in hand when he will read... and reverently layeth it up again when he hath done. Whereas we, God forgive us, take little regard to sit down on our Bible with the Old Testament and the New too. Which homely handling, as it
30 proceedeth of little reverence, so doth it more and more engender in the mind a negligence and contempt of God’s holy words. We find also that among the Jews, though all their whole Bible was written in their vulgar tongue... and those books thereof wherein their laws were written were usual in every man’s hands,
35 as things that God would have commonly known, repeated, and kept in remembrance—yet were there, again, certain parts thereof which the common people of the Jews of old time, both of

1 *troth*: word // *yet ween I*: I yet think 1–2 *grudge to have*: resent having
2 *on this wise*: in this way 2–3 *had*... *printer*: would rather pay the printer for it
3 *have*... *free*: get it from the bishop for free 6 *mind*: mentality 7 *fortune*: turn out
8 *more doubt*: greater fear 9 *grudge*: grumble // *hold*... *aggrieved*: consider themselves done terribly wrong // *require*: request 11 *honest*: upstanding; decent
11 *to be*: i.e., who wanted it in order for it to be 12 *lewd*: ignorant / crass 13 *rudely*: ineptly
13 *list*: likes 15 *quodlibet*: scholastic debate // *pot*: drinking 16 *trow*: trust
16–17 *find*... *therein*: find fault with that 17 *spoke right now*: were speaking just now
19 *no reason*: not reasonable 22 *worshipful*: respectable 23 *hire*: pay
28 *take little regard to sit*: think little of sitting 29 *homely*: casual 30 *of*: from
31 *negligence*: heedlessness // *contempt*: disregard 33 *vulgar tongue*: ordinary language
34 *usual*: ordinarily 35 *commonly*: i.e., by all of them 36 *again*: on the other hand

reverence and for the difficulty, did forbear to meddle with. But

3.16

*The veil of the Temple is
broken asunder.*

now since the veil of the Temple is broken
asunder that divided among the Jews...
the people from the sight of the secrets,

- 5 and that God had sent his Holy Spirit to be assistant with his whole
Church to teach all necessary truth; though it may therefore be the
better suffered that no part of Holy Scripture were kept out of *honest*
laymen's hands—yet would I that no part thereof should come
in theirs which to their own harm and haply their neighbors'
10 too... would handle it over-homely... and be too bold and busy therewith.
And also, though Holy Scripture be, as ye said while ere, a medicine
for him that is sick... and food for him that is whole: yet, since there is
many a body sore soul-sick that taketh himself for whole; and in Holy
Scripture is a whole feast of so much diverse viand... that, after the
15 affection and state of sundry stomachs, one may take harm by the
selfsame that shall do another good; and sick folk often have such
a corrupt tallage in their taste that they most like the meat that is
most unwholesome for them—it were not, therefore, as methinketh,
unreasonable that the ordinary (whom God hath in the diocese
20 appointed for the chief physician... to discern between the whole
and the sick, and between disease and disease) should, after his
wisdom and discretion, appoint everybody their part... as
he should perceive to be good and wholesome for them. And therefore,
as he should not fail to find many a man to whom he might
25 commit all the whole: so, to say the truth, I can see no harm therein
though he should commit unto some man the Gospel of Matthew,
Mark, or Luke... whom he should yet forbid the Gospel of Saint
John; and suffer some to read the Acts of the Apostles... whom
he would not suffer to meddle with the Apocalypse. Many were there,
30 I think, that should take much profit by Saint Paul's epistle *ad*
Ephesios... wherein he giveth good counsel to *every* kind of people...
and yet should find little fruit for their understanding in his
The Epistle to the Romans epistle *ad Romanos*... containing such
containeth high difficulties. high difficulties as very few learned men
35 can very well attain. And in like wise
would it be in divers other parts of the Bible, as well in the Old

1 *meddle with*: concern themselves with 1–4: See Matthew 27:51.

4 *secrets*: mysteries 5 *assistant*: actively present 7 *suffered*: sanctioned

7 *honest*: honorable 10 *over-homely*: too unceremoniously

11 *while ere*: a while back 12, 13, 20 *whole*: well 13 *sore*: terribly

14 *so much diverse viand*: so many different foods 14, 21 *after*: according to

15 *affection*: disposition 17 *corrupt tallage in their taste*: distorted sense of taste

17 *meat*: food 18 *were not*: would not be 19 *ordinary*: bishop

20 *discern*: distinguish 22 *appoint*: grant to

24–25 *might commit all the whole*: could commit it in its entirety 26 *though*: if

28 *suffer*: allow 29 *meddle with*: involve themselves with; get into

29 *Apocalypse*: Book of Revelation // *were there*: would there be

33 *containing*: i.e., it containing 35 *attain*: get at 36 *divers*: several

Testament as the New. So that, as I say, though the bishop might
 unto some layman betake and commit, with good advice and instruction,
 the whole Bible to read, yet might he to some man well and
 with reason restrain the reading of some part; and from some busy
 5 body, the meddling with any part at all... more than he shall hear
 in sermons set out and declared unto him; and in like wise, too,
 take the Bible away from such folk again... as be proved by their
 blind presumption to abuse the occasion of their profit unto
 their own hurt and harm. And thus may the bishop order the
 10 Scripture in our hands... with as good reason as the father doth by
 his discretion appoint which of his children may, for his sadness,
 keep a knife to cut his meat... and which shall for his wantonness have
 his knife taken from him, for cutting off his fingers. And thus am I
 bold, without prejudice of other men's judgment, to show you
 15 my mind in this matter: how the Scripture might without great
 peril, and not without great profit, be brought into our tongue and
 taken to lay men and women both—not yet meaning thereby but that
 the whole Bible might, for my mind, be suffered to be spread abroad in
 English. But if that were so much doubted that percase all might
 20 thereby be letted—then would I rather have used such moderation as
 I speak of... or some such other as wiser men can better devise. Howbeit,
 upon that I read lately in the epistle that the King's Highness translated
 into English... of his own (which His Grace made in Latin,
 answering to the letter of Luther), my mind giveth me that His
 25 Majesty is, of his blessed zeal, so minded to move this matter unto
 the prelates of the clergy—among whom I have perceived some of
 the greatest, and of the best, of their own minds well inclinable thereto
 already—that we lay people shall in this matter ere long time pass,
 except the fault be found in ourselves, be well and fully satisfied
 30 and content.”

“In good faith,” quoth he, “that will in my mind be very well done.
 And now am I, for my mind, in all this matter fully content and
 satisfied.”

“Well,” quoth I, “then will we to dinner, and the remnant will we
 35 finish after.” And therewith went we to meat.

The end of the Third Book

4 *restrain*: prohibit 4–5 *busy body*: importunate person 5 *meddling*: dealing
 6 *declared*: explained 11 *for his sadness*: on account of his maturity
 12 *for his wantonness*: because of his carelessness
 13 *for cutting off*: for fear that he will cut off 13–14 *am I bold*: do I venture
 14 *of*: to // *show*: tell 15 *mind*: thinking 16 *tongue*: language 17 *yet*: even
 18 *might*: could // *for my mind*: as far as I am concerned // *suffered*: allowed
 18 *abroad*: around 19 *doubted*: feared // *percase*: perchance 20 *letted*: lost
 22 *upon that*: from what // *epistle*: letter 23 *made*: wrote
 24 *my mind giveth me*: I get the impression 25 *move*: present
 27 *well inclinable*: very amenable 29 *except*: unless // *well and*: good and; quite
 31 *in good faith*: truly 32 *for my mind*: for my part
 32 *in all this matter*: with regard to this whole matter 34 *will we*: we will go
 34 *remnant*: rest 35 *meat*: (our) meal

The Fourth Book

4.1

The First Chapter

The author showeth wherefore it were not well done to suffer Luther's books—or any other heretic's—to go abroad
 5 and be read among the people... though there were some good things in them among the bad.

When we had after dinner a little paused, your friend and I drew ourselves aside, into the garden. And there, sitting down in an arbor, he began to enter forth into the matter, saying that he had
 10 well perceived that not in his country only, but also in the university where he had been, there were that had none evil opinion of Luther, but thought that his books were by the clergy forbidden of malice and evil will, “to the end that folk should not surely see and perfectly perceive what he saith—or, at the least, what thing he
 15 meaneth by his words. Which will not appear, they think, by a line taken out in the midst of a leaf, but by the diligent consideration of the whole matter. Without which men might impute a wrong blame, they say, to the best writers that ever wrote in this world. But they think that the clergy will not have his books read
 20 because that in them laymen may read the priests' faults—which was, they say, the very cause of the condemnation. For else... whether he had written well or evil... yet, they say, his books had been kept in men's hands and read. For there is, they think, therein, though some part were naught, many things yet well said... whereof there
 25 was no reason that men should lose the profit for the bad. And also, reason men think it *were*... that all were heard that can be said touching the truth to be known concerning the matters of our *salvation*; to the intent that, all heard and perceived, men may for their own surety the better choose and hold the right way.”
 30 “Forsooth,” quoth I, “if it were now doubtful and ambiguous whether

3–4 *showeth* . . . *suffer*: explains why it would not be good to allow

4 *go abroad*: get out there 5, 23 *though*: even if

7 *a little paused*: taken a little break

10 *country*: part of the country; neck of the woods // *in*: at

11 *were*: i.e., were some; were those // *none evil*: no bad 12 *of*: out of

13, 22 *evil*: ill 16 *taken out in the midst of a leaf*: extracted from the middle of a page

18 *blame*: blameworthiness 20 *faults*: wrongdoings 22 *had been*: would have been

24 *naught*: bad 24–25 *there was no reason*: it did not stand to reason

25 *for*: on account of 26 *reason men think it were*: people think it *would* stand to reason

26, 28 *all*: everything 26 *were*: was 27 *touching*: with regard to

28 *perceived*: understood 29 *surety*: safety 30 *ambiguous*: unclear

the church of Christ were in the right rule of doctrine or not,
 then were it very necessary to give them all good audience that
 could and would anything dispute on either part, for it or against
 it, to the end that if we were now in a wrong way, we might leave
 5 it and walk in some better. But, now, on the other side, if it so be, as
 indeed it is, that Christ's church hath the true doctrine already... and
 Gal 1:8 the selfsame that Saint Paul would not
 give an angel of heaven audience to the
 contrary: what wisdom were it now therein to show ourselves so
 10 mistrustful and wavering that, for to search whether our faith
 Luther is painted accordingly. were false or true, we should give
 hearing not to an angel of heaven... but
 to a fond friar; to an *apostate*; to an open *incestuous lecher*, a
 plain limb of the *devil*, and a manifest messenger of *hell*? In
 15 which words if ye would haply think that I use myself too sore,
 to call him by such odious names: ye must consider that *he*
 spareth not—both untruly and without necessity—in his railing
 books, to call by as evil... them whom his duty were highly to
 reverence; whereas I do, between us twain, call him but as himself
 20 hath showed him... in his writing, in his living, and in his
 mad 'marriage.' And yet I neither do it nor would... were it not that
 the matter itself of reason doth require it. For my part is it of necessity
 to tell how naught he is... because that the worse the man is, the
 more madness were it for wise men to give his false fables hearkening
 25 against God's undoubted truth... by his Holy Spirit taught unto
 his church... and by such multitude of miracles, by so much blood
 of holy martyrs, by the virtuous living of so many blessed confessors,
 by the purity and cleanness of so many chaste widows and
 undefiled virgins, by the wholesome doctrine of so many holy
 30 doctors, and, finally, by the whole consent and agreement of all
 Christian people this fifteen hundred years, confirmed. And, therefore,
 not any respect unto his railing against the clergy... is, as some
 would have it seem, the cause of his condemnation and suppression
 of his books. For the good men of the clergy be not so sore grieved
 35 with them that touch the faults of the bad... nor the bad themselves

2, 24 *were it*: would it be 2 *give . . . that*: give a good hearing to everyone who
 3 *anything dispute*: argue anything // *part*: side
 8–9 *give . . . contrary*: i.e., give a hearing to an angel from heaven who was saying the opposite
 9 *what wisdom were it now*: how wise would it now be
 13 *fond*: foolish // *open*: overt; out-in-the-open // *incestuous*: See note for 165/18.
 14 *limb*: agent 15 *haply*: perhaps // *use myself too sore*: am being too harsh
 17 *untruly*: untruthfully 18 *as evil*: i.e., as bad names
 20 *showed him*: i.e., showed himself to be 23 *naught*: bad 24 *wise*: sane
 27 *confessors*: male saints who gave heroic witness to the faith but were not martyred
 28 *chaste widows*: widows who after their husbands' deaths remained celibate for the rest of their lives
 29–30 *holy doctors*: theologians 30 *whole consent*: unanimous accord
 32 *respect*: regard 33 *his condemnation and*: the condemnation of him and the
 34–35 *grieved with*: put out with; offended by 35 *touch*: criticize
 35 *faults*: wrongdoings

be not so tender-eared... that for the only talking of their faults they would banish the books that were good in other things besides.

For else could not the books of many old holy fathers have endured so long... wherein the vices of them that in the clergy be naught... be

5 *The cause why Luther's books* very vehemently rebuked. But the *very*
 be not suffered to be read cause why his books be not suffered to be
 read... is because his heresies be so many,

and so abominable... and the 'proofs' wherewith he pretendeth to make them probable be so far from reason and truth, and so far

10 against the right understanding of Holy Scripture (whereof, under color of great zeal and affection, he laboreth to destroy the credence and good use), and, finally, so far stretcheth allthing

 against good manner and virtue—provoking the world to wrong opinions of God, and boldness in sin and wretchedness—that there
 15 can *no good*... but *much harm*... grow by the reading. For if there were the substance good, and of error or oversight some cockle among the corn... which might be sifted out and the remnant stand in stead, men would have been content therewith, as they be with such others. But now is his not besprent with a few spots, but

20 with more than half venom poisoned... the whole wine—and that right rotten of itself. And this done of purpose and malice—not without an evil spirit in such wise walking with his words... that the contagion thereof were likely to infect a feeble soul... as the savor of a sickness-sore infecteth a whole body. Nor the truth is not to be

25 *Mk 3:11–12* learned of every man's mouth. For as
 Christ was not content that the devil

should call him God's Son though it were true, so is he not content that a devil's limb, as Luther is, or Tyndale, should teach his flock the truth... for infecting them with their false, devilish

30 heresies besides. For likewise as the Holy Scripture of God, because of the good Spirit that made it, is of his own *nature* apt to purge and amend the reader... though some that *read* it, of their invincible

The devil in making of malice, turn it to their harm: so
 Luther's works was of do such writings as Luther's is, in the
 35 *counsel.* making whereof the devil is of counsel
 (and giveth therewith a breath of his assistance),

1 *for the only talking of their faults*: just for the talking about their wrongdoings

3 *old holy fathers*: (of the) early fathers of the Church 4 *naught*: wicked

6 *suffered*: allowed 8 *pretendeth*: professes 9 *probable*: worthy of acceptance

11 *color*: pretext // *affection*: love (for it) 12 *allthing*: everything

13 *manner*: habitual behavior 14 *opinions of*: ideas about 15 *grow by*: come of

16 *of error or oversight*: by mistake or inadvertence 17 *might*: could

17 *remnant*: rest 18 *stand in stead*: remain in place

19 *besprent*: besprinkled 21 *of*: . . . *malice*: on purpose and out of malice

22 *walking with*: accompanying 23 *as*: just as // *savor*: odor; i.e., stench

24 *sickness-sore*: plague sore 25 *of*: from

26 *Christ was not content*: it was not all right with Christ 27 *were*: was

27–28 *is he not content*: it is not all right with him 28 *limb*: agent // *as*: such as

29 *for infecting*: lest they should infect / in order to infect

31 *that made*: who wrote // *his*: its 32 *invincible*: unconquerable

though the goodness of some men master the malice thereof—
walking harmless with God's help, as the prophet saith, upon

Ps 91:13

the serpent and the cockatrice, and treading
upon the lion and the dragon—yet be

5 such works of themselves always right unwholesome to meddle with, meet
and apt to corrupt and infect the reader. For the proof whereof we
need none other example than this that we be in hand with...

if we consider what good the reading of his books hath done in

What fruit doth grow of

Saxony. And this find we more than too

10 *reading Luther's works*

much proved here among us: that of ten
that use to read his books, ye shall

scantly find twain but that they not only cast off prayer and
fasting and all such godly virtues as Holy Scripture commendeth...

and the Church commandeth... and virtuous people have ever had in

15 great price, but also fall in plain contempt and hatred thereof. So
that what fruit should grow of the reading ye may soon guess."

The Second Chapter

The author showeth many of Luther's heresies to be so
abominable... and some part also so peevish... that the very bare

20 rehearsal is enough, without any further dispicion thereupon,
to cause any good man abhor them... and to be

ashamed also to seem so foolish as to hold them. And for

an example the author rehearseth divers... whereof some be

newly set forth by Tyndale in his English books... worse yet,

25 in some part, than his master Luther is himself.

“And in good faith, I would ween that any good man, except some
reasonable necessity should compel him thereto, else would, if he heard
but his opinions once rehearsed, be very loath to lose his time in the
reading... either of his fond ‘proof’... or of the very titles and names thereof
30 again.”

“If they be such indeed,” quoth your friend, “and that they be not
mistaken or misreported.”

2 *harmless*: unharmed 5 *meddle with*: deal with; get into // *meet*: fit

10 *proved*: tested out; proved by experience 11 *use*: are wont 12 *scantly*: hardly ever

12 *twain*: two 14–15 *had in great price*: considered to be of great value

15 *in*: into // *plain*: outright 16 *should*: would // *grow of*: come of 19 *peevish*: silly

19–20 *the very bare rehearsal*: just the mere mention 20 *dispicion*: discussion

21 *cause*: make // *abhor*: shudder at 23 *rehearseth*: relates // *divers*: several

26 *in good faith*: really and truly // *ween*: think // *except*: except if; unless

27 *necessity*: need 28 *opinions*: theses 29 *fond*: idiotic 32 *mistaken*: misunderstood

- “Methinketh,” quoth I, “that the fruit which ye see spring of them... should suffice to make you perceive them for naught. And iwis a friar’s living that ‘weddeh’ a nun—when his living is such... should make it easy to wit that his teaching is not very good.”
- 5 “Surely,” quoth he, “I cannot say nay but that these be shrewd tokens.”
- “I shall,” quoth I, “do more for you. For I shall find the means that ye shall see his own books... and therein perceive yourself that men belie him not.”
- 10 “I pray you,” quoth he, “let me hear some of his opinions by mouth the while, and for the seeing of them in his own books I shall bethink me after.”
- “First he began,” quoth I, “with pardons and with the pope’s power, denying finally any of both to be of any effect at all.
- 15 “And soon after—to show what good spirit moved him—he denied all the seven sacraments except Baptism, Penance, and the Sacrament of the Altar, saying plainly that all the remnant be but feigned things and of none effect.
- “Now, these that he leaveth for good... it is good to see how he handleth them. For in Penance... he saith that there neither needeth contrition
- 20 nor satisfaction. Also he saith that there needeth no priest for the hearing of confession; but that every man, and every woman, too, is as sufficient to hear confession, and assoil, and do all that belongeth to a confessor, as is a priest.”
- “Marry, sir,” quoth your friend, “this were an easy way for one thing. For
- 25 the sorest thing that I find in confession is that when I see many confessors at a pardon, yet can I scant like one of them so well upon the sight... that I would tell any such tales to... once in seven years, and I might choose. But, now, if I might, after Luther’s way, be confessed to a fair woman, I would not let to be confessed weekly!”
- 30 “Ye would,” quoth I, “peradventure tell her a tale that ye would not tell every man. But yet if some men told some tales to a fair woman that they tell in confession to a foul friar, they would wish, I ween, among, that they had kept their counsel in their own breast.”
- “Marry,” quoth he, “that may happen also in the confession that is made unto
- 35 a priest.”
- “Possible it were indeed,” quoth I. “And Tyndale, in his book of *Obedience*—or, rather, *disobedience*—saith that the curates do go and show

2 *naught*: bad // *iwis*: certainly 2–3 *a friar’s living*: the conduct of a friar
 3 *his living*: the way he lives; his morality 4 *wit*: know 5 *say nay but*: deny
 5 *shrewd tokens*: bad signs 7–8 *men belie him not*: i.e., he is not being slandered
 9 *opinions*: theses 9–10 *by mouth the while*: orally for now 10 *for*: about
 11 *bethink me after*: think later 12 *pardons*: indulgences 13 *any*: either
 13 *both*: those two things 16 *plainly*: straight-out // *remnant*: rest 17 *feigned*: made-up
 18 *leaves for good*: i.e., leaves in as being bona fide sacraments 19, 20 *needeth*: is needed
 21 *sufficient*: qualified; competent 22 *assoil*: give absolution
 22 *all . . . confessor*: everything a confessor is supposed to do 24, 34 *marry*: well
 24 *this . . . thing*: this way would be advantageous in one respect 25 *the . . . in*: the worst
 problem I have with 26 *pardon*: Penance service // *scant*: scarcely 27 *and*: if
 28 *after*: in accord with 29, 31 *fair*: beautiful 29 *let*: hesitate 32 *ween*: suppose
 33 *among*: now and then 34 *in*: with 37 *curates*: parish priests // *show*: relate to

and working with his holy sacrament. But surely, whereas there be

Confession was devised by God. *many things that well and clearly prove*
the sacrament of confession to be a

thing instituted and devised by God, yet if all the remnant lacked,

5 this one thing were unto me a plain persuasion and a full proof...

which thing I find in the noble book that the King's Highness made

against Luther: that is to wit, that in so common a custom of

confession offer than once in the year, where no man letteth boldly

10 to tell such his secrets... as upon the discovering or close keeping
thereof his honesty commonly, and oftentimes his life also, dependeth;

so many simple as be of that sort that hear them—and in all other

things so light and lavish of their tongue, and some therewith so

lewd in all their living, that for money they force little to steal,

rob, and murder too... and might, many times, with the disclosing

15 of some such things get so much as some of them would kill a
man for less—yet find we never any man take harm by his

confession, or cause given of complaint, through any such

secrets uttered and showed by the confessor.”

20 “In good faith,” quoth he, “this is very truth, and a great thing in
mine opinion. But undoubtedly if confession came once to women’s
ears, there would be a sore change. For it would be hard for God
and the devil too... to keep their tongues.”

All is in counsel that
women tell.

“Yes, yes,” quoth I, “a woman can keep a

25 counsel well enough! For though she

tell a gossip, she telleth it but in

counsel yet; nor that gossip to her gossip neither; and so, when

all the gossips in the town know it, yet is it but counsel still.

And therefore I say it not for any harm that would come by them,

but for the novelty thereof.”

30 “Now, in earnest,” quoth your friend, “this *was* a much merry mad
invention of Luther; and Luther is in a manner as mad as Tyndale.

For it were as good, almost, to have no confession at all as to set
women to hear it.”

35 “Forsooth,” quoth I, “if it had been wisdom and not against
God’s will, it would of likelihood have been found by some

1 *surely*: assuredly // *whereas*: while 2 *well and*: quite

4 *all the remnant lacked*: all the rest were lacking 5, 32 *were*: would be

6 *made*: wrote 8 *offer*: i.e., made more often

8–9 *letteth boldly to tell such*: refrains from telling frankly such of

9 *discovering*: disclosing; divulging // *close*: tight-lipped 10 *honesty*: reputation

11 *so . . . them*: i.e., with so many of that sort that hear them being very ordinary men

12 *light and lavish of their tongue*: unthinking and loose-lipped 13 *lewd*: bad; immoral

13 *force*: hesitate; scruple 14 *might*: could 16 *less*: i.e., less than

18 *uttered*: revealed // *showed*: made known 19 *in good faith*: in all sincerity

19 *very truth*: indeed true 20 *came once*: ever came 21 *sore*: drastic

22 *keep*: bridle 24, 26 *counsel*: confidence 25, 26, 27 *gossip(s)*: confidante(s)

27 *yet is it but counsel still*: it is still just in confidence 28 *it*: i.e., this

28 *for*: on account of 30 *in earnest*: seriously // *much merry*: very funny

31 *invention of Luther*: idea of Luther’s // *in a manner*: just about

34 *if it had been wisdom*: i.e., if this had been a sound idea

35 *it would of likelihood have been found*: it probably would have been come up with

good men before these days, in this long time of so many hundred
 years. Howbeit, he goeth near enough to take it all
 away. And divers of his scholars besides Tyndale do now deny
 it utterly. And himself leaveth little substance and little fruit
 5 therein. For he would that we should not care much for any full confession
 of all deadly sins; nor be very studious in the gathering of
 our faults to mind... nor pondering the circumstances, nor the
 weight and gravity, thereof... nor taking any sorrow therefor. Now, these
 things taken away, and the Sacrament of Penance left such as he
 10 would have it, consider in yourself what fruit were a man likely to
 find in it. He that taketh a confessor he forceth not whom, and then
 confesseth he forceth not what... disposing him to repentance he
 forceth not how; good works in satisfaction accounteth for
 naught—what manner of amendment shall this man come to? And
 15 especially if, besides all this, he may take to his confessor a fair woman
 such as a young man would have a lust to break his mind unto! Doth
 it not plainly appear that this fond fellow so playeth with this holy
 sacrament of Penance... that he goeth about utterly to destroy it?
 And yet is this one of the three he leaveth, taking four away
 20 expressly.”

“Surely,” quoth your friend, “so doth he this too, as thinketh me.”

“Forsooth,” quoth I. “And he handleth the Sacrament of Baptism not
 much better. For he magnifieth Baptism but to the suppression of
 25 *Luther's conclusions and most shameful opinions* penance and of all good living. For therein
 he teacheth that the sacrament *itself* hath no
 virtue at all, but the faith only.

“Item: He teacheth that only faith sufficeth to our salvation with our
 baptism—without good works. He saith also that it is *sacrilege* to
 go about to please God with any works, and not with faith only.

30 “Item: That no man can do any good work.

“Item: That the good and righteous man always sinneth in doing
 well.

“Item: That no sin can damn any Christian man... but only lack of
 belief. For he saith that our faith ‘suppeth up’ all our sins, how great
 35 soever they be.

“Item: He teacheth that no man hath no free will... nor can anything do

2 *goeth* . . . *take*: comes close enough to taking 3 *divers*: several
 3 *scholars*: pupils 3–4 *deny it utterly*: utterly reject it 4 *himself*: he himself
 5 *would* . . . *for*: would have us not be too concerned about 6 *deadly*: mortal
 6–7 *studious* . . . *mind*: conscientious about calling to mind our sins
 8 *taking any sorrow*: becoming at all sorry; conceiving any contrition
 8 *therefor*: for them 11, 12, 13 *forceth*: cares 14 *naught*: nothing / wicked
 15 *to*: for // *fair*: beautiful 16 *break*: open 17 *fond fellow*: foolish jackass
 21 *as thinketh me*: as it seems to me 23 *magnifieth*: extols 26 *virtue*: efficacy
 27 *only faith*: faith alone 29 *go about*: attempt 34 *suppeth*: swallows

therewith... not though the help of grace be joined thereunto; but
that everything that we do, good and bad, we do nothing at all
therein ourselves... but only suffer *God* to do allthing *in* us—good and
bad—as wax is wrought into an image or a candle... by the man’s
5 hand, without anything doing thereto itself.

“Item: He saith that God is as verily the author and cause of the
evil will of Judas in betraying of Christ... as of the good will of Christ
in suffering of his Passion.”

10 “In Matrimony he saith plainly that it is no sacrament; and so
saith Tyndale too.

“Item: That if a man be not able to do his duty to his wife, he is
bound secretly, without slander, to provide another to do it for
him.”

15 “Forsooth,” quoth your friend, “this was courteously considered of him!
He is a very gentleman, I warrant you! It is no marvel though his
wife be well teeming, if he make her such provision.”

“Surely,” quoth I, “this wise device *hath* he! And much other beastliness
he saith in such things—and his disciple after him—of such sort
as honest ears could scant abide the hearing.

20 “In the Sacrament of Orders he saith that priesthood and all
holy orders be but a feigned invention.

“Item: That every Christian man, and every Christian woman, is a
priest.

“Item: That every man may consecrate the body of Christ.”

25 “This is a shameful saying, in good faith!” quoth your friend.

“Abide ye,” quoth I, “and ye shall hear worse yet. For he saith further
that every woman and child may consecrate the body of our Lord.”

“Surely,” quoth he, “then is the man mad outright.”

“He saith,” quoth I, “further yet... that the Canon of the Mass is false.

30 “Item: That the host in the Mass is none oblation nor sacrifice.

“Item: That the Mass with its Canon after the form that is and
ever hath been used in Christ’s church... is sacrilege and
abomination.

35 “And though much of this concerneth his damnable heresies
touching the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, yet saith he thereof
many lewd doctrines more. And among others he teacheth that it is
heresy to believe that there is not very bread and very wine in the

1 *though*: even if 3 *suffer God to do*: have God do // *allthing*: everything

4 *image*: statue 7 *evil*: bad 9, 20 *in*: about; concerning

12 *without slander*: without causing scandal

15–16 *it . . . teeming*: it’s no wonder that his wife is so fertile

17, 28 *surely*: assuredly 17 *wise device*: brilliant idea

18 *in such things*: on such subjects 19 *honest*: respectable // *scant*: scarcely

21 *holy orders*: i.e., the diaconate, subdiaconate, and so forth / ordination

21 *feigned*: made-up; fictitious 24, 27 *may*: can

25 *saying*: thing to say // *in good faith*: for sure 26 *abide ye*: wait; hold on

28 *mad outright*: just plain crazy 29 *false*: bogus 31 *after*: in

35 *touching*: regarding 36 *lewd*: wicked 37 *very*: actual

Sacrament of the Altar joined with the Body and Blood of our Lord.

4.2

“Item: Zwingli and Oecolampadius, scholars of Luther, have built further upon this ungracious ground of their master... and teach
5 that the Sacrament of the Altar is not the very Body nor Blood of our Lord at all. And Luther himself, albeit he now writeth against them therein, yet (as it by many things appeareth) minded and intended to put forth by leisure the same heresy himself... till
10 he changed his mind for envy that he bore toward them... when he saw that they would be heads of a sect themselves; for that could he suffer no man to be but himself. But before, as I say, he did intend it himself. And therefore he made a way toward it by these other heresies that I have rehearsed you, and by divers others more.

“For he teacheth also that the Mass availeth no man quick nor dead...
15 but only to the priest himself.

“Item: He teacheth that men should go to Mass as well after supper as before breakfast... and in his common clothes, as he goeth all day; without light or any other honorable rite used therein.

“Item: He saith it were best that men should never be houseled but
20 once in their life—and that never till they lie a-dying. As they be but once christened, and that at their beginning.

“Item: He teacheth that every man and woman should take the Holy Sacrament... and spare not to touch it and handle it as much as them list.

“Item: He saith that the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is ordained
25 of God to be *received*, but not to be *worshipped*.”

“In faith,” quoth your friend, “these things be far out of course!”

“Ye see,” quoth I, “now, how he handleth all the blessed sacraments.

“But now hath he other wild heresies at large. For he teacheth,
against Scripture and all reason, that no Christian man is or can be
30 bound by any law made among men, nor is not bound to observe or keep any.

“Item: He teacheth that there is no purgatory.

“Item: That all men’s souls lie still and sleep till the Day of Doom.

3 *scholars*: pupils 4 *ungracious*: ungodly 5 *very*: actual

7 *as it by many things appeareth*: as is shown by many things

7 *minded*: thought; had it in mind 8 *by leisure*: in the course of time; someday

10 *would*: were about to 11 *suffer*: stand for 12 *intend*: hold

13 *rehearsed*: mentioned to // *divers*: several 14 *availeth*: is of avail to

14 *quick*: living 17 *common*: ordinary 18 *light*: i.e., candlelight

18 *honorable rite*: honorific ritual 19 *were*: would be // *houseled*: given Communion

23 *as them list*: as they please 25 *of*: by 26 *in faith*: truly

26 *far out of course*: way out of line 28 *at large*: out there; on the loose

33–34 *the Day of Doom*: Judgment Day

“Item: That no man should pray to saints, nor set by any holy relics nor pilgrimages, nor do any reverence to any images.”

5 “By my troth,” quoth your friend, “I had forgotten... that when I was now in the university, in the communication that I had with my friends there in that matter... one of them objected against me that the worship of images hath been, ere this, condemned by a great council in Greece.”

10 “There was indeed,” quoth I, “a council once in Greece gathered by an emperor... that then was a heretic there... which was after, in the eighth synod, by the general council, damned and annulled. But this no more doth to the matter... than if there would now in Saxony, and Switzerland, and such other places, such people as be swerved from the faith gather themselves together and keep, as they would call it, a ‘general council’... wherein they might determine what they would; and yet were all that no prejudice to the right belief of
15 *The Catholic Church* the Catholic Church—which is always that known people that still persevere as one body with our Savior Christ in their former fast-confirmed faith... from which faithful body these other, withering branches
20 be blown away by the devil. And therefore, as a council of Lutherans assembling themselves in Saxony could make none authority against the true faith of the Church, so could that council in Greece nothing prove their purpose... which made none interruption of the right belief and godly custom of worship done to saints
25 and images; that yet did, for all that, continue still in all the Catholic Church of Christ, and ever since hath done.”

“Forsooth,” quoth he, “that is truth.

30 “But yet,” quoth he, “was there one at our communication, learned in the law—and in his chamber were we—which said that if he list, he could show a fair law, incorporated in the decrees of the Church, which law if it were laid in their light that would take upon them the defense of any worship to be done to images...

1 *set by*: care about // *holy*: sacred 2 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites; shrines
3 *by my troth*: oh my goodness 4 *now in the university*: at the university this last time
4 *communication*: conversation 5 *in that matter*: on that subject
5 *objected against me*: made against what I was saying the objection
6, 24 *worship*: veneration 8 *gathered*: convened 9 *after*: afterward
10 *general council*: This was the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, held in 787.
10 *damned*: condemned // *annulled*: nullified
11 *no more doth to*: has no more bearing on 13 *swerved*: deviated 20 *as*: just as
21, 23 *make / made*: constitute(d) 23 *nothing . . . purpose*: not at all . . . point
23 *which*: i.e., which council 28 *at our communication*: in our discussion
29 *chamber*: room // *which*: who 30 *list*: wanted to // *fair*: bona fide
30 *decrees*: i.e., canon-law decrees 31 *their light that*: the view of those who
32 *worship*: reverence

would make all their eyes daze. Then longed not only I, but all the remnant also, very sore to see that law. In bringing forth whereof he made a while somewhat strange, as of a thing kept for a secret mystery.

5 “But in conclusion he set forth a book of the decrees; and therein he

Ch. “Perlatum,” De consecratione, read us, in good faith, a plain text (as me
Distinctio 3 thought, and all that were present) by

which Saint Gregory writeth unto a certain

bishop that had broken down the images in his church;

10 and there Saint Gregory... albeit that he blameth him for breaking them—yet, for all that, he commendeth him for that he would not suffer them to be worshipped.”

“Did you,” quoth I, “read that law yourself?”

15 “In good faith,” quoth he, “I stood by and looked on that book while *he* read it.”

“Did he,” quoth I, “or you either, read the next law following in the book?”

“Nay, verily,” quoth he, “for methought this was enough.”

20 “So was it, verily,” quoth I—“and too much, too, without more. But and if ye had either read the next law following or the gloss upon the selfsame law that ye read, ye should then have seen that the law which he showed you made little for his purpose.”

25 “By my troth, as for the gloss,” quoth he, “neither I nor any man else that there was had list once to look on, considering that the text was plain and easy to understand. And as for the law next following, we looked not after... for we thought to find it contrary. And if we should... then should we not yet have wist which we should believe.”

“Yes, yes!” quoth I. “Ye would not much have doubted if ye had read the law that followeth! For it is a law synodal, made in the sixth

30 *How images should be* synod, in which there is well and plainly
worshipped showed that images *be* to be worshipped among Christian men; and well

35 declareth in what wise we worship them, and owe to do: that is to wit, none image to be worshipped as God; nor the hope of our health to be beset upon the image; nor to look that the image shall be he which shall judge our souls in time to come; but we worship

1 *make all their eyes daze*: daze the eyes of them all; i.e., flabbergast them all

2 *remnant*: rest // *sore*: badly 2–3 *in . . . strange*: which for a while he acted rather reluctant to bring out 3 *as of a thing kept for*: as if it was something being kept as

5 *in conclusion*: finally 6 *in good faith*: honest to goodness

8, 10 *Saint Gregory*: i.e., Pope Saint Gregory III 9 *broken down the images*: smashed the statues

10 *blameth*: rebukes 12 *suffer*: allow 12, 30, etc. *worship(ped)*: venerate(d)

14 *in good faith*: really and truly // *by*: i.e., right next to him // *on*: at 18 *and if*: if

21 *made little for his purpose*: lent little support to his argument 22 *by my troth*: indeed

23 *that there was*: who was there // *had list once to look on*: ever cared to look at it

24 *plain*: clear 25 *looked not after*: didn’t afterwards look at that

26 *not yet have wist*: still not have known

27 *much have doubted*: have been in much doubt

28–29 *the sixth synod*: A synod held in Rome in 731.

29–30 *well and plainly showed*: quite clearly stated 32 *declareth*: clarifies

32 *wise*: way // *owe to do*: ought to 33 *health*: healing / well-being 34 *look*: expect

the image, and reverence, and well owe to do, for the remembrance
of the thing that the image representeth. And yet, though we do
the image honor and reverence, yet for *divine* honor, and service
only done to *God*—that kind of worship, called *latria*, we neither
5 do nor may do... neither to image nor any creature in all the whole
world, either in heaven or earth. And this should ye have seen if ye
had either read, as I say, the law next following or the gloss of that
law that ye read.”

“Marry,” quoth he, “but in the law itself that we read, good Saint Gregory
10 saith plain the contrary! For he commendeth the bishop there
because he would not suffer the images to be worshipped at all!”

“That word ‘at all,’” quoth I, “ye set to yourself, more than ye find in
the book. For in deed the book saith no more but that they ‘should not
be worshipped’... by this Latin word ‘adorare.’ By which word he
15 understood the divine worship called *latria*.”

“Whereby know we,” quoth he, “he understood it so? For I believe not
much the gloss.”

“Ye may,” quoth I, “perceive it by the law that followeth. Wherein albeit
Ch. “*Venerabilis*,” that there be the same word, ‘adorare,’ yet
20 *De consecratione, Distinctio 4* is it there showed how we *may* ‘adorare’—
that is to wit, how we may worship—
images.”

“Why,” quoth he, “if that law say ‘quod possumus adorare,’ and Saint
Gregory saith ‘quod *non* licet adorare’—be not they twain plain
25 repugnant?”

The taking of this word “Yes,” quoth I, “if they both took that word
‘adorare’ in one sense. But when the synod
used that word for such worship as we
may do to a creature... and Saint Gregory useth it for such worship
30 only as may not be done but only to the Creator... then they be
nothing repugnant at all.”

“But yet,” quoth he, “whereby shall I be sure that Saint Gregory took it
so? For it appeareth by the law, as yourself saith, that the word may
be taken otherwise. For the same law itself taketh it otherwise; and
35 then, peradventure, so did he... and thereby forbade *all* manner worship
to be done unto images.”

1 *reverence*: i.e., do reverence // *owe to do*: ought to 3 *for*: as for // *service*: homage
4, 15, etc. *worship*: veneration 7 *of*: for 9 *marry*: well
10 *plain the contrary*: the exact opposite 11 *suffer*: allow
11, 14, 21 *worship(ped)*: venerate(d) 12 *word*: phrase
12 *set to yourself; more than ye find*: more add in yourself than find
13 *in deed the book*: the book in fact 25 *repugnant*: contradictory
27 *one*: the same 31 *nothing repugnant at all*: contradictory in no way at all
35 *peradventure*: perhaps

“That were very unlikely,” quoth I—“that Saint Gregory were of one mind and the whole synod of the contrary.

“But, now, since ye make the matter so clear upon the words of Saint Gregory incorporated in the decrees... and will not believe the gloss...

5 which appeareth plainly that he meant only to forbid us to do such worship to images as is only due to God—will ye be content therein to believe Saint Gregory himself if he tell you himself that he meant none other?”

“Yea, before God,” quoth he, “that will I well!”

10 “Then,” quoth I, “we shall agree well enough.” And therewith I took down of a shelf, among my books, the ‘Register’ of Saint Gregory’s epistles... and therein turned to the very words which are by Gratian taken out of his second epistle *ad Serenum, episcopum Massiliensem*... and incorporated in the decrees. And then caused I him to read the formal

15 words as they be couched in the decree. And by the collation of the one with the other, I caused him to see that Gratian had taken but a part of the epistle, and that by other words of the epistle itself... it appeareth evidently that Saint Gregory spoke of none other worship to be withdrawn from images but only divine worship

20 and observance due to God; as by divers other things in the epistle
Lk 4:8 appeareth plainly... as in that he saith *that*—
 that it is not lawful to ‘worship’ anything

wrought by hand... because it is written, ‘Dominum Deum tuum adorabis, et illi soli servies’ (‘Thou shalt worship thy Lord God, and only him shalt thou serve’).

25 “Now is it in this place of Scripture meant none other worship nor service than *divine* honor, and service called *latria*—as is to learned men well known. And he that will affirm the contrary and say that in Scripture is forbidden from images *all* manner of worship, he must affirm also that *all* manner worship, and *all* manner service, is forbidden by Scripture from *all* manner creatures. For the Scripture saith there, ‘Thou shalt worship and serve only God’; and so should we, by that construction, neither worship nor serve father nor mother... master nor prince nor king. And in the same place Saint Gregory

35 *The worship called latria* saith that we do ‘worship’ only the Holy Trinity; which showeth that he

1 *were*: would be 5 *appeareth plainly*: clearly submits
 6, 18, etc. *worship*: veneration 6 *content*: willing 11 *of*: from
 11 *among*: i.e., from among 14 *caused him to read*: I had him read
 14 *formal*: exact 15 *collation*: comparison 18 *evidently*: conclusively
 19 *withdrawn*: withheld 20 *divers*: several 30 *service*: homage
 32–33 *by that construction*: according to that interpretation

speaketh only of divine worship, called *latría*, which is done with a mind that reputeth the thing worshipped to be very God.

For else... by those words if he forbade *any* manner worship for to be done to anything saving the Trinity... then did he forbid *any* worship

5 to be done to any saint—or to our Blessed Lady, either. And every man well *wotteth* how reverently himself worshipped both our Lady and all saints as well, by many books and epistles of his... as by the litany which, as his epistles well showeth, he ordained to be with great devotion used in honor of God, our Lady, and all holy
10 saints. And, over that, by the great honor that he did to saints in churches specially dedicated unto them—and also great honor and reverence used unto their holy relics, as in his own books and epistles appeareth. And, finally, if his epistles had been lost out of which the decree is taken... yet the words of the decree itself

15 *Images be the books of lay people.* would well enough suffice. For therein is it specified that images be ‘the books of

lay people, wherein they read the life of Christ.' And then if it be, as it is indeed, well and virtuously done devoutly to kiss a book in which Christ's life, and his death, is expressed by writing.

why should it be evil done reverently to kiss the images by which Christ's life and his Passion be represented by Scripture or painting?"

“In good faith,” quoth he, “I am well satisfied in this matter. And so would they that then were with me, if they had seen all that I see now.”

25 “They may,” quoth I, “soon see as much whensoever they list to look therefor.

30 “But, now, to turn again to the matter... neither the bishop of
Marseilles, that broke the images that they speak of, nor the council
of Greece neither—schismatic as it was—went never yet so far as
Luther’s other heresies most naught images, but also leave no saint unblasphemed—
abominable nor Christ’s own mother
neither.

35 “For Luther cannot abide the common anthem of our Lady (and the most devout), *Salve Regina*, because we therein call that blessed virgin our advocate.

2 *reputeth . . . God*: regards the object of the veneration as being God himself

3, 4 *worship*: veneration 4 *anything*: any being // *saving*: except

6 *wotteth*: knows // *himself*: he himself // *worshipped*: venerated 10 *over*: besides

11 *specially*: expressly 12 *used*: shown 16 *specified*: explicitly stated

18 *well and virtuously done*: a very virtuous thing to do

21 *evil done*: ill done; a bad thing to do

22 *Scripture*: This may be an error for “sculpture.” 23 *in good faith*: honestly

24 *would they*: i.e., would be those 25 *list*: care

26 *therefor*: for it 28 *broke*: destroyed

“Item: He saith that every other woman now living, if she have the same faith, may be prayed unto as well as our Lady... and with her prayer as much profit us.

5 “Item: He teacheth that men should do no worship to the holy cross that Christ died on—saying that if he had it whole, or all the pieces thereof, he would cast it in such a place as no sun should shine thereon, to the end it should never be found to be worshipped more.

10 “Item: Of all feasts, he saith that he hateth the Feast of the Holy Cross... and the Feast of Corpus Christi.

“He teacheth also that no man or woman is bound to keep and observe any vow that he hath made to God of virginity... or widowhood... or other chastity out of marriage; but that they may marry at their liberty, their vow notwithstanding.”

15 “And how proveth he that?” quoth your friend.

“Marry,” quoth I, “by the breaking of his own, when he married the nun! And now he railleth against all chastity, and saith that if a priest live chaste, he is like to the priests of the idol Cybele!

20 “Long would it be to write you *all* the abominable heresies of this new sect. But *some* of them have I rehearsed... that ye may thereby consider whether he that teacheth such things... go not about utterly to destroy the whole faith, religion, and virtue of Christendom. And that he is not in any of these points belied... I shall find the means that ye shall see it in his own books. And there shall ye see how madly he laboreth to prove them.”

25 “*Prove* them?” quoth your friend. “The substance of these matters be too abominable to be reasoned! And to make him hated of all good folk, is enough to hear them rehearsed. But I marvel me much how he fell into such a heap of heresies.”

The Third Chapter

30 The author showeth by what occasion that Luther first fell to the devising of these heresies. And that the occasion was such as well declareth that he was pricked thereto by malice... and ever proceeded from evil to worse, not witting where to hold him; and that he refuseth to
35 stand to the judgment of any folk earthly concerning the truth or falsehood of his opinions... save only himself.

4 *worship*: reverence 7 *worshipped*: venerated 12 *out*: outside
15 *marry*: indeed 16 *chastity*: celibacy 17 *chaste*: celibate
22 *belied*: (being) slandered 24 *laboreth*: tries 25 *substance*: bulk; majority
25 *matters*: theses 26 *reasoned*: discussed // *of*: by 27 *is*: i.e., it is
27 *to hear them rehearsed*: i.e., just to hear them mentioned
27 *marvel me much*: really wonder 30 *showeth*: tells
32 *well declareth*: makes it quite clear // *pricked*: spurred 33 *evil*: bad
34 *witting*: knowing // *hold him*: settle 36 *opinions*: theses // *save*: except

“Now, that is,” quoth I, “somewhat worth to consider—how this lewd friar began to fall in these mischievous matters. Ye shall understand that there was a pardon obtained in Saxony... for which pardon, as the manner is there, Luther was the preacher... and preached to the people exhorting them thereto, and advancing the authority thereof, all that he possibly might—not without his great advantage therefor. So happed it then, soon after, that the setting forth of the pardon—with the advantage thereof—was taken from him and set to another.

The occasion why Luther fell unto heresy For anger whereof he fell into such a fury... that forthwith he began to write against all pardons. Howbeit, because the matter was new and strange, he began first by way of doubts and questions only, submitting himself and his writing to the judgment of the pope... and desiring to be informed of the truth. Whereupon when he was by writing answered by the master of the pope’s palace... then waxed he more wood and fell to railing against him—and made also another book, against the power of the pope, affirming that his power upon the Church was never instituted of God, but ordained only by the common consent of Christian people, for avoiding of schisms. But yet he said that all Christian men were bound to stand and obey thereunto... and that the Bohemians were damnable heretics for doing the contrary. But soon after, when he was in such wise answered by good and cunning men... that he perceived himself unable to defend that he had affirmed—then fell he from reasoning to railing, and utterly denied that he had before affirmed. And then began to write that the pope had no power at all, neither by God nor man. And that the Bohemians, whom he had in his writings before called damnable heretics, were good Christian men, and all their opinions good and Catholic. Then, when he was cited by the Pope’s Holiness to appear, he appealed to the ‘next general council’ which should be ‘gathered in the Holy Ghost.’ So that whatsoever general council were after assembled, he might jest and rail thereon, and say it was not it that he appealed unto, for it was not assembled in the Holy Ghost.”

“He took,” quoth your friend, “a good wily way.”

“As wily as it was,” quoth I, “yet would he not stand thereby, but

1 *somewhat worth to consider*: something worth considering

1 *lewd*: bad; sorry excuse for a 2 *fall in*: arrive at

2 *mischievous matters*: terrible theses

3, 8 *pardon*: Penance service (in which indulgences would be granted)

5 *thereto*: i.e., to come to it // *advancing the authority*: supporting the legitimacy

6 *might*: could 7 *setting forth of*: giving of; officiating at

8 *set to another*: assigned to someone else 11 *pardons*: indulgences

12 *the matter*: this stance // *strange*: unheard-of 14 *desiring*: requesting

16 *waxed he more wood*: he became more irate // *fell to*: started 17 *made*: wrote

18 *upon*: over // *of*: by 19 *common consent*: joint agreement

23 *cunning*: knowledgeable 24, 25 *that*: what

29 *opinions*: views; contentions 30 *cited*: summoned 33 *might*: could

33 *jest*: jeer 36 *stand thereby*: stick to it

- fled from that to another. For now shall ye understand that yet soon after this, in the book by which he not answereth but *raileth* against that book wherein our sovereign lord the King, like a most faithful, virtuous, and most erudite prince, evidently and effectually revinced and confuted the most venomous and pestilent book of Luther, entitled *The Captivity of Babylon*, in which he laboreth to destroy the holy sacraments of Christ's church—in that book, I say, Luther, which had before appealed to the 'next general council,' utterly denieth the authority of all general councils, and setteth them all at naught."
- "By my troth," quoth your friend, "either was the man very negligent before... or very naught after, when he changeth so often and writeth ever the longer the more contrary... not to his adversary only, but also to himself. But I pray you, how excuseth he his inconstancy?"
- "Marry," quoth I, "he saith that he seeth further than he saw before. Whereunto the King's Grace sheweth him that it were unlikely that he should see better through a pair of evil spectacles, of ire and envy."
- "Very true," quoth your friend, "by my troth! But yet I hear say that he hath offered to stand at the judgment of learned men in all his matters, if his offer had been taken in time."
- "Indeed," quoth I, "once he promised to stand to the judgment of the University of Paris; and thereupon was there open dispicions kept, and the very words written by notaries sworn for both the parties. But when his opinions were after, at Paris, by the University, condemned, then he refused to stand to their judgment—and fell again to his old craft of railing."
- "He appeared also at Worms, before the Emperor and the princes of the empire, by a safe-conduct. And there recognized and acknowledged as well the said pestilent book written against the sacraments... as many others of like sort... to be his own... and offered to abide by them. Which he might boldly do, being by the safe-conduct in good surety of himself that he could take no harm. Then was he moved to dispicions upon the articles... so that he should agree

4 *evidently*: conclusively 5 *revinced*: proved erroneous 7 *laboreth*: strives
 11 *by my troth*: my word; goodness // *negligent*: careless 12 *naught*: bad
 14 *pray*: ask 14–15 *how* . . . *inconstancy*: how does he defend his inconsistency
 16 *marry*: indeed 17 *showeth*: tells 18 *evil*: bad
 20 *by my troth*: my word; I must say // *hear say*: hear it said 21 *stand at*: submit to
 22 *matters*: theses 23, 27 *stand to*: abide by 24 *open dispicions*: public debates
 25 *kept*: held // *very*: exact 26 *opinions*: theses 28 *fell again*: reverted
 28 *craft*: expedient 30 *recognized*: admitted
 33 *them*: i.e., the judgment of the Emperor and princes 34 *surety of*: security about
 35 *moved* . . . *should*: invited to engage in debates on his tenets... provided that he would

upon some persons, virtuous and well-learned, that should be judges
of that disputation, and that he should be content to stand to their
judgment upon the same. Whereupon he agreed to come to
dispicions; but he would in no wise agree to make any men living...
5 judges upon it, nor stand to no man's judgment earthly."

4.3

The Fourth Chapter

The author showeth how that Luther, in the book that himself
made of his own acts at the city of Worms in
Almaine, doth so madly oversee himself that he discloseth
10 unawares certain follies of himself which a man
will well laugh at, and marvel much to see it.

"And that these things be true... it well appeareth to all the world
in the book that he made himself of his demeanor and his acts at the
city called Worms, in Almaine. Which book whoso readeth... shall
15 have a great pleasure to see therein both the frantic vainglory of that
fond friar... and yet, therewith, to see him carried out with folly so
far from himself... that in a line or twain he discovereth all that
he went about to hide... in all the book beside. For ye shall
understand that albeit he made that book himself, yet he made it
20 so... that he would it should seem to have been of some other man's
making, and not of his own, to the intent that such worshipful
words as he speaketh of himself might make him in the ears of
the reader seem some honorable person. Which words else, he
wist well, spoken of his own mouth... all the world would wonder on.
25 Now, in this book—besides that he leaveth out some things there said
and spoken where the words written in could do him no worship,
and some things reciteth with advantage for his part,
rehearsing the other side nakedly and barely, and some part pared off, too,
to make it seem the more slender—one thing he observeth diligently:
30 that, whereas, speaking of the Emperor, he calleth him never but
simply and singly 'Charles,' he never speaketh of himself but he
setteth forth his name in great capital letters and solemn titles—

1 *well-learned*: well-educated 2 *content*: willing 2, 5 *stand to*: abide by
3–4 *come to dispicions*: engage in debates 4 *in no wise*: by no means
5 *no man's judgment earthly*: the judgment of any man on earth 7 *himself*: he himself
8 *made of*: wrote about 9, 14 *Almaine*: Germany 9 *oversee*: forget
10 *follies*: idiocies // *of*: about 11 *marvel much to see it*: be very surprised to see
13 *made*: wrote // *of*: about 15 *frantic*: wild 16 *fond*: foolish
17 *discovereth*: uncovers; lets show 18 *the book beside*: the rest of the book
19 *made*: wrote 20 *so*: in such a way // *that he would it should seem*: as to have it seem
21 *making*: authorship 23 *honorable*: illustrious 24 *wist*: knew // *on*: at
26 *do him no worship*: win him no renown 28 *rehearsing*: quoting
28 *nakedly*: sparsely // *barely*: in bare-bones fashion
29 *slender*: tenuous; unconvincing 31 *singly*: solely

“By my troth,” quoth your friend, “this device *was* madly minded of Luther, and madly handled, and madly overseen, to show himself so fond—but if pride, as the proverb is, must needs have a shame.”

4.4

The Fifth Chapter

5 The author showeth the perpetual inconstancy of Luther, and his contrariety and repugnance against himself.

10 “**N**ow, as for his constancy, appeareth,” quoth I, “by that I have before rehearsed of his continual change in his heresies from day to day... from worse to worse... which course he kept not only in the matters above rehearsed, but almost in all the remnant. For as concerning purgatory, he wrote first that although it could not be proved by evident Scripture (as he affirmed), yet was there no doubt but that there *is* purgatory; and that thing, he said, was of all Christian men firmly to be believed. And then he wrote that he wondered of the madness of such false and foolish heretics as were born ‘within
15 *The Church believeth that* one hundred years past’ and are not
 there is a purgatory. ashamed to deny purgatory, which ‘the whole church of Christ hath believed this
20 fifteen hundred years.’ Now, what constancy is there in this friar... that wrote this of heretics that deny purgatory... and within a while after denieth it himself, saying, in the sermon that he wrote of the rich man and Lazarus, that all men’s souls ‘lie still and sleep till Doomsday’?”

25 “Marry,” quoth your friend, “then hath some man had a sleep of a fair length! They will, I ween, when they wake forget some of their dreams!”

 “By my faith,” quoth I, “he that believeth Luther that his soul shall sleep so long... shall when he dieth sleep in shrewd rest.”

30 “I much marvel,” quoth your friend, “what evil ailed him, to find out this fond folly.”

 “To this opinion,” quoth I—“or, rather, to the *feigning* of this opinion, for I verily think that himself thinketh not as he writeth—he

1 *by my troth*: my word; goodness // *minded of*: conceived by

2 *overseen*: forgotten about 3 *fond*: foolish // *but if*: unless // *is*: goes

6 *repugnance*: opposition 8 *appeareth*: i.e., this is shown // *that*: what

9, 11 *rehearsed*: related 11 *remnant*: rest 13 *evident*: conclusive

14 *of*: by 15 *of*: at 22 *of*: about 25 *marry*: goodness 26 *ween*: think

29 *so*: that // *shrewd*: poor 30 *marvel*: wonder

30 *what evil ailed him*: what his problem was

30–31 *to . . . folly*: i.e., that induced him to come up with this foolish absurdity

fell for envy and hatred that he bore to priesthood; by the malice of which his ungracious mind, he rather were content that all the world lay in the fire of purgatory till Doomsday than that there were one penny given to a priest to pray for any soul.”

4.5

5 “This is,” quoth your friend, “very likely.”

“Like constancy,” quoth I, “hath he used in the matter of holy vows. For in his book of *The Captivity of Babylon*, he writeth that ‘neither man nor angel’ is able to dispense with the vow made by man to God. And soon after, he wrote that no vow could bind any man, but that every man may boldly break them of his own head. But it well appeareth that he wrote the first of anger and malice toward the pope... and then changed to the second of a lecherous lust to the nun that he minded to marry.”

The Sixth Chapter

15 The author showeth how that Luther hath been fain for the defense of his indefensible errors... to go back and forsake all the manner of proof and trial... which he first promised to stand to. And now, like a man shameful and shameless, hath no proof in the world but his own word... and calleth
20 that the word of God.

“**H**is inconstant wit and very devilish intent especially showed itself by this also which I shall now rehearse you. In the beginning the man had the mind that commonly such fools have: he reckoned all the world wild geese save himself, and all the wit and learning to stand
25 in his own head. And then weening that he should find no match, but that he should as he list be able to prove the moon made of green cheese, he professed in his books that he would for the proof or reproof of his opinions... stand to natural reason, to the authority of the old holy fathers, the laws and canons of Christ’s church, and to the Holy
30 Scripture of God, with the interpretations of the old holy doctors. But soon after, when he perceived himself in his opinion deceived...

1 *envy*: ill will 2 *which his ungracious mind*: which ungodly attitude of his

2 *rather were content*: would rather 3 *all the world*: everyone 6 *used*: exercised

8 *dispense with*: undo by granting a dispensation 10 *head*: initiative

12 *of . . . to*: out of . . . toward 13 *minded*: intended

15 *fain*: forced 16 *go back*: go back on // *forsake*: abandon 17 *all the*: the whole

18, 28 *stand*: submit 21 *wit*: mind 22 *rehearse*: relate to

23 *mind*: attitude; mentality 24 *wit*: intelligence // *stand*: reside

25 *weening*: thinking 26 *list*: pleased 27 *reproof*: disproof 28 *opinions*: theses

28, 30 *old*: early 29 *holy fathers*: fathers of the Church

30 *holy doctors*: theologians / biblical exegetes 31 *deceived*: mistaken

and that he saw himself confuted and concluded evidently... both
 by Scripture, natural reason, the laws and determinations of the
 Church, and the whole consent of the holy fathers interpreters of Holy
 Scripture: then began he to sing another song. For then, as for reason,
 5 *"Reason hindereth us in* he refused to stand to, saying that the matters
 our faith." of our faith be things *above* reason,
 and that reason hindereth us in our faith,
 and is unto faith an enemy. And as for the laws of the Church... he (with
 other blasphemous heretics) burned up openly at Wittenberg,
 10 singing in derision a dirge about the fire for the law's soul. And
 then would he stand to nothing but only Scripture; nor to that,
 neither, but if it were very plain and evident. But, now, if it were
 in question whether the Scripture were evident for him or against
 him: therein would he stand to no man's judgment but his
 15 own. For as for the whole faith of Christ's church, continued by so
 many hundred years—he set utterly at naught, calling it men's
 devices. And in Scripture the interpretation of Saint Jerome,
 Saint Augustine, Saint Ambrose, and all the old holy fathers, of so
 many years past... he nothing would esteem, but with blasphemous
 20 words letted not to write, 'I care not for Augustine, I care not
 for a hundred Cyprians, I care not for a thousand Jeromes, I care
 not but for *Scripture alone*—and *that is plainly* on my part!' As though
 none of these old holy, cunning men had understood any Scripture
 till *he* came! Now was he by this unreasonable manner driven to
 25 another devilish device against saints. For to the intent that their
 authority should not by the devotion and reverence that all good men
 bear them... diminish his credence, he was forced to labor to bring
 men in that heresy that they should pray to *no* saints; but would
 have their images drawn down, all their pilgrimages left up,
 30 all their relics cast out, all their honor and men's devotion
 toward them withdrawn; so far forth that he could neither abide
 the honor of our Blessed Lady... nor the Holy Cross... nor Christ's
 Blessed Body—as plainly declareth his abominable books."

1 *concluded evidently*: conclusively trounced 3 *whole consent*: unanimous agreement

3 *holy fathers interpreters*: i.e., Church fathers who were interpreters

5, 11 *stand to*: submit to (it) 9 *burned up openly*: publicly burned them

10 *about*: around 12 *but if*: unless 12, 13 *evident*: conclusive

14 *stand to*: abide by 17 *devices*: inventions

18 *old holy fathers*: early Church fathers 20 *letted not*: did not forbear

20, 21, 22 *for*: about 22 *part*: side 23 *cunning*: learned

24 *unreasonable*: irrational // *manner*: mode of proceeding

25 *devilish device*: diabolical scheme 27 *labor*: try 28 *in*: into

29 *drawn*: pulled // *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites; shrines // *left up*: abandoned

33 *as . . . books*: as his abominable books clearly show

The Seventh Chapter

4.7

The author showeth what things caused the people to fall
into Luther's fond and furious sect. And he showeth also
what mischief the followers of that sect have done in
5 Almaine, Lombardy, and Rome.

“It is,” quoth your friend, “a wonder to me that the people being before
brought up in the right belief... could find in their hearts to
give him audience in some such heresies as these be!”

10 “Ye must understand, and may perceive,” quoth I, “that he did not
set forth all at once; but as Tyndale hath begun here in England with
the thing that had a good visage (though he had corrupted it and
meant naught indeed), putting forth first the New Testament in
such wise handled that unlearned folk were likely to take harm
and conceive divers heresies in their hearts ere they could perceive
15 his falsehood, and then hath since, by two other books, openly
showed himself to lack nothing of Luther... but that he hath not
yet married a nun: so did Luther also put forth in the beginning
no more but the matter of pardons, as I told you; and therein nothing
affirmed, neither, against the determination of the Church, but
20 submitted himself thereto. Now, with this demeanor was there
no man offended. But yet did he that time intend a further
mischief... which he little and little pursued and brought to
pass. And one special thing with which he spiced all the
poison... was the liberty that he so highly commended
25 unto the people, bringing them in belief that, having faith, they
needed nothing else. For as for fasting, prayer, and such other
things, he taught them to neglect and set at naught as vain and
unfruitful ‘ceremonies’; teaching them also that, being *faithful*
Christians, they were so near cousins to Christ... that they be, in a full
30 freedom and liberty, discharged of all governors and all manner
laws, spiritual or temporal, except the Gospel only. And albeit
he said that of a special perfection it should be well done to suffer
and bear the rule and authority of popes, princes, and other governors—

2, 3 *showeth*: tells 3 *fond*: ridiculous // *furious*: absurd / wildly insane
4 *mischief*: evil things 5 *Almaine*: Germany 9 *may perceive*: can see
11 *had a good visage*: i.e., looked good on the surface 12 *naught*: badly
18 *matter of pardons*: thesis about indulgences 21 *that time*: i.e., at that time
22 *and little*: by little 23 *special*: particular 27 *neglect*: abandon
27 *vain*: futile 28 *ceremonies*: rituals 32 *suffer*: put up with

- Luther doth call the rule of* which rule and authority he calleth
lords "tyranny." but only *tyranny*—yet he saith that the
 people be so free, by faith, that they be no
 more bound thereto... than they be bound to suffer wrong. And
 5 this doctrine also teacheth Tyndale... as the special matter of his holy
 book of disobedience. Now was this doctrine, in Almaine, of the
 common, uplandish people so pleasantly heard that it blinded
 them in the looking upon the remnant, and could not suffer them
 to consider and see what end the same would in conclusion come to.
 10 The temporal lords were glad also to hear this gear against the
 clergy—and the people as glad to hear it against the clergy and
 against the lords too, and against all their governors of every good
 town and city. And finally so far went it forward... that at the last,
 it began to burst out and fall to open force and violence. For,
 15 intending to begin at the feeblest, there gathered them together
 for the setting forth of these ungracious heresies a boistous company
 of that unhappy sect... and first rebelled against an abbot, and
 after against a bishop; wherewith the temporal lords had good
 game and sport, and dissembled the matter, gaping after the lands
 20 of the spirituality... till they had almost played as Aesop telleth of
 the dog... which, to snatch at the shadow of the cheese in the water,
 let fall and lost the cheese that he bore in his mouth. For so was it
 shortly after that those uplandish Lutherans took so great boldness,
 and so began to grow strong, that they set also upon the temporal
 25 lords. Which, had they not set hand thereto the sooner, while they
 looked for other men's lands... had been likely shortly to lose their
 own. But so acquitted they themselves... that they slew upon the point of
 seventy thousand Lutherans in one summer, and subdued the remnant
 in that part of Almaine to a right miserable servitude. Howbeit, in
 30 the meanwhile many mischievous deeds they did.
 "And yet in divers other parts of Almaine and Switzerland,
 this ungracious sect, by the negligence of the governors in great
 cities, is so far forth grown... that finally the common people have
 compelled the rulers to follow them... whom if they had taken heed in
 35 time, they might have ruled and led.

2 *but only*: nothing but 4 *suffer wrong*: tolerate injustice 5 *special matter*: main theme
 6, 29, 31 *Almaine*: Germany 6 *of the*: by the 7, 23 *uplandish*: rustic
 7 *so pleasantly heard*: heard as being so delightful 8 *upon the remnant*: at the rest
 8 *suffer*: permit 10 *temporal*: secular // *gear*: stuff
 14 *burst out and fall to*: break out and turn into 15 *at the feeblest*: with the weakest
 16 *setting forth*: propagating // *ungracious*: ungodly; wicked // *boistous*: rowdy
 17 *unhappy*: sorry 18–19 *good game and sport*: great fun and entertainment
 19 *dissembled the matter*: pretended not to be aware of what was going on
 20 *spirituality*: clergy 26 *had*: would have 27 *upon the point of*: nearly
 28 *remnant*: rest 30 *mischievous*: criminally evil 31 *divers*: several
 32 *ungracious*: ungodly; wicked

“And now is it too piteous a sight, to see the despiteous despites
 done there, in many places, to God and all good men... with the
 marvelous change from all face and fashion of Christendom... into
 a very tyrannous persecution... not only of all good Christian
 5 people, quick and dead, but also of Christ himself. For there shall
 ye see now the goodly monasteries destroyed, the places burned up,
 the religious people put out and sent to seek their living—or, in
 many cities, the places yet standing... with more despite to God
 than if they were burned up in ashes. For the religious people—
 10 monks, friars, and nuns—be clean drawn and driven out...
 except such as would agree to forsake their vows of chastity and
 be ‘wedded’; and the places dedicated to cleanness and chastity... left
 only to these apostates and brothels, to live there in lechery. Now
 the parish churches, in many places, not only defaced (all ornaments
 15 withdrawn, the holy images pulled down... and either
 Oh, what abomination was broken or burned), but also the Holy
 this! Sacrament cast out—and the abominable
 beasts (which abhorreth me to think
 on) not abhorred in despite to file in the pyxes... and use, in many
 20 places continually, the churches for a common siege. And that in so
 despiteful wise... that when a stranger of other places, where
 Christ is worshipped, resorteth to these cities, some of those unhappy,
 wretched citizens fail not, as it were for courtesy and kindness, to
 accompany them in walking abroad... to show them the pleasures
 25 and commodities of the town, and then bring them to no place,
 lightly, but only the churches... to show them in derision what uses
 the churches serve for.

“Of this sect was the great part of those ungracious people also... which lately entered into Rome with the Duke of Bourbon—not only robbing and despoiling the city (as well their own friends as the contrary part), but, like very beasts, did also violate the wives in the sight of their husbands, slew the children in the sight of the fathers. And to extort the discovering of more money... when men had brought out all that ever they had, to save themselves from death or further pain, and were at pacts and promises of rest without further business—then the wretched tyrants and cruel tormentors, as though all that stood for nothing, ceased not to put them eftsoons into intolerable torments. And old, ancient, honorable men... those fierce heretics letted not to hang up by the privy members; and

- 4.7
- Oh, what cruelty!* from many they pulled them off and cast
 them in the street. And some brought out
 naked, with his hands bound behind him... and a cord tied
 fast unto his privy members. Then would they set before him, in his
 5 way, others of those tyrants with their Moorish pikes, the points
 toward the breasts of these poor naked men. And then one or two of
 those wretches would stand behind those Moorish pikes... and draw
 the poor souls by the members toward them. Now, then was all
 their cruel sport and laughter either to see the seely naked men, in
 10 shrinking from the pikes, to tear off their members... or, for pain of that
 pulling, to run their naked bodies in deep upon the pikes.
 Too piteous and too abominable were it to rehearse the villainous
 pain and torments that they devised on the seely women—to whom,
 after that they had beastly abused them (wives in the sight of their
 15 husbands, and the maidens in the sight of their fathers), they were
 reckoned for piteous that did no more but cut their throats. And
 very certain is it that not in Rome only, but also in the country of
 Milan that they kept and oppressed, after torments used and
 money fetched out that way... then some calling himself a gentleman in
 20 Almaine or Spain... would feign himself fallen in love of his
 host's daughter, and that he would marry her in any wise... and then
 make much earnest business for to have some money with her. And
 whether he got aught or got naught by that device, he letted not
 soon after to put the father, the mother, the fair daughter, and all
 25 the whole house to new torments, to make them tell where any more
 money were—were there any or none. And some failed not to take the
 child and bind it to a broach... and lay it to the fire to roast—the
 father and mother looking on. And then begin to commune of a price
 for the sparing of the child, asking first a hundred ducats...
 30 then fifty... then forty... then twenty... then ten... then five... then
 twain, when the seely father had not one left... but these tyrants had
 all before. Then would they let the child roast to death. And yet in
 derision, as though they pitied the child, they would say to the
 father and the mother, 'Ah, fie, fie, for shame! What marvel is it
 35 though God sent a vengeance among you! What unnatural people be
 you, that can find in your hearts to see your own child roasted before

2 *brought*: i.e., would be brought 3 *with*: i.e., each with
 4, 8, 10 (*privy members*): private parts 7 *draw*: pull 9, 13, 31 *seely*: poor
 12 *piteous*: distressing // *abominable*: disgusting // *were it*: would it be
 12 *rehearse*: relate 15 *fathers*: parents
 15–16 *they were reckoned for piteous that*: those were considered merciful who
 17 *country*: area 18 *kept*: occupied // *torments used*: tortures (being) inflicted
 19–20 *some . . . Spain*: someone claiming to be an upper-class German or Spaniard
 20 *feign himself*: pretend to have 21 *in any wise*: in any event
 22 *much earnest business*: very serious efforts // *have*: get // *with*: along with
 23 *auht*: anything // *naught*: nothing // *device*: ruse
 23 *letted not*: did not forbear 27 *broach*: spit 28 *commune of*: talk about
 34 *marvel*: wonder 35 *though*: i.e., that

your face... rather than ye would out with one ducat to deliver it from death!’

4.7

“Thus devised these accursed wretches so many diverse fashions of exquisite cruelties... that I ween they have taught the devil new
 5 torments in hell, that he never knew before—and will not fail to prove himself a good scholar and surely render them his lesson when they come there; where it is to be feared that many of them be by this. For soon after that they had in Rome exercised a while this fierce and cruel tyranny... and entered into the holy churches,
 10 despoiled the holy relics, cast out the Blessed Sacrament, pulled the chalice from the altar at Mass, slain priests in the church—left no kind of cruelty or despite undone, but from hour to hour imbruing their hands in blood... and that in such wise as any Turk or Saracen would have pitied or abhorred—our Lord sent,
 15 soon after, such a pestilence among them that he left not of them the third part alive. For this purpose I rehearse you this their heavy, mischievous dealing: that ye may perceive by their deeds...
Mt 7:16–20 what good cometh of their sect. For as our Savior saith, ye shall know the
 20 tree by the fruit.”

The Eighth Chapter

The messenger saith that the malice of the men is not to be imputed to the sect, since that of every sect, some be naught. And the author showeth that in the Lutherans, the
 25 sect itself is the cause of the malice that the men fall to.

“**S**ir,” quoth your friend, “in good faith, I neither can nor will defend that sect. But yet reason it is to take everything as it is. And if it be naught... it hath the less need to be made worse. But as for the malicious, cruel dealing of men of war—is not, in my mind, to
 30 be imputed to the sect of Luther. For there is no sect so saintly but they fall in cruelty when they fall to war. And of *every* sect, also, be some bad. And therefore the malice of the men is not, as me seemeth, to be imputed unto the sect.”

1 *out with*: part with 4 *exquisite*: ingeniously devised // *ween*: think
 6 *scholar*: student 8 *this*: i.e., this time; now 12 *despite*: outrage
 12 *imbruing*: staining 13 *in blood*: with blood
 15–16 *of . . . part*: one-third of them 16 *rehearse*: relate to
 17 *heavy*: oppressive // *mischievous*: criminally evil
 17, 29 *dealing*: behavior 24 *naught*: bad // *in*: in the case of
 25 *fall to*: go in for 26 *in good faith*: in all honesty // *will*: wish to
 27 *it is to take*: i.e., does call for taking 28 *naught*: bad
 29 *is*: i.e., that is // *mind*: opinion 31 *fall in*: engage in
 31 *fall to*: go to 32–33 *me seemeth*: it seems to me

“It is not,” quoth I, “all one to be some naught and all naught. But they
 that fall in this sect... wax naught, all the whole meinie. For forthwith
 upon this sect once begun, the whole flocks of such as were infected
 therewith fell unto those mischievous deeds that I before rehearsed
 5 you. And also, though men in war wax furious and cruel, yet was
 there never none that went therein so far—and especially in such
 kind of cruelty as hath been among Christian men in their wars
 always forborne, as is the despites done to the Blessed Sacrament.
 Wherein these beasts were more hot and more busy than would the
 10 great Turk—and that because their sect is yet, in manner, worse
 than his. Moreover, the unhappy deeds of that sect must needs be
 imputed to the sect itself... while the doctrine thereof teacheth and
 giveth occasion to their evil deeds. A Christian man’s evil living...
 15 cannot be imputed to his Christendom. For his living is contrary
 to the doctrine and living of Christ. But as for the doctrine of
 this unhappy sect, and the living, also, of the beginners of the same,
 is such as every wise man well perceiveth doth *teach* and give
occasion of their evil deeds. For what good deed shall he study or
 labor to do... that believeth Luther that he hath no free will of his
 20 own... by which he can with help of grace either work or pray?
 Shall he not say to himself that he may sit still and let God
 alone?

“What harm shall they care to forbear... that believe Luther... that
 God alone, without their will, worketh all the mischief that they do
 25 themselves?

“What shall he care how long he live in sin... that believeth
 Luther... that he shall after this life neither feel well nor ill in body
 nor soul till the Day of Doom? Will not he, trow you, say as the
 Welshman said? ‘If thou give her that day—by God, Davy will
 30 have thy coat too!’ And this thing I say but for an example. For look his
 opinions through, and ye shall find that they plainly set
 forth all the world to wretched living. If they would say that we
 misconstrue their words—their books be open, and the words
 plain, and inculcated again and again, so often and so openly that
 35 men cannot err therein, nor they by any cloak or color defend
 them.

1 *all one*: one and the same 1, 2 *naught*: bad 2 *fall in*: come into
 2 *wax*: go // *all the whole meinie*: the whole lot of them 4 *mischievous*: criminally evil
 4 *rehearsed*: related to 5 *wax furious*: do get savage 8 *despites*: outrages
 9 *would*: i.e., would be 10 *is yet, in manner, worse*: is, in a way, even worse
 11, 16 *unhappy*: deplorable 12 *while*: when
 13, 14, etc. *living*: way of living; conduct 14 *Christendom*: Christianity; being a Christian
 17 *is*: i.e., it is // *wise man*: sensible person 19 *labor*: strive 21 *let*: leave
 23 *harm*: evil 24 *mischief*: iniquity 28 *the Day of Doom*: Judgment Day
 28 *trow you*: i.e., don’t you suppose // *as*: what
 29 *her*: A Welsh idiom for “him.” // *that day*: i.e., till that day to pay
 29–30 *will . . . too*: i.e., will cause you to lose your coat as well as this money
 31 *opinions*: theses 31–32 *set forth all the world*: direct everyone
 33 *open*: out there 34 *openly*: clearly 35 *color*: pretext

“And besides that, not only the commonalty of their sect show the effect and fruit of their doctrine by their abominable dealing, as I have rehearsed you, but also the doctors and the archheretics themselves... well declare the holiness of their doctrine by their own living. For as they live they teach, and as they teach they live.”

4.8

The Ninth Chapter

The author showeth that it is a great token that the world is near at an end... while we see the people so far fallen from God that they can abide it to be content with this pestilent frantic sect... which no people, Christian or heathen, could have suffered before our days.

“If the world were not near at an end, and the fervor of devotion so sore cooled that it were almost quenched among Christian people, it could never have come to pass that so many people should fall to the following of such a beastly sect. For albeit that the Muhammadans, being a sensual and filthy sect, did in few years draw the great part
Wherewith the Lutherans of the world unto it... by the selfsame
draw men to their sect ways which now the Lutherans use—that is to wit, voluptuous living and violence, offering delight unto the receivers... and death to the refusers—yet was there before *this* abominable sect never any sect so shameless... that would still avow themselves for Christian folk granting the Scripture to be true... and therewith so enviously blaspheme and oppugn the *church* of Christ, the *sacraments* of Christ, the *saints* of Christ, the *cross* of Christ, the *mother* of Christ, and the *Holy Body* of Christ; so shamefully living, and openly professing, a bestial manner of living... clean contrary to the *doctrine* and *life* of Christ. The Arians, the Pelagians, the Manichaeans, and so forth—every sort of heretics—began of such as, though they wickedly erred in substantial articles of the faith, yet was their outward fashion of living so honest and spiritual in appearance... that men thought themselves bound the better to believe their doctrine as Christian... for some spiritual form and

1 *the commonalty*: (do) the rank-and-file members 2 *dealing*: behavior
 3 *rehearsed*: related to // *doctors*: teachers 4 *declare*: manifest
 5 *living*: way of living; conduct 7 *showeth*: points out // *token*: indication
 8 *while*: when 9 *content*: all right // *pestilent*: pernicious
 10 *frantic*: lunatic 11 *suffered*: tolerated 13 *sore*: badly
 20 *receivers*: accepters 23 *enviously*: inimically 31 *fashion*: way
 31 *honest*: upright 33 *for*: on account of

fashion of their Christian living. But, now, the chieftains of *these* execrable heresies both *teach* and *use* more sensual and licentious living... than ever did Muhammad! Which, though he license men to many wives—yet he never taught nor suffered his folk to break their chastity promised once, and solemnly dedicated, to God.

5 Whereas Luther not only teacheth monks, friars, and nuns to ‘marriage,’ but also, being a friar, hath ‘married’ a nun himself... and with her liveth, under the name of wedlock, in open, incestuous lechery, without care or shame... because he hath procured

10 and gotten so many shameful and shameless companions.

“Who could have abided to look any man in the face that should have done thus in Saint Jerome’s and Saint Augustine’s days—what speak we of Saint Jerome and Saint Augustine? Who durst have done it for shame

15 *any* time since Christ’s birth until our wretched days? Or who since *Adam*’s time, among the chosen people of God—what speak we of the chosen people of God? The very *paynims* and *pagans*—*idolaters*—kept their chastity vowed once to their false gods... and rather chose to cut off the members with which they might break it

20 *A vestal virgin* than to stand in the jeopardy to break it.

And in Rome of old time, when they were pagans, if any vestal virgin (for so called they their nuns) were violated, they not only beat the man to death with rods, in the marketplace... and buried the woman quick... but also reckoned it for a wonderful *monster*, and a token of wrath and indignation of

25 their gods toward their city and empire—putting thereupon themselves in devoir with open processions and prayers and sacrifice...

Promised chastity hath to procure the recovery of their

always been highly esteemed. gods’ favor. Is it not, then, now a wondrous case to see, since that the

30 chastity promised once to God... and also to the false idols under the name of God... hath always been, since the world began, among Christian and heathen so highly esteemed... that the breakers thereof have always been, by the common consent of the whole world, as a thing taught by God unto good men... and by nature to all men, taken, reputed,

35 and punished as abominable, wicked wretches; is it not, I say, now a wondrous thing to see... that in the flock of *Christian* people, which by

2 *use*: practice 3–4 *license men to*: gives men license to have

4 *suffered*: allowed 7 *marriage*: i.e., get married

9 *incestuous*: See note for 165/18. // *care*: worry

12, 15–16 *what speak we*: why are we speaking; why speak

16 *paynims*: heathens 18 *might*: could 23 *quick*: alive

23–24 *reckoned it for*: regarded it as

24 *a wonderful monster*: a shocking aberration // *token*: portent

25–26 *putting . . . with*: thereupon taking it upon themselves, as a duty, with

26 *open*: public 29, 36 *wondrous*: astonishing

29 *case*: thing 30 *chastity*: celibacy 33 *consent*: agreement

Christ himself, by all his apostles, by all his holy martyrs, confessors,
 and doctors—by *all* his whole Church, all the whole time of
 these fifteen hundred years past, chastity hath been more highly praised
 and esteemed than ever it was of any other sect since the world
 5 began—we should see now a lewd friar so bold and so shameless to
 ‘marry’ a nun and abide thereby... and be taken still for a Christian man?
 And, over that, for a man meet to be the beginner of a sect... whom
 any honest man should vouchsafe to follow? If our Lord God—
 whose wisdom is infinite—should have sat and studied to devise
 10 a way whereby he might cast in our face the confusion of our
 folly, how might he have found a more effectual... openly to
 show us the shame of our sin... than to suffer us that call ourselves
 Christian folk to see such a rabble spring up among us... as,
 professing the faith and religion of Christ, let not to set at
 15 naught all the doctors of Christ’s church and lean to the only
 authority of Friar Tuck and Mad Marian?”

The Tenth Chapter

The author inveigheth against this detestable article of
 this ungracious sect whereby they take away the liberty
 20 of man’s free will and ascribe allthing to destiny.

“Surely, as I say, this world is either, after the words of Saint
 John, ‘totus positus in maligno’ (‘all set in malice’), that we be so
 prone wittingly to take so wrong a way, or else is it in a marvelous
 blindness, if we can neither perceive by the naughty living of
 25 the persons that their sect is naught... nor can perceive by their
 doctrine that their sect must make their persons naught, their
 doctrine being such as ye have heard. Whereby every man that any
 faith hath and any manner knowledge of Christian belief... may well and
 surely perceive that Luther and all his offspring, with all those
 30 that favor and set forth his sect, be very limbs of the devil
 and open enemies to the faith of Christ. And not only to the faith
 and manhood of our Savior Christ, but also against the Holy
 Ghost and the Father himself—and utterly against all *goodness* of the

1 *confessors*: male saints who gave heroic witness to the faith but were not martyred

2, 15 *doctors*: theologians 3 *chastity*: celibacy 5 *lewd*: bad / lascivious

5 *so bold . . . to*: i.e., be so bold . . . as to 6 *abide thereby*: stick by this

7 *over that*: moreover // *meet*: fit 8 *honest*: decent // *vouchsafe*: deign

11 *might*: could // *effectual*: effective (one) 12 *suffer*: allow

14 *let*: scruple 15 *lean to the only*: rely solely on the 19 *ungracious*: wicked

20 *allthing*: everything 21–22 *after . . . John*: as Saint John puts it

23 *wittingly*: knowingly // *marvelous*: terrible 24, 25, 26 *naught(y)*: bad

24 *living*: conduct 28 *manner*: kind of 28–29 *may . . . perceive*: can quite clearly see

30 *set forth*: promote; advance // *limbs*: agents 31 *faith of Christ*: Christian faith

Godhead—as those that wretchedly lay all the weight and blame of
 our sin to the necessity and constraint of God’s ordinance,
 affirming that we do no sin of ourselves, by any power of our own
 will, but by the compulsion and handiwork of God. And that we
 5 do not the sin ourselves, but that God doth the sin in us himself.
 And thus these wretched heretics, with this blasphemous
 heresy alone, lay more villainous rebuke to the great majesty
 The Lutherans lay all of God... than ever any one ribald
 misdeeds to God. laid unto another. For who was there
 10 ever that laid unto another all the particular
 evil deeds of any one other man?—whereas these ribalds
 lay to the charge and blame of *God* all the malice and mischief,
 from the first fault to the last, that ever was wrought or thought
 by man, woman, or devil! And by this give they wretches great
 15 boldness to follow their foul affections... as things, after their
 opinion, more verily wrought in them by God... than the best
 minds be in good men. And that it were therefore in vain for
 them to resist their sinful appetites. And if they shall be
 damned—yet they say it shall be long ere they feel it. For Luther
 20 saith that all souls shall sleep and feel neither good nor bad after
 this life till Doomsday. And then they that shall be damned... shall
 be damned, he saith, for no deserving of their *own* deeds, but
 for such evil deeds as *God*, only, forced and constrained them unto,
 and wrought in them himself—using them, in all those evil deeds,
 25 but as a dead instrument, as a man heweth with a hatchet. And
 that God shall damn all that shall be damned... for his own deeds
 only, which *himself* shall have done *in* them; and finally for
 his only pleasure—because it liked him not to choose them as he did
 his chosen people. Whom they say that he chose in such wise, before
 30 the beginning of the world, that they can never sin.”

The Eleventh Chapter

The messenger saith that howsoever Luther and his followers
 in *Almaine* believe, yet he cannot think that such as be
 Lutherans in *England*—of whom some, he saith, have seemed
 35 good and honest—be so mad and unhappy to believe that all

1 *as those that*: i.e., in that they 7 *lay . . . to*: cast a more scurrilous aspersion on
 8, 11 *ribald(s)*: scoundrel(s) 9 *laid unto*: i.e., cast on
 10 *laid unto another*: blamed on someone else 11, 23, 24 *evil*: bad
 12 *mischief*: evildoing 13 *fault*: sin 14 *give they*: i.e., they give
 15 *affections*: inclinations // *after*: according to
 16 *opinion*: contention; professed belief // *verily*: truly 17 *minds*: dispositions
 18 *appetites*: desires 20 *neither*: i.e., nothing either 21 *Doomsday*: Judgment Day
 25 *dead*: inanimate; i.e., completely passive 27 *finally*: ultimately
 28 *only*: mere // *liked him not*: did not suit him
 29 *such wise*: such a way 33 *Almaine*: Germany 35 *good and honest*: quite
 35 *honest*: decent // *mad*: insane // *unhappy*: wretched // *to*: as to // *all*: everything

hangeth upon destiny. Whereupon the author showeth the
contrary... and that they be naught in deed, seem they never so
good. And for proof that howsoever they color their words,
they mean that all dependeth upon only destiny, he rehearseth
5 a certain dispicion had with a heretic detected to
the bishop and examined—the author being present—where
the heretic, being learned and a preacher, made many
shifts to make it seem that in his evil words he meant but
well.

- 10 **W**hen your friend had heard all this, he said at last that albeit the
words of Luther seemed very plain toward the affirming of such
opinions, yet were the things so far out of all frame that it gave
him occasion to doubt lest Luther meant not allthing so evil as his
words seem to weigh to. And if he so meant himself, with others of his
15 flock and affinity in Almaine, yet thought your friend that “such as *here*
favor and follow his sect, in *England*—of whom some seem right honest,
and far from his manner of living—do not so take his words, nor
understand them that way, but construe them to some better sense.”
“Forsooth,” quoth I, “they cannot but know his open living in lechery
20 with his lewd leman the nun. And that all the captains of that sort—
some late Carthusians, some Observants, some of other religions, and
all now apostates and ‘wedded’—live in like manner and teach others the
same. And by this can they not doubt but that their doctrine is
naught, except themselves allow that way for good. Now, as for their
25 own goodness, ye find few that fall to that sect but that soon after, they
fall into the contempt of prayer and fasting, and of *all* good works,
under the name of ‘ceremonies.’ And if any do otherwise, it is for
some purpose for the while to blind the people and keep themselves
in favor, till they may find the time, by leisure, to fashion and
30 frame them better to their purpose... which in the beginning if
they showed themselves plainly... could haply not abide to hear
them. Of which their demeanor, and that in these heresies they
mean here no better than Luther doth himself, I have had good
experience, and among other things, this that I shall show
35 you. It happed me to be lately present... where one in the Lutheran

1 *hangeth*: hinges 2, 24 *naught*: bad 2 *in deed*: in reality
2 *never so*: no matter how 4 *upon only*: solely on // *rehearseth*: relates
5 *dispicion*: discussion // *detected*: reported; informed on 8 *evil words*: bad statements
12 *opinions*: contentions // *all frame*: all bounds (of right thinking)
13 *doubt lest*: suspect that // *allthing*: everything // *evil*: badly 14 *weigh*: amount
15 *affinity*: association // *Almaine*: Germany 16 *right honest*: quite decent
19 *know*: i.e., know about 20 *lewd*: lascivious / sorry // *leman*: paramour; shack job
20 *captains*: leaders // *sort*: band; outfit 21 *late*: former
21 *Observants*: i.e., Franciscan Observants // *religions*: religious orders
24 *except . . . good*: unless they themselves accept that conduct as good 25 *fall to*: join
27 *ceremonies*: rituals 29 *time*: opportunity // *by leisure*: eventually 30 *which*: who
31 *haply*: perhaps 32 *of . . . demeanor*: of which mode of proceeding of theirs
34 *show*: relate to 35 *lately*: recently // *one*: someone

books deeply learned—and, of truth, neither in Holy Scripture
 nor in secular literature unlearned (as I perceive not only by
 the testimony of other men, and the degrees that he had taken in
 the university, but also by his words and his writing)—was, in the
 5 presence of right honorable, virtuous, and very cunning persons,
 examined. For he was at that time in ward for heresy, because
 that being learned, and using to hear confessions, and among many
 folk meetly well allowed in preaching, and thereby growing in good
 opinion and favor of many good simple people—abused all these
 10 open and apparent good things... to the secret sowing and setting
 forth of Luther's heresies. And had for that intent not only taught and
 written and covertly corrupted divers light and lewd persons, but
 also had bought great number of the books of Luther... and Wycliffe,
 Hus, and Zwingli, and such other heretics... and of many one
 15 sort, divers books... to be delivered, as he could find occasion, unto
 young scholars of the universities—such as he thought of youth and
 lightness most likely to be soon corrupted. This man, I say, being
 examined, and long keeping himself close from disclosing of the matter...
 and more ready to go straight to the devil with lying and false forswearing
 20 than to be acknown of his evil demeanor and confess
 the truth—at the last, perceiving the matters... partly by the confession
 of other folk, partly by his own handwriting... so far forth
 come to light that they could in no wise be cloaked, then began
 he somewhat plainly to confess and declare... not only what he had
 25 done for the setting forth of that sect, but also, partly, what opinions
 he and others, his fellows, had held and were of. Setting, nevertheless,
 all the colors he could to make it seem that though the
words which they spoke or wrote were strange and contrary to
 right belief, yet the effect of their *meaning* was not much discrepant
 30 from the true faith of Christ's church. Howbeit, when he was
 reasoned with, and saw that he could not so shift it off but that,
 for any color he could find, one part of his tale ever contraried another,
 at last he showed plainly their opinions... and laid forth as
 in part for his own excuse, as things inducing him thereto, all the
 35 texts of Scripture by which they pretend to prove their opinions
 true. Among which opinions when he came to the opinion by

4 *words*: oral statements 5 *right honorable*: quite distinguished // *cunning*: astute
 6 *ward*: custody 7 *using to hear*: frequently hearing; on a regular basis hearing
 8 *meetly well allowed in preaching*: considered a pretty good preacher
 10–11, 25 *setting forth*: promoting 12 *divers*: several // *light*: credulous; unthinking
 12 *lewd*: ignorant 14–15 *of . . . books*: i.e., of many a one book, several copies
 16 *scholars*: undergraduates // *of youth*: i.e., on account of their youth
 17 *lightness*: credulity; gullibility // *soon*: easily 18 *close from*: guarded against (any)
 19 *forswearing*: denying under oath 20 *be acknown of*: acknowledge
 20 *demeanor*: behavior 26 *fellows*: cohorts // *setting*: putting (on them)
 27, 32 *color(s)*: spin(s) 27 *though*: even if 28 *strange*: foreign
 31 *reasoned*: argued 32 *tale*: story // *ever*: always // *contraried*: contradicted
 33 *showed*: stated 33, 35, 36 *opinion(s)*: (heterodox) contention(s)
 35 *pretend*: profess 36 *true*: correct

which they hold that only ‘faith alone’ is sufficient, without good works—unto that, he said in the beginning that they meant nothing else thereby but that men should put their faith in God’s promises and hope to be saved thereby, and that they should not put their trust in their works, for that would turn them to pride.

5 “Then was it answered him that he and his fellows could not mean so. For if they did—then could they not blame the Church as they do, making as though the Church had all this while hid the true faith from the people, and that themselves were now shent for

10 preaching the Gospel truly. For if this were their meaning, they then meant none other than every common preacher of the Church

Lk 18:9–14 hath always preached before Luther’s days. For what preacher hath not told the people

the parable of the poor publican ashamed of his sins... and the proud

15 *Put not your trust in good deeds.* Pharisee boasting of his virtues? Who hath not bidden them do well... and, albeit that God will reward them for their good

deeds, yet put not their trust in themselves and their own deeds, but in God’s goodness? Who hath not told them that they should, as God

20 *Lk 17:10* biddeth them in the Gospel—that when they have done all they can do, yet say to themselves, ‘We be but unprofitable servants; we have done but our duty’? These things and such others the Church hath always taught

Men cannot surely judge their own deeds. against the putting of a proud trust

25 in our own deeds, because that we cannot always surely judge our own deeds, for the blind favor that we bear toward ourselves. And therefore was it said to him, ‘If ye meant but thus, as the *Church* meaneth, then would ye preach but as the Church preacheth... and not *blaspheme* the Church in

30 your sermons... as though ye began true preaching of the Gospel, and that the Church had hitherto preached false. And also ye must needs mean some other thing... for Luther, whose sect ye confess that ye have leaned unto, writeth in this matter far otherwise. For he saith plainly that faith alone, without any good works, doth justify

35 us and sufficeth for our salvation.’ Then answered he that therein they meant none other but that faith is sufficient alone... if one happen after he have faith and Baptism to die ere he have time to do any

6 *fellows*: cohorts 7 *so*: that 9 *shent*: (being) punished

16 *do well*: to do good (things); to act rightly 26 *surely*: accurately

32 *sect*: belief system 33 *leaned unto*: subscribed to

36 *none other but*: nothing other than 37 *have faith*: receives faith // *ere*: before

good works. Then was it said unto him... if they should teach
 this opinion, under such words, for a great, secret mystery newly
 found out, and thereby blame the Church for misteaching the
 people—as though the Church taught them to put less trust in God
 5 and in faith of Christ than they should do, and induced them to put
 their trust in themselves and their own good works—they used themselves
 marvelously, considering that if they meant none other, the
 Church and they meant all one thing. But they could not mean so.
 For then why should they blame the Church, that saith not the contrary?
 10 And also, if they meant none other thing, few words would serve
 them. They should not need so often to speak thereof. ‘For then that tale
 can do little good here or anywhere else where folk be christened in
 their cradles. For either they die ere they have time to do good
 works... and then they be too young to hear that sermon... or else they
 15 live and have time to do good works. And then that sermon were
 not wholesome for them—that good works need not, but “only faith”
 is sufficient, without them. And when the people take it as ye
 speak it—that faith alone is enough for them—then is it now a bare
 gloss for you to say that ye meant not so, but only that faith alone
 20 had been enough for them if they had died in their swaddling
 clothes.’

“To this he said that they thought also that faith alone doth
 justify a man without any good works... not only in children,
 but also in every age. ‘For whensoever a man that hath been a
 25 sinner doth repent and amend in his mind with a full faith in
 the promises of God... he is justified ere ever he do any of these good
 works—alms, fasting, or any such other. For he cannot *work*
 well till he be good already. For as Christ saith, “*Arbor mala non*
potest bonum fructum facere”—“An evil tree cannot bring forth good
 30 fruit”—and therefore, since good works be good fruit, an evil man
 cannot work them. Whereby it appeareth well that the man is
 justified before by his faith alone, without the works, and then out
 of that faith groweth the good fruit of good works. But faith did
 justify the man before, and the man was as good before the works as he
 35 is after. For his faith did justify him. And as for the works, be but
 things that the faith in the man, or the man *by* the faith, bringeth forth...

2 *opinion*: tenet // *under*: in // *secret*: esoteric 3 *blame* . . . *for*: accuse . . . of
 5 *of*: in 6–7 *used themselves marvelously*: would be behaving in a strange way
 7 *none other*: nothing else 8 *all one*: exactly the same 8, 19 *so*: that
 9 *blame*: criticize // *that*: which 10 *few*: i.e., a few
 10 *serve*: suffice 11 *tale*: information 15–16 *were not*: would not be
 16 *need not*: are not necessary // *only faith*: faith alone
 18–19 *bare gloss*: flimsy excuse 20 *had been*: would have been
 24 *in*: at 27 *work*: act 29, 30 *evil*: bad 31 *appeareth well*: is quite evident
 35 *be*: i.e., they are

hath always good hope and charity *with* it, and cannot *but* work well—no more than the fire can be without heat and light and burn all combustible things that it may touch and tarry with.’

- “Then was it said unto him that albeit a man might so speak
 5 by the fire... yet would not this thing serve their sect. ‘For he that saith fire alone is enough to burn... would not say nay to him that would say the fire could not burn but if it had heat. But your sect scorneth and blameth the Church... because the Church saith that faith will not suffice but if it have charity and good works. For else ye
 10 had no cause in this matter to preach contrary to the Church. Moreover, whereas ye say that faith hath always good hope with it—that seemeth not always true. For he that hopeth that by “faith alone” he shall be saved without any good works—as Lutherans do believe indeed—he hath an *evil* hope, and a *damnable*. Now, whereas ye say that
 15 ye preach “faith alone” to be sufficient because that faith hath always charity joined therewith: if this were true, why preach ye not as well that “charity alone” is sufficient?—which were as near the
 Charity is it that bringeth truth as the other. Now, whereas ye make
 forth good works. all the ground upon this, that “faith
 20 hath ever charity therewith,” and that it cannot be but that charity (which is in deed the thing that specially bringeth forth good works, much more properly than faith; for faith bringeth them forth by charity when it is joined therewith,
 Gal 5:6 as the Apostle saith: “Fides quae per dilectionem operatur”; “Faith worketh by
 25 charity”)—whereas ye say it cannot be but that this charity is always joined unto faith—this ground will fail you... and make your foundation false, and all your building fall. The apostle Paul in many places of his epistles saith the contrary thereof. For he saith that
 30 *1 Cor 13:2–3* if a man have so great faith that he might by the force of his faith work miracles—
 and also such fervent affection to the faith that he would give his body to the fire for the defense thereof—yet if he lacked *charity*, all his faith sufficed *not*.”
 35 “In good faith,” quoth your friend, “he was well and properly answered. But yet methinketh he might have replied a little again to those

3 *may*: can // *tarry*: linger 5 *by*: about 6 *say nay to*: disagree with; contradict
 7, 9 *but if*: unless 8 *blameth*: castigates 14 *evil*: bad 17 *were*: would be
 21 *in deed*: in reality; actually // *specially*: predominantly
 24 *the Apostle*: Saint Paul 28 *all your*: your whole 30 *might*: could
 32 *affection*: attachment; devotedness 35 *in good faith*: in all honesty
 35 *well and properly*: quite excellently
 36 *might have replied a little again*: could have said a little something back, in reply

- words of Saint Paul... and might have avoided them well with
other words of his own. For where he writeth also, to the Galatians,
Gal 1:8 that if ‘any angel’ would ‘come down from
heaven’ and preach a contrary gospel to that
5 that he had preached already, ‘accursed should he be,’ and not to be
believed... he did not in these words affirm nor intend thereby that
ever it should so be, or could so be, that any angel so should do indeed.
For he knew right well it was impossible that any angel of
heaven should come down and tell a false tale. But he said it
10 only by a manner of speaking which is among learned men called
Hyperbole ‘hyperbole’—for the more vehement expressing
of a matter—nothing meaning
else but that the gospel which he had preached was the plain,
sure, and undoubtable truth, against which no man were to be
15 believed. And in like wise methinketh the man that ye speak of
might have said that though Saint Paul said if he ‘had so great
faith’ that he were ‘able thereby to remove hills,’ except he ‘had charity
therewith’ it would not serve him, he meant thereby no more but to
show the great need that men have to charity... and not that it were
20 possible that faith could be without charity—no more than he meant
that an angel may come down from heaven to preach a false faith.
And therefore might it yet stand right well with all those words of
Saint Paul... that faith cannot fail of *salvation*, since it cannot
fail of *charity*. And of truth, meseemeth as that man said: that
25 faith cannot be idle, but it must needs work well.”
“Forsooth,” quoth I, “the man lacked you there; for he found not
that gloss. Which though he had... yet would it not have served him.
For between those two places of Saint Paul is there great difference.
For in the one is there an impossible excess and hyperbole; in the
30 other is there not so. For angels of heaven never can come down and
teach a false faith; but faith *may* be severed from charity. And in
the one place he none other thing intended than, as ye say, to
show by that great, exceeding word... the undoubted truth of the
faith which himself had preached. But in the other place his
35 special purpose was to teach the Corinthians that they should

1 *might have avoided them well*: could have well gotten around them
2 *of his own*: i.e., of Saint Paul's 9 *tell a false tale*: say something false
11–12 *more vehement expressing of a matter*: more forceful making of a point
16 *might*: could 17 *remove hills*: move mountains // *except*: unless
19 *to*: for 21 *may*: could 22 *stand right well*: be quite consistent
26 *lacked*: fell short of // *found not*: did not come up with 27 *though*: even if
28, 34 *place(s)*: text(s) 28 *of*: from 29 *excess*: overstatement
31 *may*: can 33 *great, exceeding word*: extreme, out-of-bounds statement
33 *undoubted*: undoubtable 34 *himself*: he himself 35 *special*: precise

- 4.11
- No good work availeth* neither trust that any gift of nature, or
without charity. gift of God above nature... or any manner
 virtue—almsdeed, faith, or other—
- were able to stand them in stead without charity. And this did
 5 he specially... for that he would that no man should be in such error...
 as to reckon that either excellent gift of cunning, great labor
 spent in preaching, great alms spent on poor people, or a very
 fervent faith... might suffice to their salvation if charity lacked.
 Against which error he doth in such wise exhort them to charity
 10 in avoiding the rancor which by occasion of schisms did arise
 among them... that he *showed* them—precisely—that without charity
 they lost clearly the merit of all their other virtues and graces that God
 had given them (cunning, almsdeed, faith, and all), putting
 the example by his own self; which though *he* were a chosen servant
 15 and apostle, yet if *he* were in language equal with all the whole world and
 with angels too, and had all the cunning that possibly could be had, and
 the spirit of all prophecy therewith, and would give all his goods in
 alms, and had also all the full faith so great that it sufficed to work
 wonders with, and so fervent that he would abide to be burned for it:
 20 yet if he lacked charity, all this would not serve him. So that ye
 may see now that your gloss would not have relieved this man. For
 though none angel *could* come down and teach an untruth...
 and therefore the words that ye allege can be none otherwise taken
 than, as ye say, by way of excess and hyperbole to declare the
 25 vehemence of his mind in the matter of faith which he then spoke
 of: yet this *other* place of Saint Paul, that was laid against that
 heretic that I speak of, as great and vehement as the words
 be... yet do they plainly prove that the Apostle showeth that
 Faith may be without charity. faith may be without charity—and that
 30 both so great that it may suffice to the
 doing of great wonders... and so fervent that it may suffer a painful
 death... and yet, for fault of charity, not sufficient to salvation—and
 that this may hap as well in faith as in almsdeed, which the
 Apostle putteth in the same case. And therefore, whereas that man
 35 said, and ye seem to confirm the same, that faith cannot be idle

2 *manner*: kind of 3, 13, 33 *almsdeed*: almsgiving
 4 *were*: would be // *stand them in stead*: do them any good
 5 *specially*: precisely // *for . . . be*: because he wanted no one to be
 6, 13, 16 *cunning*: knowledge 8 *lacked*: was lacking
 11–12 *showed . . . clearly*: literally *showed* them that a lack of charity would cause them
 to lose completely 13–14 *putting the example by*: using as his example
 14 *were*: was 15 *in . . . all*: linguistically on a par with everyone in
 19 *abide to be*: undergo being 21 *relieved this man*: gotten this man off the hook
 23 *allege*: quote 24 *excess*: overstatement
 24–25 *declare . . . in*: express the strength of his conviction regarding
 25–26 *then spoke of*: was then speaking of 26 *place of*: text from // *laid*: adduced
 27 *great*: big // *vehement*: strong 28 *the Apostle*: Saint Paul // *showeth*: says
 29, 30, etc. *may*: can 29 *be*: exist 31 *suffer*: submit to 32 *fault*: lack
 33 *in*: with 34 *case*: position

- from the working of good works: the Apostle, to show the contrary...
 and that all the works of faith, though they seem never so good, be yet
 naught in deed if they be not wrought with charity, commendeth
 only that faith that worketh by charity—signifying that all other works
 5 of faith be not available. And surely faith *alone*, without charity, may
 be, besides this, not only *idle*, without the busyness of good works,
 but also for lack of good works it may be utterly *dead*. And therefore,
Jas 2:14–26 as it was there objected unto that man, the
 holy apostle James saith to them that reckon
 10 faith sufficient for salvation without good works... that they be worse
 than devils. For he saith that the devils do believe, and ‘tremble’ for the
 fear of God; and that men which by the hope and boldness of their
 belief think their faith without good works sufficient be worse
 than devils... because they stand out of dread of *God*, that menaceth
 15 unto them the pains of hell except they do good works! Without
 which Saint James, for a final conclusion, saith that the faith is
 but dead.
 “But here was it also said unto him, yet again, that though Saint
 James do say that ‘faith without good works is dead’—he should not
 20 thereby run to his old gloss and say that therefore he and other
 Lutherans meant that faith sufficeth to salvation... because they
 think it cannot be but that it shall needs bring forth good works;
 and that therefore, on the contrary side, if one have no good works he
 hath no faith... because a dead faith is no faith, as a dead man is no
 25 man. It was told him that this gloss would not serve him, ‘for Saint
 James meant not that the faith that he calleth dead for lack of good
1 Tm 5:6 works is *no* faith—no more than Saint
 Paul meant that a widow living in
 delight and pleasure is no woman, though he said that she “is dead
 30 even as she goeth alive”—but Saint James meant only that such faith
A dead faith is a faith, shall not stand them in stead. For Saint
but unprofitable. James denieth not but that such a dead
 faith as he calleth dead because it is
 unprofitable... is yet a very faith indeed, though it be not quick

2 *never so*: no matter how 3 *naught in deed*: actually bad

5 *available*: efficacious // *surely*: certainly 5, 7 *may*: can

14 *stand out of dread*: are devoid of fear

14–15 *that menaceth unto them*: who threatens them with their having to suffer

15 *except*: unless 31 *stand them in stead*: benefit them; do them any good

34 *quick*: alive

in good works. And therefore he resembleth such a faith in a man
 unto the unprofitable faith that is in a devil. For he saith that whereas
 such a man is bold of his faith, the *devil* hath faith as well as *he*—
 for the devil doth believe such things as we believe.’ To this the man
 5 answered that some ‘right well-learned men’ were of the mind
 that without a man wrought good works—it was a good proof that he had
 no faith at all; for *very* faith could not *but* work; and that the devil
 had no faith ‘but by equivocation of this word “faith.” For the *very*
 faith, indeed, is a faith in the *promises* of *God*. And the devil is
 10 desperate, and hath not nor cannot have faith and trust in God’s
 promises.’

“Then was it answered him that those ‘right well-learned men’ were
 Luther and Tyndale, and their fellows, ‘that take themselves for
 better learned than Christ’s blessed apostles Saint Paul or Saint
 15 James—which in their holy writings affirm fully the contrary.
 And where they say that the devil hath no *faith*, but hath the *knowledge*
 of the things that we believe, and so he hath not faith... they
 affirm therein more than they may make good. For *Saint James*
 saith they “believe,” and saith not they “know.” And *he*, when he wrote
 20 it, knew much better than Luther and Tyndale too... what manner
 perceiving the devils have in the articles of our faith. In which
 as there be some whereof the devils have, peradventure, not a belief,
 but a certain and sure knowledge—as of Christ’s descent into hell,
 and despoiling of their possession—so are they, of likelihood, in any
 25 other articles of our faith whereof they have only belief and persuasion,
 without the very knowledge and science. And where those
 “well-learned men” Luther and Tyndale say that the devil hath not
 faith but by the equivocation of the word “faith”—being in deed (as
 ye say) a faith in the “promises of God”... whereby Christian men hope to
 30 come to heaven, whereas the devils “be desperate and can have no such
 faith in God’s promises, nor hope or look for heaven”—these “well-learned
 men” that so say go about to set Saint James to school. For
 they would we should ween that Saint James did speak of faith like
 one that wist not what “faith” meant... but were deceived by equivocation
 35 of the word, calling “faith” the thing that is not faith in deed; whereas
 in deed, Saint James speaketh of it as he should... and useth the
 word in its right signification, and these *Lutherans* abuse the

1 *resembleth*: likens 3 *is bold of*: presumes upon 5, 12 *right*: very
 5, 12 *well-learned*: well-educated 6 *without*: unless
 6 *it*: i.e., that; the fact that he did not do good works 10, 30 *desperate*: in despair
 13 *fellows*: cohorts 14 *better learned*: better educated; more learned
 18 *may make good*: can prove 20 *manner*: kind of 22 *as*: just as 23 *as*: such as
 24 *of likelihood*: probably // *in*: with regard to
 26 *very*: actual // *science*: cognizance 28 *being in deed*: it being actually
 28–29 *as ye say*: so you say; according to you 30 *come*: get
 32 *go . . . school*: are trying to set Saint James straight
 33 *would we should ween*: would have us think 34 *one*: someone // *wist*: knew
 34–35 *were . . . word*: made a mistake by using the word in an equivocal way
 35 *not faith in deed*: not in fact faith 36 *deed*: fact 37 *abuse*: misuse

The Lutherans deceive the people with equivocation. word—of a malicious mind to deceive unlearned people with equivocation. For whereas “faith” signifieth the belief and firm credence given... not only to such things as God promiseth...
 5 but also to every truth that he telleth his Church, by writing or without, which thing he will have us bound to believe; and whereas of truth, the devils, as Saint James saith, do believe such things and have them in a reverent dread: now would these heretics blind us with their *equivocation* by which they not only restrain
 10 the faith unto the “promises” alone, from all other articles of the faith—of which many be no promises (as to believe that there is a God, and that there be three Persons; and many such other articles)—but also abuse the word “faith” altogether, turning it slyly from belief into trust, confidence, and hope... and would have it seem as
 15 though our faith were nothing else but a sure trust and a faithful hope that we have in God’s promises. And this sophistic handling of “faith” is the thing that, as appeareth by Tyndale in his book of *Obedience*, these Lutherans ween to deceive all the world with, and to make men ween that “faith” betokeneth not belief, but
 20 hope and trust; and, so, to make men ween that Saint James wist not what “faith” meant when he laid against them that put their trust, as these Lutherans teach us, in their “only faith”... the comparison between them and devils, which believe as surely as they. And therefore, to reprove Saint James, they would make us believe that our
 25 faith were nothing but hope; whereas every man wotteth that faith and hope be two distinct virtues, and that hope *is* not faith, but *followeth* faith, in him that hath hope. For no man can hope for heaven if he believe it not. But, on the other side, he may, as the devil doth, though he believe it and know it too... yet fall far from all hope thereof. And if these Lutherans will defend their heresy by that
 30 sophistic gloss... they must then change their article and say no more that *faith* alone is sufficient, but they must say that *hope* alone is sufficient. And yet shall they then lie as loudly as they do now. For hope without charity will but beguile them.’
 35 “After such reasoning, the man said that he and the other Lutherans, when they spoke that ‘only faith’ was sufficient, they ‘mean

1 *mind*: intention 8 *have*: hold // *dread*: fear 9 *restrain*: restrict
 11 *as*: such as 18, 19, 20 *ween*: think 20 *wist*: knew 21 *laid*: set forth
 22, 36 *only faith*: faith alone 24 *reprove*: prove erroneous 25 *wotteth*: knows
 28 *believe it not*: does not believe in it // *side*: hand // *may*: can
 29 *believe*: believe in // *know*: have knowledge of 33 *loudly*: blatantly
 35 *reasoning*: argumentation 36 *spoke*: said
 388/36—389/1 *mean not of*: have in mind not

not of a *dead* faith, that is without charity and good works, but a
very faith, that is quick and worketh by charity'; and that *such* faith,
 he thought, was sufficient. But then was it answered that neither they
 nor he could mean so. For how could they call that thing 'faith
 5 only' that is joined with charity and good works? Or how can
 it stand that they mean that faith which 'by charity worketh
 good works,' when they say that it is sufficient alone *without* good
 works? And that it is, as Luther saith, 'great sin and sacrilege' to
 go about to please God by good works, and not by only faith? How
 10 could they say that 'only faith' sufficeth... if they should mean that
 without charity and good works, no faith sufficeth? For it were a
 mad thing to say that 'faith alone suffices, without good works,'
 and therewith to say that 'without good works, faith sufficeth nothing.'
 And so was it said unto him that therefore, though they color
 15 their matters when they be examined, yet it cannot be but that he and
 other Lutherans, where they sow their heresy, mean plainly as
 they speak: that folk need no more but *believe*, and then howsoever
 they live shall make no matter. For nothing, as Luther
 saith, 'can damn a Christian man, save only lack of belief.'
 20 For all other sins—if belief and faith stand fast—be quite absorbed
 and 'supped up,' he saith, in that faith.

"When this man was, with such reasoning and much better than I
 do or can rehearse you, somewhat sore pressed upon, then brought
 he forth another gloss... and said that they meant not but
 25 that faith if it should suffice for salvation... must needs have with
 it charity and good works, or else it were no *very* faith, as a dead
 man is no *very* man. Howbeit, he said that though it be nothing
 without good works, yet when it *is* joined with good works... all
 the merit cometh of our faith only, and no part thereof for our
 30 works. So that God giveth us heaven for our faith only, and nothing
 for our works. For though he give it not for our faith if we
 lack good works, yet if we have both... he regardeth not in his
 reward our works anything, but only our faith. And he said that
 for *this* cause they say that only faith causeth our salvation.

35 "To this it was answered that if this opinion were true... yet it well

2 *very*: genuine // *quick*: alive 4 *so*: that 5 *only*: alone 6 *stand*: be
 8 *saith*: puts it 9 *go about*: try 10, 34 *only faith*: faith alone
 14–15 *color their matters*: dissemble their contentions 18 *matter*: difference
 18–19 *as Luther saith*: as Luther puts it 20 *quite*: entirely
 21 *supped up*: swallowed up; consumed 22 *reasoning*: argumentation
 23 *rehearse*: repeat to 26 *very*: real // *as*: just as 27 *very*: actual
 33 *anything*: at all 35 *if*: i.e., even if // *opinion*: contention // *true*: correct
 389/35—390/1 *yet . . . appeareth*: it would still be quite obvious

- appeareth that this is not the thing that they mean. For the words of Luther and Pomeranus and *all* the archheretics of that sect be very plain. For they say that it is *sacrilege* to go about to please God by any good works but faith only. And then why should good works be
- 5 joined to faith? Or why should God exact good works of us? Whereof should they serve... if they be nothing pleasant to God? And when Luther saith that ‘nothing can damn any Christian man but only lack of belief,’ he showeth manifestly that we not only *need* no
- 10 *good* works with our faith, but also that, so we have faith, none *evil* works can *hurt* us. And so he meaneth plainly that faith *only*—without any good works joined thereto, and also with all kind of evil works joined thereto—is sufficient to save us. ‘And therefore, if ye be of his sect,’ was it said to the man, ‘ye cannot avoid but that *this is* your *very* doctrine, howsoever ye color it.’
- 15 “Then was it further asked him, if their meaning should be such as he had said, what should move him and others, his fellows, so to think—that in faith and good works joined together, the good works were nothing worth, but that *all* the merit should be in the faith, and *all* the thank and reward should be given to the faith,
- 20 and right naught to the good works.
- “Whereunto he answered that many texts of Scripture induced
- Rom 5:1; Gal 3:24* them thereto, and especially texts of Saint Paul: ‘Fides iustificat’ (‘Faith justifies’); and ‘Credidit Abraham Deo,
- Rom 4:3* et reputatum est ei ad iustitiam’ (‘Abraham
- 25 *Rom 4:2* believed God, and it was accounted in him for justice’); ‘Si ex operibus, habet quidem gloriam, sed non apud Deum’ (‘If he were justified by the works, then had he glory,
- Gal 2:21; Rom 3:24* but not with God’); ‘Si ex operibus . . . , Christus pro nobis gratis mortuus est’ (‘If we be
- 30 justified by the works, then did Christ die for us for naught’); ‘Gratis redempti estis’ (‘Ye be redeemed freely’). ‘And thereby may we see that our works were no part of the cause.’ And yet especially these words of our Savior Christ, he said, much moved them to be of
- 35 *Mk 16:16* that mind... where he saith, ‘Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit salvus erit’ (‘He

3 *go about*: attempt; try 4, 5, etc. *works*: acts 6 *nothing pleasant*: not at all pleasing
 8 *showeth manifestly*: is manifestly stating 9 *so*: so long as; provided that
 10, 12 *evil*: bad 10 *meaneth plainly*: clearly means 11 *only*: alone
 14 *avoid but*: escape the fact // *very*: actual // *color*: disguise 16 *fellows*: cohorts
 19 *thank*: credit 19, 20 *to*: for 20 *right naught*: absolutely nothing
 26–27 *accounted in him for justice*: credited to him as righteousness
 28 *were . . . had*: i.e., had been . . . would have had 31 *for naught*: for nothing; to no avail

that believeth and is baptized shall be saved')—where 'Christ requireth nothing but only faith.'

4.11

- “By all these texts, he said, it plainly appeared that *all* our salvation came of faith, as Abraham was justified by faith and *not* by his works. And that if our good works should be the cause of our salvation—‘then, as Saint Paul saith, Christ died for naught. For he needed not to die for us... if our own works might save us. Nor we were not redeemed *freely*... if we should redeem ourselves with the payment of our own works.’
- “To this was it answered that ‘those texts, and all others alleged for that purpose, signify none other but that after the faith of Christ brought into the world by the Incarnation and Passion of our Blessed Savior... men are no longer bound to the observance of Moses’ law. Nor that all the law of Moses... nor all the good works of man... were not able to save one man of themselves... nor without *faith*; and that Christ freely redeemed us. For neither had he, or ever shall have, any reward of us for the bitter pains taken in his blessed Passion for us... nor never deserved we unto him that he should so much do for us. Nor the *first* faith, nor the preaching thereof, nor the first justification of man thereby, nor the sacrament and fruit of our baptism... was not given to the world for any good works that ever the world had wrought, but only of God’s mere *Faith without good works cannot save us.* liberal goodness. But yet there is never a text of them, nor any other in all Scripture, so meant... that *after* the baptism, the “faith only” shall save us without good works... if we live, and have reason, to do them. For though it be said by the mouth of our Savior, “He that believeth shall be saved,” where he nothing speaketh of any good works, yet meaneth he not that “he that believeth” shall be saved... without good works if he live to do them. For else *Mt 19:17; Lk 10:28* why should ye not as well say that men shall be saved for keeping of the commandments without faith, since Christ saith, “If thou wilt enter into the kingdom of heaven, keep the commandments”? And saith also, “Do that and thou shalt have life.” At which time he *Lk 11:41* spoke no word of any faith. He saith also in Holy Scripture, “Date elemosinam,

6 *for naught*: for nothing; to no avail 7 *might*: could 8 *should*: i.e., have to

10 *alleged*: cited 11 *none other but*: nothing other than

11–12 *after the faith of Christ brought*: i.e., now that the Christian faith has been brought

14–16 *nor that . . . were not able to . . . nor*: i.e., and that neither . . . could . . . or

16 *freely redeemed us*: redeemed us for free

16–17 *neither . . . us*: i.e., he neither did nor ever will receive from us any recompense

18 *nor never deserved we unto him*: nor did we ever merit from him

22 *mere*: sheer 26 *faith only*: faith alone

26–27 *if . . . reason*: i.e., if we live long enough, and have enough intelligence, to be able

30 *live*: i.e., lives long enough to be able 36 *spoke no word of*: said not one word about

et omnia munda sunt vobis” (“Give alms, and all is clean in you”).

4.11

Which words if men should as largely construe for the preeminence of *almsdeed* as ye that are of Luther's sect construe the texts that speak of *faith*—they might take a false gloss and color to

5 say that without faith or penance either, or any other virtue,
almsdeed alone sufficeth for salvation, how wretchedly soever
we lead our life beside. But if we should so say of almsdeed,
we should say wrong, as ye do when ye say so of faith. For likewise
10 as it is understood that faith must needs go with good works
if they shall be fruitful... though it be not spoken of in those texts
that speak of good works: so is it understood that in them
which after baptism have time and reason to work well, good
works must walk with faith... and sorrow at heart for fault of
good works... if the faith shall aught avail them. For if both good
15 works and final repentance of the lack of good works do
fail us having time and reason to them, we be likely to fare much
the worse for our faith. And that this is thus... we may well know
by the texts of Holy Scripture if we set them together... and take
not one text for our part and set another at naught.'

20 “To this answered he that albeit that these texts set together do prove
that faith alone doth not suffice without good works (which
thing he said that himself denied not), yet he said that none of
those texts prove anything the contrary but that when faith and
good works be joined together, all the *merit* cometh, yet, of our
25 faith only. and nothing of our works.

“Whereunto he was answered that ‘though it so were indeed that no texts of Scripture proved the *contrary*, yet since there is none that saith *so*... and the whole Church saith and believeth the contrary, what reason have ye to say *so*, and to give the whole merit unto faith... and no part of the reward to good works? And now have ye much *less* reason so to do... when the plain words of Holy Writ

Gn 4:7

be, openly, to the contrary. For did not

Lk 6:38

God say to Cain, "If thou do well, thou shalt have well"? Saith not Christ of

35 them that doth alms, “A good measure shaken together, heaped,
and running over shall they give into your bosom”? Doth not our

2 *largely*: liberally 3, 6, 7 *almsdeed*: almsgiving

4–5 *might* . . . *say*: i.e., could be given a false interpretation and guise of saying

7 *beside*: otherwise // *so say of*: say that about 9 *go with*: accompany

12 *reason*: the requisite intelligence // *work*: act 13 *walk with*: accompany

13 *fault*: lack 14 *shall aught avail them*: is to be of any benefit to them

16 *us . . . them*: i.e., those of us having the time and intelligence necessary for doing them

19 *part: side* // *set another at naught: disregard another*

25 *nothing*: in no way 26 *though*: even if

Mt 25:34–36

Lord show that in the Day of Judgment
he will give the kingdom of heaven to

4.11

- them that have done alms... in meat, drink, clothes, and
lodging... because of their charity used in those deeds? Which deeds
5 though he will not reward with heaven except faith went *with*
them—yet if they *were* wrought in faith, he promiseth to reward
those *works*, and not their faith only. And that so far forth... that it
appeareth by the words of our Savior in the same places, and by
his words in which he said he would in the Day of Judgment
10 speak to them that had by faith wrought wonders in his name without
good works and charity... whom he would then bid walk
workers of wickedness, and tell them that he knoweth them not—
by these things, I say, it well appeareth... that, be a man's faith
never so great, yet if those good works fail him, his faith shall
15 fail of heaven.'
- 'Then said he yet again that faith can never be without good
works, 'but and if a man have faith, his faith shall not fail nor
cease to bring forth the fruit of good works, as the tree bringeth
forth his leaves.'
- 20 'Then was it answered him that he was driven from that point before...
as well by the authority of Saint Paul as of Saint James. And also that
he wist well that faith, or belief, is not contrary to *every* sin,
but only to infidelity and lack of belief; so that with other sins
it may stand. Then said he that if men believed 'surely,' he thought
25 they would not sin. 'For who would sin,' said he, 'if he believed verily
and surely that sin should bring him to hell?' Whereunto it was
answered, 'Whoso believed after your Lutheran faith... should never
let to sin, since Lutherans believe that no sin could damn
them but only lack of *belief*, and that no good work needeth
30 them... but that they shall be saved howsoever they live, for their
only faith. Whereby it well appeareth that ye Lutherans have but half
a faith. For ye believe God only in his "promises," and in his threats
ye believe him not at all. Howbeit, if one believed indeed surely...
as ye would now seem to believe: truth is it that it would let many a
35 man from sin... but yet not every man. For albeit that many
men there be... either the more bold in sin or the more negligent

1 *show*: say 1, 9 *in the*: on the 3 *meat*: food 4 *used*: exercised
5 *except*: unless 8 *places*: texts 11 *bid*: tell to // *walk*: depart as
13 *well appeareth*: is quite evident 14 *never so*: no matter how // *fail*: elude
15 *fail of*: i.e., fail to get him into 17 *and if*: if; provided that 18 *as*: just as
19 *his*: its 22 *wist*: knew // *contrary to*: incompatible with 23 *to*: with
24 *may stand*: i.e., can coexist 27 *whoso*: whoever // *after*: in accordance with
27 *should*: would 28 *let*: forbear 29 *needeth*: is necessary for
31 *only faith*: faith alone // *well appeareth*: is made quite evident
34 *as*: i.e., what // *let*: deter; hold back

- in good virtues... because their faith is very faint and feeble, which
 would if they had a sure and an undoubted faith be in such dread of
 God—and love, also—that it would withdraw them from sin and
 set them in the way of virtue: yet many men be there, on the
 5 other side, that, were their faith never so strong, yet should it not
 master the frowardness of their malicious appetites. And this
 would happen sometimes—and daily doth—in men not deeply
 drowned in malice... nor folk out of the faith, neither... which yet
 fall into the breach of God's commandment by the subtle suggestion
 10 *2 Cor 12:7–9* of the devil, or by the frailty
 of their own flesh. Whereof it seemeth
 that the holy Apostle was himself so sore afraid—for all his faith—
Gn 3:6 that he thrice prayed God to take the temptation
 away. I cannot see but that Adam
 15 believed the words of God... and yet he broke his commandment.
2 Sm 11:2–15 And I think that King David fell not
 from his faith, though he fell first in
 adultery and eft in manslaughter. And some examples have we seen
 of them that have sought the revenging of their own malicious
 20 minds... by such ways as they saw when they went about it their
 own undoubted death before their eyes. And therefore it is but a tale to
Faith doth not draw always say that faith draweth always good works
good works with it. with it, and that ye Lutherans, in that
 ye say that faith is sufficient “alone,
 25 without good works,” should say so because it bringeth always good
 works with it. For this were a very vain doctrine—that faith is
 alone sufficient to save them that have the use of reason, without
 good works—if in such as have the use of reason, faith be never
 without good works.’
 30 “After such objections, then fell he to another point, and said
 that if our good works and faith be joined, yet might it well
 appear by Scripture that all the merit was in our faith, and
 nothing in man's works. ‘For all the works of man,’ he said, ‘be
 stark naught, as things all spotted with sin.’ And for that he
 35 laid divers texts of Scripture, but especially, as the most
 plain proof, the words of the prophet ‘Omnis iustitia nostra velut

1, 8 *which*: who 2 *dread*: fear 3 *withdraw*: restrain
 4 *in the way*: on the path 5 *side*: hand // *never so*: no matter how
 6 *master*: overcome // *frowardness*: obstreperousness 6, 19 *malicious*: evil
 6 *appetites*: inclinations 8 *drowned*: submerged // *malice*: wickedness
 8 *out*: devoid 9 *breach*: breaking // *subtle*: insidiously sly
 9 *suggestion*: prompting 12 *the holy Apostle*: Saint Paul // *sore*: terribly
 13 *prayed*: begged 17, 18 *in*: into 18 *eft*: afterward
 18 *manslaughter*: murder 19 *revenging*: punitive upholding
 20 *minds*: attitudes 21 *tale*: fiction 26 *very vain*: really silly
 31–32 *yet might it well appear*: it yet could be clearly shown
 33 *nothing*: not at all 34 *stark naught*: utterly wicked
 35 *laid*: adduced // *divers*: several
 394/36—395/1 “*Omnis . . . menstruate*”: See Isaiah 64:5–6.

pannus menstruate.’ ‘And since that *all* our works,’ he said, ‘be spotted and sinful and naught how good soever they seem, it must needs follow that all the merit cometh of our faith.’

- 5 “To this was answered him, ‘Lo—now, by this, ye have somewhat opened yourself unawares... and declared your opinion in this matter to be far other than ye said before. For in the glosses that ye have used before, ye have always said that ye—and *all* the sect of Luther, as far as ye knew and thought—believed that faith could not save us (if we had reason) without good works, but ye said that
- 10 faith was enough “alone” because it brought of necessity good works with it. And yet all the merit and reward due to the faith only, and not to the good works that it bringeth forth. And now ye say that there *be* no *good* works at all, but all our works be stark naught. Now, if ye think that there *be* no good works, how can
- 15 ye say as ye said before—that ye think that faith always bringeth forth good works? Moreover, the words of the prophet, though it be generally spoken, may be well understood to be verified in far the most part of mankind though not of all—or of the justice of man... if it were compared with the sovereign justice of God. Or that
- 20 justice of right good men is yet sore spotted with sin, for that the frailty of our nature seldom constantly standeth any while together in good works... but that the perseverance is interrupted, often spotted, and besprent with sin. And thereof is it said,
- Prv 24:16* “Septies in die cadit iustus, et resurget”
- 25 (“Seven times in the day falleth the righteous man, and riseth again”). It may be also understood of all the righteousness of a man... alone wrought of himself and his pure
- All our only justice is all spotted.* natural powers, without the aid and help of special grace. For surely all such
- 30 justice of ours as is *only* ours... *is* all spotted, and in effect all one foul spot, for any beauty that it hath in the glorious eye of God. But surely the holy prophet never meant as Luther and his fellows would have seem... that the grace of God is in all his people so feeble of itself, and of so little force and effect, that
- 35 no man may with the help thereof be able to do one good, virtuous deed. For Luther saith plainly that no man, though he have the

2 *naught*: wicked 5 *opened yourself*: given yourself away // *declared*: shown
 5 *opinion*: stance 9 *reason*: i.e., the use of reason
 10 *brought of necessity*: necessarily brought 13–14 *stark naught*: utterly wicked
 15 *as*: i.e., what 17 *generally spoken*: said of everyone in general
 18 *far the most part*: the vast majority 18, 19, etc. *justice*: righteousness
 19 *that*: i.e., that the 20 *sore*: badly // *for that*: because
 21 *seldom . . . together*: i.e., is such that we seldom consistently continue for any length of time
 23 *besprent*: besprinkled 27 *pure*: mere 29 *special*: actual 29, 32 *surely*: assuredly
 35 *may*: can 36 *though*: even if

help of God's grace thereto, is able to keep and observe the commandments of God. Which blasphemous words seem to signify that both Saint John the Baptist and our Blessed Lady also... were sinners; and, over all this, that God were not able by the aid and help of his grace to make a man keep his commandments, and keep him out of sin, though he would.

“All the old fathers that wrote against Pelagius (which held opinion that man is of nature, or, at the leastwise, with the general influence of grace, able and sufficient to do good and meritorious works, without help of any special grace toward every good deed itself) misliked and condemned his doctrine... for that it diminished the necessity of man's recourse unto God, for calling help of his grace. But ye that hold all men's deeds for utterly naught though grace wrought with them... be double and treble more enemies to grace than they. For whereas they said we might do good sometimes without it, ye say we can at *no* time do *no* good *with* it! And then were grace, by your tale, a very void thing! Was, then, all the labor and the pain that the apostles took in preaching... all naught and sinful? All the torments that the martyrs suffered in their passion... altogether sin? All the deeds of charity that Christ shall (as himself saith!) reward with everlasting life at the general judgment—be they sin altogether? Saint Paul reckoned it

2 *Tm* 4:7–8

otherwise. For he said boldly of himself, “Bonum certamen certavi, cursum

consummavi, . . . et nunc super est mihi corona iustitiae”—“I have labored and striven a good strife, I have performed my course . . . ; now lacketh me no more for me but the crown of justice.”

“Thereunto he answered that Saint Paul would not say that our

The sufficiency of our faith is of God.

deeds were sufficient of themselves, but that all our sufficiency is of God. Whereunto it was answered that this was little

to the matter, ‘for no more is our *faith* sufficient of itself, but the sufficiency thereof is also of God, in that our Lord, with our endeavor, giveth us grace to believe—and in that it liketh our Lord,

35 *Rom* 8:18

of his goodness, so highly to reward it. For surely, as it is very true that Saint Paul

4 *over*: besides; on top of // *were not*: would not be

6 *though he would*: even if he wanted to // 7 *old*: early // *which*: who // 8 *of*: by

10–11 *every good deed itself*: each respective good deed // 11 *misliked*: disapproved of

11 *for that*: because // 12 *diminished*: sold short // *calling*: asking (the)

13, 19 *naught*: wicked // 14 *though*: even if // *wrought*: worked

14 *double and treble*: i.e., two or three times // 15 *might*: could // 17 *tale*: account

17 *very void*: really worthless // 18 *pain*: trouble // 21 *himself*: he himself

21 *saith*: See, e.g., Matthew 25:34–36. // 26 *striven a good strife*: fought a good fight

26 *performed*: completed // 30, 33 *is*: comes // *of*: from // 32 *matter*: point

34 *liketh*: pleases // 36 *surely*: assuredly // *as*: just as // *that*: what

saith, that “non sunt condignae passiones huius vitae ad futuram gloriam
 quae revelabitur in nobis” (“all that ever we can suffer in this
 world... is not worthy the glory to come, that shall be showed in us”)—
 for what thing *could* a seely, wretched creature do or suffer for God
 5 in the brief time of this short life... that might of right require to
 be rewarded everlastingly... with such inestimable joy as neither
 eye hath seen nor tongue can express, nor heart can imagine or conceive?—
 so is it also as true that all the faith we have or can have...
 can of his own nature as little, or much less, deserve heaven... as our
 10 other good deeds. For what great thing do we to God, or what
 great thing could we ask him of right, because we believe him?
 As though he were much beholden unto us... in that we vouchsafe
 to trust him! As though his worship hung in our hands—and his
 estimation lost if he were out of credence with us! And therefore,
 15 among many foolish words of Luther... as foolish as ever heretic
 spoke, he never spoke a more frantic... than in that he saith that
 God hath need of our faith. For he *saith* that God “hath no need of
 our good works, but he hath need of our faith, and hath need
 that we should believe him”! Truth is it that he needeth neither our
 20 faith nor our works. But since that he hath determined that he
 will not save us without both if we be of discretion to have both—
 therefore have *we* need of *both*. And yet neither is there the
 one nor the other, nor they both together between them, that
 be of their own nature worthy the reward of heaven. But as we see
 25 that one ounce of gold, whereof ten pounds’ weight were not of his
 own nature toward man worth one ounce of wheat, nor one
 hundred pounds’ weight thereof... of the nature itself worth one seely
 sheep, is yet among men, by a price appointed and agreed, worth
 many whole sheep, and many a pound’s weight of bread: so hath it
 30 liked the liberal goodness of God to set as well our faith as our deeds—
 Faith and good works of which were else, both twain, of their
 their own nature are little own nature, right little in value—at so
 in value. high a price... as none is able to buy them
 and pay for them but himself... because
 35 we should work them only to him, and have none other paymaster,
 nor none other chapman to sell our ware and work
 unto, but only him. Except we would be so mad, and towards

3, 24 *worthy*: deserving of 4 *seely*: poor 5 *might*: could
 5, 11 *of right*: by right 5–6 *require to be*: call for being 9, 25 *his*: its
 9 *deserve*: earn (us) 12 *vouchsafe*: deign 13 *worship*: honor
 14 *estimation*: reputation (would be) // *out of credence with*: i.e., not given credence by
 15 *words*: statements 16 *spoke a more frantic*: i.e., made a more wildly insane one
 19 *truth is it*: the truth is 21 *be of discretion*: possess enough reasoning ability
 24 *as*: just as 26 *toward man worth*: worth to man 27 *seely*: measly / frail
 29 *whole*: robust
 30 *liked the liberal goodness of God to*: pleased God, in his liberal goodness, to
 33 *none*: no one 34 *because*: in order that; so that 35 *to*: for
 36 *chapman*: purchaser 37 *except*: unless // *mad*: crazy

him so unkind, that we would sell it to another for less... rather than to him for more. As some do that had liefer travel far off and sell for less... than they would for more sell to their neighbors at home. And as do these foolish hypocrites... which rather than they would sell their work to God for everlasting joy of heaven... sell it all to the world for the peevish pleasure of the vain praise puffed out of poor mortal men's mouths with a blast of wind.'

"Unto this he said that very true it was that all our works took their value and price after the acceptation of God, and as he list to allow them. But he said that God rejected, disallowed, and set at naught all the works of infidels, wrought without faith; for 'sine fide impossibile est placere Deo' ('without faith it is impossible to please God').

"And that of his faithful chosen people, that believe and trust in him, he accepteth and alloweth *all* the deeds. 'And that is,' said he, 'well proved by the words of Saint Paul "Nihil damnationis est iis qui sunt in Christo Iesu."' And albeit that in the rehearsing of the communication

had with this man, it may well be that my remembrance may partly miss the order; partly, peradventure, add or diminish in some part of the matter—yet in *this* point, I assure you faithfully, there is no manner change or variance from his opinion, but that, after many shifts, he brought it plainly to this point at last... that he and his fellows that were of Luther's sect were firmly of this opinion: that they believed that only God worketh all in every man, good works and bad; howbeit, such as he foreknoweth to be damned, *no* manner works be profitable to them, for God taketh them for naught be they never so good; but, on the other side, in those he hath chosen from the beginning and predestined to glory, *all* works be good enough, for God accepteth and taketh them well a-worth be they never so bad.

"It was asked him then whether that the forsaking of Christ by Peter was allowed and well approved by Christ. And whether the adultery and manslaughter was by God well allowed in David.

1 *unkind*: cold 2 *had liefer*: would rather 6 *peevish*: silly 7 *blast*: whiff
 9 *after*: according to // *list*: chose 10 *allow*: appraise; take
 10 *disallowed*: discommended 10–11 *set at naught*: counted as nothing
 15 *accepteth*: i.e., regards as acceptable // *alloweth*: condones
 16–17 "*Nihil . . . Iesu*": "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
 18 *rehearsing*: relating // *communication*: conversation
 20 *miss the order*: have the order wrong
 20–21 *add . . . matter*: be adding to or subtracting from some part of the discussion
 22 *faithfully*: sincerely 22, 27 *manner*: kind of 24 *fellows*: associates
 25 *only God*: God alone 28 *naught*: bad 28, 31 *never so*: no matter how
 29 *side*: hand 31 *well a-worth*: as being quite all right with him
 33 *allowed . . . by*: condoned by and quite all right with
 34–35 *the . . . David*: in the case of David, the adultery and the murder were quite all right with God

“Whereunto he said that because they were chosen and predestined,
 therefore those sins were not... nor the sins of any such men
 be not... ‘imputed’ unto them; but God, because he hath from the
 beginning chosen them to everlasting bliss, therefore he
 5 arrecteth no blame of their deeds unto them, but all the works of
 a ‘just man’—‘that is to say,’ quoth he, ‘of a person by God predestined
 to glory’—turn him to good, how evil soever they be. And this for
 conclusion he declared to be their very plain mind and opinion...
 for all the cloaks that he had set upon the matter before, to make
 10 it seem that they meant in their words no harm. And there it
 clearly appeared... that he and his fellows which in their preaching
 do covertly and craftily set out the damnable sect of Luther...
 hope and gape always for some other time... in which they trust openly
 and boldly to play the ravenous wolves and devour the sheep and
 15 mar the whole flock. And in the mean season be content to play the
 wily foxes and worry simple souls and poor lambs... as they may catch
 them straggling from the fold—or, rather, like a false shepherd’s-dog
 that would but bark in sight, and seem to fetch in the sheep...
 and yet kill a lamb in a corner. Men speak of some that bear two
 20 *The Lutheran preachers bear* faces in one hood. I never saw any that
two faces in one hood. more verily play that pageant... than do
 this kind of such preachers. For in
 preaching to the people, they make a visage as though they came
 straight from heaven to teach them a new, better way, and more true,
 25 than the Church teacheth, or hath taught this many hundred years.
 And then to the Church, in examination, they show themselves as
 poor men of middle earth... and as though they taught none other wise
 than the Church doth. But in conclusion, when they be well
 examined... and, with much work, that falsehood of their cloaked
 30 collusion is pulled off: then appeareth there all the malicious treachery,
 and what poison they put forth under the cloak of honey. As this man
 that I tell you of... laboring all that he might, by many means, to
 make it *seem* that in preaching that faith alone was sufficient
 for our salvation, and that good works were nothing worth,
 35 had nothing intended but well and according to the doctrine

5 *arrecteth*: attributes // *blame of*: culpability for 7–8 *for conclusion*: in the end
 8 *declared*: showed 11 *fellows*: cohorts // *which*: who 12 *set out*: promote
 13 *gape*: long; hanker 15 *mar*: destroy // *mean season*: meantime
 16 *worry*: gobble up 17 *false*: duplicitous // *shepherd’s-dog*: sheepdog
 18 *in sight*: for the sake of appearance 21 *pageant*: charade
 23 *make a visage*: make themselves seem
 27 *men of middle earth*: down-to-earth men // *wise*: way
 28 *in conclusion*: in the end 32 *laboring all that he might*: trying as hard as he could

of the Church... and that he and his fellows never meant otherwise
 than the Church meaneth, yet in conclusion he plainly showed himself...
 that he and his fellows intend thereby to bring the people to
this point at last: that allthing hangeth only upon *destiny*, and
 5 that the liberty of man's will should serve of right naught;
 nor men's deeds, good or bad, made no difference before God;
 but that in his chosen people, nothing misliketh him, be it never so
 bad... and in the other sort, nothing pleaseth him, be it
 never so good—the very worst and most mischievous heresy that
 10 ever was thought upon, and thereto the most mad! For, as it
 was said unto him, if this were true, whereto preach they at all?
 And counsel any man one thing or other? What fruit could
 come of their exhortation, if all should hang upon destiny?
 There were showed unto him many things for the reproof of that
 15 unreasonable and detestable heresy... and that the texts which he
 alleged nothing made for his purpose. For as for that he alleged
 of Saint Paul, that 'there is no damnation to them that be in
 Christ Jesus'—was meant of good-faithful folk that live virtuously;
 and therefore where he saith that 'there is no damnation to them
 20 that be in Christ Jesus,' it followeth forthwith in the text, 'those that
 walk not after the flesh.' Meaning, plainly, that there is no man
 so planted in Christ Jesus... but and if he follow the fleshly ways of
 his sensual appetites, he *shall* be damned, for all his faith in Christ.
 For else it should follow, upon this false opinion—if God accept
 25 well all the works of them that are predestinated—then is sin no
 sin in them, but in the other sort only, whom God hath not
 predestinated. And then is it as much to say as no man may lawfully
 be naught, no man lawfully do theft or adultery, nor lawfully be a
 manqueller, nor lawfully forswear himself... but God's good
 30 sons and his specially chosen children.

Rom 8:28 "Now, where he alleged the words of
 Saint Paul 'Quod iustis omnia cooperantur
 in bonum' ('To a just man all things work together to his
 weal'), it was said that it meant that all the evils that men did
 35 unto them... turn them to good, and be to good men occasion of

1, 3 *fellows*: cohorts 2 *showed*: stated 3–4 *to . . . last*: ultimately to this position
 4, 13 *all(thing)*: everything // *hang(eth)*: hinge(s); depend(s)
 5 *of right naught*: for absolutely nothing 7 *misliketh*: displeases
 7, 9 *never so*: no matter how 8, 26 *sort*: set; group 9 *mischievous*: evil / harmful
 10 *upon*: of // *thereto*: also // *mad*: insane
 11 *whereto preach they*: i.e., to what purpose would they preach
 14 *showed unto*: pointed out to // *reproof*: refutation 15 *unreasonable*: irrational
 16, 31 *alleged*: cited 16 *nothing made for his purpose*: did not at all make his point
 16 *that*: what 17 *of*: from 17–18 *there . . . Jesus*: See Romans 8:1.
 17, 19 *damnation to them*: condemnation for those
 18 *was meant of*: by that was meant // *good-faithful*: right-believing
 20 *it followeth*: i.e., there follows 21 *after*: according to // *plainly*: obviously
 22 *but and if*: i.e., but that if 24 *opinion*: thesis
 25 *well*: i.e., as being all right with him 28 *naught*: wicked // *do*: commit
 29 *manqueller*: murderer // *forswear*: perjure 34 *weal*: good // *evils*: bad things

their merit—as was to Job all the torments by which the devil
 assaulted his patience; and all the pains that pagan tyrants
Sin sometimes is an occasion did unto the holy martyrs. And sometimes
of goodness. the sin in which a good man is
 5 by God's sufferance permitted to fall...
 is an occasion to him of a greater good... or of the avoiding of a
 greater sin. As the eschewing of a high spiritual pride... into
 which, peradventure, the continual course of his virtuous life
 might, by the devil's subtle suggestion, have brought him; whereas
 10 one foul act of lechery hath showed him his frailty, and instead
 of pride brought him into penance and humility—and
 make him run the faster forward in virtue... because he hath
 letted and sat still a while in sin, and therefore will he run
 forth to win again in his way that he before cast himself
 15 behind. But it was not meant that ever their sins so turned them
 to good... that they were accepted the more, and rewarded the better,
 for their evil deeds. Nor God remitteth not the sins of his
 chosen people, nor forbeareth not to impute the blame thereof unto
 20 *God accepteth men for their* them, *because* they be his chosen
merits. people—for he accepteth not folk for
 their persons, but for their merits—but
 whereas they have sinned, he punisheth as well them as others; and
 sometimes *more*, because their former good living somewhat of
 congruence deserved that they should by punishment be called again
 25 to grace, and not be for their fault so soon cast clean away; as
 some others, obdurate in malice and evil custom of sin, deserve
 to have the grace of God and his calling-on nevermore offered unto
 30 *2 Sm 12:1–18* them... and unto some it is offered that will
Lk 22:54–62 not receive it. God called on David by the
 prophet Nathan... and yet punished his
 offense. Christ looked on Peter after he had forsaken and forsworn
 35 *Mk 14:45* him... and Peter therewith took repentance.
 God looked on Judas, and kissed him,
 too... and he turned to none amendment. Now, God from the beginning,
 before the world was created, foreseeing in his divine
 prescience—or, rather, in the eternity of his Godhead presently

2 *assaulted*: tested // *pains*: tortures 3 *did unto*: inflicted on
 5 *sufferance*: refraining from preventing this 8 *peradventure*: perhaps
 9 *subtle suggestion*: insidiously sly prompting 13 *letted*: stopped
 14, 24 *again*: back 14 *in his way*: on his track // *that*: what
 16 *accepted the more*: received with the more favor 22 *whereas*: inasmuch as
 23 *living*: conduct; way of living 23–24 *of congruence*: by propriety
 24 *deserved*: merited; made them deserve 25 *fault*: transgression
 26 *malice*: wickedness // *evil custom*: bad habit 29 *receive*: accept
 31, 33 *on*: at 36 *Godhead*: divine nature
 401/36—402/1 *presently beholding*: beholding in the present

beholding—that Peter would repent and Judas would despair,
 and that the one would take hold of his grace and the other would
 reject it, accepted and chose the one and not the other; as he would
 have made the contrary choice if he had foreseen in them the contrary
 chance.”

The Twelfth Chapter

The author inveigheth against the most pestilent sect of
 these Lutherans, which ascribe our salvation and
 damnation, and all our deeds, to destiny.

10 **“But**, now, for to say (as that heretic said after all his shifts, at last)
 that all that shall be saved shall be saved only because that God from
 the beginning hath chosen them, and because of that choice all
 their deeds be good... or, if they be evil, yet God, for cause of his
 eternal choice, taketh them well in worth and imputeth no blame
 15 unto them; and that all other people whom God hath created shall
 be damned only because he would not choose them, and that all
their deeds either be naught or not well accepted... because God list
 not in the beginning to choose them; and that he worketh both in
 the one sort and in the other... all their deeds himself alone, and they
 20 do nothing therein themselves; and, so, that God, “whose goodness is
 inestimable,” doth damn so huge a number of people to intolerable
 and interminable torments only for his pleasure, and for his own
 deeds wrought in them only by himself—this false opinion is, as
 the King’s Highness most virtuously writeth in his epistle to Luther,
 25 the most abominable heresy that ever was. And surely it is so far
 against all Holy Scripture well understood, so far against all
 natural reason, so utterly subverting all virtue and all good order
 in the world, so highly blaspheming the goodness and majesty of
 Almighty God in heaven... that it is more than wonder how any man
 30 earthly that hath either one spark of wit in his head or toward
 God or man one drop of good will in his heart should not abhor
 to hear it. For this execrable heresy maketh God the cause of

4 *contrary*: opposite 5 *chance*: outcome 7 *the*: i.e., that 8 *which*: who
 10 *shifts*: evasions 13 *evil*: bad 14 *well in worth*: as quite all right
 14 *blame*: culpability 16 *would not*: did not will to 17 *naught*: bad
 17 *well accepted*: well regarded; much approved of
 17–18 *list not in the beginning*: did not in the beginning care to
 19 *sort*: set; group 21 *inestimable*: beyond all understanding
 23 *opinion*: thesis; contention 25 *surely*: certainly 26 *well*: rightly
 29 *wonder*: i.e., a wonder 29–30 *man earthly*: man on earth 30 *wit*: intelligence
 30 *abhor*: shudder 32 *maketh God*: makes God out to be

all evil; and such cruel appetite as never tyrant and tormentor
 had... ascribe they to the benign nature of Almighty God!
 For whereas our Savior Christ took upon himself all our sins...
 and of his endless pity bore the pain of them for our sake, this
 5 damnable heresy holdeth that God should be, first, so untrue
 that he should lay unto us the weight and blame of his *own* faults—
 that is to wit, the evil works which (as they say) be not wrought *by*
 us, but *in* us by *God*—and thereunto they make him so despiteous
 and cruel... that for his own deeds so done he shall have a perpetual
 10 delight and pleasure to torment us. Now turn they the treacle of
 Holy Scripture quite into poison. For this false error once taken
 for truth, whereof should all Scripture serve? Whereof should serve
 the exhortations to good works, if men neither any do nor any
 can do, neither of themselves nor with help of grace? Or, if any be
 15 done by them which be not chosen... their deeds be not accepted
 of God, because he hath not chosen their persons—whereof shall serve
 the preachings and exhortations to the faith, if the hearers have no
 liberty of their own will... by which they may, together with
 God's grace, labor to submit, and subdue the rebellion of, their
 20 reason to the obedience of faith and credence of the word of God?
 Whereof shall serve all the dehortations and comminations and
 threats in *Scripture*... by which God calleth men from sin and
 evil works, if the world were once of mind that they believed
 after Luther... that no man doth any evil deed himself, but God
 25 doth them all himself? And that every man is either chosen or
 unchosen, and if we be of the chosen sort, none evil deed can
 damn us, and if we be of the unchosen sort, no good deed can
 avail us—he that thus believeth, what careth he what he doth...
 except for the fear of temporal laws of this world? And yet if his
 30 false faith be strong, he forceth little of them also. For he shall
 think dying in his bed or on the gallows... cometh not after his
 deserving, but hangeth all upon destiny. And therefore all
 laws they set at naught. And they hold that no man is bound to
 obey any... but would be at liberty to believe what they list, and
 35 do what they list—as they say that God doth with us not what
 we deserve, but what himself list.

1 *such*: i.e., such a // *appetite*: disposition 4 *pain*: punishment
 5 *untrue*: unjust 6 *of his own faults*: for his own wrongdoings
 7, 23, etc. *evil*: bad 7, 13, 23 *works*: actions; deeds 8 *thereunto*: also
 8 *make him*: make him out to be // *despiteous*: spiteful; malevolent
 9–10 *have . . . to torment*: take . . . in tormenting 10 *treacle*: antidote
 11 *quite*: entirely // *false*: despicable // *error*: untruth
 15 *them which*: those who // *accepted*: looked upon with favor
 16 *of*: by 18 *may*: can 21 *dehortations*: dissuasions
 21 *comminations*: warnings 22 *from*: away from 24 *after*: in accord with
 26, 27 *sort*: set 30 *forceth little of*: cares little about
 31–32 *after his deserving*: according to what he deserves
 32 *hangeth all*: depends entirely 33 *bound*: obliged 34, 35 *list*: please
 36 *what himself list*: whatever he pleases

“Whereof shall *reason* serve if man had no power of himself toward the direction of his own works, but that all our works were brought forth of us without our will?—worse than the works be, indeed, out of a brute beast by the appetite of his sensual motion!

5 For ours should be, by this opinion, brought forth... as the leaves
come out of the tree, or as a stone falleth downward, and the smoke
upward, by the power of nature—so should, I say, all our deeds, good
or bad, ascend or descend by the violent hand of God, maugre our
minds. And thus the beasts be not ashamed to say... when they prove
10 hourly by their own experience in themselves... that when they
will do a thing, they do it, and when they list, they leave it. I say not
The assistance of God is by themselves alone, without God. But his
always at hand. assistance is always at hand... if we be
willing to work therewith; as the light
15 is present with the sun... if we list not willfully to shut our eyes
and wink.

“Whereof should serve all laws, and where were become all good order among men, if every misordered wretch might allege that his mischievous deed was his destiny?

20 “If free will serve for naught, and every man’s deed is his destiny,
why do these men complain upon any man? Except they will say
they do it because it is their *destiny* to do so? And why will they
then be angry with them that punish heretics... except they will
say because it is their destiny to be so? For if they will hold them
25 to their own sect, and say men do them wrong to burn them for
their heresies because it was their destiny to be heretics, they
may be then well answered with their own words... as one of their
A convenient answer sect was served in a good town in
Almaine. Which when he had robbed a
30 man and was brought before the judges, he could not deny the deed,
but he said it was his destiny to do it and therefore they might not
blame him—they answered him after his own doctrine, that if it
were his destiny to steal... and that therefore they must hold him excused,
then it was also their destiny to hang him... and therefore
35 he must as well hold them excused again. And undoubtedly

- 2, 3 *works*: actions; deeds 3 *of*: from 4 *appetite*: inclination // *his*: its
4 *motion*: impulse 5 *by*: according to // *opinion*: thesis; contention
8 *violent*: forceful 8–9 *maugre our minds*: regardless of our intentions
11 *will*: will to // *list*: choose to // *leave it*: i.e., leave it not done
15 *list not willfully*: do not willfully choose 16 *wink*: play blind
18 *misordered*: law-breaking 18, 31 *might*: could 18 *allege*: claim
19 *mischievous*: criminal 21 *complain upon*: cry out against 21, 23 *except*: unless
24–25 *hold them to their own sect*: stick to their own sectarian tenet
27–28 *as one of their sect was served*: as was done to a member of their sect
29 *Almaine*: Germany 32 *after*: in accord with 35 *again*: right back

among men these takers-away of the will may never avoid that
 answer by reason. But then fall the wretches to the desperate ways
 of devils and damned souls. Then fall they to railing and
 reprovng the justice of God, and say that himself hath wrought
 5 their evil works... and wrongfully punished them... and cruelly
 created them to wretchedness. Our mother Eve laid the weight of her
 sin to the serpent... and God was offended that she took not her
 own part to herself. But these wretches excuse themselves and the
 devils and all... and lay both their own faults and the devils' too... to
 10 the blame of Almighty God. But surely, whatso they say, they little
 care in deed of hell or of heaven... but would in *this* world live in
 lewd liberty, and have all run to riot. And since they see that they
 cannot so be suffered, nor their sect allowed, in judgment:
 they devise by all the ways they can to get so many to fall into
 15 their sort... that they may be able to turn the world upside
 down, and defend their folly and false heresy, by force. And this
What the Lutherans call "the liberty of the Gospel" they call 'the liberty of the Gospel': to be
 discharged of all order, and of all laws,
 and do what they list—which, be it good,
 20 be it bad, is (as they say) nothing but the works of God wrought in
 them. But they hope that by this means God shall for the while work
 in them many merry pastimes. Wherein if their heresy were once
 received... and the world changed thereby, they should find themselves
 sore deceived. For, the laws and orders among men with
 25 fear of punishment once taken away, there were no man so
 strong that could keep his pleasure long... but that he should find
 a stronger take it from him. But after that it were once come to that
 point, and the world once ruffled and fallen in a wildness, how
 long would it be... and what heaps of heavy mischiefs would there
 30 fall... ere that way were found to set the world in order and peace
 again?"

The Thirteenth Chapter

The author showeth his opinion concerning the
 burning of heretics... and that it is lawful, necessary, and

1 *may*: can // *avoid*: refute 4 *reprovng*: impugning
 5 *evil works*: bad deeds 6 *laid the weight of*: attributed the responsibility for
 7–8 *her own part to herself*: on herself her own share
 9–10 *lay* . . . *God*: blame on Almighty God both their own wrongdoings and the devils' too
 10–11 *little* . . . *heaven*: actually are little concerned about either hell or heaven
 11 *would*: (just) want to 12 *lewd*: base; (a) bad // *all run to riot*: everyone run wild
 13 *so be suffered*: get themselves allowed to do that // *allowed*: approved
 13 *in judgment*: by judicial means 14 *fall into*: join 15 *sort*: band; pack
 19 *list*: please 20 *as they say*: according to them 21 *the while*: the time being
 22 *merry*: enjoyable; fun 22–23 *once received*: once and for all accepted
 24 *sore deceived*: badly mistaken 28 *ruffled*: thrown into confusion
 29 *heavy mischiefs*: terrible calamities 30 *fall*: befall 33 *showeth*: states
 34 *lawful*: licit

well done; and showeth also that the *clergy* doth not procure
it... but only the good and politic provision of the
temporalty.

4.13

- “**T**he fear of these outrages and mischiefs to follow upon such sects
5 and heresies... with the *proof* that men have had in some countries
thereof... have been the cause that princes and people have been constrained
to punish heresies by terrible death; whereas else, more
easy ways had been taken with them. And therefore here will I somewhat,”
said I to your friend, “answer the points which ye moved
10 at our first meeting, when ye said that many men thought it a
hard and an uncharitable way taken by the clergy to put men
convicted of heresy sometimes to shame, sometimes to death, and that
Christ so far abhorred all such violence that he would not any of
his flock should fight in any wise, neither in the defense of themselves
15 or any others—not so much as in the defense of Christ himself...
Jn 18:10–11 for which he blamed Saint Peter—
but that we should all live after him, in sufferance
and patience; so far forth that folk thought, as ye said, that we
should not fight in defense of ourselves against the Turks and infidels.
20 These objections be soon answered. For neither doth the clergy
therein any such thing as is laid and imputed unto them... nor the
temporalty, neither. For albeit with good reason they *might*... yet
had they never in deed fallen so sore to force and violence against heretics
if the violent cruelty first used by the heretics themselves
25 against good Catholic folk had not driven good princes
thereto... for preservation not of the faith only, but also of the peace
among their people. For albeit it that forthwith upon the death of
Christ, in the beginning of the Church, many sects and heresies
began (as well appeareth by the Apocalypse, of Saint John the Evangelist,
30 and the epistles of the apostle Paul), and after, almost continually,
divers heresies sprang in divers places (as we plainly see
by the story of the Church, by the books of Saint Jerome, Saint
Augustine, Saint Eusebius, Saint Basil, Saint Ambrose, Saint

1 *well*: rightly // *showeth also*: also points out

3, 22 *temporalty*: laity; i.e., secular authorities 4 *mischiefs*: calamities

5 *proof*: experience 8 *easy*: moderate // *had*: would have

9 *moved*: brought up 11 *hard*: harsh

13–14 *any* . . . *should*: have any member of his flock 14 *wise*: way

17 *after*: like // *sufferance*: endurance 18 *patience*: forbearance

21 *laid*: (being) attributed 22 *might*: could (have done this anyway)

23 *had* . . . *to*: they in fact never would have resorted so heavily to

29 *well appeareth*: is well evidenced by // *Apocalypse*: Book of Revelation

29 *of*: (written) by 30 *after*: afterward 31 *divers*: various

32 *story*: historical records

5 paynimis would suffer the faith of Christ to be peaceably preached
 among them... and that we Christian men should therefore
 suffer, in like wise, all their sects to be preached among us... and
 violence taken away by assent on both the sides: I nothing
 10 mistrust that the faith of Christ should much more increase than
 decay. And albeit that we should find among us... that would, for
 the lewd liberty of these sects, draw to the devil—yet so should
 we find, I doubt not, among *them*... also many a *thousand* that
 15 should be content to leave that beastly pleasure and come to the faith
 of Christ; as came in the beginning to Christendom out of the
 paynimis, that lived as voluptuously as the Turks do now. But
 since violence *is* used on that part, and Christ's faith *not* there
 20 suffered to be preached and taken, he that would now suffer that
 sect to be preached or taught among Christian men, and not punish
 and destroy the doers, were a plain enemy to Christ, as he that
 were content to suffer Christ lose his worship in many souls on this
 side... without any one won in their stead on the other side. But,
 now, if violence were withdrawn on that side, then this way that ye
 25 speak of were, peradventure, between Christendom and Turkey or
 pagans, if the world were assented thereunto and could hold it,
 none evil way. For since we should nothing so much regard
 What things we ought most as the honor of God... and increasing of
 to regard the Christian faith... and winning of
 men's souls to heaven—we should seem
 30 to *dishonor* God if we mistrusted that his faith preached among
 others indifferently, without disturbance, should not be able to
 prosper. And believing that it *were*, we should hinder the profit
 if we would refuse the condition... where there be many more to be
 won to Christ on that side... than to be lost from him on this side.
 35 But yet, as for heretics rising among ourselves, and springing
 of ourselves—be in no wise to be suffered, but to be oppressed and
 overwhelmed in the beginning. For by any covenant with them...
 Christendom can nothing win. For as many as we suffer to fall
 to them, we lose from Christ; and by all them we cannot win to
 40 Christ one the more, though we won them all home again; for they
 were our own before. And yet, as I said, for all that, in the beginning—

- 1, 11 *paynims*: pagans 1 *would*: were to 1, 3, 13, 33 *suffer(ed)*: allow(ed)
1, 5, 9–10 *faith of Christ*: Christian faith 4–5 *nothing mistrust*: doubt not at all
6 *decay*: decline; wane // *that would*: those who would 7 *lewd*: bad
9, 27 *should*: would 9 *content*: willing 11 *voluptuously*: hedonistically
12 *that part*: i.e., the part of the Turks 13 *taken*: accepted
15 *the doers*: i.e., the doers of that preaching and teaching
15–16 *as he that were content*: i.e., since he would be willing 16 *suffer*: let
19, 27 *were*: would be 19 *peradventure*: perhaps 20 *hold*: stick to
21 *none evil way*: no bad way 25 *mistrusted*: feared
26 *indifferently*: on an equal footing 27 *hinder*: block; prevent
31 *of*: from // *be*: i.e., they are // *in no wise*: by no means // *suffered*: tolerated
31 *to be*: i.e., are to be // *oppressed*: suppressed 32 *overwhelmed*: overcome
32 *in the beginning*: at the outset // *covenant*: pact 35 *though*: even if

never were they by any temporal punishment of their bodies anything sharply handled... till that they began to be violent themselves.

4.13

- “We read that in the time of Saint Augustine, the great doctor of the
 5 Church, the heretics of Africa called the Donatists fell to force
 and violence, robbing, beating, tormenting, and killing
 such as they took of the true Christian flock... as the Lutherans have
 done in Almaine. For avoiding whereof, that holy man Saint
 Augustine, which long had with great patience borne and suffered
 10 their malice, only writing and preaching in the reproof of their
 errors—and had not only done them no temporal harm, but
 also had letted and resisted others that would have done it—did
 yet at the last, for the peace of good people, both suffer and
 exhort the Count Boniface and others to repress them with force
 15 and fear them with bodily punishment. Which manner of doing
 holy Saint Jerome and other virtuous fathers have in other places
 allowed. And since that time hath there upon necessity... perceived by
 great outrages committed against the peace and quiet of the people,
 in sundry places of Christendom, by heretics rising of a small
 20 beginning to a high and unruly multitude... many sore punishments
 been devised for them, and especially by fire—not only in
 Italy and Almaine, but also in Spain, and in effect in every part
 of Christendom. Among which... in England, as a good Catholic realm,
 it hath been long punished by death in the fire. And especially forasmuch
 25 as in the time of that noble prince of most famous memory
 Lord Cobham King Henry V, while the Lord
 Cobham maintained certain heresies...
 and that by the means thereof, the number so grew and increased...
 that within a while, though himself was fled into Wales, yet they
 30 assembled themselves together in a field near unto London in such
 wise and such number that the king with his nobles were fain to
 put harness on their backs for the repression of them; whereupon
 they were distressed and many put to execution; and after that, the
 Lord Cobham taken in Wales and burned in London—the king, his
 35 nobles, and his people, thereupon considering the great peril and

1 *anything*: at all 5 *fell*: resorted 6 *tormenting*: torturing
 8, 22 *Almaine*: Germany 8 *avoiding whereof*: putting a stop to which
 9 *which*: who // *suffered*: endured 10 *the reproof*: refutation
 12 *letted*: hindered // *resisted*: opposed 13 *suffer*: permit
 15 *fear*: threaten // *bodily*: corporal 16 *places*: texts
 17 *allowed*: expressed approval of 20 *sore*: severe
 21 *especially*: in particular 22 *in effect in*: in practically 26 *while*: when
 31–32 *were . . . them*: i.e., had to put on armor in order to suppress them
 33 *distressed*: routed 34 *taken*: arrested

jeopardy that the realm was likely to have fallen in by those heresies,
made at a parliament very good and substantial provisions,
beside all such as were made before, as well for the withstanding
as the repressing and grievous punishment of any such as should
5 be found faulty thereof... and by the clergy left unto the secular
hands.

“For here ye shall understand that it is not the clergy that laboreth
to have them punished by death. Well may it be that, as we be
all men and not angels, some of them may have sometimes either
10 over-fervent mind or indiscreet zeal... or, percase, an angry and a
cruel heart, by which they may offend God in the selfsame deed
whereof they should else greatly merit. But surely the order of the
spiritual law therein is both good, reasonable, piteous, and
charitable... and nothing desiring the death of any man therein.
15 For at the first fault, he is abjured, forsweareth all heresies, doth
The order of the ecclesiastical such penance for his fault as the bishop
laws against heretics assigneth him... and is, in such wise,
graciously received again into the favor
and suffrages of Christ’s church. But and if he be taken eftsoons with
20 the same crime again... then is he put out of the Christian flock by
excommunication. And because that being such, his conversation
were perilous among Christian men, the Church refuseth him... and
thereof the clergy giveth knowledge to the temporalty—not exhorting
the prince, or any man else, either to kill him or punish him;
25 but only in the presence of the temporal officer, the spirituality
not *delivereth* him but *leaveth* him to the secular hand... and
forsaketh him as one excommunicated and removed out of the
Christian flock. And though the Church be not light and sudden in
receiving him again, yet at the time of his death, upon his
30 request with tokens of repentance, he is absolved and received
again.”

The Fourteenth Chapter

The author somewhat showeth that the clergy doth no
wrong in leaving heretics to secular hand... though their
35 death follow thereon. And he showeth also that it is lawful to
resist the Turk and such other infidels—and that princes be
bound thereto.

3 *beside*: additional to // *withstanding*: counteracting 4 *grievous*: severe 5 *faulty*: guilty
6, 26 *hand(s)*: authorities 10 *over-fervent mind*: too hot a head // *indiscreet*: injudicious
12 *surely*: certainly // *order*: procedure 13 *spiritual*: Church // *piteous*: merciful
15 *at . . . fault*: after a first offense 16 *fault*: offense 18, 30–31 *received again*: taken back
19 *suffrages*: intercessory prayers // *but . . . with*: but if afterward he is caught committing
21 *conversation*: intermingling 22 *were*: would be // *refuseth*: washes its hands of
23 *temporalty*: civil authorities 25 *spirituality*: clergy 28 *sudden*: hasty 30 *tokens*: signs
33 *showeth*: explains how it is 34 *secular hand*: the civil authorities 35 *lawful*: licit
36–37 *princes . . . thereto*: rulers are obligated to do so

“**M**arry,” quoth your friend, “but as me thinketh, the bishop doth as much as though he killeth him... when he leaveth him to the secular hand in such time and place... as he wotteth well he shall soon be burned.”

5 “I will not here enter into the question,” quoth I, “whether a priest might for any cause—and if for any, whether, then, for heresy—without blame of irregularity put or command any man to death... either by express words or under the general name of right and justice. In which matter I could not lack both reason, authority, and
10 example of holy men. But in this matter that we have in hand, it is sufficient that the bishop neither doth it nor commandeth it. For I think there will no reason bear it that when the heretic if he went abroad would with the spreading of his error infect other folk... the bishop should have such pity upon him... that he should,
15 rather than other men should punish his body, suffer him to kill other men’s souls.

“Indeed,” quoth I, “there be some, as ye say, that, either of high pretended pity or of a feigned observance of the counsels of Christ, would that no man should punish any heretic, or infidel either—
20 not though they invaded us and did us all the harm they possibly could. And in this opinion is Luther, and his followers; which among their other heresies hold for a plain conclusion... that it is not lawful to any Christian man to fight against the Turk, or to make against him any resistance, though he come into Christendom with
25 a great army and labor to destroy all. For they say that all Christian men are bound to the counsels of Christ, by which they say that we be forbidden to defend ourselves; and that Saint Peter was, as ye rehearsed, reprov’d of our Savior when he struck off Malchus’s ear, albeit that he did it in the defense of his own master... and the
30 most innocent man that ever was. And unto this they lay, as ye said in the beginning, that since the time that Christian men first fell to fighting... it hath never increased, but always diminished and decayed; so that at this day the Turk hath estraisted us very near... and brought it in within a right narrow compass; and narrower
35 shall do, say they, as long as we go about to defend Christendom by

1 *marry*: indeed // *as me thinketh*: as I see it 3 *hand*: authorities

3 *wotteth*: knows 6 *might*: could 7 *blame*: being guilty

12 *no reason bear it*: no right thinking have it

13 *went abroad*: went out there; was at large 15 *suffer*: allow

17 *high*: (a) lofty // *pretended*: professed 20, 24 *though*: even if

23 *lawful to*: licit for 25 *labor*: try // *all*: everyone

27–30: See John 18:10–11. 28 *rehearsed*: mentioned // *of*: by

30 *unto*: in connection with // *lay*: allege 32 *it*: i.e., Christendom

33 *decayed*: declined; deteriorated

33 *estraisted* . . . *near*: very tightly restricted us

the sword. Which they say *should* be, as it was in the beginning increased, so be continued and preserved—only by patience and martyrdom. Thus holily speak these godly fathers of Luther’s sect, laboring to procure that no man should withstand the Turk, but
 5 let him win all. And when it should come to that—then would they, as it seemeth, win all again by their patience, high virtues, and martyrdom... by which now they cannot suffer to resist their beastly voluptuousness, but break their vows, and take them harlots under the name of wives; and whereas they may not fight
 10 against the Turk, arise up in great plumps to fight against their even Christian. It is, I trow, no great mastery to perceive whom they labor to please, that have that opinion. And if the Turk happen to come in, it is little doubt whose part they will take; and that Christian people be likely to find none so cruel Turks as them. It is a
 15 gentle holiness to abstain for devotion from resisting the Turk... and in the meanwhile to rise up in routs and fight against Christian men, and destroy, as that sect hath done, many a good religious house; despoiled, maimed, and slain many a good, virtuous man; robbed, polluted, and pulled down many a goodly
 20 church of Christ.
 “And now, where they lay for a proof that God were not contented with battle made against infidels... the losses and diminishment of Christendom since that guise began, they fare as did once an old,
 25 *A consultation about* sage father-fool in Kent at such time as
Sandwich Haven divers men of worship assembled old
 folk of the country to commune and
 devise about the amendment of Sandwich Haven. At which time as they began first to ensearch by reason, and by the report of old men thereabout, what thing had been the occasion that so good
 30 a haven was in so few years so sore decayed, and such sands risen, and such shallow flats made therewith, that right small vessels had now much work to come in at divers tides... where great ships were within few years past accustomed to ride without difficulty; and some laying the fault to Goodwin Sands,
 35 some to the lands inned by divers owners in the Isle of Thanet out of the Channel, ‘in which the sea was wont to compass the Isle and bring

2, 6 *patience*: forbearance 4 *laboring*: endeavoring // *withstand*: resist
 5, 6 *all*: everything 6 *again*: back 7 *suffer*: manage
 8 *voluptuousness*: sensuality // *them*: to themselves 10 *great plumps*: large bands
 11 *even*: fellow // *trow*: trust // *mastery*: difficult achievement
 12 *labor*: are trying // *have that opinion*: take that stance 13 *part*: side
 15 *gentle*: noble // *for devotion*: out of piety 16 *routs*: rabbles; mobs
 18 *religious house*: i.e., monastery or convent 19 *polluted*: desecrated
 19 *pulled down*: demolished 21 *lay*: put forth
 21 *were not contented*: would not be pleased 23 *guise*: practice
 23 *fare*: act; behave 25 *divers*: several // *worship*: distinction 26 *country*: area
 27 *devise*: confer // *amendment*: restoration 27, 30 *haven*: harbor
 28 *ensearch*: investigate // *reason*: discussion 30 *sore decayed*: badly deteriorated
 31 *flats*: sandbars 32 *divers tides*: i.e., any kind of tide 35 *inned*: reclaimed
 35 *divers*: various // *in*: into

the vessels round about it'; 'whose course at the ebb was wont to scour the haven; which now, the sea excluded thence, for lack of such course and scouring is choked up with sand'—as they thus alleged, diverse men, diverse causes, there started up one good old father and said, 'Ye masters, say every man what he will, ch'a marked this matter well as some other; and by God, I wot how it waxed naught well enough. For I knew it good... and have marked, so ch'ave, when it began to wax worse.' 'And what hath hurt it, good father?' quoth these gentlemen. 'By my faith, masters,' quoth he, 'yonder same Tenterden steeple, and nothing else! That, by the Mass, ch'ould 'twere a fair fish pole!'

"Why hath the steeple hurt the haven, good father?" quoth they. 'Nay, by our Lady, masters,' quoth he, 'ich cannot tell you well *why*; but ch'ot well it *hath*. For by God, I knew it a good haven till that steeple was built. And by the Mary Mass—ch'a marked it well—it never throve since!'

"And thus wisely speak these holy Lutherans, which, sowing schisms and seditions among Christian people, lay the loss thereof to the withstanding of the Turk's invasion, and the resisting of his malice; whereas they should, rather, if they had any reason in their heads... lay it to the contrary. For when Christian princes did their devoir against miscreants and infidels—there be stories and monuments enough that witness the manifest aid and
The cause why the Turk help of God in great victories given to
doth prosper against good Christian princes by his almighty
Christendom hand. But, on the other side, since that the ambition of Christian rulers desiring each other's dominion... have set them at war and deadly dissension among *themselves*; whereby, while each hath aspired to the enhancing of his own, they have little forced what came of the common corps of Christendom: God, for the revenging of their inordinate appetites, hath withdrawn his help and showed that he careth as little; suffering, while each of them laboreth to eat up other, the Turk to prosper and so far forth to proceed... that if their blind affections look not thereto

2, 12, 14 *haven*: harbor 2 *excluded thence*: (being) shut out from there

4 *diverse*: different

5, 15 *ch'a*: I've. (*Ch'* is a contracted form of "ich," the German word for "I.")

6 *some other*: i.e., anyone else // *wot*: know 6–7 *waxed naught*: went bad

8 *ch'ave*: I have // *wax worse*: get less good 11 *ch'ould*: I wish

11 *fair fish pole*: nice big fishing pole 12, 13 *why*: i.e., how

14 *ch'ot*: I know 15 *the Mary Mass*: the Mass in honor of our Lady

16 *throve*: did well 17 *thus wisely*: that intelligently // *which*: who

18–19, 21 *lay . . . to*: blame . . . on 19 *withstanding*: fending off

20 *reason*: sense 22 *their devoir*: their duty / what they could

22 *miscreants*: unbelievers // *stories*: historical records 26 *side*: hand

29 *enhancing*: aggrandizing 30 *forced*: cared // *came*: became

31 *revenging*: punishing 32 *suffering*: allowing 34 *affections*: passions

the sooner, he shall not fail (which our Lord forbid!) within
short process to swallow them all.

4.14

Mt 26:52–54; Jn 18:10–11

“And albeit Christ forbade Saint Peter

(being a priest... and, under himself,

5 prince of his priests) to fight with the temporal sword... toward the
impeachment and resistance of his fruitful Passion, whereupon
depended the salvation of mankind; which affection our Savior
had before that time so sore reprov'd and rebuked in him... that he

Mt 16:23

called him therefor Satan: yet is it

10 nothing to the purpose to allege that
by that example *temporal* princes should, without the let of such
spiritual profit and the sufferance of much spiritual harm,
suffer their people to be invaded and oppressed by infidels... to
their utter undoing not only temporal, but also, of a great part,
15 perpetual... which were likely of their frailty, for fear of worldly
grief and incommodity, to fall from the faith and renay their
baptism.

“In which peril since our Lord would not that any man should
willfully put himself (and for that cause advised his disciples that
20 if they were pursued in one city, they should not come forth

Mt 10:23

and foolhardily put themselves in peril of
renaying Christ by impatience of some

intolerable torments, but rather, flee thence into some other place
where they might serve him in quiet... till he should suffer them to
25 fall in such point that there were no way to escape; and then
would he have them abide by their tackling like mighty champions,

*Christ's exhortation to
every man*

wherein they shall not, in such case,
fail of his help)—now, albeit so that Christ
and his holy apostles exhort every

30 man to patience and sufferance... without requiting of an evil
deed, or making any defense, but using *further* sufferance... and
doing also good for evil—yet neither doth this counsel bind a
man that he shall of necessity, against the common nature, suffer
another man causeless to kill him... nor letteth not any man from the
35 defense of another... whom he seeth innocent and invaded and
oppressed by malice. In which case both nature, reason, and

2 *short process*: a short amount of time // *swallow*: do away with 6 *impeachment*: hindrance

7 *affection*: propensity 8 *sore*: severely 9 *therefor Satan*: Satan for it

10 *nothing to the purpose*: not at all on-target 11 *by*: in accord with // *temporal princes*: civil rulers

11–12 *without . . . harm*: i.e., not with an eye to such spiritual profit but with an allowing of much spiritual
harm 13, 24, 33 *suffer*: allow 13–15 *to their . . . were*: i.e., to the . . . of those who would be

14 *of a great part*: for a great many 15 *worldly*: earthly 16 *grief*: hardship

16 *incommodity*: discomfort // *fall*: fall away // *renay*: renounce

18 *would . . . should*: would not have anyone 19 *willfully*: deliberately 20 *pursued*: persecuted

20 *forth*: forward 22 *renaying*: denying // *by . . . of*: because of inability to endure

23 *torments*: tortures // *flee thence*: should flee from there 24 *might*: could // *quiet*: peace

25 *fall . . . that*: get into a spot from which 26 *abide by their tackling*: stand their ground

30 *patience*: forbearance // *sufferance*: endurance

31 *using . . . sufferance*: i.e., taking endurance even further 32 *doing also*: i.e., even returning

33 *the common nature*: i.e., human nature 34 *letteth nor*: i.e., is meant to deter

God's behest bindeth... first, the prince, to the safeguard of his people with the peril of himself (as he taught Moses to know himself

Ex 2:11-12

bound to kill the Egyptians in the defense of Hebrews), and after, he bindeth

5 every man to the help and defense of his good and harmless neighbor... against the malice and cruelty of the wrongdoer. For as the Holy

Sir 17:14

Scripture saith, 'Unicuique dedit Deus curam de proximo suo'; 'God hath given

10 every man charge of his neighbor'... to keep him from harm of body and soul, as much as may lie in his power.

"And by this reason is not only excusable but also *commendable*... the common war which every people taketh in the defense of their country against enemies that would invade it, since that every man fighteth not for the defense of himself of a private affection to himself, but of a Christian charity... for the safeguard and preservation of all others. Which reason, as it hath place in *all* battle of defense, so hath it most especially in the battle by which we defend the Christian countries against the Turks, in that we defend each other from far the more peril and loss... both of worldly substance, bodily hurt, and perdition of men's souls. And, now, if this be lawful and enjoined also to every private person, how much more belongeth it to princes and rulers? Which if they may not, upon the peril of their souls, wittingly suffer among the people whom they have in governance any one to take away another's *horse*, how may they without eternal damnation suffer other people, and especially infidels, to come in, spoil and rob... and captivate them all? And if they be bound to the defense and may not do it alone, what madness were it to say that the people may not help them!"

The Fifteenth Chapter

30 That princes be bound to punish heretics... and that fair handling helpeth little with many of them.

“**A**nd surely as the princes be bound that they shall not suffer their people by infidels to be invaded, so be they as deeply bound that

2 *with the peril*: (even) at the risk 5 *harmless*: innocent 11 *by*: for

12 *common*: communal

14 *of a private affection to*: out of a personal regard for; just out of a concern for

16 *reason*: consideration 20 *lawful* . . . *to*: i.e., licit and obligatory also for

21 *private person*: i.e., private citizen 23 *wittingly*: knowingly

23-24 *suffer among* . . . *any one to take*: allow it to happen . . . that any one of them takes

24 *may*: can 25 *without*: i.e., without calling down on themselves

25, 32 *suffer*: allow 26 *spoil*: kill // *captivate*: enslave 27 *may not*: cannot

27 *alone*: by themselves 28 *were it*: would it be 30, 32, 33 *bound*: obligated

31 *fair handling*: nice treatment

they shall not suffer their people to be seduced and corrupted by
heretics, since the peril shall in short while grow to as great—
both with men's souls withdrawn from God... and their goods
lost... and their bodies destroyed, by common sedition, insurrection,
5 and open war, within the bowels of their own land. All which
may in the beginning be right easily avoided... by punishment
of those few that be the first. Which few well repressed... or, if
need so require, utterly pulled up... there shall far the fewer have
lust to follow. For if they were handled in a contrary manner... and,
10 as ye seemed to mean in the beginning of our matter, instead of
punishment... entreated, favored, and by fair words and
rewards brought home again, I fear me then that you should find
little fruit in that fashion. For, first, whereas they fall into heresy by
pride—that way should make them prouder... and set the more by
15 themselves. And then would many more fall thereto... of purpose to be
hired again therefrom. So that as Mamluks and Janissaries about
the Turk and sultan have used to christen their children of purpose
that by the renaying of their faith after, they might be made
Mamluks or Janissaries as their fathers were... and may be had
20 the more in estimation and favor about the great Turk: even
likewise, within a while, if we take that way with heretics, we shall
have young fresh fellows first become heretics... that they may be
prayed and hired after to come to Christ's faith again. I would
not they were over-hastily handled, but little rigor and much
25 mercy showed where simpleness appeared, and not high heart or
malice. For of such as be proud and malicious... much proof hath
been made already. For of some sort, many full fair handled...
little change themselves or come to good amendment. I told you
myself, and very true it was, of twain that were detected of
30 heresy unto the most honorable prelate of this realm, and in
what benign, fatherly manner, and liberal also, he dealt with them.
And yet what amendment made his genteel and courteous entreaty
in their stubborn stomach? Were they not after worse than they were
before? And so used themselves that after much harm done by them...
35 they came in short space after to their open conviction? They be,

4 *common*: general 8 *pulled up*: rooted out 8–9 *have lust*: be inclined
10 *mean*: have in mind // *in*: at // *matter*: discussion 11 *favored*: treated kindly
11 *fair*: nice 12 *home again*: back around // *I fear me*: I'm afraid
12, 14 *should*: would 13 *fruit*: advantage // *fashion*: approach
13 *whereas*: given that // *by*: through 14 *set the more by*: think the more of
15 *of purpose to be*: for the purpose of being 16, 23 *hired*: bribed 16 *again*: back
16 *as*: just as // *about*: around 17 *used*... *purpose*: made a practice of having their
children baptized for the purpose 18 *renaying*: renouncing // *they*: i.e., these children
19 *had*: held 20 *estimation*: esteem 22 *fresh*: enterprising 23 *prayed*: entreated
23 *come to Christ's faith again*: come back to the Christian faith
24 *they*... *handled*: have them treated with too much hostility // *rigor*: severity
25 *where simpleness appeared*: i.e., where the problem seemed to be gullibility
25 *high*: proud 26–27 *proof*... *already*: much has already been found out by experience
27 *some sort*: a certain type // *full fair handled*: treated very nicely
29 *detected*: accused 31 *liberal*: generous 33 *stomach*: heart(s)
34 *used*: conducted 35 *in short space after*: a short time later // *open*: public

- ye wot well, at the first, customably, received to grace; and verily,
for such merits... forgiveness is reward enough. And if they
cannot by that warning be warned—surely, as Saint Paul saith,
he is not to be trusted often, but rather of all good Christian people
5 to be eschewed and avoided from the flock. For they be so far
'waxen crooked' that seldom can they be righted again."
"Forsooth," quoth your friend. "Yet, as I said at my first coming to you,
were I worthy to be of counsel with the clergy when there were a
man found faulty therein... whom the people have in good
10 estimation for some great opinion of learning and virtue—they
should be secretly and soberly admonished, and not the matter
published among the people. And finally if they so should needs be
openly convicted and corrected in face of the world—then would
I not, yet, have them called 'Lutherans,' lest the people which had
15 good opinion of them... may peradventure like Luther the better
for them; or, if they happen to perceive them for naught, and so take
them, then shall they peradventure give the less credence to all
good men, and set the less by all *good* preachers, after."
"Surely," quoth I, "certain rule that were always best... were hard to
20 give in such case. Sometimes there may, peradventure, such honesty
be joined with such repentance... that it would not be much
amiss to preserve the man's estimation among the people, to
whom his perfect change may, percase, more than recompense his
former error and oversight. But whereas the contrary shall seem
25 *An old usage* convenient—*there* can I not see why we
should forbear to call them 'Lutherans,'
since it is both an old usage to call heretics after the name of him
whom they follow in their heresy... and also, as Luther's sect is, in
effect, the whole heap of all heresies gathered together, it is now
30 all one to call him a 'Lutheran' or to call him a 'heretic,' those
two words being in manner equivalent, Luther teaching almost
nothing *but* heresies... nor no heresies found anywhere, almost,
that the Lutherans have not among them. And since it so is,
reason doth, in my mind, require that the name of 'Lutherans'

1 *wot*: know // *at the first*: i.e., after a first offense // *customably*: ordinarily
3 *be warned*: take warning 3–6: See Titus 3:10–11. 5 *avoided*: banished
6 *waxen*: become // *crooked*: twisted; warped 8 *of counsel with*: consulted by
9 *faulty therein*: i.e., guilty of heresy
9–10 *have in good estimation*: hold in high regard
10 *for some great opinion of*: because of some great reputation for
11 *secretly*: privately 12 *published*: publicized 13 *openly*: publicly
13 *corrected*: punished // *face*: front 15, 17, 20 *peradventure*: perhaps
16 *for them*: on account of them // *for naught*: as wicked
18 *set the less by*: think the less of // *after*: thereafter
19 *surely*: to be sure; of course // *were*: would be 20 *honesty*: honorableness
22 *estimation*: reputation 23 *percase*: perchance // *recompense*: make up for
24 *oversight*: mistake // *whereas*: wherever 25 *convenient*: appropriate
27 *usage*: custom 28 *as*: since 30 *all one*: one and the same
31 *in manner*: practically; just about 34 *mind*: opinion
417/34—418/1 *require that . . . should*: call for . . . to

should be customably brought in men's ears as odious as the name
of 'heretics.' Nor I see not so great fear that either folk shall for opinion
of any man's virtue in whom they see themselves deceived...
withdraw their favor and affection from such as are good indeed...

4.15

- 5 or fall into the favor of Luther's sect for the estimation of the
man whom they now see proved naught. For this will no man do but
such as either be so foolish that they would hate all Christ's apostles
for the falsehood of Judas... or so naughty that they would fain have all the
world fall to the same sect and be of their own suit."

10 *The Sixteenth Chapter*

Of simple, unlearned folk that are deceived by the great good
opinion that they have, percase, in the learning and living of
some that teach them errors.

- 15 "Forsooth," quoth your friend. "Yet would there, methinketh, be much
pity used in those matters among. For many a man unlearned,
when he heareth one that he taketh for cunning... and seeth such a
man as he taketh for virtuous... commend Luther's way, he
is, of simpleness and good mind, moved to follow the same."

- 20 "Surely," quoth I, "therein I say not nay, but that these things *being*
such, great *pity* it is to see many good simple souls deceived and
led out of the right way by the authority of such as they reckon for
good men and cunning... whom they have, either by open sermons
or secret communication, perceived to be favorers of that
ungracious sect; thinking that men of such cunning and
25 knowledge in Scripture... being therewith of such virtuous behavior
as they seem to be... would never lean to that way but if they knew
it for good. And surely where it so happeneth that any simple soul
is by the good opinion that he hath in his master led out of the
right belief of the faith, weening *that* were the *very* faith...
30 which he seeth his master (whom he reckoneth good and cunning)
follow and lean unto—it is a very piteous thing. And as that person
is less in blame, and more easily cured—so is that master doubly
damned, as the cause both of his own sin and his that followeth

1 *be . . . ears*: be made by custom to sound

3 *in . . . deceived*: about . . . to have been wrong 5 *for . . . of*: because of their regard for

6, 8 *naught(y)*: (to be) wicked 8 *for falsehood*: on account of the treachery // *fain*: like to

8–9 *all the world*: everyone in the world 9 *fall to the*: join that // *suit*: sort

11 *of*: about // *deceived*: led astray 12 *percase*: perchance // *in*: regarding

12 *living*: way of living; personal conduct 14–15 *would . . . among*: I would think a lot of
pity should be shown now and then in those inquiries 16 *one*: someone

16, 22, 30 *cunning*: knowledgeable 18 *mind*: attitude 19 *surely*: assuredly

22 *open*: public 23 *secret communication*: private conversation 24 *ungracious*: ungodly

24 *cunning*: erudition 26, 31 *lean (un)to*: favor; subscribe to 26 *but if*: unless

27 *surely*: certainly 28 *in*: of 28, 30, 32 *master*: teacher 29 *weening*: thinking

29 *very*: true 30 *reckoneth*: believes to be 31 *piteous*: sad; lamentable

32 *in blame*: blameworthy 33 *his that followeth*: that of the one who is following

- God for our sin doth suffer* him; and very hard is he to mend. 4.16
evil teachers. Howbeit, sometimes we deserve with our
 sin that God for the punishment thereof...
 suffereth us to have lewd leaders and evil teachers. And surely, for the
 5 more part, such as be led out of the right way... do rather fall
 thereto of a lewd lightness of their own mind... than for any
 great thing that moveth them in their master that teacheth
 them. For we see them as ready to believe a purser, a glover, or a weaver,
 that nothing can do but scanty read English, as they would be
 10 to believe the wisest and the best-learned doctor in a realm. Howbeit,
 be a man never so well-learned, and seem he never so virtuous,
 yet can we with no reason excuse ourselves... if we leave the right belief
 for the trust that we have in any man earthly. For our belief is
 taught us by God surely planted in the church of Christ; and the
 15 articles thereof not newly begun, but now continued many a
 hundred years in the great congregation of Christian people, as things
 certain, sure, and stable, and out of all question—which no
 heretic doth or can deny—and in the hearts of this congregation
 be they written by the holy handwork of God. And therefore accursed
 20 is he that through his trust put in any man... believeth the contrary
 of any point that the church of Christ is taught to believe by God.
 “This faith was taught by Christ, preached by his apostles; of this
 wrote his evangelists; and many more things were taught than are
 written. And this faith should have been taught and firmly stood...
 25 although nothing had been written. And the articles of this faith
 had in men’s hearts... be the just and sure rules of construction by
 which we construe and understand the Holy Scripture that is written.
The sure rules whereby Holy For very sure are we that whoso would
Scripture is understood construe any text of Holy Scripture in
 30 such wise as he would make it seem
 contrary to any point of this Catholic faith which God hath
 taught his Church, he giveth the Scripture a wrong sentence... and
Gal 1:8–9 thereby teacheth a wrong belief. And, as
 Saint Paul saith, accursed be he and though
 35 he were an angel of heaven. And therefore be we not excusable if we

4 *suffereth*: allows // *lewd*: sorry // *evil*: bad 5 *more*: most 6 *lewd*: bad
 8 *purser*: purse-maker // *glover*: glovemaker 9 *scantly*: barely
 10 *wisest*: most intelligent // *best-learned*: best-educated // *doctor*: scholar
 11 *never so*: no matter how // *well-learned*: well-educated 12 *reason*: rationality
 17 *out of*: beyond 24 *should*: would // *firmly*: i.e., have firmly
 25 *although*: even if // *nothing had been written*: i.e., none of it had been put in writing
 26 *construction*: interpretation 32 *sentence*: meaning 34 *and though*: even if

believe *any* man to the contrary of the faith, how good or how cunning soever he seem, while we see that he teacheth us a wrong way; which we may soon know if we be good Christians and know the belief already.

5 “And we may have also a great guess thereat... if he teach us secretly, as a privy mystery, the doctrine that he would not were uttered and showed openly. For such things be they, commonly, that these heretics teach in hugger-mugger—against the faith that all the

Good counsel Church believeth. Now would I give
10 this counsel to every unlearned man:

When any man so teacheth thee whom thou hast in great estimation for virtue or cunning, then consider in thyself that he neither hath more virtue nor more cunning... than had Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Saint Ambrose, Saint Gregory, Saint Cyprian,
15 Saint Chrysostom, with *many* old fathers and holy doctors, which believed all their days, and died in, the belief that thou believest already, whereof he teacheth the contrary. And so say boldly to him. But then if he would beguile thee... and say that those holy doctors believed not as thou dost, but as he saith: bring him
20 to the reckoning before some other good and well-learned men. And I dare be bold to warrant that thou shalt find him doubly false. For neither shalt thou find it true that he told thee... and, besides that, he shall not let to belie thee, saying—and swearing, too—that thou sayest wrong on him... and that he never told thee so.”

25 “Marry, sir,” quoth your friend, “he will haply say that he were peradventure in that point to be pardoned... because of the jeopardy that he might fall into by the maintenance of his opinion.”

“Pardon him if ye will,” quoth I. “But yet is he not then so good as were those good fathers. For either is his way naught—and then doth he
30 naught to teach it—or, if it be good, then is *he* naught... that for any fear forsaketh it. For he that forsaketh any truth of Christ’s faith...

2 *cunning*: knowledgeable // *while*: when 3, 5 *may*: can 6 *privy*: confidential
6 *would not were*: does not want // *uttered*: let out 7 *showed*: stated
8 *hugger-mugger*: a hush-hush way 11 *hast in great estimation*: hold in high regard
12, 13 *cunning*: erudition 15 *old*: early 15, 19 *holy doctors*: theologians
16 *which*: who 18 *beguile*: (try to) trick 20 *good and*: quite
20 *well-learned*: well-educated 21 *be bold to warrant*: venture to guarantee
21 *false*: untruthful 23 *let*: scruple; hesitate // *belie*: slander
24 *sayest wrong on him*: are reporting him wrongly // *so*: that 25 *marry*: well
25 *haply*: perhaps // *peradventure*: maybe 27 *might*: could
27 *by . . . of*: i.e., by admitting to and standing by 29, 30 *naught*: bad(ly)
31 *forsaketh*: denies

Lk 12:2

forsaketh Christ. And then saith our
Savior that whoso doth... shall be
forsaken of him. And he that so doth is not to be believed like those
holy fathers which have taught us far the contrary. For they did
5 abide by the right faith that they taught—which is, as by their
books appeareth, the selfsame faith that we believe. And so far
forth abide they thereby... that divers of them sustained great
persecution therefor—and some of them death and martyrdom. So
that we were more than mad if we had not liefer send our
10 souls to the souls of those holy fathers... of whose cunning,
virtue, and salvation we be sure... than to cast them away
with these folk which, how holy soever they seem, yet
show themselves naught... in that they teach the contrary of such
things as those undoubted holy doctors taught.”

15 “I marvel, then,” quoth your friend, “why they live so virtuously—
fasting, and giving their good in alms, with other virtuous
exercises... both in forbearing the pleasure of the world... and also
taking pain in their bodies.”

20 *Mt 7:15* “To this matter,” quoth I, “our Savior himself answereth where he
saith (in the Gospel of Matthew), ‘Attendite
a falsis prophetis, qui veniunt ad vos in
vestimentis ovium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces’ (‘Beware of
the false prophets, that come to you in the clothing of sheep... and yet
withinthin be ravenous wolves’). For since that they by false
25 doctrine labor to devour and destroy men’s souls, we be sure
enough that wolves they be indeed, how sheepishly soever they
look. And hypocrites must they needs be... since they be so denounced
by God’s own mouth. And well may we perceive that he meaneth
not well... when he teacheth evil. And that evil he teacheth we
30 may well wit... when we see him teach the contrary of that which God
hath already taught his whole Church. In which hath been so many
holy fathers, so many cunning doctors, and so many blessed
martyrs... that so have abided by the faith to the death... that it were

- 1 *forsaketh*: denies; rejects 3 *forsaken*: rejected; disowned // *of*: by
4 *which*: who 5–6 *as by their books appeareth*: as is evident from their books
7 *divers*: several 8 *therefor*: for that 9, 33 *were*: would be
9 *more than mad*: worse than crazy // *had not liefer*: would not rather
10 *cunning*: knowledgeableness 13 *naught*: (to be) evil
14 *undoubted*: definitely 14, 32 *doctors*: theologians
15 *marvel*: wonder 16 *good*: money 24 *withinforth*: inwardly
26 *how sheepishly soever*: however sheep-like 27 *denounced*: declared to be
29 *evil*: ill; badly 30 *may*: can // *wit*: know 32 *cunning*: erudite

a *frenzy* if we would now, against so many such, believe any false heretic and feigning hypocrite... teaching us the contrary.

4.16

“Of those holy fathers of our faith, whom their books showeth to have believed as we believe, we have seen and known their virtuous life well proved by their blessed end; in which our Lord hath testified by many a miracle... that their faith and their lives hath liked him. But never have we yet seen any such thing by any of these heretics. Nor yet so much as any constancy in their doctrine; but and if they were once found out and examined, we see them always, first, ready to lie and forswear themselves if that will serve. And when that will *not* help, but their falsehood and perjury proved in their faces: then ready be they to abjure and forsake it, as long as that may save their lives. Nor never yet found I any one but he would once abjure though he never intended to keep his oath. So holy would he be, and so wise therewith, that he would with perjury kill his soul forever... to save his body for a while. For commonly, soon after, such as so do... show themselves again, God of his righteousness not suffering that their false forswearing should stand them long in stead.”

20 *The Seventeenth Chapter*

The author showeth that some which be Lutherans and seem to live holily, and therefore be believed and had in estimation, intend a further purpose than they pretend... which they will well show if they may once find their time.

“**A**nd as for their living, the good appearance whereof is the thing that most blindeth us: as much *surety* as we have of the godly life of our old holy fathers—whereof the world hath written, and God hath borne witness by many great miracles showed for their sakes—as *uncertain* be we of *these* men, with whom we neither be always present... and little also can tell what abominations they may do too, some of them, secretly. Nor yet can know their intent

1 *frenzy*: mental derangement 2 *false*: sorry; lousy 7 *liked*: pleased
 7 *by*: with 9 *and if*: if 10 *forswear*: perjure 12, 14 *abjure*: recant
 12 *forsake*: renounce 13 *any one*: i.e., a one of them
 14 *but he would*: i.e., who would not // *once*: at some point // *though*: even if
 14 *never intended to keep*: had no intention of keeping
 17 *themselves*: i.e., their true colors 18 *suffering*: permitting
 18 *false*: dishonest // *forswearing*: renouncing under oath
 21 *showeth*: points out 22–23 *had in estimation*: held in high regard
 23 *intend*... *pretend*: have a further objective than they claim to have
 24 *may once*: can ever 25 *time*: opportunity 27 *surety*: sureness; certainty
 28 *old*: early 29 *showed*: performed

and purpose that they appoint upon, and the cause for which they be for the while content to take all the pain.

“Very certain is it that pride is one cause wherefore they take the pain. For pride is, as Saint Augustine saith, the very mother of all

5 *Pride, the mother of all* heresies. For of a high mind to be in
heresies the liking of the people... hath come

into many men so mad a mind, and

so frantic, that they have not sought what pain they took without any other recompense or reward but only the fond pleasure and

10 delight that themselves conceive in their heart... when they think
what worship that people talketh of them. And they be the devil's

Heretics the devil's martyrs martyrs, taking much pain for his pleasure; and his very apes, whom he

maketh to tumble through the hoop of that ‘holiness’ that putteth

15 them to pain without fruit. And yet oftentimes maketh them

miss of the vain praise whereof only they be so proud! For while they delight to think how they be taken for holy... they be many times well perceived and taken for hypocrites, as they be.

“But such is this accursed affection of pride, and so deep setteth in

20 the claws where it catcheth, that hard it is to pull them out. This
pride hath ere this made some learned men to devise new fantasies

in our faith because they would be singular among the people; as did Arius, Faustus, Pelagius, and divers other old heretics. Whose

false opinions have been, long time past, openly condemned

25 by many holy synods and general councils; and now, God be

thanked, not only their opinions quenched, but also all their books clean gone and vanished quite away... ere ever any law was

made for such books' burning. So that it well appeareth to have been the only work of God that hath destroyed those works, which

30 wrought in their times much harm in his Church. This affection
of pride hath not only made some learned men to bring forth new

fantasies, but maketh also many men of much less than mean

learning so sorely to long to seem far better learned than they be... that

to make the people have them in authority, they devise new sects

35 and schisms to the pleasure of newfangled folk; sparing no pain,

1 *appoint*: settle 5 *high mind*: proud ambition 7 *mad*: insane

7 *mind*: mentality 8 *frantic*: frenzied; out-of-control // *rough*: cared

9 *fond*: foolish 11 *what . . . them*: how worshipfully people are talking about them

16 *miss of*: fail to obtain 19, 30 *affection*: disposition 20 *the*: i.e., its

21, 32 *fantasies*: wild ideas 22 *in*: regarding // *would*: wanted to

23 *divers*: several // *old*: early 24 *openly*: unreservedly

29 *the only*: solely the 32 *mean*: average

and raieth thereon, and saith it was begun by the devil. Which thing had undoubtedly never been obtained among the people—that folk should show themselves their secret sins to another man—if God had not brought it up himself. Nor never could it have continued so many hundred years without great harm grown by disclosing of many men’s offenses... if the Holy Spirit of God had not assisted his holy sacrament, as the King’s Highness most prudently writeth. Luther also sometimes affirmeth purgatory, sometimes doubteth, and sometimes denieth. But Tyndale putteth no doubt at all, but denieth it as utterly as foolishly, without ground, cause, or color laid wherefore. Concerning the Holy Mass, Luther, as mad as he is, was never yet as mad as Tyndale is, which, like himself, so raieth thereupon in his frantic book of *Obedience* that any good Christian man would abhor to read it; and yet, writing as he doth, he is not ashamed to say that the Church will not believe holy Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine, and such others—as though these holy doctors were on his side. Among all whom he shall scant read one leaf wherein he shall not find one or other of his abominable heresies reprov’d! Luther himself was never so shameless to say... that these holy fathers held on his side; but because they were against him... he rejected the authority of them all. But what conscience hath this Tyndale, that thus can write to blind unlearned people with, when himself well knoweth that

Confession of necessity they do all, with one voice, prove that shrift
requisite to our salvation and confession is of necessity requisite to
our salvation? And that they lay for them

the Holy Scripture plenteously for the further proof of this part—which Tyndale would wickedly, with only railing and jesting against all their wholesome doctrine, drive away clean and he could! He knoweth also himself that all they with one voice teach, and prove by Scripture, too, that there *is* the fire of purgatory; which I marvel why Tyndale feareth so little... but if he be at a plain point with himself to go straight to hell. They teach also all with one voice the great profit of the Mass, and honor that ought to be done thereto—which Tyndale teacheth to dishonor.

“They teach all... the worshipping of images and relics, and

2 *had* . . . *never*: undoubtedly would never have

2 *been obtained*: become established; taken root 3 *show themselves*: themselves reveal

4 *brought it up*: introduced it 5–6 *grown by*: coming of (the)

8 *prudently*: astutely; perspicaciously 9 *putteth*: expresses 11 *color*: pretext; rationale

11 *laid*: given 13 *which*: who // *like himself*: true to form // *frantic*: rabid

14 *abhor*: shudder 17 *doctors*: theologians 18 *scant*: scarcely // *leaf*: page

19 *reprov’d*: refuted 20 *to*: as to // *held*: believed 23 *blind*: undiscerning

23 *unlearned*: uneducated 24 *they*: i.e., the Church fathers

24, 30, 33–34 *with one voice*: unanimously 24 *prove*: find // *shrift*: absolution

26 *lay for them*: adduce for themselves 27 *part*: side (of the argument)

29 *clean*: completely // *and*: if 30 *all they*: all of them 32 *marvel*: wonder

32 *but if*: unless 32–33 *he be at a plain point with himself*: he’s fully made up his mind

36 *the worshipping*: (in favor of) the venerating

praying to saints, going on pilgrimages, and credence to be given to miracles; of all which Tyndale teacheth the contrary.

“All they teach also *chastity*, and preach high preeminence of virginity and widowhood above wedding, and ever have had in abomination the breach of any vow of chastity; whereas Tyndale, against them all teaching the contrary, is therein so shameless, and so little respect hath of his own conscience, that—seeing all them to write against him and himself against them all, and that every man that learned is must needs perceive his shameless boldness therein—letteth not, yet, both to rail against Christ’s church for saying as these old holy saints said before... and also to say that the Church will not hear them; whereas himself seeth that the Church and they say all one thing, and as well they as the Church abhor and condemn his deadly, damnable heresies.

“Now ween I that we need little to doubt how he liveth... that thus writeth. He liveth, of likelihood, as evil as he teacheth—and worse he cannot. But, as I began to say, this Tyndale in the beginning bore forth a fair face, and seemed unto the people, peradventure, an honest man; as some others haply do now whom ye speak of... which, when they see their time, shall, if they may be suffered, cast off their visors of hypocrisy and show themselves at length in their own likeness, as he doth now.

“I pray you look on Luther himself. If he should in the beginning have said all that he hath said since, who could have suffered him? If he should in the beginning have married a nun, would not the *people* have burned him? And yet now, by little and little, he hath brought them to be content therewith. And let us not think the contrary but that of those heretics that here seem so good (if there be any such), we see not yet their stomachs, but shall if they be upheld a while see them follow their author in lewd living, Doctor Luther with his leman—and shall by the devil’s help induce good and simple souls so far into wrong ways... that they shall at length well like and commend the things which now their uncorrupted conscience abhorreth. And therefore let all

3 *all they*: all of them // *chastity*: (the goodness of) celibacy

4 *widowhood*: i.e., remaining in widowhood // *above*: over // *wedding*: (re)marrying

4 *had*: held 5 *breach*: breaking // *chastity*: celibacy 7 *respect*: regard

7 *of*: for 10 *boldness*: audacity // *letteth*: scruples 11 *as*: what // *old*: early

12, 13, 14 *Church*: i.e., Church authorities; Magisterium 12 *hear*: listen to

13 *one*: the same 14 *abhor*: loathe 15 *ween*: think // *little to doubt*: have little doubt as to

16 *of*: in all // *evil*: ill 17 *began*: started

18 *bore forth a fair face*: put on a good appearance // *peradventure*: perhaps

19 *honest*: honorable // *haply*: maybe 20 *which*: who // *time*: opportunity

20–21 *may be suffered*: can get tolerated 21 *visors*: masks // *at length*: finally

22 *in their own likeness*: in their true colors; for what they really are

23 *pray you look on*: ask you to look at 24 *suffered*: tolerated

26 *by little and little*: little by little 27 *content therewith*: all right with that

29 *stomachs*: hearts 30 *upheld*: put up with // *author*: instigator; leader

30 *lewd*: lascivious / bad 31 *doctor*: professor // *leman*: paramour; shack job

33 *at length*: eventually

good Christian people knock and break, as Holy Scripture counseleth,
the young children's heads of Babylon against the stone; that is to
say, let good Christian folk suspect, abhor, and pursue in the
beginning all such *evil doctrine* as is contrary to the faith and
5 teaching of Christ's Catholic Church... which God and his Holy
Spirit, both by writing and without writing, hath taught his
Church, and which hath in his Church continued from Christ's
days hitherto—as it well appeareth by the good and godly books of
all our forefathers holy doctors of Christ's Church Militant here in
10 earth, and now glorious saints in his Church Triumphant in
heaven. From whose firm faith joined with good works (which, as
two wings, carried them up to heaven) there shall, but we be more
than mad, no fond heretic lead us, seem he never so saintish,
with any new construction of Christ's holy Gospel or other part of
15 Holy Scripture; which no wise man will doubt but that those holy,
cunning men illumined with the grace of God... much better understood
The Lutherans are the than all the rabble of these lewd
worst heretics that ever heretics. Of all which that ever sprang
sprang in Christ's church. in Christ's church, the very worst and the
20 most beastly be these Lutherans, as their
opinions and their lewd living showeth. And let us never doubt
but all that be of that sect, if any seem good (as very few do),
yet will they in conclusion decline to the like lewd living as
their master and their fellows do, if they might once (as by
25 God's grace they never shall) frame the people to their own
frantic fantasy. Which dissolute living they be driven to
dissemble... because their audience is not yet brought to the
point to bear it; which they surely trust to bring about,
and to frame this realm after the fashion of Switzerland or Saxony,
30 and some other parts of Germany... where their sect hath already
fordone the faith, pulled down the churches, polluted the temples,
put out and despoiled all good religious folk, joined friars and nuns
together in lechery, despited all saints, blasphemed our Blessed
Lady, cast down Christ's cross, thrown out the Blessed Sacrament;
35 refused all good laws, abhorred all good governance, rebelled
against all rulers; fallen to fight among themselves (and so many
thousands slain... that the land lieth, in many places, in

2 *the young children's heads*: the heads of the young children 3 *suspect*: watch out for
3 *pursue*: go after 8 *as it well appeareth by*: as is quite evident from
9 *holy*: i.e., the holy // *in*: on 11 *as*: like
12–13 *but we be more than mad*: unless we are worse than crazy 13 *fond*: foolish
13 *saintish*: saintly 14 *construction*: interpretation 15 *no wise man*: no one with any sense
16 *cunning*: knowledgeable 17 *all the rabble*: the whole pack // *lewd*: wicked / ignorant
18 *sprang*: i.e., sprang up 21 *opinions*: tenets 21, 23 *lewd*: base 24 *master*: leader
24 *fellows*: confreres // *might once*: can ever 25 *frame*: conform
26 *frantic fantasy*: demented delusion 28 *bear*: put up with 29 *frame*: shape
31 *fordone*: done away with // *polluted*: desecrated
32 *religious folk*: members of religious orders 33 *despited*: vilified
35 *refused*: rejected // *abhorred*: shrunk with loathing from
427/37—428/1 *in manner*: virtually

manner deserted and desolate); and finally—that most abominable is of all!—4.17
of all their own ungracious deeds lay the fault in *God*, taking away
the liberty of man’s will, ascribing all our deeds to destiny... with
all reward or punishment pursuing upon all our doings. Whereby
5 they take away all diligence and good endeavor to virtue, all withstanding
and striving against vice, all care of heaven, all fear of hell,
all cause of prayer, all desire of devotion, all exhortation to good,
all dehortation from evil, all praise of well-doing, all rebuke of
sin, all the laws of the world, all reason among men; set all
10 wretchedness abroad, no man at liberty... and yet every man do what
he will, calling it not his will but his destiny; laying their sin to
God’s ordinance... and their punishment to God’s cruelty; and
finally turning the nature of man into worse than a beast, and the
goodness of God into worse than the devil. And all this good fruit would
15 a few mischievous persons—some for desire of a large liberty to an
unbridled lewdness, and some of a high devilish pride cloaked under
pretext of good zeal and simpleness—undoubtedly bring into this
realm... if the prince and prelates, and the good-faithful people, did
not in the beginning meet with their malice.”

20 *The Eighteenth Chapter*

The author showeth that in the condemnation of heretics,
the clergy might lawfully do much more sharply than
they do; and that in deed the clergy doth now no more against
heretics... than the Apostle counseleth... and the old holy
25 doctors did.

“**F**or as for the clergy, whom they labor to bring in hatred under the
false accusation of cruelty—do no more therein than Saint Augustine,
Saint Jerome, and other holy fathers have been wont to do before; nor
no further than the Apostle adviseth himself. For they do no
30 more but when one heretic, after warning, will not amend, but
waxeth worse... eschew him then, and avoid him out of Christ’s flock.

2 *of*: for // *ungracious*: ungodly; wicked // *lay the fault in*: put the blame on
4 *all* . . . *pursuing*: i.e., all the . . . pursuant 5 *withstanding*: putting up of resistance
6 *care of*: concern about 7 *devotion*: piety 8 *dehortation*: dissuasion
10 *abroad*: astir; free to run rampant 15 *mischievous*: dangerous; destructive
16 *lewdness*: wickedness 18 *good-faithful*: right-believing 19 *meet with*: combat
22 *might lawfully do much more sharply*: could legitimately act much more harshly
23 *deed*: fact 24, 29 *the Apostle*: Saint Paul 24–25 *old holy doctors*: early theologians
26 *labor*: strive // *bring in hatred under*: make hated by means of
27 *do*: i.e., they do 30 *warning*: i.e., being warned
31 *waxeth*: becomes // *avoid*: drive

- Which is the very thing that Saint Paul counseleth where he writeth
Ti 3:10 to Titus, ‘Haereticum hominem post primam
et secundam correptionem devita.’ 4.18
- And this is much less, that the clergy doth to heretics, than Saint
5 *Acts 5:1–10* Peter did unto Ananias and Sapphira for a
far smaller matter; that is to wit, for their
untrue saying, and keeping aside a portion of their own money...
when they made semblance as though they brought to the apostles
altogether. For though they were not killed by his own hand,
10 yet appeareth it well that God killed them, both twain, *by* Saint Peter,
his means as governor of his Church, to the fearful example of all
such as would after that break their promise and vow to God willingly
made, of themselves or their own good. Which thing Luther and Tyndale
15 *1 Cor 5:1–5* would have all men do now. Did not
Saint Paul write unto the Corinthians... that
they should deliver to the *devil* him that had defiled his father’s wife,
to the punishment of his body, ‘that the spirit might be saved
1 Tm 1:19–20 in the day of judgment’? What say we of
Hymenaeus and Alexander, of whom he
20 writeth (unto the Corinthians also), ‘Hymenaeum et Alexandrum tradidi
Satanae, ut discant non blasphemare’? ‘I have,’ quoth he, ‘betaken
Hymenaeus and Alexander to the devil, to teach them to leave their
blasphemy.’ In which words we may well learn... that Saint Paul,
as apostle and spiritual governor in that country, finding them
25 twain fallen from the faith of Christ into the blasphemy of that
they were bound to worship, did cause the devil to torment
and punish their bodies; which every man may well wit
was no small pain... and peradventure not without death also. For we
find nothing of their amendment. And this bodily punishment
30 did Saint Paul, as it appeareth, upon *heretics*. So that if the clergy did
unto much more blasphemous heretics than I ween they twain
were... much more sorrow than Saint Paul did to them, they should
neither do it without good cause nor without great authority and
35 *Mt 7:15* evident example of Christ’s blessed apostles.
And surely when our Savior himself
calleth such heretics ‘wolves cloaked in sheep’s skins,’ and
would that his shepherds, the governors of his flock, should in such

2–3: “If someone is still heretical after a first and second warning, break off contact with him.”

7 *untrue saying*: speaking untruthfully 8 *made semblance*: made it appear

9 *altogether*: all of it 10 *appeareth it well*: it is quite evident 12 *willingly*: voluntarily

13 *good*: money 20 *unto the Corinthians also*: Actually not to them, but to Timothy.

22 *leave*: quit 23, 25 *blasphemy*: blaspheming 25 *that*: that which

26 *bound*: duty-bound // *cause the devil to*: have the devil 27 *wit*: know

28 *pain*: penalty // *peradventure*: perhaps 29 *of*: about // *bodily*: corporal

30 *did*... *upon*: inflicted... on 30–31, 32 *did (un)to*: gave to 31 *ween*: think

31 *they twain*: the two of them 32 *sorrow*: grief

- 4.18
- My Lord of Rochester* wise avoid them as very shepherds
 would avoid very wolves, there is little
 doubt but (as an honorable prelate of this realm, in his most erudite
 book, answereth unto Luther) the prelates of Christ's church rather
 5 ought temporally to destroy those ravenous wolves... than suffer them
 to worry and devour everlastingly the flock that Christ hath committed
 unto their cure... and the flock that himself died for to save it from the
 wolf's mouth. But, now, though it well appear (as methinketh it doth)
 that the clergy might in this case right sore procure against heretics,
 10 yet do they indeed no further than the old holy fathers did in their
 time... and the blessed Apostle counseleth them to do; but all the sore
 The causes of the punishment punishment of heretics wherewith such
 of heretics folk as favor them would fain defame
 the clergy... is and hath been—for the great outrages
 15 and temporal harms that such heretics have been always wont
 to do, and seditious commotions that they be wont to make, besides the
 far passing spiritual hurts that they do to men's souls—devised
 and executed against them, of necessity, by good Christian princes and
 politic rulers of the *temporality*, forasmuch as their wisdoms well
 20 perceived that the people should not fail to fall into many sore and
 intolerable troubles... if such seditious sects of heretics were not
 by grievous punishment repressed in the beginning, and the
 spark well quenched ere it were suffered to grow to over-great a
 fire.”
 25 “Forsooth,” quoth your friend, “it appeareth well that the clergy is not in
 this matter to be blamed, as many men reckon. For it seemeth that the
 sore punishment of heretics is devised not by the clergy, but by
 temporal princes and good lay people—and not without great cause.”
 “Well,” quoth I, “and to the intent that ye shall perceive it much the
 30 better—and, over that, believe your own eyes, and not my words,
 in many things that ye have heard of my mouth—we will not part
 this night but I shall deliver into your hands here more books than
 ye will read over till tomorrow. But for that ye shall neither need to
 read all... nor lose time in seeking for that ye should see, I have laid
 35 you the places ready with rushes between the leaves, and notes marked
 in the margins, where the matter is touched.”

1, 2 *avoid*: drive out // *very*: actual 3–4 *as . . . Luther*: More is referring to Saint John Fisher's *Assertionis Lutheranae Confutatio* (1523). 5 *suffer*: allow
 7 *cure*: care 8 *though it well appear*: even if it is quite evident // *doth*: i.e., is
 9 *might*: could rightly // *right sore procure*: take very aggressive measures
 10 *old holy fathers*: early fathers of the Church 11 *the blessed Apostle*: Saint Paul
 11, 27 *sore*: severe 13 *would fain defame*: would like to render infamous
 17 *passing*: surpassing 19 *politic*: prudent // *temporality*: secular sphere
 20 *sore*: terrible 22 *repressed*: suppressed 23 *suffered*: allowed
 25 *appeareth well*: is now quite evident 28 *temporal*: secular
 30 *over that*: moreover 31 *in*: regarding // *of*: from
 32 *but I shall deliver*: without my having put 33 *read over till*: (be able to) read through before
 33 *for*: so 34 *all*: everything // *seeking*: looking // *that*: what
 34 *laid*: gotten 35 *rushes*: Plant stems similar to reeds. 36 *touched*: discussed

So caused I to be borne into his chamber a book of decrees, and certain works of Saint Cyprian, Saint Augustine, and some other holy doctors; and therewith, a work or twain of Luther, and as many of Tyndale. And in this wise went we to supper; and on the morrow forbore I to speak with him till near dinnertime. At which our meeting, he showed me that in the decrees, where the rushes lay, namely in *Causa XXII: Quaestione quinta* and divers others of the questions consequently following, he had seen at full that the clergy doth at this day no further for the punishment of heretics than did the old fathers and holy doctors and saints in time past—as by their own words there alleged doth openly and plainly appear. And that as well the clergy in the persecution of heretics lawfully may do... as the temporal princes in war against infidels be deeply *bound* to do... much more than they now do, or of long time have done, or yet, as it seemeth, go about to do. And, over this, he said that he had seen of Luther's own words worse than he had ever heard rehearsed; and in Tyndale worse yet, in many things, than he saw in Luther himself. And in Tyndale's book of *Obedience* he said that he had found what things Tyndale saith against miracles and against the praying to saints.

"Marry," quoth I, "and these two matters made us two much business before your going to the university! I would it had happed you and me to have read over that book of his before! Howbeit, in good faith, if ye will... we shall yet peruse over his reasons in those points, and consider what weight is in them."

"Nay, by my troth," quoth your friend, "we shall need now to lose no time therein. For as for miracles, he saith nothing, in effect, but that which I laid against them before: that the miracles were the works of the devil. Saving that whereas I said that it might peradventure be *said* so, he saith that indeed it *is* so—and proveth it yet less than I did. And therefore, as for that word of his—without better proof, is of little weight."

"Forsooth," quoth I, "Tyndale's word alone ascribing all the miracles to the devil... ought not to weigh much among Christian men... against the writing of holy Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Saint Ambrose,

1 *caused I to be borne into his chamber*: i.e., I had someone take into his room

1 *decrees*: i.e., canon-law decrees 3 *holy doctors*: theologians

6 *our meeting*: meeting of ours // *showed*: told 7 *namely*: especially

7 *divers*: several 11 *alleged*: quoted 12 *persecution*: prosecution

12 *lawfully*: licitly 14 *of*: in a 15 *over this*: furthermore

17 *rehearsed*: related 21 *marry*: indeed // *matters*: issues

21 *made us two much business*: caused the two of us a lot of to-do

22–23 *would . . . over*: wish it had happened that you and I had read through

23 *in good faith*: I am serious; I mean this

24 *will*: want // *shall yet*: i.e., can still // *peruse over*: examine one by one

24 *reasons*: arguments // *in*: on 26 *troth*: word 28 *laid*: alleged

29 *saving*: except 30 *yet*: even 31 *word*: dictum; claim // *is*: i.e., it is

Saint Chrysostom, Saint Gregory, and many another holy doctor...

writing many a great miracle done at holy pilgrimages and
saints' relics—done in open presence of many substantial folk,
and divers done in their *own* sight—all which miracles all
5 those blessed saints do ascribe unto the work of God, and to the
honor of those holy saints that were worshipped at those pilgrimages.
Against all whom when Tyndale ascribeth them all to the
devil, he plainly showeth himself as *faithful* as he would seem—

Lk 11:15

10 very near sib to the infidelity of those
Jews that ascribed Christ's miracles to the
devil, saying that he did cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub,
prince of devils."

"Surely!" quoth your friend. "And as for that he reasoneth against praying
to saints, is very bare."

15 "It must needs," quoth I, "be bare... except he well avoid the miracles.
Whereto when he hath nothing to say but to ascribe God's works
to the devil, he showeth himself driven to a narrow strait. For he
and his fellows, as touching miracles, neither have God willing...
nor the devil able... to show any for the proof of their part; nor, I
20 trust in God, never they shall."

"In faith," quoth your friend, "as for reasoning the matter of praying
to saints, he is not worth the reading now. For all the substance, in
effect, that ye prove it by... is by him clean untouched."

"That is," quoth I, "no marvel; for he hath not heard it."

25 "In faith," quoth your friend. "And of his own making he layeth arguments
for it, such as he list... which he layeth forth faintly... and then
doth answer them so slenderly—and all his whole matter, in those points
and others, so plainly confuted by the old holy fathers—that if I had seen so
much before, it had been likely to have shortened much part of our
30 long communication."

"For by my troth," quoth he, "when I consider both the parts well,
and read Luther's words and Tyndale's in some places where ye laid me
the rushes, I cannot but wonder that either any Almain could
like the one... or any Englishman the other."

35 "I cannot much marvel," quoth I, "though many like them well."

2 *writing*: writing of; attesting in writing 2, 6 *pilgrimages*: shrines 4 *divers*: several
6 *worshipped*: venerated 13 *that he reasoneth*: the argument he makes
14 *is*: i.e., that is 14, 15 *bare*: flimsy; meritless 15 *except*: unless // *avoid*: discredit
17 *to a narrow strait*: into a tight spot 18 *fellows*: cohorts // *as touching*: as regards
19 *show*: perform; work // *part*: side 21, 25 *in faith*: really
21 *as for*: for the purpose of // *reasoning*: discussing // *matter*: issue
22–23 *in effect*: as it were 23 *that ye prove it by*: i.e., by which you prove its legitimacy
23 *clean untouched*: completely unaddressed 24 *marvel*: wonder; surprise
25 *layeth*: presents 26 *list*: pleases // *layeth*: sets 27 *slenderly*: unconvincingly
27 *all his whole matter*: his whole entire case // *in*: on 28 *so*: i.e., is so
28 *old holy fathers*: early fathers of the Church 29 *had been likely to*: would likely
29 *much*: a large 30 *communication*: conversation 31 *troth*: word // *parts*: sides
32 *words*: statements // *laid*: put for 33 *rushes*: plant stems (as bookmarks)
33 *that*: i.e., how // *Almain*: German
35 *much marvel* . . . *though*: be too surprised . . . that

For since there is no country wherein there lacketh plenty of such as
 be naught, what wonder is it that vicious folk fall to the favor of
As good it is to preach to a post... as to a heretic. their like? And then, as for such, when
 5 their hearts are once fixed upon their
 blind affections, a man may with as
 much fruit preach to a post as reason with them to the contrary. For
 they nothing ponder what is reasonably spoken to them, but whereto
 their fond affection inclineth, that thing they lean to, and that they
 believe; or, at the leastwise, that way they walk and *say* they believe
 10 it. For in good faith, that they so believe indeed... their matters be so
 mad that I believe it not. And yet make they semblance as though
 they believed that no man were able to confute Luther or Tyndale;
 whereas methinketh, for these matters of their heresies that they so
 set forth, if the audience were indifferent... there were not in this
 15 world a man more meet to match them both twain in dispicions
 than were mad Collins alone, if he were not of the same sect. For he
 lasheth out Scripture in Bedlam as fast as they both in Almaine.
 And, in good faith, they both expound it as madly as he. And so
 help me God as methinketh that man is as mad as any of all
 20 three... which when he seeth the right faith of Christ continued in his
 Catholic Church so many hundred years, and on that side so many
 glorious martyrs, so many blessed confessors, so many godly
 virgins; and in all that time, virtue had in honor... fasting, prayer,
 and alms had in price... God and his saints worshipped... his
 25 sacraments had in reverence... Christian souls tenderly prayed for...
 holy vows kept and observed... virginity preached and praised...
 prilgrimages devoutly visited... every kind of good works commended;
 and seeth now suddenly start up a new sect setting forth
 clean the contrary, destroying Christ's holy sacraments... pulling
 30 down Christ's cross... blaspheming his blessed saints... destroying
 all devotion... forbidding men to pray for their fathers' souls...
The devout deeds of heretics contemning fasting days... setting at
 naught the holy days... pulling down the
 churches... railing against the Mass... villainously demeaning the
 35 Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the Sacred Body of our Savior Christ;

2 *naught*: wicked // *vicious folk*: immoral people; people given over to vice
 5, 8 *affection(s)*: feeling(s) 5 *may*: can 7 *nothing*: do not at all
 7 *reasonably*: rationally; in line with reason 8 *fond*: foolish // *lean to*: go along with
 10, 18 *in good faith*: in all honesty 10–11 *matters be so mad*: contentions are so crazy
 13 *matters*: points 14 *indifferent*: impartial; unbiased // *were not*: would not be
 15 *dispicions*: debate 16 *were*: would be 17 *lasheth out*: spouts
 17 *fast*: quickly / constantly / zealously // *Almaine*: Germany
 22 *confessors*: male saints who gave heroic witness to the faith but were not martyred
 23, 24, 25 *had*: held 24 *price*: esteem // *worshipped*: venerated
 27 *pilgrimages*: pilgrimage sites; shrines 29 *clean the contrary*: the exact opposite
 29, 30 *destroying*: doing away with 31 *fathers'*: parents'
 32 *contemning*: flouting; treating with contemptuous disregard

and seeth the one side, and the continuance thereof, so clearly proved by
 many a thousand miracles... so clearly testified by the virtuous and
 erudite books of all the old holy doctors from the apostles' time to our
 days; and seeth on the other side a fond friar and his fellows
 5 without wit or grace bear us in hand that all those holy fathers never
 understood the Scripture... but only these beasts that teach us vice as
 fast as ever the others taught us virtue; and that seeth on the one side
 Saint Cyprian, Saint Jerome, Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine,
 Saint Basil, Saint Chrysostom, Saint Gregory, and all the virtuous
 10 and cunning doctors, by row, from the death of Christ and the time of his
 apostles till now, and seeth among all these neither priest, monk, nor
 friar that ever did, after his profession made, marry and take a wife... or
 any suffered to break their vowed chastity, in all their time; and seeth
 on the other side none other doctors of this new sect but Friar
 15 Luther and his wife... priest Pomeranus and his wife... Friar Huesgens and
 his wife... priest Karlstadt and his wife... Dom Otho (monk) and his
 wife... Friar Lambert and his wife... frantic Collins, and more frantic
 Tyndale, that saith all priests, monks, and friars must needs have wives—
 that man were, I say, as frantic as they both... that would rather send his
 20 soul with such a sort as these be... than with all those holy saints
 that ever since Christ's days have testified by their holy handwriting...
 that they died in the same faith that the Church believeth yet, and
 all these fifteen hundred years hath done, and shall do till the world's end. Go
 there never so many heretics out thereof... and leave it never so little,
 25 yet shall it remain and be well known always by the profession of that
 faith, and those holy sacraments, that have continued therein from
 the beginning thereof, and the holy doctors thereof ever had in
 honor and reverence—and their acceptation with God incessantly
 testified by *miracles*; which never one sort of so many sects of
 30 heretics could yet allege for any doctor of theirs. Nor
 never shall, I think, till the great indignation of God provoked by
 Antichrist, the head of all our sin and wretchedness... shall suffer
 heretics the head of all heretics, Antichrist (of whom
 these folk be the forewalkers), to come
 35 into this wretched world... and therein to work such wonders that

2, 21, 29 *testified*: attested 3, 10, etc. *doctor(s)*: theologian(s) 4 *fond*: foolish
 4 *fellows*: cohorts 5 *wit*: intelligence // *bear us in hand*: try to make us believe
 7 *fast*: steadfastly / zealously 10 *cunning*: learned // *by row*: one after the other
 13 *suffered*: allowed // *vowed chastity*: i.e., vow of celibacy
 17, 19 *frantic*: delirious; insane 19 *were*: would be
 19 *they both*: i.e., both Collins and Tyndale 27 *had*: held
 29 *never one sort*: not one variety 32 *suffer*: allow 34 *forewalkers*: forerunners

the sight thereof shall be able to put right wise men, and good men,
 in great doubt of the truth, seeing false Antichrist proving his
 preaching by miracles; whereas now, neither good man nor wise man
 can have any color of excuse... if men were so mad to believe these
 5 mad masters of whom they see the principal archheretics, and
 first authors of the sect, neither show miracle for the proof of
 their doctrine... and yet their teaching and their living all set upon
 sin and beastly concupiscence—and so, clean contrary to the doctrine
 of all the old holy doctors... for whom God hath and doth show so
 10 many miracles in his Church. Which, as I said, shall not fail to be
 conserved, and his right faith therein to be preserved, in spite of all
 the heretics that ever shall spring—Antichrist and all—and in spite of the
 devil, the great master of them all; whom Christ shall at the last restrain,
 and destroy his idol Antichrist, with the spirit of his holy mouth,
 15 repairing and dilating his Church again; and, gathering thereinto as
 well the remnant of the Jews... as all other sects abroad about the
 world, shall make all folk one flock under himself the Shepherd...
 and shall deliver a glorious kingdom to his Father, of all the
 saved people... from our former father Adam to the last day... from
 20 thenceforth to reign in heaven, in joy and bliss incogitable, one everlasting
 day with his Father, himself, and the Holy Ghost: which send
 these seditious sects the grace to cease, and the favorers of those
 factions to amend; and us the grace that, stopping our ears from the
 false enchantments of all these heretics, we may by the *very*
 25 faith, of Christ's Catholic Church, so walk with charity in the way
 of good works in this wretched world... that we may be partners
 of the heavenly bliss... which the blood of God's own Son hath
 bought us unto. And this prayer," quoth I, "serving us for grace, let
 us now sit down to dinner." Which we did.
 30 And after dinner departed he home toward you, and I to the
 Court.

Finis

*Cum privilegio regali,
 Anno Domini MDXXXI, mensis Maii*

1 *right*: quite 1, 3 *wise*: intelligent 4 *color of*: i.e., plausible // *to*: i.e., as to
 5 *masters*: teachers 6 *authors*: founders // *show*: perform (any) 8 *so*: thus
 8 *clean*: completely 9 *show*: work 12 *spring*: i.e., spring up
 15 *dilating*: expanding 16 *sects*: religious groups // *abroad*: out there
 16 *about*: around 20 *incogitable*: unimaginable 21 *which*: whom may it please to
 22 *cease*: desist / cease to exist 23 *from*: i.e., to keep out 24 *very*: true
 26–27 *partners of*: partakers of; sharers in
 33 *cum privilegio regali*: with royal privilege 34 *mensis Maii*: month of May