

*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  
<https://thomasmorestudies.org/concordance-home/#heresies>

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-  
 5 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  
 10 things touching the pestilent sect of Luther  
 and Tyndale, by the  
 one begun in  
 Saxony, and  
 15 by the  
 other labored  
 to be brought into England.

Newly overseen by the said Sir Thomas More,  
 Chancellor of England.  
 20 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.

### *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  
20 by the messenger moved that there should 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.

### *The Fourth Chapter*

25 The author declareth in the comprobation 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 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)

*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 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 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 *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— 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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.

15 *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.

30 *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

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  
20 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; and therewith finisheth the Second Book.

30  
35

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*

5 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*

10 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  
15 negligence... that would be used in the singing or saying of Divine Service.

*The Third Chapter*

20 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*

25 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  
30 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 *reprovng*: 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 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 proved indeed. And with this finisheth he the matter of his abjuration.

*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.

*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, 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 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 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 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*

The author showeth by what occasion that Luther first fell to the devising of these heresies. And that the occasion was such as  
20 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.

### *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.

### *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*

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  
5 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.

10 *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 *temporalty*.

15 *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.

20 *The Fifteenth Chapter*

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

*The Sixteenth Chapter*

25 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*

30 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 *temporalty*: 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

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...  
 5 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.

5 Which proverb, as it happeth, I find very true by myself,  
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

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  
 20 assembled (part run out of religion... and all run out of the  
 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

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

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*

20 The letter of credence sent from his friend by a trusty  
 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—  
 30 whereof some part I trust so to remember as myself  
 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 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—  
 20 albeit your friend, either for that of truth he thought so or for 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.

**Y**our 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 *demanded*: 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 reprov'd 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 perchance 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 *perchance*: 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, perchance, 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.

20 **O**n 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, "against their vicious living; and in him is, on the other side,  
10 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* living as innocent as a saint—yet if he were infected and faulty in  
20 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  
35 much wherein they that report it could assign it. For if any were 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."

"Now, forsooth," quoth I, "whosoever will say that these be no heresies—he shall not have me to *dispute* it, which have no  
 30 *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. And thereby do I plainly know it for a heresy... if a heresy be a  
 35 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





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 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!

20 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

25 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

30

35

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



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  
15 you before, all the words that be either written or spoken... be but  
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  
10 virtue of the workman... or for that God showeth at the place some  
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  
15 person to your remembrance as much, and more, too, as doth his  
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

*Mk 7:10*

all honor were so to be given ‘only’ to

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*

“And well they wot that the Church

*worshippeth saints*

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’ part.

15 “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 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  
20 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  
25 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.

30 “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.

5 “Let us consider our own country here... and we shall find of these 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

10 clergy *and* the people), taketh pilgrimages for a more earnest and a  
 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,  
 15 he sent two of his priests in pilgrimage, for the trial of the truth  
 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 caraces 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 *caraces*: 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...

- 5 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 showeth 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.  
 “Was it not also his pleasure to be specially present in his temple  
 20 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 be worshipped; Mt 6:5–6* reproveth... showing that God may in heart 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  
 5        *What they are that come not to*        use to come to the temple of stone; and  
           *the church*                                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  
 10 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,  
 15 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  
 20 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  
 25 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*,  
 30 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*: lowlifes  
 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 comprobation 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.

**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  
 10 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.

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  
 20 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  
 30 of many more than a thousand miracles, one time and other. In the *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 // *comprobation*: 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* health... albeit no man can tell *why* he  
*certain places* 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.

**T**hen 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) showeth 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  
 30 amiss, nor very far from the point. But since this thing is much 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  
 that the fire shall make iron to run as silver or lead doth... and  
 10 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,  
 drawn by man's hand through strait holes made in an iron...  
 15 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 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 thereto."

15 "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 now shall I provide me—tomorrow, peradventure—a couple of witnesses... of whom I wot well ye will mistrust neither nother."

30 "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 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.”

5 “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 did it... may *well and easily* be done.”  
 35

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*

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  
10 first if ye will grant me that they teach me that if they should  
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  
15 his infinite wisdom done so well, and provided that course to go  
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  
20 better. For if it might—then had our Lord not made his order and  
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  
25 that it were not possible to be better, and the goodness of God will  
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

5 *Note* by God brought forth nothing but only  
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  
10 and brought forth. And in this high generation and production did  
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  
15 natural course of this world some things to the better. Howbeit,  
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  
20 miracles, he doth for the better: neither reason nor nature showeth  
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.

25 “Nor the doctors of Christ’s church did never mistrust the  
wonders and marvels that the paynims tell and write to have  
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  
5 miracles that we most marvel of and repute most incredible.

“**N**ay,” 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  
10 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  
15 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  
20 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  
25 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...  
30 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.

“**N**ow, 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  
 25 *bounden* to his *goodness* in that he vouchsafeth so familiarly in  
 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

Wherefore Christ turneth  
water into wine (Jn 2:6–11)  
Lk 23:8–9

such was his pleasure: in a small matter...  
to do a great miracle... for some show of  
his Godhead among them whom he vouchsafed;  
whereas, on the other side, before

1.11

5 Herod, that would fain have seen some miracle—where it stood  
upon his life, and might have delivered him from the Jews!—yet  
would he not vouchsafe either to show the proud, curious king  
one miracle... or speak one word. So the times, places, and  
occasions, reason is that we suffer to rest in his arbitrament... and  
10 not look to prescribe and appoint at our pleasure where, when, and  
wherefore God shall work his miracles... and else blaspheme them and  
say we will not believe them.”

### The Twelfth Chapter

15 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.

“Now, where ye require how many witnesses should be requisite and  
suffice to make you think yourself in reason to have good cause  
20 to believe so strange a thing: methinketh that right few were  
sufficient of them that would say they saw a great good thing done  
by the power and goodness of God... except it be hard for us to  
believe... either that God is so mighty that he *may* do it... or so good  
that he *would* do it.

25 “But, because ye would wit of me how many records were  
requisite—that thing standeth not so much in number as in  
weight. Some twain be more credible than some ten. And  
albeit that I see not greatly why I should mistrust anyone that  
seemeth honest and telleth a good tale of God... in which there appeareth  
30 no special cause of lying: yet, if *any* witnesses will serve you, then  
would I wit of *you*... how many yourself would agree. For I now put

2 *show*: manifestation    3 *vouchsafed*: i.e., saw fit to give one to  
4 *side*: hand // *before*: in the presence of  
5 *that would fain have seen*: who would have loved to see  
5–6 *stood upon*: concerned    7 *vouchsafe*: deign    9 *is*: i.e., dictates  
9 *suffer*: allow // *rest in*: remain in; be up to // *arbitrament*: discretion  
12 *believe them*: i.e., believe them to be bona fide miracles  
14 *somewhat noteth*: comments a little on // *froward minds*: perverse dispositions  
15 *hard to believe*: resistant to believing; slow to believe    15, 16 *in*: about  
16 *light*: ready; quick // *shrewd tale*: report of something bad  
17 *word*: i.e., mere word, as opposed to an oath    18 *require*: ask  
20 *strange*: singular; out-of-the-way    22 *except*: unless    23 *may*: can  
25 *would wit of*: want to know from // *records*: witnesses  
30 *special cause of lying*: particular reason to lie  
31 *would I wit*: I want to know from // *yourself*: you yourself // *agree*: agree to

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."

35 "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  
 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?”

“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!”

1.12

### *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 scantly 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  
 prior with holy maiden Elizabeth nightly in the rood loft... till she  
 25 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 abuson 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 *abuson*: 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!”

5  
10 “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.”

15 “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!”

20 “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?”

25 “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  
 10 hundred years ago, ‘nowadays.’ For I am very sure that so long  
 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  
 15 increase of the devotion of his Christian people, therein—as we find  
 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  
 20 years. And whereas ye say that of miracles many be nowadays  
 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  
 25 him in his church, it must needs suffice for the Church against all  
 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 sake, and ween there were none good at all?”  
20 “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.

“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...  
 5 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  
 10 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  
 15 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  
 20 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  
 25 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;  
 30 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  
 35 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?"

5 "Marry," said I, "ye told me that ye set naught by logic... but 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 wonderful work is wrought... there to ascribe it to God, the Master of all masteries, rather than the devil, 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 cause. It is," quoth he, "cause enough... in *Ex 20:4* that we see that God hath in *Scripture* forbidden such imagery—and that under great malediction; as in the law which yourself spoke of before, 20 '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 showeth 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 censing 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?

“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 faitery 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 *faitery*: 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.

“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

15 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 *reprovng*: 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?”

5 “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.*

10 “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?”

15 “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

20 plus quam scribarum et Pharisaeorum, 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?”

25 “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.”

30 “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  
 20 *bodily* pain (except we be so wanton... that whereas himself had  
 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  
 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.

“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

*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 displeas-  
 ant 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-  
 ed 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 worshipped, 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 *displeas*ant: offensive    4 *reputed*: regarded  
 5 *reprov*ed: blameworthy    7 *deadly*: lethal; mortal // *pestilent*: pernicious  
 13–14 *saints to be*: that saints are to be    14 *worshipp*ed: venerated  
 15 *sought*: resorted to // *deceiv*ed: 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*

5 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.

10 **“H**ow 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  
 15 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.”  
 20 “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,  
 25 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  
 30 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?”

“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

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

15 *Jn 5:39* to his own words, ‘Scrutamini scripturas, quia scripturae sunt quae

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



“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  
of altogether... that we conceive no damnable error.”

20 “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.”

“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.”

30 “Nay,” quoth he, “that cannot be, in no wise, but that he must needs  
35 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 Church into all truth.* way, which is the help of grace.”

“No, surely,” quoth he.

10 “Verily,” quoth I, “where reason may 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 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 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, 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 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 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 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 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 of philosophy and almost all the seven liberal sciences: the author therefore incidentally showeth what harm hath happened 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.

“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 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 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 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  
 10 such common things as all Christian men know, they could not  
 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  
 20 them; without receiving or ear giving to any reason or authority  
 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  
 Christian men but by the preaching of some strange novelties, and  
 5 bringing up of some newfangled heresies, to the infection of our  
 old faith.

“One wist I that was for his pertinacity in that opinion... that he  
 would and might and was bound to preach, any prohibition notwithstanding—  
 10 when he was, after divers bold and open defenses  
 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 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

*What is left us in Scripture* do, or leave undone, and hath left us the  
Scripture for none other cause but for that

5 it should stand unto us for the witness of his will (declared us by  
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  
10 Scripture of God thereby, and make it agree thereto. This were indeed a  
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.

25 “Well,” quoth I, “make no haste yet for a little while.” And so went  
 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 *quicken*: 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

5 **W**ith 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  
10 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.”

15 “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.”

20 “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.”

25 “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?”

30 “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 *aight*: 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

20 *Origen* hell in the Gospel, Origen, for all that,  
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.

30 “Now, if our child should read on the text of Scripture without  
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  
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

5 “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  
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

two precepts or three... by his own holy mouth, to our first parents.  
 And as for all that was for them to do besides, the reason which he  
 had planted in their souls... gave them sufficient warning. Whereof  
 the whole sum stood, in effect, in the honor of God and God's  
 5 friends... with love of each to the other... and to their offspring and  
*The precepts given by God's* lineage. But the precepts that he gave by  
*mouth were three.* mouth was three. Twain commanding  
 generation and eating; the third forbidding  
 the Tree of Knowledge. And *that* was for them *continual*,  
 10 whereas the other twain, albeit they were thereto bound by the  
 precept, yet were not they and their posterity bound  
 thereto at all hours and all places. But need was it in the beginning  
 to give them knowledge thereof... forasmuch as they had no  
 hunger to warn them of the one... nor sensual, rebellious appetite  
 15 to warn them of the other. But after that they were by God once  
 admonished thereof—then did reason interpret the remnant;  
 whereby they wist that they should eat for conservation of their  
 bodies, and engender for propagation of their kind. And since  
 they perceived that these two things was the end and intent of  
 20 those commandments... they thereby, consequently, knew when  
 it was time and place and occasion convenient to fulfill them. But  
 when they had once, at the subtle persuasion of the devil, broken the  
 third commandment, in tasting the forbidden fruit; being then  
 expelled out of Paradise: then, concerning their food and engendering,  
 25 not only reason oft showed them... what was honest and  
 profitable, but also sensuality... what was beastly and pleasant;  
 which sensuality labored so busily to cause man to set by delight  
 above good and convenient... that for the resistance thereof, it then  
 became to be the spiritual business and occupation of man... so to  
 30 *Whereto the body should be* preserve and bring up the body... that it  
*brought up* were not suffered to master the soul; and  
 so to rule and bridle sensuality... that it were  
 subject and obedient unto reason—as God willed the woman to be  
 subject and obedientary of man. Wherein God would that we were  
 35 learned rather to suffer our sensual parts complain and mourn...

3 *warning*: notification    14, 15 *warn them of*: direct them to    16 *admonished*: apprised  
 16 *interpret the remnant*: figure out the rest    17 *wist*: knew    18 *kind*: species  
 21, 28 *convenient*: appropriate    22 *broken the*: i.e., broken that  
 25 *honest*: honorable; noble    26 *beastly*: bestial // *pleasant*: pleasurable  
 27 *set by*: value    29 *became*: came    30 *preserve*: maintain // *bring up*: train  
 31 *suffered*: allowed    34 *obedientary of*: in obedience to    35 *learned*: taught  
 35 *suffer*: let // *complain and mourn*: moan and groan

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  
 5 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  
 10 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  
 15 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  
 20 *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  
 25 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  
 30 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  
 35 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.

15 *Ex 31:18*

For the remedy whereof, God, of his endless mercy, by the law 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—more, to keep them in straitly, for straying

25 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 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. 10 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.

15 “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*

25 “Our Savior said again unto him, ‘Thou art blessed, Simon, the son of John... for neither flesh nor blood hath revealed and showed this 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 men’s ears, and by his holy hand written in men’s hearts, ere ever 35 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  
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
- 20 God's high Providence meet and convenient for them. And from 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 displeasent... 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 *displeasent*: 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  
20 consider where should we else have the beginning of the water put  
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



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,  
 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."

1.25

*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 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 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?”

25 “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*.”

30 “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.

5 One next unto the worst; another next unto the best. And your way 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?”

25 *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.”

35 “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."

30 "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 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 of necessity to be known and believed... which may be perceived by
- 35

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

5 For then have ye the man that ye *must* needs resort unto for your 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 all things 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, ‘Ipsum 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?”  
 “To obey him also,” quoth he. “For else were he better  
 20 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 “Then may we,” quoth I, “no more doubt  
 Mt 17:5; Lk 10:16 to be true whatso the Church biddeth  
 30 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.”  
 “It seemeth not,” quoth I, “so strange a thing to Saint Paul. For he  
 35 *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?”

10 “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 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—

15 “Or else, if there were anything that was, peradventure, such that in 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 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.”

25 “That is truth,” quoth he, “but ye prove me not yet that God hath bidden me believe the Church.”

30 “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 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 said he of his church when he sent it abroad to be spread forth.

35 “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?”

20 “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 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  
 5 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  
 10 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  
 15 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  
 20 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  
 25 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.’”

### 30 *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  
 15 mittebam prophetas, et ipsi currebant.  
 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...  
 whereof Christ or Holy Scripture saith the *contrary*? Shall I believe the  
 20 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  
 25 for their opinions say and write that they have them by  
 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  
 5 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.”

10 “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  
 15 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.”

20 “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.”

25 “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  
 30 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!”

35 “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.

10 “I shall not much need,” quoth I, “to stick with you in disputing  
 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.

30 “Ye will also grant,” quoth I, “that in such points as we speak of,  
 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 old doctors and the new* erred not so. First, their wits, as much 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  
 5 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  
 10 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  
 15 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  
 20 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  
 25 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  
 30 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.”  
 35 “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?"

15 "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 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."

20 "That people," quoth I, "which should be an inheritance—did he intend should endure for his own days only, while he lived here, 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."

25 "Shall this people," quoth I, "have among them the knowledge and understanding what he would they should do to please God with?"

"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 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.”

30 “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

5 "Are ye there yet again?" quoth I. "We  
 have sundry ways proved and agreed between us that this knowledge  
 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.

15 "What if he had left it open, and written in such wise that no  
 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  
 otherwise—yet always to this point ye bring it in the end: that

25 *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  
 choice... go take you the one part at adventure and cleave thereto, as  
 35 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  
5 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.”

1.28

### *The Twenty-ninth Chapter*

10 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  
15 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.”

20 “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  
*Reason is not to be mistrusted* foundation and ground. And though it  
*where faith standeth not* somewhat build further thereon... yet is  
*against it.* not reason always to be mistrusted, where  
25 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  
30 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 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 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  
 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 showeth 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?”

“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!”

25 “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.”

35 “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 *aknownd*: 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  
 10 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  
 15 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  
 20 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  
 25 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  
 30 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*  
 35 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.

“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

30 shifts to keep out the errors. But, now, if they falsely should  
 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  
 10 substantial points concerning the faith or knowledge of virtue,  
 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 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.

15 “Then it is as true,” quoth I, “that ye be, further, fully answered in the principal point—that the scriptures laid against images and 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 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 idolatry... which we deferred before, those will we talk of after dinner.”

20 “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.”

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

**A**fter 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



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

5 But these men whom *you* call ‘the Church’ come to the  
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  
10 same: kneel to images as we do, set up candles as we do, pray to  
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.

25 “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...

7 *naught*: wrong    8 *face*: (the) sight    27 *decayed*: disintegrated

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 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.

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

5 "Marry," quoth he, "there might be some church of heretics before the church of Christ. For there might be some among the Jews, before the birth of Christ. And such, I suppose, were the Sadducees, that believed not the resurrection, nor the immortality of the soul."

10 "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 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

25 'went forth to sow his seed, and when he 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 themselves openly for heretics—yet being such indeed, since the

30 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  
 5 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  
*The Church cannot mistake* deed... yet is this point their sheet anchor.  
*Holy Scripture.* 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,  
 15 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  
 20 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  
 25 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.  
 30 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 member of Christ’s church ere he was born... as he is now in heaven.”

20 “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 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 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 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 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 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, 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.

25 “Now,” quoth I, “if some infidels as Turks or Saracens, having heard 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 understand without a reader. And then if they took a wrong reader of a wrong

10 church, all were marred. And also, they would not trust the scriptures, 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 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 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 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  
 25 *Luther's foolish argument* argument it is a world to see what  
 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  
 31 *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

5           What “the church” is           before rehearsed. ‘The church’ therefore must  
           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  
 20           Jn 6:70           that one of them was, as our Savior said  
 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 warmness 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  
 5 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  
 10 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 witherlings, 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  
 20 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.

**W**hen I had said...

25 "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.

30 "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.”

2.6

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...  
15 if they were idolaters and pursued your party for saying the truth, and  
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



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* means they do it (as whether they see and  
*do hear us* 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  
*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





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?"

35 "He would, I think," quoth he, "thank me for the good treating of 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 nor*: 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 that many be none!”  
20

“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



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 percuse  
 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 // *percuse*: 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  
been helped by the only touch of holy saints’ vestures? And doubt  
35 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 goat. 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 . . . goat*: 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 displeasent 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 displeasent*: 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  
 5 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  
 10 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...  
 15 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,  
 20 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  
 25 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  
 30 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  
15 ye would ask her whether it were Our Lady of Ipswich or Our Lady  
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,  
20 and ye may when ye will, and shall find it true... except it be in  
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 astonished, 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 he meddled anything with witchcraft or necromancy... or had  
10 *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 astonished*: (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 say, they take the images for the saints themselves, or the rood for Christ himself—  
 5 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— 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 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 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 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 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."

10 *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

15 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."

25 "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?"

35 "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 witchcraft of the Egyptian jugglers.

*Dn 14:10–21; 1 Kgs 18:19–40* 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* only church... may be, among many  
*heretics* 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

impossible for God to do, and more than blasphemy for any man  
to think. For this were not like the sufferance of an unconsecrated  
host, whereof ye put the example; wherein the people's invincible  
ignorance, with their devout affection, may without harm to  
5 their souls be suffered, in the thing that seldom happeth... and endureth  
for so short a while. But if God would leave all good doctors  
unknown, and suffer his church to be deceived with miracles and  
marvels done by them that taught heresies and set forth idolatry—  
then should himself, as I say, not only suffer his honor and  
10 right faith and religion to be perpetually lost... but help also himself  
to destroy it. Which whoso could think possible... were worse  
than Judas, and more mad than any man in Bedlam. And therefore  
can it not in no wise be that the Church can be deceived in that  
they take for saints these holy doctors of the Church. Nor, they  
15 so being, can it in any wise be that the doctrines wherein they  
consent and agree can be false or untrue! Among which doctrines  
since the things whereof we speak—I mean the praying to saints,  
the worship of images, reverencing of relics, and going in  
pilgrimages—is a part, as by their books plainly doth appear, we  
20 may well and surely conclude that none of these things be damnable  
or displeasing to God, but things highly to his contentation and  
pleasure. And since we further perceive that their books be written  
in diverse regions and sundry ages, we thereby well perceive that these  
things be parcel of the rites, usages, and belief of Christ's church...  
25 not only now and of late, but continually from the beginning  
hitherto. And since it is plainly proved you that the Church can in  
no wise be suffered of God to fall *into* any damnable error thereby,  
it is yet most surely concluded that these things *be* none such. And  
consequently proved that no text of Scripture seeming to sound  
30 to the contrary... can be so taken or understood. Nor that the  
Church cannot in prejudice of the faith misunderstand the  
*A most sure rule* Scripture. And that the substantial  
points of the faith therefore learned of the  
Church... is one of the surest rules that can be found for the  
35 right interpretation of Holy Scripture. And that no sect of heretics  
can be the church of Christ; but that *our* church is the very

2 *were not like the sufferance of*: would not be like his letting there be    5 *endureth*: lasts  
6, 14 (*holy*) *doctors*: theologians    7, 13 *deceived*: misled    11 *were*: would be  
16 *consent*: concur    18 *worship*: veneration // *in*: on  
21 *displeasing*: offensive // *contentation*: satisfaction  
24 *parcel*: part and parcel // *usages*: customs    25 *of late*: recently    27 *of*: by  
28 *yet*: furthermore // *surely*: definitely    29–30 *sound to*: indicate  
31 *in prejudice*: to the detriment    33 *learned of*: learned from  
34 *surest*: safest; most reliable    36 *very*: true

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 *augh*: 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.”

25 “Then must I,” quoth he, “have said the same that I did: that I know  
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 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 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 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 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 taken all the one sort and rejected all the other... had not that Holy 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 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*

10 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  
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.”

“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  
 be in the Service of God superstitious instead of religious; overly  
 10 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  
 appeareth by Eutychus, the young stripling (that is spoken of by Saint  
 15 *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 reproving 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.

5 “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 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 from the hatred and obloquy that else would follow their sentence on 10 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.

15 “But yet, of all things, specially the law should best content us, 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, hope, or dread, pity, cruelty, meed, request, or some other 20 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 made by the people in cases criminal... can be but indifferent. And 25 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 taking of more slight witness than would be taken for sufficient in 30 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 // *disorder*: 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.

“Howbeit, 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  
 5 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  
 10 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.”

15 “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  
 20 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  
 25 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  
 30 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.”

35 “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 benefited 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.”

“They were,” quoth I, “taken as large as they were spoken—which  
30 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.

25 “He had also set a priest of his, and a secular servant of his besides, to  
 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?”

35 “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  
 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.
- 35 “Myself,” quoth I, “nay; but such as I heard it of were men of more 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?”
- 15 “And what,” quoth I, “of them that accused him to other prelates 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.”
- 30 “Well,” quoth he, “since it *might* be so, then put case it *was* so. Did not 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 *tale*: 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 // *aught*: 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 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 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!”

“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 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.”

“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.

“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*.”

“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       *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.”

15       “It may be too,” quoth I, “by possibility, if we go this way to work, 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.”

25       “And how many bulls,” quoth I, “and briefs, have ye seen that came thence?”

“By our Lady,” quoth he, “bulls very few, and briefs never none; for I never ask after them.”

30       “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 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*  
5 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.

30 “**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  
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





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  
 5 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  
 10 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:  
 15 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  
 20 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  
 25 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.”  
 30 “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  
 35 *Mark these three words.* 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

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."

30 "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  
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



*The Ninth Chapter*

3.9

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

- 5 **“But**, 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  
10 imprinted, as it saith, in Almaine—a foolish railing book against  
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  
15 destroyed the Mass.’ Whereby ye may see that he reckoned that translation  
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 showeth 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

**B**ut yet he said that the faults might be by some good men amended, and then the book printed again, if nothing letted but that.

5 “Surely,” quoth I, “if we go thereto... the faults be, as ye see, so many, and 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*... but if they will make us worse than Jews? Wherein I can, in good

20 *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 pignant 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 *piignant*: 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







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.”

5 “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  
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!”

10 “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  
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.

15 “Marry,” quoth he, “it happed that a young priest very devoutly, in a  
procession, bore a candle before the cross... for lying with a  
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!’”

20 “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;

35 which parts Shem and Japheth, the blessed children, reverently  
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.

“And be a priest never so naught, albeit that he do some way

10     *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 perchance 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 *perchance*: 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 disliked  
 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 displeasent 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... scantly 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 disliked*: 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 *displeasent*: 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 railleth 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 Orders.* same order by the same Spirit that 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

10 and by the governance of them showed that he is meet to bear 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  
5 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  
10 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  
15 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  
20 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—  
25 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  
30 *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  
35 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*: construings // *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 so evidently showeth itself. And therefore we shall let his wise  
 10 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*      them 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  
 5 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  
 10 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,  
 15 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  
 20 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.  
 25 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.  
 30 “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.”  
 “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



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!”

10 “It was,” quoth I, “sure indeed, but not so good as this. For therein  
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  
 10 allowed through Christendom long time since. Which ere I would  
 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*                      a 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  
 20 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  
 no man should from thence forth translate into the English tongue  
 30 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 . . . tittle*: 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 . . . no*: 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 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.

10 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, 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 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 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 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.”

“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 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 showeth 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.”

15 “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...  
 when so many would so fain have it.”

20 “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...  
 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  
 25 own neck—and then hang upon a doubtful trial whether the  
 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  
 30 man hath had the mind in faithful wise to translate it, and  
 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  
 35 bishop from the admitting thereof... without the assent of the  
 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

15 deserve to lose. For else, if the abuse of a good thing should cause the  
 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

20 away the occasion of reward from them that would with help of  
 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

25 it so—that appeareth well in that they suffer it not to *be* so. And over  
 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

30 *Gn 3:1–7, 22–24; Mk 4:33–34* 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

35 *every* man—priest and other—lest it drive all out of Paradise.  
 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  
 30 *Ex 20:19; 24:2-3* showeth that it is in Exodus... by Moses  
 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 understood without a reader.* and expounding of Holy Scripture... and 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 contemn 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

*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

35

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  
*The things that the unlearned  
cannot attain unto* Scripture. Now, then, the things, on the  
15 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  
*Temper thy sermon after thy  
audience.* convenient, with reverence and authority,  
35 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 ignoramus  
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  
 20 apostles apart. Whereof I would not, for my mind, withhold the  
 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 abuson; 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 *abuson*: 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.

5 Now, if it so be that it would haply be thought not a thing 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 were haply denied it. Which I suppose would not often happen  
10 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  
25 *How reverently the Jew* down upon his Bible of the Old Testament; *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

*The veil of the Temple is* now since the veil of the Temple is broken  
*broken asunder.* asunder that divided among the Jews...

5 the people from the sight of the secrets,  
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  
10 in theirs which to their own harm and haply their neighbors'  
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  
15 Scripture is a whole feast of so much diverse viand... that, after the  
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,  
20 unreasonable that the ordinary (whom God hath in the diocese  
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*

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.

10 **W**hen 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  
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





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*

10

*reading Luther's works*

Saxony. And this find we more than too  
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.

30 "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  
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.

20 “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 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.”

25 “Marry, sir,” quoth your friend, “this were an easy way for one thing. For 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.”

35 “Marry,” quoth he, “that may happen also in the confession that is made unto 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

*Oh, what a false lie is this!* the bishops the confessions of such as be  
rich in their parishes... and that the bishops  
thereupon do cite them, and lay their secret sins to their  
charge... and either put them to open, shameful penance... or compel  
5 them to pay at the bishop's pleasure. Now dare I be bold to say—and I  
suppose all the honest men in this realm will say and swear the same—that  
this is a very foolish falsehood imagined of his own mind... whereof he  
never saw the example in his life. We see in some rather the contrary fault:  
that not only the rich, but the poor also... keep open queans, and live in  
10 open adultery... without payment or penance, or anything, almost,  
once said unto them. But therewith findeth Tyndale no fault in the  
bishops. For he saith plainly that the bishop hath none authority to  
punish any such thing at all. But he letteth not, on the other side, to  
belie the bishops and the curates too, feigning that the one doth utter  
15 folks' confessions to the other. And when he hath so belied them—  
then, forthwith, as though he had proved his tale true, he taketh the  
same false, feigned lie for a *ground*, thereupon to build the destruction  
of that holy sacrament of Penance. For upon that lie and such others  
like, he saith plainly that confession to the priest is the worst thing that  
20 ever was found. Now, if that were true (as it is as false as he that said it),  
how happed it, then—which question Luther and he be asked often, and  
always make as they heard it not—how happed it, I say, that of so many  
virtuous, wise, and cunning fathers as have been in Christ's church in  
so many hundred years, never none had the wit nor the grace to spy  
25 this great thing, but all *teach* confession, till now that Tyndale came?  
Which yet in this point passeth his master, Luther. For *he* saith  
he would in any wise have confession stand... but he would have it made  
at liberty as well to women as men. But Tyndale will have none at  
all... because he listeth to belie both the bishops and the curates,  
30 feigning that they should between them disclose our confessions.”  
“*In faith*,” quoth your friend, “that is a thing that I never heard to have  
happened.”  
“Nor he neither,” quoth I—“that dare I boldly say. And yet, I wot well,  
as ye said right now, that priests should utter folks' confession were  
35 well possible—and in many of them nothing in this world more  
likely, neither—if God and his Holy Spirit were not, as it is, assistant

3 *cite*: summon 3–4 *lay* . . . *charge*: confront them with their secret sins  
5 *be bold*: venture 7 *imagined of*: concocted in; thought up by  
9 *keep open queans*: openly keep whores 13 *letteth*: scruples // *side*: hand  
14, 15, 29 *belie(d)*: slander(ed) 14, 29 *curates*: parish priests  
14, 30 *feigning*: making up the story; falsely claiming 14, 34 *utter*: reveal  
17 *feigned*: fabricated 18 *upon*: on the basis of 20 *found*: come up with  
22 *as*: as if 23 *cunning*: learned 24 *never none*: not a one // *wit*: intelligence  
26 *which* . . . *passeth*: who in this point goes even further than  
27 *in any wise*: by all means 29 *listeth*: wants 30, 34 *should*: would  
31 *in faith*: honestly 33 *boldly*: with assurance // *wot*: know  
34 *said right now*: were saying just now 34–35 *were well*: would be quite  
35 *in*: with 36 *neither*: i.e., too // *as it is*: as is the case  
36 *assistant*: actively present

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

5 thing instituted and devised by God, yet if all the remnant lacked,  
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  
14 *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  
 10 things taken away, and the Sacrament of Penance left such as he  
 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  
 15 naught—what manner of amendment shall this man come to? And  
 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.

35 “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  
 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 hand, without anything doing thereto itself.

5 “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

5 “Item: Zwingli and Oecolampadius, scholars of Luther, have built further upon this ungracious ground of their master... and teach 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 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.

10  
15 “For he teacheth also that the Mass availeth no man quick nor dead... 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.

20 “Item: He saith it were best that men should never be houseled but 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.

25 “Item: He saith that the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is ordained 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.

30 “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 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, Distinctio 3* read us, in good faith, a plain text (as me 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 worshipped* synod, in which there is well and plainly 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 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.”

5  
10 “Marry,” quoth he, “but in the law itself that we read, good Saint Gregory 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 understood the divine worship called *latria*.”

15 “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  
20 Ch. “*Venerabilis*,” that there be the same word, ‘adorare,’ yet  
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 ‘adorare’ “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  
30 may do to a creature... and Saint Gregory useth it for such worship 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

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...

30 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



“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.

“Item: Of all feasts, he saith that he hateth the Feast of the Holy Cross... and the Feast of Corpus Christi.

10 “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.”

“And how proveth he that?” quoth your friend.

15 “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 showeth 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.

“**A**nd 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

‘The Man of God Luther.’ And whereas they that spoke against his errors, he writeth that they ‘burst out in virulent and venomous words,’ when he cometh to his own answer... then he writeth in this wise: ‘But then Doctor Martin, for his incredible humanity and bounty, answered in this wise, benignly.’ And sometimes with these words: ‘The most benign Father most mildly made answer.’  
 5 And, finally, he finisheth and endeth his book, as it were, with a Gloria Patri to the whole psalm, in this wise: ‘This holy, devout man, therefore, even born to teach and preserve the Gospel of God, our Lord long preserve for his Church, with his holy Word also. Amen.’  
 10 Now, who was there ever born so suspicious, that ever would have suspected that he which wrote such glorious words of Luther should be Luther himself? For where should a man find so very a vainglorious fool, that would not in himself be ashamed of himself to think such things? But, now”—ye that read this, I pray you, for God’s sake—“see how utterly this itch and tickling of vanity and vainglory had cast him clean beside his mind and memory. For whereas all the book beside was so devised and handled that it should seem some other to have made it, and not himself—suddenly the  
 20 fond fellow bewrayed himself unawares. For in one place, forgetting himself, he speaketh in this wise: ‘When this was spoken, then the orator of the empire, in a chiding manner, said that I had not  
*Things determined in general* answered to the purpose, and that  
*council should not be* those things which had been damned  
 25 *brought in question.* and determined in general councils of old... ought not now, of new, to be brought again in question by me; and therefore I should give a plain answer whether I would revoke mine errors or not. Then, unto this, I answered in this wise: “Since that it is so [etc.]” Lo, here may ye see the  
 30 incredible humility and lowly mind of this most benign Father... which under the visor of a strange herald... bloweth himself his own boast. Then may ye see therewith his marvelous, profound prudence... that had not the wit to beware that himself bewrayed not his own so foolish a device... in the vain vaunting of his own  
 35 false boast and praise—that though the words had been true, yet would almost a very natural fool have been ashamed of himself to write them.”

9 *even born*: born precisely    12 *of*: about    15 *pray*: beg of    17 *beside*: out of  
 18 *the book beside*: the rest of the book  
 19 *some other to have made it*: i.e., to have been written by someone else  
 20 *fond*: foolish // *bewrayed himself*: gave himself away    23 *purpose*: point  
 24 *damned*: condemned    27 *again in*: back into    31 *which*: who // *visor*: guise  
 31 *strange*: unknown; unidentified    33 *wit*: sense // *beware*: watch out  
 33–34 *himself bewrayed not*: he not himself divulge    35 *though*: even if  
 36 *a very natural fool*: someone who is literally a born idiot

“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

*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 that the word of God.

25 **“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 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 Scripture of God, with the interpretations of the old holy doctors. 30 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  
 15       him: therein would he stand to no man’s judgment but his  
 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  
 20       many years past... he nothing would esteem, but with blasphemous  
 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  
25 poison... was the liberty that he so highly commended 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





“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  
 30 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  
 35 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  
 to intolerable torments. And old, ancient, honorable men... those  
 fierce heretics letted not to hang up by the privy members; and

1 *despiteous despites*: cruel indignities    3 *marvelous*: terrible // *face*: appearance  
 3 *fashion*: semblance    5 *quick*: living    8 *despite*: insult (done)    13 *brothels*: prostitutes  
 14 *ornaments*: furnishings    15 *withdrawn*: taken out    18 *abhorreth*: horrifies  
 19 *not . . . file*: do not find it horrifying to contemptuously defecate  
 20 *common siege*: communal bathroom    21 *of*: from    22 *resorteth to*: visits // *unhappy*: sorry  
 24 *abroad*: around    24–25 *pleasures and commodities*: sights and attractions  
 26 *lightly*: practically; just about    28 *great part*: majority // *ungracious*: ungodly    31 *part*: side  
 33 *fathers*: parents // *discovering*: bringing out    35 *rest*: peace    36 *business*: disturbance  
 37 *stood*: counted // *ceased . . . eftsoons*: did not desist from putting them again  
 38 *ancient*: venerable // *honorable*: distinguished    39 *fierce*: savage  
 39 *letted not*: did not forbear // *privy members*: private parts

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 *ought*: 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  
 20 labor to do... that believeth Luther that he hath no free will of his  
 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 draw men to their sect* of the world unto it... by the selfsame 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  
 5 their chastity promised once, and solemnly dedicated, to God.  
 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  
 25 for a wonderful *monster*, and a token of wrath and indignation of  
 their gods toward their city and empire—putting thereupon  
 themselves in devoir with open processions and prayers and sacrifice...  
 30 *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  
 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.

“**S**urely, 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  
 5 trust in their works, for that would turn them to pride.  
 “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*      Pharisee boasting of his virtues? Who  
             *deeds.*                              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*      against the putting of a proud trust  
 25      *their own deeds.*                      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

as the tree bringeth forth his leaves and can do none other... faith being  
in the heart.’

4.11

“Then was it said unto him that in this tale he seemed to make the  
good works to be much like a shadow that the body maketh of  
5 necessity while it standeth in the sun... and is never the better  
therefor. And then was it asked him whether a man must not, if his  
faith shall serve him, have charity therewith, and a *purpose* to do  
good works. ‘Yes,’ quoth he, ‘that he must, if he have age and discretion  
thereto.’ Then was it answered him that then was all gone that  
10 *Faith alone doth not justify* himself had said before. For then did not  
*man.* *faith alone* justify the man; but the  
*charity*, with the *purpose* of good works,  
must, by his own granting, needs go therewith, or else would his  
faith justify nothing at all. For if he had never so great a faith,  
15 and never so sure a belief, in God’s ‘promises’—yet if he purposed to  
do no good deeds therewith... but peradventure harm, he should  
have little justification by his ‘only faith.’ And therefore it was  
false that he had said—‘a man is never the better for his good works’—  
while his good works be so taken and reputed with God... that the  
20 *purpose* of them, yet undone, so far forth worketh to his justification...  
that without that purpose he cannot be justified. And that it is also  
false that he said—that ‘faith alone justifies a man’—when himself is  
fain to grant that faith without charity and purpose of good  
works cannot justify; which is as much to say as *faith alone cannot*  
25 justify.

“To this he answered that he had said that ‘faith only’ *was* sufficient,  
and that ‘faith alone’ *doth* justify, because that if a man  
had faith... it could not be but that he should work good works.  
For faith, he said, could never be idle—as the fire must needs burn  
30 and give heat. And therefore as a man may say “The fire is enough  
to burn a tree,” though he speak nothing of heat... and yet the fire  
doth it by heat; and a man may say “The fire maketh me see by  
night,” and yet the fire doth it but by the light: so may a man  
say that “faith doth save us” though faith do it not without  
35 hope and charity and other virtuous works... because that faith

1 *his*: its // *can do none other*: cannot do otherwise    3 *tale*: account  
6 *therefor*: i.e., for    7, 21 *purpose*: intention  
8–9 *have . . . thereto*: is old enough and has enough reasoning capacity for that  
10, 22 *himself*: he himself    14, 15 *never so*: no matter how  
15 *purposed*: intended    19 *while*: since // *reputed*: regarded // *with*: by  
20, 23 *purpose of*: i.e., intention of doing  
20 *yet undone*: i.e., when they are not yet done    23 *fain*: forced  
26 *faith only*: faith alone    29, 30 *as*: just as  
31 *though*: even if // *speak nothing of*: makes no mention of

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.’

5 “Then was it said unto him that albeit a man might so speak 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 forth good works.* truth as the other. Now, whereas ye make 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  
 30 *Faith may be without charity.*      faith may be without charity—and that  
    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*  
 10 faith, indeed, is a faith in the *promises* of *God*. And the devil is  
 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,  
 25 *Rom 4:3* et reputatum est ei ad iustitiam’ (‘Abraham  
*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,  
 30 *Gal 2:21; Rom 3:24* but not with God’); ‘Si ex operibus . . . , Christus  
 pro nobis gratis mortuus est’ (‘If we be  
 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.'

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5 “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.’

10 “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

15 *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

20 *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

25 *Lk 11:41* saith also, “Do that and thou shalt have life.” At which time he 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”).

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 as it is understood that faith must needs go with good works  
10 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  
30 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 *tail*: 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) disliked 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 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 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, 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



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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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  
 15 forth to win again in his way that he before cast himself  
 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

5 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.” 4.11

### *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  
15 can do, neither of themselves nor with help of grace? Or, if any be  
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  
20 God's grace, labor to submit, and subdue the rebellion of, their  
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 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  
 10 *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  
 30 *A convenient answer* sect was served in a good town in *Almaine*. Which when he had robbed a 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*.

5 “**T**he fear of these outrages and mischiefs to follow upon such sects  
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,”  
10 said I to your friend, “answer the points which ye moved  
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  
15 his flock should fight in any wise, neither in the defense of themselves  
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

Gregory Nazianzen, Saint Chrysostom, and many other doctors  
of the Church)—yet in all this time, by a long space of many years,  
was there never other punishment done upon them, in effect, but  
only redargution and reproving by dispicions (either in words  
5 or writing), or condemnations of their opinions in synods and  
councils, or, finally, excommunications and putting out of Christ’s  
flock; saving that they were put sometimes to silence upon pain  
of forfeiture of certain money. But, as I said before, if the heretics  
had never begun with violence; though they had used all the  
10 ways they could to allect the people by preaching; though they  
had therewith done as Luther doth now, and as Muhammad did  
before—bring up opinions pleasant to the people, giving them  
liberty to lewdness—yet if they had set violence aside, good Christian  
people had peradventure yet unto this day used less violence toward  
15 them than they do now. And yet were heresy well worthy to  
be as sore punished as any other fault, since there is no fault that  
*No fault offendeth God more* more offendeth God. Howbeit, while  
*than heresy.* they forbore violence... there was little  
violence done to them. And surely though  
20 God be able against all persecution to preserve and increase his  
faith among the people—as he did in the beginning for all the  
persecution of the paynims and the Jews—yet is it no reason to  
look that Christian princes should suffer the Catholic, Christian people  
to be oppressed by Turks... or by heretics worse than Turks.”  
25 “By my soul,” quoth your friend, “I would all the world were all agreed  
to take all violence and compulsion away upon all sides, Christian and  
heathen, and that no man were constrained to believe but as he could  
be by grace, wisdom, and good words induced, and then he that  
would go to God, go on a God’s-name, and he that will go to the  
30 devil, the devil go with him.”  
“Forsooth,” quoth I, “and if it so were, yet would I little doubt but that  
the good seed being sown among the people... should as well come  
up, and be as strong to save itself, as the cockle... and God should  
always be stronger than the devil. But yet be heretics and heathen  
35 men in two diverse cases. For in case the Turks, Saracens, and

3 *in effect*: virtually; just about    4 *redargution*: refutation  
4 *reproving*: proving (them) erroneous // *dispicions*: disputations  
4–5 *either in words or writing*: either oral or written    5 *opinions*: theses; contentions  
8 *certain*: a certain amount of    9 *begun with*: started with the; initiated the  
9, 10 *though*: even if    10 *allect*: lure  
12 *bring up opinions*: give utterance to contentions // *pleasant*: pleasing  
13 *liberty to lewdness*: license for badness // *set violence aside*: left violence alone  
14 *had peradventure . . . used*: would perhaps . . . have used    16 *sore*: severely  
16 *fault*: crime    17 *while*: as long as    22 *of*: i.e., inflicted by // *paynims*: pagans  
22 *no reason*: not reasonable    23 *look*: expect // *suffer*: allow    25 *would*: wish  
35 *diverse*: different // *case*: i.e., the case that

paynims 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  
 5 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  
 10 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  
 paynims, that lived as voluptuously as the Turks do now. But  
 since violence *is* used on that part, and Christ's faith *not* there  
 15 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  
 20 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  
 25 *men's souls to heaven*—we should seem  
 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.  
 30 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  
 35 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

5 “We read that in the time of Saint Augustine, the great doctor of the 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.

4.13

“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 estraited 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 *estraited* . . . *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  
 30 men thereabout, what thing had been the occasion that so good 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 help of God in great victories given to good Christian princes by his almighty 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 reproved and rebuked in him... that he

10 *Mt 16:23* called him therefor Satan: yet is it  
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  
15 their utter undoing not only temporal, but also, of a great part,  
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,

15 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

20 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

25 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  
15 *pride*—that way should make them prouder... and set the more by  
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  
20 Mamluks or Janissaries as their fathers were... and may be had  
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 **"F**orsooth," 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



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

10 *Good counsel* Church believeth. Now would I give 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.”

30 “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 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

4.16

*Lk 12:9* 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  
vestmentis ovium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces’ (‘Beware of  
the false prophets, that come to you in the clothing of sheep... and yet  
withinforth 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 rought 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  
30 the only work of God that hath destroyed those works, which  
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  
35 to make the people have them in authority, they devise new sects  
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 // *rought*: 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 railleth 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 railleth 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 reproved! 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 *reproved*: 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.

5 “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.

10 “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

20 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

25 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

30 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!—  
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 abroach, 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 *abroach*: 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.’

5 And this is much less, that the clergy doth to heretics, than Saint  
*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  
*1 Cor 5:1–5* would have all men do now. Did not  
 15 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  
*Mt 7:15* evident example of Christ’s blessed apostles.  
 35 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

*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)  
 10    that the clergy might in this case right sore procure against heretics,  
      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 *temporalty*, 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 // *temporalty*: 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* very near sib to the infidelity of those

10 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



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