

# THE PARSON'S TALE

## The Parson's Prologue

What time the manciple his tale had ended,  
The sun down from the south line had descended  
So low that he was not, unto my sight,  
Degrees full nine and twenty yet in height.  
Four of the clock it was then, as I guess:  
Four feet eleven, little more or less,  
My shadow was extended then and there,  
A length as if the shadow parted were  
In six-foot equal parts, as I have shown.  
Therewith the moon's high exaltation known,  
I mean the sign of Libra, did ascend  
As we were entering a village-end;  
Whereat our host, since wont to guide was he,  
As in this case, our jolly company,  
Said in this wise: "Now, masters, every one,  
We lack no tales except a single one.  
My judgment is fulfilled and my decree,  
I think that we have heard from each degree.  
Almost fulfilled is all my ordinance;  
I pray to God to give him right good chance  
Who tells to us this story pleasantly.  
Sir priest," he asked, "can you a vicar be?  
Are you a parson? Tell truth, by your fay!  
Be what you will, break not our jolly play;  
For every man, save you, has told his tale,  
Unbuckle, show us what is in your mail;  
For truly, I think, judging by your cheer,  
You should knit up a mighty matter here.  
Tell us a fable now, by Cock's dear bones!"  
This parson then replied to him at once:  
"You'll get no foolish fable told by me;  
For Paul, when writing unto Timothy,  
Reproves all those that veer from truthfulness  
And tell false fables and such wretchedness.  
Why should I sow chaff out of my own fist  
When I may sow good wheat, if I but list?  
But if, I say, you something wish to hear  
In which the moral virtues will appear,  
And if you now will give me audience,  
I will right gladly, in Christ's reverence,  
Give you such lawful pleasure as I can.  
But trust me, since I am a Southern man,  
I can't romance with 'rum, ram, ruff, by letter,  
And, God knows, rhyme I hold but little better;  
But if you wish the truth made plain and straight,

A pleasant tale in prose I will relate  
To weave our feast together at the end.  
May Jesus, of His grace, the wit me send  
To show you, as we journey this last stage,  
The way of that most perfect pilgrimage  
To heavenly Jerusalem on high.  
And if you will vouchsafe, anon shall I  
Begin my tale, concerning which, I pray,  
Choose what you will, I can no better say.  
Yet this my meditation is, I own,  
Perhaps not free from errors to be shown  
By clerks, since I am not a learned man;  
I do but grasp the meaning as I can.  
Therefore, I do protest, I shall prepare  
To take what comes, and all correction bear."  
When he had spoken thus, we all agreed,  
For, as it seemed to us, 'twas right indeed  
To end with something virtuous in its sense,  
And so to give him time and audience.  
We bade our host that he to him convey  
The wish of all that he begin straightway.  
Our host, he had the very words for all.  
"Sir priest," said he, "may good to you befall!  
Say what you wish, and we will gladly hear."  
And after that he added, for his ear:  
"Tell us," he said, "your meditation grown,  
But pray make haste, the sun will soon be down;  
Be fruitful, tell us in a little space,  
And to do well God send to you His grace!"  
Explicit prohemium

## The Parson's Tale

Our sweet Lord God of Heaven, Who will destroy no man, but would have all come unto the knowledge of Him and to the blessed life that is everlasting, admonishes us by the Prophet Jeremiah, who says thus: "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths (that is to say, the old wisdom) where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls," etc. Many are the spiritual ways that lead folk unto Our Lord Jesus Christ and to the Kingdom of Glory. Of which ways there is a right noble way and a proper one, which will not fail either man or woman who through sin has gone astray from the right way to the Heavenly Jerusalem; and this way is called penitence, as to which man should gladly hear and inquire with all his heart, in order that he may

learn what penitence is, and why it is called penitence, and in how many ways penitence functions, and how many kinds of penitence there are, and what things appertain and are necessary to penitence, and what things hinder it.

Saint Ambrose says that “penitence is the mourning of man for the sin that he has done, and the resolve to do no more anything for which he ought to mourn.” And another doctor says: “Penitence is the lamenting of man, who sorrows for his sin and punishes himself because he has done amiss.” Penitence, under certain circumstances, is the true repentance of a man that goes in sorrow and other pain for his misdeeds. And that he shall be truly penitent, he shall first regret the sins that he has done, and steadfastly purpose in his heart to make oral confession, and to do penance, and nevermore to do anything for which he ought to feel regret or to mourn, and to continue on good works; or else his repentance will avail him nothing. For, as says Saint Isidore: “He is a mocker and a liar and no true penitent who does again a thing for which he ought to repent.” Weeping, when not accompanied by a refusal to sin, shall not avail. But, nevertheless, men should hope that every time a man falls, be it never so often, he may arise through penitence, if he have grace; but certainly there is great doubt of this. For, as Saint Gregory says: “With difficulty shall he arise out of sin who is burdened with the burden of evil habit.” And therefore repentant folk, who keep from sin and abandon sin ere sin abandon them, Holy Church holds them to be sure of their salvation. And he that sins and verily repents in his last moments, Holy Church yet hopes for his salvation, what of the great mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ, because of his repentance; but take you the certain way.

And now, since I have declared unto you what penitence is, now shall you understand that there are three deeds required by penitence. The first deed is that a man be baptized after he has sinned. Saint Augustine says: “Save he be repentant for his former sinful life, he shall not begin to lead the new clean life.” For truly, if he be baptized without repentance for his old offence, he receives the sign of baptism but not the grace nor the remission of his sins, until he have true repentance. Another defect is this, that men do deadly sin after they have received baptism. The third defect is that men fall into venial sins after their baptism, and from day to day. Thereof Saint Augustine says that “penitence of good and humble folk is the penitence of every day.”

The kinds of penitence are three. One of them is public, another is general, and the third is private. That form of penitence which is public is of two kinds: as to be expelled from Holy Church in Lent, for the slaughter

of children and such-like things. Another is, when a man has sinned openly, of which sin the shame is openly spoken of in the community; and then Holy Church, by judgment rendered, constrains him to do open penance. Common or general penitence is when priests enjoin men collectively in certain cases, as, peradventure, to go naked on pilgrimages, or barefoot. Private penitence is that which men do continually for their sins, whereof we confess privately and receive a private penance.

Now shall you understand what is necessary to a true and perfect penitence. And this stands upon three things: contrition of heart, confession by word of mouth, and restitution. As to which Saint John Chrysostom says: “Penitence constrains a man to accept cheerfully every pain that is put upon him, with contrition of heart and oral confession, with restitution; and in doing of all acts of humility.” And this is a fruitful penitence for three things wherein we anger Our Lord Jesus Christ; that is to say, by delight in thinking, by recklessness in speaking, and by wicked sinful works. And over against these wicked offences is penitence, which may be likened unto a tree.

The root of this tree is contrition, which hides itself away in the heart of him who is truly repentant, just as the root of another tree hides within the earth. From the root contrition springs a trunk that bears branches and leaves of confession and the fruit of penance, As to which Christ says in His gospel: “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.” For by this fruit may men know this tree, and not by the root that is hidden in the heart of man, nor by the branches, nor by the leaves of confession. And therefore Our Lord Jesus Christ says thus: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” From this root, too, springs a seed of grace, the which seed is the mother of security, and this seed is eager and hot. The grace of this seed springs from God, through remembrance of the day of doom and the pains of Hell. Of this matter says Solomon: “Fear the Lord, and depart from evil.” The heat of this seed is the love of God and the desiring of the joy everlasting. This heat draws the heart of man unto God and causes him to hate his sin. For truly there is nothing that tastes so well to a child as the milk of its nurse, nor is there anything more abhorrent to it than this same milk when it is mingled with other food. just so, to the sinful man who loves his sin, it seems that it is sweeter than anything else; but from the time that he begins to love devoutly Our Lord Jesus Christ, and desires the life everlasting, there is to him nothing more abominable. For truly the law of God is the love of God; whereof David the prophet says: “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.” He that loves God keeps His law and His word. The Prophet Daniel saw this tree in spirit following upon the vision

of King Nebuchadnezzar, when he counselled him to do penance. Penance is the tree of life to those who receive it, and he that holds himself in true penitence is blessed, according to the opinion of Solomon.

In this penitence or contrition man shall understand four things, that is to say, what contrition is, and what the causes are that move a man to contrition, and how he should be contrite, and what contrition avails the soul. Then it is thus: that contrition is the real sorrow that a man receives within his heart for his sins, with firm purpose to confess them and to do penance and nevermore to do sin. And this sorrow shall be in this manner, as says Saint Bernard: "It shall be heavy and grievous and sharp and poignant in the heart." First, because man has offended his Lord and his Creator; and more sharp and poignant because he has offended his Heavenly Father; and yet more sharp and poignant because he has angered and offended Him Who redeemed him, Who with His precious blood has delivered us from the bonds of sin and from the cruelty of the Devil and from the pains of Hell.

The causes that ought to move a man to contrition are six. First, a man should remember his sins, yet see to it that this same remembrance be not to him in any wise a delight, but only great shame and sorrow for his guilt. For Job says: that sinful men do things that ought to be confessed. And therefore Hezekiah says: "I will remember all the years of my life, in bitterness of heart." And God says in the Apocalypse: "Remember from whence thou art fallen." For before that time when first you sinned, you were the children of God and members of the Kingdom of God; but because of your sin you are become slavish and vile, and the children of the Fiend, hated of the angels, the slander of Holy Church, and food of the false serpent. You are perpetual fuel for the fire of Hell. And yet more vile and abominable, for you offend often and often, like the dog that returns to his vomit. And you are even yet more vile, for your long continuation in sin and your sinful habits, for which you are as filthy in your sin as a beast in its dung. Such thoughts cause a man, to take shame to himself for his sinning, and not delight, as God says by the Prophet Ezekiel: "Thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed." Truly, sins are the ways that lead folk unto Hell.

The second reason why a man ought to have contempt for sin is this: that, as Saint Peter says, "He that sinneth is the slave of sin." And sin puts a man into deep thralldom. And thereupon the Prophet Ezekiel says: "I went sorrowfully, in abhorrence of myself." And truly, well ought a man to abhor sin and to release himself from that thralldom and degradation. And see what Seneca says about this matter. He says thus: "Though I knew that neither

God nor man should ever be cognizant of it, yet would I disdain to commit a sin." And the same Seneca also says: "I am born to greater things than to be thrall to my body, or than to make of my body a thrall." Nor a viler thrall may man or woman make of his or her body than by giving that body over to sin. And were it the lowest churl, or the lowest woman, that lives, and the least worth, yet is he or she then more vile and more in servitude. Ever from the higher degree than man falls, the more is he enthralled, and by so much the more to God and to the world is he vile and abominable. O good God! Well ought a man to have disdain of sin; since, because of sin, whereas he was once free, now is he in bondage. And thereupon Saint Augustine says: "If thou have disdain for thy servant, if he offend or sin, have thou then disdain that thou shouldest do any sin." Have regard of your worth, that you be not foul unto yourself. Alas! Well ought they then to disdain to be servants and thralls to sin, and to be sorely ashamed of themselves, when God of His endless goodness has set them in high place, or given them understanding, bodily strength, health, beauty, prosperity, and redeemed them with His heart's blood, who now so unnaturally, in face of His nobleness, requite Him so vilely as to slaughter their own souls. O good God! You women, who are of so great beauty, remember the proverb of Solomon, who says: "A fair woman who is the fool of her body is like a gold ring in the snout of a sow." For just as a sow roots deep into every ordure, so does she root her beauty into the stinking filth of sin.

The third cause that ought to move a man to contrition is fear of the day of doom and of the horrible pains of Hell. For as Saint Jerome says: "Every time that I remember the day of doom I quake; for when I eat or drink or do whatever thing, ever it seems to me that the trump sounds in my ear, bidding the dead arise and come to judgment." O good God! Greatly ought a man to fear such a judgment, "Where we shall be all," as Saint Paul says, "before the throne of Our Lord Jesus Christ." And there we shall compose a general congregation, whence no man shall absent himself. For truly there shall avail neither esoin nor excuse. And not only shall our faults be judged, but all our deeds shall openly be made known. As Saint Bernard says: "There shall no pleading avail, and no trickery; we shall give reckoning for every idle word." There shall we have a judge that cannot be corrupted or deceived. And why? Because, in truth, all our thoughts are known unto Him; nor for prayer nor for bribing shall He be corrupted. And therefore says Solomon: "The wrath of God will spare no one, either for prayer or gifts." Therefore, at the day of doom, there shall be no hope of escape. Wherefore, as says Saint Anselm: "Great anguish shall all sinful folk have at that time;

there shall the stern and angry judge sit above, and under Him the horrible pit of Hell, open to destroy him who must acknowledge his sins, which sins shall be openly showed before God and before all creatures. And on the left side more devils than any heart can think, to harry and to draw the sinful souls to the punishment of Hell. And within the hearts of folk shall be the tearing of conscience and without shall be the world all burning. Whither then shall the wretched sinful man flee to hide himself? Certainly he shall not hide; he must come forth and show himself." For truly, as says Saint Jerome: "The earth shall cast him forth and the sea also; aye, and the air, which shall be filled with thunders and with lightnings." Now, indeed, whoso well thinks of these things, I suppose that his sin shall not be a delight within him, but a great sorrow, for fear of the pain of Hell. And therefore said Job to God: "Let me take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness as darkness itself: and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Lo, here may it be seen that Job prayed for respite to weep and to bewail his trespass; for indeed one day of respite is better than all the treasure of the world. And for as much as man may acquit himself before God by penitence in this world, and not by treasure, therefore should he pray to God to grant him respite for a while to weep and to bewail his sins. For truly, all the sorrow that a man might feel from the beginning of the world is but a little thing in comparison with the sorrows of Hell. As to the reason why Job called Hell the "land of darkness," it is to be understood that he called it "land" or "earth" because it is stable and never shall fail; "dark" because he that is in Hell lacks the materials for light. For truly the dark light that shall come out of the fire that burns forever shall turn him all to pain who is in Hell; for it shall show unto him the horrible devils that torment him. "Covered with the darkness of death:" that is to say, that he who is in Hell shall lack the sight of God; for truly, to see God is life everlasting. "The darkness of death" is the sin which the wretched man has done, which hinders his seeing the face of God; just as does a cloud that comes between us and the sun. "Land of ill ease:" because there are three kinds of pains against three things that folk of the world have in this present life, that is to say, honors, delights, and riches. Over against honors they have in Hell shame and confusion. For well you know that men call "honor" the reverence that man gives to man; but in Hell is no honor or reverence. For indeed no more reverence shall be done there to a king than to a knave. As to which God says, by the Prophet Jeremiah: "They that scorn me shall be scorned." "Honor" is also called great lordship; but there no man

shall serve another, save to his harm and torment. "Honor," again, subsists in great dignity and rank; but in Hell all they shall be trodden upon by devils. And God says: "The horrible devils shall go and come upon the heads of the damned." And this is because the higher they were in this life, the lower shall they lie and be defiled in Hell. Against the riches of this world shall they have the misery of poverty; and this poverty shall be of four kinds: lack of treasure, whereof David says: "They that trust in their wealth, boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, they shall sleep in the darkness of death, and nothing shall they find in their hands of all their treasure." And, moreover, the misery of Hell shall consist of lack of food and drink. For God says thus, through Moses: "They shall be wasted with hunger, and the birds of Hell shall devour them with bitter death, and the gall of the dragon shall be their drink, and the venom of the dragon their morsels." And, furthermore, their misery shall be for lack of clothing, for they shall be naked of body save for the fire wherein they burn, and for other filth; and naked shall they be of soul, devoid of all virtues, which are the clothing of the soul. Where shall be then the gay robes and the soft sheets and the soft shirts? Behold what God says by the prophet Isaiah: "Under them shall be strewed moths and their covering shall be of the worms of Hell." And still further, their misery shall lie in lack of friends; for he is not poor who has good friends; but there no friend; for neither God nor any other shall be friend to them, and each of them shall hate all others with a deadly hatred. "The sons and the daughters shall rebel against father and mother, and kindred against kindred, and each of them shall curse and despise the others," both day and night, as says God through the Prophet Micah. And the loving people that once loved each other so passionately, each of them would eat the other if he might. For how should they love in the torments of Hell who hated each other in the prosperity of this life? For trust it well, their carnal love was deadly hate; as says the Prophet David: "Whoso loveth wickedness hateth his own soul." And whoso hates his own soul, truly he may love no other, in any wise. And therefore, in Hell is no solace nor any friendship, but ever the more fleshly relationships there are in Hell, the more cursings and the more deadly hates there are among them. And, again, they shall lack every kind of pleasure; for truly, pleasures are according to the appetites of the five senses, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. But in Hell their sight shall be full of darkness and of smoke, and therefore full of tears; and their hearing full of wailing and the gnashing of teeth, as says Jesus Christ; their nostrils shall be full of a stinking smell. And, as the Prophet Isaiah says, "their savouring shall be of bitter gall." And as for



touch, all the body shall be covered with "fire that never shall be quenched and with worms that never shall die," as God says by the mouth of Isaiah. And for as much as they shall not think that they may die of pain, and by death thus flee from pain, then may they understand the words of Job, who said, "There is the shadow of death." Certainly a shadow has the likeness of that whereof it is the shadow, but the shadow is not the substance. Just so it is with the pain of Hell; it is like unto death because of the horrible anguish. And why? Because it pains forever, and as if they should die at every moment; but indeed they shall not die. For as Saint Gregory says: "To these wretched captives shall be given death without death, and end without end, and want without ceasing." And thereupon says Saint John the Evangelist: "They shall seek for death and they shall not find it; and they shall desire to die and death shall flee from them." And Job, also, says: "Death, without any order." And though it be that God has created all things in right order, and nothing at all without order, but all things are ordered and numbered; yet, nevertheless, they that are damned have no order, nor hold to any order. For the earth shall bear them no fruit. For, as the Prophet David says: "God shall destroy the fruits of the earth from them." No water shall give them moisture, nor the air refreshment, nor the fire a light. For, as Saint Basil says: "The burning of the fire of this world shall God send into Hell unto the damned souls there, but the light and the radiance thereof shall be given in Heaven unto His children"—just as the good man gives flesh to his children and bones to his dogs. And since they shall have no hope of escape, Saint Job says at the last that horror and grisly fear shall dwell there without end. Horror is always the fear of evil that is to come, and this fear shall dwell forever in the hearts of the damned. And therefore have they lost all their hope, and for seven causes. First, because God their judge shall be without mercy to them; they may not please Him, nor may they please any of His saints; they can give nothing for their ransom; they shall have no voice wherewith to speak to Him; they cannot flee from pain; and they have no goodness within themselves which they might show to deliver them out of pain. And therefore says Solomon: "The wicked man dieth; and when he is dead he shall have no hope of escaping from pain." Whosoever, then, will well understand these pains, and bethink him well that he has deserved these very pains for his sins, certainly he shall have more longing to sigh and weep than ever to sing and play. For, as Solomon says: "Whoso shall have the wisdom to know the pains that have been established and ordained for the punishment of pain, he will feel sorrow." "This same knowledge," says Saint Augustine, "maketh a man to bewail within his heart."

The fourth point that ought to cause a man to feel contrition is the unhappy memory of the good that he has left here on earth; also the good that he has lost. Truly, the good deeds that he has left are either those that he wrought before he fell into mortal sin, or the good deeds he did while he lived in sin. Indeed the good deeds he did before he fell into sin have been all deadened and stultified and rendered null and void by the repeated sinning. The other good deeds, which he wrought while he lay in mortal sin, they are utterly dead as to the effect they might have had on his life everlasting in Heaven. And then the same good deeds that have been rendered null by repeated sinning, which good works he wrought while he stood in a state of grace, shall never quicken again without an utter penitence. And thereof God says, by the mouth of Ezekiel: "If the righteous man shall turn again from his righteousness, and do wickedness, shall he live?" Nay, for all the good works that he has wrought shall never be held in memory, for he shall die in his sin. And thereupon, as to that same chapter, Saint Gregory says thus: "That we shall understand this principally: that when we do mortal sin it is for naught that we tell of or draw from memory the good works that we have wrought before." For, certainly, in the doing of mortal sin there is no trusting to the help of good that we have wrought before; that is to say, as it affects the everlasting life in Heaven. But notwithstanding this, the good deeds quicken again and return again, and help and are of avail in attaining the everlasting life in Heaven, when we have contrition. But indeed the good deeds that men do while they are in deadly sin, because they are done in deadly sin, shall never quicken again. For truly, that thing which never had life may never quicken; nevertheless, albeit these deeds avail nothing as to the perdurable life, yet they help to lighten the pains of Hell, or else to acquire temporal riches, or else, because of them, God will enlighten and illumine the heart of the sinful man to be repentant; and also they avail in accustoming a man to the doing of good deeds, to the end that the Fiend has less power over his soul. And thus the compassionate Lord Jesus Christ wills that no good work be utterly lost; for in somewhat it shall avail. But for as much as the good deeds that men do while they are in a state of grace are all stultified by sin ensuing; and, also, since all the good works that men do while they are in mortal sin are utterly dead, in so far as the life everlasting is concerned, well may that man who does no good work sing that new French song, *J'ai tout perdu mon temps et mon labeur*. For certainly, sin bereaves a man of both goodness of nature and the goodness of grace. For indeed the grace of the Holy Ghost is like fire, which cannot be idle; for fire fails anon as it forgoes its working, and even so does grace fail immediately it forsakes

its work. Then loses the sinful man the goodness of glory, which is promised only to good men who suffer and toil. Well then may he sorrow, who owes all his life to God, as long as he has lived and as long as he shall live, and who yet has no goodness wherewith to repay his debt to God. For trust well, "he shall give account," as Saint Bernard says, "of all the good things that have been given him in this present life, and of how he has used them; in so much that there shall not perish a hair of his head, nor shall a moment of an hour perish of all his time, that he shall not be called upon to give a reckoning for."

The fifth thing that ought to move a man to contrition is remembrance of the passion that Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for our sins. For, as Saint Bernard says: "While I live I will keep in remembrance the travail that Our Lord Christ suffered in preaching; His weariness in travail; His temptations when He fasted; His long watchings when He prayed; His tears when He wept for pity of good people; the grievous and the shameful and the filthy things that men said of Him; the foul sputum that men spat into His face; the foul buffets that men gave Him; the foul grimaces and the chidings that men said; the nails wherewith He was nailed to the cross; and all the rest of His passion, which he suffered for my sins and not for his own guilt." And you shall understand that in man's sin is every order or ordinance turned upside-down. For it is true that God and reason and sensuality and the body of man have been so ordained and established that, of these four things, the next higher shall have lordship over the lower; as thus: God shall have lordship over reason, and reason over sensuality, and sensuality over the body of man. But, indeed, when man sins, all of this order or ordinance is turned upside-down. Therefore, then, for as much as the reason of man will not be subject to nor obedient to God, Who is man's Lord by right, therefore it loses the lordship that it should hold over sensuality and also over the body of man. And why? Because sensuality rebels then against reason; and in that way reason loses the lordship over sensuality and over the body. For just as reason is rebel to God, just so is sensuality rebel to reason, and the body also. And truly, this confusion and this rebellion Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered upon His precious body, and paid full dearly thus, and hear you now in what wise. For as much, then, as reason is rebel to God, therefore is man worthy to have sorrow and to die. This Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for mankind after He had been betrayed by His disciple, and secured and bound "so that the blood burst out at every nail of His hands," as says Saint Augustine. Moreover, for as much as reason of man will not subdue sensuality when it may, therefore man is worthy of shame; and this suffered Our Lord Jesus Christ for man when they spat in His face.

Furthermore, for as much, then, as the wretched body of man is rebel both to reason and to sensuality" therefore is it worthy of death. And this Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for man upon the cross, where there was no part of His body free from great pain and bitter passion. And all this Jesus Christ suffered, Who never did any wrong. And therefore it may be reasonably said of Jesus thus: "Too much am I tortured for things the punishment of which I do not deserve, and too much disgraced for shame that belongs to man." And therefore may the sinful man well say, as says Saint Bernard: "Accursed be the bitterness of my sin, for which there must be suffered so much bitterness." For truly, according to the diverse discordances of our wickedness, was the passion of Jesus Christ ordained in divers ways, as thus. Certainly sinful man's soul is betrayed unto the Devil by covetousness of temporal prosperity, and scorned by deceit when he chooses carnal delights; and it is tormented by impatience under adversity, and spat upon by servitude and subjection to sin; and at the last it is slain forever. For this confusion by sinful man was Jesus Christ first betrayed and afterwards bound, Who came to loose us from sin and pain. Then was He scorned, Who should have been only honored in all things. Then was His face, which all mankind ought to have desired to look upon, since into that face angels desire to look, villainously spat upon. Then was He scourged, Who had done nothing wrong; and finally, then was He crucified and slain. So was accomplished the word of Isaiah: "He was wounded for our misdeeds and defiled for our felonies." Now, since Jesus Christ took upon Himself the punishment for all our wickedness, much ought sinful man to weep and to bewail that for his sins the Son of God in Heaven should endure all this pain.

The sixth thing that ought to move a man to contrition is the hope of three things; that is to say, forgiveness of sin, and the gift of grace to do well, and the glory of Heaven, wherewith God shall reward a man for his good deeds. And for as much as Jesus Christ gives us these gifts of His largess and of His sovereign bounty, therefore is He called Iesus Nazarenus rex Iudeorum. Jesus means "saviour" or "salvation," in whom men shall hope to have forgiveness of sins, which is, properly, salvation from sins. And therefore said the angel to Joseph: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, Who shall save His people from their sins." And thereof says Saint Peter: "There is no other name under Heaven given to any man, whereby a man may be saved, save only Jesus." Nazarenus is as much as to say "flourishing," wherein a man may hope that He Who gives him remission of sins shall give him also the grace to do well. For in the flower is hope of fruit in time to come; and in forgiveness of sins is hope of grace to do

well. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," says Jesus: "if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." That is to say, by the good works that he shall do, which good works are the food of God; "and he shall sup with Me"- by the great joy that I shall give him. Thus may man hope, for his deeds of penitence, that God shall allow him to enter His Kingdom, as is promised unto him in the gospel.

Now shall a man understand in what manner shall be his contrition. I say, that it shall be universal and total; that is to say, a man shall be truly repentant for all the sins that he has done in delight of his thought; for delight is very dangerous. For there are two ways of acquiescence; one is called acquiescence of the affections, when a man is moved to do sin, and delights in long thinking thereon; and his reason well perceives that it is sin against the law of God, and yet his reason restrains not his foul delight or appetite, though he see well that it is opposed to the reverence that is due to God; although his reason consent not to do that sin in very deed, yet some doctors say that dwelling long on such delight is full dangerous, be it ever so little. And also a man should sorrow for all that he has ever desired against the law of God with perfect acquiescence of his reason; for there is no doubt of it, there is mortal sin in acquiescence. For truly, there is no mortal sin that was not first in man's thought, and after that in his delight, and so on unto acquiescence and unto deed. Wherefore I say, that many men never repent for such thoughts and delights, and never confess them, but only the actual performance of great sins. Wherefore I say that such wicked delights and wicked thoughts are subtle beguilers of those that shall be damned. Moreover, a man ought to sorrow for his wicked words as well as for his wicked deeds; for truly, the repentance for a single sin, unaccompanied by repentance for all other sins, or else repentance for all other sins and not for a single sin, shall not avail. For certainly God Almighty is all good; and therefore He forgives all or nothing. And thereupon says Saint Augustine: "I know certainly that God is the enemy of every sinner." And how then? He that continues to do one sin, shall he have forgiveness for the rest of his sins? No. Furthermore, contrition should be wondrous sorrowful and full of suffering; and for that God gives fully His mercy; and therefore, when my soul was suffering within me, I had remembrance of God, that my prayer might come unto Him. Moreover, contrition must be continual, and a man must keep and hold a steadfast purpose to shrive himself and to amend his way of life. For truly, while contrition lasts, man may continue to have hope of forgiveness; and of this comes hatred of sin, which destroys sin within himself and also in other folk, according to his ability. For which David says: "Ye that

love God hate wickedness." For trust this well, to love God is to love what He loves and to hate what He hates.

The last thing that man shall understand about contrition is this: What does contrition avail him? I say, that at times contrition delivers a man from sin; as to which David says: "I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." And just as contrition nothing avails without firm purpose of shrift, if man have opportunity, just so shrift itself is of little worth without contrition. Moreover, contrition destroys the prison of Hell and makes weak and feeble all the strength of all the devils, and restores the gifts of the Holy Ghost and of all good virtues; and it cleanses the soul of sin, and delivers the soul from the pain of Hell and from the company of the Devil, and from the servitude of sin, and restores it unto all spiritual good and to the company and communion of Holy Church. And furthermore, it makes of him who was formerly the son of anger to be the son of grace; and all these things are proved by holy writ. And therefore he that would set his understanding to these things, he were full wise; for truly, he should not then, in all his life, have desire to sin, but should give his body and all his heart to the service of Jesus Christ, and do Him homage. For truly, Our sweet Lord Jesus Christ has spared us so graciously in our follies that, if He had not pity on man's soul, a sorry song indeed might all of us sing.

*Explicit prima pars penitentie;  
Et sequitur secunda pars eiusdem*

The second part of penitence is confession, which is the sign of contrition. Now shall you understand what confession is, and whether it ought to be used or not, and which things are necessary to true confession.

First, you shall understand that confession is the true discovery of sins to the priest; I say "true," for a man must confess all the circumstances and conditions of his sin, in so far as he can. All must be told, and nothing excused or hidden, or covered up, and he must not vaunt his good deeds. And furthermore, it is necessary to understand whence his sins come, and how they increase, and what they are.

Of the birth of sins, Saint Paul says thus: that "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;... so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And this man was Adam, by whom sin entered into the world when he broke the commandment of God. And therefore, he that at first was so mighty that he should never have died became such a one as must needs die, whether he would or no; and all his progeny in this world, since they, in that man, sinned. Behold, in the state of innocence, when Adam and Eve were naked in Paradise, and had no shame for their nakedness, how that the serpent, which was the wiliest of all the beasts that God had

made, said to the woman: "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" And the woman said unto the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, 'Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'" And the serpent said unto the woman: "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and delectable in the sight, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat; and gave also unto her husband, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened. And when they knew that they were naked, they sewed fig-leaves together into a kind of breeches to hide their members. There may you see that mortal sin had first suggestion from the Fiend, who is here figured by the serpent; and afterward the delight of the flesh, as shown here by Eve; and after that the acquiescence of reason, as is shown by Adam. For trust this well, though it were that the Fiend tempted Eve, that is to say, the flesh, and the flesh delighted in the beauty of the forbidden fruit, certainly until reason, that is, Adam, consented to the eating of the fruit, yet stood he in the state of innocence. From that same Adam caught we all that original sin; for we are all descended from him in the flesh, engendered of vile and corrupt matter. And when the soul is put into a body, immediately is contracted original sin; and that which was at first merely the penalty of concupiscence becomes afterwards both penalty and sin. And therefore are we all born the sons of wrath and of everlasting damnation, were it not for the baptism we receive, which washes away the culpability; but, forsooth, the penalty remains within us, as temptation, and that penalty is called concupiscence. When it is wrongly disposed or established in man, it makes him desire, by the lust of the flesh, fleshly sin; desire, by the sight of his eyes, earthly things; and desire high place, what of the pride of his heart.

Now, to speak of the first desire, that is, concupiscence, according to the law for our sexual parts, which were lawfully made and by rightful word of God; I say, for as much as man is not obedient to God, Who is his Lord, therefore is the flesh disobedient to Him, through concupiscence, which is also called the nourishing of and the reason for sin. Therefore all the while that a man has within himself the penalty of concupiscence, it is impossible but that he will be sometimes tempted and moved in his flesh to do sin. And this shall not fail so long as he lives; it may well grow feeble and remote by virtue of baptism and by the grace of God through penitence; but it shall never be fully quenched so that he shall never

be moved within himself, unless he be cooled by sickness or my maleficence of sorcery or by opiates. For behold what Saint Paul says: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary, the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things, that ye would." The same Saint Paul, after his great penance on water and on land (on water by night and by day, in great peril and in great pain; on land in famine, in thirst, in cold, and naked, and once stoned almost unto death), yet said he: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And Saint Jerome, when he had long lived in the desert, where he had no company but that of wild beasts, where he had no food but herbs, with only water to drink, and no bed but the naked earth, for which his flesh was black as an Ethiopian's with heat and well-nigh destroyed with cold, yet said he that the heat of lechery boiled through all his body. Wherefore I know well and surely that they are deceived who say that they are never tempted in the flesh. Witness Saint James the apostle, who says that everyone is tempted in his own concupiscence. That is to say, each of us has cause and occasion to be tempted by the sin that is nourished in the body. And thereupon says Saint John the Evangelist: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Now shall you understand in what manner sin waxes or increases in man. The first thing to be considered is this same nurturing of sin, whereof I spoke before, this same fleshly concupiscence. And after that comes the subjection to the Devil, that is to say, the Devil's bellows, wherewith he blows into man the fire of concupiscence. And after that a man bethinks himself whether he will do, or not, the thing to which he is tempted. And then, if a man withstand and put aside the first enticement of his flesh and the Fiend, then it is no sin; and if it be that he do not, he feels anon a flame of delight. And then it is well to be wary, and to guard himself, else he will fall anon into acquiescence to sin; and then he will do it, if he have time and place. And of this matter Moses says that the Devil says thus: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." For certainly, just as a sword may part a thing in two pieces, just so acquiescence separates God from man. "And then will I slay him in his sinful deed." Thus says the Fiend. For truly, then is a man dead in soul. And thus is sin accomplished by temptation and by acquiescence; and then is the sin called actual.

Forsooth, sin is of two kinds; it is either venial or mortal sin. Verily, when man loves any creature more than he loves Jesus Christ our Creator, then is it mortal sin. And venial sin it is if a man love Jesus Christ less than he



ought. Forsooth the effect of this venial sin is very dangerous; for it diminishes more and more the love that man should have for God. And therefore, if a man charge himself with many such venial sins, then certainly, unless he discharge them occasionally by shriving, they may easily lessen in him all the love that he has for Jesus Christ; and in this wise venial sin passes over into mortal sin. Therefore let us not be negligent in ridding ourselves of venial sins. For the proverb has it: "Mony a mickle mak's a muckle." And hear this example. A huge wave of the sea comes sometimes with so great violence that it sinks a ship. And the same harm is caused sometimes by the small drops of water that enter through the little opening in the seam into the bilge of the ship, if men be so negligent that they do not discharge it in time. And therefore, though there be a difference between these two ways of sinking, nevertheless the ship is sunk. Just so it is sometimes with mortal sin, and with vexatious venial sins when they multiply in a man so greatly that the worldly things he loves, for which he venially sins, have grown as great in his heart as the love for God, or greater. And therefore, the love for everything that is not fixed or rooted in God, or done principally for than he love God's sake, though a man love it less. God, yet is it venial sin; and it is mortal sin when the love for anything weighs in the heart of man as much as the love for God, or more. "Mortal sin," as Saint Augustine says, "is when a man turns his heart from God, Who, is the truly sovereign goodness and may not change, and gives his heart unto things that may change and pass away." And true it is that if a man give his love, the which he owes all to God, with all his heart, unto a creature, then certainly so much of his love as he gives unto the said creature he takes away from God; and thereby does he sin. For he, who is debtor to God, yields not unto God all of his debt, which is to say, all the love of his heart.

Now since man understands generally what venial sin is, it is fitting to tell especially of sins which many a man perhaps holds not to be sins at all, and for which he shrives not himself; yet, nevertheless, they are sins. Truly, as clerics write, every time a man eats or drinks more than suffices for the sustenance of his body, it is certain that he thereby sins. And, too, when he speaks more than it is necessary it is sin. Also, when he hears not benignly the complaint of the poor. Also, when he is in health of body and will not fast when other folk fast, and that without a reasonable excuse. Also, when he sleeps more than he needs, or when he comes, for that reason, too late to church, or to other places where works of charity are done. Also, when he enjoys his wife without a sovereign desire to procreate children to the honor of God, or when he does it without intention to yield to his wife

the duty of his body. Also, when he will not visit the sick and the imprisoned, if he may do so. Also, if he love wife or child or any other worldly thing more than reason requires. Also, if he flatter or blandish more than, of necessity, he ought. Also, if he diminish or withdraw his alms to the poor. Also, if he prepare his food more delicately than is needful, or eat it too hastily or too greedily. Also, if he talk about vain and trifling matters in a church or at God's service, or if he be a user of idle words of folly or of obscenity; for he shall yield up an accounting of it at the day of doom. Also, when he promises or assures one that he will do what he cannot perform. Also, when he, through thoughtlessness or folly, slanders or scorns his neighbour. Also, when he suspects a thing to be evil when he has no certain knowledge of it. These things, and more without number, are sins, as Saint Augustine says.

Now shall men understand that while no earthly man may avoid all venial sins, yet may he keep them down by the burning love that he has to Our Lord Jesus Christ, and by prayer and confession, and by other good deeds. For, as Saint Augustine says: "If a man love God in such manner that all that he ever does is done in the love of God, and truly for the love of God, because he burns with the love of God: behold, then, how much a drop of water falling in a furnace harms or proves troublesome; and just so much vexes the venial sin a man who is perfect in the love of Christ." Men may also keep down venial sins by receiving deservedly the precious body of Jesus Christ; also by receiving holy water; by almsgiving; by general confession of confiteor at mass and at compline; and by the blessings of bishops and of priests, and by other good works.

*Explicit secunda pars penitentie  
Sequitur de septem peccatis mortalibus  
et eorum dependenciis  
Circumstanciis et speciebus*

Now it is a needful thing to tell which are the mortal sins, that is to say, the principal sins; they are all leashed together, but are different in their ways. Now they are called principal sins because they are the chief sins and the trunk from which branch all others. And the root of these seven sins is pride, which is the general root of all evils; for from this root spring certain branches, as anger, envy, acedia or sloth, avarice (or covetousness, for vulgar understanding), gluttony, and lechery. And each of these principal sins has its branches and its twigs, as shall be set forth and declared in the paragraphs following.

### *De Superbia*

And though it be true that no man can absolutely tell the number of the twigs and of the evil branches that spring from pride, yet will I show forth a number of them,

as you shall understand. There are disobedience, boasting, hypocrisy, scorn, arrogance, impudence, swelling of the heart, insolence, elation, impatience, strife, contumacy, presumption, irreverence, obstinacy, vainglory; and many another twig that I cannot declare. Disobedient is he that disobeys for spite the commandments of God, of his rulers, and of his spiritual father. Braggart is he that boasts of the evil or the good that he has done. Hypocrite is he that hides his true self and shows himself such as he is not. Scornor is he who has disdain for his neighbour, that is to say, for his fellow Christian, or who scorns to do that which he ought to do. Arrogant is he who thinks he has within himself those virtues which he has not, or who holds that he should so have them as his desert; or else he deems that he is that which he is not. Impudent is he who, for his pride's sake, has no shame for his sins. Swelling of heart is what a man has when he rejoices in evil that he has done. Insolent is he that despises in his judgments all other folk in comparing theirs with his worth, and with his understanding, and with his conversation, and with his bearing. Elated is he who will suffer neither a master nor a peer. Impatient is he who will not be taught nor reprov'd for his vice, and who, by strife, knowingly wars on truth and defends his folly. Contumax is he who, because of his indignation, is against all authority or power or those that are his rulers. Presumption is when a man undertakes an enterprise that he ought not to attempt, or one which he cannot accomplish; and that is called overconfidence. Irreverence is when men do not show honor where they ought, and themselves wait to be revered. Obstinacy is when man defends his folly and trusts too much in his own judgment. Vainglory is delight in pomp and temporal rank, and glorification in this worldly estate. Chattering is when men speak too much before folk, clattering like a mill and taking no care of what they say.

And then there is a private species of pride that waits to be saluted before it will salute, albeit the one who has it is of less worth than is the other, perchance; also, when he attends services in church he desires to sit, or else to go, before his neighbour in the aisle, or to kiss the pax before him, or to be censured before him, or to make offering before his neighbour, and similar things; all against his necessity, peradventure, save that in his heart and his will is such proud desire to be magnified and honored before the people.

Now there are two kinds of pride; one of them lies within the heart of man, and the other lies without. Whereof, truly, these aforesaid things, and more than I have named, appertain to that pride which is within the heart of man; for that other species of pride lies without. But notwithstanding, one of these species of pride is a sign of the existence of the other, just as the fresh bush

at the tavern door is a sign of the wine that is in the cellar. And this second kind of pride shows itself in many ways: as in speech and bearing, and in extravagant array of clothing; for truly, if there had been no sin in clothing, Christ would not have noted and spoken of the clothing of that rich man in the gospel. And, as Saint Gregory says, that same precious clothing is culpable for the glory and beauty of it, and for its softness, and for its strange new modes, and its fantastic ornamentation, and for its superfluity, and for the inordinate scantiness of it. Alas! May not men see, in our days, the sinfully costly array of clothing, especially in the matter of superfluity, or else in inordinate scantiness?

As to the first sin, it lies in the superfluity of clothing, which makes cloth so dear, to the harm of the people; not only the cost of embroidering, the elaborate notching or barring, the waved lines, the stripes, the twists, the diagonal bars, and similar waste of cloth in vanity; but there is also the costly furring of gowns, so much perforating with scissors to make holes, so much slashing with shears; and then the superfluity in length of the aforesaid gowns, trailing in the dung and in the mire, a-horseback and afoot, as well of man's clothing as of woman's, until all this trailing verily, in its effect, wastes, consumes, makes threadbare and rotten with dung the superfluity that rather should be given unto the poor; to the great harm of the aforesaid poor. And that in sundry wise: this is to say, the more that cloth is wasted, the more it costs the people because of its scarcity; and furthermore, if they would give such perforated and slashed clothing to the poor folk, it would not be suitable for their wearing, what of their state, nor sufficient to help their necessity to keep themselves from the fury of the elements. On the other hand, to speak of the horrible inordinate scantiness of clothing, let us notice these short-cut smocks or jackets, which, because of their shortness, cover not the shameful members of man, to the wicked calling of them to attention. Alas! Some of them show the very boss of their penis and the horrible pushed-out testicles that look like the malady of hernia in the wrapping of their hose; and the buttocks of such persons look like the hinder parts of a she-ape in the full of the moon. And moreover, the hateful proud members that they show by the fantastic fashion of making one leg of their hose white and the other red, make it seem that half their shameful privy members are flayed. And if it be that they divide their hose in other colours, as white and black, or white and blue, or black and red, and so forth, then it seems, by variation of colour, that the half of their privy members are corrupted by the fire of Saint Anthony, or by cancer, or by other such misfortune. As to the hinder parts of their buttocks, the thing is horrible to see. For, indeed, in that part of their body where they

purge their stinking ordure, that foul part they proudly show to the people in despite of decency, which decency Jesus Christ and His friends observed in their lives. Now, as to the extravagant array of women, God knows that though the faces of them seem chaste and gentle, yet do they advertise, by their attire, their lickerousness and pride. I say not that a moderate gaiety in clothing is unseemly, but certainly the superfluity or inordinate scantiness of clothing is reprehensible. Also, the sin of adornment or apparel lies in things that appertain to riding, as in too many fine horses that are kept for delight, that are so fair, fat, and costly; in many a vicious knave who is kept because of them; in too curious harness, as saddles, cruppers, poyntrels, and bridles covered with precious caparison and rich, and with bars and plates of gold and silver. As to which God says by Zechariah the prophet: "I will confound the riders of such horses." These folk have but little regard for the riding of God of Heaven's Son and of His trappings, when He rode upon the ass and had no other caparison than the poor cloaks of His disciples; nor do we read that ever He rode upon any other beast. I say this against the sin of superfluity, and not against reasonable display when the occasion requires it. And further, certainly pride is greatly shown in keeping up a great household, when such servants are of little profit, or of no profit. And this is especially so when such an array of servants is mischievous and injurious to the people, by the insolence of high rank or by way of office. For truly, such lords sell then their lordships to the Devil of Hell when they sustain the wickedness of their following. And when folk of low degree, as those that keep and run hostelryes, sustain the thievery of their servants, which is done in many ways. This kind of folk are the flies that seek honey or the dogs that seek carrion. Such folk strangle spiritually their lordships; as to which thus says David the prophet: "Wicked death shall come upon such masters, and God will give that they descend into Hell; for in their houses are iniquities and evil deeds." And God of Heaven is not there. And truly, unless they mend their ways, just as God gave His blessing to Laban for the service of Jacob and to Pharaoh for the service of Joseph, just so will God give His curse to such lordships as sustain the wickedness of their servants, unless they shall make amendment. Pride of the table is often seen; for truly, rich men are bidden to feasts and poor folk are turned away and rebuked. The sin of pride lies also in excess of divers meats and drinks; and especially in certain baked meats and made-dishes, burning with spirituous liquors and decorated and castellated with paper, and in similar waste; so that it is scandalous to think upon. And also in too great preciousness of vessels and in curious instruments of minstrelsy, whereby a man is stirred the

more to the delights of luxury; if it be that he thereby sets his heart the less upon Jesus Christ, certainly it is a sin; and certainly the delights might be so great in this case that a man could easily fall thereby into mortal sin. The varieties of sin that arise out of pride, truly, when they arise with malice imagined, advised, and aforethought, or from habit, are mortal sins, and of that there is no doubt. And when they arise out of frailty, unadvisedly and suddenly, and are quickly withdrawn again, albeit they are grievous sins, I think that they are not mortal. Now might men ask, whence pride arises and takes its being, and I say: sometimes it springs out of the good things of nature, and sometimes from the benefits of Fortune, and sometimes from the good of grace itself. Certainly the good things of nature consist of either physical wellbeing or riches of the soul. Certainly physical wellbeing consists of the weal of the body, as strength, activity, beauty, good blood, and generous candour. The benefits of nature to the soul are good wit, keen understanding, clever talent, natural virtue, and good memory. The benefits of Fortune are riches, high rank, and the people's praise. The good of grace consists of knowledge, power to suffer spiritual travail, benignity, virtuous contemplation, ability to withstand temptation, and similar things. Of which aforesaid things, certainly it is great folly in a man when he permits himself to be proud of any of them. As for the benefits of nature, God knows that sometimes we receive them naturally as much to our detriment as to our profit. As, to take bodily health, certainly it passes away lightly enough, and moreover it is often the reason for the wickedness of the soul; for God knows that the flesh is a great enemy to the soul; and therefore, the more sound the body is, the more are we in danger of falling into sin. Also, to feel pride in the strength of one's body is a great folly; for certainly the flesh lusts for that which is detrimental to the spirit, and ever the stronger the flesh is, the sorrier must the soul be: and above all this, strength of body and worldly boldness bring a man often into danger of mischance. Also, to be proud of his gentility is a great folly; for often the gentility of the body debases the gentility of the soul; and furthermore, we are all of "One father and one mother; and we are of one nature, rotten and corrupt, both the rich and the poor. Forsooth, but one kind of gentility is praiseworthy, and that it is which clothes a man's heart with virtue and morality and makes of him Christ's child. For trust this well, that over whatsoever man sin has gained the mastery, that man is a very serf to sin.

Now there are general signs of gentility; as the eschewing of vice and ribaldry and servitude to sin, in word, in deed, and in conduct; and as the practising of virtue, courtesy, and purity, and being generous, which is to say, bounteous within measure; for that which goes beyond a

reasonable measure is folly and sin. Another such sign is, when a man remembers and bears in mind the good that he has received from others. Another is, to be benign to his good inferiors; wherefore, as Seneca says: "There is nothing more becoming a man of high estate than kindliness, courtesy, and pity. And therefore the flies that men call bees, when they make their king, they choose one that has no prick wherewith he may sting." Another is, for a man to have a good heart and a diligent, to attain to high virtuous things. Now truly, for a man to pride himself on the gifts of grace is also an extravagant folly; for these same gifts of grace that should have turned him to goodness and to alleviation, turn him to venom and confusion, as says Saint Gregory. Certainly, also, whoso prides himself on the benefits of Fortune, he is a full great fool; for sometimes a man is a great lord at morning who is a captive and a wretch ere it be night; and sometimes the wealth of a man is the cause of his death; sometimes the pleasures of a man cause the grievous malady whereof he dies. Certainly the people's commendation is sometimes false enough and brittle enough to trust; today they praise, tomorrow they blame. God knows, desire to have commendation of the people has caused death to many a busy man.

### *Remedium Contra Peccatum Superbie*

Now, since it has come to pass that you have understood what pride is, and what the species of it are, and whence pride arises and springs, now you shall understand what is the remedy for the sin of pride, and that is, humility or meekness. That is a virtue whereby a man may come to have a true knowledge of himself, and whereby he will hold himself to be of no price or value in regard to his deserts, but will be considering ever his frailty. Now there are three kinds of humility: as humility of heart, and another humility is of the mouth, and the third is in a man's works. The humility of heart is of four kinds: one is, when a man holds himself to be of nothing worth before God in Heaven. Another is, when he despises no other man. The third is, when he reckons not though men hold him as nothing worth. The fourth is when he is not sorry for his humiliation. Also, the humility of the mouth is of four kinds: temperate speech, meek speech, and when a man acknowledges with his own mouth that he is as he thinks himself to be, in his heart. Another is, when he praises the goodness of another man and nothing thereof belittles. Humility in deeds is in four manners: the first is, when a man puts other men before him. The second is, to choose the lowest place of all for himself. The third is, gladly to assent to good counsel. The fourth is, to abide gladly by the decision of his rulers, or of him that is of higher rank; certainly this is a great work of humility.

### *Sequitur De Invidia*

After pride I will speak of the foul sin of envy, which is, according to the word of the philosopher, sorrow for other men's prosperity; and according to the word of Saint Augustine, it is sorrow for other men's weal and joy for other men's harm. This foul sin is flatly against the Holy Ghost. Be it that every sin is in opposition to the Holy Ghost, yet, nevertheless, for as much as goodness appertains properly to the Holy Ghost and envy springs by nature out of malice, therefore is it especially against the goodness of the Holy Ghost. Now malice has two species, that is to say, a heart hardened in wickedness, or else the flesh of man is so blind that he does not consider himself to be in sin, or he cares not that he is in sin, which is the hardihood of the Devil. The other kind of malice is, when a man wars against the truth, knowing that it is truth. Also, when he wars against the grace that God has given to his neighbour; and all this is envy. Certainly, then, envy is the worst sin there is. For truly, all other sins are sometime against only one special virtue; but truly, envy is against all virtues and against all goodnesses; for it is sorry for all the virtues of its neighbour; and in this way it differs from all other sins. For hardly is there any sin that has not some delight in itself, save only envy, which ever has of itself but anguish and sorrow. The kinds of envy are these: there is, first, sorrow for other men's goodness and prosperity; and prosperity being naturally a thing for joy, then envy is a sin against nature. The second kind of envy is joy in other men's harm; and this is naturally like the Devil, who always rejoices in man's harm. From these two species comes backbiting; and this sin of backbiting, or detraction, has certain forms, as thus. A man praises his neighbour with a wicked intention, for he puts always a wicked twist into it at the end. Always he puts a "but" in at the end, which implies more blame than all the praise is worth. The second form is, when a man is good and does or says a thing to good intent, the backbiter turns all this goodness upside-down to his own evil end. The third is, to belittle the goodness of a neighbour. The fourth form of backbiting is this: that if a man say good of a man, then the backbiter says, "Faith, such or such a man is better than he," in disparagement of him that men praise. The fifth form is this, to assent gladly and listen gladly to the evil that folk speak of others. This sin is a great one; and it grows according to the wicked endeavours of the backbiter. After backbiting comes grumbling or murmuring; and sometimes it springs from impatience with God, and sometimes with man. Impatience with God it is when the man grumbles against the pains of Hell, or against poverty, or loss of chattels, or against rain or tempest; or



else complains that scoundrels prospers or else that good men have adversity. And all these things should men suffer patiently, for they come by the right judgment and ordinance of God. Sometimes grumbling comes of avarice; as Judas complained of the Magdalen when she anointed the head of Our Lord Jesus Christ with her precious ointment. This murmuring is such as when a man grumbles at good that he himself has done, or that other folk do with their wealth. Sometimes murmuring comes of pride; as when Simon the Pharisee murmured against the Magdalen when she approached Jesus Christ and wept at His feet for her sins. And sometimes grumbling arises out of envy; as when men discover a man's secret weakness, or swear of him a thing that is false. Murmuring, too, is often found among servants, who grumble when their masters bid them to do lawful things; and for as much as they dare not openly gainsay the commands of their masters, yet do they speak evilly of them and grumble and murmur privately, for very spite; which words men call the Devil's Paternoster, though the Devil never had a Paternoster, save that vulgar folk give these murmurings that name. Sometimes grumbling comes of anger or privy hate, that nurtures rancour in its heart, as I shall hereafter set forth. Then comes bitterness of heart, through which bitterness every good deed of one's neighbour seems to one to be but bitter and unsavoury. Then comes discord, which undoes all friendship. Then comes spite, as when a man seeks occasion to annoy his neighbour, though he do never so well. Then comes accusation, as when a man seeks occasion to offend his neighbour, which is like the guile of the Devil, who watches both night and day to accuse us all. Then comes malignity, through which a man annoys his neighbour privately, if he may; and if he may not, then nevertheless his wicked will shall not want for means to harm him, as by burning his house, or poisoning or slaying his beasts, and suchlike things.

### *Remedium Contra Peccatum Inuidie*

Now will I speak of the remedy for this foul sin of envy. First, is the love of God, and the love of one's neighbour as one's self; for indeed the one cannot be without the other. And trust well, that by the name of your neighbour you are to understand your brother; for certainly all of us have one fleshly father and one mother, that is to say, Adam and Eve; and even one spiritual father, and that is God in Heaven. Your neighbour you are bound to love and to wish all good things; and thereunto God says, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." That is to say, to the salvation both of life and soul. Moreover, you shall love him in word, and in benign admonition and in chastening; and comfort him in his vexations, and pray for him with all your heart. And you shall love him in deed and in such

wise that you shall charitably do unto him as you would that it were done unto yourself. And therefore you shall do him no damage by wicked words, nor any harm in his body, nor in his goods, nor in his soul by the enticement of wicked example. You shall not covet his wife, nor any of his things. Understand also that in the word neighbour is included his enemy. Certainly man shall love his enemy, by the commandment of God; and truly, your friend shall you love in God. I say, you shall love your enemy for God's sake, and by His commandment. For if it were reasonable that a man should hate his enemies, then God would not receive us into His love, when we are His enemies. For three kinds of wrong that his enemy may do to a man, he shall do three things in return, thus: for hate and rancour, he shall love him in heart. For chiding and wicked words, he shall pray for his enemy. And for the wicked deed of his enemy, he shall do him kindness. For Christ says: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Lo, thus Our Lord Jesus Christ commands that we do to our enemies. For indeed, nature drives us to love our enemies, and, faith, our enemies have more need for love than our friends; and they that have more need, truly to them men ought to do good; and truly, in the deed thereof have we remembrance of the love of Jesus Christ Who died for His enemies. And in so much as that same love is the harder to feel and to show, in that much is the merit the greater; and therefore the loving of our enemy has confounded the venom of the Devil. For just as the Devil is discomfited by humility, so is he wounded to the death by love for our enemy. Certainly, then, love is the medicine that purges the heart of man of the poison of envy. The kinds of this degree of sin will be set forth more at large in the paragraphs following.

### *Sequitur De Ira*

After envy will I describe the sin of anger. For truly, whoso has envy of his neighbour will generally find himself showing anger, in word or in deed, against him whom he envies. And anger comes as well from pride as from envy; for certainly, he that is proud or envious is easily angered.

This sin of anger, according to Saint Augustine, is a wicked determination to be avenged by word or by deed. Anger, according to the philosopher, is the hot blood of man quickened in his heart, because of which he wishes to harm him whom he hates. For truly, the heart of man, by the heating and stirring of his blood, grows so disturbed that he is put out of all ability to judge reasonably. But you shall understand that anger manifests itself in two manners; one of them is good, the other bad. The good anger is caused by zeal for goodness, whereof a man is enraged

by wickedness and against wickedness; and thereupon a wise man says that "Anger is better than play." This anger is gentle and without bitterness; not felt against the man, but against the misdeed of the man, as the Prophet David says: *Irascimini et nolite peccare*. Now understand, that wicked anger is manifested in two manners, that is to say, sudden or hasty anger, without the advice and counsel of reason. The meaning and the sense of this is, that the reason of man consents not to this sudden anger, and so it is venial. Another anger is full wicked, which comes of sullenness of heart, with malice aforethought and with wicked determination to take vengeance, and to which reason assents; and this, truly, is mortal sin. This form of anger is so displeasing to God that it troubles His house and drives the Holy Ghost out of man's soul, and wastes and destroys the likeness of God, that is to say, the virtue that is in man's soul; and it puts within him the likeness of the Devil, and takes the man away from God, his rightful Lord. This form of anger is a great joy to the Devil; for it is the Devil's furnace, heated with the fire of Hell. For certainly, just as fire is the mightiest of earth engines of destruction, just so ire is mightiest to destroy things spiritual. Observe how a fire of smouldering coals, almost extinct under the ashes, will quicken again when touched by brimstone; just so will anger quicken again when it is touched by the pride that lies hidden in man's heart. For certainly fire cannot come from nothing, but must first be naturally dormant within a thing, as it is drawn out of flints with steel. And just as pride is often the matter of which anger is made, just so is rancour the nurse and keeper of anger. There is a kind of tree, as Saint Isidore says, which, when men make a fire of the wood of it, and then cover over the coals with ashes, truly the embers will live and last a year or more. And just so fares it with rancour; when it is once conceived in the hearts of some men, certainly it will last, perchance, from one Easter-day to another Easter-day, and longer. But truly, such men are very far from the mercy of God all that while.

In this aforesaid Devil's furnace there are forged three evils: pride that ever fans and increases the fire by chiding and wicked words. Then stands up envy and holds the hot iron upon the heart of man with a pair of long tongs of abiding rancour. And then stands up the sin of contumely, or strife and wrangling, and strikes and hammers with villainous reproaches. Certainly, this cursed sin injures both the man who does it and his neighbour. For truly, almost all the harm that any man does to his neighbour comes from wrath. For certainly, outrageous wrath does all that the Devil orders; for it spares neither Christ nor His Sweet Mother. And in his outrageous anger and ire, alas! full many a one at that time feels in his heart right wickedly, both as to

Christ and as to His saints. Is not this a cursed vice? Yes, certainly. Alas! It takes from man his wit and his reason and all the kindly spiritual life that should guard his soul. Certainly, it takes away also God's due authority, and that is man's soul and the love of his neighbour. It strives always against truth, also. It bereaves him of the peace of his heart and subverts his soul.

From anger come these stinking engenderings: first hate, which is old wrath; discord, by which a man forsakes his old friend whom he has long loved. And then come strife and every kind of wrong that man does to his neighbour, in body or in goods. Of this cursed sin of anger comes manslaughter also. And understand well that homicide, manslaughter, that is, is of different kinds. Some kinds of homicide are spiritual, and some are bodily. Spiritual manslaughter lies in six things. First, hate; and as Saint John says: "He that hateth his brother committeth homicide." Homicide is also accomplished by backbiting; and of backbiters Solomon says that "They have two swords wherewith they slay their neighbours." For truly, it is as wicked to take away a man's good name as his life. Homicide consists also in the giving of wicked counsel deceitfully, as in counselling one to levy wrongful duties and taxes. And Solomon says that cruel masters are like roaring lions and hungry bears, in withholding or diminishing the wages (or the hire) of servants; or else in usury; or in withholding alms from poor folk. As to which the wise man says: "Feed him who is dying of hunger." For indeed, unless you feed him, you slay him; and all these are mortal sins. Bodily homicide is when you slay a man with your tongue in some manner; as when you give command to slay a man, or else counsel him to the slaying of another. Homicide, in deed is in four manners. One is by law; as when a judge condemns a culpable man to death. But let the judge take care that he do it rightfully, and that he do it not for delight in the spilling out of blood, but only for the doing of justice. Another kind of homicide is that which is done by necessity, as when one man slays another in his own defence, and when he may not otherwise escape his own death. But certainly, if he may escape without killing his adversary, and yet slays him, he commits sin, and he shall bear the punishment for mortal sin. Also, if a man by force of circumstances, or by chance, shoot an arrow or cast a stone with which he kill a man, he commits homicide. Also, if a woman negligently overlie her child in her sleep, it is homicide and mortal sin. Also, when a man interferes with the conception of a child, and makes a woman barren by the drinking of poisonous drugs, whereby she cannot conceive, or slays an unborn child deliberately, by drugs or by the introduction of certain substances into her secret parts with intent to slay the child; or does any unnatural sin whereby

man or woman spill his or her fluid in such manner or in such place as a child cannot be conceived; or if a woman, having conceived, so hurt herself that she slays her child, it is homicide. What do we say of women that murder their children for dread of worldly shame? Certainly, such a one is called a horrible homicide. Homicide it is, also, if a man approach a woman by desire of lechery, through the accomplishing of which her child is killed in the womb, or strike a woman knowingly in such manner that she is caused to miscarry and lose her child. All these constitute homicide and are horrible mortal sins. Besides' there come from anger many more sins, as well of word as of thought and of deed; as that of accusing God of, or blaming God for, a thing of which a man is himself guilty; or despising God and all His saints, as do wicked gamblers in divers countries. They do this cursed sin when they feel in their heart a great wickedness toward God and His saints. Also, they do it when they treat irreverently the sacraments of the altar, and then the sin is so great that scarcely may it be forgiven, save that the mercy of God passes all His works; it is so great and He is so benign. Then comes of anger, venomous anger; when a man is sharply admonished after confession to forgo his sin, then will he be angry and will answer scornfully and angrily, and will defend or excuse his sin as the result of the weakness of his flesh; or else he did it to keep the good will of his fellows, or else, he'll say, the Fiend enticed him; or else he did it because of his youth, or else his temperament is so mettled that he could not forbear; or else it was his destiny, as he says, until a certain age; or else, he says, it comes to him out of the breeding of his ancestors; and suchlike things. All this kind of folk so wrap themselves in their sins that they will not deliver themselves. For truly, no man that excuses himself for his sin may be shriven of it until he meekly acknowledges it. After this, then comes swearing, which is expressly against the commandment of God; and this comes often of anger and ire. God says: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Also, Our Lord Jesus Christ says, through Saint Matthew: "Nolite iurare omnino: neither by Heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black: but let your communication be, yea, yea, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil." For Christ's sake, swear not so sinfully, thus dismembering Christ by soul, heart, bones, and body. For indeed it seems that you think that the cursed Jews did not dismember enough the precious body of Christ, since you dismember Him even more. And if it be that the law compel you to swear, then be governed by the rule of the law in your swearing,

as Jeremiah says, quarto capitulo: "Iurabis, in veritate, in iudicio et in iusticia: thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness." That is to say, you shall swear truth, for every lie is against Christ. For Christ is utter truth. And think well on this, that every great swearer, not by law compelled to swear, the plague will not depart from his house while he continues to indulge in such forbidden swearing. You shall swear for the sake of justice also, when you are constrained by your judge to bear witness to the truth. Also, you shall swear not for envy, nor for favour, nor for reward, but for righteousness; for the declaring of it to the honor of God and the help ing of your fellow Christian. And therefore, every man that takes God's name in vain, or falsely swears by word of mouth, or takes upon him the name of Christ that he may be called a Christian man, and who lives not in accordance with Christ's example of living and with His teaching, all they take God's name in vain. Behold, too, what Saint Peter says, Actuum, quarto capitulo: "Non est aliud nomen sub celo, etc. There is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." That is to say, save the name of Jesus Christ. Take heed also how in the precious name of Christ, as Saint Paul says ad Philipenses secundo: "In nomine Iesu, etc. In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." For it is so high and so worshipful that the cursed Fiend in Hell must tremble to hear it named.

Then it appears that men who swear so horribly by His blessed name despise Him more boldly than all the cursed Jews, or even than the Devil, who trembles when he hears His name.

Now, certainly, since swearing, unless it be lawfully done, is so strictly forbidden, much worse is false swearing, and it is needless.

What shall we say of those that delight in swearing and hold it for an act of the gentry, or a manly thing, to swear great oaths? And what of those that, of very habit, cease not to swear great oaths, though the reason therefor be not worth a straw? Certainly this is a horrible sin. Swearing suddenly and thoughtlessly is also a sin. But let us pass now to that horrible swearing of adjuration and conjuration, as do these false enchanters or necromancers in basins full of water, or in a bright sword, in a circle, or in a fire, or in a shoulder-bone of a sheep. I can say nothing, save that they do wickedly and damnably against Christ and all the faith of Holy Church.

What shall we say of those that believe in divinations, as by the flying or the crying of birds, or of beasts, or by chance, by geomancy, by dreams, by creaking of doors, by cracking of houses, by gnawing of rats; and such kinds of wickedness? Certainly, all these things are

forbidden by God and by all Holy Church. For which they are accursed, until they repent and mend their ways, who set their beliefs in such filth. Charms against wounds or maladies in men or in beasts, if they have any effect, it may be, peradventure, that God permits it that folk shall have the more faith in Him and the more reverence unto His name.

Now will I speak of lying, which generally is the using of words in false signification with intent to deceive one's fellow Christian. Some lying there is whereof there comes no advantage to anyone; and some lying is done for the ease and profit of one man, and to the uneasiness and damage of another man. Another kind of lying is done to save one's life or chattels. Another kind of lying is born of mere delight in lying, for which delight they will fabricate a long tale and adorn it with all circumstances, where all the groundwork of the tale is false. Some lying is done because one would maintain his previous word; and some lying is done out of recklessness, without forethought; and for similar reasons.

Let us now touch upon the vice of flattering, which comes not gladly from the heart, but for fear or for covetousness. Flattery is generally unearned praise. Flatterers are the Devil's nurses, who nurse his children with the milk of adulation. Forsooth, as Solomon says, "Flattery is worse than detraction." For sometimes detraction causes a haughty man to be more humble, for he fears detraction; but certainly flattery- that causes a man to exalt his heart and his bearing. Flatterers are the Devil's enchanters, for they cause a man to think of himself that he is like what he is not like. They are like Judas who betrayed God; for these flatterers betray a man in order to sell him out to his enemy, that is, to the Devil. Flatterers are the Devil's chaplains, that continually sing Placebo. I reckon flattery among the vices of anger; for oftentimes, if one man be enraged at another, then will he flatter some other to gain an ally in his quarrel.

Let us speak now of such cursing as comes from an angry heart. Execration generally may be said to embrace every kind of evil. Such cursing deprives a man of the Kingdom of God, as says Saint Paul. And oftentimes such cursing returns again upon the head of him that curses, like a bird that returns again to its own nest. And above all things men ought to eschew the cursing of their children, and the giving to the Devil of their progeny, so far as they may; certainly it is a great danger and a great sin.

Let us now speak of chiding and reproaching, which are great evils in man's heart; for they rip up the seams of friendship in man's heart. For truly, a man can hardly be reconciled with him that has openly reviled and slandered him. This is a terrible sin, as Christ says in the gospel. And note now that he who reproaches his neighbour, either he

reproaches him for some painful evil that he has in his body, as with "leper" or "hunchbacked scoundrel," or by some sin that he does. Now, if he reproach him for a painful evil, then the reproach is turned upon Jesus Christ; for pain is sent, as the righteous giving of God, and by His permission, be it of leprosy or malady or bodily imperfection. And if he reproach him uncharitably for sin, as with "you whoremonger," "you drunken scoundrel," and so forth, then that appertains to the rejoicing of the Devil, who is ever rejoiced when men sin. And truly, chiding may not come, save out of a sinful heart. For according to the abundance of what is in the heart the mouth speaks. And you shall understand that when any man would correct another, let him beware of chiding or reproaching. For truly, save he beware, he may easily quicken the fire of anger and wrath, which he should quench, and perhaps will slay him whom he might have corrected gently. For, as Solomon says, "the amiable tongue is the tree of life," which is to say, of the spiritual life; and in sooth, a foul tongue drains the vital forces of him that reproaches, and also of him that is reproached. Behold what Saint Augustine says: "There is nothing so like the Devil's child as he that chideth." Saint Paul says, too: "The servant of the Lord must not strive." And though bickering be a sinful thing as between all kinds of folk, certainly it is most unsuitable between a man and his wife; for there is never rest there. Thereupon Solomon says: "A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman, are alike." A man who is in a house, the roof whereof leaks in many places, though he avoid the dripping in one place, it finds him in another; and so fares he who has a chiding wife. If she cannot scold him in one place, she will scold him in another. And therefore, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith," says Solomon. Saint Paul says: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Ad Colossenses, tertio.

After that, let us speak of scorn, which is a wicked sin; especially when one scorns a man for his good works. For truly, such scorners are like the foul toad, which cannot bear to smell the sweet odour of the vine when it blossoms. These scorners are fellowpartakers with the Devil; for they rejoice when the Devil wins and sorrow when he loses. They are adversaries of Jesus Christ; for they hate what He loves, that is to say, the salvation of souls.

Now will we speak of wicked counsel; for he that gives wicked counsel is a traitor. For he deceives him that trusts in him, ut Achitofel ad Absolonem. Nevertheless, his wicked counsel first harms himself. For, as the wise man says, every false person living has within himself this peculiarity, that he who would harm another harms first himself. And men should understand that they



should take counsel not of false folk, nor of angry folk, nor of vexatious folk nor of folk that love too much their own advantage, nor of too worldly folk, especially in the counselling of souls.

Now comes the sin of those that sow discord amongst folk, which is a sin that Christ utterly hates; and no wonder. For He died to establish concord on earth. And more shame do they do to Christ than did those that crucified Him; for God loves better that friendliness be among men than He loved His own body, the which He gave for the sake of unity. Therefore they are like the Devil, who ever goes about to make discord.

Now comes the sin of the double-tongued; such as speak fairly before folk, and wickedly behind; or they make a semblance of speaking with good intention, or in jest and play, and yet they speak with evil intention.

Now comes betraying of confidence, whereby a man is defamed: truly, the damage so done may scarcely be repaired.

Now comes menacing, which is an open folly; for he that often menaces, he often threatens more than he can perform.

Now come idle words, which sin is without profit to him that speaks and also to him that listens. Or else idle words are those that are needless, or without an aim toward any profit. And although idle words are at times but a venial sin, yet men should distrust them; for we shall have to account for them before God.

Now comes chattering, which cannot occur without sin. And, as Solomon says, "It is a sin of manifest folly." And therefore a philosopher said, when men asked him how to please the people: "Do many good deeds and chatter but little."

After this comes the sin of jesters, who are the Devil's apes. For they make folk laugh at their buffoonery, as they do at the pranks of an ape. Such clownings were forbidden by Saint Paul. Behold how virtuous and holy words give comfort to those that labour in the service of Christ; just so the sinful words and tricks of jesters and jokers comfort those that travail in the service of the Devil. These are the sins that come by way of the tongue, and from anger and many other sins.

### *Sequitur Remedium Contra Peccatum Ire*

The remedy for anger is a virtue which men call mansuetude, which is gentleness; and even another virtue which men call patience or tolerance.

Gentleness withholds and restrains the stirrings and the urgings of man's impetuosity in his heart in such manner that it leaps not out in anger or in ire. Tolerance suffers sweetly all the annoyances and wrongs that men

do to men bodily. Saint Jerome says thus of gentleness, that "it does harm to no one, nor says harm; nor for any harm that men do or say does it chafe against reason." This virtue is sometimes naturally implanted; for, as says the philosopher: "A man is a living thing, by nature gentle and tractable to goodness; but when gentleness is informed of grace, then is it worth the more."

Patience, which is another remedy against anger, is a virtue that suffers sweetly man's goodness, and is not wroth for harm done to it. The philosopher says that "patience is that virtue which suffers meekly all the outrages of adversity and every wicked word." This virtue makes a man god-like and makes him God's own dear child, as Christ says. This virtue discomfits one's enemy. And thereupon the wise man says: "If thou wilt vanquish thy enemy, learn to endure." And you shall understand that man suffers four kinds of grievances from outward things, against the which he must have four kinds of patience.

The first grievance is of wicked words; this suffered Jesus Christ without grumbling, and patiently, when the Jews many times reproached Him and showed how they despised Him. Suffer patiently, therefore, for the wise man says: "If thou strive with a fool, though the fool be wroth or though he laugh, nevertheless thou shalt have no rest." Another outward grievance is to suffer damage in one's chattels. In that Christ endured patiently when He was despoiled of all that He had in the world, that being His clothing.

The third grievance is for a man to suffer injury in his body. That, Christ endured full patiently throughout all His passion. The fourth grievance is in extravagant labour. Wherefore I say that folk who make their servants labour too grievously, or out of the proper time, as on holidays, truly they do great sin. Thereof endured Christ full patiently, and taught us patience when He bore upon His blessed shoulder the cross whereon He was to suffer a pitiless death. Hereof may men learn to be patient; for certainly, not only Christian men should be patient for love of Jesus Christ, and for the reward of the blessed life everlasting, but even the old pagans, who never were Christians, commended and practised the virtue of patience.

Upon a time a philosopher would have beaten a disciple for his great misdoing, at which the philosopher had been much annoyed; and he brought a rod wherewith to scourge the youth; and when the youth saw the rod he said to his master: "What do you intend to do?" "I will beat you," said the master, "for your correction." "Forsooth," said the youth, "you ought first to correct yourself who have lost all your patience at the offence of a child." "Forsooth," said the master, weeping, "you

say truth; take the rod yourself, my dear son, and correct me for my impatience." From patience comes obedience, whereby a man becomes obedient to Christ and to all to whom he owes obedience in Christ. And understand well that obedience is perfect when a man does gladly and speedily, with entire good heart, all that he should do. Obedience, generally, is to put into practice the doctrine of God and of man's masters, to whom he ought to be humble in all righteousness.

### *Sequitur De Accidia*

After the sins of envy and of anger, now will I speak of the sin of acedia, or sloth. For envy blinds the heart of a man and anger troubles a man; and acedia makes him heavy, thoughtful, and peevish. Envy and anger cause bitterness of heart; which bitterness is the mother of acedia, and takes from a man the love of all goodness. Then is acedia the anguish of a troubled heart; and Saint Augustine says: "It is the sadness of goodness and the joy of evil." Certainly this is a damnable sin; for it wrongs Jesus Christ in as much as it lessens the service that men ought to give to Christ with due diligence, as says Solomon. But sloth has no such diligence; it does everything sadly and with peevishness, slackness, and false excusing, and with slovenliness and unwillingness; for which the Book says: "Accursed be he that serveth God negligently." Then acedia is the enemy to every state of man; for indeed the state of man is in three degrees. One is the state of innocence, as was the condition of Adam before he fell into sin; in which state he was maintained to praise and adore his God. Another state is the condition of sinful men wherein they are obliged to labour in praying to God for the amendment of their sins. Another state is the condition of grace, in which condition man is bound to acts of penitence; and truly, to all these things acedia is the enemy and the opposite. For it loves no busyness at all. Now certainly this foul sin of acedia is also a great enemy to the livelihood of the body; for it makes no provision for temporal necessity; for it wastes, and it allows things to spoil, and it destroys all worldly wealth by its carelessness.

The fourth thing is that acedia is like those who are in the pain of Hell, because of their sloth and their sluggardliness; for those that are damned are so bound that they may neither do well nor think well. First of all, from the sin of acedia it happens that a man is too sad and hindered to be able to do anything good, wherefore God abominates acedia, as says Saint John.

Then comes that kind of sloth that will endure no hardship nor any penance. For truly, sloth is so tender and so delicate, as Solomon says, that it will endure no hardship or penance, and therefore it spoils everything

that it attempts to do. To combat this rotten-hearted sin of acedia or sloth, men should be diligent to do good works and manfully and virtuously to come by the determination to do well; remembering that Our Lord Jesus Christ rewards every good deed, be it ever so little. The habit of labour is a great thing; for, as Saint Bernard says, it gives the labourer strong arms and hard thews, whereas sloth makes them feeble and tender. Then arises the dread of beginning to do any good deeds; for certainly, he that is inclined toward sin, he thinks it is so great an enterprise to start any works of goodness, and tells himself in his heart that the circumstances having to do with goodness are so wearisome and burdensome to endure, that he dare not undertake any such works, as says Saint Gregory.

Now enters despair, which is despair of the mercy of God, and comes sometimes of too extravagant sorrows and sometimes of too great fear: for the victim imagines that he has done so much sin that it will avail him not to repent and forgo sin; because of which fear he abandons his heart to every kind of sin, as Saint Augustine says. This damnable sin, if it be indulged to the end, is called sinning in the Holy Ghost. This horrible sin is so dangerous that, as for him that is so desperate, there is no felony or sin that he hesitates to do; as was well showed by Judas. Certainly, then, above all other sins, this sin is most displeasing to Christ, and most hateful. Truly he that grows so desperate is like the cowardly and recreant combatant that yields before he is beaten, and when there is no need. Alas, alas! Needlessly is he recreant and needlessly in despair. Certainly the mercy of God is always available to every penitent, and this is the greatest of all God's works. Alas! Cannot a man bethink him of the gospel of Saint Luke, 15, wherein Christ says: "Joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." Behold further, in the same gospel, the joy of and the feast given by the good man who had lost his son, when his son, repentant, returned to his father. Can they not remember, also, that, as Saint Luke says, XXIII capitulo, the thief who was hanged beside Jesus Christ said: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." "Verily," said Christ, "I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Certainly, there is no such horrible sin of man that it may not be, in his lifetime, destroyed by penitence, by virtue of the passion and the death of Jesus Christ. Alas! Why then need a man despair, since mercy is so ready and so great? Ask, and it shall be given unto you. Then enters somnolence, that is to say, sluggish slumbering, which makes a man heavy and dull in body and in soul; and this sin comes from sloth. And truly, the time that a man should not sleep, in all reason, is the early morning, unless there be a reasonable necessity. For

verily the morningtide is most suitable for a man to say his prayers, and to meditate on God and to honor God, and to give alms to the poor person who first asks in the name of Christ. Behold what Solomon says: "Whoso would awake in the dawn and seek me, me shall he find." Then enters negligence, or carelessness, that reckes of nothing. And if ignorance is the mother of all evil, certainly then negligence is the nurse. Negligence cares not, when it must do a thing, whether it be well done or badly.

As to the remedies for these two sins, as the wise man says: "He that fears God spares not to do that which he ought." And he that loves God, he will be diligent to please God by his works, and will exert himself, with all his might, to do well. Then enters idleness, which is the gate to all evils. An idle man is like a house that has no walls; the devils may enter on every side and shoot at him, he being thus unprotected, and tempt him on every side. This idleness is the sink of all wicked and villainous thoughts, and of all idle chattering, and trifles, and of all filthiness. Certainly Heaven is for those that labour, and not for idle folk. Also, David says: "They are not among the harvest of men and they shall not be threshed with men," which is to say, in Purgatory. Certainly, then, it appears that they shall be tormented by the Devil in Hell, unless they soon repent.

Then enters the sin that men call tarditas, which is when a man is too tardy or too long-tarrying before he turns unto God; and certainly this is a great folly. He is like one that falls in the ditch and will not arise. And this vice comes of a false hope whereunder a man comes to think that he shall live long; but that hope full often fails him.

Then comes laziness; that is when a man begins any work and anon forgoes it and holds his hand; as do those who have anyone to govern and who take no care of him as soon as they find any difficulty or annoyance. These are the modern shepherds who knowingly allow their sheep to run to the wolf in the briers, or have no care for their governing. Of this come poverty and the destruction of both spiritual and temporal things. Then comes a kind of dull coldness that freezes the heart of man. Then comes lack of devotion, whereby a man is so blinded, as Saint Bernard says, and has such languor of soul, that he may not read or sing in holy church, nor hear or think of anything devout, nor toil with his hands at any good work, without the labour being unsavoury and vapid to him. Then he grows slow and slumbery, and is easily angered and is easily inclined toward hate and envy. Then comes the sin of worldly sorrow, such as is called tristicia, which slays men, as Saint Paul says. For, verily, such sorrow works the death of the soul and of the body also; for thereof it comes to pass that a man is bored by his own life. Wherefore such sadness full often shortens a man's

life before his time has naturally come.

### *Remedium Contra Peccatum Accidie*

Against this horrible sin of acedia, and the branches thereof, there is a virtue that is called fortitudo or strength; that is, a force of character whereby a man despises annoying things. This virtue is so mighty and so vigorous that it dares to withstand sturdily, and wisely to keep itself from dangers that are wicked, and to wrestle against the assaults of the Devil. For it enhances and strengthens the soul, just as acedia reduces it and makes it feeble. For this fortitudo can endure, by long suffering, the toils that are fitting.

This virtue has many species; and the first is called magnanimity, which is to say, great-heartedness. For certainly a great heart is needed against acedia, lest it swallow up the soul by the sin of sadness, or destroy it by despair. This virtue causes folk to undertake hard things, or grievous things, of their own initiative, wisely and reasonably. And for as much as the Devil fights a man more by craft and by trickery than by strength, therefore men may withstand him by wit and by reason and by discretion. Then there are the virtues of faith and of hope in God and in His saints, to achieve and accomplish the good works in which one firmly purposes to continue. Then comes security and certainness; and that is when a man shall not doubt, in time to come, the value of the toil of the good works that he has begun. Then comes munificence, which is to say, that virtue whereby a man performs great works of goodness that he has begun; and that is the goal to reach which men should do good works; for in the doing of great good works lies the great reward. Then there is constancy, that is, stability of purpose, and this should be evidenced in heart by steadfast faith, and in word and in attitude and in appearance and in deed. Also, there are other special remedies against acedia or sloth, in divers works, and in consideration of the pains of Hell and of the joys of Heaven, and in faith in the grace of the Holy Ghost, that will give to a man the strength wherewith to perform his good purpose.

### *Sequitur De Avaricia*

After acedia I will speak of avarice and of covetousness, of which sin Saint Paul says that "The love of money is the root of all evil:" ad Timotheum, sexto capitulo. For verily, when the heart of a man is confounded within itself, and troubled, and when the soul has lost the comforting of God, then seeks a man a vain solace in worldly things.

Avarice, according to the description of Saint Augustine, is the eagerness of the heart to have earthly things. Others say that avarice is the desire to acquire

earthly goods and give nothing to those that need. And understand that avarice consists not only of greed for land and chattels, but sometimes for learning and for glory, and for every kind of immoderate thing. And the difference between avarice and covetousness is this. Covetousness is to covet such things as one has not; and avarice is to keep and withhold such things as one has when there is no need to do so. Truly, this avarice is a sin that is very damnable; for all holy writ condemns it and inveighs against that vice; for it does wrong to Jesus Christ. For it takes away from Him the love that men owe to Him and turns it backward, and this against all reason; and it causes that an avaricious man has more hope in his chattels than in Jesus Christ and is more diligent in the guarding and keeping of his treasure than in the service of Jesus Christ. And therefore Saint Paul says, ad Ephesios, quinto, that “this ye know, that no... covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.”

What difference is there between an idolater and an avaricious man, save that an idolater, peradventure, has but one idol and the avaricious man has many? For verily, every florin in his coffer is his idol. And certainly the sin of idolatry is the first thing that God forbids in the ten commandments, as witnesses Exodi, capitulo XX: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me, thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.” Thus an avaricious man, who loves his treasure more than God, is an idolater, by reason of this cursed sin of avarice. Of covetousness come these hard exactions whereunder men are assessed and made to pay taxes, rents, and payments in lieu of service, more than duty requires or reason demands. Also, they take from their serfs amercements that might more reasonably be called extortions than amercements. As to which amercements and fines of serfs, some lords' stewards say that it is just, because a churl has no temporal thing that does not belong to his lord, or so they say. But certainly these lordships do wrong that take away from their serfs things that they never gave them, Augustinus de Civitate, libro nono. The truth is that the condition of serfdom is a sin: Genesis, quinto.

Thus may you see that man's sin deserves thralldom, but man's origin does not. Wherefore these lords should not greatly glorify themselves in their lordships, since by natural condition, or origin, they are not lords of thralls; but thralldom came into being first as the desert of sin. And furthermore, whereas the law says that the temporal effects of bondmen are the property of their lords, verily, by that is to be understood, the property of the emperor, who defends them in their rights, but who has no right to rob or to plunder them. And thereupon says Seneca: “Thy prudence should cause thee to live benignly with thy

slaves.” Those whom you call your serfs are God's people; for humble folk are Christ's friends; they are at home in the house of the Lord.

Think, also, that such seed as churls come from, from such seed come the lords. As easily may the churl be saved as the lord. The same death that takes the churl takes the lord. Wherefore I advise you to do unto your churl as you would that your lord should do unto you, if you were in the churl's plight. Every sinful man is a serf to sin. I advise you, verily, that you, lord, act in such wise with your serfs that they shall rather love you than fear. I know well that there is degree above degree, and that this is reasonable; and reasonable it is that men should pay their duty where it is due; but, certainly, extortions and contempt for underlings is damnable.

And furthermore, understand well that conquerors or tyrants often make thralls of those who were born of as royal blood as those who have conquered. This word of thralldom was unknown until Noah said that his grandson Canaan should be servant to his brethren for his sin. What say we then of those that plunder and extort money from Holy Church? Certainly, the sword which men give to a knight when he is dubbed, signifies that he should defend Holy Church and not rob or pillage it; and whoever does so is a traitor to Christ. And, as Saint Augustine says: “They are the Devil's wolves that pull down the sheep of Jesus Christ.” And they do worse than wolves. For truly, when the wolf has filled his belly, he ceases to kill sheep. But truly, the plunderers and destroyers of God's Holy Church do not so, for they never cease to pillage. Now, as I have said, since it was because sin was the first cause of thralldom, then it stands thus: that all the while all the world was in sin, it was in thralldom and subjection. But certainly, since the time of grace came, God ordained that some folk should be higher in rank and state and some folk lower, and that each should be served according to his rank and his state. And therefore, in some countries, where they buy slaves, when they have converted them to the faith, they set their slaves free from slavery. And therefore, certainly, the lord owes to his man that which the man owes to his lord. The pope calls himself servant of the servants of God; but in as much as the estate of Holy Church might not have come into being, nor the common advantage kept, nor any peace and rest established on earth, unless God had ordained that some men should have higher rank and some lower: therefore was sovereignty ordained to guard and maintain and defend its underlings or its subjects within reason and so far as lies in its power, and not to destroy or to confound them. Wherefore, I say that those lords that are like wolves, that devour the wealth or the possessions of poor folk wrongfully, without mercy or measure, they



shall receive, by the same measure that they have used toward poor folk, the mercy of Jesus Christ, unless they mend their ways. Now comes deceit between merchant and merchant. And you shall understand that trade is of two kinds; the one is material and the other is spiritual. The one is decent and lawful and the other is indecent and unlawful. Of this material trade, that which is decent and lawful is this: that where God has ordained that a kingdom or a country is sufficient unto itself, then it is decent and lawful that of the abundance of this country men should help another country that is more needy. And therefore there are permitted to be merchants to bring from the one country to the other their merchandise. That other trade, which men barter with fraud and treachery and deceit, with lies and with false oaths, is accursed and damnable. Spiritual trade is properly simony, which is earnest desire to buy spiritual things, that is to say, things that appertain to the sanctuary of God and to the cure of the soul. This desire, if it be that man is diligent in accomplishing it, even though his desire have no effect, yet it is a deadly sin; and if he be ordained he sins against his orders. Simony is named for Simon Magus, who would have bought, with temporal wealth, the gift that God had given, by the Holy Ghost, to Saint Peter and to the other apostles. And therefore you should understand that both he that buys and he that sells spiritual things are called simonists; be it by means of chattels, or by entreaty, or by fleshly asking of his friends- fleshly friends or spiritual friends. Fleshly friends are of two kinds, as kindred and other friends. Truly, if they ask for one who is not worthy and able, it is simony if he take the benefice; but if he be worthy and able, it is not. The other kind is when a man or woman asks folk to advance him or her, only for wicked fleshly affection that they may have for that person, and that is vile simony. But certainly, in that service for which men give spiritual things unto their servants, it must be understood that the service is honest; and also that it be done without bargaining, and that the person be able. For, as Saint Damasus says: "All the sins of the world, compared to this sin, are as naught." For it is the greatest sin that may be done, after that of Lucifer and Antichrist. For by this sin God loses the Church and the soul that He bought with His precious blood, because of those who give churches to those who are not worthy. For they put in thieves, who steal souls from Jesus Christ and destroy His patrimony. By reason of such unworthy priests and curates have ignorant men the less reverence for the sacraments of Holy Church; and such givers of churches put out the children of Christ and put in the Devil's own sons. They sell the souls that they watch over as lambs to the wolf that rends them. And therefore they shall never have any part in the pasture of lambs, that

is, the bliss of Heaven. Now comes hazardry with its appurtenances, such as backgammon and raffles; whence come deceit, false oaths, chidings, and hatred for one's neighbours, waste of wealth, mis-spending of time, and sometimes homicide. Certainly, hazarders cannot be without great sin while they continue to practise their craft. Of avarice come also lying, theft, false witnessing, and false oaths. And you must understand that these are great sins, expressly against the commandments of God, as I have said. False witnessing lies in word and also in deed. In word, as by taking away your neighbour's good name by bearing false witness against him, or by depriving him of his chattels or his heritage by such false witnessing when you, for anger or reward, bear false witness or accuse him by your false witnessing, or else when you falsely excuse yourself. Beware, you jurymen and notaries! Certainly, by false witness, was Susanna in great sorrow and pain, as have been many others. The sin of theft is also expressly against God's command, and that of two kinds, corporal and spiritual. Corporal, as taking your neighbour's chattels against his will, be it by force or by fraud, be it by short lineal measure or by short measure of capacity. By secret swearing, and, of false indictments against him, and by borrowing your neighbour's goods with intent never to return them, and by similar things. Spiritual theft is sacrilege, that is to say, injuring of holy things, or of things sacred to Christ, and is of two kinds; by reason of the fact that it is a holy place, as a church or a churchyard, every vile sin that men do in such places may be called sacrilege, or every violence done in such places. Also they who withhold what of right belongs to Holy Church are guilty of sacrilege. And plainly and generally, sacrilege is to steal a holy thing from a holy place, or an unholy thing from a holy place, or a holy thing from an unholy place.

### *Revelacio Contra Peccatum Avaricie*

Now shall you understand that the relief for avarice is mercy and pity in large doses. And men might ask why mercy and pity relieve avarice. Certainly, the avaricious man shows no pity nor any mercy to the needy man; for he delights in keeping his treasure and not in the rescuing or relieving of his fellow Christian. And therefore will I speak first of mercy. Mercy, as the philosopher says, is a virtue whereby the feelings of a man are moved by the trouble of him that is in trouble. Upon which mercy follows pity and performs charitable works of mercy. And certainly, these things impel a man to the mercy of Jesus Christ- that He gave Himself for our sins, and suffered death for the sake of mercy, and forgave us our original sins; and thereby released us from the pains of Hell and lessened the pains of Purgatory by means of penitence, and gives us grace

to do good, and, at the last, gives us the bliss of Heaven. The kinds of mercy are: to lend, and to give, and to forgive, and to set free, and to have pity in heart and compassion on the tribulations of one's fellow Christian, and also, to chasten, as need may be. Another kind of remedy for avarice is reasonable largess; and truly, here it behooves one to give consideration to the grace of Jesus Christ, and to one's temporal wealth, and also to the perdurable wealth that Christ gave to us; and to remember the death that he shall receive, he knows not when, where, or how, and also that he must forgo all, that he has, save only that which he has invested in good works.

But for as much as some folk are immoderate, men ought to avoid foolish largess, which men call waste. Certainly, he that is prodigal gives not his wealth, but loses his wealth. Truly, that which he gives out of vain-glory, as to minstrels and to followers, in order to have his renown carried about the world, he does sin thereby rather than gives alms. Certainly, he shamefully loses his wealth who seeks in the gift thereof nothing but sin. He is like a horse that chooses rather to drink muddy or turbid water than the clear water of a well. And for as much as they give where they should not give, to them belongs that cursing which Christ will give at the day of doom to those that shall be damned.

### *Sequitur De Gula*

After avarice comes gluttony, which also is entirely against the commandment of God. Gluttony is immoderate appetite to eat or to drink, or else to yield to the immoderate desire to eat or to drink. This sin corrupted all this world, as is well shown by the sin of Adam and Eve. Read, also, what Saint Paul says of gluttony: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." He that is addicted to this sin of gluttony may withstand no other sin. He may even be in the service of all the vices, for it is in the Devil's treasure house that he hides himself and rests. This sin has many species. The first is drunkenness, which is the horrible sepulture of man's reason; and therefore, when a man is drunk he has lost his reason; and this is deadly sin. But truly, when a man is not used to strong drink, and perhaps knows not the strength of the drink, or is feeble-minded, or has toiled, for which reason he drinks too much, then, though he be suddenly caught by drink, it is not deadly sin, but venial. The second kind of gluttony is when the spirit of man grows turbid for drunkenness has robbed him of the discretion of his wit. The third kind of gluttony is when a man devours his food and has no correct manner of eating. The fourth is when,

through the great abundance of his food, the humours in his body become distempered. The fifth is, forgetfulness caused by too much drinking, whereby sometimes a man forgets before the morning what he did last evening, or the night before.

In another manner are distinguished the kinds of gluttony, according to Saint Gregory. The first is, eating before it is time to eat. The second is when a man gets himself too delicate food or drink. The third is when men eat too much, and beyond measure. The fourth is fastidiousness, with great attention paid to the preparation and dressing of food. The fifth is to eat too greedily. These are the five fingers of the Devil's hand wherewith he draws folk into sin.

### *Remedium Contra Peccatum Gule*

Against gluttony abstinence is the remedy, as Galen says; but I hold that to be not meritorious if he do it only for the health of his body. Saint Augustine will have it that abstinence should be practised for the sake of virtue and with patience. Abstinence, he says, is little worth unless a man have a good will thereto, and save it be practised in patience and charity and that men do it for God's sake and in hope of the bliss of Heaven.

The companions of abstinence are temperance, which follows the middle course in all things; and shame, which eschews all indecency; and sufficiency, which seeks after no rich foods and drinks and cares nothing for too extravagant dressing of meats. Measure, also, which restrains within reason the unrestrained appetite for eating; sobriety, also, which restrains the luxurious desire to sit long and softly at meat, and because of which some folk, of their own will, stand, in order to spend less time at eating.

### *Sequitur De Luxuria*

After gluttony, then comes lechery; for these two sins are such close cousins that oftentimes they will not be separated. God knows, this sin is displeasing to God; for He said Himself, "Do no lechery." And therefore He imposed great penalties against this sin in the old law. If a bondwoman were taken in this sin, she should be beaten to death with rods. And if she were a woman of quality, she should be slain with stones. And if she were a bishop's daughter, she should be burnt, by God's commandment. Furthermore, for the sin of lechery, God drowned all the world by the deluge. And after that He burned five cities with thunderbolts and sank them into Hell.

Let us speak, then, of that stinking sin of lechery that men call adultery of wedded folk, which is to say, if one of them be wedded, or both. Saint John says that adulterers shall be in Hell "in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone"- in the fire for the lechery, in brimstone

for the stink of their filthiness. Certainly, the breaking of this sacrament is a horrible thing; it was ordained by God Himself in Paradise, and confirmed by Jesus Christ, as witness Saint Matthew in the gospel: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh." This sacrament betokens the knitting together of Christ and of Holy Church. And not only did God forbid adultery in deed, but also He commanded that "thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." This behest, says Saint Augustine, contains the forbidding of all desire to do lechery. Behold what Saint Matthew says in the gospel: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Here you may see that not only the doing of this sin is forbidden, but also the desire to do that sin. This accursed sin grievously troubles those whom it haunts. And first, it does harm to the soul; for it constrains it to sin and to the pain of everlasting death. Unto the body it is a tribulation also, for it drains it, and wastes and ruins it, and makes of its blood a sacrifice to the Field of Hell; also it wastes wealth and substance. And certainly, if it be a foul thing for a man to waste his wealth on women, it is a yet fouler thing when, for such filthiness, women spend on men their wealth and their substance. This sin, as says the prophet, robs man and woman of good name and of all honor; and it gives great pleasure to the Devil, for thereby won he the greater part of the world. And just as a merchant delights most in that trading whereof he reaps the greater gain, just so the Fiend delights in this filth.

This is the Devil's other hand, with five fingers to catch the people into his slavery. The first finger is the foolish interchange of glances between the foolish woman and the foolish man, which slays just as the basilisk slays folk by the venom of its sight; for the lust of the eyes follows the lust of the heart. The second finger is vile touching in wicked manner; and thereupon Solomon says that he who touches and handles a woman fares like the man that handles the scorpion which stings and suddenly slays by its poisoning; even as, if any man touch warm pitch, it defiles his fingers. The third is vile words, which are like fire, which immediately burns the heart. The fourth finger is kissing; and truly he were a great fool who would kiss the mouth of a burning oven or of a furnace. And the more fools they are who kiss in vileness; for that mouth in the mouth of Hell; and I speak specifically of these old dotard whoremongers, who will yet kiss though they cannot do anything, and so taste them. Certainly they are like dogs, for a dog, when he passes a rosebush, or other bushes, though he cannot piss, yet will he heave up his leg and make an appearance of pissing. And as for the opinion of many that a

man cannot sin for any lechery he does with his wife, certainly that opinion is wrong. God knows, a man may slay himself with his own knife, and make himself drunk out of his own tun. Certainly, be it wife, be it child, or any worldly thing that a man loves more than he loves God, it is his idol, and he is an idolater. Man should love his wife with discretion, calmly and moderately; and then she is as it were his sister. The fifth finger of the Devil's hand is the stinking act of lechery. Truly, the five fingers of gluttony the Fiend thrusts into the belly of a man, and with his five fingers of lechery he grips him by the loins in order to throw him into the furnace of Hell; wherein he shall have the fire and the everlasting worms, and weeping and wailing, sharp hunger and thirst, and horror of devils that shall trample all over him, without respite and without end. From lechery, as I said, spring divers branches; as fornication, which is between man and woman who are not married; and this is deadly sin and against nature. All that is an enemy to and destructive of nature is against nature. Faith, the reason of a man tells him well that it is mortal sin, since God forbade lechery. And Saint Paul gives him over to that kingdom which is the reward of no man save those who do mortal sin. Another sin of lechery is to bereave a maiden of her maidenhead; for he that so does, certainly, he casts a maiden out of the highest state in this present life and he bereaves her of that precious fruit that the Book calls "the hundred fruit." I can say it in no other way in English, but in Latin it is called *centesimus fructus*. Certainly, he that so acts is the cause of many injuries and villainies, more than any man can reckon; just as he sometimes is cause of all damage that beasts do in the field, who breaks down the hedge or the fence, just so does the seducer destroy that which cannot be restored. For truly, no more may a maidenhead be restored than an arm that has been smitten from the body may return thereto to grow again. She may have mercy, this I know well, if she does penance, but it shall never again be that she is uncorrupted. And though I have spoken somewhat of adultery, it is well to show forth more dangers that come of adultery, in order that men may eschew that foul sin. Adultery, in Latin, means to approach another man's bed, by reason of which those that once were one flesh abandon their bodies to other persons. Of this sin, as the wise man says, follow many evils. First, breaking of faith; and certainly, in faith lies the key to Christianity. And when faith is broken and lost, truly, Christianity stands barren and without fruit. This sin is also a theft; for theft commonly is to deprive a person of his own thing against his will. Certainly this is the vilest thievery that can be when a woman steals her body from her husband and gives it to her lecher to defile her; and steals her soul

from Christ and gives it to the Devil. This is a fouler theft than to break into a church and steal the chalice; for these adulterers break into the temple of God spiritually and steal the vessel of grace, that is, the body and the soul, for which Christ will destroy them, as Saint Paul says. Truly, of this theft Joseph was much afraid when his master's wife besought him to lie with her, and he said: "Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand: there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Alas! All too little is such truth encountered nowadays. The third evil is the filth whereby they break the commandment of God and defame the Author of matrimony, Who is Christ. For certainly, in so far as the sacrament of marriage is so noble and honorable, so much the more is it a sin to break it; for God established marriage in Paradise, in the state of innocence, in order to multiply mankind to the service of God. And therefore is the breaking thereof the more grievous. Of which breaking come oftentimes false heirs, that wrongfully inherit. And therefore will Christ put them out of the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the heritage of good folk. From this breaking it happens oftentimes, also, that people wed or sin with their own kindred; and specially the loose-livers who haunt the brothels of prostitutes, who may be likened to a common privy wherein men purge themselves of their ordure. What shall we say, also, of whoremasters who live by the horrible sin of prostitution, yea, sometimes by the prostitution of their own wives and children, as do pimps and procurers? Certainly these are accursed sins. Understand also that adultery is fitly placed in the ten commandments between theft and homicide; for it is the greatest theft that can be, being theft of body and of soul. And it is like homicide, for it cuts in twain and breaks asunder those that were made one flesh, and therefore, by the old law of God, adulterers should be slain. But nevertheless, by the law of Jesus Christ, which is a law of pity, He said to the woman who was taken in adultery and should have been slain with stones, according to the will of the Jews, as was their law: "Go," said Jesus Christ, "and have no more will to sin," or "will no more to do sin." Truly, the punishment of adultery is given to the torment of Hell, unless it be that it is hindered by penitence. And there are yet more branches of this wicked sin; as when one of them is a religious, or else both; or folk who have entered orders, as a sub-deacon, or deacon, or priest, or hospitaller. And ever the higher that he is in orders, the greater is the sin. The thing that greatly aggravates their sin is the breaking of the vow of chastity, taken when they received the

order. And furthermore, the truth is that the office of a holy order is chief of all the treasury of God, and His special sign and mark of chastity, to show that those who have entered it are joined to chastity, which is the most precious kind of life there is. And these folk in orders are specially dedicated to God, and are of the special household of God; for which, when they do deadly sin, they are especially traitors to God and to His people; for they live on the people in order to pray for the people, and while they are such traitors their prayers avail the people nothing at all. Priests are angels, by reason of the dignity of their ministry; but forsooth, as Saint Paul says: "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." Truly, the priest that resorts to mortal sin, he may be likened to the angel of darkness transformed into the angel of light; he seems an angel of light, but, forsooth, he is an angel of darkness. Such priests are the sons of Eli, as is shown in the Book of the Kings, that they were the sons of Belial, that is, the Devil. Belial means, "without judge"; and so fare they; they think they are free and have no judge, any more than has a free bull that takes whatever cow pleases him on the farm. So act they with women. For just as a free bull is enough for all a farm, just so is a wicked priest corruption enough for all a parish, or for all a county. These priests, as the Book says, teach not the functions of priesthood to the people, and they know not God; they held themselves but ill satisfied, as the Book says, with the flesh that was boiled and offered to them and took by force the flesh that was raw. Certainly, so these scoundrels hold themselves not pleased with roasted flesh and boiled flesh, with which the people feed them in great reverence, but they will have the raw flesh of laymen's wives and of their daughters. And certainly these women that give assent to their rascality do great wrong to Christ and to Holy Church and all saints and all souls; for they bereave all these of him that should worship Christ and Holy Church and pray for Christian souls. And therefore such priests and their lemans also, who give assent to their lechery, have the cursing of all the Christian court, until they mend their ways. The third kind of adultery is sometimes practised between a man and his wife; and that is when they have no regard to their union, save only for their fleshly delight, as says Saint Jerome; and care for nothing but that they are come together; because they are married, it is all well enough, as they think. But over such folk the Devil has power, as said the Angel Raphael to Tobias; for in their union they put Jesus Christ out of mind and give themselves to all filthiness. The fourth kind is the coming together of those that are akin, or of those that are related by marriage, or else of those whose fathers or other kindred have had intercourse in the sin of lechery; this sin makes them like



dogs that pay no heed to relationship. And certainly, kinship is of two kinds, either spiritual or carnal; spiritual, as when one lies with one's sponsor. For just as he that engenders a child is its fleshly father, just so is his godfather his spiritual father. For which reason a woman is in no less sin when she lies carnally with her godfather or her godson than she would be in if she coupled with her own fleshly brother. The fifth kind is that abominable sin whereof a man ought scarcely to speak or write, notwithstanding it is openly discussed in holy writ. This wickedness men and women do with divers intentions and in divers manners; but though holy writ speaks of such horrible sin, holy writ cannot be defiled, any more than can the sun that shines upon the dunghill. Another form of sin appertains to lechery, and that comes often to those who are virgin and also to those who are corrupt; and this sin men call pollution, which comes in four ways. Sometimes it is due to laxness of the body; because the humours are too rank and abundant in the body of man. Sometimes it is due to infirmity; because of the weakness of the retentive virtue, as is discussed in works on medicine. Sometimes it is due to a surfeit of food and drink. And sometimes it comes from base thoughts that were enclosed in man's mind when he fell asleep; which thing may not happen without sin. Because of this, men must govern themselves wisely, or else they may fall into grievous sin.

### *Remedium Contra Peccatum Luxurie*

Now comes the remedy for lechery, and that is, generally, chastity and continence, which restrain all the inordinate stirrings that come of fleshly desires. And ever the greater merit shall he have who restrains the wicked enkindlings of the ordure of this sin. And this is of two kinds, that is to say, chastity in marriage and chastity in widowhood. Now you shall understand that matrimony is the permitted coming together of man and of woman, who receive, by virtue of the sacrament, the bond of union from which they may not be freed in all their life, that is to say, while they both live. This, says the Book, is a very great sacrament. God established it, as I have said, in Paradise, and had Himself born into wedlock. And to sanctify marriage, He attended a wedding, where He turned water into wine, which, was the first miracle that He wrought on earth before His disciples. The true result of marriage is the cleansing of fornication and the replenishing of Holy Church with believers of good lineage; for that is the end of marriage; and it changes deadly sin to venial sin between those who are wedded, and makes one the hearts of them, as well as the bodies. This is true marriage, which was established by God ere sin began, when natural law occupied its rightful position in

Paradise; and it was ordained that one man should have but one woman, and one woman but one man, as Saint Augustine says, and, that for many reasons.

First, because marriage figures the union between Christ and Holy Church. And another is, because the man is the head of the woman; at any rate it has been so ordained by ordinance. For if a woman had more men than one, then should she have more heads than one, and that were a horrible thing before God; and also, a woman could not please too many folk at once. And also, there should never be peace or rest among them; for each would demand his own thing. And furthermore, no man should know his own get, nor who should inherit his property; and the woman should be the less beloved from the time that she were joined with many men.

Now comes the question, How should a man conduct himself toward his wife? and specifically in two things, that is to say, in tolerance and reverence, as Christ showed when He first made woman. For He made her not of the head of Adam, because she should not claim to exercise great lordship. For wherever the woman has the mastery she causes too much disorder; there are needed no instances of this. The experience of every day ought to suffice. Also, certainly, God did not make woman of the foot of Adam, because she should not be held in too great contempt; for she cannot patiently endure: but God made woman of the rib of Adam, because woman should be a companion to man. Man should conduct himself toward his wife in faith, in truth, and in love; as Saint Paul says: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." So should a man give himself for his wife, if there be need.

Now how a woman should be subject to her husband, that is told by Saint Peter. First, by obedience. And also, as says the law, a woman who is a wife, as long as she is a wife, has no authority to make oath or to bear witness without the consent of her husband, who is her lord; in any event he should be so, in reason. She should also serve him in all honor, and be modest in her dress. I know well that they should resolve to please their husbands, but not by the finery of their array. Saint Jerome says that wives who go apparelled in silk and in precious purple cannot clothe themselves in Jesus Christ. Also, what says Saint John on this subject? Saint Gregory, also says that a person seeks precious array only out of vainglory, to be honored the more before the crowd. It is a great folly for a woman to have a fair outward appearance and inwardly to be foul. A wife should also be modest in glance and demeanour and in conversation, and discreet in all her words and deeds. And above all worldly things she should love her husband with her whole heart, and be true to him of her body; so, also, should a husband be to

his wife. For since all the body is the husband's, so should her heart be, or else there is between them, in so far as that is concerned, no perfect marriage. Then shall men understand that for three things a man and his wife may have carnal coupling. The first is with intent to procreate children to the service of God, for certainly, that is the chief reason for matrimony. Another is, to pay, each of them to the other, the debt of their bodies, for neither of them has power over his own body. The third is, to avoid lechery and baseness. The fourth is, indeed, deadly sin. As for the first, it is meritorious; the second also, for, as the law says, she has the merit of chastity who pays to her husband the debt of her body, aye, though it be against her liking and the desire of her heart. The third is venial sin, and truly, hardly any of these unions may be without venial sin, because of the original sin and because of the pleasure. As to the fourth, be it understood that if they couple only for amorous love and for none of the aforesaid reasons, but merely to accomplish that burning pleasure, no matter how often, truly it is a mortal sin; and yet (with sorrow I say it) some folk are at pains to do it more and oftener than their appetite really demands.

The second kind of chastity is to be a clean widow and eschew the embraces of man and desire the embrace of Jesus Christ. These are those that have been wives and have lost their husbands, and also women that have fornicated and have been relieved by penitence. And truly, if a wife could keep herself always chaste with leave and license of her husband, so that she should thereby give him never an occasion to sin, it were a great merit in her. These women that observe chastity must be clean in heart as well as in body and in thought, and modest in dress and demeanour; and be abstinent in eating and drinking, in speech and in deed. They are the vessel or the box of the blessed Magdalen, which fills Holy Church with good odour. The third kind of chastity is virginity, and it behooves her to be holy in heart and clean of body; then is she the spouse of Christ and she is the beloved of the angels. She is the honor of this world, and she is the equal of martyrs; she has within her that which tongue may not tell nor the heart think. Virginity bore Our Lord Jesus Christ, and virgin was He Himself.

Another remedy for lechery is, specially to withhold oneself from such things as give rise to this baseness; as ease, and eating and drinking; for certainly, when the pot boils furiously, the best measure is to withdraw it from the fire. Sleeping long in great security from disturbance is also a nurse to lechery.

Another remedy for lechery is, that a man or woman eschew the company of those by whom he expects to be tempted; for though it be that the act itself is withstood, yet there is great temptation. Truly a white wall, though it

burn not from the setting of a candle near it, yet shall the wall be made black by the flame. Often and often I counsel that no man trust in his own perfection, save he be stronger than Samson and holier than David and wiser than Solomon.

Now, since I have expounded to you, as best I could, the seven deadly sins, and some of their branches, and their remedies, truly, if I could, I would tell you of the ten commandments. But so high a doctrine I leave to the divines. Nevertheless, I hope to God that they have been touched upon in this treatise, each of them all.

### *De Confessione*

Now, for as much as the second part of penitence deals in oral confession, as I said in the first paragraph hereof, I say that Saint Augustine says: Sin is every word and every deed and all that men covet against the law of Jesus Christ; and that is, to sin in heart, in word, and in deed by one's five senses, which are sight, hearing, smell, taste or savour, and feeling. Now it is well to understand that which greatly aggravates every sin. You should consider what you are that do the sin, whether you are male or female, young or old, noble or thrall, free or servant, healthy or ailing, wedded or single, member of a religious order or not, wise or foolish, clerical or secular; whether she is of your kindred, bodily or spiritual, or not; whether any of your kindred has sinned with her, or not; and many other things.

Another circumstance is this: whether it be done in fornication, or in adultery, or otherwise; incest, or not; maiden, or not; in manner of homicide, or not; horrible great sins, or small; and how long you have continued in sin. The third circumstance is the place where you have done the sin; whether in other men's houses, or your own; in field, or in church or churchyard; in a dedicated church, or not. For if the church be consecrated, and man or woman spill seed within that place, by way of sin or by wicked temptation, the church is interdicted till it be reconciled by the bishop; and the priest that did such a villainy, for the term of all his life, should nevermore sing mass; and if he did, he should do deadly sin every time that he so sang mass. The fourth circumstance is, what go-betweens, or what messengers, are sent for the sake of enticement, or to gain consent to bear company in the affair; for many a wretch, for the sake of companionship, will go to the Devil of Hell. Wherefore those that egg on to or connive for the sin are partners, in the sin, and shall partake of the damnation of the sinner. The fifth circumstance is, how many times has he sinned, if it be in his memory, and how often he has fallen. For he that falls often in sin, he despises the mercy of God, and increases his sin, and is ungrateful to Christ; and he grows the

more feeble to withstand sin, and sins the more lightly, and the more slowly rises out of sin, and is the more reluctant to be shriven, especially by his own confessor. For the which reasons, when folk fall again into their old follies, either they avoid their old confessors altogether, or else they make parts of confession in divers places; but truly, such divided confessions deserve no mercy of God for one's sins. The sixth circumstance is, why a man sins, as by way of what sort of temptation; and whether he himself procured that temptation, or whether it came by the incitement of other folk; or whether he sin by forcing a woman or by her consent: or, if the sinner be a woman, despite all her efforts were she forced or not- this shall she tell; and whether for greed of gain or for stress of poverty, and whether it was of her own procuring, or not; and all such trappings. The seventh circumstance is, in what manner he has done his sin, or how she has suffered men to do it unto her. And the same shall the man tell fully, with all the circumstances; and whether he has sinned with common brothel-women, or not; or has done his sin in holy times, or not; in fasting times, or not; or before confession, or after his last shriving; and whether he has, peradventure, broken therefor his enjoined penance; by whose help and by whose counsel; by sorcery or cunning: all must be told. All these things, according as they are great or small, burden the conscience of a man. And, too, that the priest who is your judge shall be the better advised to his judgment in giving, you penance, that is, according to your contrition. For understand well that after a man has defiled his baptism by sin, if he would gain salvation, there is no other way than by penitence and shrift and penance; and specifically by the two, if there be a confessor to shrive him; and by the third if he live to perform it.

Then shall a man reflect and consider that if he will make a true and profitable confession, there must be four conditions. First, it must be in sorrowful bitterness of heart, as said King Hezekiah to God: "I will remember all the days of my life in bitterness of heart." This condition of bitterness has five signs. The first is, that confession must be shamefaced, not to cover up nor to hide sin, for the sinner has offended his God and defiled his soul. And thereof Saint Augustine says: "The heart suffers for the shame of its sin." And if he has a great sense of shame, he is worthy of great mercy from God. Such was the confession of the publican who would not lift up his eyes to Heaven, for he had offended God in Heaven; for which shamefacedness he received straightway the mercy of God. And thereof says Saint Augustine that such shamefaced folk are near to forgiveness and remission. Another sign is humility in confession; of which Saint Peter says "Humble thyself beneath the might of God." The hand

of God is mighty in confession, for thereby God forgives you your sins; for He alone has the power. And this humility shall be of the heart, and shall be manifested outwardly; for just as he has humility to God in his heart, just so should he humble his body outwardly to the priest that sits in God's place. Since Christ is sovereign and the priest is means and mediator between Christ and the sinner, and the sinner is the last, in reason, the sinner should nowise sit as high as his confessor, but should kneel before him, or at his feet, unless infirmity hinder it. For he shall care not who sits there, but only in whose place he sits. A man who has offended a lord, and who comes to ask mercy and to be at peace again, and who should sit down at once by the lord's side- men would hold him to be presumptuous and not worthy so soon to have remission or mercy. The third sign is, your confession should be made in tears, if a man can weep; and if a man cannot weep with his fleshly eyes, let him weep in his heart. Such was the confession of Saint Peter; for after he had forsaken Jesus Christ he went out and wept full bitterly. The fourth sign is, when the sinner forgoes not for shame to make his confession. Such was the confession of the Magdalen, who did not spare, for any shame before those who were at the feast, to go to Our Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge to Him her sins. The fifth sign is, that a man or woman shall obediently receive the penance that is imposed for the sins; for certainly, Jesus Christ, for the sins of a man, was obedient unto death.

The second condition of true confession is that it be speedily done; for truly, if a man had a dangerous wound, the longer he waited to cure himself the more would it fester and hasten him toward his death; and also the wound would be but the harder to heal. And it is even so with sin that is long carried in a man unconfessed. Certainly a man ought to confess his sins without delay, for many reasons; as, for fear of death, which often comes suddenly and whereof no man can ever be certain when it will come or in what place; and also the prolonging of one sin draws a man into another; and further, the longer he delays the farther he is from Christ. And if he live until his last day, scarcely then may he shrive himself or then remember his sins, or repent of them, because of the grievous malady about to cause his death. And for as much as he has not in his life hearkened unto Jesus Christ when He has spoken, he shall cry to Jesus Christ at the last and scarcely will He hear him. And understand that this condition must have four elements. Your shrift must be considered in advance and well advised upon, for wicked haste gives no profit; and that a man shall be able to make confession of all of his sins, be they of pride, or of envy, and so forth, according to the kind and the circumstances; and that he shall have comprehended in his

mind the number and the greatness of his sins; and how long he has lain in sin; and also that he shall be contrite for his sins, and have a steadfast purpose that never again, by the grace of God, shall he fall into sin; and also that he fear and keep watch upon himself, so that he shall flee the occasions whereof he is tempted to sin. And you shall also shrive yourself of all your sins to one man, and not of some of them to one man and some to another; when, it is to be understood, the intention is to split up your shriving out of shame or fear; for this is but the strangling of your soul. For indeed, Jesus Christ is wholly good; there is no imperfection in Him; and therefore He perfectly forgives all, or nothing. I do not say that if you are sent to the director for a certain sin you are bound to show unto him all the rest of your sins, whereof you have been shriven by your own curate, save and except you wish to do so out of humility; for this does not constitute dividing your shrift. Nor do I say, in speaking of divided confession, that if you have leave to shrive yourself to a discreet and honest priest, where you wish to do so and by leave of your curate, that you may not as well shrive yourself to him of all your sins. But let no blot remain behind, let no sin be untold, so far as you have remembrance of them. And when you shall be shriven by your curate, tell him as well all of the sins that you have done since last you were shriven; and then this will be no wicked intention to divide confession.

Also, true confession asks certain other conditions. First, that you shrive yourself of your free will, not by constraint, nor for shame, nor for illness, nor for any such things; for it is only reasonable that he who trespassed of his own free will shall as freely confess it, and that no other man tell his sin, but that he himself do it, nor shall he withhold or deny his sin, nor allow himself to become angry at the priest for admonishing him to leave sin. Another condition is that your shrift be lawful; that is to say, that you, who shrive yourself, and also the priest who hears your confession, be verily of the faith of Holy Church; and that a man be not deprived of hope of the mercy of Jesus Christ, as was Cain or Judas. And also a man must himself accuse himself for his own trespass, and not another; but he shall blame and reproach himself and his own malice for his sin, and not another; nevertheless, if another man be the occasion for or enticer to his sin, or the state of a person be such that because of that person the sin is aggravated, or else if he cannot fully shrive himself without telling of the person with whom he has sinned; then he may tell; so that the intention be not to backbite such a person, but only to declare fully the confession.

Also you shall tell no lies in your confession; as to seem humble, perchance, in saying that you have done

sins whereof you were never guilty. For Saint Augustine says: if thou, by reason of thy humility, liest against thyself, though thou wast not in sin before, yet art thou then in sin because of thy lying. You must also confess your sin with your own mouth, unless you grow dumb. and not by letter; for you have done the sin and you shall have the shame thereof. Also, you shall not embellish your confession with fair and subtle words, the more to cover up the sin; for then you beguile yourself and not the priest; you must tell it plainly, be it ever so foul or so horrible. You shall also shrive yourself to a priest that is discreet in counselling you, and moreover, you shall not shrive yourself for vainglory, nor hypocritically, nor for any cause other than the fear of Jesus Christ and the well-being of your soul. Also, you shall not run suddenly to the priest to tell him lightly of your sin, as one would tell a jest or a tale, but advisedly and with great devotion. And, generally speaking, shrive yourself often. If you fall often, then you rise by confession. And though you shrive yourself more than once of sin. for which you have been already shriven, it is the more merit. And, as Saint Augustine says, you shall thereby the more easily obtain release from and the grace of God, both as to sin and punishment. And certainly, once a year, at the least, it is lawful to receive the Eucharist, for truly, once a year all things are renewed.

*Explicit secunda pars penitencie;  
et sequitur tercia pars eiusdem,  
de satisfaccione*

Now have I told you of true confession, which is the second part of penitence. The third part of penitence is expiation; and that is generally achieved through almsgiving and bodily pain. Now there are three kinds of alms-givings: contrition of heart, where a man offers himself to God; another is, to have pity on the weaknesses of one's neighbours; and the third is, the giving of good counsel, spiritual and material, where men have need of it, and especially in the procuring of men's food. And take note that a man has need of these things, generally; he has need of food, he has need of clothing and shelter, he has need of charitable counsel, and of visiting in prison and in illness, and sepulture for his dead body. And if you cannot visit the needy in person, visit him by your message and by your gifts. These are general almsgivings, or works of charity, by those who have temporal riches or discretion in counselling. Of these works you shall hear at the day of doom.

These alms-doings shall you do with your own proper things, and without delay, and privately, if you can; but nevertheless, if you cannot do it privately, you shall not forbear to do such works though men may see you, so long as they be done not for the world's approbation, but



for the pleasing of Jesus Christ. For take witness of Saint Matthew, capitulo quinto: "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

Now, to speak of bodily pain, it consists of prayers, of vigils, of fasts, of virtuous teaching of orisons. And you shall understand that orisons or prayers consist of a pious will of the heart that has made amends to God and expresses itself by spoken word, asking for the removal of evils and to obtain things spiritual and durable, as well as temporal things, sometimes; of which orisons, truly, in the prayer of the paternoster has Christ included most things. Certainly, it is invested with three things pertaining to His dignity, wherefore it is more dignified than any other prayer; Jesus Christ made it Himself; and it is short, so that it may be learned the more easily, and be held the more easily in the heart of memory, that man may the oftener help himself by repeating the prayer; and in order that a man may the less grow weary of saying it, and that he may not excuse himself from learning it; it is so short and so easy; and because it comprises within itself all good prayers. The expounding of this holy prayer I commit to these masters of theology; save that thus much will I say: that, when you pray that God forgive your trespasses as you forgive those that trespass against you, beware that you are not uncharitable. This holy orison diminishes each venial sin, and therefore it appertains specially to penitence.

This prayer must be truly said and in utter faith, in order that men may pray to God ordinally and discreetly and devoutly; and always a man shall subject his own will to the will of God. This prayer must also be said with great humility and all innocently; honorably and not to the annoyance of any man or woman. It must also be followed by works of charity. It is of avail also even against the vices of the soul; for, as Saint Jerome says, "By fasting we are saved from the vices of the flesh, and by prayer from the vices of the soul."

After the foregoing you shall understand that bodily pain lies in vigils; for Jesus Christ says, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." You shall understand, also, that fasting stands in three things; in the forgoing of material food and drink, and in forgoing worldly pleasures, and in forgoing the doing of mortal sin; this is to say, that a man shall guard himself from deadly sin with all his might.

And you shall understand, also, that God ordained fasting; and to fasting pertain four things: Largess to poor folk, gladness of the spiritual heart in order not to

be angry or vexed, nor to grumble because you fast; and also reasonable hours wherein to eat moderately; that is to say, a man shall not eat out of season, nor sit and eat longer at his table because he has fasted.

Then you shall understand that bodily pain lies in disciplining or teaching, by word or by writing, or by example. Also, in wearing shirts of hair or coarse wool, or habergeons next the naked flesh, for Christ's sake, and such other kinds of penance. But beware that such kinds of penance on your flesh do not make your heart bitter or angry or vexed with yourself; for it is better to cast away your hair shirt than to cast away the security of Jesus Christ. And therefore Saint Paul says: "Clothe yourselves as those that are the chosen of. God, in heart of mercy, gentleness, long-suffering, and such manner of clothing." Whereof Jesus Christ is more pleased than of hair shirts, or habergeons, or hauberks.

Then, discipline lies also in beating of the breast, in scourging with rods, in kneelings, in tribulations, in suffering patiently the wrongs that are done unto one, and also in patient endurance of illnesses, or losing of worldly chattels, or of wife or of child or other friends.

Then shall you understand which things hinder penance; and these are four, that is to say, fear, shame, hope, and despair. And, to speak first of fear, since a man sometimes thinks that he cannot endure penance, against this thought may be set, as remedy, the thought that such bodily penance is short and mild compared with the pain of Hell, which is so cruel and so long that it lasts forever.

Now against the shame that a man has in confession, and especially of these hypocrites that would be held so perfect that they have no need for shrift- against that shame should a man think, and reasonably enough, that he who has not been ashamed to do foul things, certainly he ought not to be ashamed to do fair things, and of such is confession. A man should also think that God sees and knows all his thoughts and all his deeds; from Him nothing may be hidden nor covered. Men should even bear in mind the shame that is to come at the day of judgment to those who are not penitent and shriven in this present life. For all the creatures on earth and in Hell shall openly behold all that sinners hide in this world.

Now to speak of the hope of those who are negligent and slow in shriving themselves- that is of two sorts. The one is, that he hopes to live long and to acquire riches for his delight, and then he will shrive himself; and as he tells himself, it seems to him that it will then be time enough to go to confession. Another is the over-confidence that he has in Christ's mercy. Against the first vice he shall think, that our life is in no security; and also that all the riches in this world are at hazard, and pass as does

a shadow on the wall. And, as Saint Gregory says, it is part of the great righteousness of God that never shall the torment cease of those that would never withdraw themselves willingly from sin, but have always continued in sin; because, for the perpetual will to sin, they shall have perpetual torment.

Despair is of two sorts: the first is of the mercy of Christ; the other is the thought of sinners that they cannot long persevere in goodness. The first despair comes of the thought that he has sinned so greatly and so often, and has lain so long in sin, that he shall not be saved. Certainly, against that accursed despair should be set the thought that the passion of Jesus Christ is stronger to loose than sin is strong to bind. Against the second despair, let him think that as often as he falls he may rise again by penitence. And though he may have lain in sin ever so long, the mercy of Christ is ever ready to receive him into grace. Against that form of despair wherein he deems that he should not long persevere in goodness, he shall think that the feebleness of the Devil can do

nothing unless men allow him to; and also that he shall have strength of the help of God and of all Holy Church and of the protection of angels, if he will.

Then shall men understand what is the fruit of penance; and according to the word of Jesus Christ, it is the endless bliss of Heaven, where joy has no opposite of woe or grievance, where all evils of this present life are past; wherein is security from the torments of Hell; wherein is the blessed company that rejoices evermore, each of the others joy; wherein the body of man, that formerly was foul and dark, is more bright than the sun; wherein the body, that lately was ailing, frail, and feeble, and mortal, is immortal, and so strong and so whole that nothing may impair it; wherein is no hunger nor thirst, nor cold, but every soul is replenished with the ability to perceive the perfect knowing of God. This blessed Kingdom may man acquire by poverty of spirit, and the glory of humbleness, and the plenitude of joy by hunger and thirst, and the ease and rest by labour, and life by death and the mortification of sin.