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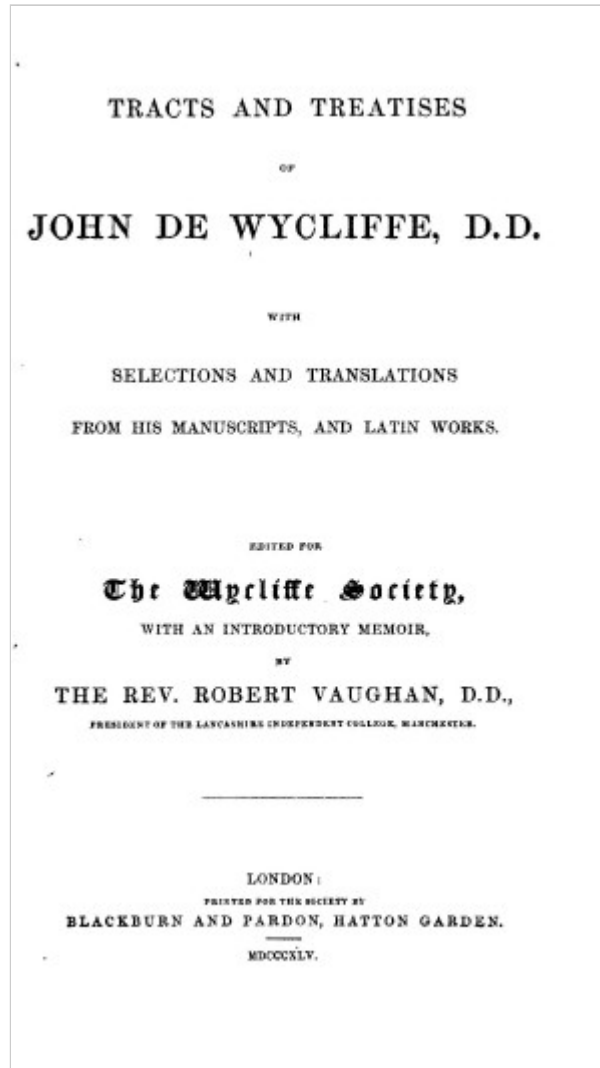
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Edition Used:

Tracts and Treatises of John de Wycliffe, D.D. with Selections and Translations from his Manuscripts, and Latin Works. Edited for The Wycliffe Society, with an Introductory Memoir, by the Rev. Robert Vaughan, D.D. (London: Blackburn and Pardon, 1845).

Author: [John Wycliffe](#)

Translator: [Rev. Robert Vaughan](#)

About This Title:

A translation of some of Wyclif's shorter Latin works, his Treatise Trialogus, his Treatise against Orders of Friars, and other shorter works.

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The Wycliffe Society.

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for reprinting a series of the more scarce and valuable tracts and treatises of the earlier reformers, puritans, and nonconformists of great britain.

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When it devolved on the Committee of the Wycliffe Society to decide on the subject of its first volume, they concluded that in effect that question was determined for them already by the illustrious name which the Society had adopted, and that they must commence the series with "The Tracts and Treatises of John de Wycliffe."

They well knew that one of the corresponding members of the Society was, by his previous researches, more fully qualified to engage in the work of preparing such a volume, than probably any other writer in the kingdom: the Committee accordingly requested the Rev. Robert Vaughan, D.D., to undertake the task, and the present volume is the result. Its contents are divided into three parts: the first is biographical, containing facts and observations concerning the life of Wycliffe. The second part is analytical, supplying a critical account of the writings of Wycliffe that are still in manuscript, with numerous extracts, and also a notice of the *Dialogus*, with a translation from the original Latin of the more important chapters of that treatise; whilst the third part may be called bibliothecal, as it contains those tractates of the Reformer which have been already printed at different periods, and in various forms.

The first part therefore includes all that is known concerning the personal history of the Reformer, the result of a most laborious, extensive, and repeated examination of the extant writings of Wycliffe, and of all other materials which could be made available for the purpose.

Respecting the second part, Dr. Vaughan has thus written: "In the extracts presented in the first section of the first book, I have not retained every obsolete word, and in a few instances, an illegible or obscure sentence has been omitted; but those passages exhibit throughout, the substantial and idiomatic language of the Reformer, and cannot fail to make precisely that impression on the reader, which would be made by them if read from the original manuscript. It has not appeared to me necessary, or desirable, that I should affect greater accuracy in that portion of the work.

"The catalogue of the Reformer's writings, in the next section, has been revised with much care, and will be found less imperfect than any one previously published. I speak of this catalogue as being only less imperfect than those which have preceded it, because no man acquainted with the subject can expect to see a perfect account of the writings of Wycliffe, distinguishing satisfactorily between the extant and the non-extant, and between the works certainly written by the Reformer, and those attributed to him on probable evidence only. In this connexion, the obscure and uncertain may be diminished, but can never be wholly removed. In the hope of giving more completeness to this section, I have re-examined many of the Wycliffe manuscripts within the last year.

"There are two editions of the *Dialogus*: one printed without the name of the place or of the printer, in 1525; the other printed at Frankfort, in 1753. The latter is a reprint from the former. In both, the errors of punctuation and typography are frequent, and

the man who shall attempt any extended translation of the contents of that work, will be the least disposed to pass a hasty censure on this portion of my labour. That I have succeeded in giving the precise meaning of the author, in every instance, especially in the scholastic and metaphysical portions of his argument, is more than I dare promise myself; but I am satisfied that the reader may confide in the general accuracy of the translation, and that, judging of the doctrine taught in the *Triologus*, from the chapters given in the volume, he will be safe from all material error. Some chapters and parts of chapters even in this fourth book have been omitted, but the translations are complete on the subjects to which they relate.”

In reference to the contents of the third part, it is only necessary to add, that the treatise “Against the order of Begging Friars,” and the next, intitled “A Complaint to the King and Parliament,” were printed in Oxford in 1608, and edited by Dr. James, from which impression they are now reprinted. The piece intitled, “The Wyckett,” is printed from the Norembergh edition of 1545; and the tract, “Why Poor Priests have no Benefices,” and the other fragments, are transcribed from the first edition of Lewis’s *Life of Wycliffe*, and Fox’s *Acts and Monuments*.

It may be expedient to state in conclusion, that while the present volume is, in its typographical and general character, a fair specimen of those that will succeed it, yet in a literary point of view, it must to a great extent be regarded as introductory and unique.

Nearly five centuries have passed away since Wycliffe flourished; and the spitefulness of rivals and the malignity of persecutors, the dim shadows of succeeding ages, the progress of the English language, and successive revolutions in the manners and maxims of society, have all combined to render the writings of the Reformer obscure, and to require the labours of an editor who would scrupulously examine and faithfully expound them. In succeeding volume, the reader will find, according to the original plan of the Wycliffe Society, more of the author, and less of the editor; but in the present, the prominence of the editor was unavoidable; and the reader will doubtless feel happy in the company of so competent and experienced a guide.

Robert Ashton. } *Secretaries.*

John Blackburn. }

Congregational Library, London,

February, 1845.

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Part I.

FACTS AND OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE LIFE OF WYCLIFFE.

The biographers of Wycliffe all mention the year 1324 as that of his birth.^a The place of his nativity still bears his name—a village about six miles from the town of Richmond in Yorkshire. The name of Wycliffe, like that of William of Wykeham, is evidently a local one, being written John of Wycliffe; and in England there is no locality bearing the name of Wycliffe beside the place above mentioned. From the time of the Norman Conquest the parish of Wycliffe had been the residence of a family bearing that name, who were lords of the manor of Wycliffe, and patrons of its rectory. During the lifetime of our Reformer there were two rectors of the parish who bore this name: Robert Wycliffe, presented to the living by Catherine, relict of Roger Wycliffe; and William Wycliffe, presented by John de Wycliffe. In 1606 the possessor of this ancient property lost his only son, and by the marriage of his daughter, his patrimony passed to a family of another name.^b

Dr. Zouch, rector of Wycliffe in the last century, in the inscription attached to the portrait of Wycliffe, by Sir Antonio More, now an heirloom to the holders of that living, speaks of the Reformer without hesitancy—as “a native of this parish.” Birkbeck, a clergyman, who officiated in an adjoining parish during the reign of Charles I. speaks no less decidedly on this point in a work intitled the “Protestant Evidence.”^a But our best authority is that of Leland, who wrote his “Collectanea” about a hundred and fifty years after the decease of Wycliffe, and mentioning the parish of Wycliffe, describes it as the place where “Wycliffe the heretic was born.”

It is true Leland himself has elsewhere given a somewhat different account. In his “Itinerary,” he makes mention of Spreswell, “a poor village, a good mile from Richmond,” as the place where the Reformer was born.^c But no trace of such a name can be found anywhere in the neighbourhood of Richmond. Leland travelled for much of his information, but it is manifest, from his errors in respect to Richmondshire, that he could not have visited that county more than very partially. Indeed, an author who could describe the rise of the Tees as being in a meadow near Caldwell, at least fifty miles from its real source, must be supposed liable to mistake on a point of this nature.

Spreswell may have been the name of the family mansion of the Wycliffes, or of some property belonging to them in the neighbourhood; but we are more disposed to trust in the account given by Leland in his “Collectanea,” than in that found in the “Itinerary,” and to connect the birth of Wycliffe with the spot which was certainly the home of his family, and from which, beyond all reasonable doubt, he derived his name.

b It must be admitted that the name of the Reformer does not occur in the existing records of the Wycliffe family. But this omission will not occasion surprise, when it is known that all the members of that family continued their adherence to the existing religious system, and that, according to the notions and feelings of the middle age, the man who made himself so conspicuous as the opponent of that system, would be regarded, in the language of the Reformer himself, applied to such cases, as “slandering all his noble kindred, who were ever held true men and worshipful.” *d* It will appear the more probable that the Reformer spoke thus, from remembrances connected with his own history, if we bear in mind, that no examination of his writings has served to bring to light anything concerning his intercourse with his kindred. What Leland has said concerning Spreswell, accordingly, is not of sufficient weight to be allowed to disturb the uniform testimony both of tradition, and of the most trustworthy authorities on this subject.

Concerning the early years of Wycliffe, we possess not a vestige of information. At the age of sixteen, we find him entered as a commoner in Queen’s College, Oxford. This was in 1340, the year in which that college was founded. Queen’s College owed its origin in part to the munificence of Philippa, the queen of Edward III., but still more to the praiseworthy zeal of Sir John Eglesfield, her chaplain. Eglesfield was a native of Cumberland, and the new college was designed chiefly for the benefit of students from the northern counties; a fact which may account for its being chosen in favour of a youth from the borders of Westmoreland and Durham.

In the age of Wycliffe, the means of education were extended far beyond the precincts of the cathedral or the monastery. Not only in the larger cities, but in every borough or castle, schools are said to have been established. Besides a school in the Abbey of St. Albans, in which every branch of knowledge then cultivated was taught, there was one in the same town under Mathew, a physician, and Garinus, his kinsman. Garinus was much celebrated for his knowledge of the canon and civil law; and the praise bestowed by Matthew Paris on this school, implies that there were many such in the kingdom. Not less than five hundred religious houses had made their appearance in England during the interval from the Conquest to the reign of John; and to those houses, schools were generally annexed. It is certain, also, that so early as the year 1138, the instituting of schools in a manner distinct from the monastic establishments, had extended itself in some cases from towns even to villages. No person, however, could act in the capacity of schoolmaster until licensed by a clergyman; and the clergy, whether from jealousy or avarice, were often so exorbitant in their demands on such occasions, as at length to provoke the intervention of authority. In a general council held in the Lateran church at Rome in 1179, and in another convened at Paris in 1212, all exactions for licences to teach as schoolmasters were forbidden.

Even the studies at Oxford and Cambridge in those times were for the most part of an elementary kind, and the pupils were children. Such scholars were received into the schools which Wood describes as the “Nurseries of Grammarians,” until they became capable of ascending to “higher arts.” Children, however, would not often be sent from distant parts of the kingdom to the universities, merely for the sake of such elementary acquisitions as might be made with greater facility and equal effect nearer home. In the northern counties especially, the necessity for so doing was precluded.

Edward I. speaks of an establishment as existing in one of the border districts in his time, where two hundred young clerks were receiving education. In some such establishment the northern students generally made such progress as qualified them when they came to the universities to enter upon those higher studies which were peculiar to those celebrated seats of learning. In the provincial schools the Latin language was sedulously taught, as being in those times the only key of knowledge. When thus far instructed, the pupil passed to the study of certain approved works on grammar, rhetoric, and logic; and obtained some knowledge of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. These sciences, which, it will be observed, are seven in number, were supposed to be so explained as to present within their mystic circle whatever was deemed important, or even possible to be known. But it is not probable that the preliminary studies of the “young clerks” in such seminaries often embraced much beyond the study of grammar; their progress in the higher arts being reserved to the course awaiting them at the university.[a](#)

These facts may suggest to our imagination the manner in which Wycliffe had been occupied up to the time of his becoming a commoner in Oxford. But the connexion of Wycliffe with Queen’s College was not of long continuance. Merton, to which he shortly afterwards removed, was a foundation of great celebrity. It could boast of some of the most scientific scholars of the age: it had supplied the English church with three primates: its divinity chair had been recently filled by the celebrated Bradwardine: and within its walls the great schoolmen Ockham and Duns Scotus had put forth those powers, the fame of which filled all Christendom, and was supposed to be immortal. So great was the capacity of Scotus, that, according to his eulogists, had the genius of Aristotle been unknown, here was a disciple who could have supplied his place. His arrival at truth was rather with the readiness and certainty of tuition, than by the slow and doubtful processes common to ordinary minds. The Divine attributes he could describe as one descending immediately from the presence of Deity, and the nature of angels as though it were his own. The mysteries of Providence, he could explain as if apprised of all its secrecies; and the felicities of heaven he could set forth as if they had become the element of his own being. How natural that such a man should be described as the immortal Scotus, and the most powerful and ingenious of the sons of men! But his contemporary Ockham lived to better purpose. He presumed to question the infallibility of Pope John XXII. As a punishment of his temerity, he was compelled to seek the protection of Louis of Bavaria, emperor of Germany; and his publications in defence of the civil power as opposed to the undue pretensions of the ecclesiastical, if not friendly to his repose, contributed largely to his fame. One of his compositions is praised by Selden, as the “very best performance published concerning the limits of the spiritual and temporal powers.”[a](#)

Wycliffe appears to have felt the influence of the associations into which he thus passed, and to have given himself to the study of the scholastic philosophy with great ardour. Aristotle, according to that system, was the only safe guide to the meaning of St. Paul. Aided by the logic and metaphysics of that great master, there was nothing, either known or supposed to have being, which his disciples did not affect to describe and analyse. In attempting to establish any truth, it was common to state and refute the forms of error opposed to it; and debates conducted after the manner of a most

technical and abstruse logic, became to the inmates of colleges much the same thing which the tournament had long been to knights, and nobles, and princes. In the subsequent portions of this volume, the reader will find sufficient illustration of the nature of this science, and of the skill with which the Reformer could avail himself of its weapons.

To his skill in the scholastic philosophy, Wycliffe has the reputation of having added a diligent study of the civil and canon law. The civil law was a system of jurisprudence which had descended from the times of the Roman empire, and in part even from the times of the republic. It was adopted in various degrees by the nations of feudal Europe; but as it had been moulded for the most part by men who acted in obedience to the will of a military despotism, however wise it may have been in some of its provisions, as relating to questions between man and man, it was in every way unfavourable to liberty as between sovereign and subject. The canon law consisted of the decrees of councils and of popes, and constituted an authority which not only took under its jurisdiction every thing properly ecclesiastical, but often infringed upon the province of the civil power. Hence a spirit of rivalry arose between the courts of princes, and the courts of bishops; between the authority of councils, and the authority of parliaments; and between the supremacy claimed by princes in regard to ecclesiastical matters within their own dominions, and the pretensions of the pontiffs, as extending to the control of all such matters, in all the nations of Christendom. Thus it came to be a proverb, that no man could be a good canonist, without being a good civilian—the limits of the canon and the civil law being in many things so difficult to determine, that no one could hope to be expert in the defence of either, without possessing an intimate knowledge of both. But the causes which proved unfavourable to the dominion of the old Roman law, were highly favourable to the growing power of the church; and the sort of empire which the court of Rome laboured to introduce by means of its canons, may be said to have come very much into the place of the old empire of the Cæsars. In most of the nations of Europe, however, there were many laws and usages of Gothic or feudal origin, which were much too free or national in their character to accord readily with either of the systems adverted to. This was eminently the case in England; and the writings of Wycliffe afford abundant evidence of the attention which he had bestowed on all these subjects. He clung with much tenacity to the authority of the civil power as his own just means of defence against the intolerance of churchmen; and often appealed to the laws of the land as a sufficient warrant, especially when sustained by Holy Scripture, for opposing all foreign usurpation within the realm of England, whether civil or ecclesiastical.

We know not to what extent Wycliffe may have applied himself to mathematical studies, but his acquaintance with natural philosophy generally, as taught in those times, was considerable. His great distinction, however, among the distinguished men of his day, consisted in his manner of inculcating religious truth on the sole authority of Scripture, and in the strict exercise of the right of private judgment, long before those terms had become as a watchword among us. It was this peculiarity which secured him the honourable appellation of the “Gospel Doctor.”^a

It is not without considerable effort of imagination, that we can at all realise the test which must have been applied in those times, to the courage of a man resolved on

pursuing such a course. Mosheim, in his History of the Thirteenth Century, remarks, “The method of investigating the nature of Divine truth, by reason and philosophy, prevailed so universally, and was followed with such ardour, that the number of those who, in conformity with the example of the ancient doctors, drew their systems of theology from the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the fathers, and who acquired on that account the name of Biblicists, diminished from day to day. It is true, indeed, that several persons of eminent piety, and even some of the Roman pontiffs, exhorted with great seriousness and warmth the scholastic divines, and more especially those of the university of Paris, to change their method of teaching theology, and laying aside their philosophical abstraction and subtlety, to deduce the sublime science of salvation from the Holy Scriptures, with that purity and simplicity with which it was there delivered by the inspired writers. But these admonitions and exhortations were without effect; the evil was become too inveterate to admit of a remedy, and the passion for logic and metaphysics was grown so universal and so violent, that neither remonstrances nor arguments could check its presumption or allay its ardour.”^a To this course of things, however, Wycliffe had courage enough to oppose himself, and deduced his system of theology from the Holy Scriptures, in a manner which evinced as little dependence on the “writings of the Fathers,” as on the “logic and metaphysics of the schools.”

In the year 1345, a pestilence, the most destructive in the annals of the world, if we may credit contemporary writers, appeared in Tartary. Having ravaged various kingdoms of Asia, and spread itself over a great part of Lower Egypt, it passed to the islands of Greece, and making its way along every shore of the Mediterranean, fell with special violence upon the states of Italy. Even the Alps proved not a sufficient barrier against its inroads. It was felt in the most obscure recesses, and by every European nation. Two years had been occupied in its desolating progress, when, as the historians of the time relate, the continent of Europe was shaken from its centre to its borders by a succession of earthquakes. From June to December in the same year, England was visited with incessant rains. In the following August the plague appeared at Dorchester; it soon reached the metropolis, and there, in the space of a few months, added many thousands to its victims. The infected perished, for the most part, in a few hours; the strongest failed after the second or third day. Wycliffe was now in the twenty-third year of his age. He saw the distemper passing from men to the brute creation, covering the land with putrid flesh; the labours of husbandry suspended; the courts of justice closed; the timid resorting to every device of superstition for security, and perishing around him, sometimes buoyant with delusion, and sometimes frenzied by despair. It was said that a tenth only of the human family had been spared. Even grave men supposed that the earth had lost full half its population. Whether the man of three-and-twenty, who was ere long to become distinguished as a Reformer of religion, believed in one of these rumours or the other, enough, we may be assured, became known to him, on the ground of unquestionable evidence, to place the calamity before him in aspects deeply affecting; and from his frequent references to it in after life, we learn that the impression made by it, on his humane and devout mind, was deep and abiding.^a

The moral effect of this event was hardly less lamentable than the physical. The depravity of the people seemed to be maddened rather than subdued by their

sufferings. The physician and the priest were often found alike negligent of their duties. The husband was deserted by the wife, and even children by their parents; and plunderers employed themselves in rifling the dwellings which the malady had depopulated. It has ever been thus with humanity, in the same circumstances. In some instances, such visitations have been found to soften the heart, and to produce penitence; but in a greater number their effect has been to give a greater force and desperateness to the selfish passions. When the pestilence passed away, the clergy who survived were unequal to the duties required from their order, and the same want was felt in every department of agriculture and handicraft. But the great lesson which the living appeared to have derived from what had befallen the dead, was the wisdom of exacting the highest possible remuneration for such services, sometimes at the rate of a tenfold increase. Laws, accordingly, were issued to repress this rapacity, both among priests and people.^b

In reading the lives of distinguished men, two departments of inquiry naturally engage our attention; the one relating to the degree in which such men have been influenced by their times—and the other, to the degree in which they have given to their age, the impress of their own genius and labour. The effect on the mind of Wycliffe of the direful scourge adverted to, appears to have been to possess him with very gloomy views in regard to the condition and prospects of the human race. At a little more than the age of thirty, he seems to have looked on the state of society generally with painful foreboding, being equally affected by its manifest depravity, by its present sufferings, and by the prospect of the further retribution regarded as assuredly awaiting it.

The pestilence subsided in England in 1348. The earliest of the works attributed to Wycliffe bears the date 1356, eight years later. This piece is intitled the “Last Age of the Church.” We find in it a weakness of judgment, and the traces of an ill-regulated fancy, such as our general idea in regard to the character of Wycliffe would not have taught us to expect. Thus the passage in the ninety-first Psalm, which speaks of “the terror by night”—of the “arrow that flieth by day”—of the “pestilence that walketh in darkness,” and of “the destruction that wasteth at noon-day,” is described as setting forth successive stages in the history of the church. The “nightly dread” or the terror by night, denoted the time when those who slew the saints judged that they did God service. The arrow flying by day was significant of the deceit of heretics. The latter of these tribulations was “put off by the wisdom of saints,” as the former was “cast out by the stedfastness of martyrs.” The pestilence walking in darkness points to “the secret heresies of Simonists;” and the mischiefs of this third tribulation will be so heavy, that “well shall it be to that man of holy church that then shall not be alive.” The fourth tribulation, denoted by the evil which cometh at midday, is the coming of antichrist. The authorities cited in favour of this view, beside the historian Eusebius, the venerable Bede, and St. Bernard, are the abbot Joachim, and the prophet Merlin.

In the same manner, the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are allegorised, as the figure of two and twenty hundred years, and as having contained a prophetic meaning. A similar interpretation is given to the Latin alphabet, as relating to the times of the New Testament; and the conclusions deduced from those sources are said to be as certain “as that in the beginning God made heaven and earth.”

But amidst dreams of this nature, we find indications of thought and feeling in regard to the state of society, the existing religious system, and the doctrines of theology, in harmony with those which occur in the undoubted writings of Wycliffe at a later period. In this curious production, the many evils existing, and the greater evils expected, are traced mainly to the character and conduct of a vicious priesthood. Upon that class of men especially, the judgments predicted are about to descend, and the only refuge for the sincere believer, is in turning from dependence on the offices of men, and in looking with humility and devotion to the compassion and grace of their Redeemer. "The vengeance of the sword," he writes, "and mischiefs unknown before, by which men in those days shall be punished, shall fall for the sin of priests. Men shall fall on them, and cast them out of their fat benefices, and they shall say, 'He came into his benefice by his kindred, this by covenant made before, he for his service, and this for money came into God's church.' Then shall each such priest cry, 'Alas! alas! that no good spirit dwelt with me at my coming into God's church!'"

In a preceding passage he predicts, on the authority of John of Salisbury and St. Gregory, that "The pestilent smiting together of people, and hurling together of realms, and other harms, shall come to the earth, because the honours of holy church are given to unworthy men." The tract concludes with the following illustration of a Hebrew tale. "There was a stork had a bird, and his bird was shut in under a vessel of glass; and when the stork saw his bird, and that he might not come to him, he brought a little red worm out of the wilderness, and with his blood he anointed the glass. Then the glass burst, and the bird flew his way. So our Lord, the Father of heaven, had mankind in hell, which was glazen, that is to say, was as brittle as glass. To break it, he brought such a little red worm, which was our Lord Jesus Christ, as David saith in the 21st Psalm, 'I am a worm and no man,' and with his blood he delivered man's nature. Zachariah writeth in the ninth chapter, "Thou truly with the blood of witness, or the testament, hast led out them that were bound in the pit." So when we were sinful, and children of wrath, God's Son came out of heaven, and praying his Father for his enemies, he died for us then; much rather now, that we are made righteous by his blood, shall we be saved. Paul so writeth to the Romans: He shall pray for us. Jesus went into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us. Paul to the Hebrews. The which presence may he grant us to see, that liveth and reigneth without end, Amen."

We may not feel at liberty to applaud the judgment of the author in the selection of his allegory in this case, but the devout perception and feeling of the above passage is not un instructive.

In attributing this piece to Wycliffe, his biographers have been guided partly by its internal evidence, but still more by the fact that it happens to be bound up in a volume containing other pieces which are unquestionably from his pen. The evidence in regard to its authenticity, however, from both these sources is not such as to preclude all ground for suspicion on that point, though from the contents of the document, as well as from the connexion in which we find it, the evidence appears to me to turn strongly in favour of its having been written by Wycliffe. Bale has given it a place in his catalogue of the writings of our Reformer; and from his description of it, there is

reason to think that more than one copy of this work was in existence in the time of that author.[a](#)

In the year 1360 Wycliffe began his disputes with the Mendicants. In Oxford, where this controversy originated, these new orders were possessed of great power, and numbered among them many of the most able men of the times. The indolence and worldliness of the regular clergy, by scandalising the more severe or the more consistent professors of the Gospel, had been the main causes, some centuries earlier, of the rapid diffusion of the monastic institute—a fault in one extreme disposing many to error in an opposite direction. In the same manner, the great abuse of wealth on the part of the endowed priesthood, taught the Mendicants to throw themselves on a kind of voluntary system; while the general neglect of preaching in the case of the parochial clergy, was the reason assigned by the Mendicants for giving themselves almost wholly to that office as preaching friars. With stricter vows of poverty than had been adopted by the monastic orders, the friars associated a claim to the most important functions of the clergy, and thus aimed to unite in themselves much of the reputation and power belonging to both those classes.

They made their appearance in Oxford in 1221. The causes which had given them such speedy popularity on the continent, were no less powerful in this country. Some wise men, dissatisfied with the conduct of the older clergy, became the zealous patrons of these new fraternities. Their supposed separation from the corrupting influence of wealth, and their assiduity and ability as preachers, appeared to point them out as the sort of men especially demanded by the times. Among the persons by whom they were thus regarded, was the celebrated Grossteste, Bishop of Lincoln; but the men who were for a while favourites of that prelate, became the objects of his bitterest censure before his decease. At a later period, their zeal to proselyte the young in the universities, exposed them to much suspicion and disaffection. Loud complaints had been urged against them in Paris, before Fitz-Ralph, who was chancellor of Oxford in 1333, and became archbishop of Armagh in 1347, distinguished himself as an opponent of their opinions and encroachments. He denied the virtue of their voluntary poverty, censured their inroads on the province of the parochial clergy, and declared, that by their influence, the students of Oxford had been reduced, within his memory, from thirty thousand, to not more than a fifth of that number. In 1357, Fitz-Ralph, better known by the name of Armachanus, submitted his complaints on this subject to the pope at Avignon. But the decease of this zealous prelate three years later, left his purposes unaccomplished, and the event was hailed by the Mendicants as a triumph to their cause.

Wycliffe entered into the labours of Armachanus, and prosecuted the same object with even greater earnestness. None of the extant writings of Wycliffe against the friars can be attributed to so early a period as the year 1360. But his arguments against that class of men are of such constant occurrence in his later works, and are everywhere so much to the same effect, as to leave little room to doubt that the matter of the treatise published in this volume, under the title of “Objections to Friars,” presents the substance of the reasoning employed by him on this subject from the commencement of the controversy relating to it.

His language uniformly was, that if God might be said to have given the friars to the church, it was as he had given a king to Israel,—as a punishment, and not as a boon. “But a sanction was supposed to be imparted to the practices of the Mendicants by the poverty of Christ and of his apostles; and this circumstance had imperceptibly induced a habit of appeal to the sacred Scriptures, as to a decisive authority. The volume of inspired truth was thus brought from its obscurity, and was vested, though for mistaken purposes, with something of the homage due to it as the only competent arbiter of religious opinion. Such as were displeased by the obtrusive services of the friars, were thus naturally directed to the records of the Gospel, that the justice of these novel pretensions might be thus ascertained or confuted; and the arguments opposed with most success to the peculiarities of these innovators, were derived from the source to which they had themselves been the first to appeal. It is scarcely to be questioned, that to these facts we are considerably indebted for Wycliffe’s early attachment to the doctrine which affirms the sufficiency of the Scriptures with regard to all the purposes of faith and duty—a doctrine in which the right of private judgment was obviously implied; and it will hereafter appear, that no modern theologian has been more aware of the importance of these maxims than Wycliffe, or more successful in defending them. It is probable, indeed, that he was very far from discerning the ultimate result of his inquiries, when he first became known as the opponent of the new orders; but we have sufficient evidence to justify the conclusion, that even then, these momentous sentiments had become in a hopeful degree familiar to his mind. The failure of Fitz-Ralph, in his more limited project of reform, had left no room to hope for improvement, as to originate with the papacy, or as to be sanctioned from that quarter; and this state of things appears to have suggested to his successor in the contest, the necessity of a less sparing exposure of existing abuses in the church, and of a more vigorous appeal to the common sense of every class among the people.”^a

That which distinguished the efforts of Wycliffe in this connexion from those of Armachanus and others, was his setting forth the evils which he describes, as being the natural and necessary consequence of the rules which the friars had pledged themselves to observe. While other disputants were content to seek a reform of particular errors and abuses, Wycliffe sought nothing less than an extinction of the institute itself, as being repugnant to Scripture, and inconsistent with the order and prosperity of the church. Instead of supposing, as some good men had done, that the introduction of such agents would tend better than any other means that might be employed for that purpose to stimulate and improve the character of the parochial priesthood, he insisted strongly that the removal of these intruders was absolutely necessary, if harmony and vigour were to be restored to the ecclesiastical system. He is at the same time careful to distinguish between the institute and the men, being equally concerned to “destroy their errors,” and to “save their persons.”

The men against whom the Reformer committed himself to this extent, were possessed of great power, and so little accustomed to hear reproof with meekness, that, in the language of their antagonist, “a lord would more patiently submit to a severe censuring of his least offence, than friars would hear the soft and mild reproving of their greatest sins.” Wycliffe of course had to lay his account with the utmost mischief that might proceed from the passions of such opponents. During

nearly two centuries, the Inquisition had been pursuing its course of torture and destruction on the continent; and through the whole of that period its odious business had devolved chiefly on the orders of St. Dominick and St. Francis. In addition to their power in this form, they were, in the language of Wycliffe, “the confessors, the preachers, and the rulers commonly of all men.”[a](#)

The year 1360 has been mentioned as that in which Wycliffe became distinguished by the part which he took in this controversy. In the following year the master and scholars of Baliol College presented him to the living of Fylingham, a benefice of considerable value in the diocese of Lincoln. In the same year we find the name of John de Wycliffe entered as that of the newly-elected warden of Baliol.[a](#) These facts seem to warrant the conclusion that his attempts to defend the regular clergy, and the university, against the obtrusive zeal of the Mendicants, were highly estimated, at least by the parties most interested in his efforts.

But four years later we find the name of John de Wycliffe as that of the person filling the office of warden in Canterbury Hall in the same university. Canterbury Hall was founded by Simon de Islep, Archbishop of Canterbury, a prelate who appears to have acquitted himself with much credit in some of the most important offices in the church and the government. The new hall was designed for the benefit of eleven scholars, eight of whom were to be secular clergymen; the remaining three, and the warden, were to be chosen from the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury. But discord soon arose between the two classes of scholars, and Woodhall the warden took part with the monks. Islep saw the community on which he had lavished his patronage and his substance, conspicuous for dissension rather than improvement, and availing himself of a provision in the founding of the institution, he removed the three monks and the warden, and supplying the place of the former by the same number of clerical scholars, he invited John de Wycliffe to the vacant office of warden. Islep died soon afterwards, and Peter Langham, the Bishop of Ely, who had been previously abbot of Westminster, and a private monk, was raised to the primacy. Woodhall and his expelled associates made their appeal to the new primate, alleging that the late changes in Canterbury Hall had been brought about by illegal and dishonest means; and after the interval of a few weeks, the three monks were restored, and Woodhall was reinstated as warden. It was pretended that what had been done, had been done without the sanction of the founder, or that if such sanction had been given, it was in his last sickness, when he had ceased to be competent to such an office. The only appeal from the judgment of a metropolitan, in such a case, was to that of the sovereign pontiff; and to him appeal was made.[a](#)

But some doubt has been raised as to whether the John de Wycliffe, of Canterbury Hall, was the same person who had been previously master of Baliol, and who is known to us as the Reformer. The decision of the pontiff, in the case submitted to him from Canterbury Hall, was unfavourable to the appellants; and as the enemies of Wycliffe have been forward to ascribe his zeal as a reformer to this loss of his wardenship, it appears to have been supposed, that service would be done to the reputation of Wycliffe, by throwing some doubt over the point of his ever having been in possession of the said wardenship. But slight incidents do not thus affect the course of great men. Minds liable to be thus influenced to-day, will be no less open to

opposite impressions from opposite influences to-morrow, and will never evince steadiness in anything. Some difficulty indeed arises in accounting for the removal of a man from the office of warden in connexion with the older and larger foundation of Baliol, to so small and recent an establishment as that of Canterbury Hall. But we know not what may have happened at Baliol during the four years which intervened between the two appointments; and the fact that the founding of Canterbury Hall was a favourite project with the man who was “Primate of all England,” may go far to explain a circumstance which would otherwise seem improbable. It should be remembered, also, that the appeal in the matter of his wardenship was made in the spring of 1367, and that the decision of the pontiff was not given till the year 1370; and Anthony Wood, Fox the martyrologist, and others, agree in ascribing Wycliffe’s loss of his wardenship to the zeal which he had manifested on the side of ecclesiastical innovation, before the judgment of the court of Rome on that subject had been pronounced. The name of Wycliffe, as we have seen, is of local origin; and that there should have been two distinguished men in Oxford, bearing the name of John de Wycliffe, is most improbable. The confounding of the one person with the other would have been so natural, that in many instances care would have been taken to distinguish between them; and some traces of that distinction would have reached us. If a second John de Wycliffe flourished at the same time in Oxford, we seem shut up to the conclusion, that he must have been of the same family with the Reformer,—a conclusion which it seems hardly possible to admit. [a](#)

While the suit relating to Canterbury Hall was pending, a somewhat violent dispute arose between the crown of England and the court of Rome, concerning the tribute-money which King John had stipulated to be paid by himself and his successors to the treasury of the pontiffs. Urban demanded of the English monarch the annual payment of a thousand marks, as a feudal acknowledgment for the sovereignty of England and Ireland; those kingdoms being held in fee, it was said, of the successors of St. Peter. Since the decease of King John, this claim had been honoured or neglected, as the favour of the pontiff was felt to be important or otherwise.

Thirty-three years had passed since the last annual payment of this nature was made; and the demand of Urban now was, that the arrears for that interval should be sent to him, and that the annual sum should be regularly transmitted to him in future. In default of such payment, the king was further admonished that he would be cited duly to appear and answer for such neglect in the court of the sovereign pontiff, who had become his civil no less than his religious superior.

Edward received this communication in 1365: in the following year he submitted the question to the decision of parliament. Since the reign of John, the powers of the English parliament, and especially of the House of Commons, had become such that all the greater and more distinctive principles of our constitution may be said to have been called into vigorous exercise. The reign of Edward extended to fifty years, during which period more than seventy parliaments were convened. More than once it was solemnly enacted that one such assembly at least should be annually summoned. Edward, in the person of his chancellor, requested the advice of parliament with regard to the answer which should be returned to the claim made upon him and upon the nation by the pope. The prelates solicited a day for private deliberation. On the

morrow, the lords spiritual and temporal, and the members of the commons, declared unanimously, that neither King John, nor any other sovereign, had power thus to subject the realm of England, without consent of parliament; that such consent had not been obtained; and that, passing over other difficulties, the whole transaction on the part of the king was in violation of the oath which he had taken on receiving his crown. By the temporal nobility and commons, it was farther resolved that, should the pope commence his threatened process against the king of England, as his vassal, all possible aid should be rendered, that such usurpation might be effectually resisted.[a](#)

According to the ecclesiastical theory of the middle age, the church is the parent of the state, bishops are as fathers to princes, and the authority of all sovereigns must be subordinate to that of the successors of St. Peter. On the present occasion, men were not wanting to take this high ground in defence of this papal claim. In a treatise published by an anonymous monk, it was maintained, that the sovereignty of England had been legally forfeited to the pope, by the failure of the annual tribute; and that the clergy were exempt in person and property from all subjection to the authority of the magistrate. We may judge of the celebrity of Wycliffe, at this time, from the fact that he is called upon by name to show the fallacy of these opinions.[b](#)

The Reformer was not ignorant concerning the motives of his anonymous antagonist in assailing him with this challenge. He assures us that he had reason to know, that the hope of his opponent was, to expose him to the resentment of the pontiff, that, laden with ecclesiastical censures, he might be deprived of his preferments; also to commend himself and his own order to the favour of the Roman court, and to augment the possessions of the religious orders generally, by placing the kingdom in greater subjection to the power of the popes. That he might guard himself so far as possible against the sinister purposes of his opponent, Wycliffe commences by describing himself as a humble and obedient son of the church, and as meaning to affirm nothing that may be reported to her injury, or that may reasonably offend the ears of the devout. The Reformer further describes himself as the king's peculiar clerk, from which it appears that he had received the honorary distinction of royal chaplain. The right of the king in connexion with parliament not only to deny the tribute claimed by the pope, but to subject all clergymen to the jurisdiction of the magistrate in all civil matters, and in certain cases even to alienate the goods of the church, are all affirmed as doctrines shown to be just, both by the written law, and by the ancient practice of the realm. He does not deny that there may be much in the canons of the church opposed to such doctrines, but he insists that if truly examined these maxims will be found to be in strict accordance with the claims of natural right, with the maxims of civil law, and with the precepts of Holy Scripture.

Having thus stated the grounds on which it would be practicable to work out a full vindication of the above doctrines, he abstains from pursuing that course, and chooses rather to set forth his views, as contained in the substance of a series of speeches, said to have been delivered by certain secular lords, in reference to the demand lately made on the treasury of the king of England by the pope. By this method of reply, the humble Reformer may have hoped to shield himself, under the authority of the said lords, against the resentment to which his opinions might otherwise expose him. The speeches which have been thus preserved may interest the curious reader as

presenting a specimen of the manner in which our senators of the fourteenth century were deemed capable of treating questions demanding a good degree of information and discernment. What is reported from them in this document is not of course a complete account of the debate adverted to, but a selection of passages designed to place the series of difficulties inseparable from the claim of the pope in the most lucid form, and in the smallest compass. To us the paper is chiefly valuable, as containing opinions which, by adoption at least, are those of Wycliffe himself, and which in the report made of them have lost nothing of their force, probably from coming into contact with the vigour and intrepidity of his own genius.

The first lord declared all feudal subjection to be founded in the necessary subordinations of political power. But no subordination of this nature, he maintained, could have been the origin of the alleged subjection of England to the papacy; and the pretension of the pope accordingly being without any foundation of feudal justice, the dependence introduced by King John should not be regarded as a compact at all proper to be continued. Should the pontiff attempt to supply the want of feudal law, in support of this feudal pretension, by resorting to force, the speaker expressed his readiness to place the question on the issue of a trial by such weapons. The next speaker extended this line of argument. Feudal tribute, he observed, could not be justly demanded except by a superior, capable of affording feudal protection. Such protection the pope could not bestow on those from whom he now demanded tribute and homage; nor could it become him to employ himself in such matters, whatever might be his power in relation to them, seeing that the character distinguishing his holiness should be that of chief in the following of Christ, the Saviour of the world having been without a place to lay his head, and having taught his ministers in this manner by example, the superiority they should evince to all the fascinations of secular possession and authority. The great duty in this case is therefore said to be not only to resist this pretension to civil dominion on the part of the pontiff, but to insist that the cares of his holiness be restricted to the spiritual things proper to his office.

While it was shown after this manner that the feudal tribute demanded, could not be exacted on the ground of any feudal benefit supposed to be conferred, the third speaker declared that it could not be claimed with greater justice upon any religious ground, inasmuch as the influence of the pope and his cardinals was scarcely otherwise felt in England, than in conveying large portions of its treasure to the hands of its enemies. This nobleman was succeeded by a fourth, who stated that one-third of the property of the kingdom had become that of the church, and that over all such property the pope had long claimed dominion, and that in virtue of such claim, the court of Rome exacted the first-fruits from every vacant benefice in England. This interference of the pope in regard to temporal things, it was observed, must be either as vassal to the king, or as his superior. If the former doctrine would be rejected by the court of Rome, the latter should be no less spurned by the people of England; and it is accordingly recommended that a forcible check should be given to this spirit of usurpation, which may otherwise be found powerful enough, in some interval of disorder, to extend the despotism already imposed on the church, in an equal measure to the state. The remarks of the next speaker were not less pertinent. He professed himself curious to know the expressed condition on which this disputed tribute had been first granted. If granted that absolution might be conferred on the king, or that

the papal interdict might be removed from the kingdom, then the whole transaction was a piece of simoniacal dishonesty, proper to be denounced by lords and churchmen. The gifts of the Christian priesthood had been freely bestowed that they might be as freely dispensed; but the pope, according to this view of his conduct, is heard to say, "I will absolve thee, only upon condition that I receive so much money annually and for ever!" If it should be said that the claim preferred had not been made on the ground of any spiritual benefit bestowed, but on the principle of a strict feudal subjection, it is then argued that a plea to dispose of the crown itself might be some day urged with as much appearance of justice. By another lord it was observed, that supposing the land ever to have been the just possession of the pope, his right so to dispose of the goods of the church as to barter an opulent kingdom for the trivial acknowledgment of seven hundred marks a year, was hardly consistent with an honest stewardship. Certainly, the functionary who could depreciate ecclesiastical property after this manner, might alienate it entirely, and must be an authority not greatly to be coveted in the relation of a feudal superior. The same speaker proceeds to state, that "Christ is the supreme Lord, while the pope is a man liable to sin; and if in mortal sin, according to divines, is unfitted for dominion." And he concludes by observing, "manifestly, therefore, it is enough for us to keep ourselves from mortal sin, to the service of one lord of the kingdom, to communicate of our goods virtuously to the poor, and as in former time to hold our kingdom immediately of Christ, who, as chief Lord, teaches whatever is most lawful and perfect with regard to man's authority." The last speaker exposed the injustice of the papal demand still more forcibly, as an attempt to visit the sins of the monarch on the freedom and property of the subject, and that to remote generations. In the supposed compact it is argued, the people were all certainly interested, and according to the good usage of the realm, the assent of all should have been obtained, in place of which, the seal of the king and of a few apostate lords had been deemed sufficient to bring thralldom upon a whole nation. The grant, accordingly, as being one to which the kingdom had never been a party, is treated as a matter which it should never descend to recognise.^a

Wycliffe speaks of having heard the speeches of which he makes this report.^b But the reasonings of these secular lords are so pertinent, and for the most part so identical with opinions subsequently published, and reiterated in almost every shape in the writings of the Reformer, that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion, either that the supposed debate is altogether a fiction, or at least that Wycliffe has given to the utterances of the speakers a strong colouring from his own views and impressions.^c His opponent had stated the claim of Urban in a form of logic from which the escape of an adversary was supposed to be impossible. Having laid down as an axiom, that every dominion granted on condition, is dissolved on a failure of that condition, he proceeds to say, that the pope, as supreme lord, presented the realm of England to King John, after it had been surrendered into his hands, on condition that England should pay annually seven hundred marks to the Roman court. But this condition, he adds, has not been observed, and the king has thereby fallen from the true dominion of England. Wycliffe replied, that the condition assumed in this agreement had been assumed falsely; neither the king, nor those who acted with him, being competent to transfer the realm and the people of England after this manner to the pope. Having challenged the monk to show the contrary of this opinion, Wycliffe concluded by

observing, “If I mistake not, the day will come in which all exactions shall cease before such a condition will be proved to be either honest or reasonable.”

By the parliament which disposed in this manner of the arrogant claim of the pope to be regarded as the feudal sovereign of England, some wholesome regulations were made with a view to protect the universities against certain mischiefs which had resulted from the conduct of the friars. It was determined that no scholar under the age of eighteen should be admitted into any mendicant order, that no document tending in any manner to the injury of the universities should be hereafter received from the pope, and that all differences between the mendicants and the older authorities in those seminaries should be decided in future in the court of the king, and without further appeal.^a We have no direct evidence on the subject, but it is highly probable, from the part which Wycliffe had taken in this controversy, that the suit of the universities against the friars was not conducted without his assistance; and this becomes the more probable if we suppose him to have been present, as he states, when the parliament discussed the question of the tribute claimed by the pope in the manner described. The parliament adverted to, it will be remembered, was the assembly convened in 1366, and Wycliffe, who was then warden of Canterbury Hall, was soon afterwards numbered, as we have seen, among the royal chaplains.

The reign of Edward the Third, who had now reached the fiftieth year of his age, is one of the most remarkable in English history. It was distinguished by military enterprise, but hardly less by general social advancement. The battle of Cressy belongs to the year 1346. The victory of Poitiers belongs to 1356. In the latter year, the king of Scotland was a prisoner in the Tower of London, and the king of France was placed at the head of the many illustrious captives in the hands of Edward the Third. It was natural that such successes should diffuse and strengthen the war passion among the people of England in those times. But much collateral benefit resulted from this course of affairs. During the reign of Edward, the pontiffs resided at Avignon, and being, together with their cardinals, commonly Frenchmen, the animosity against France disposed the people of England to regard the policy of the papal court as that of a power naturally allied to France, and to look on all its proceedings with a suspicion and disaffection which might not otherwise have been felt.^a The great expense, moreover, inseparable from a protracted war, both in Scotland, and through the provinces of France, obliged the king to assemble his parliament every year, the effect of which was greatly to strengthen the power of such assemblies, to define parliamentary usage, and to familiarise the mind of the people to such a mode of government; while the redress of grievances almost always preceded new grants of money. Commerce also made great progress during this period, and in its train came a marked revival of taste, literature, and general intelligence.

John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, was the patron of Chaucer and of Wycliffe, and is the only male member of the royal family whose name is conspicuously associated with the religion of those times. This prince was born at Ghent in the year 1340, sixteen years subsequent to the birth of our Reformer. At the age of twenty-two, he succeeded, as Earl of Richmond, to the title of his deceased father-in-law, Henry, Duke of Lancaster, and to estates which rendered him the most opulent subject of the realm. He unsheathed his sword in Scotland, France, and Spain, but is less known

from his military exploits, than as possessing some taste for literature, and as having evinced a strong sympathy, up to a certain point, with the reforms contemplated by Wycliffe. It has been stated that Wycliffe dedicated a collection of his works to the Duke of Lancaster so early as the year 1368. But this is an error. There is a manuscript volume in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, containing several pieces from the pen of Wycliffe, and along the upper line of the first treatise in that collection, is an insertion describing the volume as consisting of the works of Wycliffe which were so dedicated. But this entry is made by a modern hand, and it is certain that the piece on which it was written was not composed earlier than 1380—that is, subsequent to the papal schism. This description, however, has been copied in a well-known printed catalogue of existing manuscripts, and from that source has been widely adopted.^a

In 1371 an attempt was made by the English parliament to exclude churchmen from those high offices of state which hitherto had been almost invariably sustained by them. At that time the offices of Lord Chancellor, and Lord Treasurer, and those of Keeper and Clerk of the Privy Seal, were filled by clergymen. The Master of the Rolls, the Masters in Chancery, and Chancellor and Chamberlain of the Exchequer, were also dignitaries, or beneficed persons of the same order. One priest was Treasurer for Ireland, and another for the Marshes of Calais; and while the parson of Oundle is employed as surveyor of the king's buildings, the parson of Harwick is called to the superintendence of the royal wardrobe.^a It is known, also, that the clergy often descended to much lower occupations, and gave themselves to such employments in a manner most inconsistent with the proper duties of their office. The attempt to put an end to this usage by authority of parliament, is attributed by historians to the secret influence of John of Gaunt; and concerning the judgment of Wycliffe as strongly opposed to it, the reader will find abundant evidence in the present volume. "Neither prelates," he writes, "nor doctors, priests nor deacons, should hold secular offices, that is, those of Chancery, Treasury, Privy Seal, and other such secular offices in the Exchequer; neither be stewards of lands, nor stewards of the hall, nor clerks of the kitchen, nor clerks of accounts; neither be occupied in any secular office in lords' courts, more especially while secular men are sufficient to do such offices."^b The prayer of the parliament, and a prayer in which its members appear to have been unanimous, was fully to the effect of the above language. Edward, on receiving it, replied that he would act in the matter with the advice of his council. But in the following month William of Wykeham, the celebrated Bishop of Winchester, resigned his office of Chancellor, and the Bishop of Exeter ceased to be Lord Treasurer. It is hardly probable that the originators of this movement should have regarded their first effort as likely to be attended by a greater measure of success.

This proceeding belongs to the year 1371. It was in the year preceding, that the papal court gave its judgment against the claim of Wycliffe with regard to the wardenship of Canterbury Hall. Against the last will of the founder, Woodhall and the three monks were restored, and two years later they rendered their illegal triumph secure, by paying the sum of two hundred marks, as the price of obtaining a confirmation of the decision of the pope from the crown.^c We have no reason to suppose that Wycliffe

was greatly disappointed by what had happened in this respect. We are not aware of a single reference to it in any of his subsequent writings.

In the year 1372, he performed his novitiate for the degree of doctor of divinity; that degree authorised him to open his own school, as a public teacher of theology in the university. In this capacity he, no doubt, read many of those scholastic pieces still extant among his works, and from this time the influence of his opinions began to be more sensibly felt in the university.

The next point with which the name of Wycliffe is connected in our history, relates to the abuses of the papacy in the matter of “provisors.” In the sixteenth year of Edward III. the recently-elected pontiff, Clement the Fourth, declared the two next vacancies in the Anglican church which should amount to the annual value of two thousand marks, to be, by provision, the property of two among his cardinals. The moment was not favourable to such a proceeding. Complaints which had been often uttered, both by nobles and commons, on this subject, were now loudly repeated. Edward, in his letter to the pope, declared that the effect of this custom of provisors had been to transfer the property designed for the support of religion, to the hands of men who neither dwelt in the country nor understood its language, and who, while seizing on the emoluments of office, were alike unable and unwilling to discharge its duties. This custom, he declares to be alike at variance with his own prerogative, with the authority of the chapters, and with that of patrons in general. His claim accordingly is, that this usage in respect to livings may be forthwith abolished.^a But the redress of these grievances was difficult to obtain. In 1350 it was found necessary to pass the celebrated statute against “provisors;” and in 1353 to provide a further enactment, well known since that time by the word *premunire*. The first declared the collation to any dignitary or benefice in a manner opposed to the rights of the king, the chapters, or the patron, to be void; the second was directed against the custom of appealing on questions of property, from the decision of the English courts, to the court of the pontiffs. But in 1373 complaint is still made against the evils resulting from these practices. The spoliation carried on under such pretexts, is said to be even greater than at any former period. Hence, to save the property of the realm, and to silence the murmurs of his subjects, Edward commissioned Gilbert, bishop of Bangor, Bolton, a monk of Dunholm, and William de Burton and John de Shepey, to lay his own complaint, and that of his parliament, before the papal court. Gregory the Eleventh then filled the papal chair, and resided at Avignon. The change demanded was, “that the pontiff should desist in future from the reservation of benefices in the Anglican church; that the clergy should henceforth freely enjoy their election to episcopal dignities; and that in the case of electing a bishop, it should be enough that his appointment should be confirmed by his metropolitan, as was the ancient custom.”^a

^c In answer to this complaint some fair promises were made; but from the spirit in which the English parliament returned to the subject in the same year, it is plain that the promise of amendment was regarded either as too restricted, or as not trustworthy. In the following year—the year 1374—an inquiry was instituted as to the exact number of benefices in England which, by means of this custom of provisors, had passed into the hands of foreigners.^b As the result of this inquiry, a second embassy was appointed, to present a further and stronger remonstrance against these

encroachments. The first name in the list of the persons now appointed, is that of the prelate who had been included in the previous commission, and the second is that of John de Wycliffe. Had the seat of the negotiation which followed been at Rome, or even at Avignon, it is probable that such nearer observation of the temper and policy of the papal court, would have given to the mind of the Reformer a strong impulse in the direction toward which it now tended. But the diplomatists met at Bruges. Wycliffe reached that city in August, 1374; and in September of the following year, the result of the commission appeared in the shape of six bulls, addressed by the pope to the king of England, and treating of the questions then at issue between the nation and the papacy. In these documents it was provided that no person at present in possession of a benefice in England, should be disturbed in such possession by any intervention of authority from the pope; that such benefices as had been disposed of, in anticipation of their vacancy, by Urban the Fifth, but which had not yet become vacant, should be left to be filled according to the pleasure of their patrons; that the titles of certain clergymen which had been questioned by the late pope, should be confirmed, and that all demand on the first-fruits of the livings to which those clergymen had been appointed, should be remitted; and also that an assessment should be made of the revenues derived by certain cardinals from livings in England, to effect the repair of the churches and other ecclesiastical buildings holden by them, and which had been allowed to fall into decay—the extent of such assessment to be determined by the verdict of a jury convened from the neighbourhood.[a](#)

These provisions point with sufficient clearness to one class of abuses then prevalent in the English church, consequent on its relation to the papacy. It is plain that it was scarcely within the power of the king, or of the parliament, or of both conjointly, to protect the ecclesiastical revenues of the kingdom against the rapacity of the popes and their dependents. In the documents adverted to, it will be marked that the only admission of error had respect to certain things done by the preceding pontiff, not to any error in principle as regarded the practice of usurping the place of the crown, the chapters, and the patrons of livings, and alienating their legal property from them, and from the nation, in favour of aliens and enemies. It is admitted that in certain cases the last pope had not exercised this sort of power wisely; but the only solace to the impoverished nation is, that in future these schemes of spoliation are to be conducted with more precaution and sagacity.

That such were the views entertained in England with regard to the papal letters, may be inferred from the continuance of the embassy which produced them. In the April of the following year, the parliament again petitioned the king on this subject, and Edward replied, that the matters in dispute were still in the hands of his commissioners at Bruges. But the health of the aged king was declining rapidly, and his power had waned in a degree not less observable. On the continent his authority and influence were almost annihilated. At home, faction brought its weakness and perplexities. The court of Rome, which never failed to perceive the advantage to be derived from delay, or the policy of seizing on some interval of weakness to embrace or extend its power, could not be brought to more than vague and partial reformation, always connecting such conditions with the points which it appeared to concede, as might furnish, ere long, a sufficient pretext for resuming whatever may seem to have been abandoned. The pope promised not to dispose of English benefices in the way of

reservation, on condition that the crown should be found to abstain from all similar liberties with ecclesiastical property; and this was all the fruit of a negotiation of two years' continuance. It is probable that to the insight into the spirit and policy of the papal court thus obtained, we are to ascribe the severity which subsequently marks the strictures of Wycliffe concerning the higher clergy generally, and especially concerning the popes, and their immediate coadjutors. Two years of precious time expended to so little purpose, must have been anything rather than soothing in its influence on a man of such a temperament.

During his absence, however, the Reformer was not forgotten by his sovereign. In November, 1375, he was presented by the king to the prebend of Aust, in the collegiate church of Westbury, in the diocese of Worcester. About the same time the rectory of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, became vacant. Lord Henry de Ferars, the patron, was then a minor; it, in consequence, devolved upon the crown to appoint the next incumbent, and the royal patronage was again exercised in favour of Wycliffe.^a

In the mean time the disposition of the commons, and, we have reason to suppose, of the people at large, to indulge in loud complaint against the court of Rome, rather strengthened than diminished. We can suppose the statistics of the commons, in 1376, to have been somewhat inaccurate when they state that the kingdom, within the memory of the present generation, had lost not less than two-thirds of its wealth and population. But it is instructive to observe, that the disasters, whether of war abroad, or of disease and poverty at home, which were regarded as having changed the condition of the kingdom to such an alarming extent, are imputed mainly to the mal-practices of popes and cardinals. In the preamble to their petition, they state that the taxes paid to the court of Rome for ecclesiastical dignities amounted to five times more than those obtained by the king from the whole produce of the realm. "For some on bishopric or other dignity," the pope they say reserves, "by way of translation and death, three, four, or five several times; and while for money the brokers of that sinful city—Rome—promote many caitiffs, being altogether unlearned and unworthy, to a thousand marks living yearly, the learned and worthy can hardly obtain twenty marks: whereby learning decayeth, aliens and enemies to their land, who never saw, nor care to see, their parishioners, having those livings; whereby they despise God's service, and convey away the treasure of the realm, and are worse than Jews or Saracens." Against these customs they plead "the law of the church," which requires that all such preferments should be disposed of in charity, "without praying or paying." They insist further, that it is the demand of reason, that establishments which owe their origin to devout and humane feeling should continue to be subservient to religion and hospitality; and they are not afraid to add, that "God has given his sheep to the pope to be pastured, and not to be shorn or shaven; and that lay patrons, perceiving the simony and covetousness of the pope, do thereby learn to sell their benefices to mere brutes, no otherwise than Christ was sold to the Jews." By such means the pope is said to derive a revenue from England alone, exceeding that of any prince in Christendom. It is stated, accordingly, that "the pope's collector, and other strangers, the king's enemies, and only lieger spies for English dignities, and disclosing the secrets of the realm, ought to be discharged." It is added, that the said collector, "being also receiver of the pope's pence, keepeth a house in London, with clerks and officers thereunto belonging, as if it were one of the king's solemn courts, transporting yearly to the

pope twenty thousand marks, and most commonly more: that cardinals and other aliens, remaining at the court of Rome—whereof one cardinal is a dean of York, another of Salisbury, another of Lincoln, another archdeacon of Canterbury, another archdeacon of Durham, another archdeacon of Suffolk, and another archdeacon of York, another prebendary of Thane and Nassingdon, another prebendary of York, in the diocese of York—all these, and divers others, have the best dignities in England, and have sent over to them yearly, twenty thousand marks, over and above that which English brokers lying here have; that the pope, to ransom Frenchmen, the king's enemies, who defend Lombardy for him, doth always, at his pleasure, levy a subsidy of the whole clergy of England; that the pope, for more gain, maketh sundry translations of all bishoprics and other dignities within the realm; and that the pope's collector hath this year taken to his use the first fruit of all benefices; that it would be good, therefore, to renew all the statutes against provisors from Rome, since the pope reserveth all the benefices of the world for his own proper gift, and hath, within this year, created twelve new cardinals—so that now there are thirty, whereas there were wont to be but twelve in all; and all the said thirty cardinals, except two or three, are the king's enemies." It is further argued from these facts, that the popes, if left without check, may ere long proceed to confer the civil offices and the states of the realm upon their creatures, after the manner in which they had "accroached" to themselves the appointment of heads to "all houses and corporations of religion." As the only adequate means of protecting the country against a system of spoliation which doomed it to perpetual poverty, and which drained from it the emolument that should be as a bounty to its learning and intelligence, it is urged, not only that the provisors of the popes should be sternly resisted in all cases, but that "no papal collector or proctor should remain in England, upon pain of life and limb; and that no Englishman, on the like pain, should become such collector or proctor, or remain at the court of Rome." [a](#)

Such were the proceedings of an assembly, which, from its enlightened public spirit, in regard to secular as well as to religious questions, obtained the honourable appellation of the "good parliament." About six months intervened between the dissolution of that parliament and the meeting of another; and the opening of the next parliament is connected with a remarkable event in the life of Wycliffe. It is manifest that the doctrines of the Reformer were now widely diffused, both among the people, and among that class of persons from whom the representatives of the people in parliament were chosen. The clergy began to be alarmed. It was deemed expedient that something vigorous should be done to prevent the scattering of these seeds of religious change through the land. Courtney, one of the most imperious churchmen of the age, had been recently elevated to the see of London. In the last parliament this prelate had committed himself in a marked degree against the Duke of Lancaster, the known patron of Wycliffe; and the bishop now employed himself to rouse and concentrate the indignation of his order against the opinions and conduct of the Reformer. The houses of convocation met on third of February, in 1377, a week after the opening of the new parliament, and one of its earliest proceedings was to issue a summons requiring Wycliffe to appear before it, and to answer to the charge of holding and publishing certain erroneous and heretical opinions. The nineteenth day of the same month was fixed for the hearing of his defence, and, in expectation of his appearance, the place of assembling, which was the cathedral of St. Paul's, was

crowded with the populace. Wycliffe and the Duke of Lancaster had met recently at Bruges, the Duke to negotiate a peace with France, while the Reformer was employed in the matter of his treaty with the delegates of the papacy. When Wycliffe presented himself to the convocation in St. Paul's, it was in company with John of Gaunt, and with Lord Percy, who then filled the office of Earl Marshal. It was with difficulty that the authority even of such persons secured an avenue through the crowd for the approach of the Reformer to the presence of his judges. The disturbance thus occasioned attracted the attention of Courtney, and the sight of Wycliffe, as sustained by the presence of two such powerful personages, was manifestly as unwelcome as it was unexpected. The following dialogue is given by Fuller, as having passed on the occasion:—

BISHOP COURTNEY.

Lord Percy, if I had known what maisteries you would have kept in the church, I would have stopped you out from coming hither.

DUKE OF LANCASTER.

He shall keep such maisteries here, though you say nay.

LORD PERCY.

Wiclif, sit down, for you have many things to answer to, and you need to repose yourself on a soft seat.

BISHOP COURTNEY.

It is unreasonable that one cited before his ordinary, should sit down during his answer. He must, and shall stand.

DUKE OF LANCASTER.

The Lord Percy's motion for Wiclif, is but reasonable. And as for you, my lord bishop, who are grown so proud and arrogant, I will bring down the pride, not of you alone, but of all the prelacy in England.

BISHOP COURTNEY.

Do your worst, sir.

DUKE OF LANCASTER.

Thou bearest thyself so brag upon thy parents, u which shall not be able to help thee; they shall have enough to do to help themselves.

BISHOP COURTNEY.

My confidence is not in my parents, nor in any man else, but only in God, in whom I trust, by whose assistance I will be bold to speak the truth.

DUKE OF LANCASTER.

Rather than I will take these words at his hands, I would pluck the bishop by the hair out of the church.^b

These last words were uttered in an under tone, but sufficiently loud to be heard by some of the by-standers. Great pains had been taken by the clergy during the sitting of the last parliament, to conciliate the popular feeling, and to direct it against the duke, as meditating a suppression of the mayoralty of London, and other grave inroads upon the liberties of the citizens. The crowd nearest the place of this dispute, consisting probably in great part of the dependents of the clergy, as well as of persons who had been filled with suspicion and disaffection by the above means, raised their voices against the duke, and the disturbance altogether became such, that the meeting separated without anything being said by Wycliffe, or any of its proper business being entered upon.^a

This meeting, it will be remembered, took place in February, 1377. In the following June, Edward the Third expired; and in October of the same year, Richard the Second assembled his first parliament. This parliament included nearly all the members who had constituted the “good parliament,” and they returned with more determination than ever to their former labour—the labour of concerting measures to prevent the court of Rome from draining the land of its treasure. As a remedy against evils which had hitherto resisted every influence opposed to them, it was urged that the procuring of a benefice by papal provision, should be punished with outlaw; and that the same penalty should be incurred by the man who should farm any living in the English church holden by a foreigner. It was also urged, that proclamation should be issued, requiring “that all aliens, as well religious as others, do, by Candlemas next, avoid the realm; and that during the war, all their lands and goods should be applied thereto.”^b The war with France had for some time taken a disastrous course. The people had been heavily burdened to sustain it; and the victories which distinguished it, brilliant as they were, yielded no substantial fruit. The temper of the nation, accordingly, was that of irritation and bitter disappointment; and no power felt the effect of this popular disaffection more immediately or strongly than the court of Rome. The above language, set forth as the grave resolution of parliament, seems to bespeak an almost desperateness of feeling on the subject of papal encroachment; and it was by this parliament that a question is said to have been submitted to the judgment of Wycliffe, to the following purport:—“Whether it would not be lawful in a kingdom, in case of necessity, and as the means of defending itself, to detain its treasure, that it might not be conveyed to foreign nations, though even the pope himself should demand the same, under pain of his censures, and in virtue of the obedience said to be due to him?” Wycliffe, as may be supposed, answers this question in the affirmative. The paper setting forth the reasons of this decision, will be found among his works printed in this volume.^a

In the month of June, 1377, several letters were sent to England by the pontiff, concerning certain false and dangerous opinions said to be holden and promulgated by John de Wycliffe, rector of Lutterworth, and professor of theology in the University of Oxford. One of these letters was addressed to the king, another to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a third to the university.^b The purport of these letters was to require that measures should be immediately taken to ascertain the opinions of the party accused; to condemn such as should be found erroneous or heretical; and to prevent the diffusion of such doctrines by every means adapted to that end.

When the heads of the university were apprised that such a communication had been sent to them, the propriety of allowing it to be read, or of declining to receive it, became a matter of serious discussion. This hesitation may be attributed in part to the sympathy of many with the opinions of the Reformer, but still more probably to that feeling of jealousy in respect to all papal interference, which was so often manifested by the universities of the middle age. Walsingham, the monastic historian of the time, expresses his astonishment that any such hesitancy should have been shown; but it is evident, from the letters of the pope, that the persons holding the opinions of the Reformer, in a greater or less degree, were known to be numerous and powerful, and that the execution of the papal mandates was expected to be attended with difficulty.

The call made upon the hierarchy to be vigilant and resolute in this affair, was met by a more prompt and cordial response. Sudbury, now Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote to the Chancellor of Oxford, reminding him of the commands received from the pope, and requiring the execution of them with all diligence and faithfulness. The chancellor is required especially to obtain, by the assistance of the most orthodox and skilful divines, correct information in regard to the alleged heresies and errors, and to send along with his statement of the doctrines certainly propagated by Wycliffe, his own judgment respecting them, delivered under the university seal. It was, moreover, enjoined upon him, that, as chancellor, he should cite the erroneous teacher, or cause him to be cited, personally to appear before his ecclesiastical superiors, in the church of St. Paul's, London, on the thirtieth day from the date of the citation.

This letter was written on the eighteenth of December, and early in the following year—the year 1378—Wycliffe appeared before a synod convened at Lambeth. On this occasion the Reformer appeared alone. But though the distinguished men who accompanied him when he last fronted his enemies, were absent, the favour of the powerful, as well as of the people, was still with him. The citizens of London surrounded the place of meeting: numbers forced their way into the chapel where the synod was assembled, proclaiming their attachment to the person and doctrine of Wycliffe. The dismay produced by this tumult was augmented, when Sir Lewis Clifford entered the chapel, and, in the name of the queen-mother, forbade the bishops proceeding to any definite sentence concerning the conduct or opinions of the Reformer. Walsingham, in relating this disastrous course of things, censures the pusillanimity of the synod in the strongest terms. “The delegates,” he remarks, “shaken as a reed with the wind, became soft as oil in their speech, to the open forfeiture of their own dignity, and the injury of the whole church. With such fear were they struck, that you would think them a man who hears not, or one in whose mouth are no reproofs.”^a Such interferences with regard to matters of public interest,

were not unusual in those times. A little previously, the queen-mother had interposed in the matter of the dispute between the Londoners and the Duke of Lancaster. The persons delegated “to entreat the citizens to be reconciled with the duke,” were Sir Alfred Lewer, Sir Simon Burley, and this same Sir Lewis Clifford: and “the Londoners answered, that they, for the honour of the princess, would obey, and do with all reverence what she would require.”^a Walsingham also relates, that a similar tumult arose, some four years later, during the trial of Ashton the Lollard.

But the historian who complains in such terms of the conduct of the synod, informs us, that before its members separated, Wycliffe delivered to them a paper, containing a statement of the opinions imputed to him, with explanations annexed. These explanations were not deemed satisfactory; and though no further proceedings were instituted against him at present, he was commanded to abstain from teaching such doctrines, either in the schools or in his sermons.^b This paper has been much misrepresented by the enemies of Wycliffe, and much misunderstood by his friends. The former have described his explanations as characterised by subtlety, timidity, and evasion; and the latter, by judging of the several articles separately, in place of regarding the document as a whole, have sometimes contributed to strengthen the prejudice thus created, rather than to remove it. As the contents of this paper have been regarded as presenting the most vulnerable point in the history of the Reformer, we shall print it without abridgment, and shall add to it such observations as may serve to give a fair exhibition of its general and real meaning. It commences thus:—

First of all, I publicly protest, as I have often done at other times, that I will and purpose from the bottom of my heart, by the grace of God, to be a sincere Christian; and as long as I have breath, to profess and defend the law of Christ so far as I am able. And if, through ignorance, or any other cause, I shall fail therein, I ask pardon of God, and do now from henceforth revoke and retract it, humbly submitting myself to the correction of Holy Mother Church. And as for the opinion of children and weak people concerning the faith which I have taught in the schools and elsewhere, and which by those who are more than children has been conveyed beyond the sea, even to the court of Rome; that Christians may not be scandalised on my account, I am willing to set down my sense in writing, since I am prosecuted for the same. Which opinions I am willing to defend even unto death, as I believe all Christians ought to do, and especially the pope of Rome, and the rest of the priests of the church. I understand the conclusions, according to the sense of Scripture and the holy doctors, and the manner of speaking used by them; which sense I am ready to explain: and if it be proved that the conclusions are contrary to the faith, I am willing very readily to retract them.

I. The first conclusion is, *that all mankind, since Christ's coming, have not power, simply or absolutely, to ordain that Peter and all his successors should rule over the world politically for ever.* And this is plain, as it is not in the power of man to hinder the coming of Christ to the last judgment, which we are bound to believe according to that article of the creed, *from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.* For after that, according to the faith delivered in Scripture, all human polity will be at an end. But I understand that political dominion, or civil secular government, does pertain to the laity, who are actually living, whilst they are absent from the Lord: for

of such a political dominion do the philosophers speak. And although it be styled periodical, and sometimes *perpetual* (or for ever); yet because in the Holy Scripture, in the use of the church, and in the writings of the philosophers, *perpetuum* is plainly used commonly in the same sense as *eternal*; I afterwards suppose that term to be used or taken in that more famous signification, for thus the church sings, *Glory be to God the Father, and to his only Son, with the Holy Spirit the Comforter, both now and for ever [in perpetuum]*. And then the conclusion immediately follows on the principles of faith; since it is not in the power of men to appoint the pilgrimage of the church to be without end.

Wycliffe here contents himself with explaining the phrase “for ever” scholastically, in its literal and most extended sense, and as being in that sense opposed to the known pleasure of God in respect to the duration of all earthly powers and relationships. But the reader will find, as he proceeds, that if the Reformer has deemed it sufficient to speak under this article, merely to the point of the *perpetuity* claimed for the papal supremacy, it was not because he had no other doctrine which he might honestly avow on that subject, but because other articles were to follow with which, in his view, it would be preferable to connect his more peculiar opinions relative to the *nature* of that power.

II. *God cannot give civil dominion to any man for himself and his heirs for ever; in perpetuum.* By *civil dominion*, I mean the same that I meant above by *political dominion*, and by *perpetual*, or *for ever*, the same as I did before, as the Scripture understands the perpetual or everlasting habitations in the state of blessedness. I said, therefore, that God, of his ordinary power, cannot give man *civil dominion* for ever. I said, secondly, that it seems probable that God, of his absolute power, cannot give man such a dominion, *in perpetuum*, for ever, because he cannot, as it seems, always imprison his spouse on the way, nor always defer the ultimate completion of her happiness.

Here the same kind of argument occurs. It is merely saying that the natural power of God has been restricted to a given course by his moral purposes.

III. *Charters of human invention concerning civil inheritance for ever, are impossible.* This is an incident truth. For we ought not to reckon as catholic all the charters that are held by an unjust occupier. But if this be confirmed by the faith of the church, there would be an opportunity given for charity, and a liberty to trust in temporalities, and to petition for them; for as every truth is necessary, so every falsehood is possible on supposition, as is plain by the testimony of Scripture, and of the holy doctors, who speak of the necessity of things future.

Under this article we have the same method of reasoning. But in a second paper, containing answers and explanations concerning these alleged errors and heresies, and made public by Wycliffe a short time after the meeting at Lambeth, the Reformer states, in regard to this conclusion, that it was a passing remark which arose in conversation with a certain divine, who magnified such charters so far as to prefer their authority to that of the Scriptures. “To which,” he states, “I replied, it would be much better to attend to the defence and exposition of the Scriptures, since many such

charters were necessarily such as could not be executed.” He complains, accordingly, that opinions should have been imputed to him from hearsay, or as reported by “children and weak persons.”

But if the reader will pass on from the first three articles in this series, to the last, he will perceive that the Reformer had simply reserved his obnoxious doctrine on this subject, that it might be set forth more fully at the right point, and that it is simply scholasticism, and not a timid concealment, with which he is chargeable. In that article he is described as saying, that in certain cases an ecclesiastic, and even a bishop of Rome, may be corrected by his inferiors, and not merely by his inferiors among the clergy, but by the laity. He is described also as teaching that this may be done whenever the good of the church shall be thought to require it. Wycliffe does not disown this doctrine, offensive and alarming as he knew it to be. In support of this opinion, he assumes the pontiff to be a peccable brother, sharing, in common with other men, in a tendency to what is sinful; and he thence infers, that popes, in common with other men, are subject to the laws of brotherly reproof and correction. He accordingly writes, “If it be evident, therefore, that the college of cardinals are remiss in performing their service for the necessary welfare of the church, it is manifest that others, and it may chance principally the laity, may reprove and implead him, and bring him to a better life.” It is admitted that the impeachment of a pontiff is a grave business, not to be rashly entered upon; but it is added, that where ground for such a proceeding really exists, to shrink from the duty is not only to know that the pope is an offender, but to conclude that he is an offender beyond the hope of recovery. In conclusion, he exclaims, “God forbid that truth should be condemned by the church of Christ, because it sounds unpleasantly in the ear of the guilty or of the ignorant, for then the entire faith of the Scriptures will be exposed to condemnation!” If the laity might be justly employed in impeaching a pontiff, and in bringing even the successors of St. Peter to a better life, of course the subordinate members of the hierarchy must be regarded as subject to the same kind of discipline. The right of the people also, to judge in such case as to what is, or is not, for the good of the church, is clearly assumed as the foundation of this doctrine. Yet the doctrine is avowed, committed to writing, and delivered into the hands of the papal delegates: we wonder not that their counsel was, that such opinions should “not be published in schools or pulpits.” It is important also to observe, that it does not appear from any source that Wycliffe had committed himself against the papacy, previously to this time, in any stronger form than in the matter of the article adverted to: such of his writings as contain stronger expressions on that subject, I have shown elsewhere to be the productions of a later period.[a](#)

IV. Every one being or existing in grace justifying finally, has not only a right unto, but in fact hath all the things of God; or, has not only a right unto the thing, but, for his time, has by right a power over all the good things of God. This is plain from Scripture, Matt. xxiv., because the Truth promises this to those citizens who enter into his joy: Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. For the right of the communion of saints in their own country is founded objectively on the universality of the good things of God.

V. A man can give dominion to his natural or adopted son, whether that dominion be temporal or eternal, ministerially only. This is plain from hence, that every man ought to acknowledge himself in all his works an humble minister of God, as is evident from Scripture: *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ.* Nay, Christ himself so ministered, and taught his principal apostles so to minister. But in their own country the saints will give to their brethren the dominion of goods, as is plain from their acting in the body, or their disposal of inferior good things by nature, according to that of Luke vi.: *Good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.*

This article, and the preceding, relate to an obscure topic, and they are not much elucidated by the sort of explanation attached to them. The doctrine to which they refer is that of “dominion founded in grace,” of which mention is made in a preceding portion of this work.

VI. If God is, temporal lords may lawfully and meritoriously take away the goods of fortune from a delinquent church. That conclusion is correlative with the first article of the Creed, *I believe in God, the Father Almighty.* I understand the word *may* as the Scriptures do, which grant that God *may* of stones *raise up children unto Abraham*; for otherwise all Christian princes should be heretics. For the first conclusion the argument is thus formed. If God is, he is Almighty; and if so, he *may* prescribe to temporal lords to take away the goods of fortune from a delinquent church; and if he does thus prescribe to them, they *may* lawfully so take them away. *Ergo*, from whence, in virtue of that principle, have Christian princes put in practice that opinion. But God forbid that from thence it should be believed, that it was my meaning that secular lords may lawfully take them away when and howsoever they please, or by their bare authority; but that they may only do it by the authority of the church in cases and form limited by law.

Concerning the doctrine of Wycliffe on the subject to which this article refers, it is necessary to look to the sixth, the sixteenth, and the seventeenth articles together. In these articles, taken collectively, he is accused of teaching, that all church endowments are left conditionally; that if the clergy fail to apply their wealth to the end which it was designed to promote, it must devolve on the magistrate to enforce such an application of it; and that, in every such case, the civil power is not only authorised so to do, but, if needful to the reformation of the order, to deprive churchmen of their possessions entirely, and this notwithstanding any censures from the church which might be fulminated against them. Such is the doctrine which Wycliffe is described as holding with regard to the enormous wealth of the clergy and of the religious orders; and in his paper, given to the papal delegates, this doctrine, instead of being denied, evaded, or softened down, is fully avowed as a part of his creed. With the prelacy of England as his judges, and the papal power as their ally, he does not fear to add, that if there be any difference between the obligations of the magistrate to secure the just application of civil or ecclesiastical endowments, his duty to that end in the latter case is even more binding than in the former, inasmuch as the mischiefs consequent on any mal-administration in the matter of ecclesiastical endowments are the more momentous. In the theory of Wycliffe, the last appeal in respect to all such questions was to the crown, and not to the mitre. The temporal

power of the pope was denied, not merely in respect to the property of the state, but in respect to the property of the church. In his view, the pontiff who claimed such powers aimed at usurpation; and the clergy who in any way ceded such power to the papacy, did so at the risk of a just allegiance to their sovereign and their country. It was natural, we repeat, that injunction should have been given against the publication of such doctrines “in schools or pulpits.”

The next article in the pope’s schedule is here omitted, and No. VIII. follows, which is here numbered the Seventh.

VII. *We know that it is not possible that the vicar of Christ, merely by his bulls, or by them together with his own will and consent, and that of his college of cardinals, can qualify or disable any man.* This is plain from the Catholic faith; since it behoves our Lord in every vicarious operation to maintain the primacy. Therefore, as in every qualifying of a subject, it is first required that the subject to be qualified, be meet and worthy; so in every disqualification there is first required a deserving from some demerit of the person thus disqualified, and, by consequence, such qualifying or disqualifying is not made purely by the ministry of the vicar of Christ, but from above, from elsewhere, or from some other.

This article, and the seven articles following, relate to one subject—the spiritual power of the clergy.

VIII. *It is not possible that a man should be excommunicated to his damage, unless he be excommunicated first and principally by himself.* This is plain; since such an excommunication must be originally founded on the sin of the party damaged. From whence Augustine, in his twenty first sermon on the words of the Lord: *Do thou*, says he, *not misuse thyself, and man shall not get the better of thee.* And to this day the faith of the church sings, *No adversity shall do us any hurt, if iniquity does not prevail.* Notwithstanding, all excommunication is to be dreaded on many accounts, even although the excommunication of the church be, to the humble excommunicate, not damnable but wholesome.

IX. *Nobody ought, except in the cause of God, to excommunicate, suspend, or interdict any one, or to proceed according to any ecclesiastical censure by way of revenge.* This appears from hence, that every just cause is the cause of God, to which chiefly respect ought to be had. Nay, a love for the excommunicate ought to exceed a zeal or desire of revenge, and an affection for any temporal things; since, otherwise, even he that excommunicates injures himself. To this ninth conclusion we add, that it is agreeable to it, that a prelate should excommunicate in human causes, but principally on this account, because an injury is done to his God. 13. 9. c. *inter querelas.*

X. *Cursing or excommunication does not bind, finally, only as far as it is used against an adversary of the law of Christ.* This is plain, since it is God that binds *absolutely* every one that is bound, who cannot excommunicate, unless it be for a transgression of, or prevaricating with his own law. To this tenth conclusion we add, that it is consonant to it, that the ecclesiastical censure be used against an adversary of a member of the church, notwithstanding it does not bind *absolutely* but *secondarily*.

XI. *There is no power granted or exemplified by Christ to his disciples to excommunicate a subject (chiefly) for denying any temporalities, but on the contrary.* This is plain from the faith taught in Scripture, according to which we believe that God is to be loved above all things, and our neighbour and enemy more than all our temporalities of this world, necessarily and because the law of God is not contradictory to itself.

XII. *The disciples of Christ have no power to exact by civil compulsion, temporalities by censures;* as is plain from Scripture, Luke xxii., where Christ forbade his apostles to reign civilly, or to exercise any temporal dominion. *The kings of the Gentiles,* says he, *exercise lordship over them, but ye shall not be so.* And in that sense it is expounded by St. Bernard, St. Chrysostom, and other saints. We add to this twelfth conclusion, that, notwithstanding, temporalities may be exacted by ecclesiastical censures *accessorie* in vindication of his God.

XIII. *It is not possible by the absolute power of God, that if the pope, or any other Christian, shall pretend that he binds or looses at any rate, therefore he doth actually bind or loose.* The opposite of this would destroy the whole catholic faith; since it imports no less than blasphemy to suppose any one to usurp such an absolute power of the Lord's. I add to this thirteenth conclusion, that I do not intend by that conclusion to derogate from the power of the pope, or of any other prelate of the church; but do allow that they may, in virtue of the head, bind and loose. But I understand the denied conditional as impossible in this sense: that it cannot be that the pope, or any other prelate, does pretend that he binds or looses at any rate, [or just as he lists,] unless he does in fact so bind and loose, and then he cannot be peccable or guilty of any fault.

XIV. *We ought to believe that then only does a Christian priest bind or loose, when he simply obeys the law of Christ:* because it is not lawful for him to bind and loose but in virtue of that law, and by consequence, not unless it be in conformity to it.

In the preceding articles, the doctrine of Wycliffe, in regard to spiritual censures, is said to be, that they should never be employed as an instrument of revenge; that they should never be used as means of extorting temporal contributions from the laity; and as they should not be employed alone for that purpose, so neither should they be used to that end conjointly with the authority of the magistrate. This the Reformer admits as his doctrine; and in the paper subsequently published, he repeats, that the use of church censures, and of the authority of the magistrate to extort from the people a revenue for the priesthood, are customs unknown to the better ages of the church, and to be numbered among the corruptions consequent on "her endowment under Constantine." He even proceeds as far as to say, that a state of things might arise, in which, to deprive the church of her wealth, would be a much more Christian act than to have bestowed it upon her.

But Wycliffe did not restrict his complaints to the bad use which was frequently made of this sort of power; he questioned the validity of the power itself. He insisted that no man is in reality at all the better for the benediction of a priest, or at all the worse for the anathema of a priest. The judgment of man in such case he accounts as nothing,

except as it shall have been in accordance with a previous judgment of God in that case. In the thirteenth proposition, the assumption of an unconditional authority in the forms of binding and loosing, so that whatever is bound or loosened by a priest on earth, must be supposed to be bound or loosened in heaven, he has condemned as a tenet destructive of the whole catholic faith, as a usurpation of authority proper only to God, and as being no less than blasphemy, inasmuch as God himself never bestows pardon thus unconditionally. So completely did the Reformer take man out of the hands of man in the concerns of religion, and thus sapped the entire foundation of the received ecclesiastical system.

XV. This ought to be believed as catholic, that every priest rightly ordained, (according to the law of grace) hath a power according to which he may minister all the sacraments secundum speciem, and, by consequence, may absolve him who has confessed to him, and is contrite, from any sin. This is plain from hence, that the priestly power is not more or less sufficient in its essence; notwithstanding the powers of inferior priests are now reasonably restrained, and at other times, as in the last article, of necessity are relaxed. I add to this fifteenth conclusion, that, according to the doctors, every prelate has a twofold power, viz.—a power of order, and a power of jurisdiction and government; and that it is as to this last that they are prelates, as being of a superior majesty and government.

This oneness of priesthood in the church, and the consequent right of the humblest priest to be occupied in the discharge of every priestly function, the Reformer always maintained. Hence he censured the practice of restricting confirmation to the office of the bishop. (See the chapter on Confirmation from the *Triologus*.)

XVI. It is lawful for kings, in cases limited by law, to take away the temporalities from churchmen who habitually abuse them.

This is plain from hence, that temporal lords ought to depend more on spiritual alms, which bring forth greater plenty of fruit, than on alms for the necessities of the body: that it may happen to be a work of spiritual alms to correct such clergymen as damage themselves, soul and body, by withholding from them the temporalities. The case the law puts is this: when the spiritual head or president fails in punishing them, or that the faith of the clerk is to be corrected, as appears *xvi. p. 7, Filiis, 40 di.*

XVII. If the pope, or temporal lords, or any others, shall have endowed the church with temporalities, it is lawful for them to take away in certain cases, viz. when the doing so is by way of medicine to cure or prevent sins, and that notwithstanding excommunication, or any other church censure, since these donations were not given but with a condition implied. This is plain from hence, that nothing ought to hinder a man from doing the principal works of charity necessarily, and that in every human action the condition of the divine good pleasure is necessarily as in the civil law. *Collationis Decorandi, c. 5, in fine Collationis 10.* We added to this seventeenth article, God forbid that by these words occasion should be given to the temporal lords to take away the goods of fortune to the detriment of the church.

XVIII. *An ecclesiastic, even the pope of Rome himself, may, on some accounts, be corrected by their subjects, and for the benefit of the church be impleaded by both clergy and laity.* This is plain from hence, that the pope himself is capable of sinning, except the sin against the Holy Ghost, as is supposed, saving the sanctity, humility, and reverence due to so worthy a father. And since he is our peccable brother, or liable to sin as well as we, he is subject to the law of brotherly reproof; and when, therefore, it is plain that the whole college of cardinals is remiss in correcting him for the necessary welfare of the church, it is evident that the rest of the body, which, as it may chance, may chiefly be made up of the laity, may medicinally reprove him and implead him, and reduce him to live a better life. This possible case is handled, *Diss.* 40, *si papa fuerit a fide devius.* For as so great a lapse ought not to be supposed in the lord pope without manifest evidence; so it ought not to be presumed possible that when he does so fall, he should be guilty of so great obstinacy as not humbly to accept a cure from his superior with respect to God. Wherefore many chronicles attest the facts of that conclusion. God forbid that truth should be condemned by the church of Christ, because it sounds ill in the ears of sinners and ignorant persons; for then the whole faith of the Scripture would be liable to be condemned.

It will be seen that in this document there is little referring to what may, with strict propriety, be described as theological opinion. But even in relation to such opinion, there is much implied, and implied with all the certainty of direct statement, though little is expressed. Its chief value, however, consists in its presenting a clear and authentic record concerning the doctrine of Wycliffe at this period, in respect to the limits which should be imposed on the pretensions of the papacy; on the scarcely less extravagant claims of the clergy generally; on the authority of the magistrate in relation to the wealth of the church, and the persons of churchmen; on the legitimate means of securing to the clergy an appropriate revenue; and on the power supposed to belong to the priest, with regard to the present character and future allotment of the worshipper. From the inconsiderate and imperfect notices of this paper by most writers, we are left to suppose that its explanations were such, as to furnish nothing which could awaken the fears or the displeasure of the contemporary clergy. But the silence imposed on Wycliffe by the synod to which the document was submitted, is evidence to the contrary. It was a professor of divinity whose zeal was thus employed to familiarise the mind of the nation with a doctrine which vested the laity with the right to judge, and even to correct, their spiritual instructors, extending this principle of reformation, as circumstances might demand, to the pontiff himself; and could such a man be regarded by the ecclesiastics of the fourteenth century as a safe preceptor for youth? In setting forth the authority of the crown as that which should be final in determining the applications of ecclesiastical property, the Reformer became a teacher of doctrines against which synods, and councils, and the papal court, had directed their most powerful engines of destruction. But so deeply laid was the fabric of the reigning superstition, that every attack of this nature on its mere outworks, must have rebounded on the head of the assailant, so long as its theory of spiritual power was allowed to remain unquestioned. This successful fiction, by placing the rewards and punishments of a future state at the disposal of the priesthood, served as a basement to the whole superstructure; and it should be distinctly remembered, that it is against this doctrine that the greater number of the conclusions which Wycliffe is accused of holding, are plainly directed; and that in his explanations at Lambeth, even according

to the showing of his enemies, not one of the propositions relating to that system of priestly fraud, was for a moment denied, or in the slightest degree modified.

The clergy of the middle age are described as believing that the sentence of excommunication exposed the parties excommunicated to the fires of purgatory, and often to eternal torments. But if such was their faith, their frequent employment of that sentence to avenge some trivial offence, or to extort some paltry contribution, must be regarded as imparting a most odious aspect to their general character. The readiness, indeed, with which such censures were resorted to in those times, obliges us to suppose that the confidence of churchmen in the truth of this scheme was more apparent than real. To doubt this, must be to view them as sharing less in the nature of men, than in that of demons. On this subject, the religion and the humanity of Wycliffe spoke forth too loudly to be misunderstood. He saw in the Romish polity and doctrine, a machinery artfully devised to raise ecclesiastics into the place of the Almighty, so as to connect the doom of impiety with every thing which men should do contrary to their pleasure. In his noble effort to deliver the souls of men from this snare, Wycliffe exposes the inconsistencies, the worldliness, and the cruelty so manifest in the ordinary exercise of that spiritual authority which the clergy had thus assumed. The maxim—"By their fruits ye shall know them," was applied to churchmen no less freely than to the laity; and to rescue the popular mind from its subjection to this ghostly thralldom, men were urged to study the principles of their faith as set forth in Holy Scripture, and to judge for themselves with regard to the pretensions of all persons claiming to be honoured as spiritual guides.

In his comment on the articles contained in the preceding paper, which the Reformer published immediately after his appearance at Lambeth, it is in the following terms that he adverts to the pontiff: "Let him not be ashamed to perform the ministry of the church, since he is, or at least ought to be, the servant of the servants of God. But a prohibition of reading the Holy Scriptures, and the vanity of secular dominion, and a lusting after worldly appearances, would seem to partake too much of a disposition towards the blasphemous advancement of Antichrist, especially while the truths of a scriptural faith are reputed tares, and said to be opposed to Christian truth by certain leaders, who arrogate that we must abide by their decision respecting every article of faith, notwithstanding they themselves are plainly ignorant of the faith of the Scriptures. But by such means there follows a crowding to the court of Rome, to purchase a condemnation of the sacred Scriptures as heretical; and thence come dispensations, contrary to the articles of the Christian faith."

The work in which the Reformer thus speaks, he has described as "A sort of Answer of the Bull," meaning, evidently, the letter addressed by Gregory to the university. In his closing paragraph he observes, "These conclusions have I delivered as a grain of faith separated from the chaff by which the ungrateful tares are set on fire. These, opposed to the Scriptures of truth, like the crimson blossom of a foul revenge, provide sustenance for Antichrist. Of this the infallible sign is, that there reigns in the clergy a Luciferian enmity and pride, consisting in the lust of domination, the wife of which is covetousness of earthly things, breeding together the children of the fiend, the children of evangelical poverty being no more." A judgment of the fruit thus produced may be formed also from the fact, that many even of the children of poverty are so

degenerate, that either by what they say, or by what they do not say, they take the part of Lucifer; not being able to stand forth in the cause of evangelical poverty, or not daring so to do, in consequence of the seed of the man of sin sown in their hearts, or from a low fear of forfeiting their temporalities. But the statements which he had now published, he avows himself prepared to defend, even “to death, if by such means he might reform the manners of the church.”

This escape of Wycliffe from the power of his enemies, and his reiteration, in still stronger terms, of his most obnoxious opinions, called forth an attack from an anonymous divine, who is described by the Reformer as a “motley theologian:”—the purport of the whole piece appears to have been to vindicate the infallibility of the pontiff. By this writer, it seems, the pope was affirmed to be incapable of mortal sin, and whatsoever his holiness should ordain, was to be accounted true and just. In reply, Wycliffe observes, that if this doctrine were admitted, the pope might exclude any book from the canon of Holy Writ; might introduce any novelty into its place; might alter the whole Bible; and make the very Scripture heresy, establishing as catholic what is opposed to the truth. The Reformer then adverts to the efforts the pontiff had made to arm the authority of the prelates, the court, and the university against him, because he had ventured to question this assumption, and some others no less impious.

The remaining portion of this piece consists of two parts—the first containing a farther explanation of certain articles in the series already objected to him, and to which his answers had been given; the second, consisting in a spirited exhortation, addressed to his readers to cast off the yoke, both secular and spiritual, which a foreign power had so long imposed on them.

The articles cited are the seventh, tenth, and thirteenth; and also the sixteenth and eighteenth. The sixteenth relates to the office of the magistrate with regard to the goods of the church. The eighteenth, to the correction of an offending pontiff, in extreme cases, by the authority of the inferior clergy, and even by that of the laity. In the instructions of the pope to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the primate is required to ascertain the real opinions of Wycliffe, but is not to pronounce any definite sentence concerning them, until the judgment of the papal court shall be known. In the course of this tract, the Reformer speaks of the delegates as waiting to receive this decision before proceeding to announce the fate of his conclusions; and he states for their information, that, according to the report which had reached him, the doctrine which he had confessed in regard to the goods of the church, and the peccability of the pope, had been condemned as in a special degree heretical.

From these articles he proceeds to those which treat of the power of absolution; and presuming that the delusion respecting them would be, that the pope and the clergy generally do in every case bind or loose when they affect so to do, his indignation becomes impetuous. The man who should thus make himself equal with God is described as a blasphemer and a heretic, as a delinquent whom Christians ought in no way to tolerate—certainly, not as their leader, since his guidance can only serve to conduct men blindfold to destruction. Secular lords are, therefore, called upon to resist the arrogant claims of the pope, and to do so, not merely with respect to the

heresy which the pontiff had imposed on them in declaring them incompetent to withdraw their alms from a delinquent church, nor merely because the same authority had declared it to be heretical to affirm, that any distribution of the goods of the church by the court of Rome can be only ministerial or subordinate, but because that power had taken from them the liberty of the law of Christ, and brought in an Egyptian bondage instead. It is urged, therefore, that no fear of suffering, no thirst of gain, no love of distinction should prevent the soldiers of Christ, as well seculars as clergy, from appearing in defence of the law of God, even unto blood! Should the lord pope himself, or even an angel from heaven, promulgate doctrines conferring upon a creature a power of absolving peculiar to the Deity, it is asserted, that every member of the Christian commonwealth should feel bound in such case to exert himself to the utmost for “the saving of the faith.”

In the following manner the Reformer reasons on the bearings of that spiritual authority which the churchmen of the day were so zealous to maintain. “Let it once be admitted that the pope, or one representing him, does indeed bind or loose whenever he affects to do so, and how shall the world stand? For if, when the pontiff pretends to bind all who oppose him in his acquisition of temporal things, either moveable or immovable, with the pains of eternal damnation, such persons assuredly are so bound—it must follow, as amongst the easiest of things, for the pope to subvert or to destroy every ordinance of Christ, and to wrest unto himself all the kingdoms of the world. And since, for a less fault than this usurpation of a Divine power, Abiathar was deposed by Solomon, Peter was reprov'd to the face by Paul, nay, and many popes have been deposed by emperors and kings, what should be allowed to prevent the faithful uttering their complaints against this greater injury done to their God? For on the ground of this impious doctrine it would be easy for the pope to invert all the order of the world; seizing, in connexion with his clergy, on the wives, the daughters, and all the possessions of the laity without opposition; inasmuch as it is their saying, that even kings may not deprive a churchman of aught, neither complain of his conduct do what he may; while to whatever the pope may decree, obedience must be instantly rendered.”^a So clear and comprehensive were the views of Wycliffe in respect to the sources of false power in the church, and so steadily and firmly did he direct the axe toward the root of that evil.

But men who live in the midst of such excitements, need a much greater measure of physical power than commonly falls to the lot of humanity. Judging from his portraits, we must regard Wycliffe, in this respect, as placed at great disadvantage, if compared with Luther. The last eight or ten years in the life of our Reformer, must have been years of extraordinary labour. Much the greater portion of his works known to us were manifestly written during that interval; while the almost ceaseless harassing to which he was exposed, from the prosecutions instituted against him, must have made a still further, and, perhaps, a still greater, demand on his strength of body, as well as on the resources of his mind. We have reason to think, that the events of 1377 and 1378, together with the excessive labour to which he applied himself immediately subsequent to that period, laid the foundation of the malady which proved fatal some years later. The sickness which befel the Reformer at this juncture, was such as to leave little prospect of his recovery. Such also was the force of religious prejudice in the fourteenth century, that his old antagonists, the Mendicants, could not regard it as

possible, that a heretic so notorious, should suppose himself on the confines of a world to come, without the most terrible apprehensions with regard to the vengeance there awaiting him. But while thus persuaded of their own rectitude, and certain that the doctrines taught by the Reformer could be no other than so many suggestions of the great enemy, some advantage, it was thought, might be obtained, if this dying member of the evil one could be brought to utter some sort of recantation. Wycliffe was in Oxford when this sickness arrested his activity, and confined him to his chamber. From the four orders of friars, four doctors, who were also called regents, were formally deputed to present themselves to their expiring enemy; and to these the same number of civil officers, called senators of the city and aldermen of the wards, were added. When these persons entered the apartment of the sick man, he was seen stretched on his bed. Some expressions of sympathy were dropped, and some of hope concerning his better health. But it was presently intimated, that he must be aware of the many injuries which the whole Mendicant brotherhood had sustained from his hands, having been the special object of attack in many of his sermons and writings; and as it was now manifest that death was about to bring his course to its conclusion, it was only charitable to hope that he would not conceal his penitence, but that, with due Christian humility, he should revoke whatever he had said tending to the disreputation of fraternities so eminent in learning, sanctity, and usefulness. Wycliffe continued silent and motionless until this address was concluded. He then beckoned his servants to raise him in his bed; and this done, he fixed his eyes on the persons assembled, and summoning all his remaining strength, exclaimed, "I shall not die, but live; and shall again declare the evil deeds of the friars!" The doctors and their attendants looked confusedly at each other, and retreated in disappointment and dismay. They lived also to feel the truth of the prediction which had been thus sounded in their ears; nor will it be easy to imagine another scene more characteristic of the parties composing it, or of the times with which it is connected. [a](#)

One of the labours on which Wycliffe was intent at this time, was a translation of all the books of the Old and New Testament, from Latin into English. This work he undertook, that his countrymen, of every class, having the Scriptures made thus accessible to them in their own tongue, might be armed in the most effectual manner against the errors and superstitions of the times. It was a noble thought, and the name of Wycliffe is that of the first Englishman who gave it lodgment. Before his time, portions of the Sacred Scriptures had been translated into English, and passed, probably, in some instances, into the hands of wealthy and distinguished persons among the laity; but a translation of the whole volume into the language spoken by the people, that the highest and the lowest might be alike readers of the Bible in their own tongue, and that men might everywhere appeal to it as their ultimate authority in respect to all questions of truth and duty,—that truly Protestant purpose,—owes its origin in our ecclesiastical history, to the intelligence, the piety, and the intrepidity of Wycliffe.

In the seventh century, Cedman, an Anglo-Saxon monk, produced a composition, which claimed the attention of his countrymen, as exhibiting the first application of their language to Christian poetry, and as the first attempt to set forth any part of the Sacred Scriptures in the speech of our forefathers. [a](#) The poem attributed to Cedman bears all the marks of the antiquity assigned to it; it touches on the leading events of

Old Testament history,—as, the creation of the world; the fall of angels and of man; the deluge; the departure from Egypt; the entrance upon Canaan; and on some subsequent events. In the following century, Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, and Guthlae, the celebrated anchorite, produced Anglo-Saxon versions of the Psalter. In the same age, the venerable Bede prefers his claim to the honour of a literal translation of St. John's Gospel.^a A manuscript copy of the Latin Gospels, a Saxon version, interlined, known by the name of the Durham Book, is attributed on probable evidence to about the time of Alfred. We possess another Latin transcript of the Gospels, with a Saxon translation, introduced after the same manner, known by the name of the Rushworth Gloss. This manuscript appears to be a production of the tenth century.^b Among the valuable manuscripts of Benet College, Cambridge, is a third copy of the Gospels in the Saxon tongue, written a little before the Conquest. And a fourth belonging to the same period, and which appears to have been copied from the former, may be seen in the Bodleian Library.^c

But an ecclesiastic, who did more than all his brethren towards supplying his countrymen with instruction from the Scriptures in their own language, was Elfric. This laborious scholar lived during the reign of Ethelred, and subscribes himself at different periods as monk, mass-priest, and abbot. In his epitome of the Old and New Testaments, composed for Sigwerd; a nobleman, we are informed, that at the request of various persons, he had translated the Pentateuch, the books of Joshua and Judges, those of Esther, Job, and Judith, also the two books of Maccabeus, and part of the first and second books of Kings. In his epitome of the Old and New Testaments, Cedman has not only made his selections from the Scriptures, but has frequently added things to the sacred story from other writings.^d A copy of this work, printed with an English translation, by William l'Isle, in 1623, is in the Bodleian, and another has been for some time in my possession. It begins thus: "Abbot Elfricke greeteth friendly Sigwerd. True it is, I tell thee, that very wise is he who speaketh by his doings; and well proceedeth he, both with God and with the world, who furnisheth himself with good works. And very plain it is in Holy Scripture, that holy men employed in well doing were in this world held in good reputation." Alfred is mentioned as having prefixed a translation of several passages from the Mosaic writings to his code of laws, and is said to have made considerable progress in a Saxon version of the Psalms a little before his death.

This, however, is the extent of our information on this interesting question; as connected with the Anglo-Saxon period of our history. The Anglo-Norman clergy were much more competent to have supplied the people with religious instruction in this form; but the example of their predecessors in this respect was slighted, or rather disapproved. The first attempt, subsequent to the Conquest, to translate any complete portion of the Scriptures into English, appears to have been made by the author of a rhyming paraphrase on the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, intitled "Ormulum." Of nearly the same date, is a huge volume bearing the name of *Salus Animæ*, or, in English, "Sowle Hele," in which the object of the compiler or transcriber seems to have been to furnish a volume of legendary and scriptural history in verse. He professes to set forth an outline of the historical portions both of the Old and New Testaments, but has introduced fragments of religious history with little regard to any principle of selection. The composition of this work is supposed to have preceded the

opening of the fourteenth century. In Benet College, Cambridge, there is another work of the same description belonging to the same period, and containing accounts of the principal events recorded in the books of Genesis and Exodus. There is also in the same collection a copy of the Psalms in English metre, which is attributed to about the year 1300; and two similar works, of nearly the same antiquity, have been preserved, one in the Bodleian Library, the other in that of Sir Robert Cotton.[a](#)

But it is not until the middle of the following century that we trace any attempt to produce a literal translation even of detached portions of the Scriptures. It was about the year 1350, that Richard Roll, better known to ecclesiastical antiquaries as the hermit of Hampole, engaged in a work of this nature. His labours, however, were restricted to a little more than half the book of Psalms; and to the Psalms which he translated, a devotional commentary was annexed. Contemporary with this recluse, were some devout men among the clergy, who produced translations of such passages from the Scriptures as were prominent in the offices of the church; while others ventured to complete separate versions of the Gospels or Epistles. The persons thus laudably employed were certainly few in number; but parts of St. Mark and of St. Luke, and several of the Epistles, as thus rendered, have descended to us. It should be added, that these versions, which are of various merit, are generally guarded by a comment.

Some, Catholic writers have been disposed to deny that there was anything original in the conception of Wycliffe, with regard to the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular language;[a](#) but the preceding statements will suffice to show in what form, and to what extent, that claim may be urged in favour of our Reformer. Knighton, a contemporary of Wycliffe, gives full expression to the different opinions which obtained in his own time on this subject. “Christ,” says that historian, “delivered his doctrine to the doctors of the church, that they might administer to the laity and weaker persons according to the state of the times, and the wants of men. But this Master John Wycliffe translated it out of Latin into English, and thus laid it more open to the laity, and to women who could read, than it had formerly been to the most learned of the clergy, even to those of them who had the best understanding. And in this way the Gospel pearl is cast abroad, and trodden under foot of swine; and that which was before precious to both clergy and laity, is rendered, as it were, the common jest of both. The jewel of the church is turned into the sport of the people; and what was hitherto the principal gift of the clergy and divines, is made for ever common to the laity.”[b](#) So spoke the canon of Leicester on this matter. Nevertheless, if we may credit some modern Catholics, there was nothing new—nothing inconsistent with sound Catholic usage, in what Wycliffe had done in this respect! Not so thought the English clergy, when assembled in council, in 1408, with Archbishop Arundel at their head. Their enactment on this subject reads as follows:—“The translation of the text of Holy Scriptures out of one tongue into another is a dangerous thing, as St. Jerome testifies, because it is not easy to make the verse in all respects the same. Therefore we enact and ordain that no one henceforth do, by his own authority, translate any text of the Holy Scriptures into the English tongue, or any other, by way of book or treatise; nor let any such book or treatise now lately composed in the time of John Wycliffe aforesaid, or since, or hereafter to be

composed, be read in whole or in part, in public or in private, under the pain of the greater excommunication.”[a](#)

Before the Conquest, and during a considerable space afterwards, there was little evil to be apprehended from any attempt to translate the Scriptures into the spoken language of the country. The repose of ignorance was too profound to be readily broken, and the vassalage both of the body and of the mind had been too long continued to admit of being speedily disturbed. But in the age of Wycliffe, the augmented population of the country, the progress of commerce and of a representative government, and the partial revival of learning, had all contributed to improvement; and, together with the bolder encroachments of the papacy, and the spirit of complaint and resistance which those encroachments had produced, proved eminently favourable to the zeal of our Reformer, as employed in applying the popular language to the pure records of the Gospel. His opponents, we have seen, were by no means insensible to the probable result of his efforts in this respect; and to his own discernment that result was obvious in a much greater degree. Nearly twenty years had now passed since his first dispute with the Mendicants, and during that period his writings disclose a growing conviction with regard to the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and with regard to the truth of the doctrine which we designate by the term—the right of private judgment. The success, also, which attended his controversy with the friars manifestly prepared him for his present enterprise; the effect of which, according to his enemies, was to make the truths of the Gospel better known to the laity, and even to females, than they had hitherto been to the most distinguished among the clergy.[a](#)

Many passages illustrative of the arguments with which the Reformer opposed the clamours of his adversaries on this question, will be found in the ensuing pages. In one of his earliest vindications he thus writes:—“Seeing the truth of the faith shines the more by how much the more it is known, and that lords bishops condemn the faithful or true opinion in the ears of secular lords, out of hatred of the person who maintains it; that the truth may be known more plainly and diffusively, true men are under a necessity of declaring the opinion which they hold, not only in Latin, but in the vulgar tongue. It has been said, in a former Looking-glass for Secular Lords, written in the vulgar tongue, that they ought wholly to regulate themselves conformably to the law of Christ. Nor are those heretics to be heard who fancy that seculars ought not to know the law of God, but that it is sufficient for them to know what the priests and prelates tell them by word of mouth; for the Scripture is the faith of the church, and the more it is known in an orthodox sense the better. Therefore, as secular men ought to know the faith, so it is to be taught them in whatsoever language is best known to them. Besides, since the truth of the faith is clearer and more exact in the Scripture than the priests know how to express it; seeing, if one may say so, that there are many prelates who are too ignorant of the Scripture, and others conceal points of Scripture, such, to wit, as declare the poverty and humility of the clergy, and that there are many such defects in the verbal instructions of priests, it seems useful that the faithful should themselves search out or discover the sense of the faith, by having the Scriptures in a language which they know and understand. Besides, according to the faith taught by the apostle, Heb. xi., the saints by faith overcame kingdoms, and by the motive of faith chiefly hastened to their own country. Why,

therefore, ought not the fountain of faith to be made known to the people by those means by which a man may know it the most clearly? He, therefore, who hinders this, does his endeavour that the people should continue in a damnable and unbelieving state.

“The laws, therefore, which the prelates make, are not to be received as matters of faith, nor are we to believe their words or discourses any further or otherwise than they are founded in the Scripture, since, according to the constant doctrine of Augustine, the Scripture is all the truth. Therefore this translation of the Scripture would do at least this good, that it would render priests and prelates unsuspected in regard to the words of it, which they profess to explain. Further, prelates, as the pope, or friars, and other means, may prove defective, and Christ and his apostles, accordingly, converted the most part of the world by making known the Scripture in a language which was most familiar to the people. For to this purpose did the Holy Spirit give them the knowledge of all tongues. Why, therefore, ought not the modern disciples of Christ to collect fragments from the same loaf, and after such example open the Scriptures clearly and plainly to the people, that they may know them? For this is no fiction, unless it be to one who is an unbeliever, and desirous to resist the Holy Spirit.

“The faith of Christ is therefore to be explained to the people in a twofold language, the knowledge of which is given by the Holy Spirit. Besides, since, according to the faith which the apostle teaches, all Christians must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and be answerable to him for all the goods with which he has intrusted them, it is necessary that the faithful should know what these goods are, and the uses of them; for an answer by a prelate or attorney will not then avail, but every one must then answer in his own person. Since, therefore, God has given to both clergy and laity the knowledge of the faith to this end, that they may teach it the more plainly, and work in faithfulness according to it, it is clear that God, in the day of judgment, will require a true account of the uses to which these goods have been applied.”[a](#)

Such were the motives of the Reformer in translating the Bible into English; and the achievement is one which of itself can never cease to associate a special honour with the name of Wycliffe.

In the life of Wycliffe, the controversy relating to the translation of the Scriptures was soon followed by that relating to the eucharist. Until about the middle of the ninth century, the manner in which the body and the blood of Christ are present in that sacrament was the subject of debate, or rather of a peaceful difference of opinion, among persons holding the highest offices in the church. But in the twelfth century, the advocates of the mysterious dogma, which then began to be known by the name of transubstantiation, became numerous and powerful. The progress of this doctrine, however, was far from being uninterrupted. Among its opponents in those times, the most distinguished place must be allotted to Berengarius, a Gallic prelate, whose learning and genius were greatly above the character of the age. His doctrine was strictly that of the primitive church, and of the existing Protestant communities. The zeal and ability with which he maintained it, called forth the enmity or admiration of the clergy through all the churches of the west. In the cause of his opinions, the

disputant submitted to spiritual censure from the pontiff, and from a council assembled at Paris; and the displeasure of the French king, which his zeal had provoked, was followed by the forfeiture of his episcopal revenues. The burden of such wrongs was probably lightened, by remembering that his disciples in France, in Italy, in England, and especially in the States of Germany, were many and increasing. But such it appears was the extent of the suffering, which this advocate of truth and reason was prepared to endure in defence of his tenets. Thrice was he compelled to appear at Rome; and as often was his doctrine formally renounced, only to be again avowed as the prospect of impunity returned. Towards the close of life, he retired from the agitated scenes which, for more than thirty years, had been familiar to him; and the remembrance of the indecision which had been allowed to sully his character, is said to have embittered his seclusion. But he died with a reputation of sanctity, and his doctrine never ceased to find disciples. [a](#)

The Vaudois and the Albigenses never relinquished this doctrine, and were animated in their opposition to the doctrine of transubstantiation by the labours of Berengarius and his partisans. That the sectaries had adopted the heresy of that prelate, was often urged against them by their persecutors; and it is manifest, from certain fragments of their reasoning on this subject which their enemies have preserved, that supposing the assertion correct, the disciples must be acknowledged as by no means unworthy of their master. From one of their adversaries, we learn that they were accustomed to appeal to the Apostles' creed, and to the Nicene and Athanasian creeds, as containing every essential article of Christian doctrine, expressing their surprise, that in those summaries of religious truth no reference should have been made to the matter of transubstantiation. They are described also as exposing the intrinsic and surpassing difficulties of that doctrine with a severity of criticism which must greatly have bewildered their antagonists,—urging, with fluency, almost every question tending to involve the subject in contradiction and absurdity. [a](#)

But we are principally concerned to know the fate of this doctrine in England. Our Saxon ancestors were in general sufficiently obedient to the opinions and customs of the papacy, and we may believe that the doctrine of transubstantiation was not unknown, nor wholly unapproved, by their spiritual guides. We have, however, the most decisive proof, that the dogma so named, was not a part of the national creed in the tenth century. Elfric, a contemporary of St. Dunstan, and an ecclesiastic of much celebrity in his time, has adverted in one of his epistles to the elements of the eucharist, in a manner which incidentally but most distinctly repudiates the Catholic doctrine. This letter was addressed to Wulfstan, archbishop of York; and as its translation into the vernacular language was in compliance with the request of that prelate, it must be admitted as a document of no mean authority. According to this writer, the “housel (host) is Christ’s body, not bodily, but spiritually. Not the body which he suffered in, but the body of which he spake when he blessed the bread and wine, a night before his sufferings.” The apostle, he observes, “has said of the Hebrews, that they all did eat of the same ghostly meat, and they all did drink of the same ghostly drink. And this he said, not bodily, but ghostly, Christ being not yet born, nor his blood shed, when that the people of Israel ate that meat, and drank of that stone. And the stone was not bodily, though he so said. It was the same mystery

in the old law, and they did ghostly signify that ghostly housel of our Saviour's body which we consecrate now."

In his homily, "appointed in the reign of the Saxons to be spoken unto the people at Easter," the doctrine of Elfric, and of the Anglo-Saxon clergy generally, on this subject, is still more explicitly presented. The good abbot there repeats his allusion to the manna, and to the rock of the wilderness; and speaks of the bread in the Christian sacrament as being no more the body of Christ, than the waters of baptism may be said to be the Holy Spirit. In describing the difference between the body in which Christ suffered, and the body which is hallowed in the bread, he states, that the one was born of Mary, and that the other is formed from a gathering together of many corns, and that "nothing, therefore, is to be understood therein bodily, but all is to be understood ghostly." The bread, which is further described as having a bodily shape, is again contrasted with the body of Christ, which is said to be present only in the sense of a "ghostly might." The body, moreover, in which Christ rose from the dead never dieth, but the consecrated bread, that is temporal, not eternal. The latter is divided into parts, and some receive a larger portion and some a less; but the body of Christ, "after a ghostly mystery," is undivided, and equally in all. This series of distinctions the writer concludes by observing, that the signs appealing to the senses in the eucharist are a pledge and figure of truth, while the body of Christ is truth itself. The authenticity of the document which thus speaks is attested by the signatures of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and by those of the prelates suffragan to them.[a](#)

But though it is thus plain that the doctrine of transubstantiation was not a recognised dogma of the Anglo-Saxon church, it is not to be doubted that there was much in the ignorance and superstitions of those times favourable to that general admission of this tenet which followed immediately after the Conquest. The political influence of the pontiffs in this island was for a while materially impeded by that event. But Lanfranc, who filled the see of Canterbury under the Conqueror, was the most distinguished opponent of Berengarius: and from that time to the age of Wycliffe, the doctrine of the eucharist, as expounded by Lanfranc, became that of the Anglican church.

It is by no means surprising that a study of the sacred Scriptures, conducted through so long an interval and so devoutly, and which had led to the abandonment of so many received opinions, should have prepared the mind of the Reformer to question, and ultimately to reject, this most unreasonable tenet. From the frequent mention of his doctrine on this subject in his sermons, it is probable that it had been often broached from the pulpit before attention was called to it in his lectures at Oxford. But in the spring of 1381 this new heresy was promulgated in the university.[a](#) Twelve conclusions were then published, in which the Reformer challenged the attention of the great men in that ancient seat of learning to his exposition of this sacrament. In these conclusions, while admitting that the words of consecration conferred a peculiar, and even a mysterious dignity, on the bread and wine, Wycliffe declares that those elements are not to be considered "as Christ, or as any part of him," but simply "as an effectual sign of him." To the easy faith of the people, and even of the learned, in those times, scarcely anything in religion was difficult of credence, if it had once been sanctioned by the church. But to some minds it was a matter of strange perplexity that the sensible qualities which had distinguished the bread and wine of

the eucharist before consecration, should continue, to all human perception, precisely unaltered, after that ceremony had been performed. To counteract this inconvenient verdict of the senses, the genius of the Mendicants struck out a new path in logical science. They affirmed that an accident, or the property of an object, as the whiteness or roundness in the sacramental bread, may be supposed to remain after the bread itself had ceased to exist. This hardy subterfuge was deeply offensive to the discernment of Wycliffe. From the time when he began to examine this subject with his characteristic independence of thought, his writings abound with allusions to it, and with special denunciations against the fraudulent temper betrayed in the above method of defending it.

In the conclusions published at Oxford, the Reformer declares that the bread and wine remain in the sacrament after the consecration, and describes the above argument in favour of transubstantiation as heretical.

It was in the nature of this doctrine that it should tend greatly to exalt the notions of the laity concerning the power of the priesthood. Men who could do such wonders as the priest was supposed to perform, when he pronounced the words of consecration—to what else might they not aspire? It was a speculative notion which could not exist alone. It carried a mighty influence along with it. On this new ground the Reformer had to lay his account with new and most determined hostility. It appears, also, that much the greater portion of the honours of the university was possessed at this time by the religious orders, notwithstanding the attempts which had been made to reduce their influence. The chancellor, William de Berton, awed by the power of the enemies of Wycliffe, or being opposed to this boldness of opinion, became a party to the measures which were speedily adopted with a view to prevent the diffusion of the new doctrine. In a convention of twelve doctors, eight of whom were either monks or Mendicants, the Reformer was represented as teaching that in the sacrament of the altar the substance of material bread and wine remains without change after the words of consecration; and that in the same venerable sacrament, there is the body and blood of Christ, not essentially, nor substantially, not even bodily, but figuratively or tropically—so that Christ is not there truly or verily in his own bodily presence. It will be seen that the doctrine of the Reformer, as expounded by his judges, stood directly opposed to transubstantiation. It was agreed, accordingly, to describe these opinions as erroneous, and as opposed to the decisions of the church; and at the same time, to set forth what should be regarded as the true doctrine of the eucharist, which is said to be—“That by the sacramental words duly pronounced by the priest, the bread and wine upon the altar are transubstantiated, or substantially converted into the true body and blood of Christ, so that after consecration, there is not in that venerable sacrament the material bread and wine which before existed, considered in their own substances and natures, but only the species of the same, under which are contained the true body of Christ and his blood, not figuratively or tropically, but essentially, substantially, and corporally—so that Christ is verily there in his own proper and bodily presence.”^a Wycliffe had challenged discussion; he was met by the intervention of authority. By this assembly of doctors, it was resolved, that the sentence of the greater excommunication, suspension from all scholastic exercises, and imprisonment, should be the penalty incurred by any member of the university,

who should inculcate, either in the schools or elsewhere, the opinions now published by Wycliffe. Even to listen to such opinions, was to become liable to this punishment.

The meeting which adopted these resolutions appears to have been privately convened; and we are told, that the Reformer was in the room of the Augustinians, lecturing among his pupils on this very doctrine, when a messenger entered the apartment, who, in the name of the chancellor, and of the divines, his coadjutors, read the above sentence concerning the sacrament of the altar, and all persons who should favour the erroneous opinions recently made public on that subject. Wycliffe paused, as if taken by surprise, and in hesitancy with regard to the best method of meeting the hostility which had so suddenly assumed this formidable shape. But a moment was sufficient to recover his self-possession. He then rose, and complaining that authority and coercion should have been thus substituted in the place of reason, he challenged any number of his opponents to furnish a fair refutation of the opinions which they had thus condemned. Wycliffe had often declared it to be the duty of the magistrate to protect the life, the property, and in all such cases as the present, the personal freedom of the subject. On this maxim he now resolved to act. The alternative placed before him was silence or imprisonment, and the chancellor was therefore informed, that since it had been determined to punish the persons who should avow the condemned opinions with civil penalties, it was his own determination to appeal from the decision of his present judges to the protection of the civil power. *They* were looking to that power to suppress freedom of thought,—*he* would look to it in support of such freedom.[a](#)

Some time, however, was to elapse before the meeting of the next parliament, and we may suppose that during that interval the lectures of the Reformer were occupied with topics less dangerous to his personal freedom. The jurisdiction of the chancellor, moreover, was restricted to the university. It did not affect Wycliffe as rector of Lutterworth; and to the silence thus imposed on him at Oxford, we should probably attribute his great labours as an author so observable during the subsequent period of his history.

The summer of this year is memorable for the insurrection of the commons under Wat Tyler. Sudbery, archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered by the insurgents, and in the following October, Courtney, bishop of London, was raised to the primacy. It will be remembered, that this prelate had already distinguished himself as a haughty opponent of the doctrines of Wycliffe. Early in May in the following year, a new parliament was convened at Westminster. At the same time, Courtney adopted measures to convene a synod for the purpose of deliberating with regard to the course which should be taken in respect to certain strange and dangerous opinions said to be widely diffused, “as well among the nobility as among the commons of this realm of England.” On the seventeenth of May, accordingly, a meeting was convened, consisting of eight prelates, fourteen doctors of civil and canon law, six bachelors of divinity, fifteen Mendicants, and four monks. The place of meeting was the residence of the Black Friars, in the metropolis, and the course contemplated by the archbishop appears to have been, in the first place, to obtain a formal condemnation of the obnoxious opinions, and then to commence a zealous prosecution of all persons who, being suspected of such opinions, should hesitate to renounce them.

It happened, however, that the synod had scarcely approached the matters to be adjusted by its wisdom, when the city was shaken with an earthquake, and the courage of some of the parties assembled was so much affected by that event, that they ventured to express their doubts, whether the object before them might not be displeasing to Heaven, and it began to be probable, that the meeting would dissolve without coming to any decision. But the ready genius of Courtney gave a different meaning to the incident, comparing the dispersion of noxious vapours produced by such convulsions to the purity which should be secured to the church, as the result of the present struggle to remove the pestilent from her communion. The courage of the wavering being thus restored, twenty-four conclusions were read, as those which had been preached “generally, commonly, and publicly, through the province of Canterbury and the realm of England.” After the “good deliberation” of three days, it was agreed, that ten of these conclusions were heretical, and the remaining were declared to be erroneous.

The doctrines described as heretical, related to the sacrament of the altar, as being perfected without any change in the substance of the bread and wine—to priests and bishops as ceasing to be such on falling into deadly sin—to auricular confession as unnecessary—to ecclesiastical endowments as unlawful—and to the claims of the pope, when he shall happen to be a depraved man, as being derived solely from the edict of Cæsar, and not at all from the authority of the Gospel. The propositions described as erroneous are those which declare, that a prelate excommunicating any man without knowing him to be condemned of God, is himself a heretic, and excommunicated—that to prohibit appeals from the tribunal of the clergy to that of the king, is to withhold from the sovereign the allegiance due to him—that priests and deacons all possess authority to preach the Gospel, without waiting for the licence of popes or prelates—that to abstain from preaching the Gospel from the fear of clerical censures, must be to appear, in the day of doom, under the guilt of treason against Christ—that temporal lords may deprive a delinquent clergy of their possessions—that tithes are simply alms, to be offered as the judgment or conscience of the laity may determine, and only as the clergyman shall be devout and deserving—and finally, that the institution of the religious orders is contrary to Holy Scripture, and being sinful in itself tends in many ways to what is sinful.[a](#)

The substance of these doctrines was, no doubt, maintained by Wycliffe and his disciples, but in the above statement, they have some of them received a partial colouring from the ignorance or prejudice of the men who pronounced judgment upon them. The form and pomp with which that judgment was given, were often appealed to in vindication of the measures afterwards adopted to free the land from these religious tares. It is certain that the people of the metropolis were deeply infected with Lollardism; and Courtney well knew that the same heresy had diffused itself widely in the university, which had been so long the residence of Wycliffe. In a letter addressed to the Bishop of London, having announced himself as legate of the apostolic see as well as metropolitan of all England, the archbishop laments, that in contempt of certain canons which had wisely restricted the office of preaching, whether publicly or privately, to such as are licensed by the holy see, or by their prelates, many were everywhere found preaching doctrines subversive of the whole church, “infecting many well-meaning Christians, and causing them to wander grievously from the

catholic communion, without which there is no salvation.” The bishop is then reminded of the high authority by which the propositions referred to had been condemned as heretical and erroneous; and he is, in conclusion, exhorted, in common with all his brethren suffragans of Canterbury,—to admonish and warn that no man do henceforth hold, preach, or defend, the aforesaid heresies and errors, or any of them. To secure this object, it is enjoined, that in future, neither himself, nor any other prelate, shall admit any suspected persons to the liberty of preaching; shall listen in any degree to the abettors of such pernicious tenets; nor lean in any way to them, either publicly or privately; but rather resist the publishers of such doctrines, as serpents diffusing pestilence and poison, and that this course be pursued on pain of the greater excommunication, that being the sentence pronounced on all and every one who shall be found in these things disobedient.[a](#)

As this letter was not only sent to the Bishop of London, but to all the prelates suffragans of Canterbury, a copy must be supposed to have reached the Bishop of Lincoln, Wycliffe’s diocesan. We know that by that prelate, official documents were immediately addressed to the abbots, and priors, and the different ecclesiastical officers, and to all the rectors, vicars, and parochial chaplains, throughout the district in which the church of Lutterworth was situate. That church is described as in the deanery of Goodlaxton, in the archdeaconry of Leicester. Wycliffe was thus canonically admonished of his obligations in regard to the heresy of the times, but was not found in a condition to profit by such warning.[a](#)

That the greater solemnity might be given to this crusade against heresy, it was arranged, that during the ensuing Whitsuntide a religious procession should pass, with many signs of woe about it, through the streets of London. On the appointed day numbers of the clergy and the religious contributed to the edification of the profane laity by moving barefooted through the most crowded places toward St. Paul’s. There a Carmelite friar ascended the pulpit, and reminded the mourning multitude of their duty in that foreboding crisis, with regard to the church and her enemies.

We do not know in what degree the populace of London were affected by this spectacle; but in Oxford the course of the persecutor was much impeded. At this time, one Peter Stokes, a Carmelite, and a doctor of divinity, had distinguished himself in that university by the ardour with which he had opposed the new opinions. His conduct in this respect procured him the notice and patronage of the archbishop, who, in a letter dated a week subsequent to the meeting at the Black Friars, commands the zealous Mendicant to publish the decisions of that assembly in all the schools of the university. In this document, which is nearly a transcript of that sent to the bishops, the primate adverts to the contempt of the episcopal office observable in the conduct of the new preachers; to their doctrine, as being subversive of that faith in which alone there is salvation; to the great learning and wisdom of the synod by which these novelties had been condemned; and having declared that to refuse the needful aid for saving men from such destruction, must be to become chargeable with their blood, he commands that the persons maintaining the heresies and errors specified, be holden in the strictest abhorrence, under the penalty of the great anathema.

But it was of little avail to despatch such instructions to the university, while its chancellor and a large portion of its members were the secret, if not the open, disciples of the doctrine thus denounced. That office, which in the preceding year had been sustained by William de Berton, was now filled by Robert Rigge, a scholar who exposed himself to much inconvenience and suffering on account of his known attachment to some of the Reformer's opinions. In the documents of this period the name of Doctor Nicholas Hereford is also of frequent occurrence, as that of a principal follower of Wycliffe. Before the assembling of the late synod, this divine, to use the language of Courtney, had been "vehemently suspected of heresy." At this moment, however, Hereford is called by the chancellor to preach before the university; and the service which thus devolved upon him was deemed the most honourable of its class through the year. It was at this time also that a similar mark of approbation was conferred on Ralph Rippington, who was also doctor of divinity, and equally an admirer of Wycliffe; and the discourses of both are described as containing a fervent eulogy on the character and the general doctrine of the Reformer. But this exercise of the chancellor's authority was instantly reported to the archbishop, and an expostulatory letter was suddenly despatched, advising a more dutiful exercise of his authority. It required him, indeed, to loathe the opinions and fellowship of such "presumptuous men," and, that his own freedom from heretical pravity may be above suspicion, to afford immediate aid to Peter Stokes in giving all publicity to the letters which had been sent to the university; that so the reign of a sect against which the king and the lords had promised to unite their authority might at length be brought to its close.[a](#)

The allusion of the archbishop to the intentions of the government, was not unadvisedly made. Richard II. was now in the sixteenth year of his age: the difficulties of his exchequer were many and distressing, and the repeated efforts of his ministers to extricate the vessel of the state seemed only to increase its perils. In the train of these perplexities came an insurrection such as had not been hitherto known in our history, and which appeared to menace the overthrow of every privileged order in the state. The zeal and sagacity of such churchmen as the present archbishop would not be slow in suggesting to the young king that convulsions of this perilous nature were to be expected if such men as Wycliffe and his followers were allowed to continue their appeal to the unbridled passions of the populace. Amidst the manifest disaffection of the people, it became a point of great importance to propitiate the clergy. Their influence might be used to allay exasperated feeling, and their wealth might enable the government to abolish, or, at least, to abate, that sort of taxation which had recently goaded the commons into madness. Lancaster, too, who, during the late commotions, had been employed in treating with the Scots on the border, had shared much in the resentment of the insurgents; and there were other causes which rendered him far from acceptable to the existing ministry. The juncture, accordingly, was favourable to a nearer alliance between the mitre and the crown.

In these auspicious circumstances the English clergy united in preferring to the sovereign and the court a series of complaints against the doctrine and practices of the followers of Wycliffe. With a view also to increase the odium so freely cast upon the disciples of the Reformer, they were now designated Lollards—a name which had long distinguished certain sectaries on the continent, to whom, after the manner of the

times, almost everything degrading had been imputed. The persons in England now classed with those injured people, are described by the prelates, abbots, and friars, representing the orthodoxy of the times, as teaching, that since the age of Sylvester there has not been any true pope, and that the last to whom that name should be given is the existing pontiff, Urban VI.: that the power of granting indulgences, and of binding and loosing, as claimed by ecclesiastics, is a delusion, and that those who confide in it are deceived and accursed; that auricular confession is a superfluous service; that the bishop of Rome has no legislative authority in the Christian church; that the invocation of saints is an unauthorised custom; that the worship of images or pictures is idolatry, and the miracles attributed to them so much fraud; that the clergy are bound to reside on their benefices, and not to farm them to others, and that the men who fail in such duties should be degraded as wasters of the goods of the church; and, finally, that the pomp of the higher orders of the priesthood should be in all things done away, and their doctrine in regard to the vanity of the world enforced by example. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that doctrines at all of this nature could not have been widely disseminated without deeply irritating the men to whose pretensions they were so explicitly opposed. As the result of this appeal, the clergy obtained the sanction of the king, and of certain lords, to a sort of statute or proclamation, which occurs as the first in our history providing for the punishment of the crime designated heresy. For this reason, and as it farther discloses the activity and energy with which Wycliffe's poor priests were now prosecuting their plans of reform, we shall insert this paper without abridgment. "Forasmuch as it is openly known that there are divers evil persons within the realm, going from county to county, and from town to town, in certain habits, under dissimulation of great holiness, and without the license of the ordinaries of the places, or other sufficient authority, preaching daily, not only in churches and churchyards, but also in markets, fairs, and other open places, where a great congregation of people is, divers sermons containing heresies and notorious errors, to the great blemishing of the Christian faith, and destruction of the laws and estate of holy church, to the great peril of the souls of the people, and of all the realm of England, (as more plainly is found, and sufficiently proved, before the reverend father in God, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the bishops and other prelates, masters of divinity, and doctors of canon and of civil law, and a great part of the clergy of the same realm, especially assembled for this cause,) which persons do also preach divers matters of slander to engender discord and dissension between divers estates of the said realm; which preachers being cited or summoned before the ordinaries of the places, then to answer to that whereof they be impeached, they will not obey to their summons and commandments, nor care for their monitions, nor for the censures of holy church, but expressly despise them; and, moreover, by their subtle and ingenious words do draw the people to hear their sermons, and do maintain them in their errors by strong hand and by great routs. It is, therefore, ordained and assented to in this present parliament, that the king's commissions be made and directed to the sheriffs and other ministers of our sovereign lord the king, or other sufficient persons learned, and according to the certifications of the prelates thereof, to be made in the Chancery from time to time, to arrest all such preachers, and also their fautors, maintainers, and abettors, and to hold them in arrest and strong prison till they shall justify themselves according to the law and reason of holy church. And the king willeth and commandeth that the chancellor make such

commission, at all times, that he by the prelates, or any of them, shall be certified and thereof required as is aforesaid.”[u](#)

This document did not obtain the sanction of parliament; but, invalid as it was in point of law, it did something towards rendering the magistracy through the kingdom the passive instruments of that “holy office,” which the scheme of the archbishop was meant to set up in every diocese. That the suspected through the nation might be placed under immediate “arrest, and in strong prison,” the force at the command of the sheriffs was to be subject in every place and at every season to the bidding of the prelates; and no process instituted was to terminate except as the parties accused should “justify themselves according to the law and the reason of holy church.” And if it be remembered that our statute book had not hitherto contained the remotest provision for punishing men, on account of their religious opinions, the matured form in which this oppressive policy was introduced, must be viewed as bespeaking no mean confidence of strength on the part of the ruling clergy.

On obtaining the powers set forth in this instrument, the attention of the primate was first directed to Oxford. The synod which held its first meeting on the 17th of May, was again convened in the chamber of the Preaching Friars on the 12th of June; and Robert Rigge, the chancellor of the university, and William Brightwell, a doctor of divinity, appeared at the place of meeting to answer in respect to their late conduct in favour of Hereford and Rippington; and also as to their opinion concerning the “aforesaid articles.” Rigge was a zealous advocate of the university, as an establishment which should be subject to the authority of the civil power, and not to ecclesiastical interference of any kind. The religious orders, on the contrary, were concerned that it should be subject to the authority of the primate as legate of the apostolic see. Wycliffe had maintained the doctrine embraced by Rigge. To what further extent the chancellor had embraced the opinions, or sympathised with the spirit of the Reformer, we do not know; but before the synod he was induced to declare his assent to the judgment which had been passed on the twenty-four heretical or erroneous conclusions in the former meeting; and Brightwell, after some hesitation, followed his example. It is hardly to be doubted, that in this act both were chargeable with some concealment of their opinions, and, perhaps, deemed themselves justified in opposing something of the wisdom of the serpent to the power of the wolf. It is certain that a letter was now delivered by the archbishop to “his well-beloved son in Christ, the chancellor of Oxford,” requiring him to publish the judgment of the synod concerning the proscribed articles in all the schools and churches at the hours of lecturing and preaching; and to give the greater notoriety to this proclamation, it was to be published in Latin and in the vulgar tongue. In this document, mention is expressly made of John Wycliffe, Nicholas Hereford, Philip Rippington, John Ashton, and Lawrence Redman, as being persons notoriously suspected of heresy; and referring to these persons, and to all who should in any way favour their persons or their doctrine, the primate says, “We suspend the same suspected persons from all scholastic exercises, until such time as they shall have purified themselves before us; and we require that you publicly denounce the same to have been, and to be, by us suspended; and that you diligently and faithfully search after all their patrons and adherents, and cause inquiry to be made respecting them through every hall in the said university: and that, obtaining intelligence of their names and persons, you do compel

all and each of them to abjure their errors by ecclesiastical censures, and by any canonical penalties whatsoever, under pain of the greater anathema, the which we now denounce against all and each who shall not be obedient to these instructions.” The primate also adds the following cautious provision: “And the absolving of such as may incur the sentence of this instrument, we reserve wholly to ourselves.”

But the chancellor had scarcely left the place of meeting, when the suspicions of Courtney appear to have been awakened anew. In a letter dated on the same day with the above, and from the same place, he informs the same Robert Rigge, that he had learned from credible information, and partly from experience, his disposition to favour “the aforesaid damnable conclusions,” and his intention to molest, by his authority as chancellor, the persons who should oppose them in the schools of the university. In consequence of this information, the archbishop thus writes: “We admonish thee, Master Robert, chancellor as before named, the first, second, and third time, and peremptorily, that thou dost not grieve, hinder, nor molest judicially, publicly nor privately, nor cause to be grieved, hindered, or molested, nor procure indirectly by thyself or others, to be grieved, the aforesaid clerks, secular or regular, or such as favour them in the points determined in their scholastic acts, or in any other condition whatsoever.”^a

In explanation of this proceeding, it should be remembered that the ecclesiastics who had joined with the archbishop in these proceedings against the chancellor of Oxford, were most of them members of the university. On returning to Oxford, the men who had sat in judgment on the chancellor would become subject to his authority, and to protect these men against the probable resentment of “Master Robert,” the above monition was addressed to him by Courtney.

The synod, we have seen, assembled on the 17th of May, and re-assembled on the 12th of June, was again convened on the 18th, the 20th, and the 28th of the same month, and on the 1st and 12th of the month ensuing. In all these meetings, the prosecution of Hereford and his associates was continued. Wycliffe resided at this time upon his rectory, but was a close observer of these proceedings. In one of his sermons, written at this juncture, he clearly refers to the measures in progress against Hereford, and against “Master John Ashton.” There is good reason to think that the Reformer was assisted by Dr. Hereford in his translation of the Scriptures, and that divine is supposed to have been the author of some pieces in English, designed to forward the contemplated reformation. Ashton was known through nearly half the kingdom as an itinerant preacher, and from the account given of him by his enemies, we must suppose that his ability as a preacher was of a highly popular and powerful description. To the doctrines of Wycliffe he is said to have added some novelties of his own. Knighton, who describes his appearing in coarse attire, and with a staff in his hand, as an affectation of simplicity, bears testimony to the assiduity with which he frequented churches, and mingled in family circles, to secure the dissemination of his tenets. The same writer has preserved the outline of two sermons said to have been delivered by this pedestrian teacher, the one at Leicester, the other at Gloucester. In these discourses we find the doctrine of Wycliffe in regard to the authority of the crown in relation to the church—the delusions and abuses connected with the spiritual powers assumed by the clergy—the corrupting influence of wealth upon the

priesthood—the unscriptural origin of the hierarchical distinctions which had obtained among churchmen—the errors and absurdities involved in the doctrine of transubstantiation, together with much invective against crusades, which are especially denounced as being one of the chief fruits of the dispensing power so mischievously exercised by the clergy. That neither the learning of Hereford, nor the zeal of Ashton, might be longer employed in diffusing opinions so little in accordance with the existing order of things, both were summoned to appear before the archbishop, who in addition to the title of primate, is pleased to describe himself as “chief inquisitor.”^a

In one of his parochial discourses, Wycliffe refers to this process as then pending. These proceedings he attributes mainly to the zeal of Courtney, whom he describes as “the great bishop of England,” and as being deeply incensed, “because God’s law is written in English to lewda^a men.” “He pursueth a certain priest,” says the preacher, “because he writeth to men this English, and summoneth him, and travelleth him, so that it is hard for him to bear it. And thus he pursueth another priest, by the help of pharisees, because he preacheth Christ’s Gospel freely, and without fables. Oh! men who are on Christ’s behalf, help ye now against Antichrist, for the perilous times are come which Christ and Paul foretold!”^b The reader is left to imagine the sympathy with which the auditory of Wycliffe would listen to this impassioned language. But if we may credit the accounts of their persecutors, the efforts made by the men who were thus pathetically adverted to, in hope of escaping from the strong hand of their oppressors, were made in vain.

But when the primate had committed himself to this struggle, it was important that he should seem to have done it with suitable precaution and success: and the report transmitted to us is, that Hereford and Rippington, after many attempts to evade any confession of their faith, at length admitted the twenty-four conclusions censured by the synod to be, with certain explanations, partly heretical, and partly false. They are described also, as stating that they had not, in any instance, publicly avowed the tenets which in those conclusions were imputed to them. This confession, however, such as it was, proved so little satisfactory, that each member of the synod declared it to be, with respect to several articles, “heretical, subtle, erroneous, and perverse.” But the accused could not be induced to present any further explanation, and the sentence of excommunication was pronounced upon them; and that it might operate the more powerfully as a warning to the infected, it was pronounced with much publicity and form.

Ashton conducted his defence with great spirit, but refused to answer the questions of his judges on the conclusions set forth as containing the heresies and errors with which he was charged. He was repeatedly enjoined to make his communications to the court in Latin, that no injurious impression might be made upon the mind of the laity who were present. But the consciousness of a bad cause betrayed in this injunction, excited the indignation of the accused, and turning to the crowd which his popularity as a preacher had brought together, he addressed them in their own tongue in such terms, that great noise and disorder ensued, and the archbishop hastened to bring the business of the day to a close. The refusal of Ashton to answer the questions

put to him, was construed as proof of his guilt, and he was sentenced to undergo all the penalties which had been attached to the holding of the censured articles.

Knighton, indeed, states that Ashton and Hereford delivered written confessions to the synod on the matter of the eucharist, setting forth the doctrine of transubstantiation in the fullest terms. But it is a suspicious circumstance, that in the Courtney register, where so large a space is assigned to the account of these proceedings, no trace of such documents is to be found. In addition to which, in the paper which Knighton has published, as supplied by Ashton, he is made to declare, that he had not, on any occasion, expressed doubt concerning the received doctrine on that subject, a statement which, according to what the historian who has adopted it has said elsewhere, was contrary to fact, and one that must have contained a falsehood in the greatest degree impolitic, inasmuch as it admitted of being so easily exposed. With regard to Hereford, also, his escape would not have been attributed, as it certainly was, to the powerful interference of the Duke of Lancaster, if his confessions had been such as to account for his release without any necessity for such interference. In 1387, Hereford was generally regarded as a disciple of Wycliffe; and so late as the year 1392, he solicited and obtained the protection of the court against the machinations of his enemies as arising from that cause. Rippington ultimately complied with the demands of the church; and even Ashton so far satisfied his judges, as to be permitted to resume his scholastic exercises; but it is supposed that the latter died as he had lived.^a

It appears from a discourse composed by Wycliffe about this time, that he was by no means ignorant of the attempts which were thus made to suppress the intended reformation of religion, by securing the aid of civil power for that end. Commenting on the entombment of Christ, and on the vain efforts of the priests and the soldiers to prevent his resurrection, the preacher adverts to the measures above described in the following terms: "Thus do our high priests and our new religious fear them, lest God's law, after all they have done, should be quickened. Therefore make they statutes stable as a rock, and they obtain grace of knights to confirm them, and this they well mark with the witness of lords; and all lest the truth of God's laws, hid in the sepulchre, should break out to the knowing of the common people. Oh, Christ! thy law is hidden thus; when wilt thou send thine angel to remove the stone, and to show thy truth unto thy flock? Well I know that knights have taken gold in this case, to help that thy law may be thus hid, and thine ordinances consumed. But well I know, that at the day of doom it shall be manifest, and even before, when thou arisest against all thine enemies!"^a The man who addressed himself in these terms to the people of his charge in Lutterworth, well knew that each step in the progress of the pending prosecutions was preparatory to the meditated blow against himself. Should that blow be struck, and struck effectually, it would be well that his countrymen should know distinctly the opinions for which he suffered. It was at this juncture, accordingly, that Wycliffe published a summary of the most important of his tenets, in the form of a petition (or complaint) to the king and parliament. This work is among the treatises printed in this volume. The assembly to which it was addressed, was assembled on the nineteenth of November, 1381, and in this document it is supposed to be already sitting. It appears also to have been known, that the subjects with which the great men

of the realm, “both seculars and men of holy church,” were about to be occupied, embraced the articles discussed in this paper.

This bold and admirable production appears to have made the kind of impression on the parliament which it was designed to produce. In a petition to the king, the members of the commons set forth the provisions of the spurious statute which had been recently obtained by the primate, and which, to effect the imprisonment of the new preachers and their abettors, until obedient to the church, had made every sheriff in the kingdom the mere instrument of his diocesan, requiring him to root out by the sword, the errors which neither the persuasions nor the terrors of the hierarchy had been sufficient to destroy. But, inasmuch as this pretended law “was never agreed to nor granted by the commons, but whatsoever was moved therein was moved without their assent,” the prayer of the whole parliament is, “that the said statute be disannulled.” The petitioners further declare it to be “in no wise their meaning, that either themselves, or such as shall succeed them, shall be farther bound to the prelates than were their ancestors in former times.”[a](#)

But in those times, to procure the enactment or repeal of statutes, was a work of less difficulty than to bring the proceedings of the government into strict conformity with the decisions of parliament. Hence the custom so prevalent in the earlier history of our constitution, of confirming anew even its most acknowledged principles. It is not too much to say, that to this bad faith, the policy of the court of Rome, in the use made of its dispensing powers, greatly contributed.

In his letters, Richard had been made to threaten exclusion from the university, imprisonment, and confiscation, against all who should hold the doctrine of Wycliffe, or should in any way favour its abettors. And though the monarch subsequently declared himself pleased with the repeal of the statute on which those instructions had been founded, the violent measures which that piece of fabrication had been devised to sanction, were still pursued, and with only too much success.

It was, as we have remarked, on the nineteenth of November, that the parliament and the convocation assembled at Oxford. The primate, in addressing the clergy as there convened, informed them that their first business was to grant a subsidy to the crown, and that their next object must be to apply some remedy to certain disorders which had too long disgraced the university, and the effects of which were extending to the community at large, in the diffusion amongst them of many dangerous and false opinions. Wycliffe was summoned to appear before this assembly. There were circumstances, however, which seemed greatly to narrow the ground of impeachment taken up against him at this juncture. By this time the Reformer had given full expression to his obnoxious opinions in his different writings, and he had reiterated most of them in the address which he presented to the parliament now sitting.

But the meditated encroachment of the prelates had excited in the said parliament, certain feelings of suspicion and resentment, which it was deemed prudent not to augment by any course of proceeding which might become the occasion of farther umbrage. On this account, it would seem, the convocation determined to restrict their prosecution of Wycliffe to a matter of doctrine, passing over the more questionable

matters of polity and discipline. The article selected was that of the eucharist. The doctrine of Wycliffe on that subject was known to be directly contrary to the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Duke of Lancaster is said to have advised the Reformer to submit in all doctrinal matters to the judgment of his order. This conduct on the part of the duke was highly praised by the clergy, but its only effect on Wycliffe was to call forth new evidence of his firmness and integrity. To have denied his doctrine on the eucharist, or simply to have abstained from teaching it, would have been to continue sheltered from the resentment of the clergy, by the favour of the nobleman of whose power they still stood in much wholesome apprehension. To proceed in opposing the received doctrine on that sacrament, notwithstanding the counsel of the duke, was to front the unrestrained malice of his enemies. The latter course, however, was his choice. We also learn, and from a writer who has shown himself not a little solicitous to fasten the reproach of equivocation upon the name of Wycliffe, not only that the Reformer proved to be as little influenced by the advice of the duke as by the command of the archbishop, but that in his public defence on this sacrament, “like an obstinate heretic, he refuted all the doctors of the second millenary.” [u](#)

Fully to understand the zeal with which the Reformer assailed the doctrine of transubstantiation, the reader must bestow his best attention on the exposition given of that doctrine in the several treatises and chapters contained in this volume. The adoration of a piece of bread in the place of the Deity, Wycliffe denounced as idolatry. The conduct of the officiating priest, in pretending to remake his Maker, he proclaimed as the last step of presumption and blasphemy. Let this pretension be admitted, and nothing remained, however much opposed to Scripture, to reason, or to the senses, which the same men might not, on the same ground, introduce. The doctrine is described, accordingly, as the master device of Satan, constructed that it might serve as an inlet to every abomination. Hence the opposition of Wycliffe to this doctrine, was, in his view, a defence of the human mind, and of all freedom.

It was with such views, not lightly taken up, but thoroughly formed, that Wycliffe appeared before his judges at Oxford. The assembly before him consisted of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops of Lincoln, Norwich, Hereford, Worcester, Salisbury, and London, with a numerous selection of doctors, together with the chancellor of the university, and many of the inferior clergy. Around him were assembled a crowd of the laity, as auditors variously interested in the object of the meeting. Before this array of power, Wycliffe stood alone and unfriended. The investigation related to a point of theological doctrine, with which neither the parliament nor any secular personage, however powerful, could interfere, without some appearance of impropriety. More than forty years had now passed since Oxford had first become the home of the Reformer, and during all those years it had been more or less associated with all his purposes and labours. Before him it stood a venerable establishment, formed to nurse the intellect of his country, so that it might well acquit itself in the duties of philanthropy, patriotism, and religion. Hence he had always been amongst the foremost to defend its jurisdiction, as independent of all foreign control, and especially against such control as proceeded from the prelates or from Rome. His hair was now grey, not perhaps from age so much as from those religious solitudes, and that mental activity, which appear to have always surpassed the strength of his physical nature, and of late to have especially exposed him to the

inroads of disease. In that city, where he had now to front his enemies on such unequal terms, and as one wholly in their power, admiring converts had often given loud utterance to their delight, as his voice was heard proclaiming doctrines dear to the purer ages of the church. Nor is it to be supposed that his numerous followers had become suddenly extinct. But at this moment the ruling clergy had so diffused the terrors of their strength, that the Reformer, like another Elijah, stands apparently alone amidst the generation of his countrymen.

His defence, we have seen, was such as to extort from adversaries the praise of an unrivalled acuteness. His written confessions, which the same adversaries have transmitted to us, contain the most distinct statements of the doctrine which he had previously taught on the sacrament to which they relate. Two confessions were presented, one in Latin, and one in English. The Latin confession treats the question in a style which the more learned of his judges must have seen to have been adapted to their taste, simply for the purpose of defeating them with their own weapons. The English document touches but distantly on the distinctions of the schools, and is framed to meet the popular apprehension. In the Latin confession, Wycliffe applies himself to demonstrate that “this venerable sacrament is *naturally* bread and wine, but *sacramentally* the body and blood of Christ.” It is alleged that there are six modes of subsistence which may be attributed to the body of our Saviour: three of these may be affirmed of that body as it is present in the eucharist, and three of the state in which it exists in heaven. In the eucharist, the body of Christ is virtually, spiritually, and sacramentally present; but his substantial, corporeal and dimensional presence, is said to be restricted to his mode of existence in the celestial state. The Reformer then repeats the doctrine maintained on this subject by himself and his followers, denies the charge of their adoring the elements of bread and wine, and observes that he had often exposed the fallacies of his opponents, who, in citing the language of the Fathers on this sacrament, were always disposed to confound the notion of a sacramental with that of an identical presence. The result of this mistake is said to be, the insane fiction of an accident without a subject, or of a quality without its substance—a notion which he denounces as dishonourable alike to God and the church.^a

It must be remembered by the reader, that to affirm the existence of bread in the eucharist after the words of consecration were pronounced, was to deny the doctrine of transubstantiation. In these papers, this affirmation is not only made, but reiterated, and with a plainness which is obvious upon the slightest attention. Nor was it deemed enough to set forth the most explicit statements of his own doctrine; he has assailed that of his opponents, and in a manner fully as uncompromising as on any occasion in his history. It must be borne in mind, that the properties of whiteness and soundness pertaining to the sacramental bread, before the act of consecration was supposed to take place, were acknowledged as existing afterwards; but that it was nevertheless contended, that the bread itself had ceased to exist. Wycliffe knew well that this was the formal doctrine of the men who were now before him as his judges. This doctrine, however, he describes as erroneous, heretical, and a mockery of human perception; as an imputing of blasphemy to Christ, and to his saints; and of all the delusions suffered to spread themselves through the church since the fatal hour of Satan’s enlargement, this is said to be the one most repugnant to the religion of the Bible. We know of nothing written by Wycliffe on this subject previously to his appearance before the

convocation at Oxford, or subsequently, which is not in strict agreement with the statements there made. If the confessions adverted to be compared with his Wicket, or with the chapters on this subject in his Trialogus, no room will be left for doubt on this point. He often speaks of the bread as being very God's body, and as being exalted in some sense by the sacred use to which it is assigned; but he never resorts to such expressions in a manner inconsistent with his real doctrine, which is, that the bread remains in the sacrament, that it is not transubstantiated, and that it is the body of Christ only in a sacramental sense. But though all this is clear as evidence can render it, Knighton speaks of the Reformer's confessions as a recantation, and Anthony Wood takes up the reproach, but contradicts the calumny in the same page, by stating that "this confession was encountered by no less than six several antagonists, immediately after its publication."^a

From this period, and on the authority of letters obtained from the king, Wycliffe was made to desist from his labours in Oxford. But this was not till the seeds of his doctrine had been sown there with such profusion as never to be wholly eradicated. That the penalty inflicted on him was not more weighty must be attributed in part to his popularity, but much more to the favour which had been shown him by the learned and the powerful. Henceforward he is found amidst his duties at Lutterworth, and employing himself in writing the greater number of those tracts and treatises which have come down to us from his pen.

It was about this time that Wycliffe was summoned by Urban to appear at Rome, and to answer before that court on the matters imputed to him. His declining health afforded sufficient ground for his refusing compliance with this citation. His letter on the occasion is printed in this volume. It contains some expressions of courtesy toward his holiness, but teems with that portion of the Reformer's doctrine which must have been most unwelcome to the race of men who claimed to be regarded as the successors of St. Peter.

We are now approaching the close of the life of Wycliffe, and it is manifest, that as the evening of his day was felt to be at hand, his zeal to purify the religion of the Bible, as it was professed around him, his superiority to the fear of man, and his devout anticipation of the end of his course, all became more strongly marked features of his character. The substance of his language is, that to oppose the errors which time, and custom, and law had established, and to publish aloud the too long-forgotten truths contained in the Holy Scripture, was the imperative obligation of every Christian man. This course he declares to be binding on every such man, though the evils incurred by pursuing it should be scorn, imprisonment, and death. The course of action which would be sure to bring such consequences along with it, he describes on many occasions, and it is precisely that which his own daily conduct exemplified. The closing years of his life, accordingly, were passed in the full expectation, that incarceration, and probably death at the stake, would ere long be added to that contumely and privation, which he had already so largely incurred. Every man who listened to his instructions, and every man who read his publications, must have known that no wrath could be more merciless, than that which would be excited by such an exposure of those fictions in regard to the soul and the future world by means of which the priesthood had contrived to secure to themselves their vast possessions,

and their worldly dominion. But those fictions were nevertheless assailed, and the uses commonly made of them were denounced as an impious and selfish fraud, most contrary to the religion of Holy Scripture, but every way becoming the practice of the children of Antichrist. While nations were called upon to reject much of that spiritual authority which their religious guides had assumed, their rulers are admonished, that as they hope to escape at the day of doom, it will behove them to divest that class of men of their vain authority and needless wealth, which could only serve to constitute them blind leaders of the blind, and to be the ministers of destruction rather than of salvation to the people.

It is not, of course, pretended, that the views of Wycliffe on these subjects were, in all instances, characterised by comprehensiveness or impartiality. Nor can we undertake to justify the severe language in which he often denounces his opponents. But in this occasional one-sidedness, and in this strength of invective, we see the character of the age fully as much as that of the man. It may be, that a mind more calm, and more equally balanced in its judgments, would have been ill suited to the kind of service which Wycliffe had to perform. His opinions were, nearly all of them, substantially true, and they were holden with a tenacity, and avowed with an intentness, becoming truth. When all fair deduction of this nature is made, enough remains to place him before us as the most extraordinary man of his times.

Wycliffe knew the temper of his opponents sufficiently to be aware, that he owed the continuance of his personal liberty, and even life, to their weakness, more than to their forbearance. But his anticipations, that the time would come when their power would be equal to their inclination, were not to be realised. The fact admits of explanation. It was known that the Duke of Lancaster, though he had not deemed it expedient to interpose on his behalf, when the point at issue was a question of theology, would probably do so if any severe measures were instituted in regard to him. The papal schism, moreover, absorbed the attention of the pontiffs: and disquietude in England had for some time rendered the factions who swayed its affairs fearful of each other. Added to all these causes, as serving to delay the introduction of a more sanguinary policy, was the declining health of the Reformer. His days, it was presumed, could not be many, and the evil which he had done might be expected to die with him.

Some time before his decease, Wycliffe had availed himself of the assistance of a curate in discharging his parochial duties. Almost the only credible tradition preserved in the town of Lutterworth, as illustrating the character of Wycliffe, describes him as most exemplary in the performance of his duties as a parish-priest, devoting a portion of the morning in each day to relieving the needy, administering the consolations of religion to the aged, the sick, and the dying. With that originality and power of intellect which anticipated a reform of Christianity more pure than the genius of Protestantism in the sixteenth century could attain, Wycliffe united that obscure condescension and assiduity which became the pastor of a village cure.

We scarcely need remark, that this consistency so observable in the character of our Reformer will hardly admit of explanation, except as resulting from deep religious principle. His sermons, fragmentary as they are, abound with expressions which show that he looked for the reward of his labours from a higher source than the favour of

mortals. "If we hope to be rewarded in this life," he writes, "our hope of heavenly bliss perisheth." In another discourse, he remarks, "Christ came into the world to bear witness to the truth, and to enlighten the world. And as Christ, God and man, came hither with this intent, should not the truth keep his disciples while standing thus for its defence, labouring even unto death? Christ and the Baptist, and many more, had not their reward here for doing this, but in heaven they have bliss hidden from men."^a In this manner the Reformer continued to preach and labour; and he is said to have been employed in administering the bread of the eucharist, when assailed by his last sickness. The paralysis which then seized him deprived him at once of utterance if not of consciousness. This happened on the twenty-ninth of December, 1384, and on the thirty-first day of that month, his devout spirit passed to the world of rest. Many good men have prayed that they might be summoned to their home while occupied in such services. We know not that Wycliffe ever presented such a petition, but we know that he was "taken from the evil to come."

"Thus, prematurely," writes an eminent and liberal churchman, "was terminated the career of this extraordinary man. His days were not extended to the length usually allotted to our species. Ten more years of vigorous exertion might reasonably have been expected, from the virtuous and temperate habits of an exemplary life. But the earthly tenement was probably worn out by the intense and fervid energy of the spirit within; and if his mortal existence be measured by the amount of his labours and achievements, his must appear to us as full of days as he was of honours. It now remains that we endeavour to form a righteous estimate of him, as he presents himself to our conceptions, through the haze and mist of ages. Unfortunately, he is known to us almost entirely by his writings. Over all those minute and personal peculiarities which give to any individual his distinct expression and physiognomy, time has drawn an impenetrable veil. To us he appears, for the most part, as a sort of unembodied agency. To delineate his character in the fullest and most interesting sense of that word would be to write a romance, and not a biography. During a portion of his life, indeed, he is more or less mixed up with public interests and transactions; but of these matters our notices are but poor and scanty: and if they were more copious, they would probably do little towards supplying us with those nameless particulars to which biography owes its most powerful charm. With regard to the details of his daily life—the habitual complexion of his temper—the turn of his conversation—the manner of his deportment among his companions—his inclinations or antipathies—his friendships or his alienations—we must be content to remain in hopeless ignorance. The only circumstance recorded concerning him, that falls within the description of an anecdote, is the reply with which he confounded the meddling and insidious friars, who intruded themselves upon him, when they thought he was about to breathe his last. This incident is, indeed, most abundantly characteristic; and it makes us bitterly regret that it stands alone. A few more such particulars would have been quite invaluable. As it is, we must be satisfied to think of him as of a voice crying in the wilderness, and lifting up through a long course of years, a loud, incessant, heart-stirring testimony against abuses which for ages had wearied the long-suffering of Heaven.

"Respecting his gigantic successor, Martin Luther, we are in possession of all that can enable us to form the most distinct conception of the man. We see him in connexion

with the wise, and the mighty, and ‘the excellent of the earth.’ We behold him in his intercourse with sages and divines, with princes and with potentates. We can trace him through all those bitter agonies of spirit through which he struggled on and on, till at last he seized upon the truth which made him free for ever. But to us, Wycliffe appears almost as a solitary being. He stands before us in a sort of grand and mysterious loneliness. To group him, if we may so speak, with other living men, would require a very strong effort of imagination. And hence it is, that we meditate on his story with emotions of solemn admiration, but without any turbulent agitation of our sympathies.”[a](#)

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Part II.

ON THE WRITINGS OF WYCLIFFE

STILL IN MANUSCRIPT.

BOOK I.

ON THE WRITINGS OF WYCLIFFE STILL IN MANUSCRIPT.

SECTION I.

In this section the attention of the reader will be directed in the first place to the pieces written by Wycliffe in English, and which, for the most part, were addressed alike to the clergy, to the opulent among the laity, and to the people at large. Even these pieces, though the most popular of the Reformer's productions, were they printed entirely and to the letter, would prove wearisome to most readers in our day, partly from the obsolescence of their language and allusions, and partly from the frequent repetitions of thought and illustration with which they abound. Such iteration of great principles served an important end in the history of the Reformer, but cannot contribute to the agreeableness of his writings as read by men in different circumstances, and in a later age. My impression is, that the attentive reader may form as correct a judgment in respect to the writings of Wycliffe from the present volume, as would be acquired by an immediate perusal of the whole of his works; nothing characteristic of those works, so far as my knowledge extends, being wanting in the descriptions here given of them, and the selections here made from them.

I. *Expositio Decalogi.* [u](#) Wycliffe wrote several expositions of the Decalogue. One forms a part of the collection of treatises, under the title of "The Poor Caitiff;" another, of much greater extent, in Latin, is preserved in the Bodleian Library. Similar thoughts and passages appear in all these pieces. From internal evidence, I conclude the piece from which the following passages are selected to be one of the Reformer's earlier productions, of much the same period probably with the several tracts in *The Poor Caitiff*.

In the prologue to this exposition, Wycliffe laments that men should be found calling God master, and professing to honour "his Son from heaven," and for "forty, threescore, fourscore years," be ignorant of his "ten commandments." He exhorts his reader, accordingly, after this wise, "If thou wilt be God's servant, begin and think how thou camest first into this world; how thou wast born of thy mother with pain and sorrow, poor, feeble, and unable to help thyself. Think how thou art set here in this wretched world, to sweat and toil for thy sustenance. Think also that thou shalt go out

of this wretched world, poor and naked as thou camest in;—and that thou shalt have nothing with thee of thy goods, save thy good deeds or thy wicked.” He then speaks of the “high bliss of heaven,” and of “the pains of hell,” as supplying motives to the obedience required. The signs of not being in deadly sin are said to be “when a man will gladly and willingly hear the word of God; when he knoweth himself prepared to do good works; when he is willing to flee sin; when a man can be sorry for his sin,”

The great obligation of man is said to be, that he should honour and love God supremely; but to this end it is necessary that he should “hear the commandments of God read, preached, and taught, and do after them as God hath bidden. But what man is there now-a-days that dreadeth to break God’s commandments, or setteth any price by the sweetest word or the sharpest word in all God’s law? Dear God, it is a wonder of all wonders on earth, that from the beginning of our life even to our last end, we are never weary, either night or day, to labour about worldly goods, pleasing to our wretched body, which shall last here but a little while; but about the learning of God’s commandments, which shall be food and nourishment for our souls that shall ever last in bliss or pain, about such things may we not labour truly to the end even one hour of the day?” This introduction concludes with an expression of regret and sorrow that the conversation of “bishops, parsons, priests, and friars,” no less than that of the people generally, had respect everlastingly to trifles and vanities, “without a word of God or his commandments.”

In the exposition of the first commandment, men are exhorted to obedience to the Divine will, as procuring them “a part in all the good prayers, and good deeds of all saints, from the beginning of the world to the last end, and to the everlasting bliss of heaven.” The precise meaning of this passage is not easily determined, but from the manner in which Wycliffe expresses himself on doctrine of this nature in his undoubted works, and in works belonging no less certainly to the later period of his life, I am disposed to trace this obscurity of language on a point of so much importance, to the partial light which had fallen on the mind of the Reformer when committing it to writing. In the same connexion sanction is given to a worship of images, and to the invocation of saints. By these “dead images,” the laity, and the more ignorant especially, are said to learn “how they should worship the saints in heaven, after whom those images are shapen.” We know that the term worship was commonly used in the age of Wycliffe to denote nothing more than a decent reverence or homage, and had no necessary connexion with the idea of worship in a religious sense. But the following passage, from the same connexion, while it points to these different uses of the term worship, leaves the word applicable in its higher sense to the regard which should be paid to saints: the man is said to have “a false god” who “worshippeth or prayeth to an image made of man, with that worship and prayer that is due only *to God, and his saints.*” This piece bears internal marks of being from the pen of Wycliffe, its thoughts, illustrations, and language, being in many instances strictly such as we find in his other writings: but, for the reason stated, the above passages oblige us to attribute it to a comparatively early period in his history. This circumstance, however, adds to the interest of the work, in place of detracting from it, inasmuch as we possess ample means of illustrating the opinions of the Reformer in his later years, while the lights relating to his doctrine at an earlier period are few and feeble. In the present treatise we may trace many of the seeds of his ultimate

principles, and, above all, the eminently devout spirit in which he prosecuted his inquiries.

Thus the man who would be obedient to the command which requires him duly to honour God, is reminded that “he must steadily believe, that Almighty God in Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three persons in one God, are the noblest object that may be, so that all power, all knowledge, all wisdom, all goodness, all charity, all mercy, is in him, and cometh of him. Also, thou must fear God before all things in this world, and break his commandments for no worldly good. Also, thou must love God before all things, and labour earnestly to understand and know his will; that thy will may be so ruled and set that it may ever accord with God’s will. Have a mind also of the goodness of God, how he made thee in his own likeness, and how Jesus Christ, both God and man, died so painful a death on the cross, to buy man’s soul out of hell and to the bliss of heaven, with his own heart’s blood!” All trust in amulets, or the devices of magic, is described as so much weakness and impiety: and the question is asked—“Since men dread so much the pope’s cursing, the bishop’s cursing, and other priests’ cursing, why do not men fear the rightful, the dreadful, and the terrible cursing that God giveth to those who will not keep his commandments?”

In regard to the second commandment, “all men and women who would be called Christians, and who live contrary to the living and teaching of Christ and of his apostles, take God’s name in vain; for it is in vain for a man to say that he is a Christian, when he doeth not the works of Christ.” Men are further chargeable with taking God’s name in vain when they indulge in profane or unlawful swearing. He then cites certain canons which menace profane swearers, if ecclesiastics, with “degradation,” and if laymen, with “excommunication;” and adding to that authority the authority of our Lord in his sermon on the mount, he remarks—“These are Christ’s own words in his Gospel, and therefore for love of him who for you shed his blood, beware henceforward night and day of your oathes swearing, and always that you swear not in vain, and much more, that you swear not falsely, for a great clerk hath said, he that sweareth falsely maketh God false, for he maketh God the author of falsehood.”

Four excuses urged by profane swearers are then mentioned and refuted. It was pretended that even such mention of the name of God tended to keep him in the thoughts of men, and was so far good. In the same manner, it is replied, it must be good that a conspirator should make mention of the name of his sovereign, though it should be only to betray him. The force of custom was pleaded:—“So the thief might say, I have had so long a custom of theft, that I cannot cease to steal other men’s goods.” The third excuse was, “that God is merciful, and will hardly damn men for a light oath.” But the parties making this excuse are reminded—“Since God is so great a Lord, and commandeth his liege men on pain of hell without end, to keep so easy a commandment as refraining his tongue from vain and false swearing, he is worthy to be damned the deeper if he breaketh it. It was little in Adam to eat an apple in paradise without the forbidding of God: nevertheless for the eating it against the forbidding of God he and all mankind were justly condemned, till Christ bought them again with his precious blood and hard death upon the cross.” The fourth excuse of the profane is—that they swear in order to be believed. But such swearing is

described as treachery towards God, and as poor evidence of trustworthiness toward man. Adverting to the prevalence of this vice, even among the servants and retainers of the clergy, he exclaims—“Surely it is wonder, apart from the endless mercy of God, that the earth openeth not and swalloweth them quick into hell for this treason and others beside!”

On the precept concerning the Sabbath-day, it is observed that this day should be kept by “three manners of occupation.” First, it should be kept in *thinking*—“thinking how God is Almighty. Why? because he made all this world of nought. He is All-knowing. Why? because he governs all things most wisely. He is All-good. Why? because he maketh all things turn to the profit of good men who faithfully love him. He is All-just. Why? because he rewardeth all good deeds, and punishes all trespasses, in due time, and in due measure, both secret and open, and no creature may withstand his punishing, neither in earth, in purgatory, nor in hell. He is All-merciful. Why? because he is readier to receive sinful men to grace, that would truly leave their sins, than they are to ask mercy.”

On Sunday it should be matter for our meditation, that creation was completed on that day, that Christ rose from the dead on that day, that knowledge and wisdom came to the earth by the descent of the Holy Spirit on that day, and that on that day, “as many clerks say, shall be doomsday—for Sunday was the first day, and Sunday shall be the last day.”

“And bethink thee heartily of the wonderful kindness of God, who was so high and worshipful in heaven, that he should come down so low, and be born of the maiden, and become our brother to buy us again by his hard passion, from our thralldom of the devil. He was beaten, buffeted, and scourged. He was crowned with a crown of thorns for despite, and when the crown, as clerks say, could not sit fast, and close down to his head, for the long and stiff thorns, they took staves and beat them down, till the thorns pierced the place of the brain. He was nailed hand and foot, and with nails sharp and rugged, that his pain should be the more, and so at last he suffered a painful death, hanging full shamefully on the hard tree. And all this he did and suffered of his own kindness, without any sin of his own, to deliver us from sin and pain, and to bring us to everlasting bliss. Thou shouldst also think constantly, how, when he had made thee of nought, thou hadst forsaken him, and all his kindness through sin, and hadst taken thee to the devil and his service, world without end, had not Christ, God and Man, suffered this hard death to save us. And thus shouldst thou see the great kindness, and all other goodness that God hath done for thee, and learn thereby thy own great unkindness, and thou shalt thus see that man is the most fallen of creatures, and the unkindest of all the creatures that ever God made. It should be full sweet and delightful to us to think thus on this great kindness and this great love of Jesus Christ.”

The second occupation proper to the Sabbath, is said to consist in *speaking*. This should be first in confession of sin, made immediately to God—confession of having lived a false, sensual, and unnatural life, neglecting the study and the observance of his will, after the manner of the brute. This confession being made, Wycliffe’s counsel to the penitent is, that he should “cry heartily to God for grace and power to

leave all sin, and ever after to live in virtue. And after this be about with thy speaking to bring thy neighbours to better living. And if they are at debate, bring them by thy power to love and charity and concord. If thou be a priest, be a true lanthorn to the people, both in speaking, and in doing truly all things that belong to a priest. And seek wisely the ground, and the true office of priesthood, and be thou not led blindly by the lewd customs of the world; but read God's law, and the exposition of holy doctors thereupon—study it, learn it, and keep it; and when thou knowest it, preach it to them that are unknowing, and look evermore that thy deeds be so rightful, that no man may blame thee with reason.”

The third manner of occupying the Sabbath-day, was to be careful to attend public worship; to endeavour to bring pure motives to the service of God; and that the mind may be in its best state for attending to the duties of that day, it is urged that there be little indulgence in the pleasures of the table. After public worship, says the Reformer, “visit such as are sick or in mischief, especially those whom God hath made needy by age, or by other sicknesses—the feeble, the crooked, the lame: these thou shalt relieve with thy goods after thy power and after their need, for thus biddeth the Gospel. But thou shalt not do so to strong and mighty beggars well arrayed, whether they be laymen, priests, or friars. And so men should not be idle, but busy on the Sabbath-day about the soul, as men are on the week-day about the body.”

On the precept concerning the honour to be rendered to parents, it is remarked, that we have three fathers—our natural father; the priest by whose means we become the spiritual children of the church; and our Father in heaven.

The mutual obligations of children and parents, are judiciously explained and earnestly enforced. “Thy second father,” says Wycliffe, “is thy ghostly father, that hath special care of thy soul, and thus thou shalt worship him—thou shalt love him before other men, and obey his teaching, in so far as he teaches God's law, and shalt help, according to thy power, that he may have a reasonable maintenance, when he doth well his office. And if he fail in his office, by giving evil example, and in ceasing from teaching God's law, thou owest to have great sorrow on that account, and to tell meekly and charitably his default to him, between thee and him alone.”

It will be seen from this extract, that Wycliffe had not proceeded so far at the time when this treatise was written, as to counsel, and even to urge strongly, as he did afterwards, the withholding of maintenance from priests habitually delinquent.

Concerning our third Father, the Reformer writes, “He is best of all,” and for his sake his true children are prepared to meet all suffering, and even death itself.

On the remaining precepts the observations are of a general nature, and present little remarkable. [a](#) But it is thus the Reformer expresses himself at the close of the work:—

“Many think if they give a penny to a pardoner, they shall be absolved of breaking all the commandments of God, and therefore they take no heed to keep them. I say thee for certain, though thou hire priests and friars to pray for thee, and though thou hear every day many masses, and found chauntries and colleges, and go on pilgrimage all

thy life, and give all thy goods to pardoners, all this shall not bring thy soul to heaven. But if thou keep the commandments of God to thy life's end, though thou have neither penny nor halfpenny, thou shalt have everlasting pardon, and the bliss of heaven!" Christ, it is added, said, "Suffer for me as I have suffered for thee, for it behoveth the members to follow the head. Jesus Christ is our head, and we are his members, if we do well. What apostle, martyr, confessor, or virgin, or saint, ever came to God without suffering? Then what shall we wretches say, that herein read the lives of saints, which through many torments went to God joying and singing. We wretches that bear falsely the name of Christian men, when only touched by a little short breath of our neighbour's tongue, we lose charity and patience, and mindfulness of our death, of the quaking judgment, of the day of doom, of the everlasting pains of hell, of the everlasting joys of heaven!"

II. In a manuscript volume in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, including a series of the most interesting of the tracts and treatises published by Wycliffe in English, the first in order is a piece intitled, *De Hypocritarum Imposturis*. It consists of a commentary on the text, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," and is meant to identify the mendicant orders with that sect of ancient religionists, in respect to their want of sincerity. It begins with the words, *Christ commandeth to his disciples, and to all Christian men, to understand and flee the sour dow of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*^b The volume has been injured by damp, and nearly the whole of the first page is illegible. In a portion of that page remaining, the Reformer speaks of the importance of "bringing men cleanly to the Gospel, and the peace and freedom of Christ's order, that being the most perfect, and the most easy to win heaven by." The treatise extends to twenty-two pages, double columns, in quarto, and from its reference to the papal schism, and to the disputes concerning the eucharist, it manifestly belongs to the later period of the Reformer's life.^a

"See now," he writes, "where these friars break falsely all the commandments of God. If they choose to be ruled more after the ordinance of sinful men and idiots, than after the clean ordinance of Christ; and say that sinful man's ordinance is better, and truer for man, and more perfect than is the clean ordinance of Christ—then they worship false gods, and are heretics and blasphemers, and so they break the first commandment of God. If they dread more, and punish more for breaking of sinful man's traditions, than for breaking the commandments of God; and study and love more their private rules, than the hests^b of God, then they worship, love, and dread sinful man, and, it may be damned devils, more than God Almighty—for as Austin saith, a man maketh that thing his God the which he dreadeth most and loveth most."

"If they hinder curates and poor priests from teaching man God's law, by hypocrisy and help of Antichrist's laws, for dread lest their hypocrisy be perceived, and their winning and worldly pride laid down, they are cursed manquellers,^c and the cause of the damnation of all the souls that perish through their default in not knowing and keeping God's commandments. If they preach principally for worldly muck and vainglory, and so preach to be praised of men, and not simply and plainly the Gospel of Christ for his glory, and gaining of men's souls, they are corruptors of God's word, as Paul saith."

Of the clergy generally, he remarks, that a schism having grown up in the papacy—

“One part holdeth with one pope, and the other with another pope, and each party saith, and teacheth as belief, that this pope is true, and none other, and that all who believe not so are accursed heretics, and out of belief, and are bringing all others out of belief. And yet they in common judge both parties as Christian men; and so they say one thing and do the contrary.”

It is in the following terms that he exhorts men to Christian fidelity:

“It is cowardice in Christ’s disciples if they spare for bodily pain and death to tell openly the truth of God’s law. And therefore telleth Christ afterwards to his disciples, that they should dread God and nothing else sovereignly. a Sothely, b saith Christ, ‘I say to you, my friends, Be ye not afraid of them that slay the body, and after these things have no more which they shall do. But I shall show to you whom you shall dread: dread ye him who after he hath slain, he hath power to send into hell; and so I say to you, Dread him.’ Here Christ will that men dread no thing principally, but God and his offence. For, if men dread bodily pains and death, and therefore cease to tell openly the truth, they are with this unable to regain the bliss of heaven, and if they say openly and sadly c the truth of God, nothing may harm them, so that they keep patience and charity.”

He then remarks, that what our Lord spoke concerning the sparrows, was to “comfort his disciples” under suffering and persecution; and adds, that “nothing may come without his knowing and his ordinance, and that it is all for the best.” Christ, he writes, “maketh us willing to die for his law by reward of the bliss of heaven, when he saith thus, that such as acknowledge me before men, man’s Son shall acknowledge him before the angels of God.” Towards the close of the treatise, the Reformer indulges in much lamentation over the sale of benefices, said to be common everywhere, but most common at Rome, “where he who can bring most gold shall soonest be opened to great benefices.” The men so introduced are described as setting “an example of pride, lechery, and other sins, hindering other true priests from teaching God’s law. And this is one way of greatest vengeance which God taketh on sinful men, to suffer such hypocrites to rule the people, and draw them to hell by withdrawing from them God’s law.” In common speech, such men were described as “able curates, and great men of holy church;” but such language the Reformer denounces as “Antichrist’s blasphemy.”

Having censured the vices, not only of the mendicants, but of the regular clergy, he extends his rebuke to “secular lords.” These also are said to “fail foul in charity.” In maintenance of their worldly dignity they will labour much, and fight valiantly; “but to maintain God’s law, and to stand for the worship to which they are bound upon pain of losing their lordship, and body and soul in hell without end, who is that lord will truly speak, labour, and suffer meekly, despite of persecution, in time of need? Those lords ought to quake against doomsday, and against the time of their death, that travail more largely to maintain their little worldly lordship, and to seek their own worship, than they travail to maintain the rightful ordinance of Jesus Christ in his church, and to nourish and maintain Christian souls in good governance and holy

life.” Merchants, and all classes, are said to be affected by this insincere and worldly temper, “but the hypocrisy of the Pharisees is the most accursed and poisonous of all.”

III. The next treatise in this collection is intitled, *De Obedientia Prelatorum*. The English title is, *How men owe Obedience to Prelates, &c.* It begins with the words, *Prelates slander poor priests, and other Christian men, that they will not obey to their sovereigns, nor fear the curse, nor dread nor keep the law, but despise all things that are against their liking.*^a On this account they are said to be “worse than Jews and Pagans, and all lords, and prelates, and mighty men should destroy them, for else they will destroy holy church, and make each man to live as him liketh, that so they may the more destroy Christendom.”

“But here poor priests and true men say they would meekly and willingly obey to God and holy church, and to each man in earth, inasmuch as he teacheth truly God’s commandments, and profitable truth for their souls. And no more oweth any man to obey to Christ, God and man, nor to any apostle. And if any worldly prelate axeth more obedience, he surely is Antichrist, and Lucifer’s master, for Jesus Christ is the God of righteousness and truth, and peace and charity, and may not do against righteousness and truth, nor against the health of man’s soul, nor against charity, since he may not lie nor deny himself. How then should any sinful prelate charge and constrain men to do against righteousness, and the health of their souls in good conscience? For Christ saith in the Gospel of John, that the Son may not do but that thing which he seeth the Father do; and therefore Christ commanded all men that they should not believe in him, but as he did the works of the Father in heaven. Why then should Christian men be constrained by Antichrist’s clerks to do after their commandments, when they do no works of God, but works of the fiend? And thus Christ speaketh to the Jews, and axeth why they believe not to him, if he saith truth. Therefore, also, Christ saith to the Jews, Who of you shall reprove me of sin? and he would that each man had so done, if he might have done so truly. Therefore in the time of his passion he said to the bishop’s servant who smote him in the face, ‘If I have spoken evil, bear thou witness of the evil.’ And thus, if prelates are vicars of Christ, they ought to follow him in this obedience, and axe no more of any man.”

Wycliffe then complains that prelates should thus demand greater reverence and submission than had been claimed by the apostles, or by Christ himself, while their life commonly bore so little resemblance to that of the Redeemer. He bids them remember that “Christ, God and Man, sought man’s soul, lost through sin, thirty years and more, with great travail, and weariness, and many pains, by many thousand miles upon his feet, in great cold, and storm, and tempests!” To this example, it is contended, his vicars should be, at least in some good measure, conformed: and it is demanded with some warmth, “Why should a sinful idiot claim more obedience than did Christ and his apostles?”

It is maintained further, that no man should leave the greater duty in favour of the less, and the duty to continue to preach the Gospel must be more manifest, than the obligation to obey any summoning from prelates who would gladly prevent such preaching. This summoning of prelates, he insists, “is not grounded in Christ’s life, nor in the life of his apostles, nor in reason, but in Antichrist’s power, through the

endowing of the church with secular lordship contrary to Holy Writ. Thus, instead of Christ's meekness, and poverty, and charity, and true teaching of the Gospel, is brought in the worldly pride of priests, and simony, and covetousness, and dissension among Christ's people, and bodily tormenting of them by priests, as though they were worldly lords of the king's liege men." Concerning such men, as putting forth such claims, he demands—"Where are more false Antichrists, more poisonous heretics, or more accursed blasphemers?" The maxim expounded in the next section is, that "no man oweth to put God's biddings behind, and the biddings of sinful man before;" and since God biddeth every man to discharge his natural obligation to wife and children, all contrary bidding notwithstanding, much more is every priest bound to the discharge of his spiritual duties toward the flock committed to him, and not to "leave his sheep unkept among the wolves of hell." Prelates may enjoin the contrary, but in such case no prelate is to be obeyed. "Christ, also, saith in the Gospel, that if the blind lead the blind, they fall both into the lake. These worldly prelates are blind in God's law, both in the knowing thereof and in life, and accordingly no man should be led by them, for dread lest they both fall into hell-ward, for ignorance of Holy Writ.

"By reason, also, and by man's law, if a man be summoned together by the higher judge and a less, he shall be excused from the less by virtue of the higher. But each man is summoned first of God to worship him with all his wit, and with all his might—and by virtue of this chief dominion, he oweth to be excused from the less.

"Men of law say, and reason also, that it is worst of all to take doom under a suspected doomsman. But these worldly prelates are suspected doomsmen against God's servants, for they are enemies to the persons of Christ's servants, and also to the cause of God. And the new religious assessors of these worldly prelates are more to be suspected than any other, for they put the decrees of the church and of their founders before the law of God, and thus charge deficiency and evil on the author of Holy Writ, deceiving lords and ladies in matters of faith and charity, and making them to trust that it is alms to destroy true men, that stand fast for God's law and true living. And thus the damnable ignorance of God's law, and the accursed life of these worldly prelates, and the strong maintaining of their own sin, and the sins of other men, is the cause why poor priests and Christian men have been suspected of heresy, and counted enemies both of God's cause and of his servants.

"But let prelates study busily and truly Holy Writ, and live openly well thereafter, and destroy open sin of other men, and poor priests and Christian men, without any summoning, would with great travail, and cost, and willingness, by land and by water, meekly come to them, and do them obedience and reverence, as they would to Peter and Paul. Let the world judge whether these divisions come from worldly prelates, ignorant, and cursed in life, or from poor priests and true men that fain desire night and day to know God's will and worship, and to do it before all things.

"As to cursing,^a Christian men say truly, that they dread it so much, that they would not willingly, or knowingly, deserve God's curse for any good in earth or in heaven: nor man's curse, in so far as it accordeth with the rightful curse of God. But they will, with great joy of soul, rather suffer man's wrongful curse, than knowingly or willingly break any commandment of God, for to win thereby all the worshiping of

this world, and to keep their body in all good never so long, and rather to suffer slandering, and backbiting, and imprisoning, and exile, hanging, drawing, quartering, and burning, with the help and grace of God, than to forsake the truth of Holy Writ, and the life of Christ.

“As to law, true men say, that they will meekly and wilfully dread and keep God’s law, up to their knowledge and might; and each law of man’s making, in so far as they know that it accordeth with God’s law, and reason, and good conscience. Christian men know well from the faith of Scripture, that neither Peter nor Paul, nor any creature, may do aught lawfully against the truth of Holy Writ, nor against the edification of holy church—that is, against the good teaching, governing, and amending of Christian souls. What power have these worldly prelates to make so many wicked laws, since God curseth those who make wicked laws, and commandeth that no man shall add to his words, nor take from them, on pain of the great curse of God?—that is to say, let no man add a false interpretation,^a or a false gloss to Holy Writ,—for then, as Jerome saith, he is a heretic; and let no man draw any truth away from God’s words, for they include all needful truth, all truth profitable for man’s soul. And to this intent saith Paul in his epistle, if even an apostle, or an angel from heaven, preach other thing than is taught of Christ and his apostles, we must not obey.”

Having insisted in such terms on the sufficiency of Holy Scripture, and the right of private judgment, as opposed to all church pretensions, he concludes this treatise by saying, “Let worldly prelates cease to slander poor priests, saying that they will not obey their sovereigns, nor dread the curse, but despise the law—for in these three things they are clear before God and man, if right, and reason, and charity, be well sought.”

IV. The next treatise in this series is intitled, *De Conversatione Ecclesiasticorum*. Its purport is indicated in the words with which it commences—*Here it telleth of prelates, that prelates leave preaching of the Gospel, and are ghostly manquellers of men’s souls.*^b The former treatise related to the obedience which prelates were wont to demand; the present relates to the duties devolving on that order of persons, and to their negligence in the matter of those duties. It is in this respect that this piece “On Prelates” is distinguishable from the piece “On Obedience to Prelates.” The strictures of the Reformer on this subject extend to forty-three chapters.

In the first chapter it is shown that our Lord and his apostles were devoted to the work of preaching, and were studious that their lives might be commendatory of their doctrine. “Christ,” it is said, “ordained all his apostles and disciples, both before his death and after his rising from the dead, to preach the Gospel to all men; and since prelates and priests, ordained of God, come in the stead of apostles and disciples, they are all bound by Jesus Christ, both God and man, thus to preach the Gospel.” Three things are said to be included in feeding the church after the manner intended by Christ in his injunction to Peter: the example of a good life; the true preaching of the Gospel; and a willingness to suffer death, if need be, to render men stable in the truth, and in the hope of bliss. The case of Eli and his sons is cited, as showing the domestic and national evils which follow naturally in the train of an unholy priesthood. The

language of Ezekiel also, on the responsibility of the minister of truth, is adduced, as holding forth the same warning. Hence also the language of the apostle—"woe is me if I preach not the Gospel:" and as Peter was called Satan, when opposing himself to the death of Christ, so may prelates be thus designated, if they interpose to prevent that salvation from coming to men, which the death of Christ has brought near to us. "Christ," says Wycliffe, "purged the temple with his own hands, as the Gospel telleth, in token that, if the priests were good, the people would soon be amended. And for this reason, true men say, that prelates are more bound to preach truly the Gospel, than their subjects are bound to pay them dymes;a for God chargeth that more, and that is more profitable to both parties. Therefore prelates are more accursed if they cease from their preaching, than the people are if they cease to pay tithes, even while prelates do their office well." Matins, masses, and chantings, are all described as "man's ordinances," but the preaching of the Gospel is of Divine obligation, as having been enjoined by Christ, both before and after his passion.

In the beginning of the second chapter, the authority of the venerable Bede, of Gregory I., of Augustine, and others, is cited in support of the importance which the Reformer ascribes to preaching. Prelates who do not preach themselves, and who prevent others from doing so, are described as monsters who refuse to feed their own offspring, and who will not suffer others to feed them: and they are denounced accordingly, as "procurators to the fiend, enemies of Christ, and traitors to his people!"

In the third chapter, Wycliffe censures, with great freedom, the gay equipage, the profanity, the gluttony, and drunkenness, of many among the prelates, and speaks of their establishments, and their general manners, as proclaiming them members of the "devil's church," rather than of "holy church." Prelates, he writes, "rob the poor liege men of the king by false excommunications, put forth under colour of holy correction, but giving men leave to dwell in sin from year to year, and from one seven years to another seven years, and commonly all their life long, if they pay by year twenty shillings, or something more or less." It is then calculated, that should certain bishops live as vendors of this art of merchandise through twenty years, they must amass not less than sixty thousand marks, "all robbed from the king's liege men." In this manner, "these wicked prelates sell Christian men's souls to Satan for money, for which souls Christ shed his precious heart's-blood upon the cross;" and if secular lords endeavour to amend this state of things, then they are slandered, accursed, and their lands are laid under an interdict; "and thus almost all men are conquered to the fiend, and these prelates show themselves very Antichrists, procurators of Satan, and traitors to Jesus Christ and his people." One prolific source of this corruption, is said to be the prevalence of simony. Most of these dignitaries enter upon their office by such means, and it is said to cleave to them "as a leprosy all through"—a depraved priesthood everywhere producing a depraved people. Lords and ladies who confer benefices on such men, and after such fashion, are admonished, that however plausibly such things may be done, the guilt of simony is upon them, and such proceedings will remain "to be judged in respect to both parties" in the last day.

In the fourth chapter, Wycliffe says, "Lords and ladies who hold curates in worldly offices, from the souls of which they have the care, are traitors. For God giveth them

lordship and presentation of churches, that they should maintain his law, and help true priests in the preaching of his Gospel; and if they withhold curates, who are God's treasure, in their worldly services, or prevent them from keeping Christian souls, the which Christ bought with his precious blood, they are foul traitors to Jesus Christ, and to the people whom they thus destroy." But if it is a great sin in the laity thus to bind the clergy to secular things, it is a greater sin in the clergy to consent to be thus bound, and a greater sin still, when a clerk descends to add craft to worldliness, and to play the false confessor for gain. These "three treasons" are said to be frightfully prevalent. "But the simony of the court of Rome doth most harm, for it is most common, and done most under the colour of holiness, and robbeth most our land, both of men and treasure." The customary exactions of the Roman see are then described and censured, especially because those exactions, and the money spent in journeying to Rome, and during the delays which kept men there, were all so much wealth lost to the kingdom. "When a lord hath the gold for presentation, then the gold dwelleth still in the land. But when the pope hath the first-fruits, then the gold goeth out, and cometh never again."

But the purchase of benefices with money was only one form of simony. "Pardons, if they are aught worth, must be free, and to take money for them, is to sell God's grace, and so simony." Hence masses, and other services, "for which money is taken," are spoken of as so much fraudulent invention, meant to give the priesthood the power of spoiling the people. The history of Jeroboam, and the fall of Gehazi, and of Simon Magus, are cited as showing the displeasure with which simoniacal preachers are regarded by the Almighty. "The king and lords," says the Reformer, "are charged of God to destroy this sin and others, and if they do it not, they are consenters to it, and fauterers a thereof."

The following passage is from the seventh chapter of this work:—

"Worldly prelates command that no man shall preach the Gospel, but at their will and limitation, and forbid men to hear the Gospel on pain of the great curse. But Satan in his own person never dared do so much despite to Christ or his Gospel, for he applied Holy Writ to Christ, and would have pursued his intent thereby. And since it is Christ's counsel and commandment to priests generally to preach the Gospel, and this thing they must not do without leave of their prelates, who, in some cases, may be fiends of hell, then it follows that priests may not do Christ's counsels and commandments without the leave of fiends! Ah! Lord Jesus, are these sinful fools, and, it may be, fiends of hell, more knowing and mighty than thou, that true men must not do thy will without leave from such? Ah! Lord God, all-mighty, all-knowing, and all full of charity, how long wilt thou suffer these Antichrists to despise thee and thy holy Gospel, and to let the health of Christian men's souls? Endless, rightful Lord! this thou sufferest for sin reigning generally among the people; but, endless, merciful, and good Lord, help thy poor wretched priests and servants to have love and reverence to thy Gospel, that they be not let from doing thy worship and will through the false feignings of Antichrist and his fiends. Almighty Lord God, merciful, and in knowledge endless, since thou sufferedst Peter and all the apostles to have so great dread and cowardice in the time of thy passion, that they fled all away through fear of death, and for a little poor woman's voice, and afterwards by comfort of the Holy

Ghost thou madest them so strong that they were afraid of no man, nor of pain, nor of death, help now by gifts of the same Holy Ghost, thy poor servants, who all their life have been cowards, and make them strong and bold in thy cause, to maintain the Gospel against Antichrist, and against all the tyrants of the world!”

In the two following chapters, the same subject is continued. Prelates are rebuked as men deriving their chief revenue from the sins of the people. It is because there are so many sins to be confessed, that “the rotten penny” is demanded continually: and by such means “a proud name in the world, and great householding,” are sustained. Clerical example, which should conduce to the edification of the people, contributes, in such case, to their destruction. Many of the sins of such men “are so open, that it needeth no man to declare them; but of sin against chastity, men say that many prelates are full thereof, and of the most cursed species thereof, such as it would be a shame to write; and so curates take example from them, and subjects take example from curates, both wedded men and single.”

In the ninth and tenth chapters are the following passages:—

“These prelates charge more their own cursing, that is many times false, than the most rightful curse of God Almighty. And hereby they mean, and show indeed, but falsely, that they are more than Almighty God in Trinity. For if a man be accursed of prelates, though wrongfully, anon all men are taught by them to flee him as a Jew or a Saracen. And if he dwell forty days under their curse, he shall be taken to prison. But they who are cursed of God for breaking his commandments, as proud men, envious, covetous, gluttons, the unchaste, are not punished thus, but holden virtuous and manly. So God’s curse is set at nought, while the wrongful curse of man is charged above the clouds. And yet, though a man be accursed of God, and of a prelate also, if he will give gold he shall be assoiled,^a though he dwell in his sin, and so under God’s curse.

“But see now the sinfulness of man’s curse. If a true man shall displease a worldly prelate by teaching and maintaining God’s law, he shall be slandered for an evil man, and forbidden to teach Christ’s Gospel, and the people shall be charged upon pain of the greater curse, to flee, and not to hear such a man, for to save their own souls. And this shall be done under the colour of holiness; for they will say that such a man teacheth heresy, and bring many false witnesses and notaries against him in his absence, and in his presence speak no word. And they pretend, by means of this invented and false law, that if three or four false witnesses, hired by money, say each a thing against a true man, that then he shall not be heard, though he could prove the contrary by two hundred.”

In this manner did the Reformer plead for natural right, and liberty of conscience, against the abuses of power on the part of a worldly and vicious clergy. To concede that such methods of proceeding are just, he remarks, would be to concede the justice of the death inflicted on the martyrs, and on Christ himself, against whom it must, of course, have been easy to produce three such witnesses. By such means, indeed, it were easy to prove “each king of Christendom foresworn, and therefore no king.” But as the judgment of Elijah prevailed against that of eight hundred false priests, so shall the judgment of one true man prevail against that of a host of prelates; and if “the

clerks of Antichrist curse the soul into hell, as they pretend, surely they are evil fathers, who thus violently curse their own children into hell—not for rebellion against God, nor against his law, but because Christian men withstand the prelates' covetousness or pride, or because they teach and maintain the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

In the next chapter Wycliffe touches on the subject of prayer, on its nature, and its supposed efficacy. “Prayer,” he remarks, “standeth principally in good life, and of this prayer speaketh Christ, when he saith in the Gospel that we must ever pray. For Augustine and other saints say, that so long as a man dwelleth in charity, so long he prayeth well.” Prayer is also said to “stand in holy desire,” and “in word;” but prayer in word “is nought worth, unless it be done with devotion, and cleanness, and holiness of life. Ah! Lord, since prelates are so far from God’s law, that they will not preach the Gospel themselves, nor suffer other men to preach it, how abominable is their prayer before God Almighty! Lord, since prelates know not whether their prayer be acceptable or abominable, why do they magnify it so much, and sell it so dear? For the prayer of a lewda man who shall be saved, is without measure better than the prayer of a prelate who shall be damned.” Vicious priests, it is observed, “need to have new laws, made of sinful fools, to colour their sin by, and to gather greedily tithes, when they do not their office; for God’s law helpeth them not thereto, but condemns their pride, covetousness, and other sins.” He then combats the notion that such men are heard “not for their own holiness,” but “in virtue of holy church;” and replies to this “dreaming,” that it is “not grounded in Holy Writ, for God saith generally that such prayer is abominable.” The offering of strange fire on the ancient altar, betokened the offering of prayer without charity.

In the twelfth chapter Wycliffe resumes his censure of the prelates who fine, curse, and imprison men, for preaching the Gospel, and who grant absolutions to the most guilty, on payment of the required “rent to Antichrist.” Coercion, he maintains, “belongs to lord’s office, as Peter and Paul teacheth,” and all punishing of the body, and loss of goods, should come from the secular power only.

The thirteenth chapter exposes the frauds practised in the matter of indulgences. Prelates are said to “destroy foully Christian men by these feignedb indulgences or pardons.” Such men are described as holding out this promise of indulgence as procured “by virtue of Christ’s passion and martyrdom, and holy merits of saints, which they did more than was needful for their own bliss.” But this doctrine, it is replied, “Christ taught never in all the Gospel, and never used it, neither Peter nor Paul.” Some of these indulgences, it seems, were granted in terms extending over a thousand years, and Wycliffe ridicules such grants by reminding those who value them, that “after the day of doom there will be no purgatory, and no man knoweth how soon that doom may come.” But the Reformer pushes his argument on this subject to a length which his opponents must have felt to be not a little inconvenient. “It seemeth that the pope and his are all out of charity, if there dwell any soul in purgatory. For he may with full heart, and without any other cost deliver them out of purgatory.” To confess the want of inclination in this particular, Wycliffe argues, must be to confess a gross want of charity; and to confess the want of power must be to confess the hypocrisy which makes pretension to such power. Allusion is made to the manner in which these indulgences were dispensed in favour of the recent crusade

in Flanders, conducted by Spencer, bishop of Norwich, when it was seen that their use was “not to make peace, but dissensions and wars.” The whole system of indulgences, and pardons, is denounced as “a subtle merchandise of Antichrist’s clerks, to magnify their counterfeit power, and to get worldly goods, and to cause men not to dread sin.”^a “Marvellous it is that any sinful fool dare grant anything on the merit of saints, for all that ever any saint did may not bring a soul to heaven without the grace and might of Christ’s passion.” In that passion, it is maintained “all merits that are needful” will be found, and the judgment of God hereafter will not be found to have been influenced by the caprice or the biddings of man. Wycliffe concludes this instructive chapter by praying that God would of his endless mercy “destroy the pride, covetousness, hypocrisy, and heresy of this feigned pardoning, and make men busy to keep his commandments, and to set fully their trust in Jesus Christ.”

From prelates at home, Wycliffe proceeds to touch on the pretensions of the great prelate abroad—this he does in the following terms: “Also prelates make many new points of belief, and say it is not enough to believe in Jesus Christ, and to be christened, as Christ saith in the Gospel of Mark, unless a man also believe that the bishop of Rome is head of holy church. And certainly the apostles of Jesus Christ never constrained any man to believe thus concerning himself. And yet they were certain of their salvation in heaven. How then should any sinful wretch, who knows not whether he shall be damned or saved, constrain men to believe that he is head of holy church? Certainly, in such case, they must sometimes constrain men to believe that a devil of hell is head of holy church, when the bishop of Rome shall be a man damned for his sins.”

In this bold manner did the genius of our Reformer separate between the institutional and the moral, the political and the spiritual, in the religion of Christ, inculcating that no reverence should be evinced towards mere office, if not allied with the spirit proper to it—the irreligious man who assumes a religious office, becoming only so much the more guilty, and the more despicable in so doing. It is not difficult to see that this one principle included the germ of all subsequent revolution in religious usage and opinion. Heavily does the Reformer complain of the arrogance which required that the people should not presume to judge in respect to the life or doctrine of the clergy, while Paul from the third heavens, and Jesus Christ, God and man, challenged such scrutiny from friends and foes. But the intention of this doctrine is said to be, that men “may not reprove such persons for any sin whatsoever which they may do;” and that good men may not presume to preach the Gospel except as bad men shall give them permission, which, according to the right of private judgment, as held in fact, though not in terms, by Wycliffe, was to place the authority of Satan before the authority of Christ.

Nor was it enough that this description of clergymen should claim exemption from all popular censure,—they affected the same independence of the highest authorities, and in respect to civil matters no less than the religious. “Prelates most destroy obedience to the law of God, for they say that they are not to be subject to secular lords, to pay them taxes, or to help the commons; and are not to be amended by their subjects (people) of their open sins, but only by the pope who is their sovereign, and he by no man on earth, because he is the greatest of all.” But the men who avow this doctrine

are reminded that Christ paid tribute to a heathen emperor, and to his religion or church, when it was demanded of him, though “he had no secular lordship, nor plenty of tithes, and much more therefore should these rich priests” be made to comply with such demands.

In the twenty-second chapter the Reformer resumes his strictures on the pretensions of the sovereign pontiff. It is said openly, he observes, “that there is nothing lawful among Christian men without leave of the bishop of Rome, though he be Antichrist, full of simony and heresy. For commonly, of all priests he is the most contrary to Christ, both in life and teaching; and he maintaineth more sin, by privileges, excommunications, and long pleas; and he is most proud against Christ’s meekness, and most covetous of worldly goods and lordships.” He is described as the head and representative of all the corruptions by which the ecclesiastical system was disfigured; and to subject the church to such a sovereignty, it is added, must be assuredly to subject her to the power of Antichrist.

In the two subsequent chapters Wycliffe rebukes those martial prelates whose passions tended to destroy the men, body and soul, whom they should have saved; and renews his lamentations that simony should be allowed so greatly to deprave both priest and people, and to transfer the wealth of the country to the coffers of its enemies. In the twenty-sixth chapter he writes, “Prelates say, that Holy Writ is not sufficient to rule holy church, and that the teachers thereof are not profitable to the people.” But to this, it is replied, that “it is the pride of Lucifer, and even greater pride than his, to say that the teachers of man’s traditions, made of sinful fools, are more profitable and needful to Christian people than the preachers of the Gospel.” If Christ has not made his law complete, it is argued that this must be either because he could not or would not. But to say either of these things, would it not be “to put a foul heresy on Christ?” This nevertheless is done—done “secretly to maintain their own covetousness and pride.” In the two following chapters, it is lamented that notwithstanding the clearness of such arguments, men are found “leaving Holy Writ and reason, for feigned dreams and miracles—and sinful man’s traditions full of error:” while prelates convert secular lords into destroyers of men’s souls, by converting them into the persecutors of men who preach the Gospel.

In the thirtieth chapter Wycliffe remarks, “Worldly prelates say, that since the people should worship Gregory, and Peter and Paul and other true apostles of Christ, and as they themselves come into the place of apostles, then the people should worship them after the same manner. But they take no account how those apostles came to their state by choosing and ordaining of God, and by holy life and true service which they did to Christian people, in true teaching of the holy Gospel, both in word and deed.” Adverting to the reasonable claims of the clergy on their people, the Reformer observes, “It is good that Christian priests should have worldly goods for their necessary livelihood, and clothing, as Paul teacheth, and reason.” But the inordinate wealth of the clergy is said to have filled them with pride, to have rendered them the victims of lust, and to have raised a Bible made up of man’s traditions, into the place of the true Bible.

In the remaining portion of this work, Wycliffe insists that it is just and scriptural thus to rebuke a vicious clergy. “Christ and his apostles reproveth Pharisees, and Herod, and heretics, in their absence and before the people, as the Gospels and Epistles witness, and this was for our example, to be followed with charity and discretion.” Were it not so, a depraved priesthood might be left to “wax rotten in their lusts, rob the people, and destroy Christendom:” and however agreeable such exemption may be to such men, it does not comport with the sense of public duty in some other men that they should be left in the enjoyment of it.

Masses, pardons, and pilgrimages, all are described as “novelties,” the effect of which is, “to make people believe that if a priest say a certain mass for a soul, it shall anon be out of purgatory, though God in his righteousness ordain that soul to abide there forty year or more, and though the priest himself be accursed for simony and pride, for, as they falsely pretend, the mass may not be impaired by the priest’s sin.—Prelates blaspheme against God, the Father of heaven, by taking to themselves the power which belongs only and especially to God—that is, the power of absolving sins, and the full remission of them. For they take on them principally to absolve, and make the people to believe so, when they have only absolved as vicars, or messengers, to witness for the people that God absolveth on contrition, or else neither angel, nor man, nor God himself absolveth—unless the sinner is contrite, that is, fully have sorrow for his sin.”

The treatise concludes thus—“In these three and forty errors and heresies, men may see how evil prelates destroy Christendom—for of them and no other is this speech—and how they are the cause of wars, and of evil life in the people, and of their damnation. God of his might and mercy amend these errors, and others, if it be his will!”

V. The next piece in the collection under review is intitled, *Speculum de Antichristo*. Its title in English is, *How Antichrist and his clerkes feren treue priests from preaching of Christ’s Gospel by four deceits*. It begins with the words, *First they say that preaching of the Gospel maketh dissensions and enmity.*[a](#)

In answer to this first “deceit,” it is said, that “Christ came not to make peace for sinful men, by leaving them to live in their fleshly lusts, and worldly joy, at their liking.” Christ means his people to be in peace only as they are holy.

The second “deceit” is, “that many men will be damned notwithstanding the hearing of the Gospel, and the more damned because they hear God’s word, and do not thereafter.” The reasoning cited on this point is of the true Antinomian complexion, neutralising precept by speculations about necessity. But it is contended that men should continue to pray and preach, even to enemies, assured that as they so do “fewer will be lost, and more will be saved.” Even concerning the reprobate it is observed, that “sometimes they have compunction, and leave their sins for a long while, and that to them is better than all this world. And God giveth to each man free will to choose good or evil, and God is ready to give them grace if they will receive it. And in this life they do many good deeds of kind,[a](#) and because of them they shall have much reward in this world, and at the last a less pain in hell. And it is a great

vengeance from God when he withdraweth preaching from a community, accounting them not worthy to hear his word; and wherever a gathering of people is, there is commonly some good done, and for those who will receive the word principally men preach it." But if none will hear, it is admitted that from such a people, after apostolic example, the preacher should turn away. The reader will not fail to mark the moral discrimination which is blended with this treatment of a subtle theological question. It has been too much the practice of divines to estimate the moral and immoral in the unregenerate by the same rule.

The third "deceit" is, "that good men shall be saved though there be no preaching, for God saith they may not perish; while some wicked men shall never come to bliss for any preaching on earth. Here true men say that as God hath ordained good men to come to bliss, so he hath ordained them to come to bliss by preaching, and by keeping his word. So as they must needs come to bliss, they must needs hear and keep God's commandments, and to this end serveth preaching with them. And some wicked men shall now be convinced by God's grace and hearing of his word; and who knoweth the measure of God's mercy, or to whom the hearing of God's word shall be thus profitable? Each man should hope to come to heaven, and should enforce himself to hear and to fulfil the word of God. For since each man hath a free will, and chooseth good or evil, no man shall be saved except he that readily heareth and steadily keepeth the commandments of God, and no man shall be damned except he that wilfully and endlessly breaketh God's commands." It is very difficult to ascertain the real opinions of the Reformer on topics of this nature as set forth in the Latin of his more scholastic pieces. The preceding observations furnish one of the most explicit expositions of his views that I have met with.

The fourth "deceit" is, when it is said, "that men should cease from preaching, and give themselves to holy prayers and contemplations, because that helpeth Christian men more, and is better." But in answer, "true men say boldly that true preaching is better than prayer by the mouth, or though it should come from the heart and from pure devotion, and that it edifieth more the people. Therefore Christ especially commanded his apostles and disciples to preach the Gospel, and not to shut themselves up in cloisters or churches to pray as some men. Hence Isaiah cried, 'Woe is me that I was still;' and Paul says, 'Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.' Devout prayer in men of good life is good in certain time; but it is against charity for priests to pray evermore, and at no time to preach, since Christ chargeth priests to preach the Gospel, more than to say mass and matins." These enlightened views concerning the paramount importance of preaching, exhibit the mind of Wycliffe as some two centuries in advance of his age; but he cites Gregory and Jerome in support of these opinions, and as censuring customs which deprived society of the benefit of good examples, and led to much sin in the way of omission.

VI. We next come to the treatise intitled, *Of Clerks Possessioners*. Its object is to expose the irreligion which, in the view of the Reformer, had resulted from the inordinate wealth, and the secular jurisdiction of the clergy. It consists of forty chapters.[a](#)

In the commencement, St. Augustine, St. Gregory, and St. Bernard, are introduced as censuring the secular lordship of the clergy, declaring it to be opposed to the design and precepts of the Gospel. Clerks who live “a lustful and worldly life,” are said to declare, that “the life and example of Christ are not a sufficient rule,” and in so doing proclaim them as “strong heretics.” Such men are “traitors to God, to lords and to the common people.” To God they show themselves traitors by deserting his law; to lords by cursing them unless they are prepared to maintain what is called holy church; and to the people by deceiving them, “teaching them openly, that they shall have God’s blessing, and bliss in heaven, if they pay truly their tithes and offerings to them.” These persons are described as preferring “the smiles of sinful man, to the smiles of Christ, God and man;” as coming in “under colour of saints,” and as living a life contrary to that of their professed patrons; and this fact is said to account for the attempts made by pretended devotees to falsify the lives of their founders.

Some men of this class are said to attempt a justification of their assuming a secular lordship by appealing to the example of Christ; “But Christ saith in the Gospel of St. John, that his kingdom is not of this world. And by worldly lordship he had not once where to rest his head. Therefore it is heresy to put this secular lordship on Christ.” Worldly jurisdiction, it is argued, must bring with it worldly and distracting duties, which Christ and his disciples knew not—such as must unfit men “for studying and teaching Holy Writ,” and be unfriendly to “devotion, and prayer, and meditation, and heavenly sweetness.” Such occupations, indeed, cannot fail to ensnare men to “simony, covetousness, gluttony, and idolatry;” disposing persons professing deadness to the world to a life the most worldly; converting men who should be preachers of the Gospel into preachers of fables; and teaching them to fight against the truth, and not for the truth.

It will be seen from these remarks, that under the title of clerks possessioners, Wycliffe included not only the beneficed and higher clergy, but also the opulent religious orders. But while monks and canons profess to take their model from the community of goods in the church at Jerusalem, they are described as destitute of the well-regulated temperance, and the Christian piety, in which that usage originated. Much complaint is made that the private rules of religious sects are made to be of more binding authority than the most manifest precepts of Christ; and that the delinquents who thus place the authority of man before the authority of God, should so commonly betray the nature of the training they receive in their secular offices by becoming persecutors “of good men following the example of Holy Writ, and living poorly and justly, and going about teaching freely God’s law.” Some fraternities among the religious orders are said to possess “many books,” and some copies of Holy Writ, which have come to them by gift or testament; “but they hide them from secular clerks,^a and suffer their noble books to rot in their libraries, and neither will profit themselves by studying in them, nor leave them to other clerks that would; so that seculars and clerks may scarcely have a book of value.”

The men who thus subordinate learning, as well as religion, to their love of pomp and indulgence, are reminded that they cannot fail to know from their own laws, as well as from Holy Scripture, that whatever they possess as more than necessary to decent “livelihood,” is not their own, but “poor men’s goods;” and they are admonished,

accordingly, to cease their visitings of the great, and to become visitors of the poor, the fatherless, and the widow. The claim of the clergy to be exempt from the loss of their goods by any judgment from the civil power, even “though they should be trespassers by long custom,” is treated as arrogant and unjust, otherwise “God’s law is false, which giveth power to kings and secular lords to punish generally, out-taking no man.”

In the remaining chapters of this treatise the Reformer exposes the folly of supposing that the existing race of clergymen would be found equal to the duties of “two lordships,” the secular and the spiritual, while Christ and his apostles were so careful to avoid such a weight and mixture of obligation. He laments, also, the many instances in which the laws of God are “put aback,” and the laws of men advanced to their place; and all this that priests may be sustained in pleading exemption from the authority of the civil power, and from the usual burdens of the state, and persecuting all good men, who, by living a holy life and preaching truly the Gospel, reprove them for their sins. He concludes the piece, as was his custom, by a prayer. “God Almighty, stir up priests, lords, and commons, to know the hypocrisy, and treason, of Antichrist’s worldly clerks, and to know and maintain the rightful ordinance of Christ, and the profit and freedom of the Gospel. Amen.”

VII. The work intituled De XXXIII. Erroribus Curatorum, has for its English title, *How the Office of Curates is ordained of God*; and begins thus—*For the office of curates is ordained of God, and few do it well, and many full evil.*^a In the Cambridge Collection this piece follows that “On Clerks Possessioners.” The term curate in this tract is used to denote the regular parochial clergy. This piece, accordingly, relates to the faults of the inferior clergy, as the three preceding pieces related to the faults of their superiors. As may be expected, the same errors come again under review, and much of the same kind of reasoning is employed to expose and correct them. It will be sufficient, in consequence, to cite a few passages. The following extract includes the whole of the first chapter:—

“For the office of curates is ordained of God, and few do it well, and many full evil. Therefore, tell we some of their defaults, to amend them with God’s help.

“First, they are more busy about worldly goods, than about virtues, and the keeping of men’s souls. For he who can best get the riches of this world together, and hold great household and worldly array, he is holden a worthy man of holy church, though he know not the least point of the Gospel. And such a one is up in full favour of the bishop and of his officers. But the curate who giveth himself to study Holy Writ, and teach his parishioners to save their souls, and who liveth in meekness, penance,^b and busy travail about ghostly things, and seeketh nought of worldly worship and riches, is holden a fool, and a disturber of holy church, and is despised and persecuted of high priests, and prelates, and their officers, and hated of other curates in the country. And this maketh many curates to be negligent in their ghostly cures, and to give themselves to occupation and business about worldly goods. But these negligent curates think full little how dearly Christ bought man’s soul with his precious blood and death, and how hard a reckoning he will make for those souls at doomsday. Certainly, it seemeth that they are out of the faith of Christian men. For they make

themselves not ready to come and answer how they came into their benefices; and how they lived, and taught, and spent poor men's goods. For if they had this faith ready in their mind, they would begin a better life, and continue therein."

The following passage is from the twenty-sixth chapter:—

"They (the worldly clergy) are Antichrists, forbidding Christian men to know their belief, and to speak of Holy Writ. For they say openly that secular men should not intermeddle themselves with the Gospel to read it in the mother tongue, but attend to a holy father's preaching, and do after such in all things. But this is expressly against God's teaching. For God commandeth generally to each layman, that he should have God's commandments before him, and teach them to his children. And the wise man biddeth every Christian man, that all his telling be in the commandments of God, and that he have them evermore in his mind. And St. Peter biddeth us, as Christians, be ready to give a reason for our faith and hope to each man that asketh it. And God commands his priests to preach the Gospel to each man, and the reason is, because all men should know it, and rule their life according to it. Lord! why should worldly priests forbid secular men to speak of the Gospel, and of God's commandments, since God giveth them great wit of kind,^a and great desire to know God, and love him? For the more goodness they shall know of God, the more they shall love him; while worldly priests, from their own ignorance, sloth, idleness, and pride, stop Christian men from knowing God, and shut up from them the gifts which God hath given to them. Since the beginning of the world, none have heard higher craft of Antichrist, whereby to destroy Christian men's belief and charity, than is this blasphemous heresy—that laymen should not intermeddle with the Gospel."^b

The next passage is from the thirtieth chapter:—

"They take not tithes and offerings by form of the Old Testament, parting them in common to all priests and ministers of the church. Nor according to the form of the Gospel, taking a simple livelihood, given of free devotion of the people, without constraining, as Christ and his apostles did. But by the new law of sinful men, one priest challengeth to himself all the tithes of a great country, by a worldly plea, and by new censures; while he neither liveth as a good priest, nor teacheth as a curate, nor giveth the residue to poor men, but wasteth it in pomp, and gluttony, and other sins, and hindereth true priests from doing the office laid on them by God Almighty. Surely it seemeth that these priests are not after God's law, but after some ordinance of sinful men, and would be masters of God, and lords over Christian people, since they never hold the law of God. And as to tithes, them they take by violence, and by strong curses, against men's good will, and make the people out of patience and charity by their pleading, and do not well their ghostly office."^a

VIII. It will be seen from these extracts, that the work on the Office of Curates breathes a spirit of earnest piety, and that it gives prominence to the soundest Protestant principle. The piece which is next in succession, intitled, Of the Order of Priesthood,^b is of the same complexion, touching vigorously on the same evils, and pointing to the same remedy. The matter of this treatise is divided into twenty-nine

sections, or chapters, but, as in the preceding work, with more of the appearance of order than of the reality. It concludes with the following devout appeal:—

“But good priests, who live well, in pureness of thought and speech and deed, and in good example to the people, and who teach God’s law up to their knowledge, and who travail fast night and day to learn it better and teach it openly and constantly, are very prophets of God, and holy angels of God, and spiritual lights of the world, as God saith by his prophets, and Jesus Christ in the Gospel, and saints declare it well by authority and reason. Ye priests, think on this noble and worthy office, and do it readily according to your knowledge and power. Think also, ye lords and mighty men who support priests, how dreadful it is to maintain worldly priests in their lusts, who neither know God, nor will learn, nor live holily in this noble order. For ye may easily amend them, without cost or travail, only telling them that ye will not support them, but as they do their duty, live well, and preach the Gospel. And certainly they would then do so. And think, ye great men, were not this a thousand-fold better than to conquer all the world? Hereby there should be no great cost to you nor travail, but honour to God, and endless good to your ownelves, to priests, and to all Christendom. God, for his endless mercy and charity, bring this holy end! Amen.”

IX. The piece which concludes thus, is followed by a tract intitled, Of Good-Preaching Priests. It begins in the following terms:—*“The first general point of poor priests that preach in England is this—that the law of God be well-known, taught, maintained, magnified. The second is—that great open sin that reigneth in divers states be destroyed, and also the heresy and hypocrisy of Antichrist and his followers. The third is—that true peace and prosperity, and burning charity, be increased in Christendom, and especially in the realm of England, for to bring men readily to the bliss of heaven.”*[a](#)

Then follows a series of articles which expose and reprove existing abuses, and various means are dwelt upon, which, if duly applied, might, with the Divine blessing, go far towards restoring to the Christian religion its primitive simplicity, purity, and devout feeling. Thus it is urged that “the accursed heresy of simony,” so inwrought with all the usages of the clergy, should be destroyed—destroyed alike “in benefices, orders, sacraments, and pardons;” and that “the ravening and extortion of prelates and their officers, which they do under colour of jurisdiction and alms, in the maintaining of sin for an annual rent, and the like, be wisely and truly stopped, and that they be well chastised for thus robbing the king’s liege men.” It is demanded also, “that clerks should be meek and obedient to worldly lords, as Christ and his apostles were, and that they be not nourished in great sin by exemption from the clerks of Antichrist, lest Christian kingdoms be destroyed because of the suffering and maintaining of accursed sin.” The next principle of the needed reformation laid down is—“that Christian men fear more the rightful curse of God, for breaking his commandments, than the wrongful curse of sinful men, who curse men for the true preaching of the Gospel, and the fulfilling of the works of mercy; for God blesseth where they curse.”

It is argued further—“that Christian men of the realm should not be robbed by simony, of the first fruits to go to the bishop of Rome; nor by the bishops at home for the hallowing of churches, altars, and such things; that Christian men should give

more heed to Christ's Gospel and his life, than to any bulls from the sinful bishops of this world, or else they forsake Christ, and take Antichrist and Satan for their chief governor:—that no liege man of the king should be imprisoned for the wrongful cursing of the prelates, while he is ready to justify himself by Holy Writ, and while he does truly his office:—and that whosoever doth most simony, and maintaineth most sin, should be judged, known, and treated, as in the most degree a heretic, as most the adversary of Jesus Christ, and as Antichrist." Wycliffe then adds, "If any man can prove by Holy Writ or reason that these points are false, poor priests will meekly amend them, and heartily pray all good men to help them in the true cause, for the honour of God, the health of their souls, and the salvation of Christian nations."

But the Reformer has not concluded his intended series of innovations,—he moves further, "That the alms of lords, given to prelates and the religious upon certain conditions, namely, to feed certain poor men, and to other hospitalities, and to maintain a certain number of good priests, be wisely amended by the king and the lords, whenever those goods are turned into means of pomp, gluttony, lechery, and maintaining of sin:—That the poor commoners be not charged with taxes, while clerks, and mainly the religious, have a superfluity of gold and silver, and such vessels, and other jewels, since all these goods are poor men's goods, and clerks are not lords of them, but merely procurators to spend them faithfully, according to poor men's need, as God's law and man's law witnesseth:—That the wasted treasure hanging on stocks and stones be wisely spent in defence of the kingdom, and relieving of the poor commons, that the people of our land be not brought to theft nor lechery under the colour of pilgrimage, nor alms be drawn from poor needy men, bought with Christ's precious blood:—That the clergy of our land be restrained from pride, glorious array, and worldly occupation, and especially that our prelates and curates be charged by the king and lords to teach well their subjects by example of good life, and open and true preaching of the Gospel, as busily and readily as they ask their tithes:—That none of the clergy be hindered from keeping truly and freely the Gospel of Christ in good living and true teaching on account of any feigned privilege or tradition, founded by sinful wretches:—That no priest or religious man in our land be imprisoned without open doom, and true cause fully known to our king, or to his true council; else worldly priests and feigned religious may stop true men from preaching of Holy Writ and magnifying of the king's regalia, and may condemn the king's liege men without answer:—That fairs be not allowed on holidays, never on Sundays:—That adultery and open impurity be not suffered in great places in our realm, nor maintained for an annual rent, as that is utterly against God's bidding:—That worldly clerks, and the feigned religious, usurp not the king's regalia, nor steal from him his holy power, granted to him of God, for no cursing or hypocrisy, since they are bound to be true to the king, and to forward his worship and the profit of his land:—and that the king and lords govern themselves in their state as God ordained it, in great wisdom, might of men, and sufficient riches, to aganstand wrong and misdoers, and in their lordships to help poor men, the fatherless and motherless, and widows and aliens, and to honour and reward true men, and clerks living in meekness, willing poverty, and busy spiritual labour for the help of man's soul, as Christ and his apostles did."

X. The next piece, under the title of *The Great Sentence of the Curse Expounded*, is much more extended than the one preceding it, and throughout is in the same degree pregnant with the seeds of reformation. It begins with the words—*First, all heretics againststanding the faith of Holy Writ be cursed solemnly four times in the year, and also maintainers or consenters to heresy or heretics in their errors.* ^a The matter of this treatise is distributed into seventy-nine chapters, and extends to nearly a hundred quarto pages. The reference in the sixteenth chapter to the war then going on in Flanders “for the love of two false priests, who are open Antichrists,” and some other allusions to contemporary events, show that this piece was written by the Reformer not more than two or three years before his death. ^b The points in this treatise, which engage the attention of the writer, are those which came before the people from quarter to quarter as this periodical anathema was pronounced in their hearing.

The Reformer begins by defining heresy, on the authority of Augustine and other clerks, as “error maintained against Holy Writ.” But our worldly prelates, he remarks, maintain error against Holy Writ “in the matter of preaching the Gospel of Christ, and therefore they are themselves cursed heretics. For when Paul asks how men should preach but as they are sent, they understand that of such men only as are sent by the pope, and other worldly prelates.” On this plea, it is observed, they not only silence many good men, causing the servants of God to depend for liberty to preach on approval from the children of the fiend, but even an angel from heaven would not dare deliver the message of the Almighty to save men’s souls, because some worldly priest has presumed to contravene the commandment of God. But whatever may be the doctrine or practice of the rulers of the church in this respect, “sending by those worldly prelates is not enough, without a sending of God, as Paul saith.” Nevertheless, it is so, that “poor priests are slandered as heretics, accursed, and imprisoned, without answer, forasmuch as they stand up for Christ’s life and teaching, and the maintenance of the king’s regalia.”

According to the “Great Sentence,” all persons were accursed, who should “spoil, or take away any right from holy church, or defraud holy church of any endowment.” On this point, it is remarked, that “Christian men, taught in God’s law, call holy church, the congregation of just men, for whom Jesus Christ shed his blood, and they do not so call stones, and timber, and earthly rubbish, which Antichrist’s clerks magnify more than God’s righteousness, and the souls of Christian men. True teaching is most due to holy church, and is most charged of God, and most profitable to Christian souls. Insomuch therefore as God’s word, and the bliss of heaven in the souls of men, are better than earthly goods, insomuch are those worldly priests who withdraw the great debt of holy teaching worse than thieves, and more accursedly sacrilegious than the ordinary thief who breaks into churches and steals thence chalices, and vestments, and never so much gold.” The fault, and the just doom of such men, are illustrated by an allusion to feudal relationships. They hold their office to certain ends, such as Christ and the apostles had set before them; and inasmuch as they not only fail to perform the duties of that office, but prevent others who are able and willing to perform them from so doing, they are pronounced traitors to the said lord, and their place is said to be a forfeiture.

The third chapter commences with the often-repeated complaint, that the clergy should so commonly apply the revenues of the church to the purposes of luxury, and neglect the poor. But the heaviest censure in this connexion is directed against the pontiff. “Certainly some men understand that the cruel manslayer of Rome is not Peter’s successor, but Christ’s enemy, and the emperor’s master, and poison under colour of holiness, and that he maketh most unable curates.” Again—“This evil manslayer, poisoner, and burner of Christ’s servants, is made by evil clerks to be the ground and root of all the misgovernance of the church: and yet they make blind men believe that he is head of holy church, and the most holy father, who may not sin!” Grosstete^a is mentioned as having been of a different judgment concerning the papacy in his day, and as having expressed that judgment to the pontiff himself with an integrity and fearlessness ever to be admired. The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters treat of the simony connected with admission to orders, the obtaining of benefices, and the administration of the sacraments. The ecclesiastical system is said to be so constructed in all respects as to favour the enriching of the priesthood, and the plunder of the people. But while the exercise of every priestly function carried its tax along with it, some of its acts imposed a heavier burden than others. “If men foolishly make a vow to go to Rome, or Jerusalem, or Canterbury, or on any other pilgrimage, that we deem of greater weight than the vow made at our christening to keep God’s commandments, to forsake the fiend and all his works. But though men break the highest commandments of God, the rudest parish priest shall anon absolve him. But of the vows made of our own head, though many times against God’s will, no man shall absolve but some great worldly bishop, or the most worldly priest of Rome—the master of the emperor, the fellow of God, and the deity on earth!”

On the sale of masses Wycliffe writes—“Ah Lord! how much is our king and our realm helped by the masses and the prayers of simonists and heretics, full of pride, and envy, and who so much hate poor priests for teaching Christ’s life and the Gospel.” But the following passage shows that until within a year or two of his death Wycliffe believed in the existence of an intermediate state, and that the devout intercessions of the living might be in some sense beneficial to the dead who had not passed beyond that state. “Saying of mass, with cleanness of holy life, and burning devotion, pleaseth God Almighty, and is profitable to Christian souls in purgatory, and to men living on earth that they may withstand temptations to sins.” The following passage shows also that he still thought highly of the functions of the priest as exercised in consecrating the elements of the eucharist. “Think, therefore, ye pure priests, how much ye are beholden to God who gave you power to sacred^a his own precious body and blood of bread and wine, a power which he never granted to his own mother or to the angels. Therefore with all your desire, and reverence, and devotion, do your office in the sacrament!”

The eighth chapter commences with passages from St. Gregory, St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and others, concerning the duties of the pastoral office. On these passages suitable comment is made; and it is especially remarked, that the men who have filled this office with the greatest success have generally been men on whom it has been forced. It is said that no man should seek it, inasmuch as that would be to forget the admonition of Scripture—“No man taketh this honour upon himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” When bishoprics were poor, and to become a bishop

was to be exposed to martyrdom, it might have been well to aspire to such distinction; but in these later times, when the office is connected with much temptation to indulge in every sort of worldliness, a devout man may with good reason avoid, rather than seek such an elevation.

Such persons are said to calumniate Christ and his disciples, as having failed to present a true pattern of life to their followers, so long as their own life presents an example so widely different from that which has been thus placed before them. "It is a great sin to witness falsely against a poor man; it is a greater sin so to witness against a holy man; but most of all to do so with the name of Christ, the Head of all saints, and the Lord of all lords. Also it is a great sin to lie, and to defraud men of their temporal goods; much more to deprive them of spiritual goods, of virtues, and good life, and most of all to deprive them of faith, and of the mirror of Christ's life, which is the ground of all well-being hereafter."

The following passage expresses Wycliffe's opinion respecting the middle-age usage well known by the name of "the rights of sanctuary," which consisted in extending the privilege of the Hebrew cities of refuge to certain ecclesiastical edifices, and that not merely in respect to manslaying, but to offences of all descriptions. The communities of such places are said to "challenge franchise and privilege, that wicked men, open thieves, and manslaughterers, and those who have borrowed their neighbours' goods, and are in power to pay and make restitution, shall there dwell in sanctuary, and no man impeach them by process of law, nor oath sworn on God's body; and they maintain stiffly that the king must confirm this privilege, and such nests of thieves and robbery in his kingdom!" In rude states of society, some usage of this nature has generally obtained; but in the age of the Reformer, its abuses had become greater than its uses. Wycliffe regarded all such obtrusions of the authority of the priest on the province of the civil magistrate with suspicion, and remarks in this treatise, that a man has better prospect of justice if cited before "the king or the emperor," than if obliged to appear before any tribunal called "court Christian."

Hence few things excited more indignation in the Reformer, than that the clergy, who were generally so much disposed to invade the sphere of the magistrate, should have set up a claim of exemption from his authority even in civil matters.

"Worldly clerks, and feigned religious," he writes, "break and destroy much the king's peace and his kingdom. For the prelates of this world, and priests, more or less, say fast, and write in their law, that the king hath no jurisdiction nor power over their persons, nor over the goods of holy church. And yet Christ and his apostles were most obedient to kings and lords, and taught all men to be subject to them, and to serve them truly and skilfully in bodily works, and to dread them and worship them before all other men. The wise king Solomon put down a high priest who was false to him and his kingdom, and exiled him, and ordained a good priest in his room, as the third book of Kings telleth.

"And Jesus Christ paid tribute to the emperor, and commanded men to pay him tribute. And St. Peter commandeth Christian men to be subject to every creature a of men, whether unto the king as more high than others, or unto dukes as sent of him, to

the vengeance of evil-doers, and the praise of good men. Also St. Paul commandeth, by authority of God, that every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God. Princes be not to the dread of good workers, but of evil. Wilt thou not dread the power—do good and thou shalt have praising of the same. For he is God's minister to thee for good. Surely if thou hast done evil, dread thou, for he beareth not the sword in vain.[b](#)

“Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, suffered meekly a painful death under Pilate, not excusing himself from his jurisdiction by his clergy.[c](#) And St. Paul professed himself ready to suffer death by doom of the emperor's justice, if he were worthy of death, as Deeds of the Apostles showeth. And Paul appealed to the heathen emperor from the priests of the Jews, for to be under his jurisdiction, and to save his life. Lord! who hath made our worldly clergy exempt from the king's jurisdiction and chastening, for since God giveth kings this office over all misdoers, clerks, and particularly high priests, should be most meek and obedient to the lords of this world, as were Christ and his apostles, and should be a mirror before all men, teaching them to give this meekness and obedience to the king and his righteous laws. How strong thieves and traitors are they now to lords and kings, in denying this obedience, and giving an example to all men in the land to become rebels against the king and lords. For in this they teach ignorant men, and the commons of the land, both in words and laws, and open deeds, to be false and rebellious against the king and other lords. And this seemeth well by their new law of decretals,[d](#) where the proud clerks have ordained this—that our clergy shall pay no subsidy nor tax, nor keeping of our king, and our realm, without leave and assent of the worldly priest of Rome. And yet many times this proud worldly priest is an enemy of our land, and secretly maintaineth our enemies in war against us with our own gold. And thus they make an alien priest, and he the proudest of all priests, to be chief lord of the whole of those goods which clerks possess in the realm, and that is the greatest part thereof! Where, then, are there greater heretics to God or holy church, and particularly to their liege lord in this kingdom? To make an alien worldly priest, an enemy to us, the chief lord over the greater part of our country!

“And commonly the new laws which the clergy have made are contrived with much subtlety to bring down the power of lords and kings, and to make themselves lords, and to have all in their power. Certainly it seemeth that these worldly prelates are more bent to destroy the power of kings and lords, which God ordained for the government of his church, than God is to destroy even the power of the fiend:—for God setteth the fiend a term which he shall do, and no more; but he still suffereth his power to last, for the profit of Christian men, and the great punishment of misdoers; but these worldly clerks would never cease, if left alone, until they have fully destroyed kings and lords, with their regalia and power.”[a](#)

The next chapter relates to the excommunication commonly pronounced against all perjured persons: and prelates, and the beneficed clergy generally, are admonished, that to this sentence they are themselves justly exposed, by reason of the many things in their conduct which are contrary to their oaths, taken when entering upon their office. Another point against which this periodical anathema was directed, was the conduct of men who should in any way prevent the due execution of the “will of a dead man.” But our blessed Lord, in his testament, is said to “bequeath to his disciples

and their successors, peace in themselves, and in the world persecution and tribulation for his law. But worldly clerks break shamefully this worthy testament of Jesus Christ, for they seek the peace and prosperity of this world—peace with the fiend, and with their flesh, and will endure no labour for keeping or teaching God’s law, but rather persecute good men who would teach it, and so make war upon Christ and his people, to obtain worldly muck, which Christ forbids to clerks. In the life of Christ, and in his Gospel, which is his testament, and in the life and teaching of his apostles, our clerks will find nothing but poverty, meekness, spiritual labour, and the despisings of worldly men, because reprov’d for their sins, and great reward in heaven for their good life, and true teaching, and cheerful suffering of death.—Therefore Jesus Christ was so poor in this life, that he had no house of his own by worldly title to rest his head in, as he himself saith in the Gospel. And St. Peter was so poor, that he had neither silver nor gold to give to a poor crooked man, as he witnesseth in the book of the Apostles’ Deeds. St. Paul was so poor in worldly goods, that he laboured with his hands for his livelihood, and suffered much persecution and watchfulness, and great thought for all churches in Christendom, as he himself saith, and as is said in many places of Holy Writ. And St. Bernard writeth to the pope, that in this worldly array, and plenty of gold, and silver, and lands, he is successor of Constantine the emperor, and not of Jesus Christ and his disciples. And Jesus said, on confirming this testament after rising from the dead—As my Father sent me, so I send you, that is, to labour, and persecution, and poverty, and hunger, and martyrdom!”[u](#)

Thus, in the judgment of Wycliffe, the church, and especially the clergy, should be regarded as in the place of executors to the will of Christ, that will being strictly confined to the setting forth of it in Holy Scripture; and the ecclesiastical persons of the age are charged with grossly violating their obligations in respect to that testament, both by their teaching and example. The next anathema was that pronounced on all persons who should “falsify the king’s charter, or assist thereto.” But it is alleged that the lands of the clergy were granted by the king for certain specified purposes, and that clergymen commonly apply the produce of such lands to purposes the opposite of those specified, and that in so doing they sin against the charter both of their earthly and their heavenly sovereign.

“Also they falsify the king’s charter by great treason, when they make the proud bishop of Rome, who is the chief manqueller on earth, and the chief maintainer thereof, the chief worldly lord of all the goods which clerks possess in our realm, and that is almost all the realm, of the more part thereof. For he should be the meekest and the poorest of priests, and the most busy in God’s service to save men’s souls, as were Christ and his apostles, since he calleth himself the chief vicar of Christ. Hereby these worldly clerks show themselves traitors to God, and to their liege lord the king, whose law and regalia they destroy by their treason in favour of the pope, whom they nourish in the works of Antichrist, that they may have their worldly state, and opulence, and lusts maintained by him.”

The sixteenth chapter commences with these words: “All those who falsify the pope’s bulls or a bishop’s letter, are cursed grievously in all churches four times in the year.” Here Wycliffe proceeds to ask:—

“Lord, why was not Christ’s Gospel put in this sentence by our worldly clerks? Here it seems they magnify the pope’s bull more than the Gospel; and in token of this they punish more the men who trespass against the pope’s bulls than those who trespass against Christ’s Gospel. And hereby men of this world dread more the pope’s lead,^a and his commandment, than the Gospel of Christ and God’s commands; and thus wretched men in this world are brought out of belief, and hope, and charity, and become rotten in heresy and blasphemy, even worse than heathen hounds. Also a penny clerk, who can neither read nor understand a verse of his psalter, nor repeat God’s commandments, bringeth forth a bull of lead, witnessing that he is able to govern many souls, against God’s doom, and open experience of truth. And to procure this false bull they incur costs, and labour, and oftentimes fight, and give much gold out of our land to aliens and enemies, and many thereby are dead by the hand of our enemies, to their comfort, and our confusion. Also the proud priest of Rome getteth images of Peter and Paul, and maketh Christian men believe that all which his bulls speak of is done by authority of Christ; and thus, as far as he may, he maketh this bull, which is false, to be Peter’s, and Paul’s, and Christ’s, and in that maketh them false. And by this blasphemy he robbeth Christendom of faith, and good life, and worldly goods.

“And if any poor man tell the truth of Holy Writ against the hypocrisy of Antichrist and his officers, nought else follows but to curse him, to imprison, burn, and slay him, without answer. It now seemeth that John’s prophecy in the Apocalypse is fulfilled, that no man shall be hardy enough to buy or sell without the token of the cursed beast;^b for now, no man shall do aught in the street without these false bulls of Antichrist; not taking reward^c to the worship of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Ghost in men’s souls, but all to these dead bulls, bought and sold for money, as men buy or sell an ox or beast!”

In the seventeenth chapter the Reformer says:—

“The Gospel telleth that at doomsday Jesus Christ shall reckon generally with men for works of mercy, and if they have not done them, then, as Christ biddeth, they shall be damned without end. But Christ shall not then speak a word of tithes. If indeed men grant that tithes are works of mercy and alms, as feeding and clothing poor men, certainly it seemeth that all this cursing is for their own covetousness, not for the sins of the people, or any trespass against God. For then their curse should be most where there is most sin, and despite against God. But this is not done, as all knowing men see manifestly.” The law, it is alleged, teaches—that no man who is himself “rightfully cursed” may lawfully curse another; but the clergy who fail to discharge the duties of their solemn office are under the curse of the Head of the church, and are sinners “a thousandfold more” than are their people when their great fault is, that “they pay not their tithes.”

The Reformer expands this grave accusation in the following terms:—

“Christ said that the Son of man came not to lose men’s lives and souls, but to save them, as the Gospel of Luke witnesseth. Why then dare these wayward curates to curse so many men’s souls to hell, and bodies to prison, and to the loss of chattels,

and sometimes to death, for a little muck, while they are themselves cursed of God for simony done at their entrance into office, and for failure in preaching, and in example of holy life, tithes being not therefore due to them, but only pain in hell? Oftentimes they are evil tormentors, and slay the soul bought with Christ's precious blood, which is better than all the riches of this world. They are not spiritual fathers to Christian souls who would damn them to hell by their cursing for the sake of a little perishing clay. Even pagan persecutors were content to torment the body, and not the soul for evermore; but these children of Satan cast about by all means in their power to slay the soul in everlasting pain! Certainly these wayward curates of Satan seem in this thing worse than the fiends of hell; for in hell they torment no soul except for everlasting sin, while these clerks of Satan curse souls to hell for a little temporal debt, which they will pay as soon as they are able, and oftentimes when it is no debt, except by long error, and theft, and custom, brought in against God's commandments!"

In the next chapter, the Reformer insists, that the clergy, in place of demanding tithes from the more needy of their flock, should employ their influence with the rich to procure relief for the necessities of the poor.

"Men wonder highly," he observes, "why curates are so charrouse to the people in taking tithes, since Christ and his apostles took no tithes as men do now; and neither paid them, or even spoke of them, either in the Gospel, or the Epistles, which are the perfect law of freedom and grace. But Christ lived on the alms of Mary Magdalene, and of other holy women, as the Gospel telleth, and apostles lived, sometimes by the labour of their hands, and sometimes took a poor livelihood and clothing, given of free-will and devotion by the people, without asking or constraining. And to this end Christ said to his disciples that they should eat and drink such things as were set before them, and take neither gold nor silver for their preaching, or giving of sacraments. And Paul giving a general rule for priests, saith thus, 'We having food and clothing to hile a us, with these things be we assayed, b as Jesus Christ.' And Paul proved that priests preaching truly the Gospel should live by the Gospel, and said no more of tithes. Certes, c as tithes was due to priests and deacons in the old law, so bodily circumcision was then needful to all men, but it is not so now, in the law of grace; and yet Christ was circumcised. But we read not where he took tithes as we do, and we read not in all the Gospel where he paid tithes to the high-priest, or bid any other man do so. Lord, why should our worldly priests charge Christian people with tithes, offerings, and customs, more than did Christ and his apostles, and more than men were charged in the old law? For then all priests, and deacons, and officers of the temple were maintained by tithes and offerings, and had no other lordship. But now, a worldly priest, who is more unable than others, by means of a bull of Antichrist, hath all the tithes and offerings to himself! If tithes were due by God's commandment, then everywhere in Christendom would be one mode of tithing. But it is not so.—Would God that all wise and true men would inquire whether it were not better for to find a good priests by free alms of the people, and in a reasonable and poor livelihood, to teach the Gospel in word and deed, as did Christ and his apostles, than thus to pay tithes to a worldly priest, ignorant, and negligent, as men are now constrained to do by bulls and new ordinances of priests." b

Wycliffe then demands to know who has given this coercive power to churchmen, seeing that Christ and his disciples had it not, and adds—“If the first ordinance of Christ and his apostles come again to Christendom, then shall Christian people be free to take their tithes and offerings from wayward priests, and not maintain them in sin.” But it is at the same time said, that they must contribute “reasonable livelihood to good priests, and this were much better and easier, both for priests and commons, for this world and the other.”

In the beginning of the next chapter, there is mention of the council in London, at time of the “earth-shaking,” an allusion which farther shows that this treatise was written not more than two years at the most before the decease of the Reformer. The clergy present on that occasion are said to have introduced a “new dispensation,” declaring it to be error to say, “that secular lords may at their doom (in the exercise of their own opinion or authority) take temporal goods from the church which trespasseth by long custom.” To which it is replied, “If this be error, as they say falsely, then the king, and secular lords, may take no farthing nor farthing’s worth from a worldly clerk, though he should owe him, or his liege men, never so much, and may well pay it, but will not.” It is insisted, that on this principle, were the college of cardinals to become an organised banditti, the authority of the king should not be exercised to curb their marauding. Should such men send money out of the land to never so great an extent, the monarch must not suppose that it pertains to him to prevent such impoverishment of the realm; and were a body of monks, friars, or clerks, to conspire the poisoning of the king, the queen, and all the lords of the realm, “yet the king, with all the lords, may not punish such offenders with the loss of one farthing’s worth of their goods!” The same exemption, it is argued, might be pleaded were these persons to defile the bed of the sovereign, to devise the death of the king and queen, to attempt the extinction of all the gentle blood of the land, and to combine to make one of themselves “king of all the world.” Let it be presumed that the sovereign may not touch the property of such persons, and it must be concluded that he may not touch their persons, seeing that their persons are held to be the most sacred, and thus to concede this clerical pretension would be at once to sheathe the sword of the magistrate, and to give a license to all wickedness. But such men should know, it is observed, that holy church consists not of the clergy, “but of all men and women who shall be saved;” and that to take away the goods which worldly churchmen misapply, and to give them to men who will apply them to their scriptural uses, must be to do the good deeds proper to the vicar of God, and no king need fear the censures of the clergy in so doing.

In several of the remaining chapters, mention is made of the right of sanctuary claimed by “Westminster, Beverley, and other places;” and the abuses which had grown up in connexion with them are forcibly exposed. It is remarked that the cities of refuge, to which these places professed to be conformed, afforded shelter to the manslayer only, and to such an one when he had slain a man unawares, while these Christian sanctuaries became a hiding-place to wilful and known offenders, and to such as might make reparation for their crimes.

But it was not enough thus to prevent the course of civil justice—the magistrate was often censured because he could not be made to do unjustly. “Then these worldly

clerks curse the king, and his justices, and officers, because they maintain the Gospel, and true preachers thereof, and will not punish them according to the wrongful commandment of Antichrist and his clerks. But where are fouler heretics than these worldly clerks, thus cursing true men, and stirring the king and his liege men to persecute Jesus Christ in his members, and to exile the Gospel out of our land?" In many instances, however, the attempt to make such use of the civil sword was successful, and kings and lords were constrained to "torment the body of a just man, over whom Satan has no power, as though he were a strong thief, casting him into a deep prison, to make other men afraid to stand on God's part against their heresy."

Some observations on legal studies occur in this part of the treatise. The civil law is said to be studied unduly, and as "our people are bound by the king's statutes," these are accounted as more worthy of being studied and taught by the clergy. The emperor's law, it is said, should be studied, and its authority admitted, only in so far as "it is inclosed in God's commandments;" and it is demanded of those who profess to study the civil law, "for the reason they find in it," whether the volume placed in their hands by the Author of reason, is not likely better to repay their labour in that respect? The pope, says Wycliffe, has forbidden the study of civil law, and for once, he adds, "the pope's intent is good;" but he observes further, that the canon law is more hostile to the religion of the Bible than the code of Justinian. The whole of the twenty-fourth chapter relates to this subject.

In the next chapter is the following striking observation on one of the most disgraceful usages in the history of religious intolerance. "All those who commune with accursed men, are cursed by our prelates, particularly if they do it knowingly. But by this sentence it would seem that God himself is accursed, since no accursed man may be in this life unless God shall knowingly commune with him, and give him breath and sustenance, whether he be wrongfully cursed or rightfully: and if he be ready to give such a man grace and forgiveness of his sins, if he ask it worthily, and even before he ask it, this sentence seems too large, since our God may not be accursed." In this manner did the Reformer deal with a practice in which men have been taught to assign religious reasons for doing violence to all the deeper instincts of our moral nature. It is one of the strong forms in which we read the demoralising tendency of religious bigotry. The treatise concludes with the following earnest utterances:—

"Men wonder much why prelates and curates curse so fast, since St. Paul and St. Peter have commanded men to bless, and not to have a will to curse. And Jesus Christ blessed his enemies, and heartily prayed for them even while they nailed him to the cross. Still more men wonder why they curse so fast in their own cause, and for their own gain, and not for injury done to Christ and his majesty, since men should be patient in their own wrongs, as Christ and his disciples were, and not suffer a word to be done against God's honour and majesty, as by false and vain swearing, ribaldry, lechery, and other filth. But most of all men wonder why worldly clerks curse so fast for breaking of their own statutes, privileges, and wayward customs, more than for the open breaking of God's commandments, since no man is cursed of God but for so doing, whatever worldly wretches may blabber; and no man is blessed of God, and shall come to heaven, but he who keepeth God's commandments: and particularly in the hour of death, let a man have never so many thousand bulls of indulgence, or

pardon, and letters of fraternity, and thousands of masses from priests, and monks, and friars, and it shall be vain. Let prelates and curates therefore leave these particulars in their censuring, for many of them are as false as Satan, and let them teach God's commandments, and God's curse, and the pains of hell, as inflicted on men if they amend not in this life, and what bliss men shall have for keeping of them, as they thereby teach truly Christ's Gospel, in word, and in example of holy life, and the mercy of God in the highness of his blessing, and so help all to that end, in right belief, and hope toward God, and full charity toward God and man! God grant us this end. Amen!"

XI. The treatise which concludes with this passage is much longer than most of Wycliffe's English pieces. The next in order, *De Stipendiis Ministrorum*, with the English title, *How men should find Priests*, is restricted to one full quarto page. It begins, *Think ye wisely, ye men that find priests, that ye do this alms for God's love, and help of your souls, and help of Christian men, and not for pride of the world, to have them occupied in worldly office and vanity.* [a](#) It exhorts the laity to support worthy priests, and such only; admonishing them, that if they furnish the means of subsistence to men of an opposite character, they will be found partakers in all the sin, mischief, and punishment attendant on the course of such unfaithful stewards. Men should be urged to the study of the Bible, and the aim of the clergy should be the scriptural edification of the people, not allowing them to suppose that religion can consist in being pleased with church singing, or in being attentive to mere ceremonies.

XII. The tract, *De Precationibus Sacris*, bears the English title, *How prayer of good men helpeth much, and prayer of sinful men displeaseth God, and harmeth themselves and other men.* It commences with these words, *Our Lord Jesus Christ teacheth us to pray evermore for all needful things both to body and soul.* [b](#)

It is taught in this tract, that the most effectual prayer is a holy life. To be holy without ceasing is to pray without ceasing. It was in this manner that the Reformer endeavoured to beat down the popular confidence in the efficacy of prayer proceeding, as it too commonly did, from the lips of an unworthy priesthood. Prayer with a view to our own well-being, and intercessory prayer, are of inestimable value; but everything depends on the faith and piety of the heart from which it proceeds. Hence James speaks of the fervent effectual prayer of the righteous man as availing much. The prayers of truly devout ministers in behalf of their people, giving them victory over their enemies, was betokened in the lifting up of the hands of Moses that Israel might prevail against Amalek. The lengthened life of Hezekiah; the going back of the shadow on the dial of Ahaz; the standing still of the sun in the time of Joshua; all are adverted to as showing the efficacy of prayer when proceeding from a believing and devout mind. Christians are reminded also, of the promise of Christ to be wherever two or three shall meet in his name; and of his assurance that if we being evil know how to give good gifts unto our children, much more our Father in heaven gives his Holy Spirit to them that ask it.

This description of the kind of prayer which is profitable, is followed by a description of the prayer which displeases God, and which brings with it harm rather than profit. Passages of Scripture are cited, in which the Almighty declares that he will receive no

sacrifice at the hand of the wicked; that the solemn feasts of such men are hateful to him; that the worshipper regarding iniquity in his heart cannot be accepted; that not every one saying to Christ, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of God; and that even the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. With these passages from Scripture, others are introduced from the writings of devout men in the history of the church. St. Augustine, St. Gregory, and St. Chrysostom, are cited as teaching that the odour and efficacy of prayer come from a holy life.

The plea that praying priests, if not heard on their own account, are still heard on account of the merits of holy church, is treated as a fraud devised by Satan since his loosening. By this means the arch-enemy aims to deceive the people, and would perpetuate the corrupt character of the priesthood, by perpetuating the practice of paying for masses. This is the great point to which the argument of the piece turns—the folly of reliance on mere priestly services, where the priest is not a devout man; and the folly of relying on the prayer of a priest more than on the prayer of any other man, supposing both to be in the same degree men of piety.

Reference is made to a canon in which the pope requires that clergy and laity should separate themselves from any priest refusing to put away his concubine, or his wedded woman; and Wycliffe argues with great freedom, that if that circumstance be a just ground of separation from a priest, the guilt of such a man is not greater than the guilt of the simonist, the envious, the covetous, and the utterly worldly, and that separation in the latter case, must, in consequence, be as justifiable as in the former.

This piece extends to nine quarto pages.

XIII. The work intituled, *De Episcoporum Erroribus*, begins with the words, *There are eight things by which simple Christian men be deceived.*[a](#)

The eight points on which much delusion is said to prevail among the people are enumerated, and these points are—holy church—law—religion—obedience—cursing—the goods and rights of holy church—commandment and counsel—deadly sin and venial.

Thus, in the first place, “when men speak of holy church, they understand anon prelates and priests, monks, and canons, and friars; and all men who have crowns,[b](#) though they live never so cursedly against God’s law. And they call not seculars men of holy church, though they live never so truly after God’s law, and in perfect charity. Nevertheless, all who shall be saved in bliss of heaven are members of holy church, and no more.” But in consequence of the false manner of speaking prevalent on this subject, simple men are taught to account many as great men of holy church, who are in fact “enemies thereof, and of the synagogue of Satan.”

In respect to “law,” the complaint is, that by that term men understand human statutes and regulations, forgetting the primary application of the term to those injunctions which man has received from his Maker. God is the great lawgiver, and it is to his enactments that all others should be subordinate.

The same error happens in respect to “religion.” By that term men do not understand the system of truth and piety set forth in Holy Scripture, but “a religion made of sinful man.” Tradition has come into the place of Scripture. The authority of man has been placed before the authority of God. The teacher who may not err, has been superseded by teachers beset with every kind of infirmity. By religion, accordingly, men do not now understand what Christ and his apostles taught, but what worldly priests and prelates have substituted in the stead of such teaching. “Also when men speak against prelates and religious, alleging Christ’s poverty and meekness, and other virtues, they say that such teachings of Christ are his *counsels*, and not his commandments, and therefore, that the bishop of Rome—who is most contrary to Christ’s teaching and life—may dispense with them.” In this manner the authority of Scripture was displaced by the authority of Romanism, and religion underwent a corresponding change. It is observed further, that “when men speak against sin, anon they say, though this be sin it is venial, and not deadly; and venial sins are washed away with a pater noster, with holy water, with pardons, with a bishop’s blessing, and in many other light ways, as men pretend. But true men say that in this life, without a special revelation, men know not what sin is venial, and what is deadly, and that these terms, venial and deadly, are inventions of new men,^a without authority of Holy Writ.”

It is repeated afterwards, that pardons, holy water, and similar observances, have been devised to sustain “the state, pride, and covetousness” of the clergy, and to “blind the people.” Every man, says Wycliffe, “should have great and lasting sorrow for his sin, and a mind intent on Christ’s righteousness and wisdom, and on Christ’s passion, death, and mercy to forgive sin on true repentance; and let each man put his full trust in God’s mercy, and in his own good life, and not in false pardons, nor in vanities, which men invent to avail after men’s death for love of money, for such things avail not any man, but destroy those who trust in them.” The fruit awaiting the good man hereafter, will be found to be exclusively the fruit of his own character, and of the Saviour’s passion.

XIV. In this series is a tract under the title, A Short Rule of Life, for each man in general, and for priests, and lords, and labourers in special, how each shall be saved in his degree. This tract commences with directions concerning the best method of cultivating a meditative and religious spirit; and these directions are followed by counsels of a moral and religious nature, addressed to the priest, the lord,^b and the labourer. The tract is interesting as exhibiting the manner in which the Reformer was accustomed to employ the sanctions of religion as means of strengthening the bonds of civil society. It may be taken as a specimen of the manner in which Wycliffe had learned to address the lessons of morality and religion to the highest and the lowest, and shows the devotional temper in which such service was performed.^c His instruction to the humblest class is in the following terms:—

“If thou be a labourer, live in meekness, and truly and willingly do thy labour, that if thy lord or thy master be a heathen man, he, by thy willing and true service, may not have to grudge against thee, nor slander thy God, nor Christendom (Christianity), but rather be constrained to come to Christendom. And serve not to a Christian lord with grudging, and serve him not only in his presence, but truly and willingly in his absence. Not only for worldly dread or worldly reward, but for the fear of God, and

conscience, and a reward in heaven. For that God who putteth thee in each service, knoweth what state is best for thee, and will reward thee more than all other lords may, if thou doest this truly and willingly for his ordinance. And beware, in all things, of grudging against God and his visitations, in great labour, and long and great sickness, and other troubles. And beware of wrath, of cursing, and of speaking in passion against man or beast; and ever keep patience, and meekness, and charity, both to God and man.

“Thus each man in the three estates ought to live, to save himself, and to help other men: and thus should good life, rest, peace, and love, be among Christian men, and they be saved, and heathen men soon converted, and God magnified greatly in all nations and religions that now despise him and his law, for the false living of wicked Christian men.”

The preacher whose counsels were of this description, was not the man to become the agent of insurrection, after the fashion of John Ball and Wat Tyler, as some of his ingenuous opponents have insinuated. His doctrines as a Reformer, were all meant to give stability to every just form of authority, and especially to the authority of the magistrate. But it is hardly surprising, if amidst the boldest attacks upon the false, the true, with which the false is commonly blended, should sometimes seem to be in danger.

XV. Three Things destroy the World. This is the title of a tract consisting of five pages.^a The three things complained of prove to be three classes of persons—false confessors, false merchants, and false men of law. The confessors intended, are principally the mendicants; the lawyers are the men engaged in chapters and consistory courts; and the merchants are those who fall under the temptations common to men intent on buying and selling to get gain. The false confessor destroys the world by using his spiritual office as a means of worldly gain, seeking to enrich himself rather than to reform such as confess to him. Concerning the second class of offenders, it is said that “jurors, for a dinner or a noble, will forswear themselves, and that so commonly, that though a man possess never so open right to a lordship, yet for a little money, against man’s law, and against God’s law, many will knowingly swear that it is not his. But among lawyers of the consistory, in their chapters, is more sin and hypocrisy to show, for they have men in their courts only to push them more aback, though their right be never so plain.”

XVI. But if the business of the world has its temptations, so has the condition of the men who endeavour to separate themselves from it after the most rigid fashion. In the piece, *Impedimenta Evangelizantium*, with the English title, *Of Feigned Contemplative Life*,^a the Reformer shows that asceticism was hardly more to his taste than worldliness. His complaint is, that when a man insists on the paramount importance of preaching the Gospel, “the fiend blindeth hypocrites to excuse him, by teaching a feigned contemplative life, and to say, that since that is the best, and they may not do both together, they are needed for the charity of God, to leave the preaching of the Gospel, and to live in contemplation.” But this reasoning is denounced as hypocrisy, and as manifestly contrary, both to the example and the

teaching of Christ and his apostles. Every true priest is as a prophet from the Lord, and bound, as St. Gregory has taught, to show to the people their sins.

“In this manner shall each priest be an angel of God, as Holy Writ saith. Also Christ, and John the Baptist, left the desert, and preached the Gospel to their death: and this, therefore, was most charitable, or else they were out of charity, or feigned a charity that might not be in them, and that may not be, since the one was God, and since no man after Christ has been holier than the Baptist, and he sinned nought by this preaching. Also the holy prophet Jeremiah, hallowed in his mother’s womb, might not be excused from preaching by his contemplation, but was charged of God to preach the sins of the people, and to suffer hard pain for doing so; and so was it with all the prophets of God. Ah! Lord, since Christ, and John, and all the prophets of God, were needed by charity to come out of the desert to preach to the people, and to leave their solitary prayers, how dare these feigned hypocrites say that it is better to be still, and pray over their own feigned ordinance, than to preach Christ’s Gospel? Lord! what cursed spirit of leasing stirreth priests to close themselves within stone walls for all their life, since Christ commandeth to all his apostles and priests to go into all the world, and to preach the Gospel. Certainly they are open fools, and do plainly against Christ’s Gospel; and if they maintain this error, they are accursed of God, and are perilous hypocrites and heretics also. And since men are holden heretics that do against the pope’s law,—and the best part of the pope’s law saith that every man coming to priesthood taketh the office of a beadle or crier, to go before doomsday, to cry to the people their sin, and the vengeance of God,—why are not those priests heretics who leave to preach Christ’s Gospel, and compel other true men to leave preaching of the Gospel, since this law is St. Gregory’s law, grounded openly in God’s law, and in reason and charity, and other laws of the people are contrary to Holy Writ, and reason, and charity, to maintain the pride and covetousness of Antichrist’s worldly clerks?”

The great argument in favour of a contemplative life is said to be, that it was the choice of Mary, as distinguished from her sister Martha, and that it was praised by Christ as “the better part.” Wycliffe replies that this example might serve if priests were women; and in the absence of that consideration it might have some weight, if the Saviour had not made his doctrine on this point much more clear in other scriptures. But granting the justice of the inference deduced from this passage, the Reformer maintains, that the substance of the argument thus assumed is, “that Christ chose the worse life for this world, and has obliged all his priests to leave the better, and to choose the worse.” In this manner, it is remarked, “do these feigned hypocrites put error on Jesus Christ.”

In answer to the argument urged in favour of the contemplative life from the scriptural injunctions to ceaseless prayer, the Reformer observes—“that Christ and Paul meant by prayer holy life, and not the mere babbling of the lips, which no man may do without ceasing;” and since a disobedient life renders a man incapable of praying acceptably, “those priests who preach not the Gospel, as Christ hath bidden, are not able to pray to God for mercy, but deceive both themselves and the people, and despise God, and stir him to wrath and vengeance.”

The mischiefs which are not done by the delusion which teaches men to deem a contemplative life preferable to an active life, are said to be in great part accomplished by the superstitious place assigned to church psalmody. Chanting, and singing, according to the “Ordinal of Salisbury,” and other books of that nature, are described as tending to call the attention of men away from the study of the law of God; and by kindling the passions unduly, as disposing many toward the indulgence of their vices, rather than toward the devout exercise of religion. “In all the law of grace,” it is remarked, “God chargeth no such song, but devotion in the heart, and true teaching, and holy speaking in tongue and good works.” He further observes, that this practice, like other novelties which have arisen from the folly and pride of man, came in by degrees, and men are admonished that whether it be by means of “song, or mass, or matins to our lady,” that their attention to the words of God is prevented, it will behove them “to remember the sharp words of St. Augustine, who saith,—As often as the song liketh me more than doth the sentence that is sung, so often I confess that I sin grievously.”

On the argument in favour of such practices as derived from the example of the Romish church, the Reformer observes, that such examples are binding on us, only as Christ and his apostles have given them a renewed obligation. The moral belonging to the previous dispensation remains, but the ceremonial has passed away; and with regard to the fact that the angels in heaven are described as singing, it is deemed enough to reply that they have “no conflict” to sustain, and that it is not their lot to dwell in “a valley of weeping.” So much were men pleased with this part of the established worship, that in some places they were known to pay “many marks and pounds a year to proud priests and loose fellows,” who were engaged in conducting it. “But where,” it is demanded, “is more deceit than to suppose that they honour God most by such things, when there are forty or fifty in a choir, three or four proud vicious fellows shall so play the most devout service, that no man shall hear the sentence, and all others shall be dumb, and look on as fools, while strumpets and thieves praise Sir Jack or Hobb, and William the proud clerk, saying, How small they play their notes, and that they serve well God and holy church, while they despise God to his face, and hinder other Christian men of their devotion.”

Men who do not conform to services of this nature, are said to be punished more than men who fail in obedience to the commands of God. But the Reformer asks with indignation—“Was not the priest’s office ordained of God, before ‘Salisbury Use’ was made of proud and lecherous and drunken priests?” The Jews, it is remarked, were not nearly so much burdened with ceremonies as the Christian worshipers of these later ages, “though the old law must needs cease, to make room for the freedom of the Gospel.” His advice, accordingly, is, that men should “study the ordinance of God, and live in Christian freedom, without heeding those novelties of sinful men, which only hinder priests from their better occupation.” At the same time, they were not to abuse this liberty, but to discard vain ceremonies, only that they might give themselves with more devotion to the duties of their Christian calling. “Ah! Lord,” he exclaims, “if all the study and labour that men have now about ‘Salisbury Use,’ with a multitude of new and costly books, were turned into the making of Bibles, and in studying and teaching of them, how much should God’s law be furthered, and known, and kept, where now it is hindered, unstudied, and unread! Lord! how shall rich men

be excused who spend so much in great chapels, and in costly books of man's ordinance, for fame and nobility in the world, and will never spend so much about the books of God's law, or to aid men to study them, and teach them, though this were without comparison better on all sides."

He concludes with stating, that men who know the liberty of the Gospel, still join in the established formularies, lest they should offend "sick consciences:" devoting, however, all the time that may be prudently withdrawn from such services, to the discharge of more enlightened and more Christian duties. In so doing, they do not take council of the ruling clergy, who, for the most part, are so much given to worldly business, as to resemble "bailiffs rather than bishops."

XVII. In the Cambridge Collection the piece On a Feigned Contemplative Life, is followed by two papers, consisting of comments on the *Lord's Prayer*, and on the *Ave Maria*. The comments on the Lord's Prayer extend to three pages, those on the Ave Maria to four: and they consist, for the most part, of complaint in respect to the want of sympathy on the part of the clergy with the temporal and spiritual necessities of their people.

XVIII. Then follows a paper, with a heading prefixed by a later hand, in the following terms:—How Religious Men should keep certain Articles. It begins—*Christian men pray meekly and devoutly to Almighty God, that he grant the grace, for his endless mercy to our religious, both possessioners and mendicants, &c.*^a This piece fills six pages in the quarto volume, and presents, in the shape of forty-four articles, a kind of summary of the doctrine of Wycliffe in relation to faith, polity, worship, and religion generally.

XIX. The paper next in this collection is intitled, *De Dominis et Servis*; or, in English—*Of Servants and Lords, how each should keep his degree*. It begins—*Servants should truly and gladly serve to their lords or masters, and not be false, nor idle, nor grudging.*^b This piece extends to something more than five-and-twenty pages, and contains many valuable illustrative passages.

The Reformer having inculcated the lessons of obedience in the language of Peter and Paul, proceeds to say—"But here the fiend moveth some men to say, that Christian men should not be servants or vassals to heathen lords, since they are false to God, and less worthy than Christian men. Neither to Christian lords, for they are brethren in kind, and Jesus Christ bought Christian men on the cross, and made them free." But against this "heresy" Paul and Peter are again cited, and their words are expounded in a manner, which, if open to the charge of fault at all, is faulty on the side of teaching an undue submission to the will of the powerful. "Yet some men," he observes, "who are out of charity slander poor priests with this error, that servants and tenants may lawfully withhold rents and service from their lords, when their lords are openly wicked in their living. And they invent and utter this falsehood against poor priests, to make lords to hate them, and not to maintain the truth of God's law, which they teach openly for the honour of God, and the profit of the realm, and the establishing of the king's power, and the destroying of sin."

The following passage explains the origin of this “slander.” “This is a feigned saying of Antichrist’s clerks—that if subjects may lawfully withdraw tithes and offerings from curates, who openly live in lechery, or in other great sins, and do not their office, then servants and tenants may lawfully withdraw their service and rents from their lords, who live openly a cursed life.” The reply to this imputation is, that the withholding of the means of support from professed ministers of religion in the supposed case, is a course of duty prescribed alike by Holy Scripture and by human reason; while in the case of the magistrate, “Men are charged of God by Peter and Paul to be thus subject to wicked lords, and Christ and his apostles accordingly paid tribute to the heathen emperor; while we read not that he, or any apostle, paid tithes to the wicked high-priests, after the time that he began to preach.—By the Gospel, and Christ’s life, and that of the apostles, priests have no such power to constrain men to pay them tithes,” as the magistrate has to compel men to be obedient, “especially while they fulfil not the duties of their spiritual office, but harm men by false teaching and by evil example. Even though they did well their office, and men would not pay tithes, they should not curse men, but suffer meekly, as did Jesus Christ.”

But if the people owe obedience to lords, lords owe justice, protection, and kind offices to those below them: “See we now how lords should live in their state. First, they should know God’s law, and study it, and maintain it, and despise wrong doing, and maintain poor men in their right, to live in rest, and peace, and charity, and suffer not men, under colour of their authority, to do extortions, to do violence to men, or to hold poor men out of their right by strength of lordship.” Kings and great lords should not give themselves to keeping many wives, but remember the evils which have come in the train of such indulgences. They should seek wisdom from on high. They should be a terror to the wrong doer. They should be as eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; as “fathers to the poor, and the cause which they know not, that should they search out. They should break the jaws of the wicked, and pluck the spoil out of his teeth.”^a Magistracy, it is insisted, was instituted to these ends, and men who fill such offices without attending to the proper duties of them, should lay their account with meeting the displeasure of the Almighty, and with seeing their authority pass ere long to more worthy hands.

In conclusion, the clergy who slander poor priests in the manner stated, are censured on account of their simony, their insincerity, and especially on account of their hypocrisy in vending their pretended pardons. “There cometh no pardon,” says Wycliffe, “but of God, for spiritual good beginneth and endeth in charity, and this may not be bought or sold as chaffering^a prelates in these days say, for whoever is in most charity is best heard of God, be he shepherd or lewd man,^b in the church or in the field.” As a whole, this piece is opposed throughout to all unjust pretension on the part of priests or magistrates, pointing out the delinquencies of both with the same freedom; while obedience, both in religious matters and in civil matters, is inculcated under the guidance of scriptural authority, and enlightened reason. The piece consists of twelve quarto pages. It abounds in the seeds both of order and advancement, in the ecclesiastical and in the secular.

XX.De Diabolo et Membris. The English title of this piece is—*How Satan and his priests, and his feigned religious, casten^cby three cursed heresies to destroy all good*

living, and to maintain all manner of sin. It begins thus—As Almighty God in Trinity ordaineth men to come to the bliss of heaven by three grounds, by knowing the Trinity, by sad faith, by true keeping of God’s commandments, and by perfect and endless charity: so Satan and his worldly clerks, and his feigned religious, full of subtle hypocrisy casten to destroy all virtuous life, and justice, and maintain all manner of sin, by these three cursed grounds:—the first is, that Holy Writ is false; the second is, that it is lawful and medeful^d to lie; the third, that it is against charity to cry openly against prelates’ sins, and other men’s.^e

We have seen that ecclesiastics, when the authority of certain passages of Scripture was alleged against them, were accustomed to reply that the literal rendering of such texts would lead to absurdity and untruth, and that by adopting a freer interpretation of such passages they generally contrived to explain away their meaning. This Wycliffe denounces as “putting falsehood on Holy Writ”—and only concedes to clerks the liberty thus to destroy the certainty and truth of Holy Writ, and all motive to religion or virtue is said to be destroyed. It is in this manner that this first heresy is said to be opposed to “all good living,” and to be favourable to the maintenance “of all manner of sin,” and its abettors are reproached as “feigning to be wiser than God.”

On the charge, that it is against charity to speak openly against the sins of prelates, and other men, the Reformer expatiates largely. It is argued, that if this charge were true, it would follow that the teaching of Christ and his apostles, and not less the teaching of the prophets under the Old Testament dispensation, must be included in it, as nothing is more conspicuous in their preaching than the denunciation of sin, and not only of sin in general, but of classes and persons. “Almighty God, full of charity, commandeth to the prophet Isaiah, to cry and cease not, and to show to the people their great sins. Sin in the commons is great, sin in mighty and wise men is more, but sin in prelates is most, and most blindeth the people. True men, therefore, are bound by God’s commandment to cry most against the sin of prelates, since it is the most, and harmeth most the people.” The language of the Almighty to the prophet Ezekiel is cited as showing that the priest who shall fail to warn sinful men of their danger, will be held responsible for the souls which perish through such want of fidelity. Concerning such of the clergy as complained that their faults were exposed in their absence, Wycliffe observes, “Antichrist maketh them so mighty, that in their presence no man dare speak against their open sins, but if he would be dead anon.” To prohibit complaint in their absence, accordingly, was to impose the most absolute silence concerning any of their evil deeds.

The following passage will indicate the notion of our Reformer in respect to the materials of which ecclesiastical councils were generally composed. On such occasions, “worldly prelates make a congregation of themselves and of clerks assenting to them; some assenting for worldly favour, some for gold and the hope of benefices, and some for fear of the curse, of losing benefices, of slander, of imprisoning and burning.” The assemblies thus constituted are described as doing their utmost to disparage the word of God, and to prevent the people from taking it as their guide; but it is maintained that everything thus alleged concerning the supposed insufficiency of Scripture, is so much imputation cast upon the wisdom or benevolence of its Author.

In this tract Wycliffe censures the manner in which the religious orders sometimes attempted to recruit their forces from among the young and unwary. “It is an accursed fraud,” he exclaims, “to draw young children that have but little discretion to these new feigned religious, by gifts, and by promises of worldly lordships, honour, and sureness of bodily welfare, more than by telling them of willing poverty, and penance, and despite, and of the forsaking of all things. All this is simony and heresy, if it be well sought. But it is a more accursed falsehood still to steal young children from their friends, and by false deceits make them to be professed, sometimes against their will, and not to suffer them to go out of their vain order though they know themselves unable thereto.”

The following sentiment also, bearing in mind when and where it was uttered, will be seen as one of great force and interest. “Christian men should know, that whosoever liveth best, prayeth best; and that the simple paternoster of a ploughman who hath charity, is better than a thousand masses of covetous prelates and vain religious!” The piece concludes thus: “Almighty God in Trinity, destroy these nests of Antichrist and his clerks, and strengthen all manner of men to maintain the truth of Holy Writ, to destroy falsehood, and openly to preach against the hypocrisy, heresy, and covetousness of all evil prelates, and priests, and feigned religious, both in word and deed, for then shall good life and truth, and peace, and charity reign among Christian men! Jesus Christ! for thine endless mercy grant us this end! Amen!”

XXI. For three Skills Lords should constrain Clerks to live in meekness, wilful poverty, and discreet penance, and ghostly travail. This is the title of another English tract. It begins thus—*Open teaching of God’s law, old and new, open example of Christ’s life, and his glorious apostles, love of God, dread of pains, and God’s curse, and hope of great reward in the bliss of heaven, should stir all priests and religious to live in great meekness, willing poverty, according to the Gospel, and discreet penance and travail, to stop pride, covetousness, and fleshly lusts, and idleness of worldly men, and to run fast to heaven by the right way of God’s commandments.*[a](#)

On the duty of the laity, and especially of men in authority, to be employed in endeavouring to bring both the clergy and the people generally into this better state, Wycliffe expresses himself as follows: “Kings and lords should know that they are ministers and vicars of God to avenge sin, and to punish wrong doers, and to praise good doers, as Peter and Paul teach. And hereto teacheth St. Isidore in the law of the church, that it is the office of the king and lords, by fear, and by bodily rigour, to constrain men to keep the law of God, when they would not so do by the preaching of priests. And God shall ask a reckoning of worldly lords, whether holy church be increased by their governance.” Having adverted with his usual freedom to the faults of the clergy, he adds, “These sins worldly lords are in debt to amend, for else they love not God, since they do not the execution of God’s commands, and avenge not the wrong and despite done to him.—Also Paul saith, that not only men doing sin are worthy of death, but also they who consent to it; and since lords may amend these great sins of pride, covetousness, extortions, and simony in clerks, they are damnable with the sinners themselves unless they so do.—And since adversities and wars come for sins reigning which are not amended, till those sins are amended lords should have neither respite nor peace. For lords have their lordship of God to destroy sin, and to

maintain righteousness and holy life, and no man so withstanding God's law shall have peace. If then they pay not to God this rent, well should they know that God must punish them as he teacheth in his law. And, certainly, if lords did well this office, they should surely come to the bliss of heaven."

These observations all relate to the first "skill," or reason, why lords should constrain clerks in the manner proposed; namely, a dread of the consequences which must follow negligence in this particular.

The second reason that should dispose them to make such use of their station and influence is—the great gain in respect to piety, and the peace proper to it, that would thus accrue to clerks, lords, and commoners. It is stated, that at present "prelates and great possessioners are so occupied in heart about worldly lordships and pleas of business, that they may not be in exercises of devotion, in prayer, in thought on heavenly things, on the sins of their own hearts, or on the sins of other men, or in study and preaching of the Gospel, and visiting and comforting poor men." He then ridicules the idea that "rich clerks of the Chancery, of the Common Bench, of the King's Bench, and in the Exchequer, and those who serve as justices, and sheriffs, and stewards, and bailiffs," should be priests in a condition to reprove the worldliness of the laity. Such men, moreover, not only fail of the duty which they owe to their respective churches, but these especially are the persons who are wont to "set an idiot for vicar or parish priest, that cannot and may not do the office of a good curate, and yet the poor parish findeth him, and no tongue in this world can tell what sin and wrong cometh hereby."

The third reason that should constrain lords to this course, is the great strengthening of the state which must follow from such a purification of the church, and the putting of such discountenance on every form of irreligion and immorality. In this manner especially "the poor commons would be discharged from heavy rents, and wicked customs brought in by covetous clerks; and of many heavy tallages and extortions by which they are now burdened and robbed. And thus by restoring of lordship to secular men, as is due by Holy Writ, and by bringing of clerks to meekness, and willing poverty, and busy spiritual labour, as lived Christ and his apostles, sin would be destroyed in each degree of holy church, and holy life brought in, and secular lords much strengthened, and the poor commons relieved, and good government, both spiritual and worldly, come again."

With regard to the censures which may be fulminated against them, in attempting this thorough and greatly needed reformation, they are reminded that the wiser among them well know "that though all the clerks on earth should curse them, because of their labour, with a clean conscience, to bring clerks to this holy life, ensampled and commanded by Christ, and to restore secular lordships to secular men, as this would be according to God's laws, God, and all angels, and saints, will bless them for this righteousness. The curses of these men harm no one, neither their interdicts, nor any censure which Satan may feign. Almighty God, stir our clerks, our lords, our commons to maintain the rightful ordinance of Jesus Christ made for clerks, and to dread the curse of God, and not the curse of Antichrist, and to desire speedily the

honour of God and bliss of heaven, more than their own honour and worldly joy. Amen!”

XXII. Of Wedded Men and Wives, and of their Children also. This piece commences—*Our Lord God Almighty speaketh in his law of two matrimonies, or wedlocks.* ^a Matrimony in the first sense, is stated to be that which subsists between Christ and his church, which ends in bringing his redeemed children to heaven: matrimony in the second sense, is that which takes place “between man and woman by just consent, after God’s law.” Marriage in this latter sense, was approved of God in paradise, by Jesus Christ when on earth, and by his apostles, one of whom has mentioned “forbidding to marry,” as a mark of the heresy which should arise in the last days. But while this “bodily matrimony” is spoken of as a “sacrament,” it is in the following terms that Wycliffe speaks respecting the constrained celibacy of the clergy.

“Since fornication is so perilous, and men and women are so frail, God ordained priests in the old law to have wives, and never forbid it in the new, neither by Christ nor by his apostles, but rather approved it. But now by the hypocrisy of the fiend and of false men, many bind themselves to priesthood and chastity, and forsake wives according to God’s law.—Nevertheless, virginity is so high and so noble, that Christ commanded it not generally, but said, he who may should take it. And St. Paul, therefore, gave no command of virginity, but gave counsel to them that were able thereto. Thus priests who keep clean chastity, in body and soul, do best; but many, on account of these new bonds, needlessly made, take this charge upon them indiscreetly, and slander themselves foully before God and his saints.”

The Reformer censures such as marry women unsuitable in age for their wealth, as exposing themselves to great temptation, and many evils. He reproves parents also, who constrain their children to marry against their inclinations; and in the conjugal relation, while assigning government to the man, he enjoins considerateness and affection in all things, using the language of Peter and Paul.

On parental duty he writes, “Paul biddeth that the father nourish his children in the love and chastening of God. And God commandeth in the old law, that fathers should teach their children God’s commandments, and the wonders and miracles which he did in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the waters of Jordan, and in the land of promise. And much more are fathers and mothers holden to teach their children belief in the Trinity, and in Jesus Christ, how he is very God, without beginning, and was made man through most burning charity to save mankind, by strong penance, hard treatment, and a bitter death; also, all the common parts of Christian belief.—Parents who maintain their children knowingly in sin, are worse than those cruel fathers and mothers who killed their children, and offered them to stocks.”

Baptism, and repeating a paternoster, will not avail to such children. They must repent, and keep the commandments of God, if they would be saved from being “deep damned in hell.” It is added—“There are three faults seen many times in wedded men and women. The first is, that they make sorrow of their children, if they are naked or

poor, but they charge it as nothing that their children are wanting in virtues; and with much labour and cost they obtain great riches, and high estates, and benefices for their children, oftentimes to their greater damnation. But they will not seek for their children the goods of grace, and a virtuous life, and will not suffer them to retain such goods freely proffered to them, but hinder them rather as much as they may, and say if the child incline himself to meekness and poverty, and flee covetousness and pride, from the dread of sin, and to please God, that he will never be a man, and shall never cost them a penny, and will curse him if he live well and teach other men God's law, to save men's souls; for by so doing the child getteth many enemies to his elders, and they say that he slandereth all his noble kindred, who were ever held true men and worshipful."

XXIII. How Antichrist and his Clerks travail to destroy Holy Writ, and to make Christian Men unstable in the Faith, and to set their ground in Devils of Hell. The tract with this title begins—*As our Lord Jesus Christ ordained to make his Gospel sadly known, and maintained against heretics, and men out of belief, by the writings of the four Evangelists; so the Devil casteth by Antichrist and his worldly false clerks to destroy Holy Writ, and the belief of Christian men by four cursed ways or false reasonings.*[a](#)

These four ways are—"First, that the church is of more authority and more credence than any Gospel. Secondly, that St. Augustine saith he would not believe in the Gospel, but if the church taught him so. Thirdly, that no man now alive knows which is the Gospel, but if it be by approving of the church. And, fourthly, if men say that they believe that this is the Gospel of Matthew or John, they ask, Why believest thou that this is the Gospel? since whosoever believeth this hath no cause except that the church confirmeth it and teacheth it.

"First, they say that Nicodemus, and many more, wrote the Gospel of Christ's life, and his teaching, and the church put them away, and approved these four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Then the church might as well have put out these four Gospels, and approved the other, since it was in the free-will and power of the church to approve and condemn which they would, and to approve and accept what they liked, and therefore men should believe more to the church than to any Gospel."

Wycliffe says in reply—"First, these forecasting heretics understand by the church the pope of Rome, and his cardinals, and the multitudes of worldly clerks, assenting to his simony and worldly lordships above all kings and emperors of the world. For else it were not to their purpose thus to magnify the church. True men, then, say that the clergy which first was, knowing men, and holy of life, were stirred by the Holy Ghost to take these Gospels, and to charge not Christian people with more, since there are enough and profitable to the full, and those four witnesses were accepted of the Holy Ghost for many reasons, which we may not now tell. But certainly the church might not have put away these Gospels, and accepted the other, for then it had done against the doom of God, and against the truth of Jesus Christ, and against the charity of the Holy Ghost."

But the Divine illumination which enabled the earlier ministers of the church thus to distinguish between the genuine records of inspiration and all spurious writings, is said to have been sadly wanting in the clergy of later times. Speaking of the contemporary priesthood, Wycliffe observes—“Jesus Christ saith his Gospel is an everlasting testament, but these would fordon^b it with a stinking blast from the mouth of Antichrist. Lord! how dare Christian men maintain such heretics against God’s teaching, and the peace of Christian people? Such heretics are full unable to rule prelates, and lords, and commons, to shrift in preaching and praying, and to do other points concerning their souls’ health, for they destroy them in faith and good life, that their own pride, and covetousness, and lusts may be borne up; and draw all men to hell that are ruled by such false confessors, false preachers, and false counsellors.”

Wycliffe then proceeds to what he describes as the “second wheel” in the machine of this adversary. “They bear upon Austin,” he writes, “that he saith he would not believe in the Gospel, but if the church saith it is true. Men answer, that Austin saith to this intent, that he would not believe thereto, unless Christ, head of holy church and saints in heaven, and the apostles of Christ that are holy church, said and approved the Gospel. And this understanding is full true, and according to the letter of Austin; but they understand it thus, that unless the cursed multitude of worldly clerks approve this for the Gospel, Austin would not believe to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” But to make the church consist in a degenerate priesthood, to the exclusion of the body of the faithful, and to reason thus on that assumption, is said to be to make everything valuable in the religion of Christ depend on approval from men who have shown themselves its enemies—“but whose heresy,” he exclaims, “might sooner destroy the belief of Christian men?—and God forbid that Austin should be found in poisonous heresy. It is accursed falsehood, therefore, to slander Austin with this accursed error, by the name of this holy doctor colouring their own false understanding and heresy. For by this cursed wheel Antichrist’s clerks condemn the faith of Christian men, and the commandments of God, and points of charity, and bring in their own wayward laws.—Therefore Christian men should stand to the death for the maintenance of Christ’s Gospel, and the true understanding thereof, obtained by holy life, and great study, and not set their faith nor trust in sinful prelates, and their accursed clerks, nor in their understanding of Holy Writ, for with their worldly life and pride they are unable to see the truth thereof.”

“See now,” the Reformer proceeds to say, “the third wheel of Satan’s chair.—They say that no man can know what is the Gospel, but by the approving and confirming of the church. But true men say that, to their understanding, this is full of falsehood. For Christian men are certain of belief by the gracious gift of Jesus Christ, that the truth taught by Christ and his apostles is the Gospel, though all the clerks of Antichrist say never so fast the contrary, and require men to believe the contrary, on pain of cursing, prisoning, and burning. And this belief is not founded on the pope and his cardinals, for then it might fail and be undone, as they fail and be sometimes destroyed; but on Jesus Christ, God and Man, and on holy Trinity, and so it may never fail, but in his default who should love God and serve him, and who faileth in these two points. For Almighty God and his truths, are the foundation of the faith of Christian men; and as St. Paul saith, other foundation may no man set, besides that which is set, that is Jesus Christ. Therefore, though Antichrist and all his accursed clerks be buried deep in hell

for their accursed misery and pride, and other sins, yet the Christian's faith faileth not, and plainly because they are not the ground thereof, but Jesus Christ is the ground thereof. For he is our God, and our best master, and ready to teach true men all things profitable, and needful for their souls."

"The fourth wheel of Belial's cart is this,—If Christian men say they know by belief that this is Christ's Gospel, these malicious heretics ask, *Why* they believe that this is Gospel? But true men ask of them againward, why they believe that God is God, and if they tell a good sufficient cause, we tell the same cause why we believe that this is Christ's Gospel. But they say, whatever the prelates teach, teach openly, and maintain stedfastly, were of as great authority, or more, than is Christ's Gospel, and so they would destroy Holy Writ, and Christian faith, and maintain that whatever they do is no sin. But Christian men take their faith of God by his gracious gift, when he giveth to them knowledge and understanding of truths needful to save men's souls by grace to assent in their heart to such truths. And this men call faith, and of this faith Christian men are more certain than any man is of mere worldly things by any bodily wit.^a And therefore Christ reproveth most defect of belief, both in the Jews and his disciples, and therefore Christ's apostles prayed most to have stableness in the faith, for it is impossible that any man please God without faith. And so Christ prayed principally that the faith of Peter, and of the other disciples, might not fail of ever. And God's law telleth how by faith saints wrought all the great wonders and miracles that they did. And if Antichrist here say that each man may feign that he has a right faith, and a good understanding of Holy Writ, when he is in error, let a man seek in all things truly the honour of God, and live justly to God and man, and God will not fail to him in anything that is needful to him, neither in faith, nor in understanding, nor in answer against his enemies."

This piece concludes thus: "God Almighty strengthen his little flock against Antichrist, and to seek truly the honour of Christ and the salvation of men's souls, to despise the feigned power of Antichrist, and willingly and joyfully to suffer reproof in the world for the name of Jesus Christ and his Gospel, to give good example to others to follow and to conquer the high bliss of heaven by glorious martyrdom as other saints did before! Jesus, for thine endless might, endless wisdom, endless goodness and charity, grant to us sinful wretches this love! Amen!"

In this examination of the writings of Wycliffe, I have followed thus far the manuscripts in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, from which all my extracts are taken, except in the instance of number fifteen—the piece intitled, "Of Feigned Contemplative Life"—my extracts from that treatise being taken, for the most part, from the manuscript in Trinity College, Dublin.

XXIV. De Dominis Divino. The piece thus described, begins—*Since false glosses make God's law dark, and hinder secular men to sustain and keep it, of such false glosses should each man be aware.*^a The false glosses of which most complaint is made, are those resorted to with a view to sustain the present endowed state of the church. In this tract, as in many of the preceding, Wycliffe denounces the sort of endowment adverted to, as contrary both to the Jewish and the Christian law. The effect of attempting to sustain religion by such means has been, to subject the clergy

generally to the influence of covetous and worldly passions; and with such examples before them in the priesthood, secular lords take license to conduct themselves oppressively towards their tenants—“and so this endowing against God’s law, doeth harm to lords, and clerks, and commons, both bodily harm, and harm in their souls.” The Reformer urges, accordingly, that men should retrace their steps in this particular, and that the church should be freed from this form of incumbrance and mischief, notwithstanding all the laws, whether of church or state, which may exist in its favour. If it be alleged against this bold counsel, that the system thus menaced has been approved by many holy men, and that its sanctity has been further established by a host of miracles, Wycliffe replies, “Here men should know, that many such figures [b](#) come often of the fiend for man’s first sin. So as St. Paul saith, the fiend hath power for to figure himself unto an angel of light. And so he is an untrue man that troweth [c](#) to such signs as much as he troweth to the faith of God’s law. And so is it no belief that all those men are saints which are hired of the pope to be holden such. And few men know how those wonders came which we call miracles, whether of good or evil. For well we know that the fiend doth often much good. Stand we stable in our belief, for that may never fail.”

Wycliffe extends his censure from these points to the conduct of the clergy in claiming exemption from the authority of the civil magistrate. He affirms it to have been the ancient law and practice of the kingdom for the secular tribunals to take cognisance of all civil offences on the part of the clergy. In judging on all such questions, the laity, it is maintained, possess, in every respect, fully as much fitness as the priesthood.

XXV. The tract beginning, *For this uncouth dissension that is betwixt these popes, seemeth to signify the perilous times that Paul said should come*, is that which sometimes has the titles, *De Papa Romana*, and *Schisma Papæ*. [a](#)

The writer commences by adverting to the circumstance of this schism in the papacy as favourable to a free discussion of questions relating to the church. He speaks of the present as a fitting occasion on which to sever from the papacy, and from the clergy generally, their ill-gotten lordships and endowments. He thus concludes the first chapter: “Trust we in the help of Christ on this point, for he hath begun to help us graciously, in that he hath clove the head of Antichrist, and made the two parts fight against each other. For it is no doubt that the sin of the popes, which has been so long continued, hath brought in this division. And so if both these heads last, or one by itself, then shall the last error be worse than the first. Emperors and kings, therefore, should help in this cause, to maintain God’s law, to conquer their own heritage, and to destroy this foul sin—saving persons. And then were peace established and simony destroyed.”

In the second chapter it is stated that the advocates of this kind of change are said to be “heretics, wicked men, and few against others.” Wycliffe adds—“A comfort it is that these three reasons mean nothing.” The third chapter commences with a reference to the pretended infallibility of the pope, on which the Reformer observes—“Here should the children of the fiend learn their logic and their philosophy, that they be not heretical in a false understanding of the law of Christ.” The election of cardinals or

princes is declared to be of no value if not in accordance with the law of God. The only proper appointments to priesthood or government in the church, are the appointments of virtuous, able, and holy men. Concerning the power of binding and loosing assumed by the clergy, it is said—“That there is no greater heresy than for a man to believe that he is absolved from his sins if he give money; or if a priest lay his hand on the head and say that he absolveth thee. For thou must be sorrowful in thy heart, and make asseeth *b* to God, else God absolveth thee not.”

In the next chapter the subject is renewed. “This confession which is made to man, hath often been varied with the varying of the church. For first, men confessed to God, and to the common people, and this confession was used in the time of the apostles.” But since that kind of confession among Christians,—confession to God, and one to another,—has given place to the practice of confession to a priest, great mischiefs have followed, priests being commonly wanting in the qualifications necessary to a wise discharge of the duties which thus devolve on them. The whole argument on this subject is in the boldest and most vigorous style, tending to expose the folly of the confidence generally placed in the efficacy of priestly absolution, and the special absurdity of the popish doctrine concerning the supposed supererogatory merits of priests, and the uses to which the clergy affected to apply them. His advice accordingly is—“Shrive thee to God, in constancy and contrition, and God may not fail, he will absolve thee.”

XXVI. The tract by Wycliffe intitled, *Of Perfect Life*, is one of a series of short pieces known by the title of the *Poor Caitif*, of which some account will be given hereafter. It commences thus—*Christ, not compelling, but freely counselling each man to perfect life, saith thus*. The language cited is that of our Lord in the ninth chapter of Luke, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take his cross, and follow me.” On which, the Reformer thus comments:—

“Forsake we ourselves in what we have made ourselves by sin, and dwell we such as we are made by grace. If a proud man be converted to Christ, and is made meek, he hath forsaken himself. If a covetous man ceaseth to covet, and giveth his own things, he hath denied himself. If a lecherous man changeth his life to chastity, he hath denied himself; as St. Gregory saith, He denieth himself who forsaketh and withstandeth the unreasonable will of his flesh. The cross of Christ is taken when despisings for the love of truth be not forsaken, when the flesh is punished by abstinence, and when compassion and pity toward our neighbour is truly kept; when a man is crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to him, setting at nought the joy thereof. It is not enough to bear the cross of painful life, except men follow Christ in virtues, not by steps of bodily feet, but by meekness, love, and heavenly desire. Meekness maketh a good soul to Christ what Martha was. As St. Bernard says, Love maketh a soul the spouse of Christ. Heavenly desire raiseth the soul on high, and maketh it to forget the world, and all the likings thereof. He taketh the cross, and is ready to meet all peril for God, and if need is, to die rather than to forsake Christ. And whosoever taketh not thus his cross, and followeth not Christ thus, is not worthy to be his disciple, nor to possess him, as he himself saith.”

But men are cautioned against such a reliance on the mercy of God, as may dispose them to delay repentance, and to heap sins upon one another; since St. Austin saith:—

“The most merciful Lord forgiveth sin to men flying to penitence, but makes us not so sure of the Lord’s mercy that we keep sins. Neither say we, while the strength of the flesh endureth, have we now our covetings, and at the last in age, do we penance for our sins, for the Lord is merciful, he shall not mind of our sins. I beseech you, saith St. Austin, think you not so, for it is the highest folly to think such things. Therefore haste we to repentance, and the last day be ever before our eyes. Restrain we our bodies from vice, and from evil covetings, and ever let our heart think on heavenly things. Lord Jesus! turn us to thee, and then we shall be turned. Heal thou us, and we shall be verily holy, for without grace and help from thee may no man be truly turned or healed. For they are but scorners who to-day turn to God, and to-morrow turn away; to-day doing penance, and to-morrow turning again to their former evils. What is turning to God? nothing but turning from the world, from sin, and from the fiend. What is turning from God? nothing but turning to the changeable goods of this world, to works of the fiend, and to lusts of the flesh. To be turned from the world is to set at nought, and to put out of mind, all joys and mirths thereof, and to suffer meekly all bitterness, slander, and deceits thereof, for the love of Christ; and to leave all occupations unlawful, and unprofitable to the soul; and to be dead to every such thing as the world worshippeth and loveth.”

He concludes by observing that Satan frequently presents occasions of temptation before the men who are most eminent in holiness, and are the least likely to be influenced by them. “But he studieth to blow against us all manner of temptations and tribulations, by how much that he seeth that by the mercy of God we are escaped out of his power. For he seeketh no thing so much as to separate a man from the pure and everlasting love of Jesus Christ, and to make him love failing things, and the uncleanness of this world.”[a](#)

XXVII. Of the Seven Deadly Sins. The work under this title begins thus—*Since belief teaches us that every evil is only sin, or comes of sin, sin should be fled as all manner of evil.*[b](#)

This treatise extends to eighty quarto pages, and after the above initial sentence, proceeds thus:—“And since nothing is fled by the wisdom of man, except as the harm of that thing is known, every true man should know sin well, and so should know the fruit thereof. All manner of evil is only sin, or else the pain which comes only from sin. Pain comes from sin in five manners. Pain comes to Christ, to buy man from sin. Pain comes to the condemned, to avenge sin. Pain comes to God’s children, to purge them from sin. Pain comes to many men to keep them from sin. Pain comes to other men to show that God hates sin. And so as God is the best thing in the world, sin is the worst thing in the world. And so while all other things are God’s creatures, sin is made without God, as St. John saith.

“God may not bid man sin, for his own goodness. Sin may not serve God, although it profit. The sin of our first father might not be bought away, except by God and man, who is above the angels. If thou wouldest flee death, and pain, in any manner, then

flee sin more, for pain is a good medicine which Christ himself took to heal man of sin. For the righteousness of God may not suffer sin, except he shall punish it, and this was the cause of the pain which Christ suffered for man.”

Wycliffe then states, as he has done in the “Poor Caitif,” the “Trialogus,” and several other works, that the sin never forgiven,—the sin against the Holy Ghost,—is that of the man who dies in a state of impenitence. “Sin,” he proceeds, “is called deadly, because it brings death to the body and soul, and that without end. And sin is called venial, because God’s Son forgives it. But men should be at war with all sin, because of the peril thereof, since they know not deadly sin from venial; inasmuch as they never know whether this sin shall ever have end, or whether this man shall be damned through being hardened in his sins.”

After these introductory observations, the Reformer proceeds to enumerate and describe the different “manners of sin that come to man.” The first sin mentioned is pride, which is said to arise sometimes separately, and sometimes otherwise, as from “the gifts of grace; the wit that God has given; the gifts of kind, as bodily strength, or bodily beauty; or from the goods of fortune, and the riches of the world.” All these gifts are said to be from God, and each man should possess them in humility, endeavouring “meekly to serve his God, according to the gifts he hath of him.” The craftsman should know his occupation, and the scholar be conversant with human learning, but the knowledge of Holy Scripture is a science with which all men should be acquainted. Every man must know the will of God, in order to the doing of it; and he must do the will of God, in order to be happy; “so each man here must needs con-divinity—some more, some less, if he will be saved.” The more men strive to hide this “science of God,” the more it increases. The friars oppose themselves to the diffusion of this knowledge, and would fain convert these spiritual treasures into articles of merchandise; “but since this science is freely given to men, it should be freely delivered; and because the telling of God’s law would be most profitable to his church, the fiend is full busy in preventing such spiritual profit.”

In the next section, the Reformer censures the costume of the age as fanciful, costly, and often injurious to the body, as well as to the mind. If the force of custom be pleaded, his answer is, that the force of the reasonable should be stronger, and that “to conform to the world, is to conform to an enemy.” The next topic is the folly of family pride. To be related to Christ and his church is the highest dignity. “Of this kindred we should have joy, and not of earthly kindred, for they were sometimes beggars, or servants, or fools; and, therefore, Jesus Christ came only of poor kindred, and would not make them rich in the world, except in virtues. He was not ashamed of the poverty of his kindred; but hath taught us to be glad in the kinship of virtues, for joy in such kindred is the bliss of heaven.”

The pride of wealth is next adverted to, as being little more reasonable than pride of family. To hoard wealth, is to sin. To be employed in distributing it, never so wisely, as when we endeavour to abate the force of evils which would never have been known if sin had not entered into the world, and such-like service, relating to what is merely temporal, is to be in danger of withdrawing our attention injuriously from what is more immediately spiritual. Hence, it is said, that the clergy should have

“food and clothing needful to them, and therewith should hold themselves paid, for more would tarry them.”

In the ninth section of this treatise, the author divides the church into three parts—preachers—defenders—and labourers. He speaks of the apostles as the “spiritual knights” of the Gospel; and of Christ as “going into all the world, not to fight with the cold arms of the body, but with the arms of charity.” He then states, that the only gradation, rank, or office known in the church of Christ, in its earlier history, was that of “priests and deacons, living clerks’ life.—By ordinance of Christ, priests and bishops were all one; but afterwards the emperor departed a them, and made bishops lords, and priests their servants, and this was the cause of envy, and quenched much charity. And so if possessioners were brought to that state which Christ ordained to his clerks, then should men have charity, both with secular clerks, and also with religious.” It has been the work of the fiend, he observes, to change this simpler state of things into one of “many colours, as secular and religious; and both have many parts, as popes, and cardinals, and bishops, and archdeacons; monks, canons, hospitallers, and friars. And each of these orders loves more his brother, than he loves a man of another strange order, and will defend his order by personal affection.” Amidst such separations of men into classes and sections, “no wonder,” says Wycliffe, “if charity be put away.” a

In the section following it is remarked, that “as virtues in priests quicken the church, sins and vices in them make the church venomous.” But the heaviest charge to be brought against the clergy is said to be, that to please some great men “they hide God’s law, and persecute priests for preaching the truth.” The parties thus opposed to religion are said to be no less opposed to humanity, combining to plunder and oppress the commonalty of the land.

The preceding observations have respect to the first of the three classes into which the church is divided, namely, the *preachers*,—the observations following are addressed to the two remaining classes, described as defenders and labourers; the former consisting of lords and knights, and the latter of the body of the people. They are observations pointed especially against the irreligion and inhumanity attendant on the practice of war. The war carried on in Flanders in favour of Pope Urban is adverted to, and appears to have disposed the mind of Wycliffe to the tone of expression observable in this part of the work. He complains much of the conduct of the clergy in this respect. He observes, “They should be labourers for peace, but in word and deed they favour war, taking it as law that it is right to annoy an enemy in whatever way we can. But the charity of Christ bids the contrary.—The virtue of charity should be most in clerks, but envy is most in them when they are turned to evil.”

The advocates of war made their appeal to the Old Testament. The reply of Wycliffe was—“In the old law men fought with God’s enemies, to avenge God’s injuries, and by no other cause, and neither will men now if their fighting be lawful.” Men, he contends, should war as the Israelites did, only when commissioned as they were. Attention to this rule would bring the fulfilment of the prophecy—“Men shall break their swords into ploughshares, and learn war no more.” But “yet Antichrist argues to keep men fighting, though humanity teaches that men should not fight. Their saying

is—Since an adder by his nature stings a man that treads on him, why should not we fight against our enemies, for else they will destroy us? What man that hath wit cannot see this fallacy? Well I know that angels withstood fiends, and many men with right of law withstand their enemies, and yet they kill them not, neither fight with them; and wise men of the world hold it well thus to vanquish their enemies without striking; and wise men of the Gospel vanquish by patience, and come to rest and peace by suffering of death. Well I know that worldly men will scorn this sentence, but men who would be martyrs for the law of God will hold with it.”

The argument of Wycliffe seems to involve, to the full, the Quaker principle on the subject of war. He admits that God has “approved that knights should defend his law by strength,” but insists that he has not granted them permission to “kill any man.” It was said—“But the pope approves crusades;” and the answer was, that such a fact proves nothing, unless it can be proved that the pope is nearer infallibility than Peter. “Christ is a good shepherd, for he puts his own life for the saving of the sheep; but Antichrist is a wolf of ravening, for he does ever the reverse, for he puts many thousand lives in the place of his own wretched life. By forsaking things which Christ bids priests forsake, he might cease all this strife. Why is he not a fiend, though a priest, who fights in this cause, stained foul with homicide? For if manslaying in others be odious to God, much more in priests, that should be vicars of Christ. And certain I am, the pope, and all the men of his council cannot produce a spark of reason to show that he should do this.”

Wycliffe, it is plain, was not insensible to the difficulties attendant on the principle which he thus advocates, but he appears to have been prepared to abide by the worst supposable consequences of it, rather than consent to see the substitution of the war principle, in any shape, in its room. What is called the right of conquest, he treats as only so much robbery on a larger scale. If the Almighty should “bid conquest,” such a title might become valid, not otherwise. “Lord!” he exclaims, “what honour falls to a knight that he kills many men?—the hangman killeth more, and with a better title. It were better be butchers of beasts than butchers of our brethren, for this were more unnatural.” Many would, probably, complain of his strong language on this subject, especially as applied to the popish crusade: his answer was, that the men are sharers in evil deeds, who, by a “coward dumbness,” fail to oppose them. His desire was, that priests should “all give themselves to a heavenly life, as angels sent from God, to draw men from the world:” in place of being more beset with the seven deadly sins than other men.

XXVIII. *Vita Sacerdotum*. This piece begins—*This peril of friars is the last of eight that fall to man in this way.* [a](#)

In its commencement, Wycliffe makes mention of the clergy as attempting to vindicate their claims to ecclesiastical endowments by appealing to the provisions of the Jewish law in that particular. But the reply given, as on many similar occasions, is, that the Levitical priesthood were wholly destitute of endowments in the sense intended; that the provision made in their case was, that they should not be possessed of landed property in any shape, and that they should depend wholly on the current tithes and offerings of the people. Such was the arrangement made in respect to the

support of the priesthood under the old law; and secular lords are reminded that they are competent to reduce the Christian priesthood to the same condition, and that it behoves them to do so.

This tract consists of eight quarto pages. It contains an allusion to the council in London, which had condemned the doctrine of Wycliffe, as opposed, in the above sense, to ecclesiastical endowments. It contains the following passage also, which is equally decisive in respect to the late date of this production: "Either God's law is false, or the realm of England shall be punished sharply, for persecuting poor priests, only for saying that Antichrist should be ashamed of their manner of life, and that the bread of the altar is very God's body, as the Gospel saith, and as common faith holds." In attempting the needed reformation, "some should help by prayer, some by good speech, some by worldly power, and some by good life."

XXIX. De Blasphemia contra Fratres. The copy of this work in the Bodleian Library has the following title, De Tribus Blasphemiis Monachorum. Its initial words are—*It is said that three things stourblin*b*the realm, especially heresie.*c

This work is much more extended than the preceding—it numbers forty pages. Wycliffe commences by defining the word blasphemy as used in this treatise. The term is used in respect to God in the same sense with the term slander as applied to man: and the blasphemies charged upon the friars are especially three—the errors inculcated by them in regard to the eucharist; their pleading the example of Christ as giving sanction to their practice of mendicity; and their conduct in pretending to dispense pardons and indulgences to the people for money. Men are said to blaspheme "when worthiness proper only to God is put to a poor creature: when imperfection is put upon God; and when dignity is denied to God that must accord to him from his great lordship." If blasphemy, in these senses, "is scattered among many men, this heresy is most common with the friars."

In regard to the first point, the eucharist, he writes, "We say surely, of our faith, that the white thing and round, which the priest consecrates, like to the unconsecrated host, and which is broken and eaten, is verily God's body in the form of bread." He cites St. Augustine as teaching, that the bread remains after consecration; and as opposed, accordingly, to the received doctrine of transubstantiation, which teaches that after the words of consecration the bread does not remain, but is transubstantiated into the body of Christ. Such is truly the doctrine of transubstantiation, the bread ceasing to be, by becoming the body, soul, and divinity of the Saviour. The friars, as the advocates of this doctrine, are described as precluding men from exercising their senses in respect to religion, as well as from the just use of their higher faculties. The strongest of the senses, according to philosophers, are touch and taste; but if friars are to be credited, men should not allow any place to the office of these senses in the matter of the sacrament. Against the absurdity of this doctrine Wycliffe pours forth his strongest invective. The men who hold it are said to be more stupid than "Jews or Pagans;" and no more capable of explaining what they mean than the brute. "Would God that the clerks of Antichrist who teach our belief, and charge more the words of Ambrose than those of the Gospel, would give us leave truly so glossa St. Ambrose. When he says that after the sacreding the sacrament should not be holden bread, the

saint means, as he often does, that this should not be known afterwards as *principally* bread. For thus (in this sense) St. Ambrose says the thing that was bread is now God's body—and well may we know that Ambrose says not that the bread goes to nought, as Antichrist says." The sacrament, he repeats emphatically, "is Christ's body, and bread also;" and then adds, "so thus it is that this bread turns into Christ's body, and so the substance of the bread offered upon the altar shall be turned into the substance of Christ's own body, as St. Ambrose says, and neither shall be brought to nought, for these are not contrary." On this subject we should confide in the law of Scripture and reason more than in any law from popes and cardinals—"so that if we had a hundred popes, and all the friars were cardinals, yet should we trust more to the law of the Gospel than to all this multitude." The following passage is an instance of the manner in which Wycliffe opposed the experience of the plain man to the subtleties of this church doctrine. "Since bodily eating was bidden of Christ, and this bodily eating might not be unless there were bread, then this bread lasts after the sacreing." [a](#)

The second article sets forth, as we have seen, that the practices of the begging friars are according to the example of the Saviour. One instance adduced by the mendicants, in support of this conclusion, was, that Christ solicited water from the woman of Samaria. In answer, it is observed, that the persons who make such use of this passage, should look to the context, where it appears that our Lord had sent his disciples into the city, not to *beg* bread, but to *purchase* it. It was usual to allege the language of the Saviour to Zaccheus for the same purpose. But it is replied that our Lord spoke to Zaccheus as a superior, and not as a supplicant; and that Christ, moreover, came to the earth in the exercise of a peculiar lordship—the lordship which pertained to human nature in innocence. It was one thing to receive temporal alms, another to become petitioners for them.

But the error under the third article is deplored as especially pernicious. This vending of pardons, "without condition," is denounced as in the last degree presumptuous and cruel; and as a course of proceeding in which mendicants do not scruple to enrich themselves at the cost of deceiving the souls of men, so as to sink them to perdition. But friars do not blush to allege that these spiritual treasures are to the priesthood what worldly treasures are to secular lords, goods entrusted to them, to be expended at their pleasure, and for their behoof. But the "idiots who argue by way of such likeness, do more harm to men than if they cut their throats." Do not these deceivers know, that men who have the disposal of temporal goods, have their superiors, and known laws, to which they are responsible, while the dealers in these supposed "merits of men," dispense their wares "after their own will?" Even the letters of pardon granted by the pope, make some mention of the signs of penitence, "but these friars, in their letters, speak of no contrition." What more natural than that the people should be negligent of their own works, "seeing they may purchase after this manner in lieu of them?"

Wycliffe's conclusions are—that by the first of these errors, that relating to the eucharist, the friars impeach the wisdom of God, setting him forth as the patron of contradictions and impossibilities—that by the second error, they charge him with inconsistency, representing him as an abettor of the kind of indolence and poverty which he has so decidedly condemned throughout the Old and New Testaments—and

that in the third error, they slander his purity, in describing him as authorising priests to dispense pardons after a manner which could only conduce to their own corrupt aggrandisement, and to the grossest irreligion and depravity among the people.

XXX.De Ecclesiæ Dominio. This work consists of about fourteen closely-written folio pages. Its English title is, *Of the Church of Christ, of her Members, and of her Governance*; and it begins, *Christ's church is his spouse that hath three parts.*[a](#)

It then immediately proceeds as follows—"The first part is in bliss with Christ, head of the church, and containeth angels and blessed men that now be in heaven. The second part of the church be saints in purgatory, and these sin not anew, but purge their old sins. And many errors fallen [b](#) in praying for these saints, and since they all are dead in body, Christ's words may be taken of them: sue [c](#) we Christ as our life, and let the dead bury the dead. The third part of the church are true men that here live, that shall be afterwards saved in heaven, and who live here the life of Christian men. The first part is called the *overcoming* part, the middle is called the *sleeping*, the third is called the *fighting*. And all these make one church, and the head of this church is Jesus Christ, both God and man. This church is mother to every man who shall be saved, and containeth no other."

He then derides the folly of regarding the church as the spouse of Christ, and of supposing that the offspring of Belial can be among its members. In the present world, no man can possibly know himself to be a member of the church of Christ except as he is enabled to live a holy life; few, if any, being so taught of God as to know their ordination to the bliss of heaven. In allusion to the Urban crusade, he censures the folly of men who "fight for the pope more than for belief," and who in so doing probably "fight for the fiend."

In the next section he proposes to trace the rise of secular power in the church, founding his statements, partly, in "belief," or Holy Scripture, and partly on "common chronicles," but proceeding always, as he hopes, under the guidance of charity. The church militant is described as consisting of persons who conform themselves to "the example of Christ, to come to heaven as he came:" and then follows a sketch of the history of the Saviour, and mention of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, and earnest praise of their labours among Jews and Gentiles. "And thus the apostles of Christ filled the world with God's grace. But long after, as chronicles say, the fiend had envy thereat, and by Silvester, priest of Rome, he brought in a new guile, and moved the emperor of Rome to endow his church. When the life of the priest was thus changed, his name was changed. He was not called the apostle, or the disciple of Christ, but he was called the pope, and head of all holy church: and afterwards came other names, by the feigning of hypocrites, so that some say he is even with the manhead of Christ, and highest vicar of Christ, to do on earth whatever he liketh; and some flourish other names and say that he is most blessed father,—because hereof cometh benefices which the priest giveth to men, for Simon Magus never more laboured in simony than do these priests. And so God would suffer the fiend no longer to reign in one such priest only, but for the sins which they had done, made division among two, so that men might the more lightly in Christ's name overcome both. For as a virtue is stronger when it is gathered, than if it be scattered; so malice is stronger

when it is gathered in one person, and it is of less strength when it is dispersed among many. And this moveth poor priests to speak now heartily in this matter, for when God will help his church, and men are slothful and will not work, their sloth is to be condemned for many causes.”

In several of his works, the Reformer speaks in this manner of the schism in the papacy, as having greatly encouraged himself and others in their endeavours to direct the attention of men to the corruptions of the church. In the claim of the pope to be regarded as the successor of St. Peter, two things are to be supposed—that he is the vicar of Christ, and a follower of Christ. But in respect to the first, “Christ biddeth the Jews, that they should trust to his works; and thus by Christ’s vicar, should be be the poorest man of all other men, and the meekest of all others, and of most labour in Christ’s church. But this choosing of cardinals, and procuring of benefices, and taking of new names, be full far from that state. Thus Peter lived after Christ, and challenged no such names, nor to be head of holy church, but studied hard rather meekly to serve it. Each apostle also in his country wrought according to Christ’s law, and none of them had need afterwards to come to Peter to be confirmed.” We do not learn, he observes, that Christ ever left preaching to sell offices in the church:—“all these things that popes do, teach that they are Antichrists. If they say that Christ’s church must have a head here on earth, true it is, for Christ is the head which must be here with his church until the day of doom.” To say there is need of another head, is to impeach the power and the grace of Christ. Some men, however, have invented “a false tale” on this subject, saying, “when Christ went to heaven, his manhood went on pilgrimage, and that he made Peter, with all these popes, his stewards to rule his house, and gave them full power thereto, before all other priests alive. Here this dream proceeds amiss, turning the church upside down, for Peter was a true helper, with Paul, and John, and the other apostles; but none of these servants dreamed that he was head of holy church, or that he loved Christ more than any of his brethren did. It seems likely, to many men, that Peter loved Christ more, in a manner, than any of these other apostles; but he was not taught to strive on that account, for other apostles, in other manner, loved Christ more than did Peter, as John loved him more heavenly, and Paul laboured more in the church.”

“We do not affirm as belief,” he adds, “that if a man be chosen as pope, then he is chosen to bliss, though here he is called blessed father. Many know by their works, that these be deepest damned in hell, for they charge themselves as hypocrites, both in office and in name, and so they sit in the first place here, and at the last day of doom they shall be in the last place, that is, the deepest place of hell. Here let us hold ourselves in bonds of belief, that stand in general and conditional words, and let us not judge foolishly, but we may say by supposal, that we guess it to be so: and his part should soonest be supposed, who bringeth most evidence.”

The Reformer then proceeds to complain of three heresies which deceive men. The first is involved in the practice of calling the pope “most blessed father.” This is said to be done in flattery, and for gain; and it includes heresy, inasmuch as it supposes, that where there is the highest office, there is the highest sanctity, all true blessedness being attendant on character and not on office. If the principle on which this practice

proceeds were just, then it might be just to give the title “most blessed father,” to Judas, and to multitudes resembling him.

Another heresy is, “that if the pope determine aught, that so determined is truth, and to be believed.” This pretension is denied, and censured as most sinful and pernicious. Appeal is made to the infirmities of Peter, as fatal to the doctrine of infallibility as thus assumed by his successors. Some men say, that on such dignities the church rests, as on her proper foundation. Wycliffe answers, that from that source, rather, the church has to trace her greatest mischiefs, especially as evinced in the matter of indulgences, and in the manner of administering absolution.

He proceeds to show still further how these supposed infallible “stewards may err in regard to the ordinance of Christ.” The monks are said to have come in because of the laxity and degeneracy of the regular clergy. Canons and friars came in from the same cause in the place of monks. All these in their turn have degenerated, so that were Christ to come again to the earth, he would judge them as so many clerks of Antichrist. The laws of these several institutes are dwelt upon as unscriptural, their history is shown to have been unfavourable to the purity of religion, and it is demanded whether the popes, the great patrons of these orders, can be regarded, in the face of such palpable blunders, as infallible? “The apostles of Christ, and other disciples long after them, were not busy about tithes, but held themselves paid in the little that the people readily gave them; and so housing and clothing, as Paul saith, should be enough.” But this Roman “steward so chaffereth^a in appropriating churches, that the people dwell untaught, and unserved in spiritual help. Who should be blind, therefore, if not this steward, that doeth this without leave of the Lord, and openly against his bidding? If any man should be damned, this steward should be deepest damned: and alyates^b for he feigneth power, and new laws, which God made never. And yet he gabbeth^c upon God, that all this is God’s work: but in the time of the Old Testament, such a blasphemmer would have been stoned to death.”

In the fifth section the friars are censured as the advocates of war, and especially as having favoured “this last journey that the English made into Flanders,” an enterprise by which the realm was not a little despoiled “of men and money.” In the next section it is argued that the converts made by these men, degenerate as the effect of such conversions; and that the rival popes have in fact no greater enemies than these zealous allies. But the time has come in which all men should apply themselves to the work of purifying the church, some by scriptural learning, some by secular power and influence, some by a Christian example, and all by earnest prayer to God—“for in him lieth the help here against the cautels^d of the fiend.”

The Reformer then proceeds to counsel his reader in respect to the best method of reasoning with the friars on the doctrine of the eucharist. “The people trust commonly, that this host is God’s body. Here friars should begin, and tell man if this be true. If they say that this host is in no manner God’s body, then flee them as heretics, for Christ and his church say the contrary. If they say that this host is an accident, as colour and figure, without a subject, and so is not God’s body, well we know that old belief, grounded in the words of Christ, saith that it is God’s body. And if they say that this sacrament is God’s body, as it is in heaven, then these friars speak

as idiots.” They were thus to insist, that the accidents of whiteness and roundness pertained to real bread, after the words of consecration; and they were to maintain equally, that the bread is God’s body, in a figurative and sacramental sense. In the remaining part of the treatise, Wycliffe resumes his strictures on the pretensions of the papacy. “After this, should men know concerning the pope’s power in absolving, granting indulgences, and other vain privileges, with cursing. For just as the popes feign that they do miracles, when they *a* . . . more wonderfully than ever did Christ or his apostles; so in absolving and cursing, they feign to themselves an unknown power, and blaspheme and harm the church. Christian men believe, that Peter and Paul, and other apostles, took power of Christ, but only that they might edify the church. And thus all priests, that are Christ’s knights, have power of him to that end; and which of them has the greatest power, it is vain for us to treat. But concerning the deeds of priests we suppose, that he who profiteth the church most, hath most power of Christ. And thus by the (kind of) power which Christ gave to Peter, no man may prove that this priest, the bishop of Rome, hath more power than other priests.” In fact, where the test of spiritual utility is especially needed, it is found, as before shown, to be especially wanting.

It does not follow in a papal election, “that God must sign, when these cardinals have chosen.” Nor should the promise, “Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,” be understood as relating exclusively to an order of priesthood, but as relating to the whole church, and as a declaration, “that Christ shall thus be with his members that he hath ordained to bless.” Adverting to the Romanist interpretation given to the words of our Lord addressed to Peter,—Whatever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosened in heaven, *b*—the Reformer observes, that this reasoning is “full of folly from many causes.” Truly, Christ said thus to Peter, but so he said to the other apostles. Why should Peter have power by this, more than other apostles of Christ? Also, men should know, that these words, which Christ said to Peter, are of no avail to this pope, but as he shall follow Christ and Peter in life. And suppose that all this be truth; “the power intended by Christ cannot have been such as is now dreamt of, since in that case Peter must have sinned in many ways, inasmuch as he did not use this power;” and it is demanded, “Who shall excuse him of this sin?”

“Men should understand what is to bind man above *c* earth. And men must needs see here, that their priest bindeth man above earth, when he bindeth man after God, and not for the flesh, nor for covetousness. And so this pope should teach men that he bindeth thus above earth, and neither in the earth, nor under the earth, but according to the keys above. But this will he never teach, before that Gabriel blows his horn. And if he teach that the church above bindeth thus, or absolveth thus, at his instance, yet he proveth not this great power, and thus grounding (or authority) from God’s law, faileth here shamefully. But if Christ said to Peter, ‘Whatsoever he bound above the earth, is bounden in heaven,’ then it followeth of this pope now living, that whatever thing he feigneth him to bind, is bound of God. But certainly the most ignorant man in this world might shame of such a reason. Furthermore, if we give this pope such power as he feigneth, and if we take heed to his deeds, he shall shame (be ashamed) of such power; for the law of charity would teach, that if he had such power, he should absolve all his subjects from pain, and from trespass, for then he would bring

all men to heaven, and suffer no man to go to hell; and since charity standeth in using the gifts of God to this end, he were too slow in God's service, denying to men the gifts of God; for as he took freely his power, Christ biddeth that he should freely give." Christ, alone, it is maintained, could be equal to the just exercise of such authority, as that claimed in this instance by the popes; and the pontiffs, in claiming the power to do such miracles, in relation to the soul, are shrewdly challenged to furnish evidence of their claim, by doing similar wonders in relation to the body, as in expelling diseases—"Prove ye this greater power," says Wycliffe, "by this less."

The cupidity and extortions of the popes in other respects are then dwelt upon, as in their encouragement of appeals to their authority; in their practices with respect to provisions and commendams; and in their demand of the first-fruits from vacant benefices. By some flatterers of the papacy, it was alleged that "the pope could do no simony, because all benefices are his." Wycliffe replies, that had the pope ever been in possession of such a title, it has been long since forfeited by abuse; "for it often falleth, according to their law, that a tyrant, and a member of the fiend, is put before a member of Christ." hence it has come to pass, that "a man's doing according to the school of Christ, without any other sin," shall be sufficient to bring him to ruin.

XXXI. The only remaining portion of the writings of Wycliffe still in manuscript, to which I shall invite the attention of the reader, in this section, will be his sermons. We have seen in many of the preceding extracts from his various works, that preaching, in the judgment of Wycliffe, was the great agency by which men were to be brought under the influence of religion, and by which they were to be continually edified when they had become religious. The sacraments, and the other services of the church, might have their value; but not such as to supersede, in the slightest degree, the office of preaching—the great office relating to instruction. Wycliffe is never weary of reiterating, that men can never be religious, except as they are enlightened; and that if they were to make advances in devout feeling, and in Christian conduct, it must be as the result of their increasing knowledge of Divine truth. In the esteem of the Reformer, accordingly, the priest or prelate who did not labour assiduously as a preacher, was a man negligent of his great duty, and justly exposed to the severest judgments both from God and man. As holding such doctrine, and as labouring with the greatest earnestness to give to it the utmost publicity, we of course expect to find in Wycliffe a man who will be eminent in the labours of the pulpit. His reputation as a scholar may render it expedient that he should sometimes address himself to the solution of questions which perplexed the less learned intelligence of senators and kings; and his celebrity as a schoolman, and the novelties broached by him in that character, may impose on him the duty of entering the arena of controversy with the most cultivated intellects of his age: but if Wycliffe, in the rector of Lutterworth, is to be judged according to his own doctrine, he must be known within that narrow space as the diligent pastor, and as the laborious preacher. He must not be so occupied with the great and the distant, as to overlook the less, and the more immediate. He may be zealous as a Reformer of the church, but he must be considerate, condescending, exemplary, as the minister of his particular cure. It is sufficient to say, that the Reformer appears to have been, in this respect, all that consistency demanded. We know not the number of sermons composed by Wycliffe, but that copies of nearly three hundred should have been preserved, notwithstanding all the effort made to

destroy whatever had proceeded from his pen, is proof that his labours as a preacher must have been abundant.

Until about the beginning of the thirteenth century two methods of preaching had prevailed: these were technically called “declaring” and “postillating.” According to the former, the preacher commenced by announcing the subject on which he meant to discourse, and proceeded to deliver on the topic thus introduced something more like an oration or essay than a sermon. To postillate was to commence with reading a portion of Scripture, and then taking its parts in the order of the writer, to offer such remarks upon them as tended to explain their meaning, and to secure their application. To the latter method, which was the same with our own custom of “expounding,” another was added about this time, and one by which the ancient practice of declaring was soon almost superseded, and the far better practice of postillating became much less frequent. The sacred text had been recently divided into its present order of chapters, and the dialectic art, to which the schoolmen were so much devoted, suggested the selecting of some brief portion of Scripture as the basis of a sermon, and that the matters introduced to illustrate and establish the doctrine or duty of the passage, should be divided and subdivided in the manner still so generally retained among preachers. This scholastic method of preaching was for some time much opposed, and its follies and mischiefs appear to have been many and considerable. Anthony Wood introduces Roger Bacon as censuring this new custom, and as accounting for its prevalence in the church in a manner which shows that the good friar’s estimate of the mind of the clergy in his time, even of such as rose to the dignity of prelacy, was not much more favourable than that so often expressed by Wycliffe. “The greater part of our prelates,” he writes, “having but little knowledge in divinity, and having been little used to preaching in their youth, when they become bishops, and are sometimes obliged to preach, are under a necessity of begging and borrowing the sermons of certain novices, who have invented a new way of preaching, by endless divisions and quibblings; in which there is neither sublimity of style, nor depth of wisdom, but much childish trifling and folly, unsuitable to the dignity of the pulpit. May God banish this conceited and artificial way of preaching out of his church, for it will never do any good, nor elevate the hearts of the hearers to anything that is great or excellent.”[a](#)

Wycliffe adhered as a preacher to the postillating or expository method. His “postils” appear to have been produced at different times through the interval from 1376, when he became rector of Lutterworth, to the close of 1384, the time of his decease. In some instances, these discourses consist of little more than a few brief notes, attached to an English translation of the lesson for the day; in others, they approach nearer to the length of modern sermons. But when filling several closely-written folio pages, we know not how far to regard them as exhibiting anything more than the general manner of the Reformer’s efforts as a preacher. In many instances they resemble mere outline preparations for the pulpit, topics being briefly indicated rather than fully expounded or discussed. Nor have we any reason to suppose that their being made public was at all the act of the Reformer. Purvey, his curate at Lutterworth, was a man who would not fail to attach great value to such documents, if we suppose them to have fallen into his hands after the decease of their author. But through whatever channel the copies of these discourses now extant have been transmitted, we may

safely conclude that they contain the very matters which were delivered to the people of Lutterworth by their rector. And there is hardly a peculiarity of opinion promulgated by Wycliffe the nature or the progress of which might not be illustrated from these discourses. It should be stated, also, that these compositions are strictly popular in their character. References to abstruse and speculative questions frequently arise, either from the import of the text, or from the reasonings suggested by it; but these are soon dismissed that the attention of the people might be directed to “things more profiting.” Through the whole, the manifold corruptions of the hierarchy are vigorously assailed, as forming the great barrier to all religious improvement. The duties of men, in all relations, are frequently discussed, and always with a careful, and mostly with a judicious reference to the authority of Scripture: while the doctrines of the Gospel are uniformly exhibited, as declaring the guilt and the spiritual infirmities of men to be such, as to show the atonement of Christ to be their only way of pardon, and the grace of the Divine Spirit to be their only hope of purity. We sometimes feel the want of more clearness in the statement of these truths, and we often wish to see them more fully developed, but no room is left to doubt as to their being there, and there as the full substance of the doctrine taught.

In an exposition on the passage from Isaiah, in which the promised Messiah is said to preach the Gospel to the poor, and which our Lord applied to himself in the synagogue of Galilee, Wycliffe has the following observations on reading sermons, and on preaching generally. “From this deed of Christ, men say that it is lawful to write, and afterwards to read a sermon, for thus did Christ, our all-perfect Master. For if men may thus improve the people, what should hinder them to have this manner? Certainly the labour of the preacher, or the fame of having a good wit, should not be the end of preaching, but profit to the souls of the people; and however this end cometh best, that is most pleasing to God. But curious preaching of Latin is full far from this end, for many men thus preach themselves, and leave to preach Christ.”^a

On the text, “Let a man so guess of us as of the ministers of God and dispensers of his services”^b—the preacher remarks: “If each Christian man should be found true in this respect, priests, both high and low, should be more true. And the sin of failure in this respect among priests is most foul. As if the pope and his bishops were ashamed to be Christ’s servants, in their manner of living they show an emperor’s life, and are lordly in the world. Since Christ hated this kind of life, they give no ground to guess them to be ministers of Christ. And so in the first word of this belief which Paul teacheth, they fail. Lord, what good doth this prating that the pope will here be called most blessed father, and bishops most reverend men, since their life discardeth from Christ? They show in the taking of this name that they are on the fiend’s side, children of the father of leasings. For if he say, after Gregory, that he is the servant of servants, his life reverseth his name. He faileth to follow Christ, since he is not the dispenser of services which God hath bidden, but he departeth to the lordship which the emperor hath given. And so all the services of the church which Christ hath limited to his priests, are turned to the contrary side, and so to the service of the fiend. So that if men take heed to the service of the church as Christ hath limited it, it is all turned upside down, and hypocrites are become rulers.” Thus the signs of a true priestly character are said to be often wanting where the office of priesthood is assumed, and in such cases the people owe not the reverence due to priesthood.

The apostle proceeds to say, “To me it is for the least thing that I be judged of you, or else of man’s judgment, but I judge not myself.” On this passage the preacher observes—“And thus men shall not be harmed because of the blind judgment of man, for God himself will judge all men, either to good or evil. Therefore Paul taketh little heed to the judgment that man judgeth, for he knew well from Scripture, that if God judgeth thus, then the judgment must stand, and that nothing else will stand but God’s judgment. Thus there are two days—the day of the Lord, and man’s day. The day of the Lord is the day of doom, when he shall judge all manner of men. The day of man is now present, in which man judgeth, according to man’s law; and this judgment will be reversed if it aught reverse reason. But at the last day of doom all shall stand to God’s judgment. So that will be the day of the Lord, for all shall then be as he wills, and his judgment shall not be contravened, for nothing may reverse it. Therefore Paul saith, Judge nothing before the time: until the time of the Lord come, the which shall light the hidden things of darkness, and shall make known the counsels of the hearts. This moveth many men to think upon God’s law day and night, for that disposeth to know what is God’s will; and without knowing this should a man do nothing, and this moveth many men to flee man’s judgment. Paul chargeth not the judgment of men, whether priests or lords, but the truth of Holy Writ, which is the will of the first Judge, was enough for him until doomsday. And thus stewards of the church should not judge wickedly by their own will, but merely after God’s law, in things of which they are certain. But the laws and judgments which Antichrist hath brought in, putting God’s law behind, mar too much the church of Christ. For to the stewards of the church, the laws of Antichrist are rules to make officers therein, and to condemn the laity. Antichrist challengeth here to be fully God’s fellow, for he saith that if he judgeth thus, his will should be taken for reason, and this is the highest point that falleth to God in respect of his Godhead. Popes and kings, therefore, should seek a reason above their own will, for such blasphemy often bringeth to men more than the pride of Lucifer. For he said, he should fly up and be like the highest lord, but he challenged not to be God’s fellow, even with him, or passing him. God bring down this pride, and help that his word reverse the word of the fiend! Well, indeed, I know, that this smoke shall disappear when it is at the highest.”

The attentive reader will be sensible that in these passages the thoughts and language of Wycliffe come strongly before him, and will require no further evidence in respect to the authorship of these discourses.

In the exposition of the gospel for Christmas day, Wycliffe proceeds thus:—“On Christmas day we may say a little child is born to us, for Jesus by our belief is born.—We take it as our belief, that as our first parents had sinned, satisfaction must be made for sins to the righteousness of God. For as God is merciful, so he is full of righteousness. But how shall he judge all the world, but if he keep his righteousness here. For the Lord against whom this sin is done, is the Lord all-mighty, and all-righteous, since no sin may be done, but it is done against God. And ever, the higher the lord is against whom the sin is done, ever the greater is the sin—as it were a great sin to do against the king’s bidding. But the sin is more without measure to do against God’s bidding. But God, according to our belief, bid Adam not to eat the apple. Yet he broke God’s commandment, and was not held excused therein; neither by his own

folly, nor by Eve, nor by the serpent; and thus by the righteousness of God, this sin must always be punished.

“And it is a light word to say, that God might of his power forgive this sin without the aseetha which was made for it, for God might do so if he would; but his justice would not suffer it, but requires that each trespass be punished, either in earth or in hell. And God may not accept a person to forgive him his sin without satisfaction, for in so doing he would give free leave to man and angel to sin; and then, sin were no sin, and our God were no God.

“We conclude also that the man who should make satisfaction for the sin of our first father must needs be God and man. For as man’s nature trespassed, so man’s nature must make satisfaction. And therefore it was not possible that an angel should make satisfaction for man, for he has not the might, nor was it a nature like his which in this case had sinned. But since all men are one person, if any member of this person maketh satisfaction, he maketh satisfaction for all this person. By this we may see that if God had made a man of nought, and anew, after the manner of Adam, yet he were holden to God as much as he might for himself, and so he might not make satisfaction for himself, and for Adam’s sin. And so, since satisfaction must be made for Adam’s sin, as it is said, the person making satisfaction must be both God and man; for then the worthiness of the person’s deed were even with the worthiness of the sin.”

The third point, which must needs follow from the two before, is said to be—“that a child is born to man to make atonement for man’s sin, and this child must needs be God and man, given to man. And he must needs bear his empire on his shoulders, and suffer for man; and this child is Jesus, whom we suppose was born to-day. And we suppose that this child was born to those only who follow him in his manner of living, for he was born against others. The men who are unjust, and proud, and rebel against God, have this judgment in Christ, that they must needs be condemned of him, and most certainly if they are grievous to their death towards his Spirit. And thus, if we covet well that this child is born to us, have we joy of this child, and follow we him in these three virtues; in righteousness, meekness, and patience for our God. For whoever is opposed to Christ and his Spirit in these virtues unto his death, must needs be condemned of this child, even as all others must be saved. And thus, the joy of this child, who was all meekness, and full of virtues, should make men to be little in malice, and then they should hold well this feast. Study we how Christ came in the fulness of time, when he should; how he came in meekness at his birth; how he came in patience from his birth unto his death; and follow we him in these three, for joy that we have of him, for this joy in this patience bringeth to joy that ever shall last.”

The extract following was meant, no doubt, to show to the people of Lutterworth, that the itinerant labours of the Reformer’s “poor priests,” were in imitation of the highest possible example. “This Gospel telleth of the office that should fall to Christ’s disciples, and so it telleth how priests should now, both greater and less, occupy themselves in the church in serving God. And first, Jesus showeth truly the love that he taught. The Gospel saith how Jesus went about in the country, both in great places and less, as cities and castles, to teach, and to profit men generally, and not to forbear to preach to a people because they be few, and our fame may be little. For we should

labour for God, and from him hope for our thanks. By castles, we understand little towns, and no doubt Christ went to small uplandish towns, as to Bethphage, and Cana in Galilee. For Christ went to those places where he wished to do good, and he travelled not for money, for he was not smitten either with pride, or with covetousness.”^a It is then deplored, that the jurisdiction set up by the prelates prevented good men from following the example of Christ in this particular. He was freely admitted to synagogues, which, Wycliffe remarks, “were then, what churches are among us.” In another of his discourses, he observes on this subject, “Jesus ever had this manner,—to speak God’s words where he knew that they might profit the people who heard them. And so Christ preached often, now at meat, and now at supper, and at whatever time it was convenient for others to hear him.”^b

The following passage may be taken as a specimen of the Reformer’s more practical and familiar method of teaching. “As men in fevers desire not that which is best for them, so men in sin covet not that which is best for them in this world. The world said that the apostles were fools, and forsaken of God; and so it would say to-day of all who live like them, for worldly joy and worldly good pleaseth them, and they savour not of heavenly things, nor of a right following after Christ. And this judgment by the world is a manifest witness against men, that they are not holy, but turned aside to worldly things: for as the palate of a sick man, distempered from good meat, moveth him to covet things contrary to his health, so it is of man’s soul that savoureth not of God’s law. And as the want of natural appetite is a sign deadly to man; so this want in respect to the knowledge of God is a sign of his second death.” Some men, the preacher observes, have learned to interpret the success of their worldly enterprises as a mark of the Divine approval; but it is added—“We should leave these sensible appearances, and take the examples of holy men, as of Christ and his apostles, how they had not here their bliss; but that here Christ ordained the pain, and the hatred of the world, much suffering to the men whom he most loved, that we might be taught to follow after him. And thus patient suffering in this earth should be taken as the sign of God’s love.”^c

In the following terms Wycliffe speaks concerning the sufferings of Christ—“Men mark the passion of Christ, and print it in their hearts, somewhat to follow it. It was the most willing passion that ever was, and the hardest passion ever man suffered. It was thus willing, and so most meritorious; and therefore Christ foretold the form of his passion to his twelve disciples, when he went to Jerusalem. And therefore Christ, who before had concealed himself to come to the city, came now to suffer, in a way to show his free will. Therefore he saith at the supper, With desire have I coveted to eat of this passover with you. The desire of his Godhead, and the desire of his manhood, moved him to eat thereof, and to suffer after. But all this was significant, and in figure of his last supper which he eateth in heaven, with the men whom he hath chosen. And since Christ suffered thus cheerfully for the sin of his brethren, they should suffer thankfully for their own sin, and purpose to forsake it. And this is the cause why God would have the passion of Christ rehearsed, for the profit of his brethren, and not for his own. This pain of Christ’s passion passed all other. For he was a most tender man, and in middle age, and God by miracle allowed his mind to suffer, else by reason of joy he might not have known sorrow. But in Christ’s passion were all things that could make pain hard, and to make it the more meritorious. The place was most

solemn, and the day also, and the hour the most solemn to Jews or heathens. And the despite was most, for men who should most have loved Christ ordained this most foul death against his surpassing kindness. We should believe also that Christ suffered not in any manner except for some certain reason, for he is both God and man, who made all things in their number, and so would shape his passion to answer to the greatness of man's sin. So follow we after Christ in his blessed passion, and gather we our devout mind from him."^a

Our next extract touches on some points of theological doctrine. It occurs in an exposition of the narrative concerning the healing of the centurion's servant. "We should know that faith is the gift of God, and so God may not give it to man except he give it graciously. And thus all the goods which men have are gifts of God. And thus when God rewardeth a good work of man, he crowneth his own gift. And this is of grace, for all things which men have from the will of God, are of grace. God's goodness is the first cause why he giveth men these goods, and so it may not be that God doeth good to men, except he confer these goods freely by his own grace, and with this we shall grant that men deserve of God. Learn we of this knight to be meek in heart, and in word, and in deed; for he granted first, that he was under man's power, and yet by power of man he might do many things. Much more should we know that we are under God's power, and that we may do nothing but by the power of God. And if we disuse this power, woe shall be to us. But this root of meekness shall beget other virtues in us, and grace of God to deserve meed in heaven, as it was in this gentle knight." It will be seen, that though the expressions here employed by the Reformer are to us somewhat strange, his real doctrine is, that the graces which fit men for rising to the enjoyment of rewards, and the rewards themselves, are alike from the grace of God—it is God crowning his own work, according to a principle of moral congruity or fitness.^a In another of these discourses the Reformer adverts, with his characteristic force and boldness, to the intolerance of hierarchy. "Freedom is much coveted, as men know naturally, but much should Christian men covet the better freedom of Christ. But it is known that Antichrist hath now more enthralled the church than it was under the old law, while men might not bear that service. And Antichrist maketh new laws now, and groundeth them not on God and man; for more ceremonies are now brought in than were in the old law; and more do they tarry men to come to heaven than did the scribes and Pharisees by their traditions. And the root of this thraldom is the lordship which Antichrist hath, for he challengeth to be full lord, both of spiritual and temporal. He so preventeth Christian men from serving Christ in freedom, that they may say, as the poet saith in his proverb the frog said to the arrow—Cursed be so many masters! For now Christian men are oppressed, now with popes, and now with bishops, now with cardinals under popes, and now with prelates under bishops, as one would buffet a football. But surely if the Baptist were not worthy to loose the latchet of Christ's shoe, Antichrist hath no power thus to hinder the freedom which Christ hath bought. Christ gave this freedom to man to come lightly to the bliss of heaven, but Antichrist wearieth man to give him money. Ever do these hypocrites fear, lest God's law should be shown, and they be thus convicted of their falsehood. For God and his law are stronger than they, and these hypocrites may only hold man for a time in this fiend's thraldom."^b

In a subsequent discourse, Wycliffe speaks thus on the connexion between suffering in the cause of God, and the enjoyment of his favour. “Whosoever suffereth here, never so much, for God’s sake, his suffering must have reward that shall pass all his travail. But since this is certain, who would grudge against God for this travail? and since God sustaineth man, and moveth him, and helpeth him, for to travail such travail, how should it not be of grace? And thus reward for this travail must needs all come of grace. If a man suffer to the death, in a good manner, in God’s cause, he hath everlasting life, which is better. Man was made in a state that he might ever live in, and, without death and other mischiefs, be translated into the bliss of heaven. But by sin he is needed to suffer pain and death. But Christ has bought him again to the state he should first have had. And thus these reasonings of the apostle move men gladly to suffer for Christ; and as God rewardeth man by grace, over that he deserveth, so the state which man hath now in heaven, is better than was the state of innocence. And this fact should move men to become martyrs for the love of Christ.”^a

We give, in conclusion, a few shorter passages, such as abound in these discourses, and such as, compared with the other works of the Reformer, contribute to establish the identity of authorship. “As no word of God’s law hath any strength but as Christ speaketh it; so no word of man’s law should be loved but if Christ speak it. Christ is truth, and no word should be loved but for its truth—since he is God his words may not be amended.”^b The third homily speaks of baptism in threefold, by blood, by water, and by the Holy Ghost, of which the last is the best, and that must be from God. In the seventh he says, “John is not Elias personally, as he himself confesseth, but he is Elias figuratively—and just so the sacred host is very bread in kind,^c and God’s body in figure.” In an early part of this volume allusion is made to King Richard as then reigning. This passage, and others containing similar references to contemporary circumstances, help, as elsewhere observed, to determine the date of these productions. Thus, when the Reformer says, in a subsequent page, that the “two bishops,” Annas and Caiaphas, did not prevent the preaching of John the Baptist, and that from this fact “it seemeth to many men that prelates who hinder true priests from preaching freely the Gospel are worse than these two bishops,” the reference to the labours and difficulties of the “poor priests” is sufficiently plain.^d In the same connexion the preacher speaks of “fleeing the sour dow of the Pharisees:” and censuring the secular lordship of the clergy, ascribes it to the evil of ecclesiastical endowments. “Therefore say many prelates that no man who hath a cure should live but on God’s part, that is on tithes and offerings, and so by clear title of alms should they have goods; for thus lived Christ, the highest pope: and who art thou that thou wilt not live thus,—wouldst thou be greater than Christ, who is Lord of all this world?” But while the people are said to owe such contributions to true priests, as much as they owe any debt to any man, it is asked—“By what reason should he have tithes and offerings from the people, that liveth in lust and idleness, and profiteth not to his people? Certainly this were a fiend’s law to give God’s part to such men.”^a On the papal supremacy he did not scruple to speak thus—“We suppose that Antichrist, the head of all these evil men, is the pope of Rome.”^b

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SECTION II.

ON THE REMAINING WRITINGS OF WYCLIFFE STILL IN MANUSCRIPT, AND INCLUDING SUCH WORKS AS ARE KNOWN ONLY BY THEIR TITLES.

XXXII. *Contra Mendicitatem Validam*. In English, and beginning—*Most Worshipful and Gentlest Lord Duke of Glocester*. It sets forth the substance of a discussion before the duke on questions at issue between a clergyman and a friar. The former half of it is occupied in giving a summary of the debate as it respected certain theological opinions; the latter presents some of the most plausible things to be said in favour of the begging practices of the friars, with the common arguments opposed to that usage. In the preliminary discussion Wycliffe states, “God is so good, that in each goodness he is before, and in each evil he cometh after the effect.” This is one of a collection of MSS. in Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. The volume containing it is thus described in the “*Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Angliæ et Hiberniæ*,” published in Oxford in 1697, as “*Jo. Wicliffe’s Works to the Duke of Lancaster in 1368*.” But this description is by a modern hand, and is erroneous. Most of the pieces in that volume are manifestly of a much later date. There is no ground to suppose that any of them should be ascribed to a period so early as 1368, except the piece intitled, *De Ultima Ætate Ecclesiæ*, of which mention will be made in the section relating to works of the Reformer which have been printed. The mention of the year 1356 in that tract, has probably led to the error in respect to the date of the other pieces. We have no means of fixing the date of this piece addressed to the Duke of Glocester. It should not, I think, be placed among his earlier or his latest productions.

XXXIII. *De Sathanæ astu contra Fidem*. This tract begins, *The fiend seeketh many ways to mar men in belief*. It consists of two pages only, and is in the same volume with the preceding piece, in Trin. Coll. Dub.

XXXIV. *In Regulam Minoritarum*. In English, in C.C.C. Cambridge. Sometimes described as the Rule of St. Francis—the Testament of St. Francis.

XXXV. *Determinationes Eucharistiæ*:—*Ad rationis Kyningham*:—and, *Determinationes Magistri J. Wicklyff contra Carmelitam Kyningham*, appear to be different descriptions of the same treatise, which was an answer to a Carmelite friar concerning a pretended miracle urged in support of the doctrine of transubstantiation. C.C.C. College, Cambridge. Lambeth Library. Knighton de Event. Angliæ, p. 2650.

XXXVI. *De Questionibus variis contra Clerum*. In English, in Lambeth Palace Library. Cat. MS. 151. Another copy in the same library, No. 30, called *Questiones XXVI*. It begins, *Almighty God in Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, both in the old law and the new*.

XXXVII. *De Modo Orandi*. In English, in the Bodleian Library, Laud, C. 3, and in the British Museum, Cotton MSS. Titus D. xix. It is also intitled, *De Duodecim Impedimentis Precationum*, or, *The Twelve Lettings of Prayer*. In the prologue of the MS. in the British Museum, the twelve hinderances of prayer are enumerated—“sin, doubting, asking things we ought not,” &c.

XXXVIII. *De Anima*. A part of this treatise, under the title, *De Incarnatione Verbi*, is in the British Museum. Bib. Reg. 7, B. iii.

XXXIX. *De Virtutibus et Vitiis*. In the British Museum, is a short tract under this title. Titus, D. xix. It treats on the following matters: The seven works of mercy, bodily and ghostly; five bodily wits; five wits ghostly; the cardinal virtues; septem mortalia peccata. “In Bib. Reg. 7, A. xxvi. is another copy of this tract which varies considerably from the former: in some instances the chapters are abridged, in others the chapters considerably altered,—a liberty very common with the transcribers of those times. This MS. varies from the preceding in another respect, as it treats of the Seven Sacraments; Six Manners of consenting to Sin; Four Things that needen to man.” Baber, 47.

XL. *Pauper Rusticus*; *Confessio derelicti Pauperis*; and the *Pore Caitif*—different titles of the same treatise. It consists of a series of tracts in English, intended to present the elements of religious instruction in a form adapted to the humblest of the people capable of reading. It is described by its author, as “sufficient to teach simple men and women, of good-will, the right way to heaven.” There are copies of this work in the Lambeth Palace Library; in Trinity College, Dublin; and in the British Museum. These collections vary a little from each other. The pieces included in the Dublin MS. are as follows: Of the Creed.—*The ground of all goodness is stedfast faith*, &c. Of the Commandments,—*A man asked of Christ what he should do*, &c. Of the Paternoster,—*Christ saith, Who that loveth me shall keep my commandments*, &c. Of Perfect Life,—*Christ, not compelling, but freely counselling each man*, &c. Of Temptation,—*But he that is verily fed with this bread that came down*, &c. Of the Charter of our Heavenly Heritage,—*Every wise man that claimeth his heritage*, &c. Of Ghostly Battle,—*The Almighty saith by holy Job*, &c. Of the Love of Jesus,—*Whoever you be that araiest thee to love God*, &c. Of Man’s will,—*Every deed punishable, either reproveable of man’s will*, &c. Of Contemplative Life,—*Christ loved much Mary, and Martha her sister*, &c. Of Chastity,—*I write this treatise in five short chapters*, &c. The substance of this work has been printed in the *British Reformers*, from the copy in the British Museum.

XLI. *Expositio Orationis Dominicæ*. This is a different comment on the Lord’s Prayer from that which forms part of the “*Pore Catif*.” It enters more on the subject of ecclesiastical abuses. “In Lambeth Library, Cott. MSS. 594, is a transcript of the ‘*Prologus in Expositionem Orationis Dominicæ*.’ Herein are condemned the lucrative catholic tenets of works of supererogation, indulgences, and auricular confession, and the Romish hierarchy are reproved for withholding from the people the scriptures in the vernacular tongue.” Baber, 48. Lewis, No. 89.

XLII. In Apocalypsin. This is an exposition of parts of the Apocalypse. It begins thus—*Saint Paul the apostle saith that all those who would live meekly in Christ Jesus, &c.* It is in the British Museum, Bib. Reg. E. 67.

XLIII. Sermo in festo Animarum; de Sermone Domini in Monte; and Octe Beatitudines, appear to be different titles of the same work. It is in English in the British Museum, Cott. MSS. Titus, D. xix. It is in Latin in Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. 362. S.C. 5. 8. No. 13. The English discourse begins—*Friends, St. John Chrysostom on the homily upon this Gospel saith, &c.* Wycliffe was charged with having published seventy-four erroneous opinions in this discourse.

XLIV. In XVII. caput Joannis. *Pubelevatis oculis in cælum Jesus.* This is a homily in English, beginning—*This Gospel telleth what loves, &c.* It is among the Wycliffe MSS. in C.C.C. Cambridge.

XLV. De Surdo et Muto apud Marcum. *Iterum exiens de finibus Tyri.* This is another homily in English. It begins—*This Gospel telleth a miracle, &c.* It is in Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. 349. Class 4.

XLVI. De Pharisæo et Publicano. This is a detached homily also, attributed to Wycliffe. Lewis, No. 97. It begins—*This Gospel telleth in a parable, &c.*

XLVII. Speculum Peccatoris. *Quoniam in via sumus vitæ labentis.* This tract has the English title—*Visitation of sick men, and begins thus—My dear son or daughter, it seemeth that thou lightest fast, &c. &c.* It is attributed to Wycliffe, and is in the British Museum. Bib. Reg. E. 1732.

XLVIII. Augustinus arguam te quando nescis. It begins—*The holy Doctor St. Austin, speaking in the person of Christ.* It is in the collection, C.C.C. Cambridge.

XLIX. Speculum Secularium Dominorum. *Cum veritas fidei eo plus rutillet.* “Archbishop Usher tells us that a copy of this tract is in MS. in the King’s Library, in Latin. By what his grace has transcribed from it, it appears that Dr. Wiclif had written before, *Prospeculum Secularum Dominorum*, in English.” Lewis, No. 137.

L. De Blasphemia. “Archbishop Usher quotes this tract in his book *De Christianarum Ecclesiarum Successione*, and tells us that in it Wiclif observes that the true doctrine of the sacrament of the eucharist was retained in the church a thousand years, ‘even till the loosing of Satan.’” Lewis, No. 199.

LI. Five Bodily Witts. There is a tract under this title in Trinity College, Cambridge, B. 8. 37. It begins—*Thus should a man rule his five bodily witts.*

LII. Seven Works of Bodily Mercy, and Seven Deeds of Ghostly Mercy. Works with these titles are in the Public Library of Cambridge, 120. No. 467.

LIII. Of Pride. It begins—*Pride is too much love that a man hath to himself, &c.* Bib. Reg. Titus, D. xix.

LIV. *De Actibus Animæ*. There is a Latin treatise under this title in C.C.C. Cambridge, attributed to Wycliffe. It begins—*Gratia dicendarum restat tractatus de actibus*.

LV. Here beginneth the Nine Virtues, &c. There is a tract in the British Museum under this title, attributed to Wycliffe. Bib. Reg. E. 1732. It begins—*All manner of men should hold God's biddings, &c.*

LVI. A Discourse in old English against the Vices of the Clergy, and the Usurpations of the Bishop of Rome in the Affairs of the Church of England, drawn up in Thirty-seven Articles. Trinity College, Dublin, Class C. Tab. i. No. 14. This work is also in the British Museum, Bib. Reg. Titus, D., and is attributed to Wycliffe by Wanley. It is throughout expressive of Wycliffe's opinions, and many passages are transcripts from his different works: it may be the work of the Reformer, or it may have been an attempt on the part of some disciple to bring the sum of his doctrines together, in the shape of so many distinct articles.

LVII. Of Temptation of the Fiend. There is an imperfect work under this title in Trinity College, Dublin, Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12.

LVIII. How Men of private Religion should love more the Gospel of God's Hests, and his Ordinance, than any new Laws, new Rules, and Customs of sinful Men. This is a piece which immediately follows the preceding in the same collection, pp. 152—156.

LIX. *Tractatus Evangelii de Sermone Domini in Monte, cum Expositorio Orationis Dominicæ*. This is the title given to the first section of a manuscript volume in Trinity College, Dublin, Class C. Tab. i. No. 23. These expositions, with a further exposition of the sixth and seventh chapters of Matthew, extend, if my notes may be trusted on this point, to page 195 of the volume.

Tractatus de Antichristo, cum expositorio in xxiii. xxiv. xxv. cap. St. Matthew. This work closes with page 313.

Tractatus in Sermonem Domini, quem fecerat valedicendo discipulis suis. pp. 313—333.

These three pieces, as bearing three distinct titles, have been not unnaturally described separately, in the catalogue of the Trinity College MSS., and by Bale, Lewis, and other writers. It is plain, however, from certain passages, that they have a connexion with each other, though they appear to have been written as separate treatises, and to have been first known as such to the Reformer's disciples.

LX. *Tractatus de statu Innocentiæ*. This work is in the same volume. It extends to about seventeen pages, and begins—*Ut supradicta magis appareant oportet parumper disgrede*. To what this "supradicta" refers, does not appear; and it is not uncommon in the writings of Wycliffe to find parts of treatises thus detached, and known by separate titles,—a circumstance which has added much to the difficulty of presenting a complete and accurate account of his productions.

LXI. *Tractatus de Tempore*. This work is detached from its original connexion. It is the treatise described by the same title in Trinity College Library, Cambridge, and numbers thirty-seven pages in the Dublin volume, but not more than ten of the large folio volume in Cambridge.

The remaining part of this volume is occupied with pieces expository of different passages of Scripture, and with one document under the following title:—

LXII. *De Captivo Hispanensi—filia comitis de Dene incarcerato infra septa Westmonast.* It relates to a question concerning the rights of sanctuary. I am not aware of the ground on which it has been attributed to Wycliffe. Wycliffe's connexion with John of Gaunt may have led to his giving publicity to such a paper. Mention is made of the case to which it refers by several historians, and a number of papers relating to it may be seen in Rymer's *Fœdera*.

LXIII. *De Veritate Scripturæ*. A large work under this title is preserved in the Bodleian Library, and in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. The copy in the Bodleian is imperfect at the beginning, the first page commencing in a part of the first chapter. The copy in Dublin, which is perfect, commences with these words,—*Restat parumper discutere errores et concordias circa sensus Scripturæ hodie plus solito seminatos, tum quia in ea consistit salus fidelium.* The treatise ends thus,—*Istud itaque dixerim pro nunc in communi de heresi, ut sciatur ex fructu veritatis Scripturæ notare et cavare hereticos, et ut planius intelligatur tractatus de simonia, quem si Deus voluerit diffusius pertractare.* The close of the Bodleian MS. agrees with that of the MS. in Dublin, but the first page is without any initial letter or heading, and begins in the middle of a sentence.

In both manuscripts the chapters are thirty-one in number, but the chapters six and seven are not duly marked in the Bodleian copy. This copy closes on the middle of the last page, and the scribe has indicated the completeness of the work by placing its title in the space below.

The volume in the Bodleian is a small folio; it numbers 621 pages, and each page consists of about twenty-six lines. The Dublin copy does not exceed 244 pages, but the pages are larger, and double-columned, with nearly a thousand words in each. The volume in the Bodleian includes no other treatise; in the Dublin volume the *De Veritate Scripturæ* is followed by three other treatises, bearing the following titles:—*De Simonia—De Apostasia—De Blasphemia.* The treatise *De Simonia* begins thus,—*Post generalem sermonem de heresi, restat de ejus partibus pertractandum.* It consists of eight chapters, and extends to about forty pages. The treatise *De Apostasia* commences—*Restat ulterius ponere aliud principium pro ambitu heresis simoniacæ perscrutando; quamvis enim simonia, blasfemia, et apostasia committuntur ad subsistendi, &c.* It extends to nearly twenty pages, and is divided into two chapters. The remaining part of the volume is occupied with the treatise *De Blasphemia*, which begins—*Restat succincte de blasfemia pertractandum. Est autem blasfemia insipiens detractio honoris domini.*

It has been supposed, partly from the order in which these pieces succeed each other, and partly from the references made in them from one to the other, that they were all portions of a large theological work. This notion derives some support also from the manner in which the names of these pieces occur in a work bearing the title *Summa Theologica*. "This title appears in a very ancient manuscript catalogue of Wycliffe's writings, which is in the imperial library at Vienna. The work is described as consisting of twelve chapters, the titles of which are as follows:—1. De Mandatis. 2. De Statu Innocentiæ. 3, 4, 5. De Dominio. 6. De Veritate Scripturæ. 7. De Ecclesia. 8. De Officio Regis. 9. De Postate Papæ. 10. De Simonia. 11. De Apostasia. 12. De Blasphemia."—Baber, xlvi. Here it will be seen that three pieces intervene between the *De Veritate Scripturæ*, and the three treatises which immediately succeed it in the Dublin MS. On what authority the title *Summa Theologica* is given to the whole collection we do not know. That title is possibly of a later date than the works themselves. Indeed, few things were more common among the transcribers of the fourteenth century, than to place a number of treatises together, all having completeness in themselves, and all, it may be, published separately, while certain of them contain allusions, and have, probably, some relation to each other. In the writings of Wycliffe, references in one treatise, to the contents of another, are very common, without being meant to indicate more than that it was not necessary to discuss a topic again which had been discussed elsewhere.

It is important to remark, that in the tenth chapter of the Bodleian copy of the *De Veritate Scripturæ*, there is a reference to the vigil of the annunciation in 1378, which determines the date of this production. This work, in both the existing copies, is exceedingly difficult to read, consisting as it does, in great part, of obscure discussions, which have been rendered still more unintelligible by the barbarous and technical Latin in which they are clothed, and by the abbreviated, and almost illegible, character of the writing. Dr. James, the author of the work intitled "An Apology for John Wicliffe," was the librarian of the Bodleian, in the time of James I. In that work he has given many passages from the *De Veritate Scripturæ*, but in the manuscript volume of extracts from the writings of Wycliffe, preserved in the Bodleian, in the hand-writing of Dr. James, there are characteristic passages transcribed from the *De Veritate Scripturæ*, extending to nearly a hundred pages. These passages, and such parts of the work itself as may be deciphered with an approach to certainty, warrant the description which I have given of his treatise in the "Life and Opinions of Wycliffe."

LXIV. In a volume in Trinity College, Dublin, are the following works attributed to Wycliffe. Class C. Tab. 5. No. 6.

i. Three pieces, on the Creed, the Paternoster, and the Ave Maria, two pages each. The first begins—*It is sooth that belief is grounded, &c.* The second—*We shall believe that this Paternoster, &c.* The third—*Men greet commonly our Lady, God's moder, &c.*

ii. Of the Seven Heresies. It begins—*For false men multiply books of the church, &c.* The seven heresies are divided into seven chapters. The contents of this piece show it to be from the pen of Wycliffe, the whole being directed after his manner against the

friars; and the fourth heresy, which is said to consist in saying, “that the sacred host is in no manner bread, but either nought, or an accident without a subject,” shows that this is one of the Reformer’s later productions. Fol. 4—9.

iii. Of the Decalogue. This begins—*All manner of men should hold God’s biddings*. The part of the decalogue relating to God, is treated in twelve chapters; that relating to man in twenty-eight. Fol. 9—27.

iv. On Faith, Hope, and Charity. It begins—*For it is said in holding of our holiday*. This is a work in six chapters, but does not exceed six pages. Fol. 27—30.

v. Of the Seven Works of Bodily Mercy. It begins—*If a man were sure that to-morrow he should come before a judge*. Fol. 30—35.

vi. Opera Caritatis. Beginning—*Sith we should serve our parishioners in spiritual alms*. Fol. 35—38. This piece, and the two preceding, are in the library of New College, Oxford.

vii. Septem Peccata Capitalia. Beginning—*Since belief teacheth us that every evil is either sin or cometh of sin*. This is the work of which an account is given from the copy in the Bodleian in the preceding pages. See pp. 66—71. It extends, in the MS. from page 38 to 63.

viii. De Ecclesia et Membris ejus. This work is also in the British Museum, and for an account of it see pp. 74—79 of this volume. Fol. 63 to 75.

ix. De Apostasia et Dotatione Ecclesiæ. It begins—*Since each Christian man is holden*. It exhibits, as the title suggests, the doctrine of Wycliffe concerning the evils of ecclesiastical endowments. Fol. 76—80.

x. Tractatus de pseudo Freris. It begins—*For many beren heavy that friars be called pseudo, or hypocrites*. It consists of arguments against the peculiarities of the religious orders. Fol. 81—95.

xi. Of the Eight Woes that God wished to Friars. Beginning—*“Christ biddeth us beware with these false prophets.”* This piece relates to the same subject with the preceding, but consists of a parallel between the Pharisees and the mendicants. Fol. 95—101.

xii. Egressus Jesus de templo. It begins—*This Gospel telleth much wisdom that is hid to many men*. Homily on Matt. xxiv. Also, in Trinity College, and C. C. C. Cambridge. This is a detached homily. In the volume of homilies in the British Museum, Bib. Reg. 18 B. ix. p. 175, is the following passage—*“All our west land is with one pope or the other, and he that is with the one hateth the other and all his. And yet hypocrites feign that all this is for charity, but this hypocrisy is worse than the sin before.”* The first part of this sentence, it seems, is in the Dublin MS., and comparison would probably show that it is merely a strayed postil. Fol. 101—116.

- xiii. Of Antichrist and his Meynee, or train—followers. This begins—*Dauids saith, Lord, set thou a law-maker upon me*. This is probably the tract mentioned under the title *De Antichristo et Membris*. But the latter piece, according to Bale, begins—*Quemadmodum Dominus Jesus ordinavit*. Fol. 116—124.
- xiv. Of Antichrist's Song in the Church. It begins—*Also prelates, priests, and friars, put on simple men, that they say that God's office or service be not to be sung with note*. Fol. 124—126.
- xv. Of Prayer, a Treatise. Beginning—*Also bishops and friars putten to poor men that they say, &c.* This piece ends on the next fol., 127.
- xvi. *Nota de Confessione*. This work extends to eleven pages, and begins—*Two virtues be in man's soul, by which a man should be ruled*. Fol. 127—138.
- xvii. Christ, forsooth, did all that he could to obey Lords. This is the beginning of a tract without title, ending on the same page.
- xviii. *Nota de Sacramento Altaris*. It begins—*Christian men's belief, taught of Jesus Christ, God and man*.—Fol. 138—145.
- xix. Chrysostom saith, that fishers and buystouse men, making each day nets. This is the beginning of a piece without a title. It does not exceed two pages. Fol. 146.
- xx. St. Bernard speaketh thus to the Pope. This is the beginning of another piece without title. Fol. 146—152.
- xxi. God moveth Holy Church by many manner of speeches to know. This also is the beginning of a piece without title. It consists of a dialogue between Christ and Satan. Fol. 152—154.
- xxii. Neither man nor woman may perfectly do the seven works of mercy—*Clerks know that a man hath five wits outward*. These are the beginnings of pieces without title. They extend to little more than a page each. They appear to be shorter tracts on subjects which the Reformer had discussed more largely in other works, if indeed they are to be regarded as from his pen.
- xxiii. Here are questions and answers put that are written hereafter. The work which thus begins is without title. It extends over more than forty leaves—from page 164 to 218 of the volume: and I had taken this note of its extent at the time of examining it, but from some subsequent oversight I failed to describe it correctly in my former catalogue of the Wycliffe MSS. This is the piece which has been recently published by the Camden Society, under the editorship of Dr. Todd, librarian of Trinity College, Dublin. It is published under the title of “Wycliffe's Apology,” but I have shown elsewhere that it is not a work of the Reformer's. [a](#)
- xxiv. The following are the beginnings of three other short pieces, forming the conclusion of this volume. *It is written in the first book of Holy Writ, that there were*

three patriarchs. These be the nine points that the Lord Jesus answered a holy man. Of the deeds of mercy God will speak at the dreadful day. Fol. 218, 219.

LXV. In the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, is a folio volume with the following works attributed to Wycliffe. MS. 326. c. 5, 8. They consist of scholastic treatises on philosophical and theological topics, and the uninitiated reader will be able to form a sufficient notion of their character from the account of the first three books of the *Triialogus* in the present volume.

i. *De ente Communi. In primis supponitur ens esse, hoc enim non probari potest nec ignorari ab aliquo.* Fol. 1—5.

ii. *De ente Primo. Extenso ente secundum ejus maximam ampliationem, possibile est venari in tanto ambitu ens primum.* Fol. 5—9.

iii. *De Purgando Errores et Veritate in Communi. Consequens est purgare errores.* Fol. 15—23.

iv. *De Purgando Errores et Universalibus in Communi. Tractatu continentur dicta de universalibus.*

v. *De Universalibus. Tractatus de universalibus continet xvi. capitula cujus primum.* Fol. 23—37.

vi. *De Tempore. In tractando de tempore sunt aliqua ex dictis superius capienda.* Fol. 37—47.

vii. *De Intellectione Dei. Illorum quæ insunt Deo communiter quædam insunt sibi soli.* Fol. 47—53.

viii. *De Scientia Dei. Ex dictis superius satis liquet quod scientiam quam Deus.* Fol. 53—70.

ix. *De Volitione Dei. Tractando de volitione Dei quam oportet ex dictis supponere.* Fol. 70—91.

x. *De Personarum Distinctione. Superest investigare de distinctione et convenientia personarum quas credimus plena fide.* Fol. 91—115.

xi. *De Ydeis. Tractando de ydeis primo oportet quærere si sunt.* Fol. 115—122.

xii. *De Potentia productiva Dei. Veritatum quas Deus non potest renovare.* Fol. 122—134.

xiii. *De Sermone Domini in iii. part. Licet totum Evangelium.* Fol. 134—141.

LXVI. *De Universalibus.* Eccl. Cathed. Lincoln. A. 9.

LXVII. *De ente Universali et Attributis Divinis.* Trin. Coll. Dub.

LXVIII. De Temporis Quidditate. In the library of the cathedral church at Lincoln (A. 9.) is a part of this treatise under the title De Tempore.

The manuscripts which follow are in the Imperial Library of Vienna: they are mentioned in Mr. Baber's catalogue of the writings of Wycliffe prefixed to his edition of the Reformer's New Testament, and are copied from Denis's Cat. of the Latin Theol. MSS. in the Imperial Library.

LXIX. i. De Minoribus Fratribus se Extollentibus. This and the piece intitled De Perfectione Statuum, are the same tract.

ii. De Sectis Monachorum. It exists in the same collection, intitled *De concordatione Fratrum cum sectâ simplici Christi*.

iii. De Quatuor Sectis Novellis. This tract is also intitled, De Prævaricatione Præceptorum.

iv. De fundatione Sectarum.

v. De solutione Sathanæ.

vi. Responsiones ad xiv. Argumenta Radulphi Strodi. [a](#)

vii. Litera parva ad quendam Socium.

viii. Speculum Militantis Ecclesiæ.

ix. De Oratione et Ecclesiæ Purgatione.

x. De gradibus Cleri.

xi. De Graduationibus.

xii. De duobus geniribus Hereticorum. The persons here denominated heretics, are those who have contracted the guilt of either simony or apostacy.

xiii. De quatuor Interpretationibus.

xiv. Super impositis Articulis, and Socii argumentum contra veritatem, are different titles given to the same tract.

xv. De citationibus Frivolis et aliis Versutiis Antichristi.

xvi. De juramento Arnoldi (de Grannario) collectoris Papæ.

xvii. De sex jugis. A treatise upon the relative duties.

xviii. De Exhortatione novi Doctoris. This is conjectured to be an exercise performed for the degree of Doctor in Divinity.

xix. De ordine Christiano. Twelve opinions subversive of the power of the pope were extracted from this book. MSS. Twini, A. 218.

xx. De Vaticinatione.

xxi. Dialogus inter Veritatem et Mendacium.

xxii. Epistola, de peccato in Spiritum Sanctum.

xxiii. Litera parva ad quendam Socium.

xxiv. Epistola ad Archiepiscopum Cantuar.

xxv. Litera ad Episcopum Lincoln. de amore, sive de quintuplici quæstione.

xxvi. De Eucharistiâ et Pœnitentia. In this treatise Wycliffe opposes the doctrine of transubstantiation, and questions the use of auricular confession.

xxvii. De octo quæstionibus Propositis Discipulo. It is a letter upon the subject of tithes.

xxviii. De triplici Vinculo Amoris.

xxix. De origine sectarum, and De novis ordinibus, are the same tract under different titles. A part of this tract is in the Imperial Library at Vienna, intitled De sectarum perfidiâ.

xxx. Summa Theologica. This title appears in a very ancient manuscript catalogue of Wycliffe's writings, which is in the Imperial Library at Vienna. The work here called *Summa Theologica*, is described as consisting of twelve chapters, the titles of which are as follows:—i. De Mandatis. ii. De Statu Innocentiæ. [.a](#)iii. iv. v. De Dominio. [.b](#)vi. De Veritate Scripturæ. [.c](#)vii. De Ecclesiâ. viii. De Officio Regis. ix. De Postate Papæ. x. De Simonia. [.d](#)xi. De Apostasiâ. xii. De Blasphemiâ.

The following are the titles of extinct works, or different names given to some of the preceding treatises. They are found in the lists published by Bale, Tanner, and subsequent writers, with no other description than is here given: and they appear to have been, for the most part, treatises or tracts on grammar, philosophy, and a variety of scholastic questions.

LXX. i. Questiones logicales.

ii. Logica de singulis.

iii. Logica de aggregatis.

iv. De propositionibus temporalibus. *Sequitur jam ultimo de proposit.*

v. De insolubilibus.

- vi. De exclusivis exceptivis. *Secundarie superius est promissum.*
- vii. De causalibus. *Pertractandum venit de causalibus.*
- viii. De comparativis. *Consequens est ad dicta superad.*
- ix. De conditionalibus. *Primo supponitur omnem hypotheti.*
- x. De disjunctivis. *Tertio sequitur de disjunctivis.*
- xi. De copulativis et relativis. *Sequitur de copulativis pertract.*
- xii. Grammaticæ tropi.
- xiii. Metaphysica vulgaris.
- xiv. De universo reali.
- xv. Metaphysica novella.
- xvi. De summâ intellectualium.
- xvii. De formis idealibus.
- xviii. De spiritu quolibet.
- xix. De speciebus hypotheticis.
- xx. De esse intelligibili creaturæ.
- xxi. De esse suo prolixco.
- xxii. De arte sophistica.
- xxiii. De una communis generis essentia.
- xxiv. De essentiâ accidentium.
- xxv. De temporis ampliacione.
- xxvi. De physica naturali.
- xxvii. De intentio physicâ.
- xxviii. De materia et formâ. *Cum materia et forma sint uni.*
- xxix. De materiâ celestium.
- xxx. De raritate et densitate. *Videtur ex tertio sequi quod nihil.*

xxxi. De mota locali. *Sequitur de localibus pertract.*

xxxii. De velocitate motus localis. *Tam ultimo restat videre quid.*

xxxiii. De centro infiniti.

The pieces thus described appear to have been treatises, or, more probably, short tracts, or detached parts of treatises, on grammar, logic, and philosophy, embracing, as before intimated, such topics as are found in the first and second books of the Trialogus. The titles which follow denote works more strictly theological, and some of them no doubt exhibited many of the distinctive opinions of the Reformer.

xxxiv. Dialogus de fratribus.

xxxv. Johannes a rure contra fratres. *Ego Johannes a rure Deum verum precor.*

xxxvi. De charitate fraternâ. *Premum cum quolibet homine qui.*

xxxvii. Dæmonum æstus in subvertendâ religione. *Ut omnipotens Deus homines disponit.*

xxxviii. De Diabolo millenario. *Cum consummati fuerint mille anni.*

xxxix. De perverso Antichristi dogmate. *Cum puri concionatores doceant Dei verbum.*

xl. Defensio contra impios. *Evangelii predicationem lites suscipere.*

xli. Contra P. Stokes. [a](#)

xlii. Responsio ad Argumenta Monachi de Salley.

xliii. Contra Monachum Dunelmensem. [b](#)

xliv. De imitate Christi.

xlv. De unico salutis Agno.

xlvi. Christus alius non expectandus.

xlvii. De humanitate Christi.

xlviii. De defectione a Christo.

xlix. De fide et perfidiâ.

l. De fide sacramentorum.

li. De fide evangelii.

- lii. Constitutiones ecclesiæ.
- liii. De censuris ecclesiæ. *Quantum ad excommunicationem attigit.*
- liv. De sacerdotio Levitico.
- lv. De sacerdotio Christi.
- lvi. De statuendis pastoribus ad plebem.
- lvii. Speculum cleri per dialogum. *Sed adhuc arquitur si querus sic.*
- lviii. De non saginandis sacerdotibus. *Cavete qui sacerdotes ad honestatem.*
- lix. De ministrorum conjugio. *Fuit in diebus Herodes sacerdos.*
- lx. Cogendi sacerdotes ad honestatem. *Apertam eruditionem in Dei lege.*
- lxi. De ritibus sacramentorum.
- lxii. De quiddite hostiæ consecratiæ.
- lxiii. De quintuplici Evangelio.
- lxiv. Determinationes quædam.
- lxv. De Trinitate. *Superest investigare de distinctione.*
- lxvi. De excommunicatis absolvendis. *Quoniam sub pœna excommunicationis.*
- lxvii. Distinctiones rerum theologicarum.
- lxviii. De fonte errorem.
- lix. De falsatoribus legæ divinæ. *Postquam interpretes subdoli legem.*
- lxx. De immortalitate animæ.
- lxxi. Ceremoniarum chronicon.
- lxxii. De cessatione legalium. *Redeundo autem ad propositum de.*
- lxxiii. De dilectione. *In quelibet homine peccatore.*
- lxxiv. Concordantiæ Doctorum.
- lxxv. De contrarietate duorum dominorum. *Sicut est unus, verus et summus.*
- lxxvi. De lege divinâ. *Ut de legibus loquar Christianorum.*

- lxxvii. De necessitate futurorum.
- lxxviii. De operibus spiritualibus. *Quia paræcianos spiritualibus.*
- lxxix. De operibus corporalibus. *Si certus esset homo quod in.*
- lxxx. De ordine Christiano.
- lxxxi. De ordinaria laicorum.
- lxxxii. De ordine sacerdotali. *Quia presbyterorum ordo instituitur.*
- lxxxiii. De purgatorio piorum. *Dona eis, Domine requiem semper.*
- lxxxiv. Positiones variæ.
- lxxxv. Replicationes et positiones.
- lxxxvi. De præscito ad beatitudinem.
- lxxxvii. De quaternario doctorum.
- lxxxviii. De religiosis privatis. *Omnes Christiani in spiritus fervore.*
- lxxxix. De studio lectionis. *Malum est in eis perseverare ea.*
- xc. De servitute civili. *Cum secundum philosophos sit relativorum.*
- xc. Theologiæ Placita.
- xcii. De virtute orandi. *Ut sabbatizatio nostra sit Deo acceptabilis.*
- xciii. Contra monachum de S. Albano.
- xciv. De compositione hominis. *Tria enovent me ad tractandum.*
- xcv. De homine misero.
- xcvi. Scholia Scripturarum.
- xcvii. Glossæ Scripturarum.
- xcviii. Glossæ vulgares.
- xcix. Glossæ manuales.
- c. Glossa novella.
- ci. Commentarii vulgares. [a](#) *Stabat Johannes, et ex discipulis.*

- cii. Lectiones in Danialem.
- ciii. De dotatione eccleslæ, and De dotatione Cæsareâ, are different titles *of the same work*, beginning—*Utrum clerus debuerit dotationem.*
- civ. De Antichristo et membris. *Quemadmodum Dominus Jesus ordinavit.*
- cv. Iterum de Antichristo. *Nota quod Antichristus 4 com.*
- cvi. Speculum militantis Ecclesiæ. *Cum identitas mater sit fastidii.*
- cvii. De perfectione evangelica. *Primo fratres dicunt suam religionem.*
- cviii. De officio pastorali. *Cum duplex debeat esse officium.*
- cix. De Simonia sacerdotum. *Heu magni sacerdotes in tenebris.* [a](#)
- cx. Super penitentius injungendis. *Pro eo quod curatorum officium sit.*
- cx. De divite apud Marcum. *Cum egressus esset in viam salvator.*
- cxii. De remissione fraternâ. *Si autem peccaverit in te frater.*
- cxiii. De tribus sagittis. *Quisquis mente tenere cupit quid.*
- cxiv. De ecclesia catholica. *Sunt sacerdotes qui certis rationibus.*
- cxv. De mandatis Divinis. *Præmissa sententia de Domino.*
- cxvi. Conciones de morte. *Beati qui in Domino moriuntur.*
- cxvii. De peccatis fugiendis. *Dum fides nos doceat malum quodlibet.*
- cxviii. De ablatis restituendis. *Quæritur 1° utrum omnium errum.*
- cxix. De seductione simplicium. *Septem sunt quibus decipiuntur simplices.*
- cxx. De ocio et mendacitate. *A manuum labore excusantur fratres.*
- cxxi. In symbolum fidei. *Certum est fidem esse omnium virtutum.*
- cxxii. Super salutatione angelica. *Solent homines Christissaram salutare.*
- cxxiii. Ad simplices sacerdotes. *Videtur meritorium bonos colore.*
- cxxiv. Ad quinque questiones. *Quidam fidelis in Domino quærit.*
- cxxv. Supplementum Trialogi.
- cxxvi. De trino amoris vinculo.

- cxxvii. Contra concilium terræ motus.
- cxxviii. De solutione Satanæ.
- cxxix. De spiritu quolibet.
- cxxx. Omnis plantatio.
- cxxxi. Si quis sitit.
- cxxxii. De confessione Latinorum.
- cxxxiii. De Christianorum Baptismo.
- cxxxiv. De clavis regni Dei.
- cxxxv. De clavium potestate.
- cxxxvi. De homine misero.
- cxxxvii. Contra cruciatum Papæ.
- cxxxviii. De legibus et veneno.
- cxxxix. Collectiones contra Dominicanos.
- cxl. Responsiones argumentorum.
- cxli. Ad rationes Kyningham.
- cxlii. Contra Bynhamum monachum.
- cxliii. Replicationes et positiones.
- cxliv. De bullis papalibus.
- cxlv. De veritate et mendacio.
- cxlvi. De prevaricatione preceptorum.
- cxlvii. Dialogorum suorum.
- cxlviii. De vera innocentia.
- cxlix. De vii. donis Spiritus Sancti.
- cl. De versatiis pseudo cleri.
- cli. Of Wedlock.

clii. The Life of the Virgin Mary.

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BOOK II.

SECTION I.

BEING SOME ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD BOOKS OF THE TRIALOGUS.

The work of our Reformer which bears the name of the Trialogus, is so called because it consists of a series of colloquies between three speakers. The names of these speakers are Alithia, Pseudis, and Phronesis—or Truth, Falsehood, and Wisdom. The opinions and reasonings of Alithia, accordingly, are to be regarded as those of Truth; those of Pseudis as being the contrary of truth; while in the person of Phronesis, Wycliffe himself speaks; and in setting forth his judgment on the points at issue, he generally assigns such reasons for his opinions as tend to expose the sophistry of Pseudis, and to sustain the views of Alithia.

Many of the opinions discussed are not of a nature to interest a modern reader, and the debates relating to such opinions are valuable chiefly as they serve to illustrate the history of theological speculations. In many instances, also, the method of the argumentation is not more to our taste than the matter of it. It was one of the peculiarities of the scholastic process of reasoning, that in attempting to establish any doctrine, full expression should be given to every conceivable form of objection against it; and though it often happened from this cause, that the disputant raised the spirit of the doubter, without being well able to lay it again, the practice itself served to whet the faculties, and to bring them to their office with the greatest degree of circumspection and force. Thus in the Trialogus, the language of Pseudis gives expression to the captious and sceptical spirit of the middle age on the great questions relating to philosophy, morals, and theology; while the speeches of Alithia and Phronesis, embody the sounder views of those times on such subjects, and along with the opinions generally received, come those bolder utterances which distinguish the writings of Wycliffe as those of a Reformer.

But the argument is conducted, especially in the earlier part of the treatise, and as relating to its more obscure topics, in the prescribed scholastic form, the method of reasoning, and the technical expressions frequently recurring in it, being such as have no place even in the most scientific treatises in our own age.^a In one respect, indeed, the works of the ancient schoolmen bear a strong resemblance to our later literature, inasmuch as there is very little in the speculations of the modern sceptic which may not be found in the writings of those middle-age churchmen. In some instances the polemic may have secretly sympathised with the freedom of thought which he affected to condemn; but in general, the atheist, the infidel, and the heretic, were imaginary foes, conjured up that the militant ecclesiastic might indulge, as in a species of tournament, in such displays of his skill as should secure to him the honours of a victory.

That there should have been men during the middle age disposed to bestow a laborious attention on such a system of dialectics, is not surprising; but Wycliffe was a man of earnest piety, of an impassioned temperament, and with a mind eminently practical, was intent through life on bringing about great practical reforms. Nevertheless, if we may credit the testimony of enemies in his favour, even that of the most bitter among them, we must believe that no man of his age was more deeply learned, or more thoroughly skilled in the science of the schoolmen. According to Knyghton, a contemporary and an adversary,—“As a theologian, he was the most eminent in his day; as a philosopher, second to none; and as a schoolman, incomparable. He made it his great aim, with learned subtlety, and by the profundity of his own genius, to surpass the genius of other men.”^b Instances, indeed, are not wanting, in which the speculative and the practical, the abstract and the impassioned, have been united in strong proportions in the same men. In Pascal, that purely intellectual concentration which is so necessary to success in the exact sciences, was combined with the imagination of the poet, and with the feeling of the saint. But opposites of this nature meet in something like equal apportionments in the weak, much more frequently than in the strong: and among the reformers it is in the genius of Calvin that we see, in this respect, the nearest reflection of the mind of Wycliffe.

The first and second books of the *Triologus*, are the least extended, and the least valuable. The third and fourth books embrace more than three-fourths of the whole treatise, and abound in matter more or less interesting to every sincere Protestant.

BOOK I.

The first book is wholly occupied with arguments to prove the being of a God, and with other speculations relating to the Divine perfections, and to the mysteries of the Divine nature. The first chapter is designed to show that “God is the first cause of all things;” the second exhibits him as taking necessary precedence of all things; and in the third he is set forth as the great reality, whose nature is such, that our thoughts can never rise to the conception of any higher excellence. The fourth chapter is intended to demonstrate that “God is, whatever it is better to be than not to be;” and this conclusion being established, all the Divine perfections are deduced from it, inasmuch as it is manifestly better that the Divine nature should be just, wise, omnipotent, and the like, than that it should be devoid of such perfections. In the sixth chapter it is maintained that the reasoning which is thus satisfactory as leading to sound conclusions in regard to the Divine perfections, is no less so as serving to show “the Lord of all to be a Trinity:” and in the remaining chapters of this book, an attempt is made to demonstrate the doctrine of the Trinity from the light of nature, and to exhibit the old philosophical doctrine concerning “ideas,” as in harmony with the prevailing notions of the schoolmen in respect to the manner of the Divine existence.

In this preliminary portion of the work, we find none of the opinions peculiar to Wycliffe, as a reformer, except that in two instances he censures the conduct of some men in making an undue use of the authority of tradition; and the following passage on the sufficiency and excellence of the Scriptures, may be regarded as of the same complexion. “It is plain, that all error in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, by which weak men do so falsify and debase them, proceeds from ignorance of grammar

and logic. And unless Go shall assist us in respect to the understanding of these rudiments of faith, the faith of the Scriptures will be too little estimated. The opinion, that if there be any truth, it is in the Scripture, which is often inculcated by Augustine, is manifestly just. Nothing, indeed, is to be named as subtle in grammar, in logic, or in any other science, but the same may be found in more excellence in Scripture.”[a](#)

The most curious portion of the metaphysical speculation found in this book, consists in the attempt made in some sense to explain, as well as to prove, the doctrine of the Trinity, by natural reason. Psuedis accounts it “great presumption” in any man to pretend that such articles of faith may be demonstrated by the light of nature. Phronesis maintains that the different opinion of Alithia on that subject is not liable to such a charge; and having spoken at some length on the subordination of the light of nature to the light of faith, and on the agreement of the one with the other, he reminds Psuedis of the doctrine of Plato in respect to a trinity of some kind in the Divine nature, and then endeavours to show, not only that the doctrine of Plato is according to reason, but to show also, and on strictly metaphysical grounds, why the Divine Trinity is described as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In pursuance of this argument it is said, that the “potentia” of the Divine nature, in the sense in which that term is used by the speaker, is God the Father; the “notitia,” or power of self-knowledge in the Divine nature, is God the Son; and the “quietatio”—the repose—the calm rest of the Divine essence, is God the Holy Spirit. Care is taken to explain the purely metaphysical sense in which the term person is used in relation to such a subject; but to the above properties of the Divine existence that name is applied, and these three persons are described as being co-eternal and co-equal. These refinements are pushed so far, that in the sense of “causation” or procession, but not in the sense of “divinity,” God is said to be “the cause of God;” not, however, in any such sense but that it is still true that “these three persons are one first cause, as they are one God, and not three causes, as they are not three Gods.”

In another place, the mind of man is viewed as consisting eminently in “memory, reason, and will;” and these are not only regarded as a kind of trinity in man, but as a species of revelation in man concerning the Trinity in the Divine nature. To the modern metaphysician, reasoning of this nature will appear as singularly open to objection, and many of the objections to which it is exposed were strongly urged against it even in those times; but such is the potency of circumstances and fashion, even in respect to such matters, that this method of treating theological subjects long retained its hold upon the learned, and is only partially superseded even in our own day.

BOOK II.

As the discussions in the first book relate principally to the existence and perfections of the Divine nature, those in the second book extend our thoughts from the Deity to his works, and relate both to the origin of the world, and to the constitution of created things generally. In thus passing from the Creator to the created, the elements of nature, the powers of the human mind, and the relation of the human spirit to the body, and to the material world—the nature, the gradations, the fall, and the wars of

the angels, and the foreknowledge and predestination of the Almighty as affecting the condition of his works, all come under review. In this book, in common with the one preceding, we find none of the distinctive doctrines of the Reformer; but there is a much greater portion of matter in this part of the treatise, which may be translated so as to be intelligible to a modern reader, and which to many such readers may not be uninteresting. This, however, is more than can be said of the contents of the first seven chapters, which consist of observations and reasonings concerning the office of the senses, the powers of the human intellect, and the history and properties of the material universe. But the following is a translation of the eighth chapter, "On the immortality of the soul as deduced from reason."

"Alithia, Pray tell me, brother, whether the immortality of the soul, a doctrine you so often assume, may be deduced from reason.

"Phronesis. On this point, we neither of us entertain any doubt but that the soul of man is truly immortal; and consequently, since that soul is identical with the individual man, it follows that the individual in this case will ever remain immortal. And this was the reason why the apostles underwent death with such courage and boldness, well knowing, as they did, that the imprisonment and burden of the flesh was an irksome restraint and oppression to them, and rejoicing that they had met their death in a just cause.

"But philosophers assign many reasons whereby to establish this opinion. In the first place, we learn on the authority of Aristotle, and in fact from common experience, that a certain energy in the mind of man is immortal. But no energy or operation can be more permanent than that which is its subject—that is, the mind, or soul, and therefore we must grant that the soul is immortal. Aristotle gives weight to his assumption on this point, by adducing in its favour the intellect of man, which, so far from being enfeebled, is rather invigorated by the weakness of the body, for there is an increase of keenness in the speculative intellect of the old, even when every corporeal faculty has failed them. This perceptive faculty must have a foundation of some sort to rest upon, of a nature not to require such an instrument as the body, and we must therefore rank the human intellect above all the animal faculties aforesaid. For in those faculties animals surpass man, as saith the poet, who shows it from experience, 'the boar excels us in hearing, the spider in touch, the vulture in scent, the lynx in sight, the ape in the sense of tasting.' And thus is it with the five organic interior faculties aforesaid. For since man does not surpass animals in power of body, or in any merely animal sense, we are shut up to the conclusion that he excels them in the operation of his intellect. But what advantage would have been given him, if in the very point which constituted his felicity he had been compelled to part with that felicity at death? For in such case God would seem to cast contempt on his favoured offspring. Man has, therefore, an understanding which he takes away from the body along with himself, and which abides for ever. Furthermore, man has a feeling within himself of natural desire to exist for ever, and the wiser men are, the more do they bear testimony to this truth. Since, then, nature is not to be frustrated in a purpose of such consequence, it appears that there is in man, according to nature, a certain understanding which exists for ever, and so he is immortal.

“In respect to every man we must come to this same conclusion. For if we affirm that immortality belongs to the nature of any one individual, this same property must necessarily be inherent in every individual of a like nature; otherwise, it would not be inherent by nature, but by chance, or from some other adventitious cause, which we cannot describe, because supposing that soul might have been destroyed in the lapse of time by its contrary, or by any other cause, every one would have become liable to destruction; otherwise there would have been in it a liability to destruction, without any cause. For things which come to their termination at the end of certain periods of time, do not last for ever, because if they did, they would become possessed of an infinite power, beyond that belonging to things of a similar species, which endure only for a limited space. Since, then, man has a longing to exist together with God, as the noblest and most natural limit of his desires, no reason can be assigned, apart from his own demerit, which should hinder the accomplishment of such a purpose, especially when we remember that the destruction of the body does not annihilate that soul, but rather gladdens it.

“Hence philosophers and natural reason teach us that it is well to die for the public good, and to avoid what is disgraceful and criminal. But this preference cannot be shown to be rational, unless the man who so dies, can be made possessor of a life after this life. Hence our conclusion follows.

“Our point may be elucidated thus. A man belonging to a community altogether just, may justly consent to die for the salvation of that community, inasmuch as then, greater advantage would accrue both to the individual who died, and to the community; and inasmuch, moreover, as every man ought to desire, as an object of preference, that good which, as belonging to the community, is called the public good. For it appears that a man should, in such an emergency, so choose death, that, according to the law of nature, the possible advantage of the community may be rather chosen. Nor is it to be doubted, but that in many cases, it might be made advantageous to the community that a certain individual should die, than that the same individual should live any longer even virtuously.

“The same reasoning applies to a man who is put to choose between committing a crime, and following the dictates of virtue, and undergoing temporal death. Suppose, then, it were determined, as by a conscience within the man, that it would be virtuous, and more expedient for him so to die, it might be asked, when the advantage, supposed to arise out of death, would accrue to him—whether before death, or after? Now it cannot be before death, for death brings no advantage before it comes; and if it be after death, then it must be the spirit which will, after death, reap that advantage; and it thus follows that the spirit will remain, for that is not dependent on the body.

“Of this sort are the many reasons, amounting almost to demonstration, which have induced the wisest and best-informed to die in this way. In such a cause they have not died in vain, for then would they have been the most wretched and senseless of all men, in common with many beside who persevere in virtue to the end of their days. Another kind of reward, then, must, in the end, be assigned them by an all-bountiful Deity, not in this life, inasmuch as God has determined they should die in the course of virtue, and we are thus obliged to conclude that it will be in a life to come, and, in

consequence, that the soul of man will survive the death of the body. For God justly distributes rewards to the virtuous, without respect of persons, as in the case of the two men before mentioned,—one of whom lives virtuously, and the other lives out the full period of his life-time in vice. It is proper, that according to some admeasurement of time, a reward should, in justice, be allotted to each according to his deserts,—not in this life, as is manifest from the fact of the case, and, therefore, necessarily after death.

“And inasmuch as Scripture is full of testimony to this truth, it is most necessary that man should embrace it. It is just as imperative that the Christian should believe that the soul will exist after this life, as that he should believe that God is, and that he is the rewarder of the good.”[a](#)

The next four chapters consist of observations, partly scriptural, and partly conjectural, regarding the nature of angels, their different ranks and offices, and their fall, punishment, and conflicts. The fourteenth chapter treats of prescience and predestination, in which an attempt is made to reconcile strong opinions on that subject, with sound doctrine concerning human responsibility. The last chapter in this book consists of some discoursing with respect to the heavens, including observations on the seven planets, the stars, the four elements, and the moon, and her influence on the humid properties of the earth. This chapter, while presenting an outline of the defective philosophy of the age, is chiefly remarkable from the intelligent scepticism with which it touches on the dreams of the astrologer and alchemist; alleging that fancies of that nature had done much to injure the science of medicine, and hardly less to detract from the certainty of the necessary truths proper to the “venerable science of theology.”

BOOK III.

The first chapter in this book is “On the Virtues.” Phronesis intimates his intention of stating his views on this subject, both practically and speculatively, and accordingly commences by enumerating the various classes of virtues. He divides them into the created and uncreated. The former are separated into natural and moral. The natural virtues are described as the divisible and indivisible. The moral virtues consist of such as belong to man naturally, and of such as are termed theological,—as faith, hope, and charity. Virtue of the former description is defined by Aristotle as consisting in that disposition, or habit of mind, which chooses the medium most suitable to the individual, according to the dictates of reason. The cardinal virtues are four,—justice, fortitude, prudence, and temperance. The intellectual virtues of which man is capable are five, each of them regulating, according to reason, the moral virtue which corresponds to it. These five virtues, or powers, are—wisdom, intellect, science, art, and prudence. In this class of virtues wisdom holds the highest rank. Intellect is defined as that faculty by which we gain our knowledge of the fundamental principles of science, such as that the same thing cannot be, and not be, at the same time, and that the whole must be greater than its parts. By science, we arrive at the results of scientific investigation. Art consists, not so much in the manual dexterity which enables us to create works of art, as in a theoretic knowledge of the principles on which all such works should be modelled. Lastly, the office of prudence is direct and

practical, and is most closely connected with the moral virtues, each one of which may be said to have its special kind of prudence belonging to it.

Aristotle connects the moral virtues with the irrational part of our nature, and calls them elective, because they lead one to choose and delight in the natural end of their being, making it the great object of pursuit; and because these virtuous dispositions maintain a medium between two extremes, which are alike vicious, he defines this kind of virtue as a disposition which makes choice of the mean course. Still we are to guard against considering virtue and vice, and the actions consequent upon them, as things having any independent existence. For the medium, as Aristotle reminds us, must not be confounded with an absolute and invariable, or with an arithmetical mean, but must be regarded as one solely relative to ourselves. The medium, then, must be adapted to the circumstances of the follower of virtue, because various means suit various individuals. Every virtue, accordingly, must be accompanied by an appropriate exercise of prudence, and, in consequence, Aristotle completes his definition by saying, that the choice of this mean is determined by the dictate of reason.

If the reader does not perceive the meaning of this moral analysis, the fault is not so much with the Reformer, as with the distinguished philosopher whose system he is endeavouring to expound. The rest of the chapter is occupied with observations on the conduct of a man who squanders away his property by a profuse generosity; and Phronesis shows that it is not true, as may at first appear, that a virtuous habit has become a vicious one merely by a change of circumstances, but that the man continues to give beyond his means, not from a principle of virtue, but from the force of habit; and that this habit of profusion, while thus unregulated by prudence, is anything but a virtue.

In the second chapter, Phronesis defends his departure from Aristotle, and shows that the cardinal virtues should be assigned to the will, or to the intellect of man, and should thus occupy a higher place than has been assigned to them by that philosopher. "Neither these," he observes, "nor any of the moral virtues, can dwell in man without the assistance of God's grace. How, I ask, can man merit happiness by living and acting according to the good pleasure of God, unless God shall, of his abundant grace, accept such service? So whatever man does, or may, as it were, beget in himself by nature, is not called a moral virtue worthy of reward and everlasting praise, unless it shall have come to him from another, and consequently from the grace of God himself: and no man can ascertain whether he be virtuous in this sense or not except by aid of a revelation from God."

Aristotle, he proceeds to say, maintains that the fact of a man's finding pleasure in pursuing the dictates of reason, is a sign to him of his having been in the practice of virtue. But this is a sign by no means sufficient to prove the point intended, inasmuch as a man without grace, may feel at times a sincere pleasure in the performance of a virtuous action, and the disbelief of this great fact has been the source of much delusion, disposing many to think "that a man may be absolved from his sins, by the mere form of words, or the laying on of hands in the sacrament."

Phronesis then discusses the subject of Faith. He remarks, that the term is sometimes used to denote the act of believing, sometimes a believing habit of mind, and sometimes the truth which is believed. There is, according to the schoolmen, a faith which is incomplete, as that of devils who believe and tremble; and another kind of faith which becomes perfect, as being inwrought by charity. This charity belongs necessarily to all who are true believers, and all men destitute of it are in a sense unbelievers. There are three properties belonging to faith. First, that it relates wholly to truth, to the exclusion of all error—truth which the believer should defend, even to the death. Secondly, it is proper to faith, that the object of it should not admit of demonstration, that it should be obscure to the eye of sense, inasmuch as we cannot be said to believe in that which we see. Thirdly, faith is the foundation or substance giving to the pilgrim rest in the objects of his belief—the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.^a

The believer is further described as a man who has bestowed upon him by God, a faith which is unmixed with hesitation.^a It is added, that every man committing sin must so do as an unbeliever; for had he been mindful of the punishment to be inflicted on the sinner, of the inspection of God as constantly over him, and of the other objects of faith always present to a believer, he would not have so done.

The third chapter treats of Hope and Charity. Hope is said to be distinguished from faith in three respects. First, hope has regard only to the realising of some future good, but faith has respect to truth universally, and simply as such. Secondly, hope falls short of that evidence and knowledge concerning its object which belong to faith, but rests in the medium between doubt and credulity; and so logicians say concerning the objects of hope, that they neither deny, know, nor doubt respecting them, but simply suppose them. Thirdly, hope has reference only to a good which is possible to the person hoping. Faith, on the contrary, has respect to things which may be advantageous or disadvantageous to the person who believes, as well as to things with which he has no concern.

But the virtue especially necessary to the Christian pilgrim is charity. Without charity no man can enter heaven. It is the wedding-garment, the want of which must bring condemnation in the last judgment. True charity consists in loving God with all the heart, and soul, and mind—and these three terms have reference to the love due to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit respectively. This command, though the first and the greatest, is but poorly observed by our fallen and unhappy race. The second command is like the first—that we love all the works of God, and especially that we love our neighbour as ourselves. We all profess to be observant of this mutual charity, but our actions proclaim the contrary, and our actions are intitled to more credence than our words. To love God is the same thing as to love his law. This is plain from the Gospel, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”^b

We may test our love to the law of God by three things—by our attention to it, our observance of it, and our readiness to defend it. “Do not the laws of men,” it is observed, “and other created objects, convict us of ignorance and contempt with regard to the law of God? Do we not love other things more, to which we give more attention? Who is there, I ask, who doth not reckon of more importance his own

advantage in the pursuit of some branch of knowledge that may bring him money, than his attention to, and sedulous observance of the law of God?—a course of conduct most manifestly repugnant to the spirit of charity, for the apostle tells us that ‘charity seeketh not her own.’—Chap. i. 7.

“Let us see, then, whether the Christian pilgrim is more anxiously concerned about his own private advantage, than about the observance of this law of Christ. Since the opposite is the fact, with the greater portion of mankind, it is plain that they are devoid of charity, being wanting in observance of the first and greatest commandment. But if a man be so rooted in this habit of perversity, who can entertain any doubt about his being a heretic, by reason of his continued failure in attention to, and observance of this law? Again, if we look to the way in which this law is defended among individuals of the higher orders, who can hesitate in saying that not only the laity, but still more the prelates, have a greater regard for the protection of their private interests than for the public defence of the law of Christ? If this were not so, they must have destroyed, as far as they possibly could, all that takes away from or is opposed to that law, and yet in both prelates and civil dignitaries exalting and defending the laws and interests of men, placing them before the law of God. For I see not otherwise how it should happen that the civil law should be executed with such scrupulous accuracy, a trifling amount of evidence being sufficient in respect to whatever violates such enactments, or shall infringe on the good of society. It is plain, therefore, from the far greater pains men take in putting human laws into execution, how great a preponderance they carry with them in general estimation, and how false is the assertion of such men that they love God with all the heart, soul, and mind.

“In fact, all, or the greater number, among our religious orders, will be among the first to be inexcusably condemned in the day of the Son of God, for disobedience of this nature, since they all seek that which is their own, and labour for the interests of their own order, and overlook the defence of the Divine law.

“Thus, then, private sects deprived their members of charity. But Christ, who wished his law to be observed in freedom, that its observance might earn a more happy reward, appointed no infliction of sensible punishment on its transgressors, but has abandoned the person neglecting it to a suffering more severe after the day of judgment. Are these three virtues, then, faith, hope, charity, anything less than banished now-a-days? The fear of the sensible penalty immediately to be inflicted on the violator of human law, makes those laws to be carefully observed; and accordingly, faith, hope, and charity, in obedience to the law of the Lord, are things that slumber. No one can convince us by reason, that when two objects of choice are set before a man, and he pursues the one, letting go, or taking no notice of the other, that he does so from any other motive than from an utter want, or at least an inferior degree of love, for that which he neglects. And thus should we judge of the lovers of the world or the flesh. And in this manner these three theological virtues grow cold.

“Who would not willingly suffer in Scotland in behalf of the law and the privileges of the king of England, if certain of returning alive and unhurt to England, to be rewarded by the king in proportion to what he had undergone? Such a man, I say, would willingly undergo trouble in Scotland, in the hope of obtaining a reward in

England. Much more then should a man in trouble in this vale of misery, manfully strive in faith, in hope, and in charity, after the reward of blessedness to be obtained on being translated to his own country.”

The fourth and fifth chapters relate to the nature of sin, viewed generally, and to the distinction commonly made between venial and mortal sins. The terms of this distinction are said to be commonly in the mouth, not of the people only, but of prelates also, men “who know better how to extort money for sins, than how to cleanse any man from his transgressions, or to distinguish between the mortal and the venial, concerning which they babble so much.” It is further stated, that these terms have no express sanction from Scripture, and Phronesis claims a right to limit the signification of them to the sense of Scripture.

“A sin may be called mortal,” says Phronesis, “when, according to the judgment of God, it is worthy of death; and thus it is the sin of final impenitence only, that is, the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is properly mortal. But any other sin, since it is such as may be pardoned, may reasonably be called venial. But inasmuch as those actual sins which quench Divine grace, are not distinguishable by our limited knowledge, and we are thus left in ignorance as to what sin committed in our pilgrimage may be venial, and what mortal, we are bound to fly from all sin whatsoever, since we are aware in a general way of its danger, but are ignorant of its real enormity. Whatever sin men commit, may be traced to the ingratitude of the sinner viewed in respect to the gratitude due to God, against whom all sin is committed; for it is not possible to sin against any other being, without sinning principally against him.

“The believer may judge in respect to the grievous nature of sin, from the fact that he owes to God a debt of infinite gratitude; and the greater the gratitude due, the greater must be the evil of a failure in that respect. So that every sin is infinite in its evil. Just as, the higher the lord against whom a crime is committed, the heavier the penalty inflicted on the criminal. So sin, committed against God, a Lord infinitely great, is infinitely enormous in its evil. In the same manner, the more detestable an evil may be, the more proportionably must it be an evil. But sin is infinitely detestable. It is therefore an infinite evil. The measure in which God should be sought, is the measure in which sin should be avoided; but God is infinitely worthy of being sought, therefore sin is infinitely fit to be avoided, and so must be infinitely evil.”

The speaker proceeds so far as to assert, that “for the sake of no good whatever, not even for the sake of God, should any sin, however small, be committed. God can never enjoin sin on any of his creatures; but were he so to do, a man would not be bound, in such case, even to obey God, for even then he would be acting in a praiseworthy manner, in endeavouring to keep his life free from the stain of guilt.” The metaphysical reader will not be startled by the impossible case thus supposed. Our duties arise out of our relations, and have their fitness or goodness, not so much from the mere will of the Divine Being, as from his whole nature, of which that will is the result.

The sixth chapter is on “The penalty attendant on the evil of sin.” It having been shown that sin is infinite in its evil, it is maintained that the remission of it must be the work of infinite power, and accordingly, that it is God only who can forgive sin. The next chapter is “On Grace;” and Phronesis, speaking of indulgences, says, “It is plain that prelates in granting indulgences, commonly blaspheme the wisdom of God, pretending, in their folly and avarice, that they understand what they know not.” On the subject of grace, the same speaker observes—“It appears to me, that grace, which is called the grace of predestination, or of final perseverance, cannot fall away from any one; for if so, it could not be that grace.” He complains also of some “sensual simonists,” who chatter on this subject, “as though grace were to be bought or sold like an ox or an ass, and thus make merchandise in the buying of pardons, and the taking away sins, the devil having availed himself of an error in the schools to introduce these heresies in morals.”

In the chapter “On Pride,” the hypocrisy imputed to the mendicant orders, is described as the worst form of that evil, particularly as evinced in the value which they attached to their vain traditions, asserting “their private rule of life to be superior to the rule of Christ.” In the following chapter, “On Humility,” this subject is resumed, and the same tone of remark is extended from the religious orders to the regular clergy.

“God chooses no prelate,” says Wycliffe, “except as he shall be more humble than those set under him, for God calls no one to such a station, except as being more skilled than others in the practice of virtue, and in consequence, more humble. The more humble a man is, the more is he like Christ. Thus humility and the other virtues follow each other, and are praiseworthy, not only in their species, but according to their gradation. And this is the reason why before the endowment of the church by the emperors, the rule of the apostle—‘no man should take this honour upon himself,’ was observed. For those who aspire to primacy in the church, or any member of a religious order who is wanting in humility, and consequently in virtue, regard themselves as more worthy than those beneath them, or otherwise are absolutely senseless. Now if it be from the desirableness of honour from man, or for the sake of temporal gain, that men covet such offices, then beyond doubt they are to be blamed, since in such case the love of God and humility are set aside, and worldly good is made of too much weight. It is plain, accordingly, that the choice made by men is in most cases unjust, since if the man chosen be not the more humble, he is chosen unjustly. And this is not the choice made for the greater part, inasmuch as now-a-days, the more humble are accounted the less worthy. Hence in such elections, and in their practice as private religionists, men place themselves in opposition to their Maker; for what he deems fit to be done is set aside as unworthy, and is disposed of by the judgment of men, which God contemns. This is one reason why these religious orders are in such confusion.

“With regard to the objection that the most sagacious man must be the best adapted to rule, and that the man of good presence and great resolution must be most likely to gain possessions for his order from the world, your reasoning is a reproach to such orders, and only shows that the better order of Christ ought to be observed. Moreover, if knowledge, a thing so good in itself, puffeth up, how much more this fox-like cunning! Such men fall, without doubt, under the prophetic woe, uttered by

Isaiah—‘Woe unto them who call evil good, and good evil.’ And since the judgment and feeling of the world are opposed to these orders, it would be well for them no longer to exist, and that things should be regulated according to the pure order of Christ.”

The thirteenth chapter is “On Charity,” and contains the following passage concerning the manner in which the law of Christ should be defended:

“To be more particular as to the way in which we ought to do whatever we do to the honour of God. We should look to the law of God, especially to the decalogue and the Gospel, and be observant of them through life, in word and deed. We should defend the Gospel against the disciples of Antichrist, by persuasive exhortations, by words of humility, and by praiseworthy deeds, even to the death. Every Christian is bound to a charity of this nature. But what the Evangelist refers to when he says, ‘The love of many waxeth cold,’ hath appeared in these last days, in which many assail the commandments of the Lord, and few duly defend them, the bulls of the pope, and the pretensions of the religious orders, being deemed of far more weight than they. But since charity is patient and benign, let us, according to the apostle, (1 Cor. xiii.) dispose ourselves to patience even unto death, and ever keep inviolate the kindness of charity, if haply God shall be found willing to pity the sinner, and turn such from that madness of which they are so full. Let us, also, ever call to mind how the prophets under the old law, and how Christ, and his beloved disciples, under the law of grace, were in that very cause slain, and ask ourselves whether we are better than they, or whether the good which God has provided for his servants is exhausted. Our faith teaches us the reverse of this. And, in short, I see not how any man should die more happily or triumphantly. Since, then, we are sure to die, and if negligent are sure to suffer the penalty of negligence, let us cultivate faith, hope, and charity, while we have the time.”

The fifteenth chapter is “On Patience and Meekness,” and teaches in the following terms that all Christians should be soldiers:

“All Christians, then, should be the soldiers of Christ, and it is plain how many are chargeable with insensibility to this duty, inasmuch as the fear of losing temporal goods, and worldly friendships, and apprehensions of the insecurity of life and fortune, prevent so great a number from being faithful either in setting forth the cause of God, in standing manfully for its defence, or, if need be, suffering death in its behalf. From such a source, also, comes that subterfuge of Lucifer urged by our modern hypocrites, who say, that to suffer martyrdom cannot be a duty now as it was in the primitive church, since in our time all men, or at least the great majority are believers—so that the tyrant is no more who may persecute Christ and his members to the death, and this is the cause why there are not martyrs now, as formerly. But it is certain that this excuse has been devised by Satan, to shield sin; for the believer in maintaining the law of Christ should be prepared, as his soldier, to endure all things at the hands of the proud rulers of this world,^a so as to declare boldly to the pope and cardinals, to bishops and prelates, how unjustly, according to the testimony of the Gospel, they serve God in their offices, inflicting perilous injury on those committed to their care, such as must bring on them a speedy destruction, one way or another.

All this applies to temporal lords, but not in so great a degree as to the clergy; for as the abomination of desolation begins with a perverted clergy, so the consolation begins with a converted clergy. Hence we Christians need not visit pagans to convert them by enduring martyrdom in their behalf, but have only to declare with constancy the law of Christ even before Cesarean prelates, and straightway the flower of martyrdom will be at hand.”

In the seventeenth chapter, this subject is touched upon in still stronger terms, the pontiff being described as “the great Antichrist.”

“It is supposed, and with much probability, that the Roman pontiff is the great Antichrist, for he falsely asserts that he is in a direct sense the vicar of Christ, most conformed to him in his life, and by consequence the most humble of Christians, the poorest of men, and one separated more than any man beside from the thralldom of secular things. But the falsehood and blasphemy of such assertions are manifest in the fact that his life is the reverse of all this, that he is the most powerful and the most wealthy man in the whole world; and what can be more contrary to the poverty of Him who had nowhere to lay his head? How can such an Antichrist be described as a vicar bearing resemblance to Christ? From the fact of what we see in him, it is clear, that so far from being the most humble of men, he is vicar to the king of pride, set up over us all. The great mart in respect to worldly possessions lies in the hands of the pope, and yet Christ declared that he was not a ruler or divider in a case between two brethren, when the worldly matter in dispute was comparatively small.

“And since the church is so much harmed from this cause, Christ hath said—‘Whosoever readeth let him understand;’ and without doubt, when a man does see this danger he ought in charity to labour in making it known even unto the death, for otherwise he would be guilty of hiding his Lord’s talent, and God would have given him knowledge in vain. After this great Antichrist, come the lesser Antichrists—the prelates, who desert the office which Christ has assigned to them, and take up another office according to another law. The injunction of Christ to Peter was—‘feed my sheep;’ but if you wish to bring this point to a test, look well to the life of Christ and of his apostles, and see how ill they are followed by our spiritual leaders. The duty of preaching is set aside, and the practice of fleecing those committed to their care is introduced in its place. Let a man bestow only slight attention on what is doing in modern times, and on the laws of Antichrist, and he will see that they are contrary in every respect to the laws and the office of Christ.”

The next chapter is on avarice, which Phronesis describes as consisting in an inordinate love of things temporal.

“Learned men teach us that the soul is more pure and sublime in its nature than the heavens we behold above us; and as the heavens are exalted by their position above the earth, so the soul should be exalted in its affections above worldly things. The avaricious man, accordingly, should beware of doing a thing so monstrous as that of making this heaven within him, fashioned after the likeness of God, to adhere unnaturally to the earth, inasmuch as the pure soul is the habitation of God, and by so

doing he would wickedly cut himself off from God, and aim to subvert the laws of nature.”

The chapter next in order relates to the virtue opposed to avarice; and Alithia having asked what that virtue is, Phronesis replies—“As avarice is the immoderate desire of possessing temporal things, the virtue opposed to it is the subordinate love of such things, consisting in an observance of the rule that every one should desire that measure of temporal good which may most conduce to his spiritual well-being.” Phronesis then cites 1 Tim. vi. 7, 8: “For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content;” and proceeds to say—“Nor can I see why all the clergy should not account themselves as strictly bound by that rule, because whatever is beyond such things must be evil, be tainted with avarice, and expose the man who covets it to great spiritual peril.” Psuedis replies, by describing this doctrine as corrupt and false, since we bring our mental faculties into the world, and carry them with us when we leave it; and inasmuch as it is so ordained that food and clothing should not be our final reward, we ought not to rest content with them before those final rewards have been realised. To which Phronesis answers, by saying, that the apostle refers in the passage quoted to temporal things exclusively, and asks Psuedis if he can affirm that he existed the same wealthy heretic before he was born as he is known to be now; or if he can say what part of his riches it is he means to take hence with him; and adds further, that when the apostle gave this injunction with regard to a moderate apportionment of temporal goods, so far was he from denying, that he in fact implied that we should receive with the liveliest gratitude and joy the gifts of grace and virtue. But the apostles were men who wore their one garment apiece, men who built no sumptuous edifices, while the friars have run into every excess of luxury, making no due return for their possessions either in the way of bodily service, or as ministering to the spiritual edification of the people.

This chapter is followed by one intitled “On Gluttony,” in which Alithia expresses surprise that Phronesis should so unhesitatingly declare the church to have been guilty of a fault in accepting an endowment, and deserting, in this particular, the rule of Christ, seeing that it is possible for a man to possess dominion of the most extended description, and still live devoutly, using all temporal things with moderation. Phronesis answers, That his expressions have been taken up somewhat too loosely by Alithia, but that Sylvester, or whoever it was that first accepted the perpetual imperial endowment, was by no means free from blame: his sin, as an individual, might be light, but he gave occasion to his weak successors to sin in a far greater degree; for before the time of that endowment, when apostolic men were more humble, men were regarded as deserving in proportion as they were found useful to the church.^a “But now, by reason of endowments, while they are bound to be more humble, they are less so; foolishly undertaking to serve the church beyond their powers of service, and in this very way they incapacitate themselves for being useful to the church, and become negligent of the counsel and command of Christ in respect to temporal things, and dominion over them.” In the remaining part of the chapter, the degrading nature of the vice to which it relates, is strongly set forth; and the saying of Constantine, “That gluttony destroys more men than the sword,” is cited against it. Wycliffe concludes by advising the practice of moderate fasting as alike beneficial to mind and body.

The twenty-fourth chapter, "On the Proneness of Man to Sin," contains some curious thoughts in respect to the connexion which is supposed to subsist between sin as pertaining to the soul, and mortality as affecting the body. Alithia, speaking of the condition of man in paradise, says, it was, as relating to the body, a state of mortality; but as the well-being of the body is dependent on the influence of the mind, man, through the innocence of his spiritual nature, was immortal. Hence, of necessity, when the soul drew back from God, through sin, and man became wanting in the full influence of God, so far as the soul was concerned, his body, from that cause, became subject to suffering, and being in the lowest grade of the existences endowed with immortality, man sunk necessarily below that grade, and became subject to death, and corporeal suffering.

In concluding, Phronesis expresses his conviction, that through the infinite compassion of God, the fall of man from a state of innocence, has been made to subserve the introduction of a greater amount of good than would have resulted from his continuance in that state.

The next chapter is on the question, "Why the Sin of Satan is not to be forgiven?" and contains some speculations still further removed from the range of the comprehensible. "In order to the forgiveness of sin," it is said, "there must be an active virtue in the agent, and some disposition toward penitence. But this is not the case with Satan, and so his sins are not forgiven. Again, the sin of Satan is the sin against the Holy Ghost, the sin of final impenitence; and as Adam committed sin against the wisdom of God the Father, whose wisdom became on that account incarnate, so for the salvation of Satan, it would be necessary that the third person in the Trinity should become incarnate; and as that cannot be, the sin of Satan cannot be forgiven." In this manner did the greatest geniuses of the middle age meddle with questions which were "too high" for them.

On "the Incarnation," the Reformer discourses as follows:—

"As we discern the uncreated Trinity, by reasoning *à posteriori* from the trinity of the soul, so from the union of the soul and body we become acquainted with the incarnation of our Lord. For as the created spirit, united to the animated body, makes one human person, the same as to the spirit, however the corporeal nature may vary, so we must, in great part, form our conception in regard to the person of the Word; because he assumed in the unity of his person, a complete humanity, becoming that human person which had an eternal pre-existence, inasmuch as according to his nature, as the Word, he had existed from eternity. We are not to understand, that the created spirit in man has any perception which it does not communicate to the compound person of man, but whatever the human spirit perceives, that the compound person perceives, and *vice versâ*. We must consider in the same light the person of the Word, and the manhood assumed, so that the compound divine person perceives whatever the person of the Word perceives. And whatever the assumed humanity suffers, that compound person suffers. We are not to understand that the person of the Word, or the Deity, is part of that man, just as the aforesaid spirit is not an integral part of man, but in reality the whole man. Hence we see, that as in the matter of the Trinity, three persons are the same divine nature, so in the matter of the incarnation,

three natures, namely,—body, soul, and the Divine nature, are each the same person of the Word.”

The twenty-eighth chapter is “On the Number of the Saved.” Phronesis thinks, that as many of the human race will be finally saved, as there were angels that fell, or as many as would have been created, supposing our race to have remained in innocence; so that by the grace of God, the fall of angels, and the fall of man, have been made productive of good.

The next chapter touches on one of the most conspicuous elements in the false religion of the times—the worship offered to saints. Phronesis states, that the Divine perfection of Christ is far beyond the reach of any human attainment, and absolutely necessary to the salvation of mankind; and proceeds to observe, that in consequence of this acknowledged principle, holy men are to be praised only in so far as they have been followers of Christ.

“This custom is, with reason, observed by our church, that whosoever entreats a saint, should direct his prayer to Christ as God, not to the saint especially, but to Christ. Nor doth the celebration or festival of such a saint avail anything, except so far as it tends to the magnifying of Christ, inciting us to honour him, and provoking and inflaming our love to him. And, accordingly, if there be any celebration of the saints, which is not retained within these limits, it is not to be doubted that cupidity, or some other evil, is the cause of such services. Hence many think it would be profitable to the church, were all festivals of that nature to be abolished, and those which have relation to Christ alone retained; because, say they, the memory of Christ would be kept more freshly in the mind, and the devotion of the common people would not be unduly distributed among the members of Christ. But however this may be, it is certain that the solemn services, and the devotion paid to any such saint, is of no use, except in so far as it incites to love of Christ, and is such as may tend to procure his advocacy. For our faith assures us, that Christ is the mediator between God and man. Hence many are of opinion, that when prayer was directed only to that middle person of the Trinity for spiritual help, the church was more flourishing, and made greater advances than it does now, when many new intercessors have been found out and introduced.”

The closing chapter of this book is meant to show, “How the Law of Christ is infinitely superior to all other Laws.” Alithia opens the dialogue on this subject by expressing apprehension that Phronesis will obtain small thanks from the “Satraps” of the age, for the opinions broached in the last chapter; adding, that so many are the assailants of the authority of Scripture on such subjects, that few seem to be capable of estimating it at its just value. “I have learnt from experience,” replies Phronesis, “the truth of your observation, and the chief cause of this state of things is, I doubt not, our unbelief. We do not sincerely believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, or we should hold the authority of the Scripture, and especially that of the evangelists, as of infinitely greater weight than any other.

“Inasmuch as it is the desire of the Holy Spirit,” he proceeds to say, “that our attention should not be dispersed over a large number of objects, but be concentrated on one necessary matter, it is his will that the books of the old and new law should be read

and studied; and that men should not be taken up with other books, which, true as they may be, and containing Scripture truth as they may by implication, are not to be confided in explicitly. Hence Augustine (Book II. De Ordine Rerum) often enjoins it on his readers, that none should give credit to his writings or his words, except in so far as they have their foundation in Scripture, wherein, as he often saith, is contained all truth, either explicitly or implicitly. Of course, we should judge in the same manner concerning the writings of other holy doctors; and much more so concerning the writings of the Romish church, and doctors of a later date.

“Accordingly, that the Holy Scriptures may be more duly estimated, every truth which is not manifest to the Christian from the simple evidence of his senses, should be deduced from Scripture, at least if the faithful are to place credence in it. And then the Scriptures would be held in reverence, and the papal bulls superseded, as they ought to be, and the veneration of men for the laws of the papacy, as well as for the doctrines of our modern doctors, promulgated since the loosing of Satan, would be kept within due bounds. How do writings of this sort concern the faithful, save as they are honestly deduced from the fountain of Scripture? By such a course, we should not only reduce the mandates of the popes, and of other prelates, to their just place, but the errors of the new orders would be corrected, and the worship of Christ would be purified and elevated. In this view, those upstart doctors are to be accounted as especially worthy of all detestation, who endeavour to maintain, that Holy Writ, of all writings or sayings, is the most false, and especially the words of Christ in the Gospel of John, which they think they can clearly demonstrate by their logic. In truth, of all heretical doctrines, I know of none more damnable than this, of none more fit for the purposes of Antichrist, none more hurtful to the faith of Christ. All the sophistries of Antichrist on this subject, lie concealed under this foul covering—‘I understand Holy Writ in this way, and according to my logic it ought so to be understood; but the sense which I attach to it amounts to an impossibility; therefore Scripture, if logically interpreted, and by consequence the Author of Scripture, must be accounted false, and most unworthy of credit.’ ”

It is by reasoning, which, pushed to its results, must lead to impiety of this complexion, that the anti-scripturalists have generally endeavoured to vindicate their conduct, when substituting some other authority in place of the immediate authority of the Divine word. Phronesis meets this argument by saying—

“It is no fault of the Scripture, if the heretic be found understanding it in a wrong sense. It is not subject to his judgment. On the contrary, it condemns him. The error of his understanding lies mainly in his pride, in his foolish confidence in his own logic; whereas the logic of Scripture itself is the most correct, the most subtle, and to be most followed.”

It is expedient, he adds, to the obtaining of such a complete acquaintance with the Scriptures, that the believer should be instructed in sound logic, and by a philosophy chastened from the Lord. Then follows a reference to the “manifold armour” with which the disciple of truth should be provided, when opposed to “the disciples of Antichrist.” The modern reader will probably smile, when he finds among the requisites enumerated, such matters as the following—just views in respect to

“universals;” such an acquaintance with “the metaphysics of the schools” as may include a knowledge of “the quiddity of time, and other accidents, and how it is that accidents are nothing but dispositions formally inherent in their subjects;” such an acquaintance, moreover, with the nature of the Creator and the created, and the relations between them, as to see that God is an “everlasting ideal,” an “eternal existence in his own genus, and a necessary antecedent;” and to see that “the essence of matter is everlasting, and material forms only so many arrangements of it, though they are quiddities of species and genera!” But we must concede much in this form to the tastes of a man who—“*In philosophia nulli reputabatur secundus: in scholasticis disciplinis incomparabilis.*”

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SECTION II.

CHAPTERS TRANSLATED FROM THE FOURTH BOOK OF THE TRIALOGUS RELATING TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, THE HIERARCHY, AND THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS.

I.

ON THE EUCHARIST.

ALITHIA.

I wish, brother Phronesis, you would speak of the Eucharist, the last sacrament but one, because it is regarded with greater reverence than the other sacraments, and appears to have most foundation in Scripture, especially as in our own day this matter has been the subject of so much intricate discussion. And to prevent our being entangled in equivocal terms, it will be necessary to specify the quiddity of this venerable sacrament.[a](#)

PHRONESIS.

We must be aware by the ordinary testimony of our senses that the priest approaches the altar, and makes or consecrates out of the bread and wine a something that remains, and is cognisable by the senses, which the common people understand to be the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, let us speak first of the round white wafer, to all appearance like a host which has not been hallowed by a consecrated presbyter, which the priest afterwards breaks and eats, and which undergoes changes like those to which an unconsecrated host is subject; as, for instance, it may be eaten by a mouse, may grow mouldy with time, and such like.

Let us speak first of this. Now there are certain modern heretics, who declare that this is not a sacrament, that they may escape the inconsistencies which follow from their errors. These men, opposed as much to the ancient as to the modern divines, must be assailed with caution, by asking at the outset what the ordinary sacrament of the eucharist strictly is, and they will either be driven to equivocate or be unable to escape, since this consecrated host must be a sacrament of some kind. The same holds of the other six sacraments; they are plainly of a material entity and permanence like this. No reason can be adduced to show that this is not a sacrament of the church in the same sense with the other sacraments. This is plain from a cursory examination of the quiddity of baptism, confirmation, and the other four above mentioned. We must adopt the common language here also, but the church in her prayers commonly calls this *thing* a sacrament, while the papal enactments call it a sacrament and not a thing,

and the doctors generally say it is sacramentally the body of Christ. Since, then, the sacrament of the eucharist is a thing of some kind, and the body of Christ is not therein visible, we are shut up to the conclusion that the sensible sign, the sacrament, does not remain in it, except what is signified by the *differentia* of the *accidens*.

There is, however, a threefold distinctive mode in this sacrament, in common with the others, namely, that of the sacrament, and the thing; the thing and not the sacrament; the sacrament and not the thing: these terms should be clearly understood. The body of the Lord, which is above, is called the sacrament and the thing. It is called a sacrament because it is the sensible sign of the soul, the deity, and the grace of Christ; and since it is itself signified by the host which we consecrate, it is called, in this respect, the thing of this same sacrament; and this thing, which is naturally the body of Christ, is called the eucharist, the host consecrated before the death of our Lord, and a multitude of other names, which have supplied matter for many tedious arguments. Again, this sensible *thing*, commonly called the consecrated bread, is called a sacrament and not a thing, not in the sense of its not being anything, since, as we see, it is obvious enough to the senses, but in the sense of its not being that holy thing primarily signified by the sensible sign which we see, because it is not naturally the body of Christ. As to the third member of the devisers, making it a thing and not a sacrament, the term has reference to the union of Christ with the church, which is designated necessarily by this sensible sacrament.

Many are the errors into which men have fallen with regard to the quiddity of this sensible sacrament. Some, for instance, say, that it is an accident without a subject; others, that it is nothing, since it is an aggregate of many accidents not all of one genus, against which I have many a time inveighed, both in the language of the schools and of the common people; for of all the heresies that have ever sprung up in the church, I think there is not one more artfully introduced by hypocrites, or a more manifold fraud upon the people. It wrongs the people, and causes them to commit idolatry. It denies Scripture, and by its unbelief often provokes the truth to wrath.[a](#)

In this place I shall briefly set forth the doctrine as supported by the testimony of Scripture. In the first place, this sacrament is the body of Christ in the form of bread. And whereas many heretics oppose this statement, and say that this sacrament is an accident, or nothing, and cannot be the body of Christ, even though the body of Christ were every particle hidden in it, they are all of them manifestly wily heretics,—I say wily, because they are aware that the majority hold the doctrine I have stated, and these men will not, know not how, or else are afraid to make known their belief. Since this article of catholic belief is so broadly expressed in Scripture, the doctrine contrary to it is manifestly heretical. Can any one thing, I ask, be more contrary to another than the doctrine which affirms this sacrament to be sacramentally the body of Christ, and the self-contradictory doctrine maintaining that this sacrament cannot be in any sense the body of Christ?

Again, in regard to the second part, what can be more opposed than the doctrine which says that this sacrament is naturally real bread, and that which contradicts itself, and holds that this sacrament cannot be bread, because it is a mere accident—or nothing? It would be well for the church universal to attend to this matter, and

anxiously to examine what it is they should believe on the ground of Scripture, because this matter is decided with greater completeness, authority, and moderation, in the Gospel of Christ than in the court of Rome. This very court, before the loosing of Satan, was plainly in agreement with the ancient doctrine aforesaid, as is evident from Con. Dis. II. c. Ego Berengarius, and so were all the holy doctors who treated of the subject prior to that time. a After that time, however, the Scriptures were neglected, and many heresies were circulated on this subject, especially among the friars, and the disciples of that school—as, in fact, the two errors mentioned above sufficiently show. The friars especially maintain these errors, and defend them with obstinacy, not only blaspheming Christ, and the commandments of his holy word, but slandering the pope, and the court of Rome, in defence of their nest, as well as prelates, secular lords, simple priests, and the whole mass of the common people. Thus saith the Scripture, Matt. xxvi., “And as they were eating Jesus took *bread*,” &c. and the same in Mark xiv.; Luke xxii.; and 1 Cor. xi. Accordingly our church uses this form at the consecration of the host, *Qui pridie pateretur, &c. Corpus meum, &c.* In all these places the meaning is the same, though there is a slight difference in the terms employed. From a faith so authoritatively promulgated, I would argue as follows with heretics:—Christ, who cannot lie, said—that the bread he took in his hands was really his body; in this he did not err, he did not assert what was false, accordingly it was truly so. This reasoning gives every believer full warrant to abominate the aforesaid heresies, and whereby to convict the friars and their accomplices of heresy. Hence, prior to the loosing of Satan, Jerome, that distinguished student of Scripture, in treating of this subject in a letter to Helvidius, concludes in the following terms: “We may hear,” saith he, “that the bread he brake and gave to his disciples to eat, is the body of our Lord and Saviour by his own words—‘this is my body.’”

II.

WHAT IS DENOTED BY THE PRONOUN “THIS” IN THE WORDS OF CONSECRATION.

ALITHIA.

I am delighted, brother, with your clear statement in regard to the faith of the church, which has been only too long hidden. I see not how the friars, or others, can escape your reasoning, without either inventing a sense for this passage of Scripture, or actually refusing to believe it.

PHRONESIS.

Neither we ourselves, nor any one besides, can deny the force of this reasoning, and the good catholic should cherish it with care, as very dear to him. But heretics have assigned various significations to this Scripture. In the first place, they say, that the pronoun “*this*,” in the proposition of the sacrament, “*this is my body*,” denotes simply the body of our Lord, and not the bread, for otherwise, according to them, the proposition would be falser. As to what John, “On God,” and other illiterate heretics

maintain, that the pronoun denotes nothing, I pass it over, as not worthy to be mentioned, and proceed to bring argument in full against the first heresy. The former of these pronouns denotes the bread which Christ took in his hands, and the pronoun following it, the same thing which was before denoted by the other. The subject, therefore, of the sacramental proposition, refers to this same *bread*. How is the believer to comprehend that Christ took bread in his hands, blessed, brake it, and gave it his disciples to eat, unless he understands by the former pronoun, “*bread?*” For the sacramental words had not yet been uttered, that it should cease to be bread. Our opinion is confirmed by Matt. xxvi., where Christ bids all his apostles drink of that cup, which they did. Also Mark xiv., “And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank of it,” and in the same way, concerning the bread; whence the apostle’s words, in 1 Cor. xi. are “For as often as ye eat this bread,” &c.: and from all this it appears, either that the Author of Scripture gives us a false representation, or that the apostles ate of the bread offered them by Christ. From the same source it is also plain, that the second pronoun denotes the same bread which is made the subject of the sacramental proposition,—“this is my body,” for, otherwise, the causal would be in every view absurd; and, besides, Christ would have been deluding his church.

This reasoning, founded on the object denoted by the pronoun, ought to give the faithful abundant confidence. The words of Christ point out the object of which the apostles took cognisance; but it is inconsistent to make them denote the mere body of Christ in its proper nature. Our Lord’s words, then, must denote something else; and nothing can they denote pertinently, more than the bread which Christ had held out to them in his hand. If the mere natural body of our Lord is meant, then the signification of these words of Christ would be, “This my body is my body.” But with this the apostles were acquainted before; and it would be out of place, in connexion with the injunction, that they should each eat of the bread.

Again, if the reference of the pronoun to bread be out of place in this connexion, how can it consistently be taught that the transubstantiation of the bread, by virtue of the words pronounced at the sacrament, is an accident without a subject, and an innovation of Christ’s body in place of the sacramental bread? This fictitious reference, which they ascribe to these pronouns, does away with the entire meaning of the sacrament.

Again, in the second sacramental clause concerning the wine, that wine in the cup is meant; therefore, by the connexion from a sufficient resemblance between this clause about the wine, and the former one in which the bread is consecrated, it appears plainly, that this same bread must be referred to, because no catholic would deny that the *contents* of the cup are meant, by metonymy; for Christ, in Mark xiv. speaks thus—“This is my blood of the new testament.” There is no catholic in existence, who believes that cup of metal to be, sacramentally, the blood of Christ, but understands the term as referring to the wine contained in it. Further, to lay bare the wily turnings of this sophistry, the Holy Spirit ordained that it should be written in the masculine gender, *Hic est sanguis meus*, (this is my blood;) wherefore, among the many significations of scriptural passages, concerning which we are certain, this is one of

the most certain, that in this, the proposition of the sacrament, bread, or wine, is meant.

This being admitted, the catholic must pass over to the complex signification of the sacramental proposition, “this is my body,” abandoning, as the height of heresy, the opinion that the Gospel, especially the words of Christ, can contain anything impossible or inappropriate. But since every word of Christ’s is true, and, in the highest sense of the term, catholic, and Christ has said that this bread is his body, it follows, manifestly, that this is true. It is about this point, however, that heretics maintain their struggle; they cannot deny that the pronoun denotes bread, and so they assign an extremely heretical compound, threefold signification. They say, first, that this,—namely, the bread,—is not the body of Christ, but that, by virtue of the sacramental words, it will be, *in a certain way*, the body of Christ. The second method appears more heretical still, for the opinion, that the bread will afterward become the body of Christ, is as inadmissible as the heretic’s own error; for, according to his showing, that bread would then be turned into, or identified with, the body of Christ, and, consequently, it would end in transubstantiation, and hence be the veritable body of Christ. Thus, in the second interpretation, we correct the first,—that this bread will become, in a certain manner, the body of Christ. The third course, again, (it being evident that nothing of that bread will remain in the body of Christ,) consists in denying any prior sense at all, saying, that the Author of Scripture means that this accident, *per se*, without any subject, is the sacramental sign of the body of Christ. And this is the signification of the proposition,—“This is my body.” The heretic sees that neither the matter, nor the form of bread, is transmuted into the body of Christ. In fact, the things themselves do not agree in subject; accordingly, he regards it as evident, that the catholic should not admit, that out of this bread will be made the body of Christ, as a statue is made out of bronze, or day is made out of night, (for they are both incongruous in subject,) but because these accidents, *per se*, without a subject, are sacramentally the figures of the body of Christ. Oh, how abominable is that figment, which would make it appear, that it is not bread which is denoted by that pronoun,—as is shown above!

An impossibility, according to our modern doctors, is incomprehensible; and according to Augustine, and other saints, it cannot be included even in the Divine Omnipotence, and so concerning the whole affair, these men are at a loss to express the genus of the accident to which this venerable sacrament should be referred. They speak falsely, therefore, when they say, that it might be meaner than horse-food, or than anything that may be named. So then, as these heretics, subsequent to the time of the loosing of Satan, have had no more understanding of this term than magpies, and as they falsely assert that neither Christ nor his apostles understood it, and so, of course, none of the fathers who came after them; we need not directly refute this error, for believers well know how constantly the body of Christ is made anew by an idiotic and unworthy priest; and it is not until these sacramental words have been duly uttered, that the accident without a subject is created; so that the demonstrative pronoun of the sacramental proposition may remain for ever without denoting an accident without a subject, so long as the bread continues bread.

It is this doctrine of the saints, that whosoever imposes upon Scripture a sense foreign to it, such as the Holy Spirit requireth not, such a man must be a heretic. This sense given to the above terms, by the persons alluded to, neither Scripture, revelation, nor reason can establish. No one of the saints, prior to the loosing of Satan, was acquainted with it. Jerome, Augustine, and other saints, and a vigorous reason, all totally contradict it. The doctrine, then, must be wholly abandoned, as one of special falsehood. These men must amend Holy Writ, and make it say, not that the accident without a subject, which they cannot comprehend, is the body of Christ, but that it is the sign of the body of Christ. But how then, by virtue of this sentence, comes transubstantiation, or the accident without a subject? Since this accident without a subject, may equally signify the body of Christ, these heretics cannot state at what instant transubstantiation, or the accident without a subject, really takes place.

Thus, then, is this three-fold doctrine annihilated, a doctrine contemptible and erroneous, after the manner of all other heresies which affect to be the doctrine of Christ. We must abide, then, by the opinion of the learned and acute Jerome, who says, that the bread, by virtue of Christ's word, is, sacramentally, the body of our Saviour. Of what sort that bread is, and of what it is in its own nature, the true theologian can see by observation of other hosts, not consecrated.

III.

SHOWING THAT THE BREAD REMAINS BREAD AFTER CONSECRATION.

ALITHIA.

I am delighted with your stringent and lucid replies to the heretics in this matter, and the more so, because so great a multitude of friars, and others, who call themselves Christians, exclaim against your doctrine, and plot in various ways against your life. According to your former statements, these men are, of necessity, manifest heretics, and, consequently, should be expelled the church, or, at least, excluded from every grade of ecclesiastical dignity, and so from all holding of temporalities and receiving of alms. I pray you, now, to explain how it is that the bread remains bread after consecration, for many declare that if they had believed thus, they would never have observed the ceremony as they have done.

PHRONESIS.

On a subject of this nature, we must attend to the words of Scripture, and give them absolute credence. And the words of Scripture tell us that this sacrament *is* the body of Christ, not that it *will* be, or that it is sacramentally a *figure* of the body of Christ. Accordingly we must, on this authority, admit, without reserve, that the bread, which is this sacrament, is veritably the body of Christ. But the simplest layman will see that it follows, that inasmuch as this bread is the body of Christ, it is therefore bread, and remains bread, and is at once both bread and the body of Christ. Again, the point may be illustrated by examples of the most palpable description. It is not necessary, but, on

the contrary, repugnant to truth, that a man, when raised to the dignity of lordship or prelacy, should cease to be the same person. The man, or the same substance, would remain, in all respects, though in a certain degree elevated. So we must believe that this bread, by virtue of the sacramental words, becomes, by the consecration of the priest, veritably the body of Christ, and no more ceases to be bread, than humanity ceases, in the instance before supposed; for the nature of bread is not destroyed by this, but is exalted to a substance more honoured. Do we believe that John the Baptist, who was made by the word of Christ to be Elias, (Matt. xi.) ceased to be John, or ceased to be anything which he was substantially before? In the same manner, accordingly, though the bread becometh the body of Christ, by virtue of his words, it need not cease to be bread. For it is bread substantially, after it has begun to be sacramentally the body of Christ. For thus saith Christ, "This is my body," and in consequence of these words, this must be admitted, like the assertion in the eleventh chapter of the gospel of Matthew, about the Baptist: "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias." And Christ doth not, to avoid equivocation, contradict the Baptist, when he declares, "I am not Elias." The one meaning that he was Elias *figuratively*, the other, that he was not Elias *personally*. And in the same manner it is merely a double meaning, and not a contradiction, in those who admit that this sacrament is *not* naturally the body of Christ, but that this same sacrament *is* Christ's body figuratively.

Concerning the assertion made by some hardened heretics, that they would never have celebrated the ordinance had they believed this, it would, indeed, have been well for the church, and have contributed much to the honour of God, if such apostates had never consecrated their *accident*, for in so doing they blaspheme God in many ways, and make Him the author of falsehood. For the world God created they straightway destroy, inasmuch as they destroy what God ordained should be perpetual—primary matter—and introduce nothing new into the world, save the mendacious assertion, that it pertains to them to perform unheard of miracles, in which God himself certainly may have no share. In fact, according to their representations, they make a new world. What loss would it have been, then, if heretics, so foolish, had never celebrated an ordinance, the proper terms of which they so little understand, and who are so ignorant of the quiddity of the sacrament they observe and worship?

With regard to the points touching the truth of the belief, that this sacrament is bread, let heretics be on the watch, and summon up all their powers; for He who is called Truth, teaches us (Matt. vi.) to pray that he would give us our daily, or supersubstantial bread. And according to Augustine, on this passage in our Lord's sermon on the mount, by daily bread, Christ intends, among other happy significations, this venerable sacrament. Are we not, then, to believe, what would follow, viz. that if the sacrament for which we pray is our daily bread, then in the sacrament there must be bread? In the same manner the apostles recognised Christ with breaking of bread, as we are told in Luke xxiv. And Augustine, with the papal enactment, De Con. Dist. III. *non omnes*, tells us that this bread is this venerable sacrament. Or are we to doubt its following, that the apostles having known Christ in the breaking of this bread, therefore that seeming bread must have been bread? Our apostle, likewise, who takes his meaning from our Lord, calls this sacrament the bread which we break, as is manifest in 1 Cor. x., and often again in the following chapter.

Who then would venture to blaspheme God, by maintaining that so chosen a vessel could apply erroneous terms to the chief of the sacraments,—especially with the foreknowledge that heresies would take their rise from that very subject? It is impossible to believe that Paul would have been so careless of the church, the spouse of Christ, as so frequently to have called this sacrament bread, and not by its real name, had he known that it was not bread, but an accident without a subject; and when he was besides aware, by the gift of prophecy, of all the future heresies which men would entertain on the matter. Let these idiot heretics say, and bring sufficient reason to prove their statements, what this sacrament, which their falsehoods desecrate, really is, if not the holy bread. As was said above, Christ, who is the first Truth, saith, according to the testimonies of the four evangelists, that this bread is his body. What heretic ought not to blush, then, to deny that it is bread?

We are thus shut up, either to destroy the verity of Scripture, or to go along with the senses and the judgment of mankind, and admit that it is bread. Mice, and other creatures, are aware of this fact; for according to philosophers, they have the power of discerning what is good for them to eat. Oh, if believers in the Lord will look on, and see Antichrist and his accomplices so strong as to have power to condemn and persecute even unto death, those sons of the church who thus yield their belief to the Gospel, yet certain I am, that though the truth of the Gospel may for a time be cast down in the streets, and be kept under in a measure by the threats of Antichrist, yet extinguished it cannot be, since he who is the Truth has said, that “heaven and earth shall pass away, but that his words shall not pass away!” Let the believer, then, rouse himself, and demand strictly from our heretics, what the nature of this venerable sacrament is, if it be not bread; since the language of the Gospel, the evidence of our senses, and arguments that have in their favour every probability, say, that so it is. For I am certain, that even heathens, who make their own gods, are perfectly aware of what they are in their own proper nature, though they pretend that a portion of divinity is bestowed upon them supernaturally by the highest God of all. The believer, therefore, hesitates not to affirm, that these heretics are more ignorant, not only than mice and other animals, but than pagans themselves; while on the other hand, our aforementioned conclusion, that this venerable sacrament is, in its own nature, veritable bread, and sacramentally Christ’s body, is shown to be the true one.

IV.

THE PRECEDING STATEMENTS CONFIRMED BY ARGUMENT.

ALITHIA.

I am pleased to find that a man must be shut up, as it seems, to one of two courses,—denying the evangelist, as an archheretic, or admitting what you require concerning this sacrament. Will you now add a few arguments to the authorities you have brought forward, for we all admit that God can do nothing without good reason, that he cannot destroy a guiltless existence, or put confusion on that intelligence

which he has implanted in our nature, unless some greater good, or better reason shall induce him?

PHRONESIS.

I am pleased with your manner of expressing confidence in God. We must, in order to the end now proposed, proceed in the way which the arguments on this topic require, that the truth of our faith may the more clearly appear. Let us lay it down, then, that of all the external senses which God has bestowed upon man, touch and taste are least liable to error in the judgments they give. But this heresy would overturn the evidence of those senses without cause; and the sacrament which does that must be a sacrament of Antichrist. With regard to the evidence of touch in the sacrament, the certainty of experiment, which the heretic will not deny, shows us that this consecrated bread, when but newly baked, differs in its manner of breaking, in the degree of brittleness, and the sort of sound produced in breaking it, from bread that is stale, and which is of greatest toughness in damp weather. Now accidents of this sort, hardness, softness, brittleness, toughness, cannot exist *per se*; nor can they be the subjects of other accidents: it remains, therefore, that there must be some subject, as bread, or some thing by which they are made subjects. For since this sacrament, which is always the same, is found at one time hard, at another soft; at one time brittle, at another tough; the philosopher plainly sees, that there must be a subject of some sort besides, as the seat of qualities, which undergoes these respective changes, (for, otherwise, all distinction between such accidents must be denied,) or else, in such a transmutation, a new sacrament is continually created. But if the first be granted, then no accident is distinguished from a material substance; and since those accidents remain, they would then become the material substance, as in the first instance.

In the same way in the sacrament of the cup, the same applies to the sense of taste, since it may happen that the wine, though retaining at first its taste and sweetness, might, by remaining in the vessel a day, lose its taste and become sour. Now according to the judgment of our taste, and our reason, we must supply a subject of some sort, whose qualities are thus changed. For quantity, such as length, breadth, and thickness, does not admit of the predication of qualities of this sort concerning them. We must therefore admit a subject besides quantity, which is changed by qualities of this sort, since the quantity must always be existing whenever the substance is rarified or condensed.

But I have argued at length on this point elsewhere, and brought against this error the testimony of Augustine in many places. I proceed, therefore, to remark, in the third place, on the great perplexity consequent on the delusion to which our internal faculties are subject, since when the knowledge obtained by our external senses is insufficient, the inward senses must be subject to delusion; and no heretic of this sort will affirm, in the terms of the schools, that he is acquainted with the quiddity, or the differentia of sensible substances. On the contrary, he will admit, with ignorant philosophers, that of such sensible existences, he knows nothing; so that, it being admitted that many hosts consecrated and unconsecrated, may be mingled together by men who are not aware of it, then the heretic cannot distinguish his accident from bread, just as we cannot distinguish between consecrated and unconsecrated hosts,

inasmuch as the effect of consecration is not sensible, but beyond the perception of the senses. Mice, however, have an innate knowledge of the fact, that the substance of bread is retained, as at first; but these unbelievers have no such knowledge, since they know not what bread or what wine are consecrated, except as they have seen the act of consecration performed. That which is consecrated does not admit of a second consecration, because, if so, an accident, *per se*, without bread or wine, may be consecrated. It is plain, accordingly, that they must ever be in doubt as to whether they do truly consecrate. What, I ask, could move our Lord Jesus Christ, thus to take away the power of judgment from his worshippers? In no way doth it redound to their good, nor can it be established by reason or Scripture, that it is necessary for men to be so deceived; for bread and wine, retaining their old form, would be a fitter representation of the body and blood of Christ, than an accident without a subject; and the body and blood of Christ can be as well in any part whatever of such a body, as in any particle of such a most monstrous accident; and then would Scripture faith be preserved, the advantage on all sides more, and the reverence for God greater. In like manner, such blasphemers convict the prelates, beyond escape, of a culpable negligence as regards the duties of the grammarian. For the schoolmaster teaches the translation of the aforesaid Latin words, according to the common understanding of them; but to avoid the danger of heresy, it should be enjoined upon such persons to teach their boys to translate them in accordance with that blasphemous absurdity. The apostles knew the Lord in the breaking of bread, *i.e.*, in the breaking of an accident without a subject; for otherwise a boy of capacity might imagine that the bread had been substantially broken by God—a most perilous notion according to these heretics. The schoolmaster would be culpable who did not explain such an equivocation as—*the dog shines in the sky*, but were to teach, according to the ordinary meaning of the word, that a barking animal and not a star shone there. Much more culpable would he be, then, if he should fail to explain an equivocal expression in a matter involving such an injury to the faith. But blessed be the Lord of goodness, that he hath so confounded the wisdom of these heretics, that to this very day they know not how to construe the aforesaid words of the Gospel, so as to make them yield the sense they affix to them. For neither in construing nor in preaching do they themselves understand their own words, when they say that the apostles knew Christ in the breaking of bread, *i.e.*, of an accident without a subject. And so Antichrist, in this heresy, overturns grammar, logic, and natural science; and, what is more lamentable, destroys the meaning of the Gospel. But God, as he always preserveth a natural understanding among the laity, so he hath always kept the catholic sense among some of the clergy, as in Greece, or elsewhere, according to his pleasure. Oh who can excuse the friars, and other apostates, in that they know not how, or do not dare, or through jealousy do not wish, to instruct the people on these points, from whom, to say nothing of their obligation to love the brethren, they receive so great emolument? Verily the natural understanding of man would condemn false brethren of this sort, for like foes at home, they would do more than idolaters abroad, to perplex the simple populace. What greater blasphemy than to assert that Christ, who is God, and the Lord of truth, hath given special authority to errors of this sort among his people? Without a doubt the chief cause is a departure from the commandments of the Gospel. Thus these false followers of Antichrist show themselves more ignorant than brutes or pagans.

V.

HOW AND FROM WHAT CAUSE THE HERESY CONCERNING THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST HATH GROWN UP.

ALITHIA.

I am pleased to hear you express yourself so boldly in behalf of evangelical truths, and that you have so far unfolded them by argument. But I would fain know how, and from what cause it was, that this heresy took its rise, even supposing it to have been introduced by Satan and his followers into the church.

PHRONESIS.

I should be worse than an infidel were I not to defend unto the death the law of Christ; and certain I am, that all the heretics and disciples of Antichrist can never impugn this evangelic doctrine. On the contrary, I trust, through our Lord's mercy, to be superabundantly rewarded by him after this short and miserable life for this lawful contention which I wage. I know from the Gospel, that Antichrist, with all his devices, can only kill the body, but Christ, in whose cause I contend, can cast both soul and body into hell-fire. Certain I am, that he will not suffer his servants to be destitute of what is needful, since he freely exposed himself to a dreadful death, and has ordained that all his more beloved disciples shall undergo severe suffering with a view to their profiting.

The reason why men fall into this heresy, is that they disbelieve the Gospel, and embrace in preference the papal laws and apocryphal sayings. And of all the kinds of infidelity that ever grew up in the church of God, this draws men down deeper and more imperceptibly into the vortices of error, and causes more to apostatise from our Lord Jesus Christ. And be it granted that Innocent III. was led away by this madness, though the friars take upon themselves to say that it is not my place to discuss this point, yet I am sure from the faith of Christ, that whatever he (Innocent III.) has laid down in this matter, should not be received by believers, except in as far as it is founded on the commandments of the Gospel, for the same faith of Christ makes me confident that all truth is contained therein, and especially all truth relating to faith, and most in harmony with its design. Since these things are not from Christ or his law, but, on the contrary, it is contained in his law, as is plain from what is said before, that this sacrament is the body of Christ and bread, every believer ought accordingly to obey his Lord herein. But herein it is manifestly inferred, that the sacrament is not an accident without a subject, since it cannot be shown that God has raised an accident to be his body. Accordingly, adhering to the faith, I will deny this as the greatest heresy, and with this view I have elsewhere sent the satraps the following conclusions thereupon, with a protest agreeably thereto. The first is:—If by virtue of these sacramental words an accident is matter without a subject in the sacrament of the altar, that accident is itself the sacrament. It is plain from this that the said sacrament,

according to the concurrent acknowledgment of these heretics, is not a substance, so that the sacramental words leave nothing remaining in the sacrament save this sort of accident. The second conclusion is, that—Of all the heresies that have ever grown up in the holy church of God, none is more abominable than that which makes this venerable sacrament an accident without a subject:—it being plain, that by this heresy, the very words of Christ are made to be heretical, so far as in it lies, and heresy is introduced over the greater part of the church. The third conclusion is, that this sacrament is, on the testimony of the Gospel, true bread naturally, and the body of Christ veritably and sacramentally, as the above-mentioned passages from the Gospels show.

With regard to your second question, it appears to me that Christ, who is head over all devils, teaches us figuratively by this, how the kingdom of the evil one is divided against itself, and must finally be made desolate, showing that its principal supporters in their very blessing are divided against themselves—as in the matter of the sect of the friars, so that each one of them is opposed to all the rest, and no one can efficiently maintain its own sentiments. And inasmuch as their prelates presume to bless, for the payment of money, those whom the Lord hath cursed, so they often curse those whom the Lord hath blessed; accordingly the Lord signifies to us, in that passage of Malachi, that their benediction after their own pleasure, should often be called the malediction of God. For they say that in the consecration of their host, they bless the bread and wine so that it becomes nothing, since according to their doctrine no part of it remains in the body of Christ, or in his sacrament, but taking annihilation in its proper sense, it is annihilated and turned into nothing. But Christ, though he was called an austere man by the slothful servant, never cursed anything whatever with a severity like this, for when he cursed the fig-tree (Mark xi.) the substance of the tree remained, since Christ destroyeth not utterly his creatures on account of sin, or the appearance of sin, and since no creature can do anything unless without the previous act of God. Hence it is plain, that though they may bless the bread (as they falsely say) so as to cause it to become nothing, yet Christ, since it is his own workmanship, preserves it. Nor must we pass over what is said by John, in his treatise “On God,” that the bread remains bread, but that where it is unknown, since believers are well assured that the bread, by virtue of the blessing of Christ, is turned into a something better, because it is turned into the body of our Lord, and remains bread because the body itself remains sacramentally; and if they say it is transubstantiated, by virtue of the sacramental words, it is enough for me, since that substance cannot pass into another which has no existence in the passage. Let us praise Jesus Christ, then, in that the author of this lie is not He who spake and it was done, but rather that liar who spake and it was not done, who commanded and it was brought to nought. But if you reply that it follows from this, that the pope and his cardinals have many times erred from the faith, and often deceive both themselves and their churches, the conclusion is true, though lamentable. Whether, however, they died penitent for such heresy, or remained heretics after death, it is not for us rashly to decide. Yet God who knoweth things secret knoweth the truth in this matter, as do those to whom it is his pleasure himself to reveal it. For we are not bound to proclaim or believe that any pope, as such, is a father in the greatest blessedness after death, as his greedy flatterers during his lifetime clamorously assert, but the more he departed in life, even to the last, from the pattern of Christ, the more deep will be his condemnation in hell. But I believe

many have been led into this heresy who finally repented, as was the case, in my opinion, with the Bishop of Lincoln and others, who have left behind them in their writings the opinion, that an accident cannot exist without its subject, and yet the aforesaid Bishop of Lincoln, in his “Glossa de Divinis Nominibus,” thus writes—“An accident may perhaps (*forte*) exist without a subject.” I believe this subtle doctor to have meant that such an accident in the sacrament must exist in the act of our mind, since we have sensation actually to admonish us. But the consideration of the quiddity of its substance must be put in abeyance, and our consideration of the created substance must be employed about that which is signified by it—as a man entering a church does not set himself to consider the quiddity of the wood of the image, or the cross, but worshippeth it in respect of that of which it is the sign. So it is in the matter of the consecrated host; and because this is sometimes the case and sometimes not, I repeat what the Bishop of Lincoln says, “there may perhaps be an accident without a subject.” It is in this way that those philosophers speak, who hold that time has its existence in the mind, and that it is rendered sensible by the act of attention. For the existence of time is known to us because it is the measure of sensible motion, by the actual consideration of the mind; just as that which is perceptible to the senses, has this passive power reduced to act, during the time that it is actually being perceived. I think it very probable that great philosophers have been secretly of this opinion on the matter. But it would be useless to inquire into the intention of the author of this error. So I leave the discussion and contention with regard to this gloss to be carried on by theologians, being certain always of the faith of the Gospel, whereupon I rest without the smallest fear.

VI.

IN WHAT WAY THE BREAD IS THE BODY OF OUR LORD, AND NOT THE IDENTICAL BODY ITSELF.

ALITHIA.

I am pleased again with the acute and lucid explanation of your sentiments, and in my opinion, the truth of Scripture is of infinitely greater authority than that of any person now living, or of any community that could be named; so that if there had been a hundred popes, and all the friars had been turned into cardinals, no concession ought to have been made to their opinion in a matter of faith, save in so far as they rest upon Scripture. I see farther, that you do not condemn the pope, or any one, on account of this error, because you are ignorant in what way they died; but it is far more likely in your eyes that doctors have erred from the faith, or been slothfully silent, than that a single word of the Gospel may possibly be false.

But there is one thing I would fain know, and that is, in what sense the bread is the body of the Lord, and yet not identically the very body.

PHRONESIS.

I see that you discern the truth on many points; and as to the mode in which that bread is the body of our Lord, such it surely is,—believe this firmly, for Christ, who cannot lie, hath so said. Now you know there are three methods of predication—the formal, the essential, and the figurative. Passing by the two former, let us here attend to the third. It is according to the third mode that Christ, as I have before observed to you, calls John the Baptist Elias, (Matt. xi.) The apostle says of Christ, (2 Cor. x., when deducing a moral from the acts of the old law,) that he was a rock. And in Gen. xii., the Scripture asserts, that seven ears of corn, and seven fat kine, are the seven years of fertility. And as Augustine observes, the Scripture does not say—are the *signs* of those years, but that they are the years themselves. And you will meet with such modes of expression constantly in Scripture. And in these expressions, without a doubt, the predication is made figuratively, and is not the predication essential, or the predication formal. Now all such expressions show that the thing (*res*) of the subject, is ordained by God to be the figure of the thing of the predicate. So again it is said, that the sacramental bread is, after that mode, specially the body of the Lord, since Christ has so declared authoritatively. Yet I am ready to believe in a more subtle meaning, should I be taught it, either by Scripture or by reason. But of this meaning I am confident, nor have heretics, who would oppose me, any means of resistance on this point, since according to appearance, this accident without a subject, as they teach, which is the sacrament, is the body of Christ, that is, sacramentally the sign and figure of the body itself. Then there is a greater relation between bread and the body of Christ, (as Augustine shows,) than between it and an accident of this sort; wherefore it is no mere colouring to say that the bread is figuratively the body of Christ. For, as Augustine teaches, in what he says on John—corn is collected of a multitude of grain, and ground; secondly, water is poured on it, and it is kneaded; and thirdly, it is taken as the food of the body for nourishment. In a similar way believers receive the sacramental bread in fragments; it is afterwards watered by evangelical faith, and kneaded in the heart; and when baked by the fire of charity, is spiritually eaten. Accordingly, Augustine says, on John, “Believe with a faith moulded by charity, and thou hast eaten;” and this must be understood of eating spiritually.

Furthermore, those heretics are not to be listened to, who endeavour to do away with the meaning thus assigned, by the false objection, that such a figurative mode of expression is not used on any other occasion in the Gospel. For in Luke xxii. it is immediately subjoined, “Do this in remembrance of me;” as if it had been said—This sacramental bread should be taken as an efficient memorial of me. Paul (1 Cor. xi.) speaks in a similar manner—“this cup,” &c., where there can be no doubt of its being a figurative expression; since in Mark xiv. Christ saith, “This is my blood,” &c., where the words show the same thing; for the mind of the Catholic cannot comprehend that the bread is the body of Christ, except by a figurative understanding of these words; inasmuch as to identify these two things is impossible. Beyond all doubt, then, the expression “this is my body,” is figurative, as are those in the Gospel of John: “unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of man,” with many like them, which Christ spake in another sense. Nevertheless, there are some expressions in Scripture which must be understood plainly and without figure, as we grant in the matter of the incarnation, that our Jesus is God and man, which is plain from collated passages, as

John i., Eph. i., and Heb. i. Whence it is thought that the cunning of the fiend hath long been busy about this fallacy, to lead the church into that heresy. And the cause of it is that the church prelates are not preferred according to Christ's ordaining, nor does the law of Antichrist suffer them to be zealous for the law of the Lord. As if the devil had been devising to this effect, saying, "If I can, by my vicar Antichrist, so far seduce the believers of the church, as to bring them to deny that this sacrament is bread, and to believe it a most abominable accident, I may in the same manner lead them, after that, to believe whatever I shall have a mind, inasmuch as Scripture language, and the senses of men, plainly teach the opposite of that dogma; and doubtless, after a space, by the same means, these simple-hearted believers may be brought to say, that however a prelate shall live, be he effeminate, a homicide, a simonist, or stained with any other vice, this must never be believed concerning him by the obedient people."

Nevertheless, from motives of gain, such exemption must not be suffered to extend to the inferior clergy. And of the pope, it must be believed, as though it were a matter of faith, that he falls into no error, especially in regard to the faith of the church, but that he is a most blessed father, because he sins not. Thus it would appear, that the passage explained above, in Matt. xxiv.,—"When ye shall see the abomination of desolation," refers to this heresy about the host.

VII.

ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE BREAD WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST.

ALITHIA.

I must request you, brother, to show still farther, from reason or Scripture, that there is no identification of the bread with the body of Christ, and no impanation. For I am by no means pleased with the spurious writings which the moderns use, to prove an accident without a subject, because the church so teaches. Such evidence should satisfy no one.

PHRONESIS.

As to identification, we must, in the first place, agree on what you mean by the term. It signifies, God's making natures, which are distinct in species or number, one and the same—as though, for instance, he should make the person of Peter to be one with Paul. I recollect having adduced many reasons to show the impossibility of such identity. For according to this visionary theory, every quantitative part of a permanent quantity, as of time, could be identified with any other, which is immediately shown to be impossible. For if this were true of A, supposing A to represent a line of a foot in length, then every quantitative part of that line is a foot in length. Even the very smallest must be so, which is a manifest contradiction. So this opinion is shown to be identical with an impossible and heretical one; and the same reasoning is applicable to time, or anything that may be named. For if A is identical with B, then both of them

remain; since a thing which is destroyed is not made identical, but is annihilated, or ceases to be. And if both of them remain, then they differ as much as at first, and differ consequently in number, and so are not, in the sense given, the same. For it is plain, by the mere force of the language—"if both of them remain"—the pronoun "them" being in the plural, points to them as numerically distinct. In like manner, supposing there were any identification in the sense here meant, then all their differences would be made identical also. Every difference is repugnant to such identification. By the same consequence, they would be identical in their differences, and a thing of one species identical with a thing of another species, an assertion which we know involves a contradiction in terms.

ALITHIA.

This threefold reason satisfies me that the identification you mention cannot exist. But let me request you to destroy the doctrine of *impanation* held by some false brethren.

PHRONESIS.

I am certain that this doctrine of impanation is impossible and heretical. In the first place, I oppose it by saying, that in that case the body of Christ, and so Christ made glorious in the body,—would undergo all the transmutations which bread could undergo, and so the body of Christ would not only be made by the presbyter who celebrates the service, but by the baker, and ere now be so multiplied, that Christ would have many bodies at once; and all that could be predicated of bread, would be applicable to the body of Christ. So a mouse would eat the body of Christ, and that very body would putrefy, and turn into worms, and a priest, in celebrating this ordinance, would commonly break the neck, and all the limbs of Christ! But what could be more hateful, more savouring of the infidel, more disastrous to the catholic pilgrim? The consequence is plain, because when two natures are identified in the same person, as is plain in the case of the incarnation, all that is predicated of either nature is applicable to the one person. For in this sense we truly grant, not only that Christ, but that God, was crucified, dead, and buried, as before he had been temporally begotten and made of a woman. But if, in the same way, that bread is so made to be the identical body of Christ, and that body is really Christ himself, that bread is in reality made Christ as God. But what idolatry could be more odious? For so every church would have its own God, to whom would be applicable all the degrading predications we have mentioned; and so the Deity would become the basest thing in the universe! On the same ground, adopting the doctrine of impanation, as above set forth, the festival of the impanation ought to be solemnly celebrated like that of the incarnation. And Christ ought, after the same sense, to be made Peter, a lamb, a sheep, a kid, a ram, a serpent, &c. But what more absurd? Wherefore it is certain, that the expression, "This is my body," with others like it, should be understood as predicated figuratively.

We must notice one difference between the predication identical, and the predication figurative, for when two natures are identified in the same person, as in the case of the incarnation, each of them is numerically the same; but in the case of the sacrament of the altar it is otherwise, because, though the bread be broken in three, or any number

of parts, each one of them is not really, but figuratively the body of the Lord, as in looking into different mirrors, you see the same face as regards the likeness in every one of them. Wherefore, there is no necessity that a thing made by God thus symbolically, should stand in any need of the presence of the thing of which it is the figure, or that the thing itself, of which it is the figure, should be locally approximated to it, or on this account be really changed. So it is not to be understood that the body of Christ descends to the host, in any church where it is being consecrated, but remains above in the skies, stable and unmoved, so that it has a spiritual existence in the host, but not of the dimensions, nor according to the other accidents appertaining thereunto in heaven. Hence it seems to me that the body of Christ, and so Christ in his humanity, may extend spiritually to every part of the world. But according to Augustine, and the other doctors, he is king spiritually, potentially, and virtually, even unto every part of his kingdom. The body of Christ, therefore, extends to every part of this world, since by virtue from that body every part of the world is pervaded, beyond any power an earthly king has of pervading the parts of his kingdom. Nevertheless we must believe, that the body of Christ is far otherwise present in the consecrated host, since it is the host itself figuratively: and, according to the nature of spiritual and virtual existence, it is different in every part of it.

VIII.

SHOWING THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST DOTHT NOT CORRUPT.

PSEUDIS.

The follies to which you have been giving vent, have sent me into a long nap; but now I must awake a little, and confute them. In the first place, you cannot escape from this expository syllogism:—First, This bread becomes corrupt, or is eaten by a mouse. Second, The same bread is the body of Christ. Third, Therefore the body of Christ does thus become corrupt, and is thus eaten;—and thus you are involved in inconsistency.

PHRONESIS.

It hath been a false sleep in which you have indulged, methinks, with but too much of the sophist and the fox in it. Think of what has been said before concerning the Trinity, and the incarnation, and concerning universals, and then you will blush in the midst of your subtleties. I deny, then, the argument which you call an expository syllogism. It is a deceptive paralogism. For, if in the matter of the Trinity it follows, not that this essence is the Father, and this same essence the Son, much more clearly, then, doth it not follow in the syllogising resorted to in your obscure reasoning? In the same manner, it doth not follow in the matter of the incarnation, that because this person is this humanity, and this same person is this Divinity, that, therefore, this humanity is this Divinity. And in the matter of universals, there is no need for quarrelling about examples, for though a human species may include Peter, and the same species may include Paul, it doth not hence follow that Peter is Paul, but only

that they are the same in species. And so, you can only prove, by means of your proposition, that if this bread is eaten by a mouse, and this bread is the body of Christ, then that which is the body of Christ is eaten by a mouse, &c. a And thus must the conclusion be adapted to all other paralogisms. An example of this is found in Scripture. It doth not follow because the Baptist is Elias, and this Baptist was at that time born of Zacharias and Elizabeth, that Elias was, therefore, so born. Accordingly, we must not, by reason of this word of Christ, true as it is, apply to the Baptist all that may be formally predicated of Elias, or the contrary. This becomes obvious, whenever we resolve propositions into their general signification. How can it be shown, that if that bread is sacramentally the figure of the body of Christ, and that bread has been baked, that the body of Christ was at that time baked?

PSEUDIS.

Still will your heretical evasions be manifest, for according to your meaning, it must be granted, that writing, utterance, and anything that might be laid down as a sign of the body of Christ, would be so figuratively, and so really the very body of Christ. But who could ever enumerate all the incongruities that would follow from such a doctrine, for as regards the principle of symbolic predication, reason is in as much agreement with the one side as with the other?

PHRONESIS.

The believer will yet escape many such arguments, because, unless you can prove that the being imposing the sign or term to be a sign of the body of Christ, or to be a sign of anything else, is He who spake and it was done, and cannot lie, your seeming argument must be defective. Accordingly, there is nothing you can identify with any other thing, until this paramount authority has been communicated to your ally, whoever he be, who imposes it; and since you cannot avail yourself of this power, you may blush at the baseness of your sophistry. Accordingly, I admit the authority of these words of Scripture, not because they are of human imposition, but because the Scripture in the first place so speaks. Thus, in consequence of maintaining this special reverence for Scripture, I humbly admit the aforesaid conclusion without reserve, being certain that no part of the Holy Writings can be false. What, therefore, is it to me, that signs or terms have been imposed with such a designation? I shall not, on that account, change my reply as to the doctrine on such subjects which I have learned from Scripture.

IX.

WHETHER TWO BODIES MAY BE AT ONCE IN THE
SAME PLACE.

PSEUDIS.

I see that you blush not to oppose both philosophers and theologians, by propositions which carry their own refutation along with them; for all men of sound mind suppose that it is impossible for two bodies to be in the same place, which you, nevertheless, intimate as possible, in what you say about the body of the bread, and the body of Christ.

PHRONESIS.

The body of Christ is not co-extensive with the body of the bread, as was shown to you before, in the distinction between formal, essential, and figurative predication. With regard to your second instance, it hath been stated already that the body of Christ is there spiritually, in the same manner in which it is distinguished essentially from the body of the bread. Accordingly, when you say, that we know not whether to say that the body of Christ be there essentially, corporeally, or dimensionally, it seems to me, that we can say with probability, the body of Christ is there *a* body, because the same body that is extended in heaven. But is it there corporeally or dimensionally? It seems to me that many labour vainly and equivocally on this subject. For by understanding this adverb in a reduplicative sense, it appears to me that the body of Christ is in that same place as a body, but not corporeally; but, with the analogous adverbs, it should be granted, that the body of Christ is there, beautifully, and really. Yet I dare not say, that it is there dimensionally, or in extent, though it may be bread which is there dimensionally, and in extent.

But the second equivocation of the adverbs is of this sort, that they are understood sometimes *simply*, as a thing is said to be corporeally elsewhere, when it is there after the manner of the body. And so some understand that the body of Christ is, in the host, corporeally, substantially, and essentially. This mode of expression can be confirmed by the apostle (Col. ii.) who says, that “in Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;”—not that the Godhead *could* exist bodily, but because many heretics shrink from the idea that Christ should be himself the Godhead, since he is body, the apostle tells us, that in Christ, existing bodily, that is, after the manner of the body, dwells the Godhead himself identically; and so the Godhead, though not in its nature a bodily existence, is yet a body, existing bodily in Christ. Let no one suppose, that by taking this reduplicatively, that Christ is corporeally the Godhead, since he is body, because, then, in as far as he was body, by consequence, the whole of his body would be the Godhead itself.

PSEUDIS.

It seems to me, that you depart alike from the church and from Scripture, since, according to your statements, a layman might officiate in this sacrament as well as a priest, and the church would then be in doubt which host to worship.

PHRONESIS.

I see that you do not apprehend the ulterior arguments in this matter, and thus you introduce difficulties foreign to the subject. For the church, owing to the great subtlety of the subject, and her zeal after temporal things, has given but too little attention to this point, the pope and all his cardinals having but a very imperfect notion concerning it. But, by the grace of Christ, I will maintain the sense of Scripture, and keep clear of the heresy which teaches, that “if the pope and cardinals assert them to be the sense of Scripture, therefore so it is,” because then they would be set up above the apostles. But, further, in regard to your logic, it seems probable, from many reasons, that for a layman to have the power of celebrating, and for a layman to have the power of rightly celebrating, are much the same thing. In the first place, this admission, according to your logic, must be conceded. And, again, many men consecrated as presbyters are imbecile; and so, at the pleasure of some, even the laity themselves often celebrate it. And, again, in the equivocation about the consecrating, it must, it seems, be granted, that the laity can officiate, and even consecrate, as the blessed Cecilia consecrated a house for her church. Nay, I believe you cannot show, that when the Christians brake bread from house to house, as we read, Acts ii., that the bread broken was not the body of Christ, and that the apostles or elders were the only persons who so did. But leaving this uncertain, it appears to me that this office becomes consecrated priests, since Christ specially enjoined upon them so to do, when he said, “As often as ye eat this bread,” &c. So, then, wherever Christ operateth with a man, then, and then only, doth he consummate the sacrament; and this should ever be admitted and remembered by our priests. Nevertheless, because this is not an article of faith, there is no necessity for its being believed by the church: but it may be left as a probable supposition, and there is no need of quarrelling, therefore, inasmuch as there are a number of things which may be proposed to the Christian, which he should neither admit, deny, nor doubt,—as, if I were asked whether I am destined to be saved; or about one who has sinned grievously, whether he will be damned, as finally obstinate,—about such things, I neither admit, deny, nor doubt. And so, on seeing the host, I worship it conditionally, and the body of the Lord above, I adore fully. And, so, my answer to the six preceding arguments may be used as a means of doing away with similar ones.

X.

ON BAPTISM.

ALITHIA.

Let us indulge no more in these vexatious disputes with Pseudis, but pass at once to the other six sacraments. And as you do not discuss them according to the order before-mentioned, but according to their comparative authority in Scripture, next to the eucharist you must treat of baptism.

PHRONESIS.

I agree with you; and in the first place let us observe where the institution of baptism is established in Scripture. In the last chapter of Matthew Christ commands his disciples, saying, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." And accordingly Philip, when about to baptize the eunuch, Acts viii., first instructed him in the faith, as did the apostles, Acts ii., when they baptized the people. John the Baptist, however, had no need to instruct Christ, Luke iii., but, on the contrary, was instructed in humility and other virtues by our Lord. On account of the words in the last chapter of Matthew, our church introduces believers, who answer for the infant which has not yet arrived at years of discretion. Those who have attained years of discretion, while yet under instruction, are called, before baptism, catechumens.

How necessary this sacrament is to the believer may be seen by the words of Christ to Nicodemus, John iii., "Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And such, accordingly, is the authority from Scripture, on which believers are customarily baptized. The church requires for baptism, pure water—no other liquid: nor is it of moment whether the baptized be immersed once, or thrice, or whether the water be poured on the head; but the ceremony must be performed according to the usage of the place, and is as legitimate in one way as another, for it is certain that bodily baptism or washing is of little avail, unless there goes with it the washing of the mind by the Holy Spirit, from original or actual sin. For herein it is a fundamental article of belief, that whenever a man is duly baptized, baptism destroys whatever sin was found in the man.^a Now inasmuch as before sin can be taken away, satisfaction is required, and satisfaction for sin cannot be made save by the death of Christ, so therefore the apostle saith, (Rom. vi.) "We who are baptized into Christ Jesus, are baptized into his death."

ALITHIA.

What you say of the outward appearance pleases me; but tell me clearly, I pray you, how it is that Christ, who was so greatly opposed to sensible signs, has made a washing of this nature necessary to salvation? For it seems to derogate from the Divine munificence and power, that God, with all his merit and passion, should not be able to save an infant, or an adult believer, unless an old woman, or some one else,

shall perform the ceremony of baptism, just as for an unbeliever. In the same manner the child of a believer is carried into the church to be baptized, according to the rule of Christ, and in failure of water, or some requisite, (the whole people retaining their pious intent,) the child is not baptized, and meanwhile dies by the visitation of God; it seems hard, in this case, to assert that this infant will be lost, especially since neither the child nor the people sinned, so as to be the cause of its condemnation. Where is the compassionate bounty of the Divine Christ, if such an offspring of believers is from this cause to be lost, when God, according to the common principles of theology, is more ready to reward than condemn men, both through the obedience and passion of Christ, and his own long-suffering?

PHRONESIS.

You have urged this point with much subtlety and acuteness. But you must attend to the distinction of terms on this subject. Some things I state as *absolute assertions*, others as *suppositions*; and in this last sense I regard the holy doctors of the church to have spoken, even the greatest of them, who came after the writers of Scripture. But I state those things as absolute assertions, which are either testified by my own senses, or plain from faith in Scripture; while others, of which, though lacking of argument, I feel persuaded as probable, those I suppose to be true. And it is in this way of supposition that I speak on this subject.

With regard to your first instance, in respect to signs, it appears to me that Christ approves of the use of signs, though he condemns their abuse. Thus I understand Matthew xii., "An adulterous generation seeketh after a sign," &c. For Christ, in his own person, is a sensible sign, and as it seems to me, the sacrament of sacraments, since the definition of a sacrament applies to him in the highest degree: for as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, and all who had been stung by the serpents were healed on looking up to that serpent, as is said, Num. xxi., so Jesus our living serpent, having the likeness of sin upon him, though he could not possibly sin, was suspended on the cross, that those who are stung by the poison of the old serpent, sin, may become spiritually whole. Christ therefore approves of signs, both under the new law and in the old, but is opposed to their abuse. You must mark, then, that the mystical body of Christ, during the time of the old law, was like a child, to be instructed in many ways by such sensible signs; but as the church grew in age under the law of grace, signs of this nature are not so much to be regarded. Accordingly I think there is in the present day a threefold abuse of these signs.

In the first place, because the signs of the old law are observed, which, according to the decision of the apostles, should now cease, as appears from Acts xv. and the epistle to the Galatians. And especially is this the case with regard to signs denoting objects which have passed away; for consistency would require that those who observe the signs should look to the objects of which they are significant.

The second abuse with regard to signs consists in the undue importance attached to them. Many attend so much to the observance of such signs, which are not according to the law of God, but have been improvidently ordained from human fancy, that they would sooner transgress the decalogue than neglect such observances.

The third abuse is, the burthening of the church with such signs which Christ hath declared should be free from them, so that the yoke is even greater than was endured by the church under the old dispensation.

Of these two abuses, our religious generally are guilty. It is plain that signs, especially those instituted by Christ, may be lawfully used with moderation, these three abuses being guarded against. Since, then, Christ himself instituted the sign of baptism, why should we not in a prudent manner observe it, especially as we are still only pilgrims, and have not yet attained to clear knowledge; and seeing that it is necessary that we should be led in this way by some signs of this nature?

XI.

ON THE THREEFOLD BAPTISM.

ALITHIA.

I am pleased that you have touched on the subject of signs, for I think you have treated the matter with acuteness, though your statements imply that it would be better for our religious to abandon those superfluous signs which they have invented. But reply I pray you to my two other objections.

PHRONESIS.

The task you impose is a pleasure. you must mark afresh the distinction between the two kinds of statement to which I have before adverted. With regard to your first objection, I think it probable, that Christ might without any such washing, spiritually baptize, and by consequence save infants. Accordingly, it is commonly said that the church hath a threefold baptism,—the baptism of water, of blood, and of fire. The baptism of water, is the baptism with that material element, of which mention is most frequently made. The baptism of blood is the washing wherewith the souls of the martyrs are cleansed. Nor do I dare assert that the infants slain for Christ (Matt. ii.) who, not having reached the eighth day, had not been circumcised, are lost. And I believe the Bishop of Armagh spoke on supposition only, not positively, when he said that this was the case. The baptism of fire is the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is absolutely necessary to every man if he is to be saved. Accordingly, the two former baptisms are antecedent signs, and supposed necessary to this third baptism. So then, without doubt, if this unseen baptism be performed, the man so baptized is cleansed from guilt: and if this be wanting, however the others may be present, the baptism availeth not to save the soul. And since this third baptism is not perceptible by the senses, and is so far unknown to us, it appears to me presumptuous and unwise to decide thus on the salvation or damnation of men simply from the circumstance of their baptism. Our conclusion, then, without a doubt is, that infants duly baptized with water, are baptized with the third kind of baptism, inasmuch as they are made partakers of baptismal grace. The above argument holds also concerning the martyrs who were slain for Christ, as it manifestly was with the Theban legion, many of whom were not baptized with water.[a](#)

With regard to the language of Scripture, (John iii.) “Unless a man be born again of water and of the Spirit,” &c. it is probable that Christ there speaks of the water which flowed from his side, and of the third kind of baptism, because it appears indubitable that a man who suffers martyrdom for Christ will be saved even though he may not have been baptized with water. So it seems probable that the words of Christ have this negative meaning—*viz.* that no man can enter the kingdom of heaven except he be baptized with the baptism of the water that flowed from the side of Christ, (*i. e.* cleansing from guilt by his passion,) and with the baptism of fire, (*i. e.* from the influence of the Holy Spirit,) since the Trinity could not save the fallen by receiving them into happiness, unless the second and the third persons remove their sins. Accordingly, Christ taught that the first baptism should be celebrated in the above words of the Gospel. Yet must it not be imagined by believers that the baptism of the Spirit altogether supersedes the baptism of water, but that it is necessary wherever circumstances permit, to become recipients thereof. When an infidel baptizes a child, not supposing that baptism to be of any avail for his salvation, such a baptism we are not to regard as serviceable to the baptized.

Yet we believe that when any old woman or despised person duly baptizes with water, that God completes the baptism of the Spirit along with the words of the sacrament. For our signs are but of small avail unless God shall graciously accept them. Thus I reply to your objection, by admitting that God, if he will, may condemn such an infant, without wrong done to himself; and if he will, can save it. Nor dare I determine on the other side, or strive for the sake of mere opinion, or for the gaining of evidence in this matter, but I hold my peace as one dumb, and humbly confess my ignorance, making use of conditional expressions, because it doth not seem clear to me whether such an infant would be saved or lost. But I know that whatever God doth in the matter will be just, and a work of compassion, to be praised by all the faithful. But those, who relying on their own authority, or their learning, come to any decision hereupon, cannot establish what they are so foolish and presumptuous as to assume. [a](#)

XII.

ON CONFIRMATION.

ALITHIA.

Pray inform me in the next place about the third sacrament, which is generally named Confirmation; and first concerning the authority which may be adduced for it from Scripture. It has not, I conceive, a sufficient warrant from Acts viii. “Now, when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” This is the text from which it is generally concluded, that beside the baptism wherewith men are baptized, apostolic confirmation should be added, since such was the practice of the apostles. Yet this passage is not adequate to sustain the doctrine; for it might be urged with probability

that though baptism in the name of Jesus Christ was for the time valid, since up to that time this institute had not been sufficiently promulgated, yet such promulgation having taken place, a return should accordingly be made to the evangelical formula. Thus those who were baptized in Samaria only in the name of the Lord Jesus, might be lawfully re-baptized; as those who had been baptized with the baptism of John, or any other illegitimate baptism, may be again baptized without danger. That this text fails to establish such a doctrine is manifest from the fact, that we constantly say—that the baptized have received the Holy Spirit in virtue of being duly baptized. Much more then must this have been the case in the primitive church. But in this passage it is said, that “Peter and John laid hands on them,” &c. Now if they had not received the Holy Ghost before, how could they have been legitimately baptized? It is not incongruous for the baptizer to lay hands on the baptized; in the same way as the passage in Acts viii. shows Peter and John to have laid their hands on them. If then it is justly proved from this text that confirmation should be appropriated to the bishops, they themselves must lay their own hands on the confirmed, that they may receive the Holy Spirit. But such a mode of receiving the Holy Spirit is neither taught us by any sensible sign, nor by the dictates of our reason. How then can it be shown that bishops administer this sacrament to the youth whom they confirm? As regards the oil wherewith they anoint them, and the linen peplus with which they bind their head, it seems a dangerous rite, quite unsanctioned by Scripture.

Still further it appears, that this confirmation, thus unauthorised by the apostles, is a blasphemy against God, since it stoutly asserts that the bishops confer the Holy Ghost anew, or that they strengthen and confirm that gift. But this is to do more than give the Holy Spirit. The apostles dared not so to teach, but prayed for themselves that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Has the Cæsarean endowment exalted our bishops to such a pitch of dignity that they are thus endowed with the singular power of conferring the Holy Ghost?

PHRONESIS.

Your replies are, in my judgment, acute and satisfactory, nor do I at present perceive any obvious method of replying to them, either from reason or Scripture. But supposing the bishops to pray for the baptized that they may be confirmed in the gift of that Holy Spirit which they have before received, and that for this reason they add to this service the sensible signs which it is their practice to observe, I do not see what there is to prevent their duly celebrating this third sacrament, supposing that the same result ensues which followed the action of the apostles; but if they fail in attaining the end of the apostles, I see not how they can show from this text that they really confirm. So long as they fail in regard to this end, it would seem useless further to discuss the subject.

This sacrament does not appear to me necessary to the believer’s salvation, nor do I believe that those who pretend to confirm youths, do rightly confirm them, nor that this sacrament should be restricted exclusively to the Cæsarean bishops. Further, I think it would be more devout, and more in accordance with Scripture language, to say, that our bishops do *not* confer the Holy Ghost, or confirm the previous bestowment of the Holy Ghost; for such expressions, however glossed by our doctors,

are still liable, if once admitted, to misconstruction, while, at the same time, they want authority to sanction them.

Hence some are of opinion, that this slight and brief confirmation performed by the bishop, with the rites which are attached to it with so much solemnity, was introduced at the suggestion of the devil, with a view to delude the people concerning the faith of the church, and to give more credence to the solemnity, or as to the necessity of bishops. For according to the common opinion, while our bishops administer this sacrament of confirmation, retaining it in common with many other things exclusively in their own hands, and while there is no salvation for believers apart from the reception of these solemn sacraments, how could the church preserve her station uninjured without such bishops? But one thing appears to hold, in the greater part, that for any bishop whatever, baptizing in such a way, to bestow the Holy Spirit, according to God's covenant, implies a blasphemy. But I leave to others the more subtle discussion of this topic.

XIII.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF ORDERS.

ALITHIA.

I do not see that anything can be done by treating further of this matter, or that any great advantage attends it, though the custom of the court of Rome, or the ancient custom of the church, may hold it proper; since this is no more a sufficient evidence in favour of this sacrament, than would be the antiquity of the abuses of the prelates, if adduced to justify their faults. But I pray you, discuss simply the sacrament of orders, and the manner in which it should be defined; and, in the first place, what order is.

PHRONESIS.

In my opinion, this sacrament of order is sufficiently analogous, and its sign accordingly is very equivocal. a For since order is the state or position of a creature, according to the Divine ordinance, it appears that, as there are many orders among angels, so there are among every created sublunary multitude. Moreover, those who break Christ's order, are to be punished, it is said, without end. Secondly, the term order is used to express, by a kind of antonomasia, the state or possession of a new religion, as if Antichrist were before the ordinance and rule of Jesus Christ. Thirdly, with greater strictness, and more to the purpose, that power given to the priest by God, through the ministry of the bishop, in order to his due ministering in the church, is called order. This ordination is commonly conferred at a holy time, with a solemn fast, and accompanied by masses and other ceremonies: whence it is commonly said, that ordination is not conferred on a priest, save when the bishop imparts to him the Holy Ghost, and impresses the priestly character on his mind. And so indelible is this last, that be the priest degraded, or happen what may to him, this character is

inseparably attached to him. Similar is the opinion concerning the character impressed in baptism.^b

One thing I confidently assert, that in the primitive church, or the time of Paul, two orders were held sufficient,—those of priests and deacons. No less certain am I, that in the time of Paul, presbyter and bishop were the same, as is shown in 1 Tim. iii. and Tit. i. That profound theologian Jerome attests the same fact, see lxxxvii. Dis. ca. Olim. For there were not then the distinctions of pope and cardinals, patriarchs and archbishops, bishops, archdeacons, officials, and deacons, with other officers and religious bodies, without number or rule. As to all the disputes which have arisen about these functionaries, I shall say nothing; it is enough for me, that, according to Scripture, the presbyters and the deacons retain that office and standing which Christ appointed them, because I am convinced that Cæsarean pride has introduced these orders and gradations. If they had been necessary to the church, Christ and his apostles would not have held their peace about them. So that those blaspheme who extol the rights of the pope above Christ. But the office of the clergy, the catholic may best learn from Scripture, in the epistles to Timothy and Peter. Nor must he, on pain of incurring serious guilt, allow admission to Cæsarean innovations. But here I doubt not vast numbers are guilty.

The root of this blasphemy, which hath turned the church upside down, is found in this, that the clergy, shrinking from the poverty of Christ, entangle themselves thus with the world. Hence it is plainly seen of what sort is their order, inasmuch as when they should beget sons like Christ and the apostles, they adulterously beget sons of Antichrist. And by this means is the kingdom of Antichrist fenced about, and the kingdom of their master the devil set above that of Christ. I have brought forward many proofs elsewhere to make plain the duty of the king and of the military order in such case. As Augustine saith, “As the pope is the vicar of Christ, so the king is the vicar of God;” which I understand as follows: As the pope ought to follow the humanity of Christ, living like him and his apostles, in poverty and reproach, and enduring contempt with a patience surpassing other men; so the king ought to be the vicar of the Deity, restraining with severity, by his coercive power, the rebellious, and the violators of God’s commandments. So speaks the apostle, Rom. xiii.

I have elsewhere brought forward many reasons to show that the clergy ought to live a life of poverty after the manner of Christ. In the first place this appears from the old law, Numb. xviii. 20, 21: “And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. And behold I have given the children of Levi all the tenth for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.”^a

If then a prelate, and such as live on tithes, strengthen themselves by means of the second part of this Divine authority, to seize tithes greedily for their own gain, why do they not as eagerly embrace the first, out of love to Christ, who was poor? To the same effect, in Deut. xviii. it reads thus: “The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and his inheritance. Therefore shall they have no inheritance

among their brethren: the Lord is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them.” If these commandments of the Lord under the old law are so strict in forbidding the clergy to hold possessions; and Christ and his apostles, in the time of the law of grace observed this same command more strictly still, who can be a greater heretic or Antichrist than that clerk, who shall contradict these lessons more than the men who lived under the old law? To the same effect, Ezek. xlv.—“I am their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession, and they shall eat the meat-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs, and the first of all the first-fruits of all things, and every oblation of all, of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priests: ye shall also give unto the priests the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house.” If then in the time of the old law, when the people were more earthly in every respect, as being young, and not wise as yet in heavenly things, the clergy were so restricted in things temporal, by the command of the Lord, how much more ought it to be observed, since Christ has followed, both God and man, living a life of the greatest poverty; and since the lives of apostles have repeated the same lesson in work and example? It is plain, then, that if any men have become, by violation of the law of the Lord, heretical apostates or blasphemers, these clergy are they, even the bishops who so notably offend herein. Two other laws are proclaimed in Gen. ii. and Ezek. xvi. If therefore the bishop be horned with a mitre, to denote that he knows and observes both testaments, who can be said to belie Christ more in blasphemy than the prelate who is endowed and enriched with worldly possessions, even above kings?

ALITHIA.

Brother, you have shrewdly fed our bishops with five barley loaves, the Pentateuch of Moses, as figured in John vi. But inasmuch as our prelates pretend that these commandments of the old law were ceremonial, and should be terminated by the law of grace, I pray you confirm your opinion, if you can, by a reference to the law of grace.

PHRONESIS.

It appears to me, that bishops instructed in the faith need no further confirmation in regard to this doctrine, since it follows by position from the major—if the bishops did so under the old law, then the bishops under the law of grace should observe the same rule: especially since Christ and his apostles have observed it, in deed (which teaches more forcibly,) as well as in word, which is sufficiently binding. As Christ on the second occasion of feeding the multitude fed four thousand with seven loaves and a few small fishes, as appears from Matt. xv. and Mark viii., so, out of my abundance I will adduce a sevenfold testimony from the law of grace in favour of this same doctrine. In Luke xiv., after the parable of the Lord, he adds, “So every one of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

What Christ meant in these words, by “forsaking,” he and his apostles have sufficiently shown by the poverty of their lives; for the actions of Christ and his disciples are the best interpreters of his law. To the same effect is the passage—“The servant is not greater than his Lord.”—Matt. x. Since Christ is the best Master, and

the Lord of lords, and all prelates should be servants and disciples of this Lord, it is clear that they ought not to be raised above Christ in secular dominion. But Christ saith, (Matt. viii.) that “the Son of man hath not where to lay his head,” that is, that in his humanity, he had not any such place; in a worldly sense, in his own proper right of possession. How, then, have our Cæsarean bishops the boldness to extol themselves above Christ in civil dominion? Our Lord, on a dispute arising between his disciples, (Luke xxii.) as to who of them should be the greatest, said, manifestly with reference to the sensible superiority of the world, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them,” &c. He distinguishes, clearly as noonday, between the superiority of the world, and superiority in regard to God—denoting the former by the lordship of the kings of the Gentiles. They are especially called “benefactors,” because they confer temporal favours on their subjects, and abate the wrongs to which they are exposed, though they are themselves too often tyrants. The second, or apostolic superiority, our Lord explains, when he absolutely forbids the followers of the Gospel to seek after the former, adding, “But ye shall not be so.” To this prohibition, accordingly, Berenger often directed the attention of Pope Eugenius. Christ afterwards sets forth the attributes of the apostolic superiority, which is a superiority simply in regard to God, and shows that whoever among them is the most humble in Spirit, possessed of the greatest charity, and the most diligent in his ministry, is the greatest.

But after the clergy were given to the world, and learnt to despise the commandments of the Lord, and gave little heed to Christ’s decision hereupon, the disciples of Antichrist said in their hearts, “Christ is contrary to our practice. He taught nothing of that refinement, so necessary for the world, but lived in misery and dishonour, like a beggar. Who, then, would follow in his footsteps, unless he were a fool?” From this threefold testimony in the Gospel the aforesaid doctrine is educed, and it is confirmed by the Old Testament.

Passages from the writings of the apostles attest the same truth, for the apostle who was snatched up into the third heaven delivered to prelates this rule,—“Having food and raiment be therewith content.”—1 Tim. vi. And he says food simply, not delicacies; and for covering, he does not speak of scarlet, nor of dwelling in sumptuous apartments. And by teaching us to be content with such things, he prohibits superfluity therein, which tends to the burden of the church, and the abandoning of our office. To the same effect Peter, the chief of the apostles, enjoins upon us, that we be not as “lords over God’s heritage,” but that we should be willingly abased for the service of the flock, not studying how we may play the lord over those put under us. Now I ask, whether the prelates, in grasping at castles and estates, lord it over God’s heritage or not; and do they so or not, when they are contriving how they may adorn themselves in the most splendid and imposing manner, without ever thinking of the burdens they lay on the church? But the life of Christ and his apostles shows in what sense they understood that language.

To the same effect speaks the apostle, (2 Cor. viii.) saying, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” Since, then, all believers are, undeniably, to follow Christ in their character, the clergy must of necessity follow him in their own order, especially in his humble poverty; whence our religious orders in their

confession, (would it were not a false one!) unite in regarding as the substance of their religion, the obedience paid to Christ, the poverty and chastity which they maintain for the cause of him.

In the sixth chapter of the Acts, we find that seven deacons were ordained, because, according to the decree of the apostles, sent forth after the descent of the Holy Spirit, it was not fit for them to leave the service of the living God, to serve tables. But who can doubt that the prelate gives himself too much to worldly affairs, who abandons Christ's office, and entangles himself in the sort of life required by the world? Yet the apostle saith, (2 Tim. ii.) that "no man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life." Accordingly, since no one takes this honour unto himself, but he who is called of God, it is plain that the worldly prelate hath this honour from the devil, unto whom he hath approved himself. Then, at the commencement of Luke xiv., we are taught that such a man cannot be the disciple of Christ, but is the disciple of Antichrist; and so since he presumes to be greater than his Lord, Jesus Christ, it is plain that he is not his disciple or his servant, but rather the disciple of Antichrist. And now with these seven loaves, not barley ones indeed, but unpalatable enough, the people may have their fill of prelates, and the aforesaid doctrine be confirmed. Other fragments from the doctors, and arguments which some multiply on this subject, we need not collect, for these complete testimonies, adduced from the old and new law, are sufficient to confirm this doctrine in the eyes of believers.

XIV.

ON THE AVARICE OF THE CLERGY.

PSEUDIS.

Though you have often taught after this manner, at the peril of your life, yet it is evident that both reason, and the grounds on which the saints have been canonised, contradict your doctrine. For who can entertain any doubt, but that the law of Christ not only permits, but requires that the man who is especially his servant, should be duly ministered unto in things temporal? For God, who is not wanting to his servants in greater things, as in the blessings of grace and of nature, does not withhold from them wealth, or the goods of fortune in any form. In like manner, though your argument would deny the prelate the right, by reason of his clergy, to require these things, and declares that he should be content with little temporal possession, yet you dare not assert that it is unlawful for temporal lords to make such offerings to their clergy, under the title of alms, since you would, by so doing, put an end to temporal alms of every kind. On this ground the clergy may possess these temporal things, and yet live sparingly as did the apostle. Such, we believe, was the case with Sylvester, and many others whom the church has canonised. For since, then, temporal things are from God, and, by consequence, eminently good, what harm can there be in our possessing the things themselves, along with the higher blessings before mentioned, since the gifts of nature and grace may derive much good, incidentally, from the gifts of fortune?

PHRONESIS.

In my view, it is plain, from the Scriptures before alleged, which we believe the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, that our clergy, especially under the law of grace, are bound to live in the manner which I have set forth. And since this is an injunction, laid on us by the God-man, Christ, it is clear that he who manifestly despiseth it cannot love Christ, and, therefore, must fall under the sentence of a most fearful excommunication; for the apostle saith, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." And this excommunication, inflicted by the Holy Spirit, does not admit of being evaded by the precautions of men, but is sure to be inflicted where guilt is incurred, and is a matter greatly more to be feared, than any damnation or condemnation for heresy, which Cæsarean prelates are wont to send forth. And since to love Christ, and to keep his commandments, are the same thing, it is plain that those prelates especially, who are so disobedient to the law of the Lord, incur a more heavy anathema.

In reply to your first objection, I admit that I have often hazarded my life, and my worldly prosperity, by the promulgation of this doctrine; but since Christ and his apostles did so, and we believe that they are now glorified in heaven for so doing, what believer should hesitate to promulgate and defend the words of Christ; especially when he himself saith, "Whoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed before the angels of God?"

With regard to the canonisation of Sylvester, Gregory, and others, who received the church endowment, I must say, without any wish to scandalise those saints, that I do not make it a matter of faith to believe, that by God's grace, they passed through life unstained in any way by the pollution of things temporal. But who would be so senseless as to disregard the admonitions and counsel of Christ hereupon, because one transgressor was saved by the grace of God? For if one offender has been rescued from so dangerous a precipice, by some cause to us unknown, who, on that account, would be so audacious as to expose himself to a greater danger? For numbers of prelates now grasp these temporalities in a way far more illegal and infamous than their predecessors above named. And therefore I grant you, that both reason and the law of God require, that one who is a chief servant of God, should be duly ministered unto in things temporal; but both reason, and the real good of God's servant, require that he be not too much laden with these temporalities, since they serve their possessor only in so far as they facilitate his duty towards God.

It is plain that the man imbibing the spirit of the Gospel pleases Christ the more, other things being equal, the greater the poverty in which he fulfils his office. Just as it is of no use for travellers to carry their ship after they have crossed the sea in it, so it doth not advantage us to carry temporal things in our hearts, more than is requisite for our voyage. During our infancy and decrepitude, we must perform our journey on boardship; while in middle age, to signify that we should aspire after things celestial, we must travel by dry land. In the early part of our voyage we are sustained by our parents, and in the last by the goods we have accumulated, or by the charity of our brethren; but in middle age we should live by our own efforts, or on those temporal things which we have virtuously made our own. And this mode of life we regard as an

approach to the state of innocence, to which the apostles conformed themselves. Thus some understand the words of Christ, “And ye shall carry nothing on your journey, neither scrip,” &c.; for apostolic men should not be delayed by anything temporal that may impede their affections or their efforts in the discharge of duty.

But the scanty and moderate nature of their possession is indicated by the staff carried in the hand. As one overburdened with a multiplicity of clothing is thereby oftentimes rendered unfit for travel, so the man who is burdened with things temporal, is often made less capable of serving the church. In this sense Christ said, “Neither have two coats,” and this law of Christ is founded on the law of nature, with which no man can dispense. As to your second objection, your assumption is plainly false, since lords temporal ought so to moderate the alms they bestow, that the ordinance of Christ shall in no respect be destroyed; for they would then not be alms, but a traitorous and accursed presumption. For Christ, in Luke xiv., shows us how we should bestow temporal relief on the poor, who are blind, halt, and infirm, and how, accordingly, to compel sturdy mendicants to labour.

In the rule of Christ, poverty must be understood in the following threefold manner, because Christ teaches us not to bestow alms on the rich in the world, though they be blind, halt, or infirm, but he teaches us to bestow alms on these three classes of the poor. But how doth the perpetual and universal endowment of the church agree with this rule of Christ? This doctrine, therefore, implies and teaches how such alms may be given with profit and foresight, and how a wrong done to these three classes of the needy should be amended.

As to your third objection, it has often been said that man holdeth things temporal under a twofold title, namely, that of original justice, and that of mundane justice. Now under the title of original justice, Christ possessed all the goods in the universe; as Augustine often declares—under that title, or the title of grace, all things belong to the just. But civil possession differs widely from such title. Accordingly, Christ and his apostles, despising civil dominion, were content with possession according to that title; and hence it is the rule of Christ, that none of his disciples presume to contend for his temporal goods, as appears, Matt. vi., “If any man take thy coat,” &c. But the laws of the state, and the custom of secular rulers, are far removed from this. And this is the reason why these mundane laws, and the eager execution thereof, have been so wrongfully introduced, even among the clergy. The conclusion you draw must be admitted, but the mode of possession should be distinguished; for possession in a civil sense, since it necessitates a carefulness about temporal things, and the observance of human laws, ought to be strictly forbidden to the clergy. With regard to Sylvester and others, it appears to me probable, that in accepting such endowment they sinned grievously. We may entertain the supposition, however, that they afterwards repented of this to some purpose. So I grant you, then, that the clergy may possess temporal things, but after that title and mode of possession which God instituted, and not after that covetous fashion which the institution of Cain hath invented.

XV.

ON THE CULPABILITY OF THE LAITY IN RESPECT TO ENDOWMENTS.

ALITHIA.

I am pleased, brother, with your doctrine, because it appears to me, that you inveigh with clearness and force against the avarice of the priests; and as, according to the apostle, 1 Tim. i., covetousness is the root of all evil, and priests should be the root of all goodness, conveying the laity to heaven, you appear to direct your censures against the source of all sin in the church. But tell me, I pray you, whether secular men are justly liable to rebuke on account of such endowments.

PHRONESIS.

I am pleased to find that you thus introduce this subject. I have often been hindered from rebuking the sins of temporal lords; and to make amends for such omission, I will state to you the belief I entertain in this matter. And, if God will, it shall come to the ears of such men.

Believe firmly, and in no way doubt, that herein temporal lords have grievously sinned. And for this cause, I doubt not, many have been suitably punished, in the righteous judgment of God, by the loss of their worldly wealth; for this endowment has given rise to wars, strife, and has brought many secular lords to poverty. And it is only just that they should be made to pay a penalty having respect to that very thing which was the means by which they committed their crime. My reason for so thinking is this, that those who are accessory to a crime, are guilty, as well as those who commit it. But the temporal powers have not only united to confer this endowment, but have consented to it in very many ways; and since such endowment is contrary to the ordinance of Christ, they are herein guilty.

For if there are six methods of consenting, as enumerated by the poet—

“Consentit, cooperans, defendens, concilium dans,
Ac auctorisans, non juvans, nec reprehendens,”

—it is clear as light, that temporal lords are manifestly guilty, in respect to these six modes, and especially in regard to the last two, inasmuch as they indolently withhold the assistance and rebuke by means of which this injury done to Christ and his church might be rectified. Nevertheless, it devolves on them, for many reasons, to amend this injury done to Christ. In the first place, because they are those who have sinned by the commission of this injury, therefore it is for them to make satisfaction for the sin. In the second place, because God gave the power they possess that they might regulate the affairs of his church, as appears in Romans xiii. Therefore, that they be not negligent in respect to the use of this power, nor guilty of an abuse of it, they should exercise it in the instance of so great an injury done to Christ, after his own example;

for Christ, in rebuking the priests of the temple, made use often of this kingly power, ejecting, in person, the buyers and sellers. And on many occasions, by his sufferings and his reproofs, Christ condemned the conduct of the priests, as may be seen at the time of his seizure and passion. And he afterwards awfully chastised that priesthood, by the hand of Titus and Vespasian his servants, as Luke had prophesied. Isodorus, also, admirably declares this doctrine, as may be seen in the twenty-third decree, *q. v. c. Principes Seculi*. For if they hold their temporal possessions on condition of service rendered, what service, I ask, could better befit them, than that of vindicating the wrongs done to Christ, and defending so reasonable an ordinance? Forasmuch as it is the same thing to love Christ, and to keep his law and commandments, as is shown in John xiv., it is manifest that if the temporal lords love Christ above all things, it is their duty to exert their power in defending his chief ordinance. What temporal lord, I ask, would not be offended beyond measure on seeing his own decree reversed? Still more would this be the case, if that reversing were to dishonour his betrothed, and to break up his kingdom. But much more is all this true in respect to the primitive justice of Jesus Christ. Let temporal lords remember, then, how distinguished was the favour which our Lord showed them in his lifetime, without doubt intending that they should make him a return of their service.

Now I have collected from the Scripture account six instances of kindness shown by Christ to temporal lords; First, because Christ, who is the Lord of time, and who might have been born at whatever period he chose, selected that interval in which secular dominion was most flourishing; for in Luke ii. it is said, that a decree went forth that the whole world should be taxed. Second, because Christ might have had dominion, had he been so disposed, over all the kingdoms of the world; but was unwilling to detract, in the smallest degree, from the secular power of the earth—as in Matt. viii. it is written, “The Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” In the third place, because Christ, that he might restore the secular authority undiminished to secular lords, caused the old priesthood to be despoiled of their possessions, as was foretold by Luke, when predicting the destruction of the temple, chap. xix. Fourth, because Christ paid tribute to Cæsar for himself and his little flock, as may be seen in Matt. xviii. Fifth, because Christ pronounced a most decisive judgment, when he said that the goods of Cæsar should be rendered to Cæsar, Matt. xxii. And in the sixth place, because Christ fed the poor tenants of secular lords, and healed them, and taught them in many ways obedience, so that the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, show how servants ought to obey their lords. And what is infinitely more than any of these considerations, though the men of the world place such things first, Christ is the Creator, Redeemer, and finally the Rewarder of temporal lords.

What then could he do that he hath not done? On all these accounts temporal lords should remember that counsel of the apostle in Colossians iii.—“Be ye thankful.” But let the believer mark, I pray, with what manifest ingratitude they have repaid the Lord. For soon after his ascension, within the four hundredth year, they reversed his chief ordinance, by endowing the church, and, by consequence, did beget Antichrist, to the dishonour of his spouse. Hence chronicles relate that at the time of the endowment of the church, an angelic voice was heard in the air, saying, “To-day is poison poured into the holy church of God.” Whence, from the time of Constantine, who so endowed the church, the Roman empire decreased, and with it secular

dominion. Nor is it of any avail to allege, in defence of this sin, that the emperor and others who endowed the church, thought that by a devotion of this nature they should secure to themselves a manifold merit, because the apostle, from a less culpable blindness, under the same persuasion, persecuted the church; and when this ignorance was no longer in his way, and he had drawn evidence from the Old Testament, he sincerely confesses that he was herein guilty of blasphemy, and sinned grievously against Christ: how then should it be that the emperor and other lords, in their grosser ignorance, could be anything but sinners against Christ, after such a showing of goodness on his part? Wherefore I warn them, that it is too hard for them to kick against the pricks.

Accordingly, if they would have their dominion kept entire, and not fiendishly torn piecemeal, and the peace of the church restored, and their tenants, according to the law of the Lord, powerful but not rebellious, let them have a proper zeal for the ordinance of Christ, to the end that they may reform the church, as much as may be, seeing that our faith gives us reason to believe that it would be ruled most prosperously under that ordinance. For then would be done away the simoniacal entanglement of the clergy in things temporal, the most scandalous ignorance, and the sloth and heresy which now disgrace the heritage of Christ. And by reason of this also, wars would come to an end, and the changing of kingdoms by conquests, and the iniquitous spoiling of the poor dwellers therein, since the lordship of the world would then be wholly in the power of the secular arm. And what is best of all, as Christ's word would run to and fro freely everywhere, many more would wing their way to heaven. For then too would come to an end those blasphemies about the spiritual power of popes, in respect to absolution from sin and punishment, and the unwarranted granting of indulgences,—things which Christ and his apostles never granted,—with an infinite number of other blasphemies. Nor can Pseudis, or any other disciple of Antichrist, adduce perfunctory evidence to show that temporal lords have no license to correct these abuses, inasmuch as that would be the same thing as to say that, seeing they have no power to repair the mischief they have done, they must of necessity perish under the guilt of it. We, however, tell them, that not only have they the power to deprive a church habitually delinquent of its temporalities, but that they are bound, on pain of the condemnation of hell, so to do, since they ought to repent of their folly, and make satisfaction for their sin in having thus defiled the church of Christ.

ALITHIA.

You have said enough, brother, on this doctrine concerning the clergy, a doctrine especially hateful to our superiors; and the more, inasmuch as you do not show how your doctrine may be acted upon, without making too great a disturbance in the church. Pass on, I pray you, to the subject of the sacrament of matrimony, observing the same order.

PHRONESIS.

No scholastic matter have I ever had more at heart than that on which I have now dwelt, forasmuch as it appears to me that it would tend above all things to the honour

of God and the advantages of the universal church. Wherefore, it seems to me, that he is notably deficient in respect to perfect charity, and the love of his king and kingdom, who, from fear of losing temporal things, and the friendship of great men, nay, who even to save his life, neglects this duty. I doubt not that the apostles, and other discreet disciples of Christ, would have defended this doctrine, even to the death. But the king and kingdom are worthy of condemnation on account of this sin, to which they have given their consent. What faithful servant of the king, therefore, may remain silent with regard to this great crime? For the sovereign authorises, by such conduct, the greatest transgression on the part of his clergy, and gives his sanction to the root of that evil by which the kingdom under him is cut to pieces. And since it is necessary to true secular dominion, that the holder of it should rule justly, and so be opposed to this crime, it appears that the king, and the nobles of his kingdom, in this case, govern without the care proper to their office. For according to the law of England, if a tenant shall withhold his service from his chief lord during two years, the said chief lord, by the authority of the king of England, may seize, in his own behoof, the land which his subject had unworthily occupied to his own purposes. How much more, then, should the King of kings confiscate the property of kingdoms, if the service they owe has been neglected for many times two years, it being plain that they ought to serve Christ, by refusing all treacherous consent to the claims of Antichrist, and by opposing his works as contrary to Christ, to the extent of their power! We see clearly how long has been the time through which the service so due to God has been neglected. And as it seems to me, that liege man of the king, who should fail to expose such misdoing, would be a slothful traitor to his king, his country, and his God.

And with regard to your objection, touching the fear of disturbance to the kingdom that would ensue on the carrying out of this doctrine, consider well how Antichrist has herein blinded our military men by his chief agents. For they are bold to invade other kingdoms, either on just grounds, or on such as are doubtful, but they are slothful in respect to the discharge of a small duty, and in charitably assisting the inhabitants of their own country, whom they ought to love in a high degree, for the sake of their Lord. Nor do we hesitate to say, that Antichrist, with his principal agents, has introduced this slothfulness. That there is a facility for performing this duty, may be thus shown. It is well known that the king of England, by virtue of his regalia, on the death of a bishop or abbot, or any one possessing large endowments, takes possession of those endowments, as the sovereign; and that a new election is not entered upon without the royal assent, nor will the temporalities, in such case, pass from their last occupant to his successor, without that assent. Let the king, therefore, refuse to continue the innovation which has been the great delinquency of his predecessors, and in a short time the whole kingdom will be freed from the mischiefs which have flowed from this source. Who, I ask, would dare to seize on such temporalities, without license obtained from the king? Nor need the king, or his kingdom, to do themselves justice in this matter, smite with the sword, kill any man, or exercise their authority presumptuously. But as nature abhors sudden changes, and as this great transgression made progress by little and little, so if it were made to decrease by successive steps, as the death of the occupants succeed each other, with a small amount of prudence, the result would be anything but hurtful, either to king or people.

But those who among the clergy or elsewhere oppose this doctrine, are falsifiers of the law of Scripture, and thus traitors in the worst sense to God and the king.

From all that has been said, we conclude that the king and his kingdom ought to protect poor priests who promulgate this doctrine, against their own brethren, and all enemies whomsoever, for otherwise they are born of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, and not of God, and so are not by birth sons of God, or of the kingdom of heaven, but children of the king of hell, forasmuch as they are lovers of the sons of the father of lies. It may be that false brethren, and other potentates among the clergy of the kingdom, will conspire against those who spread this opinion, contriving their death by the most unfounded falsehoods. But where is the believer who would apprehend the destruction of this veritable doctrine? Whence came the daring to proclaim these Gospel truths, if not from the hope in Christ's defending and God's protecting? For whoever opposes these views of things, must be ranked, without a doubt, as Antichrist,—as one contrary to the words of Christ. Woe, then, unto those who impugn this catholic doctrine, so salutary to the whole body of true believers.[a](#)

XVI.

ON PENANCE.

ALITHIA.

You would oblige me now by stating your views of the sacrament of penance. To define it seems difficult, for it is said that penitence hath three parts, like a harp, namely, contrition of heart, confession with the mouth, and satisfaction by deeds,—and its genus, accordingly, is not easily specified,—these three things being diverse in genus.

PHRONESIS.

It appears to me that penitence consists in the condition of the mind, and that these other things, which are called the parts of penitence, are its accidents, which go together to form its completeness. Contrition belongs to the mind alone, and is not an object of sense, inasmuch as the contrite confess to the Lord. And this department of penitence, though little esteemed, is yet of the greatest virtue, so that without it the rest avail nothing. Confession is made up of this feeling, and of oral utterance made to God alone. And thus the fathers under the old law, in common with those of the New Testament, were accustomed to confess. Penitence, in the sense of satisfaction by works, is made up of the two former, together with a confession made to the priest in private.

Now from a regard to gain, it is to this last view of penitence that we give most attention. But whether this third kind is necessary to salvation, or on what authority it was introduced, is with many a matter of dispute. But we must confide on this point in John, who, in his gloss on the decrees, says, after stating many opinions which he

censures, that Innocent III. invented it, and to confirm it, established the law “Omnis utrusque sexus,” which is set forth in the fifth decretal. But in my opinion, as I have explained more at length, it would be better for the church did she content herself with the first and second kinds of penitence as above mentioned. But though the third form (confession to a priest) is injurious to many, and is the cause of many evils to both parties, (the priest and the confessing,) nevertheless it brings many good results to the church, and since it might possibly be well conducted, it appears to me that it may be, by supposition, necessary, and so really necessary, forasmuch as many, through shame of being obliged to confess the sin, and of submitting to the penance enjoined, and from the fear of being obliged to make confession of what they have done elsewhere, are deterred from repeating their sin.

No one can believe that a man may not be saved without confession of this kind, for, otherwise, all the dead from Christ’s ascension to the time of Innocent III. are lost—a horrible thing to believe. Rather do we think, that a much greater number are lost under the law of that pope on this subject, than would ever have been lost for the want of it. Besides, it generally happens, that he who absolves, is not acquainted with the magnitude of the sin confessed, just as he knows not if the man who is confessing be contrite; though he is well aware that unless he be so, his sin is not removed. How, then, can he utter falsehoods in the name of Christ, and so impudently absolve sin, and enjoin a penance which he cannot know as being proportioned to the transgression? Neither is it lawful to burden the church with new traditions, especially such as are of a suspicious character, for what we have is already sufficient. And the laws about confession in the Scripture, have served us well enough for more than a thousand years. On what ground, then, is it that without a law, a third kind of penitence has been introduced in a manner so unlikely? It appears to me, that this papal law is to be admitted as far as the discretion of the person who confesses may deem profitable.

ALITHIA.

I see, brother, that you allow but little weight to this papal law; and it seems to me, that for the same reason, you would make light of the absolution from penalty and guilt, and the full remission of sin granted by the pope, and of that burden of sin which the prelate often aggravates by fulminating his horrible excommunications, and so the decision of the court of Rome, on such matters, would fall to the ground.

PHRONESIS.

The observations you make seem to involve much truth, inasmuch as in the Scriptures, without any additions on the part of the Roman court, it is sufficiently set forth how every man should regulate his life. And if the injunctions of Scripture are attended to, it follows that the man who lives to the end the life so prescribed, will be saved. Hence all these fictitious dogmas are generally promulgated to keep the people in subjection, and to detain them in a fallacious obedience; and a blasphemous covetousness is the damnable root of the whole of them.

Let us look, then, and see what is enjoined and commanded by the Lord, in the law of perfect liberty, and observe it, and abstain from what is forbidden, and from giving attention to laws newly ordained, and this will be enough. Accordingly, what is over and above, is not only evil in its origin, but is itself evil, and blinds numbers. Concerning all vows, promises, and other private observances, let the believer look up to the almighty power of Jesus Christ; let him bend all the strength of his soul to living henceforth in more perfectness, so as to be serviceable to the church; let him repent of his past evil life, strengthen within him the purpose of so sinning no more; and this, in my opinion, sufficeth to destroy his guilt, and to save him, whatever our superiors may say to the contrary. But in all this, let the believer beware of any insincerity toward God. With regard to the words in Matthew xvi., "Whatsoever ye bind," &c., let the believer demand from the false bishop when he alleges this saying of our Lord's, if his own life of holiness, by its resemblance to the life of Peter, is such as to make him a true vicar of Peter. If the presumptuous hypocrite shall impudently affirm that it is so, ask him to show the similarity of his life to that of Peter, more especially in the grace given him to work miracles, and in the lowliness of his poverty. Peter presumed not on the possession of such power, how then can this hypocrite claim it? And since he cannot prove himself a true vicar of Christ, or a member of the church of Christ, what is it to him that Christ promised this power to the blessed Peter, seeing he is neither Peter, nor by the lowness and holiness of his life the vicar of Peter?

XVII.

ON THE SIGNS OF CONTRITION.

ALITHIA.

Tell me, I pray you, brother Phronesis, what the signs are which denote true contrition, inasmuch as you have exposed the craft of Antichrist, acutely though obscurely, and say, do the Cæsarean sects, and new orders, which set aside the rules of Christ, and observe and value the new regulations they have devised, sin herein; or is there true penitence in their earnest and bold observance of such rules?

PHRONESIS.

Not only the true believers among us, but the disciples of Antichrist, unite in confessing, that to remove sin, men must experience true contrition of heart. Accordingly, the first tendency to sorrow, what is not sufficient to remove sin, they call attrition; and the grief which follows, and is adequate, they call contrition. But still they are not able to distinguish between them, or to say where contrition really exists. But I have spoken of contrition in the third part of my sixty-four sermons. [I](#) have there said, that sorrow is sufficient to take away sin, but that it must be more on account of the loss of grace, than on account of any temporal good whatsoever. And so long as sorrow of this nature shall be wanting to the sinner, he does not grieve in contrition for the loss of the husband of the church. Nor is the quantity of grief to be looked to as regards its intensity, or its duration merely; but as regards both taken

together. Wherefore it appears, that so long as we are in this life, we ought to be the subjects of grief for sin, in act or habits, since we protract our grief for temporal calamities to a great length. From all this, it further appears, that the true penitent does not return to his past sin; so that the doctors say, with truth, that to be penitent, is to mourn over past sins, and not to commit again the sins so regarded. Hence it further appears, that it is only the man who is contrite, that will be saved from his sin; the reprobate, by the sudden termination of his sorrow, shows that there is in him no contrition. Hence it follows further, that as the pope and others who administer confession, know not who will be saved, and who is reprobate, so they know not who is contrite. Hence it is a satanic presumption for men falsely to pretend that they will absolutely absolve this man or that from sin by laying their hands on his head. What avails, I ask, this sensible sign, the leaden seal, or the giving of money, to awaken contrition in the heart of the sinner? Verily nothing; and such administrators of confession deceive with their falsehoods, both themselves and those whom they confess.

But it is manifest that the Christian, by his trust in the compassion of Jesus Christ, and in his pain and holy purpose, may know from within himself that his sin is removed, and that he is contrite in spirit. Again, as to further conclusions, be firmly convinced that these new sects sin grievously against Christ, in thus contemning his ordinance, and delighting rather in their own frivolous observances.

Our possessioners ought to know, both from the life of Christ and his apostles, and from the commandments of Scripture, that such endowments as they thus obtain, are repugnant to that state which, in name at least, though falsely, and with a fraudulent intention, they profess. Yet along with these deceitful professions, they are ever plotting to increase their possessions, to defend them, and to destroy those who would impair them. It is repugnant to the Divine justice that such men should go unpunished. The same is true, also, of the friars, who blaspheme God, and defend most anxiously what is in their possession, and bitterly prosecute those who, in the name of the Lord, expose their fraud. The same is true, also, concerning their love of state, or of the Cæsarean or papal law, neglecting the state or law of the land.

This weightiest of sins is not to be taken away by flourishing pompous words, or displaying sensible signs, or by absolutions, or by the invention of indulgences—more especially when the power and opportunity of making satisfaction are within reach, and the sinner remains obstinate in his sin. God discerneth the hearts and intents of men, the condition and circumstances of their passions. It is ill, then, for a man to blaspheme Him, and say that he himself, by a sensible sign he has invented, can absolutely blot out the pollutions of such as are reprobate. Could there be a more presumptuous blasphemy, than for God's enemy falsely to profess that he can so reconcile God, though God's everlasting law and clear justice contradict him? Satan has suggested to these possessioners, that should they have such lordship in worldly things, it would be well, for the establishing of their false dominion, to invest themselves, by means of such blasphemies, with an imaginary spiritual power, a power which cannot be assailed, because not palpable to the senses, and thus procure to themselves authority from kings to burn all their opponents as heretics. Thus was the pretended power of Antichrist artfully introduced.

XVIII.

OF EXTREME UNCTION.

ALITHIA.

You have said quite enough on this subject, brother Phronesis; but inform me, I pray you, somewhat concerning the last sacrament, which is called extreme unction. It has its foundation in the passage, James v., “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”

PHRONESIS.

This foundation for that sacrament does not appear to be adequate. For the faithful might urge with sufficient reason, that this holy apostle does not specify the *last* sickness, but merely says that consolation should be administered by the presbyter when any one is sick; and as it is in the nature of oil, in those parts of the world, to promote the health of the body, so he mentions this anointing; not that the oil affects the soul, but the prayer of a devout priest poured forth, hath a healing effect, so that God helps the sickness of the soul. If that bodily anointing had been a sacrament in the sense in which it is now represented, Christ and his apostles would not have been silent respecting its promulgation and due administration. Nevertheless, I grant you that this corporal anointing is to some a sacrament, other things being equal; but it is then necessary that the presbyters should heal the sick with their own devout prayers. Still, beware, lest through too light a temper, you understand the words of the apostle imperfectly.

You may possibly err so far as to believe, that the mere fact that a priest has prayed for a sick man will be sufficient to remit any guilt that may attach to the latter. But many have been sick, and been anointed, who have, nevertheless, been doomed to everlasting condemnation. For it is not to be believed, that, insomuch as a priest so doth, his prayer of faith will save the sick, for then it would be a part of the faith of the church to believe, that whoever in his last moments should receive the sacrament, would be saved by faith in Christ, and this sacrament would then be the most necessary of all, for the recipient of the others may be finally impenitent, and be lost,—but so, without a doubt, may he be who receives this sacrament.

Thus in the sacrament of baptism, in that of confirmation, and in all the rest, hath Antichrist invented unauthorised ceremonies; and to the burden of the church, without warrant from Scripture, hath heaped them on subjected believers. But other necessary sacraments he has overlooked, as is seen in respect to the seven works of spiritual mercy, which ought to be a sacrament in the esteem of believers, and especially of priests. But this sacrament, though very necessary, inasmuch as it has no temporal gain going along with it, and is irksome to those in high places, is faithlessly neglected.

Whence it appears to me, that those who institute such private orders, and send forth such general rules, to cause sacraments of this nature to be universally received by those who are subject to them, blaspheme God, especially when God is pleased to save many without their receiving this sacrament. How like Antichrist is this presumption, for a prelate to assert, and without foundation maintain, that no one will be saved without partaking of a sacrament of this sort!

But whether a rich man, thus anointed, is permitted subsequently to recover, and whether the priest ought to have a certain knowledge, that the man so anointed will not survive, and whether this sacrament of extreme unction can be repeated, is a matter of doubt with many. But I leave it to the weak, uselessly to protract difficult questions of this nature. I merely state one thing as probable,—that a man thus sick, and thus anointed, and afterwards convalescent, cannot again receive the sacrament of extreme unction.

XIX.

OF THE VARIOUS KINDS OF MINISTERS.

ALITHIA.

Pray inform me, brother, concerning the various kinds of ministers in the church, for you consume our time needlessly in deriding the doctrine of extreme unction.

PHRONESIS.

Derision, I am satisfied, is a lawful weapon, and may be laudably employed on occasion, for Christ, Elias, and the apostles, have all availed themselves of it. And why should we not bring it into use against heretics? Nevertheless, as the excellence of ridicule lies in the moderate use of it, and is of rare and difficult attainment, I will abstain from it, and speak of the kinds of ministers in the church. Now Christ was the highest minister in the church, since, according to the apostle, he was the minister of the circumcision, and, in my opinion, no one of the ministers of our mother is worthy of praise, except as in his conversation he is a follower of Christ. Hence I think it a matter of great difficulty to establish, on sufficient authority, the institution of our new orders.

There are three kinds of ministers acknowledged in the church, each kind including many subordinate gradations. Of these the first and lowest are simple labourers. The second and intermediate class is composed of potentates, the defenders of the ordinances of Christ in the church; but the last and highest are the priests of Christ, who rightly preach his Gospel. This portion should be as the soul unto the body of our mother the church. Among these, however, there is most deception, for Antichrist hath, in the guise of clergy, twelve agents, who machinate against Christ's church, commonly called popes, cardinals, patriarchs, archpræsuls, bishops, archdeacons, officials, deacons, monks, canons, false brethren lately introduced, and questors. Now all these twelve, especially the Cæsarean prelates and the friars, thus unwarrantably

admitted, are plainly the disciples of Antichrist, because they do away with the liberty of Christ, burden holy church, and hinder the Gospel from having free course as of old.

As the last and greatest danger among those enumerated by Paul, is that incurred from false brethren, something should be said concerning these; and as they falsely assert that they were introduced before the incarnation of our Lord, we must see in what way they should be generally defined. The Bishop of Lincoln, in one of his sermons, saith of the private orders of monks in general, but of the friar in particular, that he is a dead body come out of the tomb, wrapped in funeral weeds, and set in motion among men by the fiend. A dead body, he continues, because, vigorous as his bodily life may be, yet his soul is dead—a death far more truly such than the death of our earthly man, as 1 Tim. v., “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.” He is a putrid and stinking corpse, because the natural life of the body should be derived from the spiritual life of the soul, by God’s law; secondly, he cometh out of the grave, because, as he saith, his four walls shut him in, as one dead to the world, and shut up and buried therein. But inasmuch as the shutting up of the soul is far more excellent than the bodily shutting up of the man, let us mark the four cardinal virtues—justice, fortitude, prudence, and temperance—and mark, also, how the friars tear away, almost asunder, these four walls, and so break out from the confinement of the soul, and treacherously pollute believers in the church. Christ and his apostles, accordingly, denounced them as hypocrites; and hence, to deceive the church, they dress themselves in funeral vestments, which the religion of Christ requires not.

Some wear russet above, as a sign of their labours, and a white garment under, to signify the purity of their mind. Others wear over all, black funeral vestments, as a sign, they say, of their continual sorrow and pain on account of sin, and wear white clothes underneath, as the former. A third class are clad in white, both without and within, wearing russet to denote the labour they undergo for the church. The fourth order dress like the second, in black and white, but in the fashion of their dress, and their form of burial, they differ from the two following, as do the first. The deformity of their appearance, they say, shows the utility of their body, and the girdle they so tie round them in a knot, that they endure a constant and distressing bodily penance. But we see not the reality of what is thus signified, since they are no prophets, but hypocrites who seduce the people, and give their attention more to the shutting up of the body than of the soul. They pretend, that by thus shutting up the body, they have presented to their view heaven and things heavenly. The plants that grow in the cloister signify the vigour of those virtues wherein they surpass all, and the tree in the midst of it denotes a ladder along which they mount by the steps of virtue to things heavenly. But was there ever a more hypocritical lie? For they eat of the forbidden fruit in the midst of their paradise, and make drunken to the uttermost all men who follow after them. As to the Bishop of Lincoln’s fourth particular, that every such corpse hath been set in motion among men by the devil, the believer cannot doubt that men of this sort, who break out from the cloister of the soul, are set in motion by fiends, since the fiends, who most love hypocrisy, and such deceiving of the human race, run of course to the support of such heretical fallacies; for the sin of hypocrisy, as it is most contrary to the first principles of truth, and most seduces the people, is carefully promoted by the fiend. Thus this description of the fourfold member, set

forth by that holy bishop, is made good, and the blessed Hildegard makes the same statement more expressly in her prophecy before these friars were introduced.[a](#)

XX.

ON THE BEGGING FRIARS.

ALITHIA.

I could wish that you would make some statement of your opinion concerning the begging of the friars; for many are of opinion that Christ so begged, and certain it is that on this assumption the friars found their system. This opinion has the more colour, from the fact that in the Psalms it is said that Iscariot persecuted a man who was poor and a beggar. And as the blessed Peter says, Acts i., that this prophecy was spoken by David concerning Christ and Iscariot, it is no sufficient reply to say that Christ begged only in the person of his members, for certainly the psalm refers to the person of Christ, which Iscariot persecuted.

PHRONESIS.

I have affirmed elsewhere in many ways, that the term mendicancy, like the term prayer, is to be understood in different senses. For there is one kind of mendicancy innuitive, another insinuitive, and a third declamatory. One kind of begging comes of God alone, another of man; accordingly I have elsewhere defined begging, as the petition of a needy man for bodily alms, purely on the ground of compassion, for the relief of his need. In this sense Christ in his humanity begged of the Trinity, and consequently of himself, when saying the Lord's prayer, which he had established; and as Augustine often asserts, every one in repeating that prayer must necessarily beg of the Lord. Now we may say that Christ begged in his humanity, but only innuitively, of his brethren, since he tells them, in fact, how for love of them he became so poor and needy, as saith the apostle in 2 Cor. viii. Now such real begging, without insinuitive petition, offered in words, is a faultless and most noble begging, for it became Christ thus to beg, for the interests of his church. But if the friars make a sophistical use of such begging, and beg stoutly from the people with clamour and annoyance, who can doubt that this begging is a diabolical and sophistical perversion of this act of Christ's, so full of goodness, and so serviceable to his church? Beyond this the friars defend their falsehood, by adding, that it is not only proper, but absolutely meritorious thus to embrace a life of voluntary poverty. I have assailed this position by many arguments in the vulgar tongue. In the first place, from Matt. v., that Christ, who came, "not to destroy the law and the prophets," says in Deut. xv., "There shall be no needy man nor beggar among you." Why then should Christ violate this law by thus begging of his own people? In the same manner, Prov. xxx., Solomon saith, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Christ, therefore, was not compelled to do away with the virtue that is thus said to exist in a medium between the two, since the believers supplied him with all such necessaries.

Job saith, (c. xxix.) “Oh that it were with me as in the months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth.” Here it is clear as noon-day that this pious man piously prayeth that he might possess the prosperity he had in times past, which, according to their doctrine, would be a blame-worthy petition. To the same effect speaks Paul, (Acts xx.) “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel: yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities”—whence it appears that bodily labour is indirectly enjoined, and mendicity forbidden. Also 2 Thess. iii., “For even when we were with you this we commanded you, that if any would not work neither should he eat; for we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies”—whence it is shown, as clearly as before, that the apostle forbids begging of this sort. Again, 1 Thess. iv., “But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you”—which likewise shows that the friars in begging violate the injunction of the apostle, and so of our Lord. Also Eph. iv., “Let him that stole steal no more”—but we may see how directly this command is disobeyed by the friars, for oftentimes by their knavery, contrary to the will of our Lord, they delude men, and seize the property of others by the foulest means, and neglect to labour with their own hands. Yet the apostle (as appears from Acts xviii.) laboured as a tentmaker that the church might not be burdened. God enjoined corporeal labour on the first sinner, Gen. iii.: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” Are we to regard the sect of the friars as more excellent than the first man, or as a better example than the apostle Paul? Likewise, 2 Cor. vi., the apostle lays down the following injunction: “We beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” Do not the friars receive the grace of God in vain, who are endowed by God with bodily strength, and have the opportunity, and yet will not work—to the great burden of the church? Again, when Christ prohibits such public begging, inasmuch as he who so begs is burthensome to the community, a course of life which Christ through Paul repeatedly forbids, how can the new orders have the effrontery to proclaim such open mendicancy in the case of able-bodied men, and found a new form of devotion on-such an ordinance? Do not Francis, and other idiot traffickers, depart from the faith of the church, and from the Lord Jesus Christ? Furthermore, when paupers, the blind, the sick, and the infirm, ought, according to God’s commandment, to receive such alms, (Luke xiv.) the robust mendicant taking the relief away from them, wrongs this class of men; and what robbery can be more infamous? Such beggary is contrary to the law of nature: what blasphemous necessity, then, could impose it upon our Lord Jesus Christ, especially when it neither became him so to beg, nor have the Gospel commandments, wherein is involved all truth, expressed anything of the sort? How dare the friars, then, thus blaspheme the Lord Christ Jesus? For Christ and his disciples, in abstaining from such medicancy, obeyed the tenth commandment in the decalogue, the law of nature, and the bidding of the Old Testament.

XXI.

FURTHER SHOWING THAT THE MENDICANCY OF THE FRIARS IS NOT CONSISTENT WITH SCRIPTURE.

PHRONESIS.

I see clearly, from the reasons adduced, and from many others that might be brought forward, if need were, that this mendicancy of the friars is not only without scriptural authority, but a manifest blasphemy. Yet it may be well to go briefly over the poor evidence adduced by the friars in its support. In John iv. it is written that Christ asked drink of a Samaritan woman; who can refuse, they argue, to attribute such mendicancy to Christ, when he was thus poor? But in weighing this argument we should define clearly what is meant by begging, one man of another. For, when a creditor or his agent seeks a debt, he does not, in so doing, beg; and much less does a lord, when he claims to be served with what is his own. Accordingly, though Christ, as Lord, received gifts of his people, it does not thence follow that he begged of them, but rather that he required a ministering of goods that were his own for the common benefit of those so ministering to him. Thus some students of the Gospel are of opinion that Christ asked the drink of faith and devotion from the woman; for it is not likely that Christ when hungry would have asked water to drink, especially as it was the sixth hour of the day, and the disciples had gone into the village to buy food. Moreover, if Christ had asked for material water, he would probably have drunk it at once, without delay; but when the woman was ready to give him water, he deferring drinking, and said some time after to his disciples, when they exhorted him to eat—"I have meat which ye know not of," &c. The friars, therefore, are herein more foolish than this woman, who mistook the meaning of Christ through an excusable ignorance, while they equivocate damnably by nefarious falsehoods concerning the Holy Spirit. I wish they were doomed to beg nothing of the people but water, until they have made satisfaction for the error of so heretical a lie against God.

In the second place, the friars endeavour to establish their falsehood by that passage in Luke xix. where Christ saith—"Zaccheus, make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." From which words these ignorant men conclude that Christ begged food and lodging of Zaccheus. Let these untaught grammarians acquire some knowledge of the use of terms, before they utter such blasphemies, and neither lie, nor avail themselves of lies, to defend their begging,—for Christ perceiving the piety of Zaccheus, spake these words, on account of the charity that was in him, and not from being himself in misery or destitution. So let friars mark these terms, and blush to ascribe beggary thus falsely to Christ, when they should rather regard him in the light of a supreme and most generous Physician, who is pleased of his surpassing charity to abide with men.

In the third place, these blasphemers argue from Matt. xxi., where Christ sent two disciples to Jerusalem for an ass and her colt, whereon he might go up thither,—Did he not then beg from the city of Jerusalem? Now let these heretics blush to say, that it is after the example of the Lord that they beg of men without leave sought or

obtained; for Christ the Lord of all needed not thus to mount a colt and an ass, save to fulfil the Scripture, (Zech. ix.) and to prefigure how he should ride over the Gentiles as colts, and the Jews (stupidly continuing under the burdens of the law) as asses, and still more when his disciples laid their garments on those beasts, that is to say, while the apostles taught the virtues, and principally the virtue of humility, by the efficacy of their example. Nay, I repeat, Christ mounted these animals to condemn the riding of pope and cardinals, and of the inferior bishops too, who are wont to ride in superfluous pomp on war-horses decked out with gold and silk.

In the fourth place, these blind heretics argue, that Christ begged lodging and bread for his last supper in Jerusalem, which they rest on Matthew xxvi. But let these shameless heretics know that the words of the Gospel plainly condemn their heresy. For the words of Christ are—"Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples." Where it appears clearer than light that Christ speaks as Lord, and not as a mendicant. For as in Matthew xxi. this Lord taught his disciples, saying, "If any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them," so he speaks in this instance as Lord and Master.—Let the heretic mark this consequence—"The Lord hath need of them,"—and it follows, "straightway they will let them go:"—therefore the Truth, uttering those words, begged the animals referred to; for in both these cases they attribute to Christ robbery of the poor. Christ, therefore, in addressing these words to his disciples, "Go into the city," &c., and especially in giving fulfilment to those words in a manner consistent with justice, shows the extent of his dominion, because John, in the twelfth chapter, says, "Ye call me Master and Lord," &c. Hence, according to the evangelical doctrine, Christ's disciples dare not call themselves masters and lords, but servants of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let heretics, then, compare these three sayings of Christ; in the first place, how he enjoined upon his disciples, in general terms, that they were to go into a certain city, as if he had said,—By reason of the universality of my dominion, whatever I shall ask of any one in my name is provided by him. In the second place, they should mark the expression—"The Master saith;" for Christ who speaks is greater in station than any other man that can be named. Whence to denote the certainty of what he says, and to denote that teachers are worthy of their maintenance, he subjoins distinctly these words, "The Master saith," &c. But let the same men mark the third expression also—"My time is at hand;" for other men whom Christ does not illuminate in so high a degree, withdraw their help even when they suppose their dearest friends are near death; so when Christ speaks with such certainty and authority, he shows that he makes it imperative on the part of that citizen to do as required. Therefore, to conclude, it is manifest to believers, that the Gospel, so far from teaching that Christ practised such mendicancy, condemns the custom as the height of heresy.

XXII.

ON THE LETTERS OF THE FRATERNITIES.

ALITHIA.

You have argued with sufficient shrewdness in regard to this second blasphemy of the friars. But touch, I pray you, a little on a third—that relating to their letters of fraternity, for by that means the church is too commonly deceived.

PHRONESIS.

I am willing to say of them in Latin what I have formerly expressed in English, but I am apprehensive that Pseudis will charge me with losing my labour in so doing, both because I often repeat the same doctrine, and also, since the malevolence of the friars increases, I am imprudent enough to speak of their last doings as worse than the former. Nevertheless, this is not the end, God willing, at which I aim. I suppose, on the contrary, that some friars, whom God shall see fit to teach, will be converted, and devoutly embrace the religion of Christ in its primitive purity; and abandoning their perfidy, shall seek or obtain freedom from Antichrist, and return of their own accord to the primeval religion of our Lord. And then, like Paul, they will build up the church.

But in proceeding to deal with these false letters of the friars, it is important to know something of their history; and this being understood, their simoniacal heresy will be immediately manifest, for they do not issue such rules except with the expectation of realising gain, and of giving strength to their unlawful confederacy. How then, I ask, can they be other in character than simoniacal heretics? In confirmation of this showing, when help is denied them as regards temporal things, or the defence of them, straightway they murmur. Beyond doubt, there is implied in this practice a fraudulent buying and selling; and it is equally certain that God must hate this hypocritical traffic.

The friars must also beware not to give occasion to the faithful to discover their fallacies, or to introduce unauthorised novelties, since they ought to know that Christ meant his church should be free from such things; and inasmuch as the friars do not thus act, they fraudulently diminish the liberty of the church of Christ. On many grounds it appears that the friars have fallen into a radical heresy, for they pretend expressly in these letters, that the individuals to whom they grant them, shall be made partakers of merits from themselves after death. But where can you find a more presumptuous blasphemy? For neither they themselves, nor the men with whom they carry on this traffic, can know, whether they may not be condemned in hell. How blind is their folly, then, in making assertions on a subject of which they know so little! But they have, it seems, such an innate tendency to falsehood, that they hesitate not to assert, contrary to eternal judgment, that they can do the things they cannot do.

Again, no man should be, by withdrawing his help, the means of another man's damnation. But as the friars give us to understand in this matter, it is in their power to save both themselves and others from condemnation; so that supposing any man to be lost, they are to be blamed for withholding their assistance. For if they promise to another that after death he shall be a partaker of their merits, then they manifestly imply next, both that the man himself will after death be worthy of such participation, and that they themselves at present merit future happiness; because, if each party should be a foredoomed member of Satan, then such a granting must be beyond the power of these friars.

Moreover, the friars, by following the manner of the hypocrites, flatly condemn themselves herein; for according to the evangelical doctrine in Matt. vi., such alms should be given secretly, so that their right hand should not know what the left hand doth. But the friars, by the letters which they so assiduously display to the people, give plain indication that they say unto my people that they themselves are holy and grave men in the church, and, what is more than the sounding of a trumpet before them, they send forth letters to confirm the impression of their sanctity, which men are to preserve constantly in their chests.

Inasmuch, also, as it is among the provisions of all law, that no man should deceive his neighbour in any worldly matter, much more should he not so do in respect to spiritual things, concerning a man's everlasting heritage. Since, therefore, those who trade in temporal goods require some security for their merchandise, much more is this requisite in so precious a commerce as that relating to the salvation of souls. But since the friars have no certainty in regard to themselves, of the blessings hoped for, they have spread on all sides childish fraud. Are we to believe that God will turn from his own course of justice, because such maniac concessions have been made by friars? I have heard indeed some madmen rave about temporal good, and secular dominion, but never did I hear any so horribly blaspheme as these men, in thus presuming themselves to be as God. Doctors have demonstrated, from the faith of Scripture, that no one can properly grant anything to another, except as God shall first have granted it: and it would follow therefore that whatever the friars grant men, God hath first granted; but since grants from God depend not on friars, nor on their seals and parchment, it appears a more than devilish presumption to affect to grant a share in the merits of men who themselves are hypocrites.

Many simple people, however, confide as much in these frivolous letters as in an article of faith like that of the communion of saints, or salvation by Jesus Christ. How then can such a heresy fail to place an occasion of falling in the way of the believer? Will a man shrink from acts of licentiousness and fraud, if he believes that soon after, by the aid of a little money bestowed on friars, an entire absolution from the crime he has committed may be obtained? Accordingly, this heresy is supposed to be the cause why the faith of the laity is found to be so wavering.

XXIII.

HOW THE FRIARS FALSELY SELL THEIR PRAYERS AND MERITS.

ALITHIA.

Since the subtle evasions of the friars are so many, I pray you strike at their root, that this evil may be altogether rooted out from the church; because I see clearly that the mendicants affect to dispense more of merit from their communion than they have power to bestow, or than they really possess.

PHRONESIS.

I am pleased to find that you have formed such conceptions in regard to the errors of the false brethren; and you will see yet more to this effect in their crafty excuses and fraudulent replies. For they say, in the first place, though falsely, that it is true they cannot grant any one of these things to any one, unless it be supposed that he shall make himself worthy of it in the eyes of God: and, accordingly, they grant such things subject to the good pleasure of God. But let these heretics blush, and know that they cannot grant to any one that he should be as God, and that God should cease to be in order that the creature may come into the place of God. What can be more foolish?

In the second place, they say that the men to whom they make such grants are in many respects meritorious, because of the assistance they render to the friars. But, on the contrary, it appears to me probable that the men thus described are in many respects worthy of punishment more than of reward. In the first place, because they have become unstable in the faith, casting off the catholic belief for the sake of the frivolous falsehoods of these friars. Secondly, because men thus blind nourish friars, the disciples of Antichrist, and reject the poor, the blind, the halt, and the sick, to whom they ought, by the law of the Gospel, to be bountiful. And thirdly, because the hypocritical fraud of the friars destroys alike the one and the other; and accordingly, since the supposition should be on the side of the more certain and better part, we ought to suppose that the faith, religion, and ancient usage inculcated by Christ, is far preferable to the usage or religion of late brought in by the friars. Thus should we arrive at the supposition, that had all the friars been destroyed, or consigned to perdition, it would have been better for the church than it is now; and had no such letters ever been dispensed, and had men depended simply on the graciousness of Christ, it would have been better than at present. Accordingly, these absurdities which the friars chatter forth return on their own head.

Thirdly, the friars argue falsely, that as it is lawful for temporal lords to make free grants of the possessions which they hold, so it is allowable for them, possessing, as they do, a dominion quite as absolute over the stock of their merits, to make free grants from that source to whomsoever they will, and so to render such persons participant of their merits. This absurd analogy appears to have led Simonists to a trafficking with those possessions of the church which pass under the name of

ecclesiastical benefices, but which are in fact malefices. But there is no just similarity between the two cases, so as to afford a plea to the friars in thus dispensing their merits, since merit of no kind may be possessed except by the special grace of God. In the case of a just man, accordingly, it is ridiculous to be told that the friars can communicate the nature of those works which they call merits; since, in truth, prayers, fastings, preachings, and the six works which friars commonly set forth in their letters, are not within their power, so that they can observe them, and communicate them to others as they please. And the merit remaining after these works, in the formal acceptation of the term merit, has no existence, except in the man to whom the works themselves properly belong. And so every man has his own merit or demerit.

If, therefore, it is not lawful for a man to commute any temporal possession without leave obtained from his chief lord, much more is it not lawful for friars to communicate their merits without special licence from the Lord of lords. But certain it is that God never grants licence of this nature unless there be worthiness in the person claiming such merit, in which view those who heap temporalities on the friars commonly make themselves unworthy, inasmuch as they often nourish and protect the enemies of Christ. If, therefore, God alone can impart virtues, so as not to abuse them by communicating them on wrong principles, God will distribute the principle of merit only according to what the person meriting shall have deserved from his own life. It is, therefore, a manifest blasphemy to presume, that any power which is not Divine can distribute merits according to pleasure.

But, in the fourth place, the friars argue from an analogy, as before, that the saints in heaven bestow on those who had formerly rendered them service in this life, good measures, pressed down, shaken together and running over, Luke vi.; and that, therefore, it should be lawful to friars to give to their benefactors in an inferior degree. But the saints bestow such good objectively, not subjectively or efficiently, like God, who, as it were, enters into the saints; and that is good measure, because it is a supernatural good.

In the fifth place, the friars argue by analogy, as before, and say that the popes distribute the merits of the saints in heaven, as appears in the matter of indulgences: and since the friars are the equals of the pope in respect to priesthood, it follows that they may distribute their own merits at their pleasure. But mark here, in the first place, how the friars accuse the popes; secondly, how they usurp equality with them; and thirdly, how they contend for superiority over them; for the popes do not grant such indulgences, except on the express condition that the men to whom they grant them have, in truth, confessed, and are contrite. But the friars make no mention of penitence as a condition. Yet we know that God cannot remove the guilt of the sinner unless he be truly contrite. What sect, then, is this, which raises itself so greatly above God, and above every vicar of God?

XXIV.

ON INDULGENCES.

ALITHIA.

We have here touched on the subject of indulgences; and as the granting of these appears to me quite in accordance with this blasphemous presumption of the friars, I could wish that you would say something on this topic.

PHRONESIS.

As the pride of those who hate God ever tends upward, so although the fountain head of heresy and sin takes its rise in the very beginning of darkness, the rivulet of the friars strives unnaturally to raise itself above its source. I confess that the indulgences of the pope, if they are what they are said to be, are a manifest blasphemy, inasmuch as he claims a power to save men almost without limit, and not only to mitigate the penalties of those who have sinned, by granting them the aid of absolutions and indulgences, that they may never come to purgatory, but to give command to the holy angels, that when the soul is separated from the body, they may carry it without delay to its everlasting rest.

The friars give a colour to this blasphemy, by saying that Christ is omnipotent, and excels all his good angels, and that the pope is his plenary vicar on earth, and so possesses in every thing the same power as Christ in his humanity. It is here that lawyers, in common with the friars, cry as wolves, and, contradicting themselves, say, that when they consider the power of this God upon earth they cannot lift up their face to heaven. Whence, to declare the power of the pope, the false brethren, according to the secrets of their faith, proceed as follows:

They suppose, in the first place, that there is an infinite number of supererogatory merits, belonging to the saints, laid up in heaven, and above all, the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, which would be sufficient to save an infinite number of other worlds, and that, over all this treasure, Christ hath set the pope. Secondly, that it is his pleasure to distribute it, and, accordingly, he may distribute therefrom to an infinite extent, since the remainder will still be infinite. Against this rude blasphemy I have elsewhere inveighed. Neither the pope, nor the Lord Jesus Christ, can grant dispensations, or give indulgences to any man, except as the Deity has eternally determined by his just counsel. But we are not taught to believe that the pope, or any other man, can have any colour of justice to adduce for so doing; therefore, we are not taught that the pope has any such power.

Again, I inquire, concerning these supererogatory eternal merits, what member of the church is the subject of them? If in Christ and his members, it appears wonderful, on many accounts, that the pope should be able to subtract them from their proper subjects. First, because an accident cannot exist without a subject; secondly, because no one of them is in any need of it, their hour of probation being passed. In the third

place, because he is rewarded fully, according to his own merit. How, therefore, can the pope, by such imaginary rapine, do both God and them an injury? Also, by a *reductio ad impossibile*, it is made plain, that if any mortal shall be finally condemned during the time of any pope, the pope himself will be guilty of his destruction, because he has neglected to save him; for he has power enough to accomplish the salvation of such a man, nor is there any obstacle in the way of his so doing, except, perhaps, his own sloth; and accordingly, for such sloth, he is to be blamed. But who can be equal to such a dispensation, except God alone? But since God may not recall the office, by reason of the absolute agreement which he has made therewith, it appears to unbelievers that as long as that office remains, the pope cannot err, or be condemned, inasmuch as his mind, like that of Christ, is not liable to sin. But where is there a greater blasphemy, than that by reason of the mere Cæsarean power, which is contrary to the law of Christ, Antichrist should be possessed of such authority? Whence it appears to many, that of all the sufferings endured by Christ from the hand of man, this is one of the greatest—the suffering arising from the permission given to Antichrist to reign so long, and so widely to deceive the people!

Moreover, it appears that this doctrine is a manifold blasphemy against Christ, inasmuch as the pope is extolled above his humanity and deity, and so above all that is called God,—pretensions which, according to the declarations of the apostle, agree with the character of Antichrist; for he possesses Cæsarean power above Christ, who had not where to lay his head. In regard to spiritual power, so far as the humanity of Christ is concerned, it would seem that the pope is superior to our Lord Jesus Christ; for it behoved Christ to suffer the most bitter passion for the salvation of man; and we believe, that on the ground of the Divine justice, men attain to whatever happiness may be theirs, by virtue of Christ's passion. But this renegade says, that it is allowable, that he should live as luxuriously as he may choose, and that, by the bare writing of one of his scribes, he can introduce wonders, without limit, into the church militant! Who, then, can deny his being extolled above the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose life we read not that Christ, or any one of his apostles, granted such absolutions or indulgences? Yet had such power been at their command, it is on many grounds probable that they would not have been absolutely idle in the use of it, especially when Christ condemns the slothful servant, for not trafficking with the talent entrusted to him; and he requires at the hand of the prelate the souls committed to his care, and lost through his negligence, as appears from the third chapter of Ezekiel. Which alternative, then, should we maintain,—that Christ and his apostles possessed no such power, or that they were culpable in hoarding such treasure, in place of bringing it forth for the good of the church? But what greater insanity than to adopt such a conclusion!

Similar in its folly is the doctrine which teaches, that the pope dispenses these same merits of the saints, for the service of men, to any extent, according to his pleasure. For it behoves Christ to do more, both on his own part, to fulfil the claims of justice; and on that of the sinner, whom it becomes him to affect, imparting grace to him, that he may prove worthy of the Divine assistance.

The same may be said concerning the fiction of the keys of Antichrist, for it is not necessary that the believer should insist on the foundation of this pretension, since the

argument will be found to be one without sequence. Christ, they say, granted to Peter, the apostle in the nearest degree following his own example, such power over the keys, and therefore we ought, in the same manner, to concede to Antichrist, who, in word and deed, is still more pre-eminently his opposite, as great, or even greater, power in the church! Christ gave to Peter, and to others possessing a knowledge of the law of God, power of judging according to the law of that knowledge, both in binding and loosing, agreeably to the church triumphant. But, now, this renegade will not be regulated by the mind of the church above, nor by any authority; but, as might be expected from Antichrist, he sets forth new laws, and insists, under pain of the heaviest censure, that the whole church militant shall believe in them; so that anything determined therein, shall stand as though it were a part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In such infinite blasphemies is the infatuated church involved, especially by the means of the tail of this dragon, that is the sects of the friars, who labour in the cause of this illusion, and of other Luciferian seductions of the church. But arise, O soldiers of Christ! be wise to fling away these things, along with the other fictions of the prince of darkness, and put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and confide, undoubtedly, in your own weapons, and sever from the church such frauds of Antichrist, and teach the people that in Christ alone, and in his law, and in his members, they should trust; that in so doing, they may be saved through his goodness, and learn above all things honestly to detect the devices of Antichrist!

XXV.

HOW THE ORDERS OF FRIARS WERE INTRODUCED.

ALITHIA.

Inform me, brother, how these orders, which, according to your account, so greatly disturb the church, were introduced; for it appears to many of the people that they are the safety of the church, since in them, in a special degree, the life and poverty of Christ are retained; while the pope, the bishops, and other prelates have notoriously declined from that life. Four orders so numerous, and of such a character, must therefore, it is thought, have a stable foundation.

PHRONESIS.

The matter you touch upon is in part historical, and since it has no authority from the law of Christ, some, among the many who have written upon it, have, without doubt, stated what is false. To me, however, it seems probable, that subsequent to the loosing of Satan, which took place after the first thousand years since the ascension of Christ, the church notoriously departed from the pattern of her Lord. Hence, holy and devout men, not wanting in prudence, endeavoured to revive in themselves the model which was thus lost. So Dominic, and Francis, and the other friars, began to do some things good in their nature, but through the art of the devil were made to rest on many hypocritical falsehoods. According to the common opinion, Dominic, seeing the corruption of the regular clergy, who, being too intent upon the world, had departed

unreasonably from the discipline of the canons, founded the order of preaching friars. He was succeeded by Francis, who, though at first a cunning and covetous merchant, founded his order in a blind spirit of devotion, utterly devoid of prudence. And then other sects, seeing that antiquity carried great weight with it, laid false claim to an antiquity superior to that of these orders, and declared Augustine to be their founder, pretending that they lived four hundred years or more unknown in a desert place, before the introduction of the preaching friars. But the fourth sect (the Carmelites) go still further, and assert that they were founded before the incarnation of our Lord, on Mount Carmel, by Elias, in honour of the blessed Virgin Mary.

These fictions, false as the shape and colour of their habit, and every thread carrying a falsehood, show with what care and labour they follow the father of lies. These appear to be the apostates described by Solomon in the sixth chapter of Proverbs: "A wicked man walketh with a froward mouth: he winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord." This I have elsewhere set forth in detail.

Some men, seeing the reins of falsehood thus thrown loose, pretend that these four saints had their beginning in Caym;^a and thus the voice of his brethren, representing the malice of these friars, cries from the earth to the Lord: and, in fact, the four letters of this word Caym, are the initials of these four orders, in the succession in which the friars pretend they rose,—thus C denotes the Carmelites; A, the Augustines; I, the Jacobites (Dominicans); and M, the Minors.

But passing by these fictions, there are many things we must observe respecting these men as affecting the interests of the church militant. In the first place, that the order of the truly catholic religion which Christ instituted, transcends infinitely all these private orders; for as one patron is to another patron, so is one order to another; but Christ our patron infinitely exceeds the patrons of these orders, and therefore our order infinitely exceeds theirs. For this reason the holy apostle dared not introduce such sects, as appears from 1 Cor. i. and iii. Accordingly, although the friars may little relish the conclusion that our religion thus exceeds theirs, because then their own ought in reason to be destroyed, they stoutly maintain the confirmation of their order by the Roman court, and prove by such means, that a man may pass from a secular religion to the possessionate religious orders in their various gradations, and from these to the orders of the friars. From this it follows, that the orders of these sects are of the highest authority in the church, and thus spiritually elevated above all other orders whatsoever. If the man who favours, or mainly supports these orders, should be called their peculiar patron or founder, these four sects of mendicants should be called papal friars, rather than Dominican or Franciscan; for Dominic is said to have apostatised from his own altar, or he holds the rule of Augustine unchanged. Francis, again, is said to have compiled sermons so incongruous, that his disciples are ashamed to exhibit his rules. But it is particularly by collecting the rules of their sect from the popes, as jesters obtain their mantle, that these men give disposition to their order, which has been so often changed.

Concerning the two other sects, it appears still more plainly, that by often changing their customs, they have made but unsteady progress, like boats driven to and fro in a

shoreless sea. This feeble attempt, then, to establish their orders is a failure, and accordingly we need not be surprised to find them deceiving the church. Hence, these friars, seeing the defective grounds of their institution, declare that they hold no other than the religion and ordinance of Christ, but that they hold that religion in far more perfection than we seculars, and so observe the law of Christ more perfectly.

But it is natural to ask them how it is that there should be four distinct orders of mendicants, or how it is that they ask the pope to confirm their orders and corrections? And since the novel institution, which they are so singular in observing, is no special ordinance or religion, they are asked why they retain it so pertinaciously, and in what consists its advantage, or what is still their special authority for it? Since according to Scripture, men may not introduce such unfounded novelties beyond the religion instituted by Christ, and they are bound to consider such orders as far inferior to that of Christ; inasmuch as Christ our Abbot is more worthy than their patron, our Gospel rule is far more perfect, and its company of saints militant far more noble—nay, if the excellence of an order be estimated by these marks, the military order far surpasses that of the friars.

Who, I ask, will find in this order of mendicants, such a collection of men as were in Greece in the holy Theban legion? The same is true of Mauritius and his comrades; and of the two hundred soldiers, who, in the time of Saint Catherine, followed Pophorius; and so many bodies of soldiers in the world, who, in antiquity, authority, and sanctity, far exceed these orders of the mendicants.

The sort of reply proper to the argument with which we began on this subject, is now manifest, for what is assumed in this case is not valid; though hypocrites, by their false pretences, deceive and blind many men, giving attention to the surface of life, and not to the foundation of their order. They follow not the poverty of Christ, and his mode of life, since that best of masters would not be the holder of such sumptuous dwelling-places as belong to them, nor lay such a tax on the poor, nor collect together such thieves and plunderers as are the accomplices of Antichrist. But the patron of these men seems to influence them in this opposite direction. Nor is it any argument in their favour, that this patron himself hath appointed them the law, and given them the privilege to beg, since the blessed Clement forbade his people so to do.

XXVI.

IN WHAT RESPECT THE FRIARS ARE CONTRARY TO CHRIST.

ALITHIA.

The majority of men think that the friars, as they say mass, and preach and pray so much, are necessary to the holy mother church. Therefore, pray tell me wherein they are contrary to the law of Christ, because they are then doubtless heretics, and ought especially to be stoned by the clergy.[a](#)

PHRONESIS.

It is evident that they do all these works merely for outward show; and because of the hidden malice within their hearts, they not only hurt themselves to a considerable extent, but also other people. Yet I do not deny, on the contrary I suppose, that there are some good men among them. As for the mass, it is evident, that if they are heretics in regard to first principles, in denying that the bread is the real body of Christ, and only an accident above their comprehension, then they sacrifice unto idols. It is further certain, that their saying mass is a sin unto them, even more than the sacrifices of the priests of Baal, and those of the worst kind among the idolatrous nations. And with regard to their preaching, the result shows its tendency to deteriorate the church, for they give all their attention to ritual, flattery, detraction, and falsehood, rejecting Scripture, and neglecting to rebuke sin.

Who can doubt that their frivolous mode of preaching is pernicious to the church, or that the same remark applies to their hypocritical prayers? For according to Gregory, when the man who is sent forth to intercede, is a person on his own account unacceptable, the anger of the offended party is only more provoked. But I shall now proceed to speak of the twelve abuses among the friars.

The first, is that blasphemous heresy among them, whereby they deceive the church in the sacrament of the altar, so that, as they have deviated from the faith of the Scriptures, there are now more than four heretical schisms among the four orders. And the fact that they hold opinions so diversified, is a manifest proof that their doctrines are erroneous. If, therefore, the knight-templars were dissolved on account of some erroneousness in their belief which is unknown to us, how much more should it be thus with these orders, on the ground of their well-known heresy! For they send annually many living souls into hell, to their master and patron the devil. I pass by the fact that they really kill many of their brethren. If we take, therefore, their whole occupation into consideration, it is evident that they are useless persons in the church; for the introduction of their heresy, as wanting in the authority of Scripture, can be of no value, except we concede to it importance ironically, as made up of subtle conclusions, by means of which they disturb the peace of the church. For they imagine that they devour daily the entire body of Christ in its very substance, and that they swallow it through their mouth in the same quantity in which it exists in heaven, because, as they say, the body of Christ is naturally entire as regards every particle of the accident which they so consecrate. Thus the friars, disseminating their falsehood, walk with a froward mouth; for they lie not only against those whom they hate, or those who do them a service, but concerning themselves and the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth of this is manifest in the history of many believers, who suffer with much humility under their falsehood, when they so blaspheme the Lord of lords. If therefore the retainer of a secular lord would be offended by the promulgation of a falsehood respecting that lord, much more ought every believer to testify his displeasure, when a blasphemy is circulated concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

Such a friar, then, beyond doubt, winks with covetous eyes, full of many vices, and tramples down many seeds of virtues which would otherwise grow up in the church militant. Such an apostate has a mind stored to the full with lies, and contrives evil in

his depraved heart to the damage of the church. And since nothing can be more to the occasion of strife in the church than the dissemination of such falsehood, it is plain that they constantly sow strife in the church, since they are thus wrapped up in lies, body and soul.

A second abuse of the friars is the crime of blasphemy, because they impute to Christ that he publicly begged of men, as the friars beg of the poor. The third abuse consists in the blasphemy of the letters of fraternity. The fourth abuse consists in their damnable assumptions of superiority over Christ, since Christ, who is the best and most powerful Master, had only twelve apostles, whom he sent into the world to preach the Gospel, after he had perfectly instructed them in the faith; while these gather themselves together, and steal many thousands of our youth into their convents, and preach a doctrine which is the sign of their father, by which, as above stated, they are bound for ever to the cloister. The fifth abuse is, the false pretence of the friars to be most like Christ in his poverty, and in the possession of temporalities, houses, incomes, and whatever of such things belong to them.

But certain it is, that herein they are guilty of a blasphemous falsehood against Christ; for Christ in his humanity never built any such a mansion, nay, it was repugnant to his state of innocence thus to heap together books, and money, and such things. The sixth abuse is their simoniacal accumulation of things temporal, by virtue of their office, as false preachers; for Christ taught his disciples, in the tenth of Matthew, since they had freely received from above the teaching which enabled them to preach the Gospel, and the power also of working miracles, that they should freely extend the benefit of such endowments to all who might be benefited by them, just as God and good angels bestow their gifts most freely. Thus these sealed commodities of the friars involve them in many ways in the guilt of simony and heresy.

XXVII.

OF THE OTHER SIX ABUSES OF THE FRIARS.

ALITHIA.

Pray, brother Phronesis, inform me of the other six abuses of the friars, as you have promised, for I do not clearly see how they can avoid the guilt you impute to them, without returning to the free law of Jesus Christ, inasmuch as their rule and religion, as it appears to me, compel them to the commission of the evils you condemn.

PHRONESIS.

I am pleased to see that you discern so clearly the root of the malice which is in these men. But if you will advance a little further, you will behold the chains of Satan, and see in what numbers they are linked together.

The first of these six abuses is the burdensomeness with which they oppress believers, contrary to the teaching of Christ and of his apostles. Certain it is, that many

thousands of friars, scattered throughout one small province, are covertly more burdensome to that province, than would be a thousand freebooters, who should publicly plunder it. For let it be granted, that there are in England four thousand such friars, and that every one of them annually consumes in his own person a hundred solidi of the goods of the realm, and the same amount in buildings, repairs, and decorations for their cloisters, and it is evident that this sect expends sixty thousand marks of the goods of the realm every year! But what English lord could afford to spend so much as is spent by these friars, who creep into the houses or chambers of the rich, and feast on delicacies? They consume too much of the goods of the realm, who thus obtain their food by robbery; for since their expenses do not fall upon themselves, it is plain that whatever temporal goods they have consumed in our realm belong to the realm. How, therefore, should the retainers of secular lords be other than so poor, and unable to pay them their dues so readily as before, while the friars receive so much from them every year?

In fact, the whole nation would have murmured loudly, if it had been taxed by the kingly power to such an amount, even for a large levy, or for the defence of the kingdom. And it appears wonderful to many, that so great a number of the disciples of Antichrist should thus cunningly subtract the goods of the realm, and obtain, with the consent of the people, a larger sum than the king could obtain in the same time for the defence of the kingdom. Let then the observant concerning the state of the people first consider how it is that the common people, who should give themselves to labour, are of a more feeble complexion, more infirm in health, and more short-lived than formerly. Heaven looks down more sadly on this condition of earthly things, disturbing the seasons, retarding and destroying in every direction the fruits of the earth. Beyond all this, those who serve demand a higher price, are more luxurious, and less trustworthy than they once were. Is not then this scourge, inflicted by God, a punishment sufficiently great for kingdoms, without the addition of a new infliction from the secret fraud of Antichrist? How then can it be said that they follow Christ and his apostles in life and doctrine, by sparing the church?

The second abuse of the friars is, that they shut themselves up, and despising, as we have shown above, the labour enjoined by Paul, live at ease. This appears to be the reason why there are so many more sterile tracts of country in England than in time past.

The third abuse of the friars is their preference of the frivolous inventions belonging to their order to the law and ordinance of Christ. This is a great crime, to the hurt of the church, since it is really no less than blasphemy, to make their own follies, which the devil hath invented, of more weight than the revealed will of Christ. For since the friars are limited in their powers of action and observation, as were also the apostles, it is plain, that in fulfilling in its purity the law and ordinance of Christ, they would be far better occupied than at present. This, therefore, is an inexcusable fault in them, that in letting go the evangelical ordinance they do blasphemously prefer the inventions which have proceeded from their own stupidity; as if they felt disgraced, and would blush to be found following Christ as their patron; and deserting the rule of Christ's order, set up some liar or notorious delinquent in his room. But Christ saith,

“He who shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed before the angels of God.”

The fourth abuse consists in their abandoning the law of the Gospel, concerning brotherly reproof, and faithlessly favouring the devil and the world. For when Christ saith, “Whosoever loveth father, or mother, or brother, or sister, or even his own life, more than me, he is not worthy of me;” the friars nevertheless, on account of their love of themselves, of a corrupt order, or from a regard for individuals, dare not rebuke their brethren, however manifestly they may have sinned against the Gospel; nor do they, on finding a man obstinate in sin, forsake him as a publican, as Christ enjoins, Matt. xviii. Yet they set up a rule, expressly for themselves, that the Gospel commands them, when the interests of their diabolical society are concerned, to correct, or, in the language of the church, to chastise their brethren, often shutting them up, contrary to the law of Christ, in a foul dungeon, and even secretly killing them. Since it is the same thing to love a person, and to love the commandment or law approved by that person, it is plain that the friars, in setting up their beggarly and leprous custom before the law of the Lord, prefer loving these wretched patrons to the love of Christ; where then, I ask, is the rule of charity among the friars?

The fifth abuse is seen in their entire subversion of the order of charity, and in their desiring honours and worldly wealth, more than men themselves; striving after worldly distinctions by such means, and mingling with the world, contrary to the law of Christ: “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.” 2 Tim. ii. For if they flatter men for the sake of honours and worldly gains; are sparing in the inculcation of catholic truth, not setting forth the verity of the Gospel, without deceit, and this both in prosperity and adversity; who can doubt that they are secretly and imperceptibly descending to the infernal lake, as the consequence of looking to exaltation in the world? For the Gospel teaches us not to covet such mastery and preeminence; and that a man should not entangle himself with the affairs of this life. But if the friars act in direct opposition to these commands, and suffer no worldly business to be transacted without their taking part in it, on some pretence or other, who can doubt that the devil works in them, and by their instrumentality involves the whole world in his evil deeds?

The sixth and the worst abuse of the friars consists in their pretended confessions, by means of which they affect, with numberless artifices of blasphemy, that they can purify those whom they confess, and make them clean from all pollution in the eyes of God, through this assumed power of Antichrist,—setting aside the commandments and satisfaction of our Lord. Thus, in their eagerness to participate in the gain of their master the devil, they drag but too many down to hell. For if the conversation of the just is seen to be in heaven, by the uprightness of their rule of life, the contrary shows, beyond a doubt, that the conversation of these friars is in hell—so that they may be said not so much to send men to hell, as to drag them thither. And what is worst of all, they seduce to their ruin in spiritual things those of the people who rashly put faith in them.

XXVIII.

SHOWING HOW THE FRIARS SEDUCE THE KINGDOMS THEY INHABIT.

ALITHIA.

In my opinion you have exposed the artifices of the false brethren satisfactorily, and without undue harshness; but describe more particularly the way in which they seduce the countries they inhabit; for it appears to me, that since they have not leave from their own sovereign to bring ruin on the place wherein they dwell, and do not recognise the king as liege lord of their temporal possessions, they have another lord, namely, Antichrist.

PHRONESIS.

Methinks, in overlooking the pith of the matter,—the good of the soul, you may exert yourself unfaithfully about a merely temporal offscouring. a Yet I am certain that these sects of the friars carry on their machinations to the hurt and prejudice of kingdoms, as though it were their intent to destroy them. For it would amount to the same thing for the friars, if they should, without leave asked or obtained of their respective sovereigns, set up Antichrist, as lord over all the property they possess, both houses and moveables, and make him sovereign of the kingdoms they inhabit. Because, if some iniquitous Antichrist should chance to have under him more friars than a good pope, what is there, except the grace of God, and the strength of the kingdom, to hinder his seizing on the realm of England as his own? For it is said that he has in England treasure ample enough for that purpose. And, as the friars pretend, it would be altogether contrary to reason to put a check upon the power of such an one, so as to prevent his turning to his own purposes those possessions which are made his own by the occupation of the friars. Now this is only an artful introduction to prepare the way for a claim on all the residue of the kingdom.

The believer, therefore, should prudently counsel our sovereign to resist these insidious beginnings. This acting of Satan is seen more plainly in the fact, that the friars are aware that it is against the logic of Scripture they thus utter their falsehoods. For they pretend, in order to make an appearance of sanctity, that they can hold nothing, either as their own individually, or as common property—a ground they cannot defend with effect, unless they admit, at the same time, that they are heretics, and members of the devil—for it is certain, that as they have natural existence, and the goods of nature, so they have in possession many of the goods of fortune. Therefore, if they in truth are possessed of nothing themselves, and yet to so large an extent abuse the possession of others, then they must be plainly members of Satan, on the ground of their possessing, by the pretended grace of Christ, what belongs to others. But if they say that they possess nothing in particular, or in common, in a civil, but only in a gospel sense, it is then certain, *cæteris paribus*, that they imply the civil dominion of the pope, the vicar of Peter, and so that of Christ. And since it is allowable (as they say) for them to exercise dominion in whatever way Christ in his

humanity exercised dominion, it is allowable for them to exercise civil dominion. But why do they impose on the vicar of Peter, and so on Peter himself, such dominion, when neither Peter nor Christ could, in such circumstances, exercise such dominion? Are we to believe that these friars excel Christ, that they thus set Antichrist over kingdoms, and make him lord of lords? If then these friars in words only exclude themselves from this dominion, and confer the thing itself on their father, who they say is next to Christ, of necessity they must either blaspheme Christ, or assert that, in so doing, they subject their father to a spiritual stain and poison.

But leaving this ancient archery, [a](#) which we pass by because of its folly, it appears that the friars have in general intoxicated the kingdom, particularly since the year of our Lord 1072, and especially in their own recent council, held in the time of the earthquake in London. [b](#) For it is credibly reported, and the friars maintain and defend their conduct in this particular, that the more artful among them, and the heads of these orders, by their common council, so successfully drew over many bishops, as to induce them to agree to what implied that our Lord Jesus Christ, and many of his saints now in the highest blessedness, died heretics. Into a greater blasphemy these heretics could not have precipitated themselves. Previously, our bishops are said to have hated the false brethren as they hated Satan, when in the time of the lord bishop of Armagh, we are told they defended that prelate in his controversy with these false orders. But now Herod and Pilate, who were before at variance, are made friends. From this I predict two consequences. First, that inasmuch as this alliance is not founded on the law of our Lord Jesus Christ, it will not stand, but come to an end, to the hurt of one party or the other, since the Christian can have no profitable fellowship with Belial. Secondly, I predict that our bishops and nobles must either desert the doctrines of these false brethren herein, or be involved with them in heresy. For in their first article the friars have determined (as in opposition to heresy) that no part of the substance of the material bread or wine remains after consecration in the sacrament of the altar. Opposed to this (say they) is the manifest heresy—for heresy it is—that the accidents do not remain without the subject, after consecration in this same sacrament. Although I have determined that out of the schools I will not use these terms,—the substance of the material bread or wine, yet my faith compels me to admit the convertibility of the terms in this proposition; for as St. Jerome saith—the bread which Christ took in his hands and brake, is the body of the Lord our Saviour. But I ask, what was that bread? Was it the substance of material bread, or something else unknown? When therefore Christ said that this bread was his body, and these friars deny the same as the height of heresy, it is plain, that, as far as in them lies, they condemn Christ as the worst of heretics. Now since the conditions of such condemnation make it necessary that the party condemning should be the heretical one, it follows plainly, since Christ could not possibly be a heretic, that this sect of the friars is utterly heretical, either in express terms, or by tacit consent. Again, the substance of the body of Christ remains after consecration in the sacrament of the altar, as it behoves the friars to believe; and wheresoever is the substance of the body of Christ, there is the most general genus of substance, and therefore the thing itself remains, after consecration in the sacrament of the altar. And since the thing itself is the substance and quiddity of every special substance whatsoever, it follows, that it is the substance of any material bread or wine whatever; and thus the folly of the condemnation they pronounce is manifest. For it is not inconsistent with this

sacrament, that a crumb of material bread, or a drop of wine, should be received within the pores of this venerable sacrament. Again, as we have often observed, if, according to the definition of these blasphemers, there be in this sacrament an accident without a subject, they should admit that this accident is the sacrament itself; and since an accident cannot be the body of the Lord, they are shut up to the conclusion that the sacrament itself cannot be the body of the Lord. Since Christ says, "This is my body," and displays the bread, as is shown above, it follows that these heretics, in being so expressly contrary to Christ, are blasphemers. Hence it is that many of the faithful devoutly believe, that, as in that other condemnation of Christ by the priests of the old law, (which was less to be reprobated) so in this condemnation of him, there was an unusual shaking of the earth, to expose the deficiency of human testimony against such guilt; for when the members of Christ fail to exclaim against such idiot heretics, the very earth cries out.^a My advice, then, to our bishops, and our seculars, without exception, is, that they expel such men, since these devils would fain seduce by their heresy others who stand firm in the faith.

XXIX.

OF THE FRAUD AND MALICE OF THE FRIARS

ALITHIA.

You have said enough on this subject; you would oblige me, therefore, by proceeding to handle another topic.

PHRONESIS.

The whole body of the faithful should be earnest, both in word and work, for the exposure of this evil, and faithful catholics should destroy it, even to the death, considering, according to the ancient doctrine, that there are three laws to be attended to herein, namely, the law of Christ and his members, the law of the world and of worldly men, and the law of the devil and his sons. The law and practice of the first principle is to return good for evil; the law and practice of the second is to return good for good, and evil for evil; but the law of the third principle, contrary to the law of God, is systematically to return evil for good. Accordingly, these sons of Belial, inasmuch as they so injuriously instruct the bishops and other believers, as a return for the benefits conferred upon them, show themselves manifestly to be devils. Thus it would have been better for them, ere they fell into such idiotic heresies, carefully to have considered what that sacrament is, and what is referred to by the pronoun in the sacramental proposition. But herein their father has bound up his intimations on this subject.

Since, therefore, in this council held on the occasion of the earthquake, they condemned Christ as a heretic, together with the principal doctors of the church, for a thousand years and more approved by the church, it is manifest that they include individual Christians under their sentence of heresy. In the second place, they labour specially, in this same council, to condemn the king of England, his nobles, and

realm, as heretics, and by consequence to dispossess all these lords, and bring into England, Robert Gilbonensis, with his knot of heretical friars. As a means to this end, they artfully assume that it is a most perilous error to assert that temporal lords may at their discretion deprive a delinquent church of temporal possessions, and that subjects may at their discretion correct delinquent lords. Although this second particular is an invention of the friars, they labour assiduously to establish it by sophistry. God, I say, can teach the people so to do—his power is not so weak, but that he could move the people to such a course of conduct; therefore it is possible for subjects to do so. The very persons now subjects, may, by the event of war, and a thousand other chances, become the most powerful of conquerors; while, on the other side, temporal lords may become the most wretched of beggars. How then can it be denied that subjects may inflict correction on guilty lords? Since the commonalty are the creatures of God, as well as friars, and possess in common more efficient words of exhortation, why may they not themselves, with the help of God's grace, rebuke and correct temporal lords? Are the friars desirous of so hardening the lords, that since they themselves are prevented by their father from correcting these lords, and rather make them worse, therefore all their subjects should be compelled to give the poison of the devil to these lords, just as the friars do? Accordingly I have said elsewhere, as to the first part of this doctrine, that the lords temporal have power granted them by God (as appears from Rom. xiii.) to chastise ecclesiastics. It would be a strange thing if lords temporal should have power to change the life of ecclesiastics, by depriving it of its conformity to the poverty of Christ, and not have power to chastise the folly of their delinquency against God?

But supposing the truth of the first part of the conclusion condemned by the friars, and leaving them the solution of that threefold argument with which in their folly they have incumbered the former truth, let us ascertain further in what way they determine that this error is so dangerous. They appear to decide thus without pertinency concerning the whole copulative proposition, unless they have detected error and danger in both parts, and, consequently, have ascertained that both are false. And since temporal lords have commonly to do with the first part, as a matter affecting the safety of their soul, and inasmuch as the supposition of the friars makes such doing an error, they teach herein by implication, that their lords are in this respect commonly guilty of ill-doing: such exercise of power being at the hazard of their soul, and to the hurt of the commonwealth, and peculiar to the sovereignty of the king, it is manifest that the friars impute this error to the king, and to all who assist him in such doing. And since all truth is contained in Holy Writ, this supposed error, which they describe as a falsehood, must of necessity be contrary to some part of Holy Scripture, at least by implication. And since it is so obstinately defended, it is manifest that the friars ought to declare this error an heretical one, and thus pronounce the king and his nobles, in so defending it, to be heretics. In this manner does the folly of these friars, which they account as great prudence, break forth; because, in a matter of faith, they stigmatise one kind of falsity as erroneous, and another as heretical, while the one is as obstinately defended as the other. Let these foolish disciples of Antichrist know, that every dangerous error in a matter of faith is so much clear heresy. Let them know, in the second place, that they cannot refute, and, by consequence, cannot condemn, the first part of this conclusion, which pertains to the regalia of the sovereign; nay, a careful study of their own principles would have taught them not to deny that

temporal lords should be suffered to inflict punishment in such cases. But it is supposed that the friars conceive that there is much danger in conceding such corrective power to them, because in that case they would be loosened from their relation to Satan, and cut off from that brotherhood in which the friars are united with the sons of Belial. This is the result which the friars apprehend as dangerous. It plainly appears, then, in what manner the friars aim treacherously to destroy secular dominion, the king's prerogative, and the whole kingdom.

In what relates to gain, though it may savour of manifest heresy, these men labour without ceasing. But, by the grace of God, the counsel of Ahithophel is brought to nought; for, as members of Satan, the thing which they thought would serve them, they have turned to their own injury both in body and soul: since their diabolical fraud is made the more manifest in every direction by their malice. And especially in this, that they have laboured assiduously, both in London and in Lincoln, to effect the destruction of true priests and poor men, mainly in revenge for their having charitably exposed their artifices to the people. In my opinion, God will not rest until he has inflicted a full penalty on this iniquity. For they say that they follow Christ, especially in his manner of life; but how can Christ, who loved and prayed for his enemies, endeavour to effect the destruction of those faithful men, just because they labour in charity of spirit to be of service to his members? In such conduct, therefore, the friars manifestly show their parentage, and how they endeavour to fulfil the commands of their father, by returning evil for good. Of a truth, of all the sins I have ever marked in the friars, this appears to me, on many grounds, the most iniquitous, for it has proceeded entirely from the unanimous consent and counsel of the friars. With regard to a man seizing the wife of another, and other such sins which men commit, they are of moderate guilt compared with this conduct.

XXX.

WHETHER TEMPORAL LORDS MAY AND SHOULD ASSIST AND DEFEND THEIR PEOPLE AGAINST THE FRIARS.

ALITHIA.

It appears to me that you have exposed the malicious proceedings of the mendicants with sufficient clearness. But tell me, I pray you, whether temporal lords have the power, and are bound to assist and defend the humbler members of the church, consisting of their tenants and the common people, against the friars. To me it appears certain that the friars are heretics, for I see not in what way they can more openly condemn Christ and individual Christians, as heretics, than by condemning this article in their council as heretical,—viz. that special prayers, offered by prelates or the religious for an individual, are of no more benefit to that individual than general prayers, other things being equal. For we believe, on the faith and authority of Christ, that the Lord's prayer in the sixth of Matthew, is far superior to any special prayer; and so we believe in consequence, that this prayer, devoutly poured forth for the

people, does them more service than any prayer which friars or prelates can utter, or have invented, in later times. Is not a supplication, made through Christ, better than the blasphemous supplication which the friars pretend to offer in behalf of such as are willing to give them money? And since the blessed, as the litany leads us to believe, pray for the church militant, it is to be supposed that the prayers of those blessed spirits are far more to be desired by us than the prayers of these friars or prelates. And inasmuch as the blessed, after the manner of Christ, love the people more than any private person, and cannot be turned aside by any such impure influence, it appears to me sufficiently plain that their general prayers avail the church militant more than the special prayers of the friars; for the friars cannot presume to extol themselves above the saints. In this their unbelief, therefore, it appears to me that the friars have condemned, as much as in them lies, both Christ and all the citizens of heaven, and, in consequence, the whole church militant, which sets more value on the Lord's prayer than on these special prayers and frivolous inventions of the mendicants.

PHRONESIS.

I am pleased to find that you expose this undoubted heresy by so shrewd a scrutiny of the conduct of the friars. Nor do I doubt that the decision to which you refer savours of manifest heresy. And the reason why this heresy has thus shot up is obvious; for the friars, by means of such prayers, delude the people as regards God, and despoil them as regards the world. Hence it is that they so greatly magnify these prayers; and that their doctrine may possess the greater weight, and be less open to suspicion of selfish views, they unite themselves with the other religious orders and the bishops. But Christ, and the saints in heaven, these fraudulent personages have forgotten.

On giving further attention to the question you propose, I do not hesitate to affirm, that the temporal lords are bound to assist the humbler members of the church against these false brethren, just as they are bound to defend themselves against the clerks possessioners, as I have before said; for God could not receive from his subject, or confer anything upon him, without the return of a greater blessing. How, then, is it allowable for prelates or lords to receive anything from their subjects, without affording them, in their assistance, an equivalent recompense? For they ought, as far as possible, to follow Christ; but in this respect the false prophets, and all the vicars of Antichrist, boast, diabolically, that they are more free, as regards those subject to them, than is Christ himself. In fact, I see not in what way any one could be a secular tyrant, except by exercising tyranny in the withdrawing or withholding of such assistance; for it is not possible that Christ should withdraw assistance and defence for his people: and how then can these men be said to follow God, who refuse to assist and defend their dependants against their greatest enemy? I do not hesitate to affirm, that a just defence of these men would conduce to the worldly prosperity, the merit, and the everlasting glory of such temporal lords. But if temporal lords are bound to protect their dependants against thieves, robbers, and marauders, yea, and against public enemies, invading the realm in which they dwell, much more are they so bound against false brethren, inasmuch as the evils to be feared in the latter case are the greater. The friars should be especially opposed in that respect, in which they more directly oppose themselves to Christ, and in which temporal lords might, with most ease, moderate the abuse. For there is no necessity, and I do not advise it, that they

should fight with, or kill the friars; but this I certainly do advise,—that men should not foster them in their temporal possessions, under the false pretence of alms, because they will thus, without doubt, occasion the condemnation both of the offenders and themselves. Lords, then, will do well to call to mind, how weighty is their own share of guilt, even though they make not themselves partakers with these hypocrites in their crimes, inasmuch as, according to the Gospel, it is most dangerous thus to have their lot with these deceivers. If it be urged that the temporal lords ought to put faith in them, as in the more holy members of the church militant, I reply with the apostle, that they should not too readily believe every spirit, but should try them, whether they be of God, which a secular man may easily do, since he might easily demand from a friar, on the testimony of his whole sect, under their common seal, what the sacred host is; whereupon, when the friar utters a falsehood, as in such case he is compelled to do, it follows, that having convicted the friar of falsehood, in a matter of faith, he ought wholly to reject him as a man not to be trusted. For they have decreed in their general council, as have their doctors, ever since the time when they first stole their way into Christianity, that this consecrated host is an accident without a subject—in fact, without anything; but if this is the thing they consecrate, they make their heresy obvious at once to the aforesaid lord, since they ought not only to assert, in consequence, that this host cannot be bread, but that it cannot even be the body of Christ.

As I am confident that all the friars in the world cannot show any man, no nor even themselves, what this accident without a subject is, which they thus consecrate and worship, let these lords consider that psalm, wherein the Holy Spirit, through the sainted David, declares that they shall dwell as members in the tabernacle of the church militant, and shall rest after awhile in the church triumphant, on the hill of the church triumphant. In them, the following conditions are fulfilled by reason of their order. First, that they should enter, without spot, on their allotted state of warfare; herein the friars and all simonists are manifestly found wanting. In the second place, that the pilgrim, after his entrance on the state, should carefully execute justice; and among other acts of justice, that of rendering his neighbour spiritual aid is one of the principal, since it is the one work of mercy obligatory on all men. Thirdly, that he be true not in word only, but in thought, as one who speaks truth in his heart; and fourthly, that his tongue be not deceitful in outward conversation. In the fifth place, that he do no wrong to his neighbour, by withholding bodily, or the more important spiritual aid. Sixthly, that he should not receive or believe calumnies uttered against others, whatever be the nature of the accusation; herein those who do not receive calumnies against their neighbours, are such as do not foster such as are in the habit of detraction; and since this is a sin of which the friars are in general guilty, all believers should beware, lest they become partakers with them in such guilt. In the seventh place, this lord, or faithful Christian, whoever he may be, is acquainted with the times, and aware that he should, as far as requisite, bring to nought every malignant in his convent;^a for in doing the things he does, that man is a traitor to God. In the eighth place, he should duly extol and honour his brother, who doeth justice fearlessly and constantly, and who hath a filial fear of God.

Now let not the friars longer declare us wanting in charity, because we take up such language against these sects, for Christ, I am certain, was not wanting in charity; and

yet he himself, as appears in Matt. xxiii., rebuked the sect of the Pharisees with the utmost sharpness, and not only imprecated upon them an eightfold woe or prophecy, but brought about its effectual fulfilment against them. For Christ, to magnify his own sect, which he purposed to make sufficient in himself, resolved to destroy all those sects of a private religion,—the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. And hence Christ, through his apostle, in Titus i., thus teaches us to love ourselves: “There are,” saith he, “many unruly and vain talkers, and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision; whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.” It follows, for this reason, then, that as many as are sound in the faith, should severely rebuke them. I have no doubt but that our private religious, in their unbelief, put as high a value on their own adulterous signs, as on the fruit of the faith set forth in the Gospel commandments. Nor doubt I, but that they are, systematically, vain talkers, seducers of the simple people. These men are wedded to their signs, as the unbelievers, at the time of the introduction of the law of grace, were wedded to their circumcision. I am sure, too, that these friars subvert both the temporal and spiritual houses of the temporal lords, teaching things apocryphal and ridiculous, for the sake of gain. Therefore, since their mouths must be stopped, they ought, according to the apostolic command, to be sternly refuted; and since they fluctuate so greatly in their faith, we ought to endeavour, by our rebukes, to establish them in it. If we slothfully refrain from doing these things, we fail to exercise Christian charity towards the church, nay, towards these sects themselves,—in my view, a damnable neglect, and an open betrayal of the ordinance of Christ.

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Part III.

A TREATISE OF JOHN WYCLIFFE

AGAINST THE ORDERS OF FRIARS.

The following Treatise “Against the Orders of Begging Friars,” and the next, intitled “A Complaint to the King and Parliament,” were printed in Oxford in 1608, edited by Dr. James; and they are now reprinted from that volume.

AGAINST THE ORDERS OF FRIARS.

CHAPTER I.

FRIARS’ ORDERS PERFECTER THAN CHRIST’S.

First *friars* say, that their religion, founded of sinful men, is more perfect than that religion or order the which Christ himself made, that is both God and man. For they say, that each bishop and priest may lawfully leave their first dignity, and after be a *friar*; but when he is once a *friar*, he may in no manner leave that, and live as a bishop, or a priest, by the form of the Gospel. But this heresy says, that Christ lacked wit, might, or charity, to teach apostles and his disciples the best religion. But what man may suffer this foul heresy to be put on Jesus Christ? Christian men say, that the religion and order that Christ made for his disciples and priests is most perfect, most easy, and most siker. *a* Most perfect, for this reason, for the patron or founder thereof is most perfect, for he is very God and very man, that of most wit, and most charity, gave this religion to his dear worth friends. Also the rule thereof is most perfect, since *b* the Gospel in his freedom, without error of man, is rule of this religion. Also knights *c* of this religion be most holy, and most perfect. For Jesus Christ and his apostles be chief knights thereof, and after them, holy martyrs and confessors. It is most easy and light; for Christ himself says, that “*his yoke is soft, and his charge is light,*” since it stands all in love and freedom of heart, and bids nothing but reasonable thing, and profitable for the keeper thereof. It is most siker; *a* for it is confirmed of God, and not of sinful men, and no man may destroy it, or dispense there against; but if the pope, or any man, shall be saved, he must be confirmed thereby, and else he shall be damned. But men say, that other new orders and rules be nought worth but if they be confirmed of the pope, and other sinful men, and then they be not worth but if they be confirmed of the devil, and in case the pope shall be damned, for then he is a devil, as the Gospel says of *Judas*; and thus men say, that Christ’s religion, in his own cleanness and freedom, is more perfect than any sinful man’s religion, by as much as Christ is more perfect than is any sinful man. And if new religious say, that they keep all that Christ’s religion bids, they spare the soth, *b* for they lack the freedom and measure of Christ’s religion, and be bound to errors of sinful men, and thereby be

letted *c* to profit to Christian men's souls, and not suffered to teach freely God's law, nor keep it in themselves. For by the first and most *d* commandment of God, they be holden *to love God of all their heart, and all their life, of all their mind, and all their strength, and their neighbours as themselves;* but who may do more than this? then may no man keep more than Christ's religion bids. And so if this new religion of *friars* be more perfect than Christ's religion, then, if *friars* keep well this religion, they be more perfect than Christ's apostles, and else they be apostates; and if men be apostates, they leave the better order, and take another less perfect. And the order of Christ in his cleanness and freedom is most perfect, and so it seems that all these *friars* be apostates.

CHAPTER II.

FRIARS HINDER THE FREE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

Also *friars* say, plainly, that it is apostasy and heresy for a priest to live as Christ ordained a priest to live by form of the Gospel. For if there be any *friar* that is a priest, cunning in God's law, and able to travel to sow God's word among the people; if he do this office freely, going from country to country, where he may most profit, and cease not, for *prior* nor any other satrap, *a* and charge not singular habit, and beg not, but be paid with common meat and drink, as Christ and his apostles were, they will pursue him as apostate, and draw him to prison and say, that he is cursed for this deed. For if this free going about, and free preaching, is lawful to such a *friar*, since it is ensampled and commanded of Christ, and not to be closed in a cloister, as it were Caym's *b* castle; and so *friars* should be needed to leave this living of cloister, and feigned obedience, by singular profession, and to dwell among the people to whom they may most profit ghostly. For charity should drive *friars* to come out amongst the people, and leave Caym's castle, that be so needless and chargeous *c* to the people; since they cannot occupy themselves so well in such solitary life and contemplation, as couthen *d* Christ and John Baptist. And to this same Christ ordained all his apostles and disciples, to live an open good life, in meekness and wilful poverty, and discreet penance, to teach busily his Gospel to the people, and not to be closed in great cloisters, and costly as Caym's castles. And it seems an open doing of Antichrist, not to suffer priests freely to do this office of Christ, but need them, upon pain of prisoning, to be ruled in this, after the will of a simple idiot, and, in case, a damned devil of hell; and so there leaves no means to hold these sects together; but if it be this blasphemy to prison a man for as much as he does after the will of God. And thus this new profession is harmful for many skilles. *e* For it is not ensampled of Christ, nor any of his apostles, and so taught us all that was needful and profitable. Also this profession serves of nought; but if it be to make fools do more after the errors of sinful men, than after the commandment of God; for by virtue of Christ's teaching, each man is holden to do after each other, inasmuch as he teacheth Christ's commandment or counsel, and more may no man bind another. Also Christ gave his disciples power of each work, that turns to profit of their souls, and help of other men; and this freedom is letted *f* by this profession made to sinful men, and, in case, to fiends of hell. But here men will not destroy *friars*, nor flee them, nor curse them, but

destroy their errors, and save the persons, and bring them to that living that Christ ordained priests to live in; for that is algats^g the best, to the most worship of God, to most profit of holy church, and to *friars* also. But what man should not help thereto upon all his power, wit, and will?

CHAPTER III.

A MAN ONCE PROFESSED TO THEIR RELIGION MAY NEVER LEAVE IT.

Also *friars* say, that if a man be once professed to their religion, he may never leave it, and be saved; though he be never so unable thereto, for all the time of his life; and they will need him to live in such a state ever more, to which God makes him ever unable; and so need him to be damned. Alas! out on such heresy, that man's ordinance is holden to be stronger than is the ordinance of God. For if a man enter into the new religion against man's ordinance, he may lawfully forsake it; but if he enter against God's ordinance, when God makes him unable thereto, he shall not be suffered by Antichrist's power to leave it. And if this reason were well declared, since no man wote^a which man is able to this new religion by God's donee,^b and which is not able, no man should be constrained to hold forth this new sect: and thus this new religion may not last, but if it be by this blasphemy to constrain a man unable by God's donee^b to hold this new sect, and suffer him not to come to freedom of Christ's order.

CHAPTER IV.

NO PREACHING WITHOUT LICENCE OF THEIR SOVEREIGN, HOW BAD SOEVER.

Also *friars* say, if a man be professed to their holy order, he shall not preach freely and generally the Gospel of Christian men, without licence of his sovereign, for virtue of obedience, be his sovereign never so cursed a man of life, and uncunning^c of God's law, and enemy to Christian men's souls, and, in case, a foul devil of hell; though this man professed having received of God never so much cunning of God's law, and power, and will to work after this cunning—and so this man shall needs be damned for misspending of God's treasure. For since God's law says, that he is out of charity that helps not his brother with bodily alms, if he may be in his need; much more is he out of charity that helps not his brother's soul with teaching of God's law, when he sees him run to hell, yea, by ignorance. And thus to magnify and maintain these rotten sects, they neden^a a man by hypocrisy, false teaching, and strong pains, to break God's hests,^b and lease^c charity. Out on this false heresy, and tyranny of Antichrist, that men be needed strongly to keep more his laws, and obey more to them than to Christ's commandments ever rightful!

CHAPTER V.

THE LAWFULNESS OF BEGGING MAINTAINED BY FRIARS.

Also *friars* say and maintain that begging is lawful, the which is damned both in the Old Testament and in the New. For in the fifth book of Holy Writ, God says to his people, *Algate* *da* *needy man and beggar shall not be amongst you.* Also the Holy Ghost taught Solomon to pray these two things of God: *God make vanity and leasing* *ewords far from me, and give not to me begging or beggingness: but give only things that be* *nef* *needfull for my livelode; gin* *anter* *lest I fulfilled be drawn to renaye, and say, Who is the Lord? as who say, I know no Lord: and lest I be compelled, and made of force by neediness to steal and to forswear the name of my God.* Also the wise man says, *It is a wicked or wayward life, to seek these berowgh* *ifrom house to house; and he shall not do trustily, there he shall be harboured, and he shall not open his mouth.* Also Christ bids his apostles and disciples, *that they should not bear a satchel, nor scrip, but look what meynes* *ki* *s able to hear the Gospel, and eat and drink therein, and pass not thence, and not pass from house to house.* Luke ix. x. Also *S. Paul* laboured or travailed with his hands for him, and for men that were with him, (Acts Apostles), and coveted neither gold, nor silver, nor clothes, of men that he taught, to give other teachers ensample to do the same in time of need; and *S. Peter* fished after Christ's resurrection. (John xxi.) Also *S. Paul* bids that men that will live in idleness and curiosity, and not travail, should not eat. (2 Thess.) Also *S. Clement* ordained that Christians should not beg openly. And for to put away this begging, *S. Austin* makes two books how *monks* ought to travail with their hands for their livelode. *a* And the same teaches *Benet* to his *monks*, and *S. Bernard* to his *friars*. And *Jerome* says, that *monks* should travail with their hands, not only for need, but rather to exclude idleness and vanity. For in state of innocency God ordained man to travail, and afterward in the state of sin, God gave this labour to man for his penance. Then since each open begging is thus sharply damned in Holy Writ, it is a foul error to maintain it; but it is more error to say that Christ was such a beggar; for then he must have been contrary to his own law: but it is most error to continue in this damned begging, and rob thus against charity the poor people, and make them to believe that Christ was such a beggar, and that this begging is well done.

CHAPTER VI.

FRIARS DRAW ALL ALMS FROM POOR AND NEEDY MEN, TO MAINTENANCE OF THEIR SINFUL AND SUPERFLUOUS ORDER.

Also *friars* say, that it is needful to leave the commandment of Christ, of giving alms to poor feeble men, to poor crooked men, to poor blind men, and to bed-ridden men, and give alms to hypocrites, that fain them holy and needy, when they be strong in body, and have over much riches, both in great waste houses, and precious clothes, in

great feasts and many jewels and treasure; and thus they slay poor men with their false begging, since they take falsely from their worldly goods, by which they should sustain their bodily life, and deceive rich men in their alms, and maintain or comfort them to live in falseness against Jesus Christ. For since there were poor men enough to take men's alms, before that *friars* came in, and the earth is now more barren than it was, our *friars* or poor men mought^b want of this alms: but *friars*, by subtle hypocrisy get to themselves and let^c the poor men to have this alms.

CHAPTER VII.

TRADITIONS OF FRIARS PREFERRED BEFORE CHRIST'S COMMANDMENTS.

Also *friars* charge more breaking of their own traditions, than the breaking of the commandments of God. For a *friar* shall more be punished for breaking of one of them, than for breaking of God's hests.^a For breaking of God's hests is not charged of them, and in this they show how they love their own worship more than God's, and thus they take to themselves the worship that is appropriate to God, and so be blasphemers and heretics, and so they charge more their bodily habit than charity and other virtues. For if a *friar* leave bodily habit to the which he is not bound by God's law, he is holden apostate, and sharply pursued, sometime to prison, and sometime to the death, although he serve better God without his habit, than therein: but though he trespass against charity by impatency, and false leasings, or pride, or covetousness, it is little or nought charged; but rather praised, if it bring them worldly muck.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRIARS GREAT HYPOCRITES, AS POOR AS CHRIST IN SHOW, AS SUMPTUOUS AS LORDS AND PRELATES IN DEED.

Also *friars* feign them as hypocrites, to keep straitly the Gospel and poverty of Christ and his apostles; and yet they are most contrary to Christ and his apostles, in hypocrisy, pride, and covetousness. For they show more holiness in bodily habit, and other signs, than did Christ and his apostles, and for their singular habit or holiness, they presume to be even with prelates and lords, and more worthy than other clerks; and in covetousness they can never make an end, but by begging, by queething,^a by burying, by salaries, and trentals,^b and by shricing,^c by absolutions and other false means, cry ever after worldly goods, where Christ used none of all these; and thus for this stinking covetousness, they worship the fiend as their God.

CHAPTER IX.

THEIR STEALING OF CHILDREN AND ENTICING OF THEM TO THEIR ORDER.

Also *friars* draw children from Christ's religion into their private order, by hypocrisy, leasings, *d* and stealing. For they tell that their order is more holy than any other, and that they shall have higher degree in bliss, than other men that be not therein, and say that men of their order shall never come to hell, but shall deem *e* other men with Christ at dooms-day: and so they steal children from father and mother, sometimes such as be unable to the order, and sometimes such as should sustain their father and mother by commandment of God. And thus they be blasphemers, taking upon them full counsel in doutouse *f* things, that be not expressly commanded nor forbidden in Holy Writ; since such counsel is appropriated *g* to the Holy Ghost. And thus they be therefore cursed of God, as the Pharisees were cursed of Christ, to whom he says thus: *Woe be to you, scribes and Pharisees, that be writers of law, and men of singular religion, that compass about the water and the land to make a man of your religion, and when he is made of your religion, ye make him double more a child of hell.* And since he that steals an ox or a cow is damnable by God's law and man's also: much more he that steals a man's child, that is better than all earthly goods, and draws him to the less perfect order. And though this singular order were more perfect than Christ's, yet he wrote never whether it be to damnation of the child, for he wot not to what state God hath ordained him, and so blindly they did against Christ's ordinance.

CHAPTER X.

CURATES DEFRAUDED OF THEIR DUTIES BY MEANS OF FRIARS.

Also *friars*, for pride and covetousness, draw from curates their office and sacraments, in which lie winning *a* or worship, and so make dissension betwixt curates and their ghostly children. *Friars* draw to them confession and burying of rich men by many subtil means, and masspence, and trentals; *b* but they will not come to poor men's dirge, nor receive them to be buried amongst them. And they cry fast that they have more power in confession than other curates; for they may thrive *c* all that come to them. But curates may no farther than their own parishes. But curates say, that since they shall answer before God for the souls of their sogettis, *d* they will know their life; and *friars* say it is no need, for they have more power than the curate; and thus dissension and hate is made betwixt curates and their children, and pride and covetousness of *friars* is cause of all this and many other sins: and thus, for they make discord among Christian men, they be hated and cursed of God Almighty.

CHAPTER XI.

FRIARS COME IN UNDER THE NAME OF SAINTS, AND FORSAKE THE RULE.

Also *friars* come in under the name of *saints*, and forsake the saints' rule, and live and put their own errors to the saints; and so slander both them and God. For if men speak of *Francis*, he used and taught much meekness, poverty, and penance: and Minors now use the contrary. For they make statutes of their own will, and then they keep fast, and make men to weene that *Francis* made them. But preachers say that *Dominic* founded them, and then he kept *Austin's* rule, since he was a canon before; for else he was apostate, if *Austin's* rule were good. But *Austin* would algats^a sue^b the apostles' living, and preachers do even the contrary. And *friar Austin's* founded then on *Austin* the great doctor; but his rule speaks not of *friars*, and so they be grounded on leasings,^c for they have no patron saint. And of the *Carmes*^d know men neither founder nor rule, and so the *friars* that have founders do against their founders' teaching, and Christ's also, and colour their own wicked laws under name of these saints, and so be grounded on leasings, and slander their patrons and Christ also. And other *friars* that have no patrons live after themselves, and put their errors on saints, and so slander them and Christ; and so hypocrisy reigns, and sin is maintained by colour of holiness.

CHAPTER XII.

PERSECUTION OF TRUE PRIESTS BY FALSE FRIARS.

Also *friars* pursue true priests, and lettene^e them to preach the Gospel, notwithstanding that Christ enjoined priesthood and preaching of the Gospel, and so they depart that thing that God joined together, and so (as much as in them is) they foredene^f God's ordinance, and so they harm Christian men more cruelly than the sultan of Saracens, for they be near and more malicious. For since Christ charges all his priests to preach truly the Gospel, and they pursue them for this deed, yea to the fire, they will slay priests, for they do God's bidding, and therefore they be man-slayers, and irregular, and cursed of God. For they letteng^g his people to be saved, and so need them to be damned. And since the principal point and end of Christ's dying and his passion, was to save man's soul, and the principal work of Satan is to leese^h man's soul, they be traitors to Christ, and angels of Satan transformed into angels of light, and cruel traitors of all men.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPPED FRIARS SERVED AS LORDS OR KINGS AT TABLE.

Also capped *friars*, that be called masters of divinity, have their chamber and service as lords or kings, and send out idiots full of covetousness, to preach not the Gospel, but chronicles, fables, and leesings,^a to please the people, and to rob them. ^A^b what cursedness is this, to a dead man, as to the world, and pride and vanity thereof, to get him a cap of masterdom by prayer of lords, and great gifts, and making of huge feasts, of a hundred and many hundred pounds, and then be idle from teaching of God's law; but if it be seldom before lords and ladies, or great gatherings, for name of the world, and then to leave their poverty and simpleness that he is bound to, and devour poor men's alms in waste, and feasting of lords and great men, and so give slander to his brother, and other men to live in pride and covetousness, gluttony and idleness, and leave the service of God as though they were exempt from all gods; and yet forfending^c of these covetous fools, that become limitors, go much simony, envy, and much foul merchandise; and who can best rob the poor people by false begging, and other deceits, shall have this *Judas*' office; and so a nest of Antichrist's clerks is maintained by subtle cauteles^d of the fiend.

CHAPTER XIV.

GREAT FLATTERERS OF THE PEOPLE, NEITHER REPROVING NOR REMOVING THEIR SINS FROM AMONG THEM.

Also *friars* show not to the people their great sins stably, as God bids, and namely to mighty men of the world, but flatter them, and glozen,^e and nourish them in sin. And since it is the office of a preacher to show men their foul sins and pains therefore, and *friars* take this office, and do it not, they be cause of damnation of the people. For in this they be foul traitors to God and eke^a to the people, and they be nurses of the fiend of hell. For by flattering and false behests^b they let men live in their lusts, and comfort them therein, and sometimes they pursue other true preachers, for they will not gloze^c mighty men, and comfort them in their sins, but will sharply tell them the sothe;^d and thus mighty men hire by great costs a false traitor, to lead them to hell. And ensample men may take how *friars* suffer mighty men, from year to year, to live in avowtrie,^e and covetousness, and extortious doing, and many other sins. And when men be hardened in such great sins, and will not amend them, *friars* should flee their homely company; but they do not thus, lest they lose worldly friendship, favour, or winning; and thus for the money they sell men's souls to Satan.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW MUCH AND HOW OFT THEY DECEIVE AND
COZEN THE LAY PEOPLE BY THEIR LETTERS OF
FRATERNITY.

Also *friars*, by letters of fraternity, deceive the people in faith, rob them of temporal goods, and make the people to trust more in dead parchment, sealed with leasings,*f* and in vain prayers of hypocrites, that in case be damned devils, than in the help of God, and in their own good living. Commonly these letters be powdered with hypocrisy, covetousness, simony, blasphemy, and other leasings.*f* With hypocrisy; for therein be told without end many good deeds, and sometimes be false, and more to show them holy to get worldly goods, than to save men's souls. With covetousness; for they do this to win the penny, for a poor man that may not give them, be he never so true to God, shall not have them; but a rich, be he never so cursed, shall have such letters; and weans*g* that he is sicker*h* enough thereby, do he never so much wrong to poor men. With simony; for they sell this supernal good for temporal goods, and that unskilfully for such chaffering and granting of letters was never ensampled of Christ, nor his apostles, and yet they loved best men's souls. With blasphemy; for these sinful wretches take upon them the dealing of good deeds, but this thing is appropriate to God, and so they be blasphemers; for they pass bishops, popes, and eke*a* God himself. For they grant no pardon, but if men be contrite and shriven,*b* and of merit of Christ's passion, and other saints, but *friars* make no mention neither of contrition, nor shrift;*c* nor of merit of Christ's passion, but only of their own good deeds. And so Christ grants to no sinful man continuing in his sin such part; but *friars* grant rather to cursed men for worship or winning than to good poor men. And thus falsely they pass Christ. For Christ would not grant to his cousins part of his kingdom, but if they would suffer passion as Christ did; but *friars* will make men heirs in the bliss of heaven, since they grant men part of their good deeds after this life, and they may not have their part, but if they should be saved. But Christian belief teaches, that all men in charity be procurers by grant of God of all meedful*d* deeds. Why then grant *friars* this part, for they will have property of ghostly goods where no property may be, and leave property of worldly goods where Christian men may have property? And thus they teach the people that it is more meedful*d* to give such hypocrites bodily alms, than to give it to poor needy men after the Gospel. And thus they deceive the people in belief, and rob them of temporal goods, and make them too reckless of their own good living for trust of these false letters.

CHAPTER XVI.

FRIARS PERVERT THE RIGHT FAITH OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR, BY MAKING IT TO BE AN ACCIDENT WITHOUT SUBJECT.

Also *friars* pervert the right faith of the sacrament of the altar, and bring in a new heresy. For when Christ says that the bread that he brake and blessed is his body, they say it is an accident without subject, or nought. And when Holy Writ says openly that this sacrament is bread that we break, and God's body; they say that it is neither bread, nor God's body, but accident without subject, and nought. And thus they leave Holy Writ, and take new heresy on Christ and his apostles, and on *Austin*, *Jerome*, *Ambrose*, *Isidore*, and other saints, and the court of Rome, and all true Christ-men, that hold the faith of the Gospel. For Christ says, that "This bread is my body." And *St. Paul* says, *The bread that we break is the communication* of the Lord's body; and *St. Austin* says, that that thing that we see is bread; but as to faith fully taught, the bread is Christ's body. *Ambrose* says that thing that is bread, shall be Christ's body. *Jerome* says, that that bread which Christ brake and gave to his disciples, is the body of our Saviour; for Christ says, "This is my body." *Berengary*, by approving of the court of Rome, says thus: "I acknowledge with heart and with mouth, that the bread that is laid on the altar is not only the sacrament but very Christ's body." Ah, Lord! what hardy devil durst teach these *friars* to deny thus openly Holy Writ, and all these saints, and the court of Rome, and all true Christian men, and to find this heresy, that this sacred host is accident without subject or nought? Since this is not taught openly in Holy Writ, and reason and wit is against this, and *Austin* in three or four great books says expressly, that none accident may be without subject; and all wise philosophers accord here with *Austin*; Lord, what would move Christ all-mighty, all-witty, and well willing, to hide this belief of *friars* by a thousand years, and never to teach his apostles, and so many saints the right belief; but to teach first these hypocrites, that come never into the church, till the foul fiend Satan was unbound? Hereby should all Christian men know the *friars'* heresy, and not receive them into their houses, before that they confessed under their general seal, the right belief of Christian men, and had forsaken their old heresy.

CHAPTER XVII.

THEIR EXCESS IN BUILDING OF GREAT CHURCHES AND COSTLY HOUSES AND CLOISTERS.

Also *friars* build many great churches, and costly waste houses and cloisters, as it were castles, and that without need, where thorough parish churches, and common ways be paired, and in many places undone. And so they teach in deed that men should have heritage and dwelling city in earth, and forget heaven against *St. Paul*. For by this new housing of *friars*, though it rain on the altar of the parish church, the blind people are so deceived, that they will rather give to waste houses of *friars* than

to parish churches, or to common ways, though men, cattle, and beasts, be perished therein. Before that *friars* came in, there were more people, and the earth more plenteous, and there were churches enough. What skill *a* is it now to make so much cost in new building, and let old parish churches fall down? And if men say that in these great churches God is fair served; certes *b* great houses make not men holy, and only by holiness is God well served. For in heaven that was so fair *Lucifer* served God untruly, and so did *Adam* in paradise. And *Jesus* says, that the great temple of Jerusalem, that was a house of prayer, and sometimes God's house, was made a den of thieves, for covetous preachers dwelt therein. But *Job* served God full well on the dunghill, and so did Adam out of paradise, and Christ before when he prayed in hills and deserts, and baptized eke *c*. And therefore Christ and his apostles made no great churches nor cloisters; but went from country to country, preaching the Gospel and teaching men to do their alms to poor men, and not to waste houses. For Christ taught men to pray in spirit and truth, that is in good-will, and devotion, and holy living. And to destroy this hypocrisy, he ordained the temple of Jerusalem should be destroyed for sin done therein.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FRIARS TEACHING THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE CONTRARY TO GOD'S LAW.

Friars also destroy obedience of God's law, and magnify singular obedience made to sinful men, and in case to devils, which obedience Christ ensampled never, neither in himself nor in his apostles. For by teaching of *St. Paul*, each man ought to be subject to other in the dread of Christ, that is, inasmuch as he teaches them God's will, and no man should obey more to any man. And ever the more that a man were, the more should he thus meek *d* himself, as Christ did, to all his apostles. But *friars* tell nought by this obedience; but if they make singular profession to sinful fools, that many times teach and command them against God's will, and say that in such things as be not expressly commanded, nor forfended *e* in God's law, they should algats *f* do after their sovereigns; yea, though it be unwittingly against God's will: and since it is appropriated *g* to the Holy Ghost to give full counsel in such points, they make their sinful *priars* even with the Holy Ghost. And where they should be governed in such doubty *h* points by the Holy Ghost, they leave his counsel and ruling many times and take them to the ruling of a sinful fool, and in case a damned fiend in hell. And thus they leave obedience that Christ taught and ensampled as imperfect and not sufficient, and praise more feigned obedience to sinful fools, that they take of their own presumption, as if such fools had found more perfect obedience than ever did Christ, God and man.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THEY FORSAKE THE PERFECTION OF THEIR ORDER FOR WORLDLY RESPECTS.

Also *friars* forsake perfection of their order for worship of the world, and covetousness, and be not suffered to take the freedom of the Gospel for to preach God's word to the people. For *friars* be made bishops, yea, many times by simony, and swear strongly to go and preach and convert heathen men, and leave this ghostly office, and be suffragans in *England* and rob men by extortions, as in punishing of sin for money, and suffering men to lie in sin, from year to year, for an annual rent; and so in hallowing of churches and churchyards and altars; and commonly all other sacraments for money. And thus these *friars* bishops live commonly ever after in simony, pride, and robbery, and thus they be exempt by *Caiaphas'* bishopric from all good observances of God's law, and of their own order, and be free to live in sin, and to rob our land and envenom it with many cursings. And so they bear out first the gold of our land to aliens, and sometimes to our enemies, to get of Antichrist this false exemption, and ever after live in robbing of poor men, and maintain much sin, cursing, and simony, that is passing heresy. And other bishops of them that have dioceses in this land, forsake poverty, and penance, and obedience: for they look to be masters of all *friars* of that order in this land, and to live in pride, lusts of their flesh, idleness, and spoiling of the people, more subtilly than other. And thus a *friar* shall dwell in courts of lords and ladies to be their confessor, and not displease them for nothing, though they live in never so cursed sins, for to live in his lusts and to get falsely muck to Antichrist's convent, and let a poor men of their alms, and thereto he shall have leave and commandment upon virtue of obedience: but he shall no leave have to go generally about in the world, and preach truly the Gospel without begging, and live an open, poor, and just life as Christ and his apostles did. For this were destroying of their feigned order; and therefore they love more pride, covetousness, and lusts of their own flesh, than the worship of God and heale a of man's soul. And thus they make sacrifice to *Lucifer*, to mammon, and to their own stinking belly.

CHAPTER XX.

THEIR ROTTEN HABIT ESTEEMED ABOVE CHRIST'S BODY.

Also *friars* praise more their rotten habit, than the worshipful body of our *Lord Jesus Christ*. For they teach lords, and namely ladies, that if they die in *Francis'* habit they shall never come in hell for virtue thereof; and certes b this is an open heresy damning all that trust thus into their lives' end. But a man may have the sacrament of the altar, and that is very God's body, in his mouth, and straight flee to hell without end; and the more be damned for the evil taking of this sacrament. Such heretics be unable to be amongst Christian men.

CHAPTER XXI.

FRIARS BEG WITHOUT NEED, WHEN THE POOR WANT, WITHOUT REMORSE.

Also *friars* beg without need for their own rich sect, and not for their poor bed-ridden men that may not go and have no man to send for their lifelode; *c* but rather draw rich men's alms from such poor men. And therefore charity is outlawed among them, and so is God: and leasings, *d* and covetousness and fiends be inhabited among them; for they deceive men in their alms to make costly houses, not to harbour poor men, but lords and mighty men; and teach men to suffer God's temple, that be poor men, to perish for default; and thus they be traitors to God, and his rich people whom they deceive in their alms, and manquellers *a* of poor men, whose lifelode they take away from them by false leasings, and therefore they be irregular before God, and despise him, and harm the people when they say mass or matins in this cursed life, as Holy Writ teaches, and *Austin* and *Gregory* declare fully.

CHAPTER XXII.

FRIARS REPROVE NOT THEIR BRETHREN AS THE GOSPEL WILLETH, BUT AS THEMSELVES WILL.

Friars also keep not correction *b* of the Gospel against their brethren that trespass, but cruelly doom them to painful prison; but this is not the meek suing *c* of Jesus Christ; for he and his apostles imprisoned not sinful men in this life, but sharply reprov'd their sin, and at the last, when they would not amend them, taught good men not to commune with them. But these *friars* show their tyranny at the full: who so knew well their pains and torments: and it seems no wisdom, nor profit, to give *friars* power to prison men. For when the king by his officers prisons a man, that is commonly done for great and open trespass, and that is good warning to other misdoers, and some profit comes of the king's ministers; but when *friars* prison their brethren, the pain is not known to men, though the sin were never so open and slanderous, and that does harm to other liege men, and profit of king's ministers is away. And when the potestates *d* of *friars* be proud, covetous, and sinful, and hate the truth, they will soon prison true men that reprove their sins, and spare other shrews *e* that they may flatter them and maintain them in their sin; and so beside the king's leave torment true men, for they would do God's hests: *f* and since the king grants occasion thereto, the king is holden to revoke and let *friars* prisoning, lest he be guilty of the sin that comes thereby, since he may destroy it, and does not: and thus did beggars *friars* leap up to king's power, and many times more than the kings dare do, and make the king the fiend's tormentor to prison true men, for they say the truth. And so the king stops God's law to be known in his land, and nourishes evil men, and prisons good. For this dread and many more should the king revoke this prisoning, and make clerks be ruled after the Gospel by simpleness and holy living.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FRIARS LAWLESS BEGGING THE KING AND THE MIGHTY ONES OF THE LAND TO MAINTAIN THEIR SECT, BEGGING THEIR ALMS, AND BEGGARING THE WHOLE LAND.

Also *friars* make our land lawless; for they lead clerks and namely rule prelates, and lords, and ladies, and commons also; and they be not ruled by God's law, nor laws of the church, nor laws of the king. For they glozea God's law as they like, and be exempt from bishops and other ordinaries, and lead the bishops of Rome as they like. And men say they be not liege men to the king, nor subject to his laws. For though they steal men's children, it is said there goes no law upon them, and that seems well; for they rob the king's liege men by false begging of sixty thousand marks by year, as men doubt reasonably, and yet they be not punished therefore. And the lawless *friars*, by their false ruling, make our land lawless; for they letb clerks, lords, and commons, to know the truth of Holy Writ, and make them to pursue true men to the death, for they teach the commandments of God, and cry to the people the foul sins of false *friars*. And thus falseness is maintained, and false men be raised to great estates, and truth is put on back, and true men be pursued, yea to prisoning, to loss of all their goods, and to sharp judgment, for as much as they would destroy sin that was openly and cursedly done, and in point for to foredoc our land. And of this ruling be *friars* most guilty, for they lead prelates, lords, and ladies, justices, and other men by confession, and tell them not speedily their sins. For if they tell them their sins, and they would not amend them, the *friars* that be their confessors should lead them up as *Christ* and *Paul* teach; but they do not thus, for then they should leesed winning and favour of the world. And thus for love of money and welfare of their body, they lead our land out of the law of God and all righteousness.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRIARS NO PEACE-MAKERS, BUT MAKE-BATES, STRIVERS THEMSELVES, AND STIRRERS UP OF OTHERS TO WARS AND DISSENSIONS.

Also *friars* be irregular procurators of the fiend, to make and maintain wars on Christian men, and enemies of peace and charity. For *friars* counsel and openly preach that men should flee to heaven without pain, if they would go and slay in their own person, or maintain and find one at their cost, to slay Christian men. And the end was to make Christ's vicar most rich to the world; the which vicar should be most poor, suinga in this most highly Christ and his apostles: but Christ died to make peace and charity, and if men might thus freely grant pardon, they should, yea to leeseb their own life, grant pardon to make peace. Yet they preach not pardon nor meedc to make peace and charity; and yet they be bound of God to make men sikerd to have the bliss of heaven if they will truly procure for peace and charity. But of the pardon that men

used to gain from the court of *Rome*, they have no sikerness^e by Holy Writ, nor reason, nor ensample of Christ, of his apostles. And so of other wars and debates that friars might let, ^fif they would; and since they do not, but rather counsel thereto, and comfort men therein, and tell not the perils of them, they be cause and procurators of all wars, and specially of this war in Flanders; for they preached that and had it forth against the king, the duke, and other lords and clerks, and sharply pursued priests that stood by charity, and profit of the realm. And so they were then above the king, lords, and true priests, and robbed the king's liege men by false leasing^g of many thousand pounds, that though the king should now be taken, and our land now conquered or destroyed, the king might not raise so much to help himself and his land. And certes^h there was treason to God and the king, and false deceit of all men, both of cattle and of fowl, and lettingⁱ and destroying of peace and of charity.

CHAPTER XXV.

JUDAS'S CHILDREN SELLING CHRIST, AND ALL FOR MONEY.

Friars also be *Iscariot's* children, betraying true men of the Gospel, and so *Christ* for money; and for money they send souls to Satan, by example of their evil living, by counsel to wars, and nourishing and comforting men in sin, for lusts of their flesh. For in pleasing of bishops and other men, they preach against poverty of Christ, and say that preachers of the Gospel and Christ's life be heretics, worthy to be burned. And so for gifts of bishops and other men, and worldly favour, they sell truth of the Gospel, and so Christ, as *Judas* did. For *St. Bede* and *St. Ambrose* say, since Christ is truth, he that for money says falseness and leaves the sooth, ^adoes such sin as *Judas* did; and so they counsel to wars, for they win much thereby; and for default of charity they send souls to hell, when men by their counsel take false wars, and end in them, weening^b that they do well, and therefore die without sorrow of them. And for to heart men in this cursed warring, they go with them into war, and be their confessors, and sometimes slay men in their own person; and thus they be Antichrist's martyrs, and flee to hell, to draw other men thither after them:

CHAPTER XXVI.

THEY SLANDER TRUE PRIESTS, AND FLATTER WICKED MEN.

Also *friars* destroy this world most of all cursed men; for they backbite good clerks, and say that they distourble^c the world, and flatter evil clerks in their sin: and so they praise lords that be tyrants, extortioners, and evil livers; and ladies also. And they despise lords and ladies that be given to leave pride and vanity of the world; and say it was not merry sithend^d lords and ladies took reward to the Gospel; and left their ancestors' manners, that were worshipful to the world. And so of rich men and other, they praise them that bring them much money, with wrong and many deceits, and say that they be holy: but other men that give not *friars* much more than enough, they lack

at the full, though they do their alms much better to their poor neighbours. And since God says that evil teachers be cause of destruction of the people, and *Grosted* declares it well, and *friars* be principal evil teachers, they be principal cause of destroying of this world. For they be confessors, preachers, and rulers commonly of all men; and they teach them not their foul sins, and perils of them; but suffer them in their sins, for winning of stinking muck, and lusts of their own belly, that is foul worms' meat, and a sack of dirt.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FRIARS MOST IMPATIENT OF ALL MEN LIVING IN BEARING REPROOF.

Also *friars* be most rebel against the teaching of Christ's Gospel, and most out of patience and pity; for they be most impatient against reproving sin, and destroying thereof. For a lord will more meekly suffer sharp despising of his little sin, than they will suffer meek and soft reproving of their great heresies. For they be wooda that men's alms should be rightly parted among poor needy men, feeble, crooked, and blind; for then they say they be undone; but they be of vain religion, as *St. James* says: *For this is a clean religion, without spot anentis*b*God the Father, to visit the fatherless and motherless children, and widows in their tribulation, and to keep a man unfouled from this world, that is, from pride, covetousness, and vanities. But friars do all the contrary; for they visit rich men, and by hypocrisy get falsely their alms, and withdraw it from poor men; but they visit rich widows for their muck, and make them to be buried at the friars'; but poor men come in not there. And wilful poverty they forsake, and most covetous of all men, and boast more of their holiness, and be most dislany*c *of their vain speech and worldly, and as true men tell. Friars say apertly,*d *If the king, and lords, and other men, stand thus against their false begging, and will not suffer friars to rob their tenants, but give their alms to their poor neighbours, friars will go out of the land, and come again with bright heads. And look whether this be treason or none.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ACCUSED BY THESE UNHOLY MEN OF FALSEHOOD.

Also *friars* teach and maintain, that Holy Writ is false; and so they put falseness upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and on the Holy Ghost, and on all the blessed Trinity. For since God Almighty taught, confirms, and maintains Holy Writ, if this writing be false, then God is false, and maintainer of error and falseness; but certesa then he is no God: yet know we never that any sect would say that laws of their God were false, and therewith believe on the same God: but this despite do these blasphemers to the Holy Trinity. Alas! who may suffer this blasphemy, that Christ, in whom is all treasure of wit, wisdom, and truth, could not, or would not, say true words and sentence; but sinful fools have true manner of speaking, contrary to the speech of our Lord Jesus

Christ? For if this be, sinful fools, yea in case devils of hell, be wiser and truer than is Jesus Christ. And when this cursed ground is sought, it stands in this error,—For I am master of vanity and of heresy, misunderstand the words of God, therefore they be false. But these heretics should know, that it sues *b* of their cursed ground, that God is the most false thing in earth or heaven or in hell! Why? for men falsely understand most falseness of him. And thus might each pagan or Saracen make our God false, as he liked. But why say they that Holy Writ is false? for they be wont so much to leasings *c* and falseness, that they take falseness for truth. As men say, a man may so long be nourished little and little by venom, that he weens *d* it be wholesome, meet, and good. Also Holy Writ damns their foul hypocrisy, begging covetousness, and other sins, and therefore they say that it is false, to colour by their falseness. Also Holy Writ praises much Christ's religion, and tells how new sects, full of hypocrisy and covetousness, shall come and deceive Christian men, and bids them know them by their covetousness and hypocrisy; and therefore they say, as Satan's clerks, that Holy Writ is false.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW STRONGLY WEDDED TO THEIR ROTTEN HABIT.

Friars also be stronglier wedded with their rotten habit against the freedom of the Gospel, than the husband is with his wife by ordinance of God. For the husband may lawfully be absent from his wife by a month, a half-year, and sometimes seven years, and by common consent of them both, by all their life; but if a *friar* be out of his rotten habit, yea an hour, he is apostate, though he love more God, and serve him better, and profit more to Christian men. And they put more holiness in their rotten habit than ever did Christ or his apostles in their clothes. For Christ was thrice on a day out of his clothes, and yet he was not apostate. But they charge so much this rotten habit, for thereby the people weena *a* that they be holy, and give them more dirt than is needful or profitable. And therefore each party draws another to hell. So *friars*, for their false taking of alms when no need is, nor have they leave of God's law thereto, blind the people; for they draw their alms from their poor and needy neighbours, where they should do it by the hest *b* of God, and maintain *friars* in their false begging, hypocrisy, and other sins many.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE POPE'S DISPENSATION, OR COMMANDMENT OF THE SUPERIOR, MORE REGARDED THAN CHRIST'S COMMANDMENT.

Also *friars* teach that it is not lawful to a priest or any other man to keep the Gospel in his bounds and cleanness, without error of sinful men, but if he have leave thereto of Antichrist. And thus they say it is not lawful to a Christian man to do God's commandment, but if a fiend give them leave thereto: as if the leave and commandment of God be not enough thereto. For they say that a priest that has bound

himself to errors of sinful men by new profession, may not go to the freedom of the Gospel, and live thereafter as Christ taught priests, but if they have the dispensation of the pope. And I suppose that he be Judas, and shall be damned, then he is a devil, as Christ says: and then it is plain, since this priest may not keep the Gospel in his freedom without his leave, and he is in this case a devil, then a priest may not keep the commandments of God without leave of a fiend. But for to get this leave, is our gold given to aliens, and sometimes our enemies; and yet the priest shall be bound commonly to the rotten habit, and be exempt from goodness, and bold in sin.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THEIR USURY, SIMONY, COVETOUSNESS, EXTORTION, RAPINE, AND THEFT.

Also *friars* be receipt^a and a swallow of simony, of usury, of extortions, of ravines,^b and of theft, and a nest or hoard of mammon's treasure. For though men live in simony, they will not counsel them, and charge them in shrift^c to resign their benefice, but comfort them to hold it still, and bring them much dirt thereof, and they will undertake for their sin. And so of usurers they charge them not speedily to make restitution, but rather colour this sin to be partner of this winning; and so of other robbery, they receive it privily, and so maintain and colour thefts in their theft, where other liege men should be punished therefore, and so they be more covetous than the wicked Jews that bought Christ; for they would not take the money of Judas and do it to their money nor treasure, for it was the price of Christ's blood; for Christ was sold and trayed^d to death for that money. But *friars* will receive money gotten by as great sins or more, to make great houses and great feasts to lords, and not buy a field to bury in pilgrims as the Jews did; but rather lay it up in their treasure, to maintain wrongs against their curates and other poor men, by false plea at *Rome*, and merchandise in *England*.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FRIARS CANNOT ENDURE TO HEAR OF CHRIST'S POVERTY PREACHED.

Friars also cry loud that poor priests be heretics; for they teach by God's law how clerks should keep wilful poverty and Christ's Gospel, and the kings and the lords owen^a to compel them thereto. And thus they damn Holy Writ, and the king's regalie.^b For since poor priests have taught both in English and in Latin, how many open laws both in the Old Testament and in the New, forbend^c all priests and deacons to have secular lordship, and these laws be confirmed by Christ's life and his apostles, and *friars* say that this is heresy, they damn openly Holy Writ: and since the king's regalie asks by old statute, that the king may in many in case take temporalities from clerks, and *friars* say that this taking is error against God's law, they damn this rightful regalie of our king, and also our kings and lords, as heretics, if they maintain this rightful law to stable peace of our realm. And since by God's law the office of the

king and lords is to praise, reward, and maintain good and rightful men, and to chastise sharply wicked men, and constrain clerks to hold the state that Christ put them in, and algates^d wilful poverty: *friars* say if the king and lords do their office of God's law, that they be foul heretics. But why should the king maintain in his land such traitors both to God and him, and cruel enemies of all Christian men?

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FRIARS LIKE THIEVES COMING INTO THE CHURCH BY THE WINDOW, NOT BY THE DOOR.

Also *friars* be thieves, both night thieves and day thieves, entering into the church, not by the door, that is Christ. For without authority of God, they make new religions of errors of sinful men, and yet they make worse rules ever the longer that they last, and they seek not meekly the worship of God, and profit of Christian men's souls; and this thing they must do, if they come in by Christ; but they choose, and find a new order less perfect and profitable, than is that that Christ made himself; and so they make division in priesthood against the commandment of God; and since they be not grounded on Christ and his law, they must needs be drawn up, and the ordinance of Christ must stand in his cleanness and perfection.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BIND THEIR NOVICES TO IMPOSSIBLE THINGS.

Also *friars*, by hypocrisy, bind them to impossible things, that they may not do; for they bind them over the commandments of God, as they say themselves, but they may do no more than the commandment of God; for God bids, in his most commandment, that thou shalt love the Lord thy God, of all thy heart, of all thy mind, and of all thy strength and might; but who may do more than this? No man. Then they bind them to more than they may do; and since it is not counsel of Christ, to make singular profession to a sinful idiot, and in case a devil, and they bid them to such one, that they do over the counsel of Christ; but all that is over the counsel of Christ is algats^a evil, since Christ counsels to each good things; and thus may blind fools blind them to the high counsels of Christ, that cannot keep the least commandment: but see hypocrisy of them; since each counsel of Christ is commandment for some time, and some circumstances, how bind they them to more than the commandments? Not by the counsels, for they be commandments; but they feign this, to draw young children into their rotten habit, and other fools that know not the perfection of Christ's order.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE NECESSITY AND MULTITUDE OF THEIR VAIN AND CHANGEABLE CEREMONIES.

Friars also be worse heretics than were Jews, that would keep ceremonies of the old law with freedom of Christ's Gospel. For the Jews kept reasonable laws made of God, and meedful^a for time, that God ordained them; but friars keep new laws, feigned of errors of men, more than God ordained in the old law, and more uncertain; for to-day this law is holden among them, and to-morrow destroyed; but this uncertain was not God's law, and these laws of *friars* be more against the Gospel. For the laws of the Old Testament were figure of Christ's coming and passion, and led men to the Gospel; but new laws of *friars* be not such figure, and let^b men to hold freedom of the Gospel. Ah, Lord, since good laws, ordained of God, must need cease for freedom of the Gospel, much more must evil laws, ordained of error, of sinful men, and worldly, cease, and let^b not men to keep the Gospel in his freedom.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FRIARS RETURN EVIL FOR GOOD.

Also *friars* be adversaries of Christ, and disciples of Satan; not yielding good for evil, as God's law teaches; nor good for good, as kind and man's law teaches; but yielding evil for good, as the fiend's law teaches. For they cast and imagine the death of true men, that desire and travail to deliver them from the fiend's mouth, and everlasting death, and to bring them to that state in which Christ ordained priests to live in. And they proffer *friars* this condition, if they will teach by Holy Writ or reason, that *friars* order and living is best for priests, they will gladly be professed to the *friars'* order; and if priests may teach, both by Holy Writ and reason, that their order is better than friars, since Christ himself made their order, and not *friars*, they pray *friars*, for love of God, to take that order, and to leave their singular order, inasmuch as it draws them from the freedom of the Gospel. And thus they pursue priests, for they reprove their sins as God bids, both to bren^a them, and the Gospel of Christ, written in English, to most learning of our nation. And thus for the great alms that men give to *friars*, they let men to con^b God's law, and to let^c them to be saved, for they may not be saved without conning^d and keeping of God's law, and so *friars* need our land to be damned with fiends in hell.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FRIARS, UNDER THE HABIT OF HOLINESS, LEAD MEN INTO SIN.

Friars also be worse enemies, and slayers of men's soul, than is the cruel fiend of hell by himself. For they, under the habit of holiness, lead men, and nourish them in sin,

and be special helpers of the fiend to strangle men's souls. For the name of holiness, and of great clerks in reputation of the people, that the people trust not to few true men preaching against their covetousness, hypocrisy, and false deceit; and the *friars*, for love of a little stinking muck, and welfare of their foul belly, spare to reprove the cursed sin of the people. For commonly, if there be any cursed juror, extortioner, or avowterer, *e* he will not be shriven *f* at his own curate, but go to a flattering *friar*, that will assoil *g* him falsely, for a little money, by year, though he be not in will to make restitution, and leave his cursed sin. And thus, if the foul fiend might be showed in his shape to the people, as men say he was in time of *St. Bartholomew*, the people would be feared to dwell in his service, that is sin; but the cursedness of sin is hid, and the people is made sicker *h* by false pardons, and letters of fraternity, though they all break the hests *i* of God, and keep not charity; and certain, then, is the devil sicker of both parties.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THEY PERSUADE MEN TO RECKON MORE OF THEIR ANATHEMAS, THAN OF GOD'S CURSE.

Also *friars* lead, and nourish our prelates, our lords and commons, in great blasphemy against God. For they teach all this people to reckon *a* less of the most rightful curse of God, than by the wrong curse of sinful man, though he be a damned devil; for they call the curse of God, the less curse; and the curse of sinful man, the more curse. For though a man be never so cursed of God for pride, envy, covetousness, or avowtery, *b* or any other, this is not charged, nor pursued, neither of prelate, nor lord, nor commons; but if a man withstand once the citation of a sinful prelate, yea, after the commandment of God, then he shall be cursed, and prisoned, after forty days; and all men shall go upon him, though they may be pursued for truth of the Gospel, and be blessed of God. And thus sinful men's doom, *c* and in case of the fiends, is more dread and magnified, than is the rightful doom *c* of God Almighty.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FRIARS' HERESY IN AFFIRMING THE WICKED TO BE MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S CHURCH.

Friars also destroy this article of Christian men's faith; I believe one common or general church. For they teach, that those men that shall be damned, be members of holy church, and thus they wed Christ and the devil together. For Christ is ghostly wedded with each member of holy church, and some of these, as they say, shall be damned; and then, as Christ says, they be friends; therefore, by them, Christ and the devil be wedded together. But God says, by *Paul*, that there is no comming, *d* nor consent, to Christ and to Belial, and then may there no wedding be betwixt them; but this general holy church is the congregation of Christ, that is head, and all good angels in heaven, and all men and women in earth, or in purgatory, that shall be saved, and no more. For Christ says, that none of his members shall perish; for no man shall take

them out of his hands. And John Evangelist says, of false teachers, that *They went out from us, but they were not of us*. And, therefore, Chrysostom says, that those that keep not God's law, but die out of charity, were never Christ's body, the which shall not reign with him; and since each part of Christ's ghostly body, of which *Austin* speaks, as Holy Writ does, shall reign with him in bliss, then no man that shall be damned, is part of Christ's ghostly body, and so part of member of holy church; but friars said thus,—for men should give them much money to pray for all, both good and evil; and also to please bishops and possessioners.

CHAPTER XL.

ARROGATING UNTO THEMSELVES GLORY DUE UNTO OTHER MEN, AND SOMETIMES UNTO GOD HIMSELF.

Also *friars* seek busily their own worldly worship, and put the worship of God behind, against the teaching of Jesus Christ, and *St. Paul*; yea, that is worse, they take upon themselves glory that is appropriated^a to God, and so make them even with God; for they seek fast by great gifts, and vain costs, to be called masters of divinity, and speak before lords, and sit at the meat with them, and not to teach truly the Gospel to all manner of men by meek life, and freely as Christ bids. Also to be confessors of lords and ladies algats,^b to be much told by, and fare well, and not seek poor men, though they have more need. And so of other business of *friars* whoso takes good sight to them. For if a *friar* do little well, that shall be praised algats:^b but if another man do much better, that shall be lacked or despised. Also they shall swear by him that they call patron of their order, and leave God behind, and yet they do so for worship of their own patron, and their own sect, and natheless^c God teaches to swear by him in need, and not by his creatures, but for their proud swearing and idle, they despise God and their patron also.

CHAPTER XLI.

EXALTING THEMSELVES ABOVE CHRIST HIMSELF.

Friars yet highen,^a yet falsely, themselves above Christ. For where Christ bids that men trow^b not to him, but if he do the works of the Father of heaven, *friars* challenge that men trust and obey to them, as needful to souls' health, when they do not the works of God. For else they may not ask that men do after them when they wit^c not whether the thing that they command is against God's doom^d or their wit. And thus no man should do after them, but when they teach certainly the hests^e of God or his counsels, lest men doing after their teaching, in this do against the will of God, but farewell then this new feigned obedience, with this new profession.

CHAPTER XLII.

CHRIST'S RULE NO SUFFICIENT WARRANT FOR THEM TO BE RULED BY.

Also *friars* falsely enhance themselves above Christ and his apostles. For they will not be payed *f* with Christ's rule in the Gospel to teach truly the Gospel, and have meat and drink freely of a good man and devout to God, nor be assayed *g* with food and hylling *h* as Christ and his apostles were, but they rob curates of their office and ghostly worship, and let *i* them to know God's law, by holding books from them, and withdrawing of their vantages, *k* by which they should have books and learn. And also they rob lords of their rents, and some by more hypocrisy take free annual rents of lords' coffers, and they rob the commons of their lifelode *l* by hypocrisy and false begging, damned by God's law. And thus at the beginning they feign them most poor of all clerks, but at the last they pass all other in great houses, and costly libraries, and great feasts, and many other prides and covetousnesses, and ever they pass foul Christ and his apostles. For where Christ had not to rest in his head, *friars* feigned beggars have lordly places, that almost through *England* they may each night lie on their own.

CHAPTER XLIII.

FRIARS' POLICY IN BINDING THEIR NOVICES TO UNKNOWN THINGS.

Friars also of great cantele *a* binding novices to unknown things. For they will not suffer them to know their privities of their rule and their life till they have been professed, and then they shall not be suffered to leave their rule, though they wit *b* well that they may not keep it; and this is openly against Christ's teaching and John's Gospel. For Christ says that he spake openly to the world, and in hiddenness *c* nothing, and *friars* do here fully the contrary. For first they show great devotion and sweetness of holy life to young children, till they be professed, and then master them by tyrantried *d* to do many things against their conscience, and so need them to go to hell or to prison, or sometimes to cruel death.

CHAPTER XLIV.

MISSPENDERS OF THE TREASURE OF THIS LAND.

Also *friars* be wasters of treasure of our land by many blind and unskilful manners. For first they blind them blindly from freedom of the Gospel, and then spend much gold to get them dispensation, and many times bring vain pardons, convienales, *e* and other vain privileges, and in all this the gold of our land goes out, and simony, and curse, and boldness in sin comes again. And God wote *f* where privities of our land be thus showed to our enemies. And God wote where matrimony be thus departed for money, by such *friars* making false suggestions and false pursuit after. Also it seems

that in this they magnify a sinful caitiff,a and in case a damned fiend, more than God Almighty; for they dare not by free grant of God do a good thing to please him therewith, but if they have leave of such a sinful caitiff:a and if they have leave of such an unwitty caitiff, they dare do against God's pleasing an unreasonable thing, and sinful and slanderous to all Christian men.

CHAPTER XLV.

FRIARS HOLIER THAN OTHER MEN.

Friars also by Lucifer's pride highenb themselves, and hold them holier than all other out of their sect; forasmuch as they bind them to new traditions of sinful men, the which be full of error, over the most sufficient rule of Jesus Christ, that left no profitable nor needful thing out of this rule. For though a priest or bishop do never so truly the office that God bade priests do, yet they say he is more holy if he come to their new feigned religion and obedience. But since boasting and rejoicing of sin is one of the greatest sins of all, and these *friars* boast so much of their sinful error, how they have found a better religion than Christ made for his apostles and priests, it seems they be most sinful and cursedly proud over all other wicked men. For it seems that they make themselves wiser than Christ, more witty and more full of charity, since they teach better way to heaven, than did Christ, as they feign.

CHAPTER XLVI.

FRIARS ALTOGETHER SET UPON COVETOUSNESS.

Also *friars* set more by stinking dirt of worldly goods, than they do by virtues and goods of bliss. For if a Cayn's castle of *friars* has much dirt of worldly goods, though the *friars* therein be full of pride, covetousness, simony, and false robbery by false begging and flattering, yet they say that that rich house is better than a poor house of *friars*, though they live in meekness, poverty, and penance, and much holiness. And they travail more to get dirt of this world than to get the bliss of heaven, and they commend more a *friar* that can subtilly and thick get this worldly dirt, than another, that can do and teach much virtuous life. And thus these *friars* make sacrifice to false gods for their covetousness, and forsake God Almighty, since they love more worldly muck than virtues and the love of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XLVII.

FRIARS DEAD UNTO THE WORLD, BUT RAISED BY ANTICHRIST TO PRIDE, COVETOUSNESS, AND MAINTENANCE OF SIN.

Friars also show and witness in themselves Antichrist's miracles, right as Lazarus and others raised by Christ showed and witnessed Christ's miracles. For as Lazarus

and others were verily dead and verily raised by Christ to live of kind and grace: so these *friars* feign them dead to pride of the world and other sins, but they be raised by Antichrist's doing to pride of states, covetousness, and subtle maintaining or colouring of sin. For though men be cursed avowterers, *a* extortioners, and wrongful maintainers of falseness, and debates: yet *friars* will colour these sins, and undertake for these sinful men; if they will give them much dirt, and maintain their vain sect, and commend it more than Christ's own religion. And they be quick to strive, pleet, *b* and fight bodily for worships and states of this world: and so they be dead to meekness, charity, and good religion, and be raised to cursed life of sin; and this is Antichrist's miracle.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SPIRITUAL IMPURITY OF FRIARS.

Friars also be foully envenomed with ghostly sin of Sodom, and so be more cursed than the bodily Sodomites that were suddenly dead by hard vengeance of God; for they do ghostly lechery by God's word, when they preach more their own findings for worldly muck, than Christ's Gospel for saving of men's souls, and when they leave to preach the seed of God's word and leesen *a* it, by which men should by ghostly gendure *b* be made God's sons, they do more sin than though they lost man's seed, by which the body of man should be gendered. For the misusing of the better virtue is more sin, but the seed of God's word is better than the seed of man, therefore it is worse to misspend that than to miswaste man's seed. And *Robert Grosted* declares this reason well against cruel curates.

CHAPTER XLIX.

FRIARS NOTABLE FACTORS FOR THE POPE HEREIN IN ENGLAND.

Friars also be most privy and subtle procurators of simony and foul winning and begging of benefices of indulgences, and travails, pardons, and vain privileges. For men say, they will get a great thing of the pope, or of cardinals in England better cheap than other procurators, and they be more wily, and more pleasantly can flatter the pope and his court, and most privily make lords to maintain the pope and his, in robbing our land of treasure by his pardons, privileges, and the first fruits of benefices in our land, and dimes *c* and subsidies to war on Christian men, for stinking worldly lordship that God has forbidden to him and all priests; and in false confession they stir lords much thereto, and need to destroy the land when they maintain the pope and this false robbing.

CHAPTER L.

FRIARS MOST PERILOUS ENEMIES TO HOLY CHURCH AND TO ALL OUR LAND.

Yet *friars* be most perilous enemies to holy church and all our land; for they let *a* curates of their office, and spend commonly and needless sixty thousand marks by year, that they rob falsely of the poor people. For if curates did their office in good life and true preaching as they be holden upon pain of damning in hell, there were clerks enough of bishops, parsons, and other priests; and in case over money to the people; and yet not two hundred years ago, there was no *friar*, and then was our land plenteous of cattle and men, and they were then stronger of complexion to labour than now, and then were clerks enough. And now be many thousand of *friars* in England, and the old curates stand still unamended, and among all sin is more increased, and the people charged by sixty thousand marks by year, and therefore it must needs fail, and so *friars* suffer curates to live in sin so that they may rob the people and live in their lusts. For if curates did well their office, *friars* were superfluous, and our land should be discharged of many thousand marks, and then the people should better pay their rents to lords, and dimes *b* and offerings to curates, and much flattering and nourishing of sin should be destroyed, and good life and peace and charity should reign among Christian men: and so when all the ground is sought *friars* say thus indeed, Let old curates wax rotten in sin, and let them not do their office by God's law, and we will live in lusts so long, and waste vainly and needlessly sixty thousand marks by year of the poor commons of the land, and so at the last make dissension between them, and their children for dimes *b* and offerings that we will get privily to us by hypocrisy, and make dissension between lords and their commons. For we will maintain lords to live in their lusts, extortions, and other sins, and the commons in covetousness, lechery, and other deceits, with false swearing and many guiles. And also the curates in their damnation for leaving of their ghostly office, and so be procurators of the fiend, for to draw all men to hell; thus they do indeed, however they feign in hypocrisy of pleasing of words.

Of these fifty heresies and errors, and many more if men will seek them well out, they may know that *friars* be cause, beginning, well, and maintaining of perturbation in Christendom, and of all evils of this world, and these errors shall never be amended till *friars* be brought to freedom of the Gospel, and clean religion of Jesus Christ.

God for his endless mercy and charity make very peace and charity among Christian men, and bring all priests to Christ's clean religion without error of wrong by-laws. Amen.

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A COMPLAINT OF JOHN WYCLIFFE, EXHIBITED TO THE KING AND PARLIAMENT.

Please it to our most noble, and most worthy King *Richard*, king both of England and of France, and to the noble Duke of Lancaster, and to other great men of the realm; both to seculars and men of holy church, that be gathered in the parliament, to hear, assent, and maintain the few articles, or points that be set within this writing, and proved both by authority and reason, that Christian faith, and Christian religion, be increased, maintained, and made stable; since our Lord Jesus Christ, very God and very man, is Head and Prelate of this religion, and shed his precious heart-blood, and water, out of his side, on the cross, to make this religion perfect and stable, and clean without error.

THE FIRST ARTICLE.

The first article is this:—That all persons, of what kin, private sects, or singular religion, made of sinful men, may freely, without any letting, *a* or bodily pain, leave that private rule, or new religion, founded of sinful men, and stably hold the rule of Jesus Christ, taken and given by Christ to his apostles, and for more profit than any such new religion, founded of sinful men. The reason of this axing *b* is showed thus,—The rule of Jesus Christ, youen *a* to his apostles, and kept of them, after Christ's ascension, is most perfect, to be kept for state of living in this world; and each rule, of what kin, private sect, or singular religion, made of sinful men, is less perfect, than the rule youen of Christ, of his endless wisdom, and his endless charity, to mankind; therefore, it is leaveful *b* to each man or person of this singular religion and profession, to leave it cleave fast to the rule of Jesus Christ, as more perfect. This rule is plain to each man of wit and discretion, and namely, to clerks; since men of the pope's law witnesseth plainly, that a man may lawfully, yea, against his sovereign's will, go from the less perfect religion, to the more perfect. Why, then, may not a man of private religion forsake that, and take Christ's clean religion, without error of any sinful fool, as most perfect? and that Christ's rule, in his own cleanness and freedom, is most perfect, is showed by this skill. *c* For inasmuch as a patron, or a founder, is more perfect, more mighty, more witty, and more holy, and in more charity, than is another patron or founder: in so much is the first patron's rule better and more perfect, than is the second patron's rule. But Jesus Christ, patron of Christian religion, youen *a* to apostles, passeth without measure, in might, wit, and good will, or charity, the perfection of every patron, of any private sect or singular; therefore, his rule is more perfect. Also, that Christ's clean religion, without clouting *d* of sinful men's errors, is most perfect of all, is showed by this skill. *c* For other, Christ might youe *e* such a rule, most perfect for this life, to be kept, and would not, and then he was envious, as *Austin* proveth in other matters; or else Christ would ordain such a rule, and might not, and then Christ was unmighty; but it is heresy to affirm that on Christ; or else Christ might, and couth *f* and would not, and then he was unwitty; but that is heresy, and no man should suffer to hear. That, therefore, Christ both might, and could, and

would, ordain such a rule, most perfect, that ought to be kept for state of this life; and so Christ, of his endless wisdom and charity, ordained such a rule; and so on each side, men be needed, upon pain of heresy and blasphemy, and of damning in hell, to believe and knowledge, that their religion of Jesus Christ to apostles, and kept of them in his own freedom, without clouting^d of sinful men's error, is most perfect of all, and so to let^g no man to forsake private religion, and keep Christ's clean religion, without new wrong traditions of sinful men, that oft erred in their own life and teaching. Also Christ, in making the rule and order of apostles, was, in this time, and ever before, Almighty, alwitty, all full of good will and charity, to make perfect rule; therefore, he made not only a perfect rule of all, but each patron of private rule was unmighty; and letted^a both in yiftes^b of kind and grace, and not alwitty; but in comparison of Christ, an idiot or fool, and not so well willing, to make so good and perfect as Christ; therefore, he made a rule less good, and less perfect, and hereof it sueth^c plainly, that Christ's clean religion is most perfect of all.

Also apostles, and their followers, keeping the rule youen^d to them of Christ, won most merit, and thanks of God, in this keeping, before all other times; therefore, if all Christian men, both in old time and new, had kept the same rule of Christ, in his own cleanness and freedom, should have deserved most thanks of God, in degree, possible to them. Therefore, no new sect of religion, striving from Christ's sect, should have begun; but that that was first, should have been kept in his cleanness, of such new founder; less of novelties and patrons. Also, it were now as good, and of as much merit, to keep the rule of Jesus Christ, as it was at the beginning; since Christ's rule is enough, and able for all men on live, of whatever complexion or age they be of; but this rule was kept of Jesus Christ and his apostles; and their best suers^e by five hundred year after his ascension, without any finding of any such new planting, or religion, in which time holy church increased and profited most; for, then, almost all men disposed them to martyrdom, at ensample of Christ; therefore, it were now not only meritory^f or medeful^g but most medeful to the church, to live so in all things, and by all things.

Also both monks and canons forsake the rules of *Benet* and *Austin*, and take, without any dispensation, the rule of friars, as most perfect; but the rule of apostles is utterly, and algates^h most perfect; therefore, men may forsake private rules in religion, made of sinful men, and take the clean religion of apostles, that is preached with freedom of the Gospel, without dispensation of worldly clerks, that in case quekeⁱ devils, as Christ, Judas Iscariot.

Also the pope may dispense with the rule of each private sect or religion, and hath dispensed, and yet doth, but he may not dispense with Christ's rule, youen^d to apostles; therefore, the rule of Christ, ordained to apostles, is more perfect than any rule of private religion, and most perfect of all; and hereof it sueth^c openly, that men may lawfully forsake private religion, and keep Christ's religion in his cleanness, since it is most perfect, most easy, and light, for to keep, and most siker^j to bring men to heaven, and to highest degree of bliss.

And if our adversaries of this private religion strive algats^a that the rules be more perfect than the rule of apostles, why then so many persons, as whoso saith without

number, of each such private sect, by licence of the Pope been made, some chaplains of households, some chaplains of honour, some bishops dowered with secular lordships, some bishops among heathen men, and dare not come to their children; but what profession a friar be of anon, if he be chosen thereto, he accepteth the office of the *Pope* or *Cardinal*, of *Patriarch*, of Archbishop, of Bishop; and forsaketh his own state, since Christ saith in the Gospel, that no man putteth his hand to the plough, and looking backward, is worthy to have the kingdom of God; that is, no man taking perfect state of poverty, meekness, and penance, is able to be saved, if he turned again to worldly life, pomp, and pride, and covetousness, and ease of body, and sloth, and riot, and gay clothing and costly. Therefore they change not the more perfect for the less perfect, for then they were *apostates*; but they purchase the more perfect for the less perfect; therefore the clean religion and rule of priesthood by form of the Gospel, is more perfect than any rule or religion made of sinful men. Also, nothing that is abominable and reprov'd of saints, should be brought in of other, by any colour or cauteel; but those new sects be such, that be of flesh, as St. Paul saith in his Epistles: therefore such sects should not be brought into charging of the church; but all Christian men should cast away, and hold fast the unity, freedom, and cleanness of the rule of Jesus Christ. Peradventure these hypocrites say, to exclude all these reasons, and many more, that the rule to which they make profession, is not strange nor diverse from the rule of apostles, that Christ ordained, but it is utterly the same and none other: but the contrary of this excusing is openly showed by four the last reasons before said. For if these new rules were alone with Christ's rule you end to apostles, Christ should have taught them both, and ensampled them both in his life and speaking and writing with ceremonies, and rites, and customs thereof; but did not this never in his death, nor after his resurrection, nor to his ascension. And if this excusing were soth, the sects of friars should not have begotten about a thousand and tweyn hundred years of Christ. But the contrary is open in Chronicles: it sueth also of the same, that Christ's apostles had both monks, canons, and friars, if men take monks, canons, and friars, for men that profess such private sects; but this is openly false. Also Christ's rule given to apostles is like and of o form to all men that make profession thereto, to speak of substance of the rule; but rules of these private sects be full diverse and contrary, as to substance of these rules, since some of them receive dymes and donations, as do these possessioners; but some forsake all such tithes and possessions, as friars *mendicants*. But to descend down in speciality, full many articles of rules of such sects be openly contrary to the apostles' rule; since it is lawful to each true man of Christian religion, to convert a man of wrong faith to Christianity; but this is forboden in the rule of friars minors, since only to ministers, and none other, is licence granted to restrain friars, to hear private sects, notwithstanding that evermore friars do the contrary; and Christ received pennies, but they should not by their own rule receive pennies, neither by themselves, nor by mene persons. Also Christ preaching the Gospel, entered into places both of women and men, as the Gospel of Luke telleth; but is forboden to friars to enter into the abbeys of women, but friars glosse these rules to the contrary; but Francis, their founder, commanded them in article of his death, that they should not receive glosses upon his rule. Also if Christ's rule you eng to apostles, and the rule of private sects, were all one without reason, men leave the first, and profess the other, but if it were to show their hypocrisy. Also if this feigning be soth, it seemeth that it is as perfect and needful to keep Christ's rule of Francis and Dominic, or any other such man. Also if these rules

be all one, and in nothing diverse, then such a rule should not be cleped *i* “rule of Francis,” or Dominic, or any such other, but “rule of Christ;” for so it should be of more authority, and more commended. And so the Gospel ought to be kept, without any fouling of all Christian men, without such novelries, *k* and put nothing thereto, and draw nothing therefrom; and if this thing were done, such private sects should be superfluous and waste, as flies living in the air; and it was no need of Francis, Dominic, or any such other new man beside him, about making of this rule of apostles, that friars feign to be theirs. For that rule was made of Christ, God and man, and kept of apostles, and confirmed by the Holy Ghost, and at the full declared by a thousand years and two hundred, before Francis, Dominic, or any such friar of such private sect, were into this world.

THE SECOND ARTICLE.

The second point or article is this, that though men that unreasonably and wrongfully had damned, and all this counsel be amended of so great an error; and that their error may be published to men dwelling in the realm; the reason of this axing *a* is showed thus. Nothing ought to be damned as error and false, but if it savour error or unrighteousness against God’s law; but neither the king nor his counsel did unrightfully, forasmuch as he took away the possessions of some prelates that trespassed, whose contrary friars had determined openly; therefore reasonably men should assent to this axing. *a* For some friars write thus in Coventry, among articles that they damned as heresy and error, that secular lords may lawfully and medefully *b* take away temporal goods youenc *c* to men of the church; but since our king hath done so, and other kings, his predecessors, have done so many times, by lawful cause, as pertaining to their regalie, *d* and of common law, by counsel of peers of the realm, it sueth *e* that not only our king now present, hath erred, but also his predecessors, and generally all his counsellors, as lords, and prelates, and all men of the parliament counselling thereto.

Also if this be error touching the health of man’s soul, then it is against Holy Writ; and then if a man sustain or maintain this error, he is a heretic: but full many kings, lords, and prelates, and other wise men have sustained this, and maintained, and yet done as pertaining to the king’s regalie *d* and of common law; then be these friars, all kings, lords, and prelates, and all wise men of our realm, be heretics. Also since this is an old custom, the which our kings, lords, and prelates, be sworn to sustain and maintain, if this be error, (as friars say openly) it sueth *f* by friars, that all these be foresworn and heretics. Also if this be error, as friars feign, that though an abbot and all his convent be open traitors, conspiring unto the death of the king and queen, and of other lords, and enforce them to destroy all the realm, the king may not take from them a half-penny, nor farthing worth, since all these be temporal goods. Also though other clerks send unto our enemies all the rents that they have in our land, and whatever they may rob or steal of the king’s liege men, yet may not our king punish by *og* farthing nor farthing worth. Also by this ground of friars, though monks or friars, or other clerks, whatever they be, slay lords’ tenants, the king’s liege men, and defile lords’ wives, yea the queen (that God forbid) or the empress; yet the king may not punish them by one farthing. Also it sueth *a* plainly, that men cleped *b* men of holy church, may dwell in this land at their liking, and do what kind sin, what kind treason

liketh them, and natheless^c the king may not punish, nor in temporal goods, nor in their body: since if he may not punish them in the less, he may not in the more; and also they make one of themselves king, and so no secular lord may let^d him to conquer all secular lordship in this earth, and so they may slay all lords and ladies, and their blood and affinity, with any pain in this life, or in body, or in cattle. Ye lords see and understand with what punishing they deserve to be chastised, that thus unwarily and wrongfully have damned you for heretics, forasmuch as you do execution and righteousness by God's law and man's, and namely of the king's regalie.^e For the chief lordship in this land of all temporalities, both of secular men and religious, pertain to the king of his general governing; for else he were not king of England, but of a little part thereof. Therefore the men that busien^f them to take away this lordship from the king, as do friars, and their fautors,^g in this point be sharper enemies and traitors than Frenchmen and all other nations. Also it pertaineth to the king, the while any bishop or abbot's see is void, to have in his hand all temporalities, and at his own will to youe^h them to prelates; therefore the king may take away these temporalities from prelates, when lawful cause exciteth. Also the king ought grant no man freedom to do sin or trespass, but to take away the freedom; but men of the church had free license to trespass, if the king might not bereaveⁱ their temporalities, when they sinned grievously. And so Saint Paul teacheth that each man be subject to their potestates,^j for there is no power but of God; and though things that be of God be ordained, and so they that withstandeth power withstandeth God's ordinance. For why? Princes be not a dread of good works, but of evil. But wilt thou not dread a power? do good, and thou shalt have praising thereof, that is of him that is ordained in the high estate, for he is God's minister or servant to thee in good; but if thou have done evil, then dread, for he beareth the sword not without cause, for he is God's servant avenger in wrath to him that doth evil, and therefore by need, or of need, be ye subject or underlout^k not only for wrath, but also of consciences. All this saith St. Paul, of which authority it is, to know to all men, that clerks owen^l to be subject of need to the king's power. For St. Paul, that putteth all men in subjection to kings, out taketh never ene,^a and so secular power oweth, and is bound to punish by just pain of his sword, that is worldly power, tyrants rebelling against God, and trespassing against man, by what kind trespass, and that is more to chastise his subjects by pain and torment of their body, and no dread, much more he may punish them by taken away of their temporalities, that is less than bodily pain; therefore secular lords do this rightfully, since this is done by commandment of the apostle, and by ordinance of God, and therefore it is plain of these reasons and authorities, and secular lords may levefully^b and medefully,^c in many cases taken away temporal goods given to men of the church.

THE THIRD ARTICLE.

The third article is this, that both tithes and offerings be youen^d and paid, and received by that intent, to which intent both God's law and the pope's law ordained them to be paid and received; and that they be taken away by the same intent and reason, that both God's law and the pope's law ordain that they should be withdrawn. This axinge^e is reasonable, for many skills:^f for the intent of the maker in every law should be kept, and most the intent of God that may not err. Sothly^g thus saith God's law in the first book of Kings, that the sin of Eli's children was full great before God,

for they withdraw men from sacrifice of God, taking by strength or violence that part of the sacrifice that pertained to the priest; and God saith afterwards, "I speaking have spoken, that thine house and thy father's house should minister, and serve in my sight evermore; but now," God saith, "be that thing far from me, but whoever shall worship me, I shall glorify them; but they that despise me," saith God, "shall be unable, or without honour:" of which authority it is plain and open, that the things that be due to priests, should not be axed^h by strength, by violence or cursing, but be youen^d freely without exaction or constraining: and if the priest be reproved of God for his sins, he should be put out of his office, and the sacrifices should not be youen^d to him, but taken from him, as God commandeth from the high-priest Eli; and another true man, walking in God's ways, as did Samuel, should be ordained to receive such sacrifices. Also in beginning of Tobit, men find thus, when priests of the temple went to calves of gold, to honour them for gods of Jeroboam king of Israel made, Tobit offered truly all his first-fruits and tithes. So that in the third year Tobit ministered all his tithes to proselytes, and comelings^a or guests, and withdrew them wholly from the wicked priests, and the book saith that the little child kept these things, and other such after the law of God. Therefore if our prelates or other priests, whatever they be, openly blecked^b by sacrifice of maumetry,^c as with covetousness, that is, openly sacrifice of false gods, and other great sins, as pride, simony, and manquelling,^d gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery, by the same skill^e tithes and offerings should be withdrawn from them by God's law, and be youen^f to poor needy men, at ensample of rightful Tobit.

Also St. Paul speaking to Timothy bishop, saith thus; Be we pay with these things, if we have lifelode,^g and to be hiled^h with. And St. Bernard speaketh thus in this matter; Whatever thou takest to thee of thine entrage, that is, dymesⁱ and offerings beside simple lifelode and straitclothing, it is not thine, it is theft, ravine, and sacrilege. Whereof it sueth^k plainly, that not only simple priests and curates, but also sovereign curates, as bishops, should not ask their subjects by constraining more than lifelode^g and hiling,^l when they do away all manner waste both of money, and worldly array. Also Christ and his apostles lived most poor life, as it is known by all the process of the Gospel, nothing challenging by exactions nor constraining, but lived simply and scarcely enough of alms freely, and wilfully youen;^f therefore they that pretend them to be principal followers of Christ's steps, should walk as Christ did, and so lead full poor life taking of things freely youen as much as need is, for their ghostly office and no more, and therewith be apaid.^m Also the pope's law commandeth in the best part thereof that priests, open lechers,ⁿ take no part of portion of goods of the church, therefore it is lawfully to parishioners to withhold their tithes for open fornication of their curates, and turn them into better use, and much more they may and owen^o to withdraw their tithes for great sins and open; as for simony, that is heresy, as the pope's law saith; and for covetousness, that is worshipping of gods, as Holy Writ saith; and for pride, envy, gluttony, and drunkenness, since both by God's law and man's law God curseth such men's blessings and prayings, as *St. Austin* and *St. Gregory* teach this in many books by Holy Writ and reason.

Also commonly when parish churches be appropred^p to men of singular religion, since appropriation is made by false suggestion that such religious men have not enough for lifelode^a and hiling;^b but in truth they have overmuch. Also commonly

such churches be approped^c by simony, as they know better themselves, paying a great sum of money for such appropriation, if the benefice be fat. But what man led by reason and good conscience should pay to such religious men tithes and offerings gotten by falseness, leasings,^d and simony? But suppose that such parish churches were lawfully gotten, yet since they be superfluous to such men, the tithes and offerings should be youene^e to poor needy men, as *St. Jerome* and the pope's law teach; and therefore the true great clerk, *Robert Grosted, bishop of Lincoln*, writeth to the pope, that when appropriation of parish churches is made to men of religion, of fourteen great sins and defects that come of evil curates, is made a perpetuation, that is endless confirmation; also by God and his laws curates be michelf^f more bound to teach their subjects charitably the Gospel and God's hests,^g both by open preaching and ensample of good life for to save their souls, than their subjects be holden to pay them tithes and offerings: and of these sue^h two things. The first, if curates do not their office in word and in example, that God commandeth that their subjects be not bound to pay them tithes and offerings, since the principal cause for which tithes and offerings should be paid is away, the paying of tithes should cease. Also curates be more cursed in withdrawing this teaching in word and ensample, than be parishioners withdrawing tithes and offerings, though curates duddenⁱ well their office.

A!^j Lord God, where this be reason to constrain the poor people to find a worldly priest, sometimes unable both of life, and cunning in pomp and pride, covetousness, and envy, gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery, in simony and heresy, with fat horse, and jolly and gay saddles and bridles ringing by the way, and himself in costly clothes and pelure,^k and to suffer their wives and children, and their poor neighbours perish for hunger, thirst, and cold, and other mischiefs of the world. A! Lord Jesus Christ, since within few years men paid their tithes and offerings at their own free will to good men, and able to great worship of God to profit and fairness of holy church fighting in earth. Where it were lawful and needful that a worldly priest should destroy this holy and approved custom, constraining men to leave this freedom, turning tithes and offerings into wicked uses, or not so good as they were done before times?

THE FOURTH ARTICLE.

The fourth article is this, that Christ's teaching and belief of the sacrament of his own body, that is plainly taught by Christ and his apostles, in Gospels and Epistles, may be taught openly in churches of Christian people; and the contrary teaching and false belief is brought up by cursed hypocrites, and heretics, and worldly priests uncunning^a in God's law, which seem that they are apostles of Christ, but are fools. Also Christ would not take the kingdom when the people would have made him king, as John's Gospel telleth, but if it had been a priest's office, to deal about thus bodily alms, Christ, that could best have done this office, would have taken these temporal goods to deal them among poor men; but he would not do thus, but fly and took no man of the apostles with him, so fast he hied. Lord, where then worldly priests cunning better do this parting of worldly goods of Jesus Christ; and if they say that Christ fed the people in desert with bodily alms, many thousand, as the Gospel saith, that did Christ by miracle, to show his Godhead and to teach priests how they feed ghostly Christian men by God's word, for so did Christ's apostles, and had not

whereof to do bodily alms, when they might have treasure and meals enough of kings and lords. Also Peter saith, in Deeds of Apostles, to a poor man, that to him neither was gold, nor silver, yet he performeth well the office of a true priest. But our priests be so busy about worldly occupation, that they seem better bailiffs, or reves, *b* than ghostly priests of Jesus Christ. For what man is so busy about merchandise and other worldly doings, as be priests that should be light of heavenly life to all men about them? but certes *c* they should be as busy about studying of God's law and holy prayer; not of *famulorum* but of holy desire and clean meditation of God, and true teaching of the Gospel, as be labourers about worldly labour for their sustenance; and much more busy if they might. For they be more holden for to live well and ensample of holy life to the people, and true teaching of Holy Writ, than the people is holden to give the dymes *d* or offerings, or any bodily alms; and therefore priests should not leave ensamples of good life and studying of Holy Writ, and true teaching thereof, nor for bodily alms, nor for worldly goods, nor for saving of their bodily life. And as Christ saved the world by writing and teaching of four evangelists, so the fiend casteth to damn the world and priests; for letting *a* to preach the Gospel by these four; by feigned contemplation, by songs, by Salisbury use, and by worldly business of priests!

God, for his mercy, stir these priests to preach the Gospel in word, in life, and beware of Satan's deceits. Amen.

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WYCKLIFFE'S WYCKETT,

WHICH HE MADE IN KING RICHARD'S DAYS THE SECOND.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: whose eateth of this bread shall live for ever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

John vi.

A VERY BRIEF DEFINITION OF THESE WORDS: ***HOC EST CORPUS MEUM.***

"I beseech ye, brethren, in the Lord Christ Jesus, and for the love of his Spirit, to pray with me, that we may be vessels to his laud and praise, what time so ever it pleaseth him to call upon us."

Romans xv.

Forasmuch as our Saviour Jesus Christ, when that he walked here on earth with the prophets which were presently before him, and the apostles which were presently with him, whom also he left after him, whose hearts were mollified with the Holy Ghost, and warned us, and gave us knowledge that there was two manner of ways, the one to life, the other to death, as Christ saith, (Matt. vii. Luke xiii.) "How strait and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and there be few that findeth it. But how large and broad is the way that leadeth to damnation, and there be many that go into it." Therefore pray we heartily to God, that he of his mere mercy will so strengthen us with the grace and stedfastness [of] his Holy Spirit, to make us strong in spiritual living after the evangelical Gospel, so that the world, no not the very infidels, papists, and apostates, can gather none occasion to speak evil of us, whereby we may enter into that strait gate, as Christ our Saviour and all that follow him have done, that is not in idle living, but in diligent labouring, yea in great sufferance of persecution even to the death, and that we find the way of everlasting life, as he hath promised where he saith,—“He that seeketh findeth, and he that axetha receiveth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” (Matt. vii.)

[II.] Also Christ saith, “If thy son axeb thee bread, wilt thou give him a stone? or if he axeb thee fish, wilt thou give him a serpent? if ye which are evil can give good things to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give a good Spirit to them that axeb it of him?” (Luke xi.) Saint James saith, “If any man lack wisdom, let him axeb it of God, which giveth to all men if they axeb it in faith, and upbraideth none; for he that doubteth is like to the waves of the sea, that is borne about with every blast of wind. Think not that such shall receive anything of the Lord. For a man

double in soul is unstable in all his ways,” as it is written. (James i.) Wherefore let us pray to God that he “keep us in the hour of temptation, that is coming in all the world.” (Rev. iii.) For as our Saviour Christ saith, “When ye see that abomination of desolation that is spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place,” as Christ saith, “he that readeth let him understand.” (Dan. xii. Matt. xxiv.) But for because that every man cannot have the book of Daniel to know what his prophecy is, Daniel said, “Towards the last days the king of the north shall come, and the arms of him shall stand, and shall defile the sanctuary, and he shall take away the continual sacrifice, and he shall give abomination into desolation, and wicked men shall find a testament guilefully, but ye that know your God shall hold and do, and untaught men in the people shall teach full many men, and they shall fall on the sword and in the flame, and into captivity many days.”

[III.] “And when they shall fall down they shall be araised by a little help, and many shall be applied to them guilefully, and of learned men should fall to them that they build together. And the chosen shall be together, and shall be made white till a time determined. For yet another time shall be, and the king shall do his will, and then he shall be raised, and magnified at each god; and against the God of gods shall speak great things, and he shall be raised till the wrathfulness before determined is perfectly made, and he shall not inherit the God of his fathers, and he shall be in the companies of women, and he shall not change anything of God’s, for he shall raise again all things.—Forsooth he shall honour god of mason in his place, and he shall worship a god whom his fathers know not, not with gold, silver, precious stones, nor with precious things, but he shall do make strong the god of mason with thalyent or strange god which he knew not, and he shall multiply glory, and he shall give to him power in many things, and he shall depart the land at his will.” (Dan. xi. 31.) Hitherto be they the words of Daniel, who may see a greater abomination than to see the people to be led away from God, and they be taught to worship for God that thing that is not God nor Saviour of the world? For though it be their god, as it is written by a prophet, saying, “The Lord’s going shall make low the god of the earth, for it is their gods that they believe in them which may make them safe,” (Zeph. ii. 11,) as it is written.

[IV.] Whereas Saint Paul saith, “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things I see you as vain worshippers of idols, for I passed by and saw your mawmetes,^a and found an altar in the which was written, To the unknown god. Therefore the thing which you know not ye worship as God. This thing show I unto you: God which made the world and all things that be in it. This forsooth, he is Lord of heaven and earth, and he dwelleth not in the temple made with hands, neither hath he need of anything, for he giveth life to all men, and breath everywhere, and he made of one, all kinds of men to inhabit on all the face of the earth, determining times ordained and terms of the dwelling of them to seek out God: if peradventure they might find him, although he be not far from each of you.” And again he saith, “Ye shall not think that God living is not like to gold, silver, either any graven thing, or painted by craft, either taught of man; for God despiseth the time of the unknown things. And he showeth every where that all men should do penance.” (Acts xvii.) And hereof the clerks of the law have great need, which have been ever against God the Lord, both in the old law, and in the new, to slay the prophets that spake to them the Word of God. (Matt. xxiii. 27.) Ye see that they spared not the Son of God when that the temporal judge would have

delivered him, (Matt. xxvii.) and so forth of the apostles and martyrs that hath spoken truly to the word God to them, and they say it is heresy to speak of the holy Scripture in English, and so they would condemn the Holy Ghost that gave it in tongues to the apostles of Christ, as it is written to speak the Word of God in all languages that were ordained of God under heaven, as it is written.

[V.] And the Holy Ghost descended upon the heathen, as he did upon the apostles in Jerusalem, as it is written (Joel ii.); and Christ were so merciful to send the Holy Ghost to the heathen men (Acts viii. x.), and he made them partakers of his blessed word; why should it then be taken from us in this land that be Christian men? Consider you whether it is not all one to deny Christ's words for heresy, and Christ for an heretic? for if my word be a lie, then I am a liar that speaketh the word; therefore if my words be heresy, then am I a heretic that speaketh the word; therefore it is all one to condemn the word of God in any language for heresy, and God for an heretic that spake the word; for he and his word is all one, and they may not be separated; and if the word of him is the life of the world, as it is written, (Matt. ii.) "Not only by bread liveth man, but in every word that cometh out of the mouth of God;" and every word of God is the life of the soul of man, as saith St. John, (1 John ii. 27) "that thou have anointing of the Holy Ghost, and thou have no need of any man, but teach thou in all things," which is his blessed word, in whom is all wisdom and cunning, and yet ye be always to learn as well as we. How may any antichrist for dread of God take it away from us that be Christian men, and thus suffer the people to die for hunger in heresy and blasphemy of man's law that corrupteth and slayeth the soul, as pestilence slayeth the body? As David beareth witness, where he speaketh of the chain of pestilence; and most of all they make us believe a false law that they have made upon the secret host, for the most falsest belief is taught in it.

[VI.] For where find ye that ever Christ or any of his disciples or apostles taught any man to worship it? For in the mass creed it is said, "I believe in one God only, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, only begotten and born of the Father, before all the world: he is God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten and not made, and of one substance, even with the Father, by whom all things be made;" and the Psalm, "Quicumque vult," there it is said, "God is the Father, God is the Son, and God is the Holy Ghost; unmade is the Father, unmade is the Son, and unmade is the Holy Ghost." And thou then, that art an earthly man, by what reason mayest thou say that thou makest thy Maker? Whether may the made thing say to the maker, "Why hast thou made me thus?" or may it turn again, and make him that made it? God forbid! Now answerest thou that sayest every day that thou makest of bread the body of the Lord, flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, God and man; forsooth, thou answerest greatly against reason, by these words that Christ spake at his supper, on Serethur's day, a at night, (Matt. xxvi.) that Christ "took bread, and blessed it, and gave it to his disciples and apostles, and said, (Mark xiv.) "Take ye, and eat ye, this is my body which shall be given for you. And also he taking the cup, and did give thanks, and gave to them, and said, Drink ye all hereof; this is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed out for many into the remission of sins;" as saith Luke, (Luke xxii. 19) "When Jesus had taken bread, he gave thanks, and brake it to them, and said, Take ye, eat ye; this is my body that shall be given for you: do ye this in remembrance of me."

[VII.] Now understand ye the words of our Saviour Christ, as he spake them one after another, as Christ spake them. For he took bread and blessed; and yet what blessed he? The Scripture saith not that Christ took bread and blessed it, or that he blessed the bread which he had taken. Therefore it seemeth more that he blessed his disciples and apostles, whom he had ordained witnesses of his passion, and in them he left his blessed word, which is the bread of life, as it is written, "Not only in bread lived man, but in every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. iv.) Also Christ saith, "I am the bread of life, that came down from heaven." (John vi.) And Christ saith often in Matthew, "The words that I have spoken to you be spirit and life." (John vi. 63.) Therefore it seemeth more that he blessed his disciples, and also his apostles, in whom the bread of life was left more than in material bread; for the material bread hath an end, as it is written in the Gospel of Matthew xv., that Christ said, "All things that a man eateth goeth down into the draught away," (Matt. xv.) and it hath an end of rooting; but the blessing of Christ kept his disciples and apostles both bodily and ghostly. As it is written, that "none of them perished, but the son of perdition, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." (John xvii.) And often the Scripture saith that "Jesus took bread, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take ye, eat ye; this is my body, that shall be given for you." But he said not, "This bread is my body," or that "the bread should be given for the life of the world." For Christ saith, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." (John vi.)

[VIII.] Also Christ saith in the Gospel, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except the wheat corn fall into the ground and die, it bideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii.) Here men may see by the words of Christ, that it behoved that he died in the flesh, and that in his death was made the fruit of everlasting life for all them that believe on him; as it is written, "For as by Adam all die, even so by Christ shall all live, and every man in his own order; for as one clearness is in the sun, another in the moon, and a star in clearness [is] nothing in comparison to the sun, even so is the again rising of the dead men. For we be sown in corruption, and shall rise again incorruptible; we are sown in infirmity, and shall rise again in virtue; we are sown in natural bodies, and shall rise again spiritual bodies." (1 Cor. xv.) Then if Christ shall change thus our deadly bodies by death, and God the Father spared not his own Son, as it is written, (Matt. Mark, Luke,) but that death should reign in him as in us, and that he should be translated into a spiritual body, the first again rising of dead men; then how saith hypocrites that take on them to make our Lord's body too, whether make they the glorified body, either make they again the spiritual body, which is risen from death to life, either make they the fleshly body, as it was before he suffered death? and if they say, also, that they make the spiritual body of Christ, it may not be so, for that thing that Christ said and did, he did it as he was at supper, before he suffered his passion, as it is written that the spiritual body of Christ rose again from death to life. (Matt. xxviii.)

[IX.] Also he ascended up to heaven, and he will abide there till he come to judge the quick and the dead: and if they say that they make Christ's body as it was before he had suffered his passion, then must they needs grant that Christ is to die yet: for by all Scriptures he was promised to die, and that he gave lordship of everlasting life.

Furthermore, if they say that Christ made his body of bread, with what words made he it? not with these words, (*Hoc est corpus meum*) that is to say, in English, “This is my body;” for they be words of giving, and not of making, which he said after that he brake the bread, then departing it among the disciples and apostles. Therefore if Christ had made of that bread his body, [he] had made it in his blessing, or else in giving of thanks, and not in the words of giving; for if Christ had spoken of the material bread that he had in his hand, as when he said, (*Hoc est corpus meum*) “This is my body,” and it was made before, or else the word had been a lie; for if ye say, “This is my hand,” and if it be not a hand, then am I a liar: therefore seek it busily, if ye can find two words of blessing, or of giving of thanks, the which Christ did, and that a [II] the clerks of the earth knoweth not, for if ye might find or know it those words, then should you wax great masters above Christ, and then ye might be givers of his substance, and as father and maker of him, and that he should worship you, as it is written, “Thou shalt worship thy father and mother.” (Exod. xx.) Of such as desire such worship against God’s law, speaketh St. Paul of the “man of sin that enhanceth himself as he were God. And he is worshipped over all things as God, and showeth himself as he were God.” (2 Thess. ii.)

[X.] Where our charge be guilty in this, deema ye or they that know most, for they say that when ye have said, *Hoc est corpus meum*, that is to say, “This is my body,” the which ye call “the words of consecration,” or else of making; and when they be said over the bread, ye say that there is left no bread, but it is the body of the Lord; but truly there is nothing but a heap of accidents, as whiteness, ruggedness, roundness, savoury, touching, and tasting, and such other accidents. Then if thou sayest that flesh and blood of Christ, that is to say, his manhood, is made more, or increased by so much as the ministration of bread and wine is, then thou must needs consent that that thing that is not God to-day, shall be God to-morrow; yea, and that thing which is without spirit or life, but groweth in the field by kind, shall be God another time. And we all ought to believe that he was without beginning, and without ending, and in his manhood begotten and not made: (Matt. i. Luke i. Psa. xvi.) for if the manhood of Christ were increased every day, by so much as the bread and wine draweth that ye minister, he should wax more in one day by cart-loads than he did in xxxii. years when he was here in earth. And if thou makest the body of the Lord in those words, *Hoc est corpus meum*, that is to say, “This is my body,” and if thou mayest make the body of the Lord in those words, “This is my body,” thou thyself must be the person of Christ, or else there is a false God.

[XI.] For if it is thy body, as thou sayest, then it is the body of a false knave, or of a drunken man, or of a lecherer, or full of other sins; and then is an unclean body for any man to worship for God. For and Christ had made there his body of material bread in the said words, as I know they be not the words of making, what earthly man had power to do as he did? for in all Holy Scripture, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Apocalypse, there be no words written of the making of Christ’s body; but there be written that Christ was the Son of the Father, and that he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and that he took flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, and that he was dead on the third day, and that he ascended to heaven very God and man, and that we should believe in all Scripture that be written of him, and that he is to come to judge the quick and the dead, and the same Christ Jesus, King and Saviour, (Heb. i.)

was at the beginning with the Father and the Holy Ghost, making all things of nought, both heaven and earth, and all things that be in it, working by word of his virtue; for he said, "Be it do," and it was done, (Gen. i.) as whose works never earthly man might comprehend, either make. And yet the words of the making of these things by me, written in the beginning of Genesis, even as God spake them, and if ye cannot make the work that he made, and have the words by which he made it, how shall he make him that made the works? and you have no words of authority, either power left you on earth, by which ye should do this, but as ye have feigned this craft of your false errors, which some of you understand not.

[XII.] For it is prophesied, Isaiah vi. and xlii., chapter of Matthew xiii., and Luke viii., Mark iv., "Ye shall have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not, and ye shall see prophecies and ye shall not understand, lest they were converted, for I hide them from the hearts of those people; their hearts are greatly fattened, and this thing is done to you for the wickedness of your errors in unbelief; therefore be ye converted from your worst sin;" as it is written, when Moses was in the hill with God, (Exodus xx.) the people made a calf, and worshipped it as God, "And God spake to Moses, Go, for the people have done the worst sin to make and worship alien gods." (Exod. xxxii.) But now I shall ask you a word, answer ye me; Whether is the body of the Lord made at once or at twice? is both the flesh and the blood in the host of the bread? or else is the flesh made at one time, and the blood made at other time, that is to say, the wine in the chalice? If thou wilt say, "It is full and whole the manhood of Christ in the host of bread, both flesh and blood, skin, hair, and bones;" then makest thou to worship a false god in the chalice, which is unconjured when ye worship the bread; and if ye say, "The flesh is in the bread, and the blood in the wine," then thou must grant, if thy craft be true, as it is not in deed, that the manhood of Christ is departed, and that he is made two times: for first thou takest the host of bread, other a piece of bread, and make it, as ye say, and the innocent people worship it. And then thou takest to thee the chalice, and likewise marrest, makest I would have said, the blood [XIII.] in it, and then worship it also; and if it be so, as I am assured, that the flesh and blood of Christ ascended, then be ye false harlots a to God and to us; for when we shall be household, b ye bring to us the dry flesh, and let the blood be away; for ye give us after the bread wine and water, and sometimes clean water unblessed, rather conjured, by virtue of your craft; and yet ye say, "Under the host of bread is the full manhood of Christ." Then by your own confession must it needs be that we worship a false god in the chalice which is unconjured when we worship the bread, and worship the one as the other; but where find ye that ever Christ or any of his disciples taught any man to worship this bread or wine?

Therefore what shall we say of the apostles that were so much with Christ, and were called by the Holy Ghost? had they forgot it to set it in the creed when they made it, that is, Christian men's belief? or else we might say that they knew no such God: for they believe in no more gods but in Him that was at the beginning, and made of nought all things, Hebrews the first, Psalm cii., visible and invisible; which Lord took flesh and blood, being in the virgin the same God. But ye have many false ways to beguile the innocent people, and sleights of the fiend.

For ye say that in every host either piece is the whole manhood of Christ, either full substance of him. For ye say, “As a man may take a glass, and break the glass into many pieces, and in every piece properly thou mayest see thy face, and thy face not parted; so,” ye say, “the Lord’s body is in each host either piece, and his body not parted.” And this is a foul subtil question to beguile an innocent fool.

[XIV.] But will ye take heed of this subtil question, how a man may take a glass and behold the very likeness of his own face, and yet it is not his face, but the likeness of his face? for and it were his very face, then he must needs have two faces, one on his body, and another in the glass. And if the glass were broken in many places, so there should be many faces, more by the glass than by the body, and each man shall make as many faces to them as they would: but as ye may see the mind or likeness of your face, and it is not the very face, but the figure thereof, so the bread is the figure or mind of Christ’s body in earth; and therefore Christ said, “As oft as ye do this thing, do it in mind of me.” (Luke xxii.) Also ye say, “As a man may light many candles at one candle, and the light of that candle never the more nor never the less; so,” ye say, “that the manhood of Christ descendeth into each part of every host, and the manhood of Christ never the more nor less,”—where then becometh your ministrations? For if a man light many candles at one candle, as long as they burn there will be many candles lighted, and as well the last candle as the first; and so by this reason, if ye shall fetch your word at God, of god make god, there must be many gods, and that is forbidden in the first commandment. (Exod. xx.) And as for making more, either making less of Christ’s manhood, it lieth not in your power to come there nigh, neither touch it, for it is ascended into heaven in a spiritual body, (Matthew xxviii.) which he suffered not Magdalene to touch, when her sins were forgiven to her. (John xx. 17.)

[XV.] Therefore all the sacraments that be left here in earth be but minds of the body of Christ; for a sacrament is no more to say, but a sign or mind of a thing passed or a thing to come: for when Jesus spake of the bread, and said to his disciples, Luke the xxii., “As ye do this thing, do it in mind of me,” it was set for a mind of good things of Christ’s body. But when the angel showed to John (Apocalypse xvii.) the sacraments of the woman, and of the beast that bare her, it was set for a mind of evil things to come on the face of the earth, and great stroyinga of the people of God. (Luke xxii. 19.) And in the old law there were many figures or minds of things to come. For the body of Christ and circumcision was commanded unto a law, (Gen. xvii. 12) and he that kept not the law was slain. And yet St. Paul saith, (Romans ii.) “And neither it is circumcision that is openly in the flesh, but he that is circumcised of heart in spirit, not in letter, whose praising is not of men, but of God.” Peter saith, the third chapter, “And so baptism of like form maketh not us safe, but the putting away of filthiness of the flesh, and the axing of good conscience in God, by the again rising of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, that we should be made heirs of everlasting life, he yeadea into heaven, and angels, and powers, and virtues being made subjects to him.” And also the Scriptures say of John Baptist, Matthew the third chapter, that he “preached in wilderness and said: A stronger than I shall come after me, and I am not worthy to kneel down and unlace his shoe.” And yet Christ said that he was more than a prophet.

[XVI.] Isaiah saith, the xl. chapter, Matthew xi. How many say ye be worthy to make his body and yet your works beareth witness that ye be no less the prophets; for if ye did ye should not teach the people to worship the sacraments or minds of Christ, for Christ himself, which sacraments or figures be lawful that God taught them and left them unto us, as the sacrifices other minds of the old law was full good, as it is written, "They that keep them should live in those." Paul, Romans x.: and so the bread that Christ brake was left to us for mind of things passed for the body of Christ, that we should believe he was a very man in kind as we, as God in our virtue, and that his manhood was sustained in food as ours be; for Saint Paul saith, "He was very man, and in habit he was found as man." (Phil. ii. 7.) And so we must believe that he was very God and man together, and that he styed^b up very God and man to heaven, and that he shall be there till he come to deem^c the world. And that we may not see him bodily being in this life, as it is written, Peter i.: for he saith, "Whom ye have not ye love, into whom ye now not seeing believe." And John saith in the first Gospel, "No man saw God, no but the only begotten Son that is in the Father he hath told out." (John i. 18.) And John saith in his Epistle, the iii. chapter, "Every man that sinneth seeth not him, neither knows him." By what reason, then, say ye, that be sinners, that ye make God? Truly this must needs be the worst sin, to say that ye make God; and it is the "abomination of discomfort," that is said in Daniel the prophet, "standing in the holy place; he that readeth let him understand." (Dan. xi. 32.) Also Luke saith, xxii., that Christ "took the cup after that he had supped, and did give thanks and said, This cup is the new testament in my blood that shall be shed into the remission of sins for man."

[XVII.] Now what say ye,—the cup which he said is the new testament in my blood, was it a material cup in which the wine was that he gave his disciples wine of, or was it his most blessed body in which the blessed blood was kept till it were shed out for the sins of them that should be made safe by his passion? Needs we must say that he spake of his holy body, as he did when he called his passion either suffering in body a cup when he prayed to his Father, or he went to his passion, Matthew xxvi., and said, "If it be possible that this cup pass from me, but if thou wilt that I drink it, thy will be done?" He spake not here of the material cup in which he had given his disciples drink, for it troubled not him; but he prayed for his great sufferance and bitter, the which he suffered for our sins and not for his. And if he spake of his holy body and passion when he said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood," so he spake of his holy body, when he said, "This is my body that shall be given for you," and not of the material bread which he had in his hand. Also, in another place, he calleth his passion a cup, Matthew xx., where the mother of Zebedee's sons came to him, and axed^a of him that her two sons, when he came to his kingdom, might sit one of his right side and one at his left side. And he answered and said, "Woman, thou wottest^b not what thou axest."^c Then he said to them: May ye drink the cup that I shall drink? and they said, Yea, Lord. And he said, "Ye shall drink of my cup, but to sit on my right hand, it is not mine to give, but to the Father it is proper." But in that he said, "Ye shall drink of my cup," he promised them to suffer tribulation of this world as he did, by the which they should enter into life everlasting, and to be both on his right hand.

[XVIII.] And thus ye may see that Christ spake not of the material cup, neither of himself nor of his apostles, neither of material bread, neither of material wine.

Therefore let every man wisely with meek prayers and great study, and also charity, read the words of God and Holy Scripture: but many of you be like the mother of Zebedee's sons, to whom Christ said, "Thou wottest not what thou axest." So many of you wot not what ye axe or what ye do; for if ye did, ye would not blaspheme God as ye do, to set an alien god instead of the living God. Also Christ saith, John xv., "I am a very vine!" Wherefore worship ye not the vine for God as ye do the bread? Wherein was Christ a very vine? or wherein was the bread Christ's body? in figurative speech, which is hid to the understanding of sinners. Then if Christ became not a material, neither an earthly vine, neither material vine became the body of Christ; so neither the bread, material bread, was not changed from his substance to flesh and blood of Christ.

Have ye not read John ii., when Christ came into the temple, they axed of him what token he would show, that they might believe him? And he answered unto them, "Cast down this temple, and in three days I shall raise it again;" which words were fulfilled in his rising again from death. But when he said, "Undo this temple," in that, that he said this, they were deceived, for they understood it fleshly, and had went [a](#) that he had spoken of the temple of Jerusalem, for because he stood in it. And hereof they accused him at his passion, full falsely, Matt. xxvi.; for he spake of the temple of his blessed body, which rose again in the third day. And right so Christ spake of his holy body, when he said, "This is my body, which shall be given for you," Luke xxii., which was given to death, and into rising again, to bliss for all that shall be saved by him. But like as they accused him falsely of the temple of Jerusalem, right now-a-days they accuse falsely against Christ, and say, that Christ spake of the bread that he brake among his apostles; for in that Christ said this, they be deceived, take it fleshly, and turn it to the material bread, as the Jews did to the temple; and on this false understanding, they make abomination of discomfort, that is said Daniel the prophet xi., and Matthew xxiv., standing in the holy place, "He that readeth, let him understand." Now, therefore, pray we heartily to God, that this evil time may be made short for the chosen men, as he hath promised in his blessed Gospel, Matt. xxiv. And the large and broad way, that leadeth to perdition, may be stopped; and the strait and narrow way, that leadeth to bliss, may be made open by Holy Scriptures, that we may know which is the will of God, to serve him in syckerness [b](#) and holiness, in the dread of God, that we may find by him a way of bliss everlasting. So be it.

[Note.] The Roman numerals in the margin, show the commencement of the several pages in the edition of 1546; the Scripture references, which are similarly marked, have been added in the present edition.

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WHY POOR PRIESTS HAVE NO BENEFICES.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

Some causes menena some poor priests to receive not benefices. The *first* for dread of simony: the *second* for dread of misspending poor men's goods: the *third* for dread of lettingb of better occupation that is more light or easy, more certain, and more profitable on every side. For if men should come to benefices by gift of prelates, there is dread of simony; for, commonly, they take the first-fruits or other pensions, or hold curates in office in their courts or chapels, or other vain offices, far from priests taught and ensampled of Christ and his apostles. So that commonly such benefices come not freely, as Christ commandeth, but rather for worldly winning,c or flattery, or praising, and thank of mighty men and lords, and not for ableness or cunningd of God's law, and true preaching of the Gospel, and ensample of holy life; and therefore commonly these prelates and receivers be fouled with simony, that is cursed heresy, as God's law and man's law teacheth openly, and many saints. And great marvel it is so now, that since St. Gregory saith, in plain law of the church and other books, that such men as desire benefices should not have them, but men that flee them for dread of unableness of themselves, and great charge, as did Moses, Jerom, Austin, Gregory, and holy saints. And now who can fast run to Rome, and bear gold out of the land, and pay it for dead lead, and a little writing, and strive and plead and curse for tithes, and other temporal profits, that be clepede with Antichrist's clerks rights of holy church, shall have great benefices of cure of many thousands souls, though he be unable of cunninga of Holy Writ, nor in will to teach and preach to his subjects but of cursed life, and wicked ensample of pride, of covetousness, gluttony, lechery, and other great sins. But if there be any simple man that desireth to live well, and teach truly God's law, and despise pride and other sins, both of prelates and other men, he shall be holden a hypocrite, a new teacher, a heretic, and not suffered to come to any benefice. But if in any little poor place to live a poor life, he shall be so pursued and slandered, that he shall be put out by wiles, cautels,b frauds and worldly violence, and imprisoned, disgraced, or burnt, if Antichrist's clerks may for any gold and cursed leasings.c And if lords shall present clerks to benefices, they will have commonly gold in great quantity, and hold these curates in their worldly office, and suffer the wolves of hell to strangle men's souls, so that they have much gold, and their office done for nought, and their chapels holden up for vain glory or hypocrisy, and yet they will not present a clerk able of cunninga of God's law, and good life, and holy ensample to the people, but a kitchen clerk, or a penny clerk, or wise in building of castles, or worldly doing, though he cannot read well his psalter, and knoweth not the commandments of God, nor the sacraments of holy church. And yet some lords, to colour their simony, will not take for themselves, but kenerchiefsd for the lady, or a palfrey,e or a tun of wine. And when some lords would present a good man, and able for love of God and Christian souls, then some ladies be means to have a dancer, a tripper on tapis,f or hunter, or hawker, or a wild player of summer's games, for flattering and gifts going betwixt; and if it be for dancing in bed, so much the worse. And thus it seemeth that both prelates and lords commonly make a cursed Antichrist,

and a quick fiend to be master of Christ's people, for to lead to hell to Satan their master; and suffer not Christ's disciples to teach Christ's Gospel to his children, for to save their souls. And so travail to exile Christ and his law out of his heritage, that is Christian souls, that he bought not with rotten gold nor silver, but with his precious heart-blood that he shed on the cross by most burning charity. But in this presenting of evil curates, and holding of curates in worldly office, letting **g** them from their ghostly cure, be three degrees of traitery **h** against God and his people. The first is in prelates and lords that thus hold curates in their worldly office: for they have their high states in the church, and lordships, for to purvey **i** true curates to the people, and to maintain them in God's law, and punish them if they fail in their ghostly cure, and by this they hold their lordships of God. Then if they make evil curates, and hold them in their worldly office, and let **a** them to lead God's people the rightful way to heaven, but help them and constrain them to lead the people to hell-ward, by withdrawing of God's word, and by evil ensample giving, they be wayward traitors to God and his people, and vicars and procurators of Satan. Yet mere traitery **b** is in false curates that give mede **c** or hire, to come into such worldly offices, for to spare their muck and lay it in treasure, and to get lordship and maintenance against ordinances, that they dare not clepe **d** them to residence, and save their souls, but couche **e** in lords' courts, and lusts, and ease of their flesh, for to get more fat benefices, and purpose not speedily to do their ghostly office. More is to the lords that be led with such cursed heretics, Antichrists, traitors to God and his people, namely, traitors to lords themselves: where lords might not find in all their lordship true worldly men to rule their household and worldly offices, but if they take thereto curates that be openly false traitors to God and his people: where lords be so blinded, that they perceive not that such traitors that openly be false to God, that they will much more be false to them. But the most traitery **b** is in false confessors, that should by their office warn prelates and lords of this great peril, and clerks also that they hold none such curates in their worldly offices, for they do not this lest they should lessen lordship and friendship and gifts, and welfare of their stinking belly, and so they sille **f** Christian souls to Satan, for to have likings of their stinking belly, and make prelates and lords and curates to live in sin and traitery **b** against God and his people, and so against the hire that lords give their confessors, they deceive them in their souls' health, and maintain them in cursed traitery **b** of God and his people: and thus almost all the world goeth to hell for this cursed simony and false confessors. For commonly prelates, lords, and curates, be envenomed with this heresy of simony, and never do very **g** repentance and satisfaction therefore. For when they have a fat benefice, gotten by simony, they forsake it not, as they be bound by their own law, but wittingly **h** use forth that simony, and live in riot, covetousness, pride, and do not their office, neither in good ensample, nor in true teaching. And thus Antichrist's clerks, enemies of Christ and his people, by money and flattery and fleshly love, gathering to them leading of the people, and forbare **i** true priests to teach them God's law; and therefore the blind leadeth the blind, and both parts run into sin, and full many to hell; and it is huge wonder that God of his righteousness destroyeth not the houses of prelates and lords and curates, as Sodom and Gomorrah, for this heresy, extortion, and other cursedness that they havest. **j**

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

Yet though poor priests might freely get presentation of lords to have benefices with cure of souls, they dread of misspending of poor men's goods. And this is more dread than the first anemptis^a their own persons. For priests owen^b to hold them paid with food and hiling,^c and as St. Paul teacheth: and if they have more it is poor men's good, as their own law, and Jerom and God's law say, and they be keepers thereof and procurators of poor men. But for institution and induction he shall give much of this good that is poor men's to bishops' offices, archdeacons, and officials that be too rich, and not freely come thereof. And when bishops and their officers come and feign to visit, though they nourish men in open sin for annual rent, and do not their office, but sell souls to Satan for money, wretched curates be needed to feast them richly, and give procuracy and synage,^d yea, against God's law and man's, and reason, and against their conscience, and also they should not be suffered to teach truly God's law to their own subjects, and warn them of false prophets, who deceive them both in belief and teaching and good life, and earthly goods, as Christ doth in the Gospel, and commandeth curates to do the same upon pain of their damnation. For then they must cry to the people the great sins of prelates, and other new feigned religious, as God biddeth; but they deem that such sad reprovings of sin is envy, slandering of prelates, and destroying of holy church. And they shullene^e not be suffered to do sharp executions of God's law against their subjects, be they never so openly cursed of God and slandered of Christian religion, if the high clerks of Antichrist have gifts and pensions by year to suffer cursed men in open avowtery^f and other sins. For when they be falsely amended by officials and deans, no man be hardy to waken them out of their lusts of sin, for that should destroy jurisdiction, and winning^g of prelates; and their cursed extortion is called 'the great alms of Antichrist.' But hereby they make large kitchens, hold fat horse and hounds, and hawks, and strumpets gaily arrayed, and suffer poor men to starve for mischief, and yet suffer and constrain them to go the broad way to hell. Also many times their patrons getters of country and idle shaveldoos^h will look to be feasted of such curates, and else make them lose that little thing that they and poor men shall live by. So that they shall not spend the dymes^a and offerings after good conscience and God's law, but waste them on such mighty and rich men, and idle, and else for travail, cost and enmity, and despising that they shall suffer; and on the other side, for dread of conscience therein, is better to forsake all than hold it forth. Also each good day commonly these small curates shall have letters from their ordinaries to summon, and to curse poor men for nought, but for covetousness of Antichrist's clerks, and but if they not summon and curse them though they know no cause why anemptis^b God's law, they shall be hurled and summoned from day to day, from far place to farther, or cursed, or lose their benefice or profits thereof. For else as prelates feign they by their revelry shall soon destroy prelates' jurisdiction, power, and winning.^c Also, when poor priests first holy of life, and devout in their prayers, be beneficed; but if they be not worldly and busy about the world, to make great feasts to rich parsons and vicars, and rich men, and costly and gaily arrayed, and their state axeth,^d by false doome^e of the world, they shall be hated and hayned^f on as hounds, and each man to peirg^g them in name and worldly goods, and so many cursed deceits hath Antichrist brought up by his worldly clerks to make curates to misspend poor men's goods, and not truly do their office, or else to forsake all, and let Antichrist's clerks as lords of this world, yea, more cruelly than

other tyrants, rob the poor people by feigned censures, and teach the fiend's lore,^h both by open preaching and ensample of their cursed life. Also, if such curates be stirred to go learn God's law, and teach their parishioners the Gospel, commonly they shall get no leave of bishops but for gold; and when they shall most profit in their learning, then shall they be clepidⁱ home at the bishop's will. And if they shall have any high sacraments, or points of the high prelates, commonly they shall buy them with poor men's goods, both against high prelates, anemptis^b rich men of country, as patrons, parsons, and other getters of country, and their own kin, for fame of the world, and for shame, and evil deeming^k of men. And certes^l it is a great wonder that God suffereth so long this sin unpunished openly; namely, of prelates' courts that be dens of thieves, and larders of hell: and so of their officers that be subtle in malice and covetousness, and of lords and mighty men that shall destroy this wrong and other, and maintain truth and God's servants, and now maintain Antichrist's falseness and his clerks for part of the winning.^a And how simple priests durst take such benefices. But if they were mighty of cunning^b a good life, and hearty agenstond^c these wrongs, and more that we may now touch for the multiplicity and subtle colouring by hypocrisy. But certes^d God suffereth such hypocrites and tyrants to have name of prelates for great sins of the people and unworthiness thereof, that each part lead other to hell by blindness of the fiend. And this is a thousand-fold more vengeance that if God destroy both parts and all their goods, and earth therewith, as he did by Sodom and Gomorrah. For the longer that they live thus in sin, the greater pains shall they have in hell, but if they amend them. And this dread and many more, maketh some poor priests to receive more benefices.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

But yet though poor priests might have freely presentation of lords, and be helped by maintaining of kings, and help of good commons from extortions of prelates and other misspending of these goods that is full hard in this reign of Antichrist's clerks; yet they dread sore that by singular cure ordained of sinful men they should be letted^e from better occupation, and from more profit of holy church. And this is the most dread of all as anemptis^f their persons; for they have cure and charge at the full of God to help their brethren to heavenward, both by teaching, praying, and ensample giving. And it seemeth that they shall most easily fulfil this by general cure of charity as did Christ and his apostles, though they bind them not to our singular place as a tey^g dog. And by this they most sickerly^h save themselves, and help their brethren: for now they be free to flee from one city to another, when they be pursued of Antichrist's clerks, as biddeth Christ in the Gospel. Also now they may best without challenging of men go and dwell among the people where they shall most profit, and in convenableⁱ time come and go after stirring of the Holy Ghost, and not be bound by sinful men's jurisdiction from the better doing. Also now they sue^k Christ and his apostles near, in thus taking alms wilfully and freely of the people that they teach, than in taking dymes^l and offerings by custom that sinful men ordain, and use now in the time of grace. Also this is more meedful^a in both sides as they understand by Christ's life, and his apostles: for thus the people giveth them alms more wilfully and devoutly, and they take it more meekly, and be more busy to have, keep, and teach God's law; and so it is the better for both sides. Also by this manner might and should the people give freely their alms to true priests that truly keep their order and freely

and openly taught the Gospel, and withdraw from wicked priests, and not to be constrained to pay their tithes and offerings to open cursed men, and not maintain them in their open cursedness. And thus should simony, covetousness, and idleness of worldly clerks be laid down, and holiness and true teaching and knowing of God's law be brought in both in clerks and lewd**b** men: also thus should striving, pleading, and cursing for dymes**c** and offerings, and hate and discord among priests and lewd men be ended, and unity, peace, and charity be maintained and kept. Also these benefices by this course that men use now bringeth in worldliness and needless business about worldly offices that Christ and his apostles would never take upon them, and yet they were more mighty, more witty, and more burning in charity to God and to the people, both to live the best manner in themselves, and to teach other men. Also covetousness and worldly sickness**d** of clerks, and occasion of covetousness and worldliness of the people, should be done away, and Christ's poverty and his apostles', by ensample of poor life of clerks, and trust in God, and desiring of heavenly bliss, should reign in Christian people. Also then should priests study Holy Writ, and be devout in their prayers tarried with new offices as new songs, and more sacraments than Christ used and his apostles that taught us all truth, and speedily saving of Christian people. Also mochil**e** blasphemy of prelates and other men of feigned obedience, and needless swearings made to worldly prelates, should then cease, and sovereign obedience to God and his law, and eschewing of needless oaths should reign among Christian men; also then should men eschew commonly all the perils said before in the first chapter and second, and many thousand more, and live in cleanness and sickness**d** of conscience. Also then should priests be busy to seek God's worship, and saving of men's souls, and not their own worldly glory, and winning**f** of worldly dirt. Also then should priests live like to an angel, as they be angels of office, where they live now as swine in fleshly lusts, and turn again to their former sins as hounds to their spuing, for abundance of worldly goods, and idleness in their ghostly office, and overmuch business about this wretched life. For these dreads and many thousand more, and for to be more like to Christ's life and his apostles, and for to profit more to their own souls and other men's, some poor priests think with God to travail about where they should most profit, by evidence that God giveth them, the while that they have time, and little bodily strength and youth. Nethless**a** they damn**b** not curates that do well their office, so that they keep liberty of the Gospel, and dwell where they shall most profit, and that they teach truly and stably God's law against false prophets, and cursed fiends' lymes.**c**

Christ for his endless mercy help his priests and common people to beware of Antichrist's deceits, and go even the right way to heaven. Amen, Jesus, for thy endless charity!

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ANSWER OF WYCLIFFE TO RICHARD THE SECOND, AS TOUCHING THE RIGHT AND TITLE OF THE KING AND THE POPE. [A](#)

In relation to the following document, Fox, the martyrologist, [a](#) writes:—

“It was demanded, whether the kingdom of England may lawfully, in case of necessity, for its own defence, detain and keep back the treasure of the kingdom, that it be not carried away to foreign and strange nations, the pope himself demanding and requiring the same, under pain of censure, and by virtue of obedience.”

Wycliffe thus answers:—

Setting apart the minds of learned men, and what might be said in the matter, either by the canon law, or by the law of England, or the civil law; it resteth now only to persuade and prove the affirmative part of this doubt, by the principles of Christ's law. And first I prove it thus:—

Every natural body hath power given of God to resist against its contrary, and to preserve itself in due estate, as philosophers know very well. Insomuch, that bodies without life are endued with such kind of power (as it is evident) unto whom hardness is given, to resist those things that would break them, and coldness, to withstand the heat that dissolveth them. Forasmuch then, as the kingdom of England (after the manner and phrase of the Scriptures) ought to be one body, and the clergy with the commonalty the members thereof, it seemeth that the same kingdom hath such power given it of God; and so much the more apparently, by how much the same body is more precious unto God, adorned with virtue and knowledge. Forsomuch then as there is no power given of God unto any creature, for any end or purpose, but that he may lawfully use the same to that end and purpose, it followeth that our kingdom may lawfully keep back and detain their treasure for the defence of itself, in what case soever necessity do require the same.

Secondly, the same is proved by the law of the Gospel; for the pope cannot challenge the treasure of this kingdom, but under the title of alms, and consequently under the pretence of the works of mercy, according to the rule of charity.

But in the case aforesaid the title of alms ought utterly to cease: *ergo*, the right and title of challenging the treasure of our realm shall cease also in the presupposed necessity. Forsomuch as all charity hath his beginning of himself, it were no work of charity, but of mere madness, to send away the treasures of the realm into foreign nations, whereby the realm itself may fall into ruin, under the pretence of such charity.

It appeareth also by this, that Christ the head of the church, whom all Christian priests ought to follow, lived by the alms of devout women, Luke vii. 8. He hungered and thirsted, he was a stranger, and many other miseries he sustained, not only in his members, but also in his own body, as the apostle witnesseth, 2 Cor. viii., “He was made poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich.” Whereby in the first endowing of the church, whatsoever he were of the clergy that had any temporal possessions, he had the same by form of a perpetual alms, as both writings and chronicles do witness.

Whereupon St. Bernard, declaring in his second book to Eugenius, that he could not challenge any secular dominion by right of succession, as being the vicar of St. Peter, writeth thus: “That if Saint John should speak unto the pope himself as St. Bernard doth unto Eugenius, were it to be thought that he would take it patiently? But let it be so, that you do challenge it unto you by some other ways or means; but truly by any right or title apostolical, you cannot so do; for how could he give unto you that which he had not himself? That which he had he gave you, that is to say, care over the church; but did he give you any lordship or rule? Hark what he saith: ‘Not bearing rule (saith he) as lords over the clergy, but behaving yourselves as examples to the flock.’ And because thou shalt not think it to be spoken only in humility, and not in verity, mark the word of the Lord himself in the Gospel: ‘The kings of the people do rule over them, but you shall not do so.’ ”

Here lordship and dominion is plainly forbidden to the apostles, and darest thou then usurp the same? If thou wilt be a lord, thou shalt lose thine apostleship: or if thou wilt be an apostle, thou shalt lose thy lordship: for truly thou shalt depart from the one of them. If thou wilt have both, thou shalt lose both, or else think thyself to be of that number, of whom God doth so greatly complain, saying, “They have reigned, but not through me; they are become princes, and I have not known it.” Now if it doth suffice thee to rule with the Lord, thou hast thy glory, but not with God. But if we will keep that which is forbidden us, let us hear what is said: “He that is the greatest amongst you (saith Christ) shall be made as the least; and he which is the highest, shall be as the minister;” and for example, he set a child in the midst of them.

So this then is the true form and institution of the apostles’ trade: lordship and rule is forbidden, ministration and service commanded. [a](#)

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LETTER OF WYCLIFFE

IN EXCUSE TO POPE URBAN VI. [A](#)

I have joyfully to tell all true men the belief that I hold, and algaes [b](#) to the pope. For I suppose, that if any faith be rightful and given of God, the pope will gladly conserve it; and if my faith be error, the pope will wisely amend it. I suppose over this, that the Gospel of Christ be part of the corpe [c](#) of God's law. For I believe that Jesus Christ, that gave in his own person this Gospel, is very God and very man, and by this it passes all other laws. I suppose over this, that the pope be most oblishid to the keeping of the Gospel among all men that live here. For the pope is highest vicar that Christ hath here in earth. For moreness [d](#) of Christ's vicars is not measured by worldly moreness but by this,—that this vicar sues [e](#) more Christ by virtuous living, for this teaches the Gospel. That this the sentence of Christ and of his Gospel I take as belief; that Christ for time that he walked here was most poor man of all, both in spirit and in haveing; [f](#) for Christ says that he had not thing for to rest his head on. And over this I take as belief, that no man schulde sue the pope, nor no saint that now is in heaven, but in alsmycheg [g](#) as he sued [h](#) Christ: for James and John erred, and Peter and Paul sinned. Of this I take as wholesome counsel, that the pope leave his worldly lordship to worldly lords, as Christ gave him, and more speedily all his clerks to do so, for thus did Christ, and taught thus his disciples, till the fiend had blinded this world. And if I err in this sentence, I will meekly be amended, if by the death, it be skilful, for that I hope were good to me. And if I might travel in my own person, I would with God's will go to the pope. But Christ has needed me to the contrary, and taught me more obeishe [a](#) to God, than to man. [b](#) And I suppose of our pope that he will not be Antichrist, and reverse Christ in this working, to the contrary of Christ's will. For if he summons against reason, by him or any of his, and pursue this unskilful summoning, he is an open Antichrist. And merciful intent exused not Peter that not Christ clepid [c](#) him Sathan: so blind intent and wicked counsel excuses not the pope here, but if he ask of true priests that they travel more than they may, 'tis not exused by reason of God that nor he is Antichrist. For our belief teaches us that our blessed God suffers us not to be tempted more than we may; how should a man ask such service? And therefore pray we to God for our pope Urban the Sixth, that his holy intent be not quenched by his enemies. And Christ, that may not lie, says that the enemies of a man be especially his homely emeinth, [d](#) and that this is sothe [e](#) of men and fiends.

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CONFESSION OF WYCLIFFE

CONCERNING THE EUCHARIST.

I acknowledge that the sacrament of the altar is very God's body in form of bread; but it is in another manner God's body than it is in heaven. For in heaven it is sense [a](#) fote, in form and figure of flesh and blood: but in the sacrament, God's body is the miracle of God in form of bread: and is he nouth [b](#) of sense fote, nor in man's figure, but as a man leev [c](#) for to think the kind of an image, whether it be of oak or of ash, and sets his thought in him in whom is the image: so much more should a man leave to think on the kind of bread but think upon Christ; for his body is the same bread that is the sacrament of the altar, and with all cleanness, [d](#) all devotion, and all charity that God would give him worship he Christ, and then he receives God ghostly more meedfully [e](#) than the priest, that sings the mass in less charity. For the bodily eating profits not to the soul, but inasmuch as the soul is fed with charity. This sentence is proved by Christ that may not lie. For, as the Gospel says, Christ, that night that he was betrayed of Judas Iscariot, he took bread in his hands, and blessed it, brake it, and gave it to his disciples to eat. For he says, and may not lie,—“This is my body.”

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CONFESSION ON THE EUCHARIST,

DELIVERED TO THE DELEGATES AT OXFORD, IN 1382.[A](#)

We believe, as Christ and his apostles have taught us, that the sacrament of the alter, white and runde, and like to our bread or host unsacred is very God's body in form of bread, and if it be broken in three parties, as the church uses, or else in a thousand, every one of these parties is the same God's body, and ryth**b** so as the person of Christ is very God and very man, very Godhead, and very manhead, ryth so as holy kirke many hundred winters has trowyde,**c** the same sacrament is very God's body, and very bread; as it is form of God's body, and form of bread, as teacheth Christ and his apostles. And therefore Saint Paul nameth it never, but when he calls it bread, and he by our belief took his wit of God in this: and the argument of hereties against this sentence, is easy to a Christian man to assolve. And right as it is heresy to believe that Christ is a spirit and no body, so it is heresy for to trowe that this sacrament is God's body, and no bread; for it is both together. But the most heresy that God suffered to come to his kyrke is to trowe that this sacrament is an accident without a substance, and may on no wise be God's body: for Christ said by witness of John that "This bread is my body." And if they say that be this skylle that holy kyrke had been in heresy many hundred winters, so it is specially since the fiend was loosed that was bewitnessed of the angel to John Evangelist after a thousand winters that Christ was ascended to heaven. But it is to suppose that many saints that died in the mean time before their death were pured of this error. Oh how great diversity is between us that trowes that this sacrament is very bread in its kind, and between heretics that tell us that this is an accident without a subject! For before that the fiend, the father of lesynges**a** was loosened, was never this gabbying**b** contrived. And how great diversity is between us that trowes that this sacrament that in its kind it is very bread, and sacramentally God's body, and between heretics that trowes and tells that this sacrament may on none wise be God's body! For I dare surely say that if this were truth, Christ and his saints died heretics, and the more part of holy kyrke believeth now heresy, and therefore devout men supposed that this council of friars in London, was with the herydene.**c** For they put an heresy upon Christ and saints in heaven, wherefore the earth trembled. In truth, landman's voice answered for God as it did in time of his passion, when he was dampnyde to bodily death. Christ and his modur that in ground had destroyed all heresies, keep his kyrke in right belief of this sacrament, and move the king and his realm to ask sharply of his clerks this office that all his possessioners, on pain of losing all their temporalities, tell the king and his realm with sufficient grounding what is this sacrament; and all the orders of friars on pain of losing their allegiance tell the king and his realm with good grounding what is the sacrament: for I am certain of the thridde part of clergy that defends these doubts that is here said, that they will defend it on pain of their life.

london

blackburn and pardon printers

hatton garden

[a]Tanner, Bibliotheca Brit. 767. Lewis, chap. i. Baber ii.

[b]Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, i. 229—324. Appendix i.

[a]Ed. Quarto, cent. xiv. p. 71.

[c]Itinerary, v. 99.

[b]Tom. i. part ii. 329.

[d]MS. On Wedded Men and Wives, C.C.C. Cambridge.

[a]Wood's Annals, i. 105—107; ii. 712—717. Collier's Eccles. Hist. i. 497. Tanner, Notitia Monastica, Preface. Matthew Paris, Vit. Abbot. St. Alban. 62. Baconi Opus Majus, Præfat. Brompton Chron. 1348. Hoveden, 589. Dupin, Cent. XIII. 92. Henry's Hist. Eng. vi. 195—198. Robertson's View of Society, sect. i. Hallam's Middle Ages, ii. 24—29.

[a]Hist. Oxford, ii. 89, 113. Lewis, c. i. Brucker, Hist. Philos. iii. 826, 828. Selden, De Synedriis, lib. i. cap. 10, p. 228.

[a]Hist. of Oxford, i. 53, 92, 94. Lewis, c. l. Father Paul's Council of Trent, lib. ii.

[a]Hist. iii. 249, 250.

[a]Gio. Villani Chron. lib. xii. c. 83. Matteo Villani, lib. c. 4. Il Decamerone præmio. Knighton. col. 2599—2601. Walsingham, Hist. 198. Rot. Parl. ii. 234. Rymer, v. 655, 658, 693. Maitland's Hist. London, book i. c. 2. Barnes' Edward III. book ii. c. 8. Caxton's Chron. and Hollinshed, ad an.

[b]Johnson's Canons. 1362. "No rector shall give, and no curate shall receive, more than one mark above what had been yearly given for the same services *before the plague*."

[a]No biographer of Wycliffe had examined this MS. previously to the publication of the Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, but it has since been printed and edited with much care—with more care I may say than candour—by Dr. Todd.

[a]Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, i. 266, 267.

[a]"I have in my diocese of Armagh," says Fitz-Ralph, "about two thousand persons, who stand condemned by the censures of the church, denounced every year against murderers, thieves, and such like malefactors, of all which number scarcely fourteen have applied to me, or to my clergy, for absolution; yet they all receive the sacraments

as others do, because they are absolved, or pretend to be absolved, by friars.”—Fox, Acts and Monuments, *ubi supra*.

[a] Life of Wycliffe, i. 272, 273.

[a] The documents relating to this appointment and dispute may be seen in Lewis, Appendix, Nos. 1—9, or, in the Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, i. Appendix 2—10.

[a] See Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, i. 273, where I have touched on this subject; also a paper in the Gentleman’s Magazine about two years since.

[a] Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, i. 278—280.

[b] This document is printed in Lewis, Ap. No. 30.

[a] Lewis, Col. No. 30.

[b] The speeches, he writes, “*quam audivi in quodam Concilio a Dominis secularibus.*”

[c] This is especially observable in respect to the doctrine so often imputed to him, but so generally misunderstood, concerning the doctrine of “dominion founded on grace,”—in other words, the doctrine which was said to declare every person in mortal sin as having forfeited all title to any worldly office or possession. But the doctrine of Wycliffe on this subject, whatever it may have been, he states as being that of St. Augustine and St. Bernard, and it will not accordingly be regarded, by any man of sense and honesty, as being very favourable to anarchy. In the seventeenth chapter of the fourth book of the Trialogus, he writes, that “a man may possess temporal things by a two-fold title—by a title of *original righteousness*, and by a title of *worldly righteousness*. Christ possessed all the good things of the world by the former title—as St. Augustine often declares, that it is by that title, the title of grace, that all things are the right of the godly. But possession in a *civil* sense, is widely different from a title of that sort.” And Wycliffe never appealed to the former kind of title, to the disturbance of the latter, though he could sometimes speculate on the peculiarity of the former title as a theologian, and in the case of priests, never ceased to declare that the priest in mortal sin ceased *de facto* to be a priest. See Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, ii. 233—235.

[a] Cotton’s Abridgment of Records, 102, 103. Collier’s Eccles. Hist., i. 560.

[a] From 1304 to 1378 the following popes succeeded each other, and all were Frenchmen. Clement V.; John XXII.; Benedict XII.; Clement VI.; Innocent VI.; Urban V.; and Gregory XI. By a variety of mean and selfish contrivances, having “no other end than the acquisition of riches, these inconsiderate pontiffs excited a general hatred against the Roman see, and thereby greatly weakened the papal empire, which had been visibly upon the decline since the time of Boniface.” Hist. iii. 316—318.

[a] Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Angliæ et Hiberniæ. Lewis, p. 20. Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, i. 304, 305.

[a] Cotton's Abridgment, 45 Edward III. Fox, Acts and Mon. i. 547. Collier's Eccles. Hist., i. 438—460.

[b] MS. Ecclesiæ Regimen. Brit. Museum. Cott. MSS. Titus, D. i. The substance of this work is, no doubt, the production of Wycliffe, but the copy in the British Museum has been transcribed, and in one or two instances interpolated by the transcriber. Much of its sentiment and language will be found in the work on Prelates, and in other pieces.

[c] Lewis, 15—17.

[a] Walsingham, 161. Collier, i. 546, 547, 554.

[a] Barnes's Edward III., 864. Lewis, c. iii.

[c] Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, i. Ap., No. x.

[b] Fox, Acts and Mon., i. 561.

[a] Rymer, vii. 49 Edward III., Sess. 1. Cotton's Abridgment, ad an. 1376.

[a] Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, i. 345, 346.

[a] Cotton's Abridgment, 128. Fox, Acts and Mon. i. 561.

[a] His father was the powerful Hugh Courtney, Earl of Devonshire.

[b] Fuller's Church Hist. b. iv. cent. xiv.

[a] Fuller's Church Hist. 185. Cont. Murim. 137. Walsingham affirms with indignation that the Londoners were nearly all Lollards. Hist. 191. Spelman, ii. 625.

[b] Cotton's Abridgment, 160—162.

[a] See pp. 295, 296.

[b] Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, i. Ap. Nos. xi.—xv.

[a] Spelman, ii. 625. Walsingham, ad an.

[a] Fox, Acts and Mon. i. 559.

[b] Bale describes this paper as Answers to Objections. Murimuth, Contin. 137. Walsingham, 206—208.

[a] Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, i. 381—388.

[a] Lewis, c. iv. 78—80.

[a]Baleus, De Script. Brit. 369. Lewis, c. iv. 82. The indignation of Wycliffe against these orders may appear to some persons excessive, and as betraying more temper than judgment. But whatever may have been the learning or worth of some of the Mendicants in the times adverted to, their vices generally, and the mischiefs resulting from them, were such as to call for severe reprehension. The following is Chaucer's description of one of this class of men, and it shows that the poet and the Reformer were of one judgment on this subject.

Lordinges, there is in Yorkshire, as I ghesse,
A marishe contre, callid Holdernesse,
In which there went a Limitour about,
To preche, and eke to beg, it is no dout.
And so bifell, that on a day this frere
Had preched in a chirche in his manere,
And specially abovin every thing,
Excitid the pepill in his preching
To trentalls, and to geve for Goddis sake,
Wherewith men mighten holie housis make.
There as divine service is honourid,
Not there as it is wastid and devourid;
Ne there it nedith not for to be geve,
As to possessioners that may els leve,
Thonkid be God, in wele and haboundaunce.
Trentalls, quoth he, deliverith fro penaunce
There frendis soulis as well olde as yonge,
If so that they ben hastily ysonge,
Not for to holde a preest jolie and gay,
(He singith not but o masse in a day,)
Delivereth out, quoth he, anon the soulis,
Full hard it is with fleshe-hoke, or with oules
To ben yclawid, or to brenne or bake,
Now speede you hastily for Crisis sake.
And when this frere had said al his entent,
With Qui cum Patre, forth away he went.
Whan yfolk in chirche had yeve him what hem lest,
He went his way, no lengir would he rest,
With scrip and tippid staffe ytucked hie:
In every house he gan to pore and prie,
And beggid mele, and chese, or ellis corne.
His felaw had a staffe tippid with horne,
A pair of tables alle of ivory,
A poyntell polished full fetously,
And wrote alwey the namis as he stode
Of all the folk that yave hem any gode
Askauncis, as if he wolde for hem prey.
Yeve us a bushell whete, or malt, or rey,
A Goddis kichell, or a trip of chese,
Or ellis what ye list, I may not chese,
A Goddis half-peny, or a masse-peny,

Or yeve us of your brawn if ye have any,
A dagon of your blanket, leve dame,
Our sustir dere, lo, here I write your name,
Bacon or befe, or such thing as ye find.
A sturdie harlot went hem ay behind,
That was her hostis man, and bare a sacke,
And that man yeve hem laid it on his backe.
And when he was out at the dore anon,
He playned away the namis everichone,
That he before had writtin in his tablis:
He servid hem with nyfles and with fables.
Sompner's Tale.

[a]Bede, Hist. lib. iv. c. 24.

[a]Vita Cuthberti. Baber's Historical Account of the Saxon and English Versions of the Scriptures, previous to the opening of the fifteenth century.

[b]This is in the Bodleian, D. xxiv. No. 3964. It is so called from John Rushworth, Esq. of Lincoln's Inn, its former possessor.

[c]Baber, lix. lx.

[d]Baber, 3, lxii. lxiii.

[a]Baber, lxii.—lxv.

[a]"The Holy Bible was, long before Wycliffe's days, by virtuous and well-learned men, translated into the English tongue, and by good and godly people with devotion and soberness well and reverently read."—Sir Thomas More, Dialog. iii. 14. Lingard, Hist. Eng. iv. 267.

[b]De Eventibus, col. 2644.

[a]Wilkins' Concilia, iii. 317. Walden, one of the antagonists of Wycliffe, affirmed, that "the decrees of bishops in the church are of greater authority and dignity than is the authority of the Scriptures."—Doc. Trial. lib. ii. c. 21.

[a]Knighton, De Eventibus, col. 2644.

[a]Speculum Secularium Dominiorum. MS. apud Ele. Usser. Lewis, c. v. 86, 87.

[a]Mosheim, Hist. Eccles. ii. 555—569.

[a]"If the bread should be changed every day into the body of Christ, it would be infinitely increased. They inquire also whether the bread ceaseth to be; then it is annihilated, and so it is spoiled. Also they ask, how a body of so great a bulk can enter into the mouth of a man? Whether the body of Christ be eaten, chewed with the teeth, and, consequently, divided into parts? Whether the bread becomes the body of Christ?"

Because then it will really be the body of Christ; that is to say, something else than it is. Whether the bread becomes the body of Christ? Because, if so, then bread will be the matter of Christ's body; also after transubstantiation the accidents remain; if so, they must be in another subject,—as, for instance, in the air. But if it be there, then some part of the air must be round, and savoury, and white; and as the form is carried through divers places, so the accidents change their subject. Again, these accidents abide in the same part of the air, and so solidity will be in the air; because they are solid, and, consequently, the air will be solid. Hence it appears that these accidents are not in the air, neither are they in the body of Christ; neither can any other body be assigned in its place, in which they shall appear to be; and, therefore, the accidents do not merely seem to remain. Again, when the form or figure in which the body of Christ lieth, is divided into parts, the body of Christ continues no longer in that figure which it had before; how, therefore, can the body of Christ be in every part of that host? Again, if the body of Christ be hid in that little form, where is the head, and where is the foot? As a consequence, his members must be undistinguishable again. Christ gave his body to his disciples before his passion. Now he gave it them either mortal or immortal; yet if he gave it immortal, it is certain that then it was mortal; and, consequently, while it is really mortal it was yet immortal, which is impossible.”—Alanus Magnus, contra Albigenses, cited in the Latin by Dr. Allin, in his Remarks on the Churches of the Albigenses, c. xvi. 146.

[a]The printed copy bears the following title:—“A Testimonie of Antiquitie, showing the ancient faythe in the Church of England touching the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord, here publicly preached, and also received in the Saxon tyme, above six hundred years ago. Printed by John Day, beneath St. Martyn's. Cum privilegio Regiæ Maiestatis. 1567.”

[a]Wood's Hist. 188. Lewis, c. vi.

[a]Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, ii. App. Nos. 2, 3. Leland, De Script. Brit. 379. Sir Roger Twisden describes the above judgment concerning this doctrine, as “the first plenary determination of the Church of England” respecting it, and concludes on this ground, that “the opinion of transubstantiation, that brought so many to the stake, had not more than an hundred and forty years' prescription before Martin Luther.”—Historical Vindication, pp. 193, 194.

[a]Sudbury Register, in Wilkins, Concil. Brit. iii. 170, 171.

[a]Wilkins, iii. 157. Lewis, c. vi. The Gadstow Chronicle, cited by Mr. Lewis, states that the earthquake mentioned in the preceding page took place about one o'clock in the forenoon of the Wednesday previous to Whitsuntide, about May 30th. But this was probably a second convulsion, for it is certain, that the synod assembled nearly a fortnight earlier.—Fox, Acts and Monuments. Edition by Pratt.

[a]Fox, Acts and Monuments, i. 569. Knighton, Coll. 2650, 2651.

[a]Fox, Acts and Monuments, i. 569, 570. Knighton, Coll. 2650. Lewis, c. vi.

[a]Fox, Acts and Mon. i. 507, 508.

[a]Fox, Acts and Mon. i. 575, 576.

[a]Fox, Acts and Mon. i. 577—579.

[a]Knighton, Col. 2655—2660. Fox, Acts and Monuments, 579, 580. Wilkins, Concl. Brit. ubi supra.

[a]Laymen.

[b]Homily, MS. Bib. Reg. British Museum.

[a]Knighton, De Event. Coll. 2657. Walsingham, passim. The several documents in Fox, and Lewis c. vi.

[a]Homily, MS. Bib. Reg. British Museum.

[a]Fox, Acts and Monuments, i. 576. Lingard, Hist. Eng. iv. 259.

[a]Hist. 283. Wilkins, Con. Brit. iii. 171.

[a]Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, ii. 112—120. Ap. ii., iii., vi.

[a]Hist. of Oxford, 189. Life and Opinions of Wycliffe, ii. 121.

[a]MS. Homilies. Bib. Reg. British Museum, pp. 154, 174.

[a]Le Bas, Life of Wiclif, 294, 295.

[a]British Museum. MSS. Titus D. xix. In the Bodleian is a tract with the following title:—*Compendium X. Mandatorum editum a Majestro Jo. Wicliffe, Doctore Evangelicæ veritatis*. It is much used by Dr. James, in his “Apology for John Wickliffe.”

[a]The passage following, on the precept, Thou shalt not kill, resembles the extracts on the same subject, given in a subsequent page, from the work under the title of the Seven Deadly Sins. “Therefore, each man beware that he do no manslaughter, for we are all brethren, and the sons of God. But how shall he be hardy to stand before God, who has slain the son of God? It is a wonder how any man dare destroy that creature which God made in his own likeness. If a man of craft hath so great love to his work, that he may not suffer it to be harmed, how much guess you that God loveth that creature he made to his likeness?” The deed is further described as a “despising and scorning of the passion and the painful death of Jesus Christ, who died to save men’s lives unto the bliss of heaven.” The following glance at the common life of the fourteenth century, is perhaps worth transcribing. “But, alas for sorrow, if a man sit among men or women now-a-days, and speak of such things, or warn them of their oaths, many and fell, of their cursing and swearing, and of their false leasings that they make of their neighbours, and so of other sins, anon they will begin to wax

heavy, and sorry, and evil essayed if they might for shame, and be full weary of his fellowship.”

[b]MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, pp. 1—22. Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 1—17.

[a]On the death of Gregory the Eleventh in 1378, commenced a memorable schism in the papacy, the church having during the next half century two or three heads at the same time, each of the contending popes forming plots, and thundering out anathemas against his rival. See Mosheim, iii. 125—128. This it will be remembered was about six years before the death of Wycliffe, and from the reference to this event in the MS., as well as from its allusions to the disputes concerning the eucharist, the date of this production, as written sometime during the above interval, is determined.

[b]Commandments.

[c]Man-killers.

[a]Supremely.

[b]Truly.

[c]Steadily—firmly.

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class. C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 17—23. It does not appear that the itinerant labours of the persons so often mentioned in the writings of Wycliffe under the title of “poor priests,” had become such as to attract much attention from the ruling clergy until within some five or six years of the Reformer’s death: and throughout this work, “On Obedience,” there is so much said concerning the manner in which the bishops employed their authority to silence this new and irregular class of teachers, as to place it beyond doubt that this piece was written by the Reformer sometime within the space above-mentioned.

[a]This term is commonly used by Wycliffe to denote church censures.

[a]Sentence.

[b]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 32—54. This work contains repeated allusions, in common with the preceding, to the conduct of the prelates, in persecuting the “poor priests” who went about preaching to the people. (Chap. vi., xvi., xxiii., xxvii.) In the thirteenth chapter there is a reference to the crusade carried on in Flanders under the command of Spencer, bishop of Norwich, in favour of Pope Urban. The bishop embarked on that enterprise in April, 1383, having raised a force for the purpose chiefly by means of papal pardons and indulgences. “All who should die at this time,” says Froissart, “and who had given their money, were absolved from every fault, and by the tenure of the bull, happy were they who could now die, in order to obtain so noble an absolution.” Hist. *ubi supra*. Wycliffe maintains indignantly that the spiritual weapons of religion should be used “to make peace,” and not, after this manner, “to make dissensions and war.”

[a]Tithes.

[a]Favourers.

[a]Absolved.

[a]A layman, or an ignorant man.

[b]Counterfeited—invented.

[a]See pages 2, 3.

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. Our only evidence in respect to the date of this piece, is from its general contents. It greatly magnifies the office of preaching, charges the friars with doing their utmost to deceive the people, and to “stop poor priests” from endeavouring to bring them out of their ignorance and irreligion; and it is altogether marked by the opinions, feeling, and language observable in such of the Reformer’s works as are known to be the production of his later years. We know of no work strictly of this complexion, that can be shown to have been written by Wycliffe in the early period of his history; but everything known to be from his pen during the last five or seven years of his life carries this impress.

[a]Nature—they discharge many natural duties without being religious.

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. This treatise speaks of priests as “living poorly and justly, and going about teaching freely God’s law,” (chap. xvi.) and abounds in complaint that men should be persecuted for so doing. Its condemnation of all kinds of endowment, excepting the form of tithes and offerings, and its doctrine even concerning such revenues in the case of ecclesiastics who “trespass by long custom,” leave no room to doubt as to the late date of this remarkable production.

[a]By secular clerks, the regular clergy are meant, as distinguished from the religious orders.

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 103—116. The reference in the twenty-sixth chapter of this work to the objections made against the reading of the Scriptures by the laity in the mother tongue, fixes the date of the tract as written by the Reformer not more than two or three years before his death. The passage will be found in the text. The greater part of this work has been printed in the work intitled, *The British Reformers*, i. 123—141, published by the Religious Tract Society.

[b]The word “penance” is used by Wycliffe in the sense of contrition, penitence, or humility.

[a]Strong natural discernment.

[b]“The fourth error is, that they think more of statutes of sinful men, than of the most reasonable law of Almighty God. For they dread the pope’s law, and statutes made by bishops, and other officers, more than the noble law of the Gospel. Therefore they have many great and costly books of man’s law, and study them much; but few curates have the Bible and good expositions on the Gospel: they study them but little, and do them less. But would to God that every parish church in this land had a good Bible, and good expositions on the Gospel, and that the priests studied them well, and taught truly the Gospel and God’s commandments to the people! Then should good life prevail, and rest, and peace, and charity; sin and falseness should be put back—God bring this end to his people!”—British Reformers, i. 125.

[a]This subject has been touched upon in a preceding section of the treatise. “The ninth error is, that they waste poor men’s goods on rich furs and costly clothes, and worldly array, and feasts of rich men, and in gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery. For they sometimes pass great men in their gay furs, and precious clothes, fat horses, with gay saddles and bridles. St. Bernard crieth, Whatever curates hold of the altar more than simple livelihood and clothing, is not theirs, but other men’s.”—Ibid. i. 127.

[b]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 116—125. The doctrine of this work, concerning the duty of lords in regard to the wealth of the delinquent or indolent among the clergy, and the manner in which it sets forth preaching as compared with other priestly services, seem to determine its date as contemporaneous with the works immediately preceding.

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. The first sentence of this work shows that it was written in behalf of a class of men, who, as we have before observed, do not become known to us until near the close of the life of the Reformer. Its doctrine throughout is that of Wycliffe when his views were most matured. If this and similar pieces be compared with the “Pore Caitif,” or the “Last Age of the Church,” the reader will be sensible to the force of this kind of evidence.

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.

[b]The further evidence in respect to date is in chapters iii. xv. xvi. xix. xxvi.

[a]The celebrated Bishop of Lincoln.

[a]Consecrate.

[a]Ordinance of man.

[b]I Peter ii. 13, 14. Rom. xiii. 1—4.

[c]By any ecclesiastical pretext, or plea of priesthood.

[d]Forged decrees, meant to sustain the more extravagant pretensions of the papacy.

[a]Chap. xi.

[a]Chap. xiv.

[a]The seal attached to papal documents.

[b]Rev. xiii. 17.

[c]Not having *regard*, &c.

[a]Cover us.

[b]Satisfied—content.

[c]Certainly—surely.

[a]Support—maintain.

[b]Chap. xviii.

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.

[b]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dublin. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 125—131; and another copy, Class C. Tab. i. No. 14.

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dublin. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 131—136; and another copy, Class C. Tab. i. No. 14. The contents generally of this work, in common with Nos. X. and XI., forbid, and on the same grounds, our ascribing it to an early period in the career of the Reformer.

[b]Referring to the manner of wearing the hair peculiar to ecclesiastical persons.

[a]Men of later times—modern.

[b]The term is used to denote master, superior, any person in authority.

[c]The following extract contains the devotional introduction of this tract, and the counsels addressed to the priest, and the lord, as printed in the work intitled *British Reformers*, published by the Religious Tract Society. The passages given in the text in this instance, as in all instances, are from my own papers. But as the gentlemen who made the collection adverted to, were pleased to consult me on the subject, I feel the less scruple in availing myself of a few passages from their publication in the way of notes.

“First, when thou risest, or fully wakest, think upon the goodness of thy God; how for his own goodness, and not for any need, he made all things out of nothing, both angels and men, and all other creatures, good in their kind. The second time, think on the great sufferings and willing death that Christ suffered for mankind. When no man might make satisfaction for the guilt of Adam and Eve, and others more, neither any angel might make satisfaction therefore, then Christ, of his endless charity, suffered such great passion and painful death, that no creature could suffer so much. Think the

third time, how God hath saved thee from death and other mischief, and suffered many thousands to be lost that night, some in water, some in fire, and some by sudden death, and some to be damned without end. And for this goodness and mercy thank thy God with all thine heart, and pray him to give thee grace to spend in that day, and evermore, all the powers of thy soul, as mind, understanding, reason, and will; and all the powers of thy body, as strength, beauty, and thy five senses, in his service and worship, and in nothing against his commandments, but in ready performance of his works of mercy, and to give good example of holy life, both in word and deed, to all men about thee. Look afterward that thou be well occupied, and no time idle, for the danger of temptation. Take meat and drink in measure, not too costly, nor too lickerous, and be not too curious thereabout. But such as God sendeth thee with health, take it in such measure, that thou be fresher in mind and understanding to serve God. And always thank him for such gifts. Besides this, look thou do right and equity to all men, thy superiors, equals, and subjects, or servants; and stir all to love truth, and mercy, and true peace, and charity; and suffer no men to be at dissension, but accord, if thou canst, in any good manner. Also, most of all, fear God and his wrath; and most of all, love God, and his law, and his worship: and ask not principally for worldly reward, but in all thine heart desire the bliss of heaven in mercy of God, and thine own good life; and think much of the dreadful doom of pains of hell, to keep thee out of sin; and on the endless great joys of heaven, to keep thee in virtuous life; and according to thy skill teach others the same doing. In the end of the day, think wherein thou hast offended God, and how much, and how oft, and therefore have entire sorrow, and amend it while thou mayest. And think how many God has suffered to perish that day, many ways, and to be damned everlastingly, and how graciously he hath saved thee; not for thy desert, but for his own mercy, and goodness, and therefore thank him with all thine heart. And pray him for grace that thou mayest dwell and end in his true and holy service, and real love, and to teach other men the same doing.

“If thou art a priest, and especially a curate, live thou holily, surpassing other men in holy prayer, desire, and thinking, in holy speaking, counselling, and true teaching. And that God’s commands, his Gospel, and virtues, be ever in thy mouth; and ever despise sin to draw men therefrom: and that thy deeds be so rightful, that no man shall blame them with reason, but that thy open deeds be a true book to all subjects and unlearned men, to serve God and do his commands thereby. For example of good life, open and lasting, more stirreth rude men, than true preaching by word only. And waste not thy goods in great feasts of rich men, but live a humble life, of poor men’s alms and goods, both in meat, and drink, and clothes: and the remainder give truly to poor men that have not of their own, and may not labour for feebleness or sickness, and thus thou shalt be a true priest both to God and man.

“If thou art a lord, look that thou live a rightful life in thine own person, both in respect to God and man, keeping the commands of God, doing the works of mercy, ruling well thy five senses, and doing reason and equity, and good conscience to all men. In the second place, govern well thy wife, thy children, and thy household attendants in God’s law, and suffer no sin among them, neither in word nor in deed, that they may be examples of holiness and righteousness to all others; for thou shalt be condemned for their evil life and their evil example, unless thou amend it according to thy might. In the third place, govern well thy tenants, and maintain them

in right and reason, and be merciful to them in their rents and worldly mersements, and not suffer thine officers to do them wrong, nor be extortionate to them. And chastise in good manner, them that are rebels against God's commands and virtuous life, more than for rebellion against thine own cause; or else for that thou lovest more thine own cause than God's, and thyself more than God Almighty, thou wert then a false traitor to God. And love, reward, praise, and cherish the true and virtuous of life, more than if thou sought only thine own profit. And reverence and maintain truly, according to thy skill and might, God's law and true preachers thereof, and God's servants, in rest and peace. For thereby thou holdest the lordship of God, and if thou failest of this, thou misdoest against God, and all thy lordship in body and in soul. And principally if thou maintainest Antichrist's disciples in their errors against Christ's life and his teaching, for blindness, covetousness, and worldly friendship; and helpst to slander and pursue true men that teach Christ's Gospel and his life, and warn the people of their great sins, and of false prophets and hypocrites that deceive Christian men in faith, virtuous life, and worldly goods."

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. MSS. Jamesii, Bodleian Library.

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 136—141. The piece under this title in the collection of treatises called the "Poor Caitif," is an earlier and shorter work than that from which the above extracts are taken. *British Reformers*, i. 121—123.

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.

[b]MS. *ibid.* and Trin. Coll. Dub. pp. 156—167. This piece, it is plain, did not appear until the doctrine of the Reformer, by means of his other writings, and of the preaching of his "poor priests," had become so prevalent as to be much misunderstood or misrepresented. I should account it quite one of his latest works, called forth, probably, in great part; by the Wat Tyler insurrection.

[a]Job xxix. 15—17.

[a]Trafficking—marketing.

[b]An untaught man—a layman.

[c]Contrive—cast about.

[d]Meritorious.

[e]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 177—184.

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 184—193. This treatise and the preceding bear all the marks of belonging to a late period in the life of the Reformer, but we have no means of determining their date with precision.

[a]MS. C.C.C. Cambridge.

[a]M.S. C.C.C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 173—177.

[b]Undo—destroy.

[a]Knowledge by the senses.

[a]MS. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class. C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 188—193.

[b]Appearances.

[c]Trusteth.

[a]MS. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. iii. No. 12. pp. 193—208. The first sentence of this work fixes its date as subsequent to 1378, and No. xxiii. manifestly belongs to the same period.

[b]Satisfaction—amends.

[a]These extracts are from the MS. Class C. Tab. v. No. 24. in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. The substance of the piece has been printed in *The British Reformers*, from a copy in the British Museum.

[b]MS. Bodleian Library. Archiv. A. 83. There is a short tract under this title among the Wycliffe MSS., in Trinity College, Dublin. Class C. Tab. v. No. 6. pp. 35—38. The allusion toward the close of this extended treatise to the popes, as encouraging all mischiefs and bloodshed of a crusade, in support of their worldly pretensions, settles the date of this work as being not earlier than 1383.

[a]Separated—distinguished between them.

[a]“Touching holy orders, he held that there were but two—viz. of deacons and priests, so do we.”—“James’s Apology for John Wickliffe, showing his nonconformity to the now Church of England,” Oxford, 1608.

[a]MS. Bebl. Bodl. Archiv. A. 3072.

[b]Disturb—trouble.

[c]Archiv. A. 83. The discussion in this work opposed to the doctrine of transubstantiation is evidence of its late date. It is not probable that it appeared earlier than in 1380, or at furthest in the year preceding. See *Life and Opinions of Wycliffe*, vol. ii. chap. iii.

[a]Interpret—explain.

[a]“Here may we see how falsely the fiend beguiles the church by this false principle, that if the more part of such men (men forming church councils) assent to a sentence, then all holy church shall know that as gospel.”—*Ibid.* Wycliffe then remarks that the faith which served the church a thousand years while Satan was bound, has not

suffered since he has been loosed—hence these councils. “We ought to know that Christ may not fail in any ordinance or law sufficient for his church; and whosoever reverses this sentence blasphemates against Christ.”—Ibid.

[a]MS. British Museum. Bib. Reg. 18. B. ix. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. 5. No. vi. pp. 38—63. My extracts are taken from the MS. in the British Museum, sometimes described by the titles, *De Ecclesiâ Catholicâ*, and *De Ecclesiâ Dominio*. Baber, 42. The marked allusion of this work to the papal schism, and the crusade, fix its date among the works written by the Reformer during the last year of his life, or, at the furthest, in the year preceding, the year 1383.

[b]Befall.

[c]Follow.

[a]We should understand.

[a]Marketeth—tradeth.

[b]By all means—every way.

[c]Prates fiction, or falsehood.

[d]Wariness—cunning.

[a]Illegible.

[b]Matthew xvi. 19.

[c]On earth.

[a]Wood’s Hist. Oxon. 58, 59. Henry’s History of England, viii. 182—185.

[a]Postils, p. 21.

[b]1 Cor. iv. 1, *et seq.*

[a]Satisfaction.

[a]Postils, p. 134.

[b]Ibid. p. 169.

[c]Ibid. p. 78.

[a]Postils, p. 61.

[a]“Paul saith that God doeth by his grace all things that he doeth, and withdraweth never his grace except as man shall disable himself, and then the righteousness of God

needeth that this sinner should be punished. We suppose from Scripture, that each good thing we have, be it state, be it knowledge, each such thing is God's grace, for God giveth it graciously, that man should serve to him by it. And thus he taketh God's grace in vain, who taketh his grace and leaveth his service. And, therefore, beginneth Paul thus, 'We admonish you, that ye take not thus the grace of God in vain.' These words might be said to each man in this life. Default is not in God, but all the default is in his servants."—*Ibid.* p. 17. "Since among the works of man, thinking seemeth most in his power, and yet his thought must come of God, much more each other work of man. It is a known thing to clerks, that no creature may do aught, but as God shall do first that same thing, and help his creature to do it. And since we have a better procurator (mediator) in time of grace, to pray to God, than men had under the old law, no wonder if this be a better time. Thus we should put off pride, and wholly trust in Jesus Christ, for he that may nought *think* of himself, may nought *do* of himself, but all our sufficiency is of God, through Jesus Christ."

[b]Postils, p. 52.

[a]Postils, p. 93.

[b]*Ibid.* 2nd.

[c]Its nature.

[d]In pages 141, 142, 146, 176, 182, the papal schism, and in several places the papal crusades, are distinctly mentioned. In page 163 is a farther allusion to Richard as reigning.

[a]Postils. In pages 10, 122, 126, 134, 151, 152, 159, are similar passages.

[b]*Ibid.* p. 176. "True men say, that so long as Christ is in heaven, the church has in him the best pope, who is head of all saints, and distance either more or less hindereth not Christ to do his deeds as he promiseth, and he saith he is with his own always to the end of the world. It is granted that the church beneath hath a head, that is Christ, head of angels and of men, all that are or shall be saved, and we dare not put two heads lest the church be monstrous. Peter was not head of the church, but captain of the church; and surely warriors would scorn the reasoning which saith that if a man is captain he is head. Peter was captain for a time, and afterwards Paul was captain. But these blind buzzards should first know what Christ's church truly is. There are three churches of Christ. One that hath vanquished and is above; another that sleepeth in purgatory; and neither of these requireth such a pope. But the third is fighting here; and this, with the others, require Christ as their head. And the man who is most meek, most poor, and most serviceable to the church, is its captain, by the judgment of the Head above. If men seek well they shall find that it may not be proved that it is reasonable to have such a pope, for nothing should prove it except of these three—a right understanding of the words of Christ; evidence of man's law; or custom, with the opinion of much people. But none of these may prove anything in this case."—Postils, p. 181. Two pages further on the preacher states, that the only authorised and requisite orders in the church are priests and deacons.

[a]The reader will find this question discussed, and some other points at issue between Dr. Todd and myself, in the Eclectic Review for January, 1843. Soon after that article appeared, a paper was inserted in the British Magazine, purporting to show, that Mr. Lewis, the biographer of Wycliffe, has left evidence among his private papers of being acquainted with the series of Dublin MSS, which I had ventured to describe as unknown to him. But strange enough, the proof furnished by these papers is, that Mr. Lewis did certainly possess some second-hand knowledge of the Dublin MSS. he *does* mention, but that he possessed no knowledge whatever of those he does *not* mention! This was precisely my impression of the matter, and this led me to describe my catalogue of the writings of Wycliffe as containing mention of nearly forty MSS. unknown to the Reformer's biographers.

[a]Radulphus Strodes, non Anglus sed Scotus, in Monasterio Dryburgh, provinciæ Teviotdale, educatus, Ord. Fratrum Prædicatorum, poeta-laureatus, Oxonii diu studuit, socios collegii Mertonensis, Galliam peragravit et Italiam, Syriam item Terram Sanctam, contra Wiclefi dogmata acriter disputans circa a.c. 1370. Musices quoque fuit studiosus. Scripsit fabulas, panegyricos, consequentiarum formulas, (Ven. 1517. 4to. impressas) summulas logicales, sophismatum strophas, phantasma carmen elegiacum, itinerarium Terræ Sanctæ, positiones et xiv. argumenta contra Wiclefum opuscula. Fabricius. Bib. Med. Lat. lib. xviii. Baber. 41.

[a]Biographia Wiclefiana, sive elenchus multorum ejus operum cum eorum initiis, unde Catalogi Balei et Tanneri non parum supplevi et perforce possint. Inter alia disco, tractatus varios, qui nunc separatim feruntur, partes esse *Summæ Theologicæ* nostri.—Verum id esse, vel horum librorum initia comprobant Cod. Sæc. XV. Denis, Cat. Lat. Theol. MSS. in Bib. Pal. Vind. 391. xii. In C. C. College, Oxford, is a manuscript intitled—Quædam abstracta ex *Summâ*, doctoris Anglici, Wiclefi. MS. 116. Baber. 46. See XXXII. in this series.

[b]See No. XXX. of this series. There are two copies of the *De Dominio* in the Imperial Library. Forty-four opinions in the part of this treatise intitled *De Dominio Civili*, were condemned. MS. Twini, A. 220.

[c]See No. LXIII. of the preceding series.

[d]Thirty-four opinions in this tract were censured. MS. Twini, A. 217.

[a]Stokes was a Carmelite friar. He was commanded by the Archbishop of Canterbury to publish at Oxford the condemnation which had been pronounced against the opinions of Wycliffe and his disciples by the court assembled in the Preaching Friars.

[b]This monk was named Ughtred Bolton, and had written several tracts against Wycliffe.

[a]“It is probable that the six preceding titles are various descriptions of the same work.”—Baber. 48.

[a]These words are the commencement of the piece entitled “The Last Age of the Church,” of which mention will be made elsewhere.

[a]The following passage is the first in the treatise, and may be taken as a specimen of the obscurity which attaches very generally to the metaphysical portion of the work—an obscurity which renders it impossible that a literal translation should convey to a modern reader any intelligible meaning.

“Alithia. Licet dixit insipiens in corde suo, non est Deus, tamen videtur supponendum, omnium hominum Deum esse, quia aliter tibi nemo negaret aliquid, vel aliquam veritatem esse, cum negando illud statim concederet ejus oppositum. Quia si aliquid est, illud vel est finitum vel infinitum, sive sic, vel illud, vel causa illius, est Deus, cum supponitur omne quod est prima causa non causatum ab alio, esse Deum. Et extendo hoc nomen aliquid ad omne eus, vel per se, vel aggregatum, vel affirmativam, aut negativam, vel possibilem veritatem.

“Pseudis. Præcipui Logici multipliciter sic instarent, non claudit contradictionem formalem, nullem eus esse, cum ex nulla negativa sequatur formaliter affirmativa, non ergo sequitur pro primo loco Deum esse, quia tunc sequeretur formaliter, si nihil est aliquid est. Item stat veritatem esse cum hoc, quod non sit aliquid, cum veritas potest est quod nihil sit, et tunc non est aliquid. Et tertio possibile est esse processum in infinitum in caussalibus, non ergo sequitur, si causa est, tunc prima causa est, cum in ordine causarum homo posset procedere infinite. Sicut enim diviso lumine in suas partes proportionales caussatur a secunda, et sic in infinitum, et sic etiam in infinitis casibus, quibus oportet procedere infinite.”

[b]“Doctor in theologia eminentissimus in diebus illis. In philosophia nulli reputabatur secundus: in scholasticis disciplinis incomparabilis. Hic maxime nitebatur aliorum ingenia subtilitate scientiæ et profunditate ingenii sui transcendere.”—*Knyghton*, p. 2644.

[a]Chap. viii. 23.

[a]pp. —58.

[a]“Quamvis autem fidelis noscat confuse omnes articulos fidei, et habeat evidentiam, etiam demonstrationem, ad aliquos articulos fidei cognoscendum, non tamen oportet ipsam ex hinc, a merito suo excidere. Licet viator non ut sic habeat rationem meriti, et crediderit veritatem sensibilem. Et sic intelligi potest Grego. in Omilia de octava paschæ, quod fides non habet meritum et cet. Nec video quomodo viator posset in statu isto peregrinando proficere ad beatitudinem promerendam, nisi primo omnium sit fidelis.”—pp. 84, 85.

[a]“Fidelis autem est, qui habet fidem a Deo infusam sine aliqua trepidatione fidei contraria, quæ suæ fidei sit commixta.”—*Ibid.*

[b]John xiv. 15.

[a]Satraps.

[a]Dante, who appeared about half a century earlier than Wycliffe, makes repeated mention of this supposed endowment of the church by Constantine, in the time of Sylvester, bishop of Rome.

Ah, Constantine! to how much ill gave birth,
Not thy conversion, but that plenteous dower
Which the first wealthy father gained from thee!
Inferno, Canto xix.

The following is a further reference to the same fact:—

As in Soracte, Constantine besought,
To cure his leprosy, Sylvester's aid.
Ibid. Canto xxvii.

In his treatise *De Monarchiâ*, Dante thus expresses himself.—*Dicunt quidam adhuc, quod Constantinus Imperator, mundatus a leprâ intercessione Sylvestri, tunc summi pontificis, imperii sedem, silicet Romam, donavit ecclesiæ, cum multis aliis, imperii dignitatibus.* “There are those who still say that the Emperor Constantine, having been healed of a leprosy, through the intercession of Sylvester, then supreme pontiff, gave Rome, the seat of the empire, to the church, along with many other imperial dignities.”—*Lib. iii.* In the same book Dante further touches on this subject.—*Ergo scindere imperium, imperatori non licet. Si ergo aliquæ dignitates per Constantinum essent alienata (ut dicunt) ab imperio, &c.*—“Therefore to make a rent in the empire, exceeds the lawful power of the emperor himself. If then some dignities were alienated by Constantine (as they say) from the empire,” &c.

Milton's version of this story is as follows:

Ah, Constantine! of how much ill was cause,
Not thy conversion, but those rich domains
That the first wealthy pope received of thee!
Then passed he to a flowery mountain green,
Which once smelt sweet, now stinks as odiously;
This was that gift, if you the truth will have,
That Constantine to good Sylvester gave.
Cary's Dante, Canto xix. xxvii.

[a]Many ecclesiastics of the time wrote in refutation of the doctrine of Wycliffe, especially as set forth in this treatise. The most distinguished person in this class was the friar William Wodeford, or Woodford. Woodford wrote several pieces opposed to the doctrine of the Reformer, but the piece best known is on the eighteen articles from the *Triologus* condemned in the Synod of London in 1396. This work was written at the command of Arundal, Archbishop of Canterbury. It was first printed in 1535, and was reprinted in 1690 in the *Fasciculus Rerum* edited by Brown. The work extends to seventy-five closely-printed folio pages.

The articles on the eucharist, condemned in the synod referred to, are the following:

1. That the substance of the bread remains on the altar after the consecration, and that the bread does not cease to be.

2. That as John was Elias figuratively and not personally, so the bread is figuratively and not naturally the body of Christ.

3. That the sacrament of the eucharist is naturally true bread, speaking conformably (as before) concerning material bread, white and round. Which the court of Rome determined in the chapter—Ego Berengarius.

The method of Woodford in dealing with these articles is, in the first place, to adduce against them the authority of fathers, doctors, and ecclesiastical writers from the earliest time to his own, and then to reason, in the manner usual on such topics, in favour of the received doctrine. The mental contrast between the Reformer and his antagonist is striking and instructive: on the one side a spirit of bold innovation meets us everywhere; on the other all is abject submission. In Woodford we see the mind which *had* been; in Wycliffe the mind which *was* to be. Fasciculus Rerum, i. 190—204. Concilium Londinense. Acta Conciliorum, Harduin. vii. 1723.

[a]Sic—“ad iracundiam provocat veritatem.”

[a]On the doctrine of Berenger, as opposed to the notion of transubstantiation, and on the unfixed state of that doctrine in the church of Rome, until the age to which Wycliffe refers, see Mosheim, ii. 465, 466, 548—569.

[a]That is, the bread so eaten is, *in a sense*, or *figuratively*, the body of Christ.

[a]This language points to a kind of baptismal regeneration, but the reader will find that this doctrine is considerably modified and guarded by the language of the Reformer when taken largely.

[a]The reader will observe the mixture of light and obscurity in these statements and allusions, and will form his own conclusion from them. The story of the Theban Legion belongs to the close of the third century. It is for the most part an uncertain tradition. The authorities relating to it may be seen in Gieseler’s Ecclesiastical History, i. 117.

[a]The following translated passage may be taken as a specimen of the manner in which Woodford replies to Wycliffe, and will show that, obscure as the views of the Reformer may have been in some respects on this subject, they were greatly in advance of the views which characterised his times:—

“The fourth article condemned as erroneous is in the twelfth chapter of the fourth book of the Trialogus; and teaches that those who decide that the infants of believers who die without the sacrament of baptism will not be saved, are in this presumptuous and foolish.

“That this article is justly condemned appears in the first place from the blessed Augustine on Peter concerning faith, where he assigns to such the punishment of everlasting fire: and the words are found in the fourth division of the canon respecting

consecration. But here our opponent replies in the twelfth chapter of the fourth book of the *Triologus*, that Augustine gives this as an hypothesis, and not as an assertion. But it is plain that this is false from Augustine's mode of expressing himself, who in this article, as well as in that on the Trinity, says—Maintain such firmly, and in no respect doubt—which are not the words used by one advancing a mere hypothesis, but the words of one asserting what is verily believed. And at the conclusion of that work Augustine writes thus in the fourth book—Adhere firmly to the rule of the true faith—and if you see any one uttering dogmas against it, flee him as a pest, and reject him as a heretic. For those things which we assigned to the catholic faith, are in such harmony, that if any one shall contradict, not all of them, but any one of them, in the very fact of his contumaciously rejecting these separate doctrines, he shows himself a heretic and an enemy of the Christian faith at large, and consequently is to be anathematised by all Christians. Now in these words, Augustine asserts particular articles of the catholic faith to be, and that the obstinate opponent of these particular articles becomes thereby a heretic, and an enemy of the whole Christian faith. Since, therefore, this makes the fourth article in this book, it is manifest that Augustine positively asserts this article to be heretical.

“It is plain, in the second place, that this article is with reason condemned, by the definition of the church, which is found in the canon respecting consecration, Dist. 4, cap. Nulla: where it is said—No salvation has been promised to infants except by the baptism of Christ—because if infants do not pass into the number of believers through the sacrament which was divinely instituted for this purpose, they remain in darkness. The church, therefore, decides that infants dying without the sacrament of baptism will not be saved. It must, therefore, be an error to say that those who thus decide are presumptuous and foolish.

“It appears in the third place, that this article is justly condemned, from the fact that in the primitive church they were not accustomed to hold a solemn baptism more frequently than twice a year, at the time of the passover and the pentecost, except in case of necessity, as at the point of death: as appears from the canon, Dist. 4, and as appears in authors who have treated of the Divine offices. But this would not have been the practice of the primitive church, had it not been believed that such as should die without the sacrament of baptism would perish everlastingly.

“It appears in the fourth place, that this article is justly condemned from the fact, that according to the ancient ordinance of the church, children who die without baptism after birth, are not to be buried in holy burial, any more than pagans—but should be interred without the cemetery. The church would never have ordained this custom if it had not believed that such are not of the number who will be saved.”—*Fasciculus Rerum*, 204, 205.

[\[a\]](#) Significant in more than one sense.

[\[b\]](#) To the above paragraph, succeeds the following passage, on the “quiddity” of the sacrament of orders, which I must be allowed to give as it stands. “Sed de quidditate characteres illius est dissentio apud multos, cum quidam dicunt quod est qualitas, et de facto gratia licet steterit cum motali, sed concedet nobis Deus aliam gratiam, cum

ista in multis pomnibus dammandis et salvandibus viantibus nihil valet. Aliis autem videtur, quod character sit signum insensibile, quo fidelis ab alio convivente discernitur, et ad speciale officium in ecclesia limitatur, et satis est ad esse talis characteris, constantia subjecti et preteritio officii præaccepti, quæ cum sint perpetua et indelibilia, character manet indelibiliter impressus in anima. Baptismi enim character fidelis ab infideli distinguitur, ac si ad Christi militiam sit signatus, et character ordinis clericus separatur a laico, ac si ex ordinatione Christi ad officium singulare supra laicum in ecclesia sit signatus. Et sic multiplicant quidam in ordinibus et sacramentis multis characteres. Sed istorum foundationem vel fructum nec in scriptura considero.”

[a] Wodeford opposes to the argument deduced from this passage, the language of the following:—“And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites, of the inheritance of their possession, cities to dwell in; and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them. And the cities shall they have to dwell in: and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts. And the suburbs of the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city and outward, a thousand cubits round about. And ye shall measure from without the city on the east side two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits; and the city shall be in the midst; this shall be to them the suburbs of their cities.”—Num. xxxv. 1—5. Fasciculus Rerum, i. 218. It is plain that the inference of Wycliffe, from the fact that the Levites had not a share, after the manner of the other tribes, in the land of promise, is of greater extent than the facts of the case would warrant. But within certain limits the fact appealed to was justly available for the purposes of his argument.

[a] Chapters xx. xxi. xxiii. contain some remarks on the subject of matrimony. Phronesis adduces the authority for this “venerable sacrament” from Matt. xix. He inveighs against the encouragement given by the clergy to frequent divorces. “I am anything but pleased,” he says, “with such a multitude of causes for divorce, founded as they are on merely human ordinances, as is especially the case with that of consanguinity.” He objects to the present form, “I *take* thee as my wife,” (capiro te in uxorem,) because it is not true that the rite of matrimony is performed by, or consists in these words. The consent of the parties, and the approval of God, would be sufficient to make this contract regular in the absence of all sensible signs whatsoever. He then passes on to the mystic union of Christ with the church, in its three parts,—“militant, sleeping, and triumphant:—the militant, is the believers on their way to heaven; the sleeping, those destined to salvation, but suffering* for a while in purgatory; the triumphant, the blessed at rest in heaven. Of these, one vast church will be made in the day of judgment.”

[a] This reference shows that the above number of the Reformer’s sermons were published at this time.

[a] For some account of this pretended prophetess see Mosheim, iii. 83.

[a]An obsolete manner of writing Cain.

[a]Wycliffe, who speaks in the person of Phronesis, when urging his severest measures against the mendicants, always speaks of “sparing their persons.”

[a]A solidus was equal to forty denarii, and in value about five and twenty shillings.—Du Cange.

[a]Peripsema temporale.

[a]Antiquam toxicam.

[b]May 17, 1382.

[a]Synod at the Grey Friars, May 17, 1832.

[a]Quantum sufficit ut malignum quemcunque in conventu suo deducat ad nihilum.

[a>true.

[b]The word “sith” for since, and the word “ne” for nor, which are of very frequent occurrence, are not retained; all the remaining obsolete words are retained.

[c]disciples or followers.

[a>true.

[b]truth.

[c]hindered, or prevented.

[d]greatest.

[a]a great man, either of the laity or clergy.

[b]Cain’s, see p. 200.

[c]chargeable.

[d]could.

[e]reasons.

[f]hindered.

[g]always.

[a]knows.

[b]judgment.

[c]unskilful, ignorant.

[a]force.

[b]commandments.

[c]falsify.

[d]always.

[e]lying.

[f]be.

[g]livelihood.

[h]peradventure.

[i]living.

[k]houses.

[a]living.

[b]must.

[c]hinder or prevent.

[a]commandments.

[a]bequeathing.

[b]triginta, or, thirty masses.

[c]confessing.

[d]lies.

[e]judge.

[f]doubtful.

[g]appropriated.

[a]profit.

[b]thirty masses.

[c]confess.

[d]subjects.

[e]think.

[a]always.

[b]follow.

[c]lies.

[d]Carmelite friars.

[e]forbid.

[f]undo, or break.

[g]prevent.

[h]deceive.

[a]lies.

[b]oh! or alas!

[c]forbidding.

[d]provisions.

[e]flatter.

[a]also.

[b]commandments.

[c]flatter.

[d]truth.

[e]adultery.

[f]lies.

[g]thinks.

[h]well.

[a]also.

[b]confessed for absolution by a priest.

[c]confession.

[d]helpful.

[a]reason.

[b]certainly or truly.

[c]also.

[d]humble.

[e]forbidden.

[f]always.

[g]appropriated.

[h]high or deep.

[a]hinder.

[a]health.

[b]certainly.

[c]livelihood or living.

[d]lies.

[a]murderers.

[b]reproof.

[c]following.

[d]powers or great men.

[e]obstinate or perverse persons.

[f]commandments.

[g]hinder.

[a]interpret.

[b]hinder.

[c]undo.

[d]lose.

[a]following.

[b]lose.

[c]help.

[d]true or well.

[e]truth or certainty.

[f]hinder.

[g]lies or pretences.

[h]certainly.

[i]hindering.

[a]truth.

[b]supposing.

[c]trouble or disturb.

[d]since.

[a]mad.

[b]towards.

[c]lavish.

[d]openly.

[a]certainly.

[b]follows.

[c]lies.

[d]supposes.

[a]suppose.

[b]commandment.

[a]receptacle.

[b]spoils or oppressions.

[c]confession.

[d]betrayed.

[a]ought.

[b]crown and dignity.

[c]forbid.

[d]always.

[a]always.

[a]helpful.

[b]hinder.

[a]burn.

[b]know or learn.

[c]hinder.

[d]learning.

[e]adulterer.

[f]confessed to obtain absolution.

[g]absolve.

[h]well or sure.

[i]commandments.

[a]reckon.

[b]adultery.

[c]judgment.

[d]uniting.

[a]appropriated.

[b]always.

[c]nevertheless.

[a]exalt or extol.

[b]esteem.

[Mc]know.

[d]judgment.

[e]commandments.

[f]contented.

[g]contented or satisfied.

[h]apparel.

[i]hinder.

[k]advantages.

[l]living.

[a]caution or cunning.

[b]know.

[c]secrecy.

[d]tyranny.

[e]privileges of the convent.

[f]knew.

[a]wretch or contemptible person.

[b]elevate or extol.

[a]adulterers.

[b]plead.

[a]lose.

[b]generation.

[c]tenths.

[a]hinder.

[b]tenths or tithes.

[a]hinderance.

[b]demand.

[a]given.

[b]lawful.

[c]reason.

[d]patching.

[e]give.

[f]could.

[g]hinder.

[a]hindered.

[b]gifts.

[c]followeth.

[d]given.

[e]followers.

[f]meritorious.

[g]helpful.

[h]always.

[i]cry.

[j]true, or secure.

[a]always.

[b]endowed.

[c]cunning.

[d]given.

[e]truth.

[f]two.

[g]followeth.

[h]one.

[a]tenths, tithes.

[b]forbidden.

[c]low, or unofficial.

[d]forbidden.

[e]interpret.

[f]interpretation, or addition.

[g]given.

[h]truth.

[i]called.

[k]novelties.

[a]demand.

[b]meritoriously.

[c]given.

[d]the king's right.

[e]followeth.

[f]followeth.

[g]one.

[a]followeth.

[b]called.

[c]nevertheless.

[d]hinder.

[e]the king's right.

[f]busy or labour.

[g]favourers.

[h]give.

[i]take away.

[j]powers or rulers.

[k]submissive or obedient.

[l]ought.

[a]one.

[b]lawfully.

[c]meritoriously.

[d]given.

[e]demand.

[f]reasons.

[g]truly.

[h]demanded.

[a]visitors.

[b]spotted or defiled.

[c]Mahometry or idolatry.

[d]man-killing.

[e]reason.

[f]given.

[g]livelihood or living.

[h]clothed.

[i]tithes.

[k]followeth.

[l]clothing.

[m]contented.

[n]fornicators.

[o]ought.

[p]appropriated.

[a]livelihood or living.

[b]clothing.

[c]appropriated.

[d]lies.

[e]given.

[f]much.

[g]commandments.

[h]follow.

[i]did.

[j]Oh!

[k]furs.

[a]unskilful.

[b]husbands.

[c]truly.

[d]tithes.

[a]hindering.

[a]asketh.

[b]ask.

[a]idolatries.

[a]Thursday before Easter.

[a]judge.

[a]cheats, vile persons.

[b]assemb'ed for worship.

[a]injury.

[a]went.

[b]ascended.

[c]judge.

[a]requested.

[b]knowest.

[c]askest.

[a]imagined.

[b]truth.

[a]lead or constrain.

[b]hindering.

[c]profit.

[d]knowledge.

[e]called.

[a]knowledge.

[b]contrivances.

[c]lies.

[d]kerchief or mantle.

[e]a riding-horse.

[f]tapestry.

[g]hindering.

[h]treachery.

[i]provide.

[a]hinder.

[b]treachery.

[c]reward.

[d]call.

[e]live.

[f]sell.

[g]true.

[h]knowingly.

[i]withhold.

[i]frequent.

[a]concerning.

[b]ought.

[c]clothing.

[d]synodal rent paid to the bishop.

[e]shall.

[f]adultery.

[g]profit.

[h]flatterers.

[a]tithes.

[b]concerning.

[c]profit.

[d]asketh or requireth.

[e]judgment.

[f]baited.

[g]impair or injure.

[h]learning or lesson.

[i]called.

[k]judging.

[l]certainly.

[a]profit.

[b]knowledge.

[c]resist or withstand.

[d]certainly.

[e]hindered.

[f]concerning.

[g]tied up.

[h]securely.

[i]convenient.

[k]follow.

[l]tithes.

[a]meritorious.

[b]ignorant or lay.

[c]tithes.

[d]security.

[e]much.

[f]profit.

[a]nevertheless.

[b]condemn.

[c]lymbs or deceits.

[a]Fox's Acts and Monuments, i. 584.

[a]The reply of Wycliffe extends thus far, and does not end, as the use of a different type in Fox might lead one to suppose, with the preceding paragraph. Nor does the MS. end here. It is much more extended. Bodleran MSS. Fasciculus Zizaniorum.

[a]Lewis, Ap. No. 23. Fox, Acts and Monuments, i. 581.

[b]always.

[c]body.

[d]greatness.

[e]follows.

[f]possessions.

[g]inasmuch.

[h]followed.

[a]obedience.

[b]This sentence points to the impaired health of the Reformer. He died two years later.

[c]called.

[d]family.

[e]truth.

[a]seven.

[b]neither.

[c]ceases.

[d]purity.

[e]profitably.

[a]Knighton de Event. Angl. apud X. Scriptores, Coll. 2649, 2650.

[b]right.

[c]believed.

[a]lies.

[b]gabbing.

[c]earthquake.

[a] Chapters xx. xxi. xxiii. contain some remarks on the subject of matrimony. Phronesis adduces the authority for this “venerable sacrament” from Matt. xix. He inveighs against the encouragement given by the clergy to frequent divorces. “I am anything but pleased,” he says, “with such a multitude of causes for divorce, founded as they are on merely human ordinances, as is especially the case with that of consanguinity.” He objects to the present form, “I *take* thee as my wife,” (*capio te in uxorem*,) because it is not true that the rite of matrimony is performed by, or consists in these words. The consent of the parties, and the approval of God, would be sufficient to make this contract regular in the absence of all sensible signs whatsoever. He then passes on to the mystic union of Christ with the church, in its three parts,—“militant, sleeping, and triumphant:—the militant, is the believers on their way to heaven; the sleeping, those destined to salvation, but suffering* for a while in purgatory; the triumphant, the blessed at rest in heaven. Of these, one vast church will be made in the day of judgment.”

[*]Patientes.—This word seems to be used in this connexion more in a negative than a positive sense.