"The Visions of Piers Plowman"

William Langland (1330-1387)

Prologue

In a somer seson, whan softe was the sonne,

P.1
I shoop me into shroudes as I a sheep were,

P.2
In habite as an heremite unholy of werkes,

P.3
Wente wide in this world wondres to here.

P.4
Ac on a May morwenynge on Malverne hilles

P.5
Me bifel a ferly, of Fairye me thoghte.

P.6
I was very forwardred and wente me to reste

P.7
Under a brood bank by a bourne syde;

P.8
And as I lay and lenede and loked on the watres,

P.9
I slombred into a slepyng, it sweyed so murye.

P.10
Thanne gan I meten a merveillous swevene--

P.11
That I was in a wildernesse, wiste I nevere where.

P.12
A[c] as I biheeld into the eest an heigh to the sonne,

P.13
I seigh a tour on a toft trieliche ymaked,
A deep dale bynethe, a dungeon therinne,

With depe diches and derke and dredfulle of sighte.

A fair feeld ful of folk fond I ther bitwene--

Of alle manere of men, the meene and the riche,

Werchynge and wandrynge as the world asketh.

Somme putten hem to the plough, pleiden ful selde,

In settynge and sowynge wonken ful harde,

And wonnen that thise wastours with glotonye destruyeth

And somme putten hem to pride, apparailed hem therafter,

In contenaunce of clothynge comen disguised-

In preieres and penaunce putten hem manye,

Al for the love of Oure Lord lyveden ful streyte

In hope to have heveneriche blisse--

As ancres and heremites that holden hem in hire selles,

Coveiten noght in contree to cairen aboute
For no likerous liflode hire likame to plese.

And somme chosen chaffare; they cheveden the bettre--

As it semeth to oure sight that swiche men thryveth;

And somme murthes to make as mynstralles konne,

And geten gold with hire glee-- [gilt]ees, I leeve-

Ac japeres and jangeleres, Judas children,

Feynen hem fantasies, and fooles hem maketh--

And han wit at wille to werken if they wolde.

That Poul precheth of hem I wol nat preve it here:

*Qui loquitur turpiloquium* is Luciferes hyne-

Bidderes and beggeres faste aboute yede

[Til] hire bely and hire bagge [were] bredful ycrammed,

Faiteden for hire foode, foughten at the ale.

In glotomye, God woot, go thei to bedde,
And risen with ribaudie, tho Roberdes knaves;

Sleep and sory sleuthe seweth hem evere.

Pilgrymes and palmeres plighten hem togidere

For to seken Seint Jame and seintes at Rome;

Wenten forth in hire wey with many wise tales,

And hadden leve to lyen al hire lif after.

I seigh somme that seiden thei hadde ysought seintes:

To ech a tale that thei tolde hire tonge was tempred to lye

Moore than to seye sooth, it semed bi hire speche.

Heremytes on an heep with hoked staves ,

Wenten to Walsyngham--and hire wenches after:

Grete lobies and longe that lothe were to swynke

Clothed hem in copes to ben knownen from othere,

And shopen hem heremytes hire ese to have.

I fond there freres, alle the foure ordres,
Prechynge the peple for profit of [the wombe]:

Glosed the gospel as hem good liked;

For coveitise of copes construwed it as thei wolde.

Manye of thise maistres mowe clothen hem at likyng

For hire moneie and hire marchaundise marchen togideres.

Sith charite hath ben chapman and chief to shryve lordes

Manye ferlies han fallen in a fewe yeres.

But Holy Chirche and hii holde bettre togidres

The mooste meschief on molde is mountynge up faste.

Ther preched a pardoner as he a preest were:

Broughte forth a bulle with bisshopes seles,

And seide that hymself myghte assoillen hem alle

Of falshede of fastynge, of avowes ybroken. -

Lewed men leved hym wel and liked hise wordes,

Comen up knelynge to kissen his bulle.
He bonched hem with his brevet and blered hire eighen,

And raughte with his rageman rynges and broches.

--Thus ye gyven youre gold glotons to helpe,

And leneth it losels that leccherie haunten"

Were the bissshop yblessed and worth bothe his eris,

His seel sholde noght be sent to deceyve the peple.

Ac it is noght by the bisshop that the boy precheth--

For the parisshe preest and the pardoner parten the silver

That the povere [peple] of the parissche sholde have if they ne were.

Persons and parisshe preestes pleyned hem to the bisshop

That hire parisshes weren povere sith the pestilence tyme,

To have a licence and leve at London to dwelle,

And syngen ther for symonie, for silver is swete.

Bisshopes and bachelers, bothe maistres and doctours--

That han cure under Crist, and crownynge in tokene
And signe that thei sholden shryven hire parishens,

Prechen and praye for hem, and the povere fede--

Liggen at Londoun in Lenten and ellis.

Somme serven the King and his silver tellen,

In Cheker and in Chauncelrie chalangen his dettes

Of wardes and of wardemotes, weyves and streyves.

And somme serven as servaunts lorde and ladies,

And in stede of stywardes sitten and demen.

Hire messe and hire matyns and many of hire houres

Arn doone undevoutliche; drede is at the laste

Lest Crist in Consistorie acorse ful manye"

I parceyved of the power that Peter hadde to kepe--

To bynden and unbynden, as the Book telleth--

How he it lefte with love as Oure Lord highte

Amonges foure vertues, most vertuous of all vertues,
That cardinals ben called and closynge yates

There Crist is in kyngdom, to close and to shette,

And to opene it to hem and hevene blisse shewe.

Ac of the Cardinals at court that kaughte of that name

And power presumed in hem a Pope to make

To han the power that Peter hadde. impugnen I nelle--

For in love and in lettrure the eleccion bilongeth;

Forthi I kan and kan naught of court speke moore.

Thanne kam ther a Kyng: Knyghthod hym ladde;

Might of the communes made hym to regne.

And thanne cam Kynde Wit and clerkes he made,

For to counseillen the Kyng and the Commune save.

The Kyng and Knyghthod and Clergie bothe

Casten that the Commune sholde hem [communes] fynde.

The Commune contreved of Kynde Wit craftes,
And for profit of al the peple plowmen ordeyned

To tilie and to travaile as trewe lif asketh.

The Kyng and the Commune and Kynde Wit the thridde

Shopen lawe and leaute--eeh lif to knowe his owene.

Thanne loked up a lunatik, a leene thyng withalle,

And knelynge to the Kyng clergially he seide,

"Crist kepe thee, sire Kyng, and thi kygryche,

And lene thee lede thi lond so leaute thee lovye,

And for thi rightful rulyng be rewarded in hevene"

And sithen in the eyr on heigh an aungel of hevene

Lowed to speke in Latyn--for lewed men ne koude

Jangle ne jugge that justifie hem sholde,

But suffren and serven--forthi seide the aungel:

" Sum Rex, sum Princeps", - neutrum fortasse deinceps

O qui iura regis Christi specialia regis,

Hoc qiod agas nielius--iustus es, esto pius "

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Nudum ius a te vestiri vult pietate.

Qualia vis nietere, talia grana sere:

Si ius nudatur, nudo de iure metatur;

Si seritur pietas, de pietate metas'.

Thanne greved hym a goliardeis, a gloton of wordes,

And to the aungel an heigh answerde after:

"Dum " rex" a " regere " dicatur nomen habere,
Nomen habet sine re nisi studet iura tenere'.

Thanne [c]an al the commune crye in vers of Latyn
to the Kynges counseil--construe whoso wolde--

"Precepta Regis sunt nobis vincula legis"

With that ran ther a route of ratons at ones

And smale mees myd hem: mo than a thousand

Comen to a counseil for the commune profit;

For a cat of a court cam whan hym liked
And overleep hem lightliche and laughte hem at his wille,

And pleide with hem perillousli and possed aboute.

"For doute of diverse dredes we dar noght wel loke"

And if we grucche of his gamen he wol greven us alle--

Cracchen us or clawen us and in hise clouches holde.

That us lotheth the lif er he late us passe.

Mighte we with any wit his wille withstonde,

We myghte be lordes olofte and lyven at oure ese'.

A raton of renoun, moost renable of tonge,

Seide for a sovereyn [salve] to hem alle,

"I have yseyen segges', quod he, "in the Cite of Londoun

Beren beighes ful brighte abouten hire nekkes,

And somme colers of crafty work; uncoupled they wenden

Bothe in wareyne and in waast where hem leve liketh,

And outhere while thei arn elliswhere, as I here telle.
Were ther a belle on hire beighe, by Jesus, as me thynketh,

Men myghte witen wher thei wente and awey renne.

And right so', quod that raton, "reson me sheweth

To bugge a belle of bras or of bright silver

And knytten it on a coler for oure commune profit

And hangen it upon the cattles hals--thanne here we mowen

Wher he ryt or rest or rometh to pleye;

And if hym list for to laike, thanne loke we mowen

And peeren in his presence the while hym pleye liketh,

And if hym wratheth, be war and his wey shonye'.

Al the route of ratons to this reson assented;

Ac tho the belle was ybrought and on the beighe hanged

Ther ne was raton in al the route, for al the reaume of France,

That dorste have bounden the belle aboute the cattles nekke,
Ne hangen it aboute his hals al Engelond to wynne,

[Ac] helden hem unhardy and hir counseil feble,

And leten hire laboure lost and al hire longe studie.

A mous that muche good kouthe, as me tho thoughte,

Strook forth sternely and stood biforn hem alle,

And to the route of ratons reheered thise wordes:

"Though we hadde ykilled the cat, yet sholde ther come another

To cracchen us and al oure kynde, though we cropen under benches.

Forthi I counseille al the commune to late the cat worth, neere,

And be we nevere so bolde the belle hym to shewe.

_The Vision of Piers Plowman_

The while he cacceth conynges he coveiteth noght oure caroyne,

But fedeth hym al with venyson; defame we hym nevere.

For bettre is a litel los than a long sorwe:

The maze among us alle, theigh we mysse a sherewe!
For I herde my sire seyn, is seven yeer ypassed,

"Ther the cat is a kitoun, the court is ful elenge".

That witnesseth Holy Writ, whoso wole it rede--

Ve terre ubi puer rex est, &c.

For may no renk ther reste have for ratons by nyghte.

For many mennes malt we mees wolde destruye,

And also ye route of ratons rende mennes clothes,

Nere the cat of the court that kan you overlepe;

For hadde ye rattes youre [raik] ye kouthe noght rule yowselve.

"I seye for me', quod the mous, " I se so muchel after,

Shal nevere the cat ne the kiton by my counseil be greved,

Ne carpynge of this coler that costed me nevere.

And though it costned me catel, biknowen it I nolde,

But suffren as hymself wolde [s]o doon as hym liketh--

Coupled and uncoupled to cacche what thei mowe.
Forthi ech a wis wight I warne--wite wel his owene!'  

(What this metels bymeneth, ye men that ben murye,  

Devyne ye--for I ne dar, by deere God in hevene)!  

Yet hoved ther an hundred in howves of selk--  

Sergeants, it semed, that serveden at the Barre,  

Pleteden for penyes and pounded the lawe,  

And noght for love of Oure Lord unlose hire lippes ones.  

Thow myghtest bettre meete myst on Malverne Hilles  

Than get a "mom' of hire mouth til moneie be shewed!  

Barins and burgeises and bondemen als  
I seigh in this assemblee, as ye shul here after;  

Baksteres and brewesteres and bochiers manye,  

Wollen webbesters and weveres of lynnen,  

Taillours and tynkers and tollers in markettes,  

Masons and mynours and many othere craftes:  

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Of alle kynne lybbynge laborers lopen forth somme-

P.223
As dykeres and delveres that doon hire dedes ille

P.224
And dryveth forth the longe day with "Dieu save Dame Emme!"

P.225
Cokes and hire knaves cryden, " Hote pies, hote!

P.226
Goode gees and grys! Go we dyne, go we!'

P.227
Taverners until hem tolden the same:

P.228 "Whit wyn of Oseye and wyn of Gascoigne,

P.229
Of the Ryn and of the Rochel, the roost to defie!'

P.230
--Al this I seigh slepyng, and sevene sythes more.

P.231
Passus 1
What this mountaigne bymeneth and the merke dale

1.001
And the feld ful of folk, I shal yow faire shewe.

1.002
A lovely lady of leere in lynnen yclothed

1.003
Cam doun fom [the] castel and called me faire,

1.004
And seide, "Sone, slepestow? Sestow this peple-

1.005
How bisie they ben aboute the maze?
The mooste partie of this peple that passeth on this erthe,

1.007
Have thei worship in this world, thei wilne no bettre;

1.008
Of oother hevene than here holde thei no tale'. -

1.009
I was afeed of hire face, theigh she faire weere,

1.010
And seide, " Mercy, madame, what [may] this [be] to mene?"

1.011
"The tour upon the toft', quod she, "Truthe is therinne,

1.012
And wolde that ye wroughte as his word techeth.

1.013
For he is fader of feith and formed yow alle

1.014
Bothe with fel and with face and yaf yow fyve wittes

1.015
For to worshipe hym therwith while that ye ben here.

1.016
And therfore he highte the erthe to helpe yow echone

1.017
Of woilene, of lynnен, of liflode at nede

1.018
In meserurable manere to make yow at ese;

1.019
And comaunded of his curteisie in commune three thynges:

1.020
Are none nedfulle but tho, and nempne hem I tynke,
And rekene hem by reson--reherce thow hem after.

"That oon is vesture from chele thee to save,
And mete at meel for mysese of thiselve,
And drynke whan thow driest--ac do noght out of reson,
That thow worthe the wers whan thow werche sholdest.
For Lot in hise lifdayes, for likynge of drynke,
Dide by hise doughtres that the devel liked:
Delited hym in drynke as the devel wolde,
And lecherie hym laughte, and lay by hem bothe--
And al he witte it the wyn, that wikked dede:

Inebriemus eum vino dormiamusque cum eo, ut
servare possimus de patre nostro semen.

Thorugh wyn and thorugh wommen ther was Loth acombred,
And there gat in glotonie gerles that were cherles.

Forthi dred delitable drynke and thow shalt do the bettre.
Mesure is medicine, though thou muchel yerne.

Al is nought good to the goost that the gut asketh,

Ne liflode to the likame that leef is to the soule.

Leve nought thi likame, for a liere hym techeth--

That is the wrecched world, wolde thee bitraye.

For the fend and thi flessh folwen togidere,

And that [shendeth] thi soule; set it in thin herte.

And for thow sholdest ben ywar, I wisse thee the beste.'

"A, madame, mercy,' quod l, " me liketh wel youre wordes.

Ac the moneie of this molde that men so faste holdeth--

Telleth me to whom that tresour appendeth.'

Go to the Gospel,' quod she, "that God seide hymselfen,

Tho the poeple hym apposed with a peny in the Temple

Wheither thei sholde therwith worshipe the kyng Cesar.

And God asked of hem, of whom spak the lettre,
And the ymage ylike that therinne stondeth?

1.050 Cesares, thei seiden, "we seen it wel echone.'

1.051 ""Reddite Cesari," quod God, "" that Cesari bifalleth,

1.052 Et que sunt Dei Deo, or ellis ye don ille.'

1.053--For rightfully Reson sholde rule yow alle,

1.054 And Kynde Wit be wardeyn youre welthe to kepe,

1.055 And tutour of youre tresor, and take it yow at nede,

1.056 For housbondrie and he holden togidres.'

1.057 Thanne I frayned hire faire, for Hym that hire made,

1.058 "That dongeon in the dale that dredful is of sighte--

1.059 What may it bemeene, madame, I yow biseche?'

1.060 "That is the castel of care--whoso comth therinne

1.061 May banne that he born was to bodi or to soule!

1.062 Therinne wonyeth a wight that Wrong is yhote,

1.063 Fader of falshede--and founded it hymselfe.
1.064
Adam and Eve he egged to ille,

1.065
counseilled Kaym to killen his brother,

1.066
Judas he japed with Jewen silver,

1.067
And sitthen on an eller hanged hym after.

1.068
He is lettere of love and lieth hem alle:

1.069
That trusten on his tresour bitrayed arn sonnest.'

1.070
Thanne hadde I wonder in my wit what womman it weere

1.071
That swiche wise wordes of Holy Writ shewed,

1.072
And halsede hire on the heighe name, er she thennes yede,

1.073
What she were witterly that wised me so faire.

1.074
"Holi Chirche I am,' quod she, thow oughtest me to knowe.

1.075
I underfeng thee first and the feith taughte.

1.076
Thow broughtest me borwes my biddyng to fulfille,

1.077
And to loven me leelly the while thi lif dureth.'

1.078
Thanne I courbed on my knees and cried hire of grace,
And preide hire pitously to preye for my synnes,

And also kenne me kyndely on Crist to bileve,

That I myghte werchen His wille that wroghte me to man:

"Teche me to no tresor, but tel me this ilke =

How I may save my soule, that seint art yholden.'

"Whan alle tresors arn tried,' quod she, -Treuthe is the beste.

I do it on Deus caritas to deme the sothe;

It is as dereworthe a drury as deere God hymselven.

Who is trewe of his tonge and telleth noon oother,

And dooth the werkes therwith and wilneth no man ille,

He is a god by the Gospel, agrounde and olofte,

And ylik to Oure Lord, by Seint Lukes wordes.

The clerkes that knowen this sholde kennen it aboute,

For Cristen and uncristen cleymeth it echone.

" Kynges and knyghtes sholde kepen it by reson--
Riden and rappen doun in reaumes aboute,

And taken transgressores and tyen hem faste

Til treuthe hadde ytermyned hire trespas to the ende.

For David in hise dayes dubbed knyghtes,

And dide hem sweren on hir swerd to serven truthe evere.

And that is the profession apertly that apendeth to knyghtes,

And naught to Fasten o Friday in fyve score wynter,

But holden with hym and with here that wolden alle truthe,

And never leve hem for love ne for lacchynge of silver--

And whoso passe[th] that point is apostata in the ordre.

- But Crist, kyngene kyng, knyghted ten--

Cherubyn and Seraphyn, swiche severne and another,

And yaf hem myght in his majestee--the murier hem thoughte--

And over his meene meynne made hem archangeles;

Taughte hem by the Trinitee treuthe to knowe,
To be buxom at his biddyng--he bad hem nought ellis.

1.110
"Lucifer with legions lerned it in hevene,

1.111
[And was the lovelokest to loke after Oure Lord (one)]

1.112
Til he brak buxomnesse; his blisse gan he tyne,

1.113
And fel fro that felawshipe in a fendes liknesse

1.114
into a deep derk helle to dwelle there for evere.

1.115
And mo thousandes myd hym than man kouthe nombre

1.116
Lopen out with Lucifer in lothliche forme

1.117
For thei leveden upon hym that lyed in this manere:

1.118
Ponam pedem in aquilone, et similis ero Altissimo.

1.119
And alle that hoped it myghte be so, noon hevene myghte hem holde,

1.120
But fallen out in fendes liknesse [ful] nyne dayes togideres,

1.121
Til God of his goodnesse [garte the hevene to stekie

1.122
And gan stable it and stynte] and stonden in quiete.

1.123
" Whan thise wikkede wenten out, wonderwise thei fellen--
Somme in eyr, somme in erthe, somme in helle depe;

Ac Lucifer lowest lith of hem alle:
For pride that he putte out, his peyne hath noon ende.

And alle that werchen with wrong wende thei shulle
After hir deth day and dwelle with that sherewe;

Ac tho that werche wel as Holy Writ telleth,
And enden as I er seide in truthe, that is the beste,
Mowe be siker that hire soules shul wende to hevene,
Ther Treuthe is in Trinitee and troneth hem alle.

Forthi I seye, as I seyde er, by sighte of thise textes--
Whan alle tresors arn tried, Truthe is the beste.
Lereth it th[u]s lewed men, for lettred it knoweth--
That Treuthe is tresor the trieste on erthe.'
"Yet have I no kynde knowynge,' quod I, "ye mote kenne me bettre
By what craft in my cors it comseth, and where.'
"Thow doted daffe!" quod she, dulle are thi wittes.

1.140
To litel Latyn thow lernedest, leode, in thi youthe:

1.141
_Heu michi quia sterilem duxi vitam iuvenilem!_

1.141
It is a kynde knowynge that kenneth in thyn herte

1.142
For to loven thi Lord levere than thiselве,

1.143
No dedly synne to do, deye theigh thow sholdest--

1.144
This I trowe be truthe; who kan teche thee bettre,

1.145
Loke thow suffre hym to seye, and sithen lere it after;

1.146
For thus witnesseth his word; worche thow therafter.

1.147
" For Truthe telleth that love is triacle of hevene:

1.148
May no synne be on hym seene that that spice useth.

1.149
And alle his werkes he wroughte with love as hym liste,

1.150
And lered it Moyses for the leveste thyng and moost lik to hevene,

1.151
And also the plante of pees, moost precious of vertues :

1.152
For hevene myghte nat holden it, so was it hevy of hymself,
Til it hadde of the erthe eten his fille.

And whan it hadde of this fold flessh and blood taken,

Was nevere leef upon lynde lighter therafter,

And portatif and persaunt as the point of a nedle,

That myghte noon armure it lette ne none heighe walles.

" Forthi is love ledere of the Lordes folk of hevene,

And a meene, as the mair is, [inmiddes] the kyng and the commune;

Right so is love a ledere and the lawe shapeth:

Upon man for hise mysdedes the mercyment he taxeth.

And for to knowen it kyndely--it comseth by myght,

And in the herte, there is theheed and the heighe welle.

For in kynde knowynge in herte ther [coms]eth a myght--

And that falleth to the Fader that formed us ale,

Loked on us with love and leet his sone dye

Mekely for ourse mysdedes, to amenden us ale.
And yet wolde he hem no wo that wroughte hym that peyne,

1.169
But mekely with mouthe mercy he bisoughte,

1.170
To have pite of that peple that peyned hym to dethe.

1.171
" Here myghtow sen ensample in hymself oone--

1.172
That he was myghtful and meke, and mercy gan graunte

1.173
To hem that hengen hym heigh and his herte thirled.

1.174
" Forthi I rede yow riche, haveth ruthe of the povere,

1.175
Though ye be myghty to mote, beeth meke in youre werkes,

1.176
For the same mesure that ye mete, amys outhere ellis,

1.177
Ye shulle ben weyen therwith whan ye wenden hennes:

1.178
_Eadem mensura qua mensifueritis remeisetur vobis_.

1.178
For though ye be trewe of youre tonge and treweliche wynne,

1.179
And as chaste as a child that in chirche wepeth,

1.180
But if ye loven leelly and lene the povere

1.181
Of swich good as God sent, goodliche parteth,
Ye ne have na moore merite in Masse ne in houres
Than Malkyn of hire maydenhede, that no man desireth.

For James the gentile jugged in hise bokes
That feith withouten feitis (feblere] than nought,
And as deed as a dorenai but if the dedes folwe:

Fides sine operibus mortua est &c.

"Forthi chastite withouten charite worth cheyned in helle;
It is as lewed as a lampe that no light is inne.
Manye chapeleyns arn chaste, ac charite is aweye;
Are none hardere than hii whan [hii] ben avaunced:
Unkynde to hire kyn and to alle Cristene,
Chewen hire charite and chiden after moore--
Swich chastite withouten charite worth cheyned in helle.
Manye curatours kepen hem clene of hire bodies;
Thei ben acombred with coveitise, thei konne noght out crepe,
So harde hath avarice yhasped hem togideres.

1.197
And that is no truthe of the Trinite, but tricherie of helle,

1.198
And lernynge to lewed men the latter for to deele.

1.199
For [thise ben wordes] writen in the [Euangelie]:

1.200
"" Date, et dabitur vobis--for I deeIe yow alle.

1.201
And that is the lok of love that leteth out my grace,

1.202
To conforten the carefulle acombred with synne."

1.203
Love is leche of lif and next Oure Lord selve,

1.204
And also the graithe gate that goth into hevene.

1.205
Forthi I seye as I seide er by sighte of the textes:

1.206
Whan alle tresors ben tried, Treuthe is the beste.

1.207
"Now have I told thee what truthe is--that no tresor is bettre--

1.208
I may no lenger lenge thee with; now loke thee Oure Lord!'

1.209
Passus 2
Yet I courbed on my knees and cried hire of grace,

2.001
And seide, " Mercy, madame, for Marie love of hevene,
That bar that blisful barn that boughte us on the Rode--

Kenne me by sorn craft to knowe the false.'

Loke upon thi let-t half, and lo where he stondeth--

Bothe Fals and Favel, and hire feeres manye!

I loked on my left half as the Lady me taughte,

And was war of a womman wonderliche yclothed--

Purfiled with pelure, the pureste on erthe,

Ycorouned with a coroune, the Kyng hath noon bettre.

Fetisliche hire fyngres were fretted with gold wyr,

And thereon rede rubies as rede as any gleede,

And diamaundes of derrest pris and double manere saphires,

Orientals and ewages envenymes to destroye.

Hire robe was ful riche, of reed scarlet engreyned,

With ribanes of reed gold and of riche stones.
Hire array me ravysshed, swich richesse saugh I newere.

2.017
I hadde wonder what she was and whos wif she were.

2.018
"What is this womman,' quod I, so worthili atired?'

2.019
"That is Mede the mayde.' quod she, hath noyed me ful ofte,

2.020
And ylakked my lemman that Leautee is hoten,

2.021
And bilowen h[ym] to lorde that lawes han to kepe.

2.022
In the Popes paleis she is pryvee as myselve,

2.023
But soothnesse wolde noght so--for she is a bastard,

2.024
For Fals was hire fader that hath a fikel tonge,

2.025
And nevere sooth seide sithen he com to erthe;

2.026
And Mede is manered after hym, right as [asketh kynde]:

2.027
Qualis pater, talis filius. Bona arbor bonum fructum facit.

2.027
"I oughte ben hyere than [heo]--I kam of a bettre.

2.028
My fader the grete God is and ground of alle graces,

2.029
Oo God withouten gynnyng, and I his goode doughter,
And hath yeven me Mercy to marie with myselve;

2.031
And what man be merciful and leelly me love

2.032
Shal be mylord and I his leef in the heighe hevene;

2.033
And what man taketh Mede. myn heed dar I legge

2.034
That he shal lese for hire love a lappe of Caritatis.

2.035
"How construeth David the King of men that [cacch]eth Mede,

2.036
And men of this moolde that maynteneth truthe,

2.037
And how ye shul save yourself? The Sauter bereth witnesse:

2.038
*Domine, quis hubitabit in tabernaculo tuo, &c.*

2.038
"And now worth this Mede ymaried to a mansed sherewe,

2.040
To oon Fals Fikel-tonge, a fendes biyete.

2.041
Favel thorugh his faire speche hath this folk enchaunted,

2.042
And al is Lieres ledynge that [lady] is thus ywedded.

2.043
Tomorwe worth ymaked the maydenes bridale;

2.044
And there myghtow witen if thow wilt whiche thei ben alle
That longen to that lordshippe, the lasse and the moore.

Knowe hem there if thow kanst, and kepe [thee from hem alle],

And lakke hem noght but lat hem worthe, til Leaute oe Justice

And have power to punysshe hem--thanne put forth thi reson.

Now I bikenne thee Crist,' quod she, "and his clene moder,

And lat no conscience acombre thee for coveitise of Mede.'

Thus lefte me that lady ligynge aslepe,

And how Mede was ymaried in metels me thoughte--

That al the riche retenaunce that regneth with the False

Were boden to the bridale on bothe two sides,

Of alle manere of men, the meene and the riche.

To marien this mayde was many man assembled,

As of knyghtes and of clerkes and oother commune peple,

As sisours and somonours, sherreves and hire clerkes,

Bedelles and baillifs and brocours of chaffare,
Forgoers and vitaillers and vokettes of the Arches;

I kan noght rekene the route that ran aboute Mede.

Ac Symonie and Cyvylle and sisours of courtes

Were moost pryvee with Mede of any men, me thoughte.

Ac Favel was the firste that fette hire out of boure

And as a brocour broughte hire to be with Fals enjoyned.

Whan Symonye and Cyvylle seighe hir bother wille,

Thei assented for silver to seye as bothe wolde.

Thanne leep Liere forth and seide, "Lo! here a chartre

That Gile with his grete othes gaf hem togidere,'--

And preide Cyvylle to see and Symonye to rede it.

Thanne Symonye and Cyvylle stonden forth bothe

And unfoldeth the feffement that Fals hath ymaked,

And thus bigynnen thise gomes to greden ful heighe:

"Sciantz presentes & futuri, &c."
Witeth and witnesseth, that wonieth upon this erthe,

That Mede is ymaried moore for hire goodes

Than for any vertue or fairnesse or any free kynde.

Falsnesse is fayn of hire for he woot hire riche;

And Favel with his fikel speche feffeth by this chartre

To be Princes in Pride, and poverta to despise,

To bakbite and to bosten and bere fals witnesse,

To scorne and to scolde and sclaundre to make,

Unbuxome and bolde to breke the ten hestes.

And the erldom of Envye and Wrathe togideres,

With the chastilet of cheste and chaterynge out of reson.

The countee of Coveitise and alle the costes about--

That is usure and avarice--al I hem graunte

In bargaynes and in brocages with al the burghe of thefte,

And al the lordshipe of Leccherie in lengthe and in brede--
As in werkes and in wordes and in waitynges with eighes,
And in wedes and in wisshynges and with ydel thoughtes
Ther as wil wolde and werkmanshiphe faylith.'
Glotonye he gaf hem ek and grete othes togidere,
And al day to drynken at diverse tavernes,
And there to jangle and jape and jugge hir evencristen,
And in fastynge dayes to frete er ful tyme were.
And thanne to sitten and soupen til sleep hem assaille,
And breden at burgh swyn, and bedden hem esily,
Til Sleuthe and sleep sliken hise sydes;
And thanneowanhope to awaken hym so with no wil to amende,
For he leveth be lost--this is his laste ende.
"And thei to have and to holde, and hire heires after,
A dellynynge with the devel, and dampned be for evere,
With alle the appurtinaunces of Purgatorie into the pyne of helle-
Yeldynge for this thyng at one yeres ende

Hire soules to Sathan, to suffre with hym peynes,

And with hym to wonye with wo while God is in hevene.'

In witnesse of which thyng Wrong was the firste,

And Piers the Pardoner of Paulynes doctrine,

Bette the Bedel of Bokynghamshire,

Reynald the Reve of Rutland Sokene,

Munde the Millere--and many mo othere.

"In the date of the devel this dede I assele

By sighte of Sire Symonie and Cyvyles leeve.'

Thanne tened hym Theologie whan he this tale herde, -

And seide to Cyvyle, "Now sorwe mote thow have--

Swiche weddynges to werche to wrathe with Truthe!

And er this weddynge be wroght, wo thee bitide!
For Mede is muliere, of Amendes engendred;

2.119
And God graunted to gyve Mede to truthe,

2.120
And thow hast gyven hire to a gilour--now God gyve thee sorwe!

2.121
The text telleth thee noght so, Truthe woot the sothe,

2.122
For Dignus est operarius his hire to have--

2.123
And thow hast fest hire to Fals; fy on thi lawe!

2.124
For al bi lesynges thow lyvest and lecherouse werkes.

2.125
Symonye and thiself shenden Holi Chirche,

2.126
The notaries and ye noyen the peple.

2.127
Ye shul abiggen bothe, by God that me made!

2.128
" Wel ye witen, wernardes, but if youre wit faille,

2.129
That Fals is feithlees and fikel in hise werkes

2.130
And as a bastarde ybore of Belsabubbes kynne.

2.131
And Mede is muliere, a maiden of goode,

2.132
And myghte kisse the Kyng for cosyn and she wolde.
Forthi wercheth by wisdom and by wit also,

2.134
And ledeth hire to Londoun, there lawe is yshewed,

2.135
If any lawe wol loke thei ligge togideres.

2.136
And though justices juggen hire to be joyned with Fals,

2.137
Yet be war of the weddynge--for witty is True, 

2.138
And Conscience is of his counseil and knoweth yow echone,

2.139
And if he fynde yow in defaute and with the false holde,

2.140
It shal bisitte youre soules ful soure at the laste.'

2.141
Herto assenteth Cyvyle, ac Symonye ne wolde,

2.142
Til he hadde silver for his se[el] and [signes] of notaries.

2.143
Thanne fette Favel forth floryns ynowe

2.144
And bad Gile, "Go gyve gold al aboute,

2.145
And namely to the notaries, that hem noon faille;

2.146
And feffe Fals-wtinesse with floryns ynowe,

2.147
For he may Mede amaistrye and maken at my wille.'
Tho this gold was ygyve, gret was the thonkyng

To Fals and to Favel for hire faire yiftes,

And comen to conforten from care the- False,

And seiden, "Certes, sire, cessen shul we nevere,

Til Mede be thi wedded wif thorugh wit of us alle;

For we have Mede amairstried with oure murie speche,

That she graunteth to goon with a good wille

To London, to loken if the lawe wolde

Juggen yow joyntly in joie for evere.'

Thanne was Falsnesse fayn and Favel as blithe,

And leten somone alle segges in shires aboute,

And bad hem alle be bown, beggers and othere,

To wenden with hem to Westmynstre to witnesse this dede.

Ac thanne cared thei for caples to carien hem thider;

And Favel fette forth thanne foles ynowe
And sette Mede upon a sherrve shoed al newe,

And Fals sat on a sisour that softeli trotted

And Favel on a flaterere fetisly atired.

Tho hadde notaries none; anoyed thei were

For Symonye and Cyvylle sholde on hire feet gange.

Ac thanne swoor Symonye and Cyvylle bothe

That somonours golde be sadeled and serven hem echone.

"And late apparraille thise provisours in palfreyes wise;

Sire Symonye hymself shal sittte upon hir bakkes.

Denes and southdenes, drawe yow togideres;

Erchedekenenes and officiells and alle youre registrers,

Lat sadle hem with silver oure synne to suffre--

As devountye and diverses and derne usurie--

To bere bishhopes aboute abrood in visitynge.

Paulynes pryvees for pleintes in consistorie
Shul serven myself that Cyvyle is nempned.

And cartsadle the commissarie--oure cart shal he [drawe],

And fecchen us vitailles at fornicatores,

And maketh of Lyere a lang cart to leden alle thise othere,

As fobberes and faitours that on hire feet rennen.'

And thus Fals and Favel fareth forth togideres,

And Mede in the middes and alle thise men after.

I have no tome to telle the tail that hem folweth,

Of many maner man that on this molde libbeth,

Ac Gyle was forgoer and gyed hem alle.

Sothnesse seigh hem wel, and seide but litel,

A[c] priked his palfrey and passed hem alle,

And com to the Kynges court and Conseience it tolde,

And Conseience to the Kyng carped it after.
"Now, by Cryst!' quod the Kyng, "and I cacche myghte

2.193
Fals or Favel or any of hise feeris,

2.194
I wolde be wroken of tho wrecches that wercheth so ille,

2.195
And doon hem hange by the hals and alle that hem maynteneth.

2.196
Shal nevere man of this molde meynprise the leeste,

2.197
But right as the lawe loke[th], lat falle on hem alle!' 

2.198
And comaunted a constable that com at the firste,

2.199
To attachen tho tyraunts: "For any [tresor], I hote,

2.200
Fettreth Falsnesse faste, for any kynnes yiftes,

2.201
And girdeth of Gyles heed--lat hym go no ferther;

2.202
And bringeth Mede to me maugree hem alle!

2.203
And if ye lacche Lyere, lat hym noght ascapen

2.204
Er he be put on the pillory, for any preyere, I hote.'

2.205
Drede at the dore stood and the doom herde,

2.206
And how the Kyng comaunded constables and sergeaunts
Falsnesse and his Felawship to fettren and to bynden.

2.208
Thanne Drede wente wyghtliche and warned the False,

2.209
And bad hym fle for fere, and hise feeris alle.

2.210
Falsnesse for fere thanne fleigh to the freres

2.211
And Gyle dooth hym to go, agast for to dye.

2.212
Ac marchaunts metten with hym and made hym abyde,

2.213
And bishetten hym in hire shoppes to shewen hire ware,

2.214
Apparailed hym as a prentice the peple to serve.

2.215
Lightliche Lyere leep away thennes,

2.216
Lurkynghe thorugh lanes, tolugged of manye.

2.217
He was nowher welcome for his manye tales,

2.218
Over al yhonted and yhote trusse,

2.219
Til pardoners hadde pite, and pulled hym into house.

2.220
They wesshen hym and wiped hym and wounden hym in cloutes,

2.221
And senten hym [on Sundayes with seles] to chirches,
And gaf pardoun for pens poundemele aboute.

Thanne lourede leches, and lettres thei sente

That he sholde wonye with hem watres to loke.

Spycers speken with hym to spien hire ware,

For he kouthe on hir craft and knew manye gommes.

Ac mynstrales and messagers mette with hym ones,

And [with]helden hym an half yeer and ellevene dayes.

Freres with fair speche fetten hymthen,

And for knowynge of comeres coped hym as a frere;

Ac he hath leve to lepen out as ofte as hym liketh,

And is welcome whan he wile, and woneth with hem ofte.

Alle fledden for fere and flowen into hernes;

Save Mede the mayde na mo dorste abide.

Ac trewely to telle, she trembling for fere,

And ek wepte and wrong whan she was attached.
Passus 3
Now is Mede the mayde and no mo of hem alle,

3.001
With bedeles and baillies brought bifore the Kyng.

3.002
The Kyng called a clerk--l kan noght his name--

3.003
To take Mede the maide and maken hire at ese.

3.004
I shal assayen hire myself and soothliche appose

3.005
What man of this world that hire were levest.

3.006
And if she werche bi wit and my wil folwe

3.007
I wol forgyven hire this gilt, so me God helpe!'   

3.008
Curteisly the clerk thanne, as the Kyng highte,

3.009
Took Mede bi the myddel and broghte hire into chambre.

3.010
Ac ther was murthe and mynstralcie Mede to plese;

3.011
That wonyeth at Westmynstre worshipeth hire alle.

3.012
Gentilliche with joye the justices somme

3.013
Busked hem to the bour ther the burde dwellede,

3.014
Conforted hyre kyndely by Clergies leve,
And seiden, "Mourne noght, Mede, ne make thow no sorwe,
For we wol wisse the Kyng and thi wey shape
To be wedded at thi wille and wher thee leef liketh
For al Conscienees cast or craft, as I trowe.'
Mildely Mede thanne merciede hem alle
Of hire grete goodnesse--and gaf hem echone
Coupes of clene gold and coppes of silver,
Rynges with rubies and richesses manye,
The leeste man of hire meynne a moton of golde.
Thanne laughte thei leve thise lordes at Mede.
With that comenclerkes to conforten hire the same,
And beden hire be blithe--"For we beth thyne owene
For to werche thi wille the while thow myght laste.'
Hendiliche heo thanne bihighte hem the same--
To loven hem lelly and lorde to make,
And in the consistorie at the court do callen hire names.

"Shal no lewednesse lette the clerke that I lovye,

That he ne worth first avaunced for I am biknowen

Ther konnynge clerkes shul clokke bihynde.'

Thanne cam ther a confessour coped as a frere;

To Mede the mayde [mekeliche he loutede]

And seide ful softly, in shrift as it were,

"Theigh lewed men and lered men hadde leyen by thee bothe.

And Falshede hadde yfolwed thee alle thise fifty wynter,

I shal assoille thee myself for a seem of whete,

And also be thi bedeman, and bere wel thyn er[ende],

Amonges knyghtes and clerkes, Conscience to torne.

Thanne Mede for hire mysdedes to that man kneled,

And shrof hire of hire sherewednesse--shamelees, I trowe;
Tolde hym a tale and took hym a noble

For to ben hire bedeman and hire brocour als.

Thanne he assoiled hire soone and sithen he seide,

" We have a wyndow in werchynge, wole stonden us ful hye;

Woldestow glaze that gable and grave therinne thy name,

Sykir sholde thi soule be hevene to have.'

" Wiste I that,' quod the womman, - I wolde noght spare

For to be youre frend, frere, and faile yow nevere

While ye love lordes that lecherie haunten

And lakketh noght ladies that loven wel the same.

It is a freletee of flessh--ye fynden it in bokes--

And a cours of kynde. wherof we comen alle.

Who may scape the sclaundre, the scathe is soone amended;

It is synne of the sevene sonnest relessed.

Have mercy,' quod Mede, of men that it haunteth
And I shal covere youre kirk, youre cloistre do maken,

3.060
Wowes do whiten and wyndowes glazen,

3.061
Do peynten and portraye [who paied] for the makyng,

3.062
That every segge shall see I am suster of youre house.'

3.063
Ac God to alle good folk swich graviynge defendeth--

3.064
To writen in wyndowes of hir wel dedes--

3.065
An aventure pride be peynted there, and pomp of the world;

3.066
For God knoweth thi conscience and thi kynde wille,

3.067
And thi cost and thi coveitise and who the catel oughte.

3.068
Forthi I lere yow lordes, leveth swiche w[rytynge]es--

3.069
To writen in wyndowes of youre wel dedes

3.070
Or to greden after Goddes men whan ye [gyve] doles,

3.071
On aventure ye have youre hire here and youre hevene als.

3.072
_Nesciat sinsitrap quid faciat dextra:

3.072
Lat noght thi left half, late ne rathe,
Wite what thou wertest with thy right syde--

For thus bit the Gospel good men doon hir almesse.

Maires and maceres, that menes ben bitwene

The kyng and the comune to kepe the lawes,

To punysshe on pillories and on pynynge stooles

Brewesters and baksters, bochiers and cokes--

For thise are men on this molde that moost harm wercheth

To the povere peple that parcelmele buggen.

For thei poisone the peple pryveliche and ofte,

Thei richen thorugh regratrie and rentes hem biggen

With that the povere peple sholde putte in hire wombe.

For toke thei on trewely, thei tymbred nought so heighe,

Ne boughte none burgages--be ye ful certeyne!

Ac Mede the mayde the mair h[eo] bisought[e]

Of alle swiche selleris silver to take,
Or presents withouten pens--as pieces of silver,

3.089
Rynges or oother richesse the regratiers to mayntene.

3.090
" For my love,' quod that lady, love hem echone,

3.091
And suffre hem to selle somdel ayeins reson.'

3.092
Salamon the sage a sermon he made

3.093
For to amenden maires and men that kepen lawes,

3.094
And tolde hem this teme that I telle thynke:

3.095
_Ignis devorabit tabernacula eorum qui libenter accipiunt munera, &c._

3.095
Among thise lettrede leodes this Latyn is to mene

3.096
That fir shall falle and [for]brenne al to bloo askes

3.097
The houses and the homes of hem that desireth

3.098
Yiftes or yeresyeves because of hire offices.

3.100
The Kyng fro counseil cam, and called after Mede,

3.101
And ofsente hire as swithe with sergeaunts manye

3.102
That broughte hire to boure with blisse and with joye.
Curteisly the Kyng thanne comsed to telle;

To Mede the mayde he melleth thise wordes:

" Unwittily, womman, wroght hastow ofte;

Ac worse wroghtest thow nevere than tho thow Fals toke.

But I forgyve thee that gilt, and graunte thee my grace;

Hennes to thi deeth day do so na moore!

I have a knyght, Conscience, cam late fro byonde;

If he wilneth thee to wif, wiltow hym have?'

"Ye, lord,' quod that lady, " Lord forbede it ellis!

But I be holly at youre heste, lat hange me soone!'

Thanne was Conscience called to come and appere

Bifore the Kyng and his conseil, as clerkes and othere.

Knelynge Conscience to the Kyng louted,

To wite what his wille were and what he do sholde.

"Woltow wedde this womman,' quod the Kyng, "if I wole assente?
For she is fayn of thi felaweshipe, for to be thi make.'

3.119
Quod Conscience to the-Kyng, "Crist it me forbede!

3.120
Er I wedde swich a wif, wo me bitide!

3.121
For she is frele of hire feith, fikel of hire speche,

3.122
And maketh men mysdo many score tymes.

3.123
In trust of hire tresor she t[en]eth ful manye:

3.124
Wyves and widewes wantounnesse she techeth,

3.125
And lereth hem lecherie that loveth hire yiftes.

3.126
Poure fader she felled thorugh false biheste,

3.127
And hath apoisoned popes and peired Holy Chirche.

3.128
Is noght a bettre baude, by Hym that me made,

3.129
Bitwene hevene and helle, in erthe though men soghte!

3.130
For she is tikel of hire tail, talewis of tonge,

3.131
As commune as the cartwey to [knaves and to alle]--

3.132
To monkes, to mynstrales, to meseles in hegges;
Sisours and somonours, swiche men hire preiseth,

Sherreves of shires were shent if she ne were--

For she dooth men lese hire lond and hire lif bothe.

She leteth passe prisoners and paieth for hem ofte,

And gyveth the gailers gold and grotes togidres

To unfettre the Fals--fle where hym liketh;

And taketh the trewe bi the top and tieth hym faste,

And hangeth hym for hatrede that harm[e]de nevere.

"To be cursed in consistorie she counteth noght a russhe

For she copeth the commissarie and coteth hise clerkes.

She is assoiled as soone as hireself liketh;

She may neigh as muche do in a monthe ones

As youre secret seel in sixe seore dayes!

She is pryvee with the Pope--provisours it knoweth,

For Sire Symonie and hirselve seleth hire bulles.
3.148
She blesseth thise bishhopes, theigh thei be lewed;

3.149
Provendreth persones and preestes she maynteneth

3.150
To h[old]e lemmans and lotebies alle hire lif daies

3.151
And bryngen forth barnes ayein forbode lawes.

3.152
"Ther she is wel with the kyng, wo is the reaume--

3.153
For she is favorable to Fals and defouleth truthe ofte.

3.154
By Jesus! with hire jeweles youre justice she shendeth

3.155
And lith ayein the lawe and letteth hym the gate,

3.156
That feith may noght have his forth, hire floryns go so thinke.

3.157
She ledeth the lawe as hire list and lovedaies maketh,

3.158
And doth men lese thorugh hire love that lawe myghte wynne--

3.159
The maze for a mene man, though he mote evere!

3.160
Lawe is so lordlich, and looth to maken ende:

3.161
Withouten presents or pens he pleseth wel fewe.

3.162
"Barons and burgeises she bryngeth in sorwe,
And al the comune in care that coveiten lyve in truthe,

For clergie and coveitise she coupleth togidres.

This is the lif of that lady--now Lord yyve hire sorwe,

And alle that maynteneth hire men, meschaunee hem bitide!

For povere men may have no power to pleyne though thei smerte,

Swich a maister is Mede among men of goode.'

Thanne mournede Mede and mened hire to the Kynge

To have space to speke, spede if she myghte.

The Kyng graunted hire grace with a good wille:

"Excuse thee if thow kanst; I kan namoore seggen,

For Conscience accuseth thee, to congeien thee for evere.'

"Nay, lord,' quod that lady, "leveth hym the worse

Whan ye witen witterly wher the wrong liggeth.

Ther that meschief is gret, Mede may helpe.
And thow knowest, Conscience, I kam noght to chide,

3.178  Ne to deprave thi persone with a proud herte.

3.179  Wel thow woost, wernard, but if thow wolt gabbe,

3.180  Thow hast hanged on myn half ellevene tymes,

3.181  And also griped my gold, and gyve it where thee liked.

3.182  ow wrathest thee now, wonder me thynketh !
3.183  Yet I may, as I myghte, menske thee with yiftes

3.184  And mayntene thi manhode moore than thow knowest.

3.185  "Ac thow hast famed me foule bifoire the Kyng here;

3.186  For killed I nevere no kyng, ne counseiled therafter,

3.187  Ne dide as thow demest--I do it on the Kynge.

3.188  In Normandie was he noght noyed for my sake--

3.189  Ac thow thiself, soothly, shamedest hym ofte:

3.190  Crope into a cabane for cold of thi nayles,

3.191  Wendest that wynter wolde han ylasted evere,
And dreddest to be ded for a dym cloude,

3.193
And hyedest homward for hunger of thi wombe.

3.194
Withouten pite, pilour, povere men thow robbedest

3.195
And bere hire bras at thi bak to Caleis to selle,

3.196
Ther I lafte with my lord his lif for to save.

3.197
I made his men murye and mournynge lette;

3.198
I batred hem on the bak and boldede hire hertes,

3.199
And dide hem hoppe for hope to have me at wille.

3.200
Hadde I ben marchal of his men, by Marie of hevene!

3.201
I dorste have leyd my lif and no lasse wedde,

3.202
He sholde have be lord of that lond in lengthe and in brede,

3.203
And also kyng of that kith his kyn for to helpe--

3.204
The leeste brol of his blood a barones piere!

3.205
Cowardly thow, Conscience, conseiledest hym thennes--

3.206
To leven his lordshipe for a litel silver,
That is the richeste reaume that reyn overhoveth.

"It bicometh to a kyng that kepeth a reaume

To yeve [men mede] that mekely hym serveth--

To aliens and to alle men, to honouren hem with yiftes;

Mede maketh hym biloved and for a man holden.

Emperours and erles and alle manere lordes

Thorough yiftes han yonge men to yerne and to ryde.

The Pope and alle prelates presents underfongen

And medeth men hemserven to mayntene hir lawes,

Servaunts for hire servyce, we seeth wel the sothe,

Taken mede of hir maistres, as thei mowe acorde.

Beggeres for hir biddynge bidden men mede.

Mynstrales for hir myrthe mede thei aske.

The Kyng hath mede of his men to make pees in londe.

Men that [kenne clerkes] craven of hem mede.
Preestes that prechen the peple to goode
Asken mede and massepens and hire mete [also].

Alle kyn crafty men craven mede for hir prentices.

Marchaundise and mede mote nede go togideres:

No wight, es I wene, withouten Mede may libbe!

Quod the Kyng to Conscience, "By Crist, as me thynketh,
Mede is worthi the maistrie to have!-

"Nay,' quod Conscience to the Kyng and kneled to the erthe,
"Ther are two manere of medes, my lord, by youre leve.

That oon God of his grace graunteth in his blisse
To tho that wel werchen while thei ben here.

The Prophete precheth therof and putte it in the Sauter:

Domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo?

Lord, who shal wonye in thi wones with thyne holy seintes

Or resten in thyne holy hilles?--This asketh David.
And David assuileth it hymself, as the Sauter telleth:

*Qui ingreditur sine macula et operatur iusticiam.*

Tho that entren of o colour and of one wille,

And han ywroght werkes with right and with reson,

And he that useth noght the lyf of usurie

And enformeth povere men and pursueth truthe:

*Qui pecuniam fuam non dedis ad usuram, et munera super inflocentem &c.*

And alle that helpen the innocent and holden with the rightfulle,

Withouten mede doth hem good and the truthe helpeth--

Swiche manere men, my lord, shul have this firste mede

Of God at a gret nede, whan thei gon hennes.

"Ther is another mede mesurelees, that maistres desireth:

To mayntene mysdoers mede thei take,

And therof seith the Sauter in a salmes ende--
In quorum manibus iniquitates sunt; dextra eorum repleta est munerebus:

3.248
And he that gripeth hir gold, so me God helpe,

3.250
Shal abien it bittre, or the Book lieth!

3.251
Preestes and persons that plesyne desireth,

3.252
That taken mede and moneie for masses that thei syngeth,

3.253
Taken hire mede here as Mathew us techeth:

3.254
_Amen, amen, receperunt mercedem suam._

3.254
That laborers and lewede [leodes] taken of hire maistres,

3.255
It is no manere mede but a mesurable hire.

3.256
In marchaundise is no mede, I may it wel avowe:

3.257
It is a permutacion apertly--a penyworth for another.

3.258
"Ac reddestow nevere Regum, thow recrayed Mede,

3.259
Whi the vengeaunce fel on Saul and on his children?

3.260
God sente to Saul by Samuel the prophete

3.261
That Agag of Amalec and al his peple after
Sholden deye for a dede that doon hadde hire eldres.

3.263
"Forthi,' seide Samuel to Saul, "God hymself hoteth thee
to be buxom at his biddynge, his wil to fulfille.

3.264
Weend to Amalec with thyn oost, and what thow fyndest there--sle it:

3.265
Burnes and beestes--bren hem to dethe!

3.266
Widwes and wyves, wommen and children,

3.267
Moebles and unmoebles, and al thow myght fynde--

3.268
Bren it, bere it noght awey, be it never so riche;

3.269
For mede ne for monee, loke thow destruye it!

3.270
Spille it and spare it noght--thow shalt spede the bettre.''

3.271
And for he coveited hir catel and the kyng spared,

3.272
Forbar hym and his beestes bothe as the Bible witnesseth

3.273
Otherwise than he was warned of the prophete,

3.274
God seide to Samuel that Saul sholde deye,

3.275
And al his seed for that synne shenfulliche ende.
Swich a meschief Mede made the kyng to have

That God hated hym for evere and alle his heires after.

"The culorum of this cas kepe I noght to shewe;

On aventure it noyed me, noon ende wol I make,

For so is this wor1d went with hem that han power

That whoso seith hem sothest is sonnest yblamed!

"I, Conseience, knowe this, for Kynde Wit it me taughte--

That Reson shal regne and reaumes governe,

And right as Agag hadde, happe shul somme:

Samuel shal sleen hym and Saul shal be blamed,

And David shal be diademed and daunten hem alle,

And oon Cristene kyng kepen [us] echone.

Shal na moore Mede be maister as she is nouthe,

Ac love and lowenesse and leautee togideres--

Thise shul ben raaistres on moolde [trewe men] to save.
And whoso trespaseth ayein truthe or taketh ayein his wille,

3.293
Leaute shal don hym lawe, and no lif ellis.

3.294
Shal no sergeant for his service were a sik howve,

3.295
Ne no pelure in his [paviloun] for pledynge at the barre.

3.296
" Mede of mysdoeres maketh manye lordes,

3.297
And over lordes lawes [led]eth the reaumes.

3.298
Ac kynde love shal come yit and Conscience togideres

3.299
And make of lawe a laborer; swich love shal arise

3.300
And swich pees among the peple and a parfit truthe

3.301
That Jewes shul wene in hire wit, and wexen wonder glade,

3.302
That Moyses or Messie be come into this erthe,

3.303
And have wonder in hire hertes that men beth so trewe.

3.304
"Alle that beren baselard, brood swerd or launce,

3.305
Ax outhar hachet or any wepene ellis,

3.306
Shal be demed to the deeth but if he do it smythye
into sikel or to sithe, to shaar or to kultour--

*Conflabunt gladios suos in vomeres, &c--*

Ech man to pleye with a plow, pykoise or spade,

Spynne, or sprede donge, or spille hymself with sleuthe;

Preestes and persons with Plucebo to hunte,

And dyngen upon David eche day til eve.

Huntyng or haukyng if any of hem use,

His boost of his benefice worthbynomen hym after.

"Shal neither kyng ne knyght, constable ne meire

Over[carke] the commune ne to the court sompne,

Ne putte hem in panel to doon hem plighte hir truthe;

But after the dede that is doon oon doom shal rewarde

Mercy or no mercy as Truthe [moste] acorde.

" Kynges court and commune court, consistorie and chapitle--

Al shal be but oon court, and oon b[ur]n be justice:
That worth Trewe-tonge, a tidy man that tened me nevere.

3.322
Batailless shul none be, ne no man bere wepene,

3.323
And what smyth that any smytheth be smyte therwith to dethe!

3.324
Non levabit gens contra gentem gladium &c.

3.324
"And er this fortune falle, fynde men shul the worste,

3.325
By sixe sonnes and a ship and half a shef of arwes;

3.326
And the myddel of a moone shal make the Jewes torne,

3.327
And Sarsynes for that sighte shul synge Gloria in excelsis &c--

3.328
For Makometh and Mede myshappe shul that tyme;

3.329
For Meliues est bonum nomen quam divicie multe.'

3.330
Also wroth as the wynd weex Mede in a while.

3.331
" I kan no Latyn?" quod she. "Clerkes wite the sothe!

3.332
Se what Salomon seith in Sapience bokes:

3.333
That thei that yyven yiftes the victorie wynneth,

3.334
And muche worshipe have therwith, as Holy Writ telleth--
"I leve wel, lady,' quod Conscience, "that thi Latyn be trewe.

Ac thow art lik a lady that radde a lesson ones,

Was omnia probate, and that plesed hire herte--

For that lyne was no lenger at the leves ende.

Hadde she loked that other half and the leef torned,

She sholde have founden fele wordes folwynge therafter:

Quod bonum est tenete--Truthe that text made.

And so [mys]ferde ye, madame--ye kouthe na moore fynde

Tho ye loked on Sapience, sittynge in youre studie.

This text that ye han told were [tidy] for lorde,

Ac yow failed a konnynge clerk that kouthe the leef han torned.

And if ye seche Sapience eft, fynde shul ye that folweth.

A ful teneful text to hem that taketh mede:

350 And that is Animam autem oufert accipientium &c.
And that is the tail of the text of that tale ye shewed--

3.350
That theigh we wynne worshipe and with mede have victorie,

3.351
The soule that the soude taketh by so muche is bounde.-

3.352