The Supplication of Souls
made by Sir Thomas More—Knight, Councillor
to our Sovereign Lord the King, and
Chancellor of his Duchy
of Lancaster—
against The Supplication of Beggars.

Page and line numbers correspond to
The Complete Works of St. Thomas More
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A complete concordance to this work can be found at
www.thomasmorestudies.org/publications.html#Concordance.

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

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Punctuation
The only punctuation marks found in the original printed version of The Supplication of Souls are the period, colon, question mark, slash, or “virgule” (/), and parentheses. Quotation marks, commas, semicolons, dashes, exclamation points, italics, and suspension points have been added with the goal of making the text more readily understood by present-day readers. As for the suspension points (…), these are substitutes for many of More’s slashes. He often used a slash where we would use a comma, a semicolon, a dash, or italics; but he also, quite often, used one to indicate whether a certain phrase was meant to be connected more closely with the one preceding it or with the one following it; to call attention to parallel elements in different phrases; or simply to facilitate serious reflection. He also sometimes used a slash for dramatic purposes—to indicate, perhaps, a coming sly comment, or some possibly surprising conclusion. The evident thoughtfulness with which More punctuated this book leads one to suspect that he anticipated its being often read aloud, and wanted to make sure the reader got the cadence right. He writes as though he were speaking.
In most piteous wise continually calleth and crieth upon your devout charity and most tender pity, for help, comfort, and relief, your late acquaintance—kindred, spouses, companions, playfellows, and friends—and now your humble and unacquainted and half forgotten suppliants, poor prisoners of God… the seely souls in purgatory, here abiding and enduring the grievous pains and hot cleansing fire… that fretteth and burneth out the rusty and filthy spots of our sin… till the mercy of Almighty God (the rather by your good and charitable means!) vouchsafe to deliver us hence.

From whence if ye marvel why we more now molest and trouble you with our writing than ever we were wont before, it may like you to wit and understand that hitherto—though we have been with many folk much forgotten, of negligence—yet hath always good folk remembered us; and we have been recommended unto God, and eased, helped, and relieved, both by the private prayers of good, virtuous people… and especially by the daily Masses and other ghostly suffrages of priests, religious, and folk of Holy Church. But now, since that of late there are sprung up certain seditious persons… which not only travail and labor to destroy them by whom we be much helped, but also to sow and set forth such a pestilent opinion against ourselves… as once received and believed among the people… must needs take from us the relief and comfort that ever should come to us by the charitable alms, prayer, and good works of the world—ye may take it for no wonder though we seely souls that have long lain and cried so far from you.
that we seldom break your sleep... do now... in this our great fear
of our utter loss forever of your loving remembrance and
relief... not, yet, improvidently bereave you of your rest with
crying at your ears at unseasonable time, when ye would (as we
do never!) repose yourselves and take ease, but only procure to
be presented unto you this poor book, this humble supplication
of ours, which it may please you parcelmeal, at your leisure,
to look over for all seely souls' sake; that it may be as a wholesome
treacle at your heart against the deadly poison of their
pestilent persuasion... that would bring you in that error to
ween there were no purgatory. Of all which cruel persons so
procuring... not the diminishment of your mercy toward us, but
the utter spoil and robbery of our whole help and comfort that
should come from you, the very worst (and thereby the most
deadly) deviser of our pains and heaviness (God forgive him!)
is that disputious and despiteful person which of late, under
 pretext of pity, made and put forth among you a book
that he named The Supplication for the Beggars: a book in
deed nothing less intending than the pity that it pretendeth;
nothing minding the weal of any man, but, as we shall
hereafter show you, much harm and mischief to all men...
and, among others, great sorrow, discomfort, and heaviness unto us—
your even Christians and nigh kin, your late neighbors and
pleasant companions upon earth, and now poor prisoners
here.

And albeit that his unhappy book doth for our own part
touch us very near, yet we be much more moved to give the
world warning of his venomous writing for the dear love and
charity that we bear to you... than for the respect of our own
relief. For as for us, albeit that the gracious help of your
prayer, almsdeed, and other good works for us may be
the means of relieving and releasing of our present pains,
yet such is the merciful goodness of God... that though the whole
world would clean forget us, yet would his mercy so remember us...

1 this our great fear: this great fear of ours  4 crying: crying out
4 at your ears: audibly  7 parcelmeal: piecemeal; a little at a time
8 seely: poor  9 treacle: antidote
9–10 their... would: the pernicious persuasion of those who wish to
10–11 in... ween: into the error of believing that purgatory does not exist
13 spoil: spoliation; despoiling  15, 22 heaviness: grief; distress
16 disputious: pitiless; cruel // despiteful: spiteful; malicious // which: who
16 of late: recently  17 made: wrote  19 deed: fact; actuality
19 intending: meaning // pretendeth: professes
20 nothing... weal: its aim being not the well-being  23 even: fellow
23 nigh kin: close relatives // late: former  24 pleasant: pleasing (to you)
26 unhappy: sorry; wretched  27 touch: affect // near: closely
34 his mercy: i.e., his merciful self
that after temporal punishment and purging here, he will not finally forget to take us hence... and, wiping all the tears out of our eyes, translate us (at sundry times, as his high wisdom seeth convenient) into that eternal heavenly bliss... to which his holy, blessed blood hath bought us! But surely to you worldly people, living there upon earth—not only for this present time, but also for as long as this world shall endure—the wretched maker of that ungracious book (whom God give once the grace to repent and amend!), if folk were so fond to follow him, should not fail to work... as well much worldly trouble to every kind of people... as, over that, which most loss were of all, to bring many a good simple soul, for lack of belief of purgatory, the very straight way to hell.

And the case so standing, there would, we think, no man doubt but though the man that made the book were well known among you, and in hold, also—whereby, his heinous treason to God and the world disclosed and declared by us, he might be in peril of exquisite painful punishment—yet we both might and ought rather to put him in the danger of his own demeanor... than for the sparing of his just correction... to suffer him abuse the people with his pestilent writing, to the inestimable harm of the whole world in goods, body, and soul. And since we so might of reason, and so should of charity, though the man were known and taken: how much may we now more frankly tell you all, and nothing shall need to spare him, since his book is nameless... and so himself among you unknown, and thereby out of the peril of any punishment for his unhappy deed?

But for that both ye and he shall well perceive that we desire but your weal and ours by giving you warning of his malice, and nothing intend to procure his punishment— which we rather beseech our Lord, of his mercy, to remit—ye shall understand that neither is his name nor person unknown among us, and therefore we might well discover him if we were so minded. For there is not only some of his acquaintance
and counsel (whom God gave at their death the
grace to repent) come hither to purgatory—nothing more
now lamenting among us than their cruel unkindness toward
us in giving counsel against us to the making of that
ungracious book… with infidelity and lack of belief of the
purging fire which they now find and feel—but he is also
named and boasted among us by that evil angel of his… our
and your ghostly enemy the devil. Which as soon as he had set
him a-work with that pernicious book… ceased not to come
hither and boast among us, but, with his enemious and envious
laughter, gnashing the teeth and grinning, he told
us that his people had by the advice and counsel of him and
of some heretics almost as evil as he… made such a book for
beggars… that it should make us beg long ere we get aught.

Whereby he trusted that some of us should not so soon creep out of
our pain as we had hoped.

Wit ye well, these words were heavy tidings to us. But yet,
because the devil is wont to lie, we took some comfort in that we
could not believe him—especially telling a thing so far incredible.

For who could ever have thought that any Christian man
could, for very pity, have found in his heart to seek and study
the means… whereby a Christian man should think it labor lost
to pray for all Christian souls? But alack the while, we found
soon after… that the falsehood and malice of the man… proved the
devil true. For by some that died soon after the book put forth,
we have heard and perceived the wretched contents thereof… well
and plainly declaring what evil spirit inspired him
while it was in the making. For albeit that it is so contrived, and
the words so couched, that, by the secret, inward working of
the devil that helped to devise it, a simple reader might by
delight in the reading be deadly corrupted and envenomed: yet if a
wise man well warned… advisedly will weigh the sentence, he
shall find the whole book nothing else… but falsehood under pretext
of plainness, cruelty under the cloak of pity, sedition

5 ungracious: ungodly; wicked  // belief of: belief in  
8 ghostly: spiritual
10 which: who  // enemious: inimical  // envious: malicious
14 long: for a long time  // ere: before  // aught: anything  
17 wit: know
17 heavy tidings: bad news
21 could . . . found: i.e., could be so devoid even of basic compassion as to find it
22 labor lost: i.e., a waste of time and effort  // 23 alack the while: alas the day
25 true: i.e., to have been telling the truth  // put forth: (was) published
26–27 well and plainly declaring: quite clearly making known
29 secret: hidden; unperceived  // simple: lowbrow / naïve
31 deadly: lethally  // wise: intelligent  // advisedly: carefully
32 the sentence: the meaning; what is being said
under the color of counsel, proud arrogance under the name
of “supplication,” and under the pretense of favor unto poor folk…
a devilish desire of noyance both to poor and rich… priest,
religious, and layman—prince, lord, and people—as well quick as
dead.

He deviseth a piteous bill of complaint and “supplication,”
feigned to be by the poor sick and sore beggars put up to the
King, lamenting therein their number “so sore increased” that,
good folks’ alms not half sufficing to find them meat,
they be constrained heavily to “die for hunger.” Then layeth he the
cause of all these poor beggars, both their increase in number and
their default in finding; all this he layeth to the only fault of the
clergy—naming them, in his beadroll, “bishops, abbots, priors,
deacons, archdeacons, suffragans, priests, monks,
canons, friars, pardoners, and summoners.” All these he calleth
mighty, “sturdy” “beggars” and “idle holy thieves”… which, he saith, hath
“begged so importunately that they have gotten into their
hands” the “third part” of all the realm of England… besides tithes,
“privy tithes,” “probates of testaments,” and “offerings,” with Mass-pennies
and mortuaries, blessing and accursing, citing, suspending, and
assoiling. Then cometh he particularly to friars; to whom he
maketh, as he thinketh, a plain and open reckoning… that they
receive, by begging through the realm, yearly 43,333
pounds, 6 shillings, 8 pennies, sterling. Then showeth he that all
this cast together… amounteth, yearly, far above the half of the
whole substance of the realm. After this, presupposing as
though he had proved it that the clergy hath the half, he then, to
prove the two-hundredth part of that they have were more than
sufficient for them, taketh for his ground that if the number of
them be compared with the number of lay men, the clergy be
not the hundredth part; and that if they be compared with the lay
men, women, and children, the clergy is not then the “four-hundredth
person” of that number. And then intendeth he thereby to
prove and conclude that since they have (as he saith) more than the

3 noyance: harm  4 quick: living  7 feigned: fictitiously made out
7 sore: afflicted; i.e., disabled  9 find them meat: provide them with food  10 heavily: tragically
12 default in finding: lack of being provided for // to the only: solely to the 13 beadroll: list
14 suffragans: auxiliary bishops  15 pardoners: These were priests authorized to grant papal
indulgences.  15 summoners: Ecclesiastical officers who summoned people to appear in the
bishop’s court.  16 sturdy: ruthless; unscrupulous // holy: arrant
18 the “third part”: one-third  19 privy tithes: Tithes levied on such items as eggs and fruit.
19 testaments: wills // Mass-pennies: Mass stipends  20 mortuaries: A mortuary was a gift
that the priest presiding at a funeral service was by custom considered entitled to receive from the
estate of the deceased.  20 accursing: excommunicating // citing: summoning to appear
before an ecclesiastical court  20 suspending: i.e., the suspending of a priest’s faculties
21 assailing: absolving (either from sin or from ecclesiastical censure)  22 open: obviously correct
22 reckoning: calculation  25 cast: put // far above the: to far more than
26 substance: capital; wealth  28 the . . . that: i.e., that 0.5 percent of what // were: would be
29 ground: basis  31 the hundredth part: one to a hundred; 1 percent of that number
32–33 the “four-hundredth person”: (even) 0.25 percent  34 as he saith: according to him
half of altogether, and be themselves not fully the four-hundredth part: therefore, if that better half that they have were divided into two hundred parts, then were yet one part of those two hundred parts, as he thinketh, too much for them—especially because they labor not. After this he gathereth a great heap of “evils”… wherewith he belieth the clergy, to bring them in displeasure of the King and hatred of the people. And, lest men should anything esteem the clergy for the suffrages of their prayer in relief of us seely Christian souls in purgatory, to take away that good mind out of good Christian men’s hearts… he laboreth to make the world ween that there were no purgatory at all. Wherein when he hath done what he can, then laboreth he to the King for a license to rail upon the clergy—saying that there is none other effectual remedy against them… but that it might please the King to give him and such others free license and liberty… to defame the clergy at their pleasure among the people. For he saith that if any of them be punished anything in the temporal laws, then they sore trouble the laborers thereof by the spiritual law… and then the heads of the clergy do so highly more than recompense the loss of their fellows… that they may be bold to do the like offense again at their pleasure. And for to prove that it is always so, he layeth that it hath been so thrice; and, as it shall after be showed, he lieth in all three. The first, he layeth that the bishop of London was in a great rage “for indicting of certain curates of extortion and incontinency the last year, in the wardmote inquests.” And for the second he layeth that Dr. Alen, after that he was punished by praemunire for his contempt committed against the King’s temporal law, was therefor by the bishops highly recompensed in benefices. And for the third he layeth that Richard Hunne because he had sued a praemunire against a priest for suing him in the spiritual court in a matter determinable in the king’s court… was accused of heresy.
and committed to Bishop’s Prison; where he saith that “all the
world knoweth” that he was murdered by Dr. Horsey with
his accomplices—then the bishop’s chancellor. And that the
same Dr. Horsey (he saith upon other men’s mouths)
“paid six hundred pounds for him and his accomplices”—and after
obtained the King’s “most gracious pardon.” Whereupon, he
saith, the “captains” of the spiritualty, because he had “fought so
manfully” against the King’s “crown” and “dignity,” “promoted”
him forth “with benefice upon benefice, to the value of four
times as much.” And by these examples he conclueth there
will no such punishment serve against the spiritualty… and also,
who that justly punish a priest by the temporal law… is unjustly
troubled again in the spiritual law. Whereof he would conclude that
of necessity, for a special remedy, the King must needs grant a
license to such lewd fellows to rail upon them. Then cometh he
at last unto the device of some remedy for the poor beggars.
Wherein he would in no wise have none hospitals made—because
he saith that therein the profit goeth to the priests. What remedy,
then, for the poor beggars? He deviseth nor desireth
nothing to be given them, nor none other alms or help
requireth for them, but only that the King’s Highness would
first take from the whole clergy all their whole living…and
then set them “abroad in the world” to “get them wives” and
to “get their living” with the labor of their hands and “in the
sweat of their faces” (as he saith it is the “commandment” of
God in the first chapter of Genesis)—and, finally, to tie them to
the carts, to be whipped naked about every market town till
they fall to labor. And then, if these petitions were once
granted and performed, he showeth many great commodities
that would (as he saith) ensue thereupon… both to the King and the
people… and to the poor beggars. Which things we shall, ere we
leave, in such wise repeat and ponder that your wisdoms may
consider and perceive in yourselves what good fruit would follow
the speed of his goodly “supplication,” whereof we have rehearsed
you the whole sum and effect.

2, 4 Dr.: See note for 116/27.  2 with: and  3 then: i.e., he being at that time
4 upon other men’s mouths: on the basis of what other people said; on hearsay
5 him: himself  7, 11 spiritualty: clergy  12 who that: i.e., whoever does
12 temporal: civil  13 troubled: beset; gone after // again: in return; as payback
13 in: by way of // spiritual: ecclesiastical  14 special: stopgap; ad hoc
15 lewd: vile // fellows: lowlifes  16 device: thinking up
17 in no wise: by no means  21 requireth: requests
22 all their whole: their whole entire  23 abroad: out there
24–26: See Genesis 3:19.  28 fall to labor: start doing manual labor
29 performed: put into effect // commodities: advantages; benefits
30 as he saith: according to him  31 ere: before
32 your wisdoms: you sensible people  34 speed: success
34 goodly: splendid // rehearsed: related to
Truth it is that many things wherewith he flourisheth his matters to make them seem gay to the readers at a sudden show… we leave out for the while, because we would ere we come thereto… that ye should first have the matter itself in short set forth before your eyes. And then shall we peruse his proofs, and in such wise consider everything apart… that we nothing doubt but whoso shall read his worshipful writing after… shall soon perceive therein… flourishing without fruit, subtlety without substance, rhetoric without reason, bold babbling without learning, and wiliness without wit. And finally, for the foundation and ground of all his proofs… ye shall find in his book not half so many leaves as lies, but almost as many lies as lines.

And albeit we lie here in that case that about the examination and answering of such a mad, malicious book we have neither lust nor leisure to bestow the time… whereof misspent in our life we give now a hard and a heavy reckoning: yet not only the necessity of our cause driveth us to declare unto you the feebleness of his reasons wherewith he would bring you in the case to care nothing for us, believing that there were no purgatory; but also, most especially, doth our charity toward you… stir us to show you the mischief that he mindeth to yourselves… as well in that point of infidelity… as in all the remnant of his seditious book. In answering whereof we would gladly let his folly and lack of learning pass… if it were not more than necessary that all folk should perceive his little learning and less wit, lest simple folk, weening him wise and well learned, might unto their harm esteem his evil writing the better for their wrong opinion of his wit and learning. As for his malicious mind and untruth, there can no man look that we should leave untouched… but he that would rather the man were believed than answered, and would wish his bill sped were it never so malicious and false.

For where he so deviseth his introduction… as all his purpose should have a great face of charity, by that he speaketh all in the name of the poor beggars: this is nothing else but the devil’s drift—always covering his poison under some taste of sugar. As

1 flourisheth: embellishes
2 matters: theses; contentions
3 seem gay: seem plausible; look good
4 matter: thesis; contention
5 peruse: examine one by one; go through
6 everything apart: each thing by itself
7 whoso: whoever
8 flourishing: florid language
9 10 wir: good sense
10 11 leaf: i.e., pages
12 that case: such a condition
14 answering: refuting
15 lust: desire
16 hard: rigorous
18 necessity of our cause: direness of our situation
19 declare unto: show; make clear to
20 feebleness: weakness
21 the . . . mindeth: the harm he intends to do
22 remnant: rest
23 folly: idiocy
24 25, 28 wit: intelligence
25 weening: thinking
26 learned: educated
28 mind: intent
29 look . . . untouched: expect us to leave that unnoted
30 answered: refuted
31 sped: expedited
32 wise . . false: no matter how malicious and false it was
33 face: appearance; veneer
35 drift: ruse; stratagem
for us, we trust there will no wise man doubt what favor we bear to beggars, as folk of their own fellowship and faculty... and of all whom... there be nowhere in the world neither so needy nor so sore and so sick, nor so impotent and so sore in pains, as we.

And that so far forth that if ye might see them all on the one side... and but one of us on the other side, we be very sure that the world would pity one of us... more than them all. But although we be more beggars than your beggars be, as folk daily begging our alms of you and them both; yet envy we not them, as one of them doth another; but we pray and require you to give them for our sakes—whereby your gift greatly comforteth us both. And they be also our proctors and beg in our name... and in our name receive your money; whereof we receive both your devotion and their prayers. So that ye may be well assured, there could be put no bill nor supplication forth for their advantage... which we would in any wise hinder—but very gladly further in all that ever we might. But, in good faith, as our poor brethren the beggars be for many causes greatly to be pitied—for their disease and sickness, sorrow, pain, and poverty—so do we much in this case sorrow their mishap... that they have not had at the leastwise so much fortune... as to fall upon a wiser scrivener to make their supplication, but upon such a one as under his great wiliness showeth so little wit... that, beginning with a cloak of charity, doth by and by no less disclose his hatred and malice... than if he nothing else had intended but to cast off the cloak and set out his malice naked to the show. Wherein, like a beggars’ proctor, he goeth forth so nakedly... that no beggar is there so bare of cloth or money... as he showeth himself bare of faith, learning, troth, wit, or charity. Which thing, as it already well appeareth to wise men, so will we make it evident to all men, taking our beginning at the declaration of his untruth; which one thing well perceived... will be sufficient to answer and overturn all his whole enterprise. Howbeit, we neither shall need nor do purpose to encumber you with rehearsal and reproof of all his lies; for that
were too long a work, whereof we fear ye should be weary to abide the hearing. But of so many we shall pray you take patience while we show you some... and such as for the matter be required to be known, forasmuch as all his proofs be specially grounded upon them.

And first, to begin where he beginneth, when he saith that the number of such beggars as he pretendeth to speak for—that is, as himself calleth them, the “wretched, hideous monsters” (“on whom,” he saith, “scarcely ... any eye dare look”)... the “foul, unhappy sort of lepers and other sore people, needly, impotent, blind, lame, and sick, living only off alms”—“have their number now so sore increased... that all the alms of all the well-disposed people of the realm is not half enough to sustain them, but that for very constraint they die for hunger”: unto all those words of his, were it not that, though we well wist ourselves he said untrue, yet would we be loath so to lay as a lie to his charge anything whereof the untruth were not so plainly perceived... but that he might find some favorers which might say he said true, else would we peradventure not let to tell him... that for a beginning, in these few words he had written two lies at once. If we should tell you what number there was of poor sick folk in days passed long before your time... ye were at liberty not to believe us. Howbeit, he cannot, yet, on the other side, for his part, neither, bring you forth a beadroll of their names; wherefore we must for both our parts be fain to remit you to your own time—and yet not from your childhood (whereof many things men forget when they come to far greater age), but unto the days of your good remembrance. And so doing, we suppose if the sorry sights that men have seen... had left as great impression still remaining in their hearts... as the sight maketh of the present sorrow that they see: men should think and say that they have in days past seen as many sick beggars as they see now. For as for other sicknesses, they reign not, God be thanked, but after such rate as they have done in times past; and then of the French pox, thirty years ago went thereabout sick... five

1, 22 were: would be 2 pray you: ask you to 3 show: point out to 4 specially: expressly 7 pretendeth: professes 8 monsters: monstrosities 9 unhappy: infelicitous; repugnant 10 sort: assortment 11 sore: afflicted 12 impotent: incapacitated 13 wist: knew 16 he said untrue: (that) what he said is not true 17 untruth: untrueness 18 favorers: supporters 19 he said: what he said is true 19 peradventure: perhaps 22 passed: gone by 23 side: hand 24 beadroll: list 25 fain: obliged 29 sorry: distressing 31 sorrow: affliction; distress 33 sicknesses: diseases 34–35 the French pox: syphilis 35 thereabout: around there (where the other beggars were)
against one that beggeth with them now. Whereof whoso list to say
that he seeth it otherwise, we will hold no great dispicions
with him thereupon... because we lack the names of both the
sides to make the trial with. But surely whoso shall say the
contrary... shall, as we suppose, either say so for his pleasure... or
else shall it fare by his sight as folks fare with their feeling; which
what they feel, they whine at, but what they have felt, they have
more than half forgotten—though they felt it right late. Which
maketh one that hath but a poor boil upon his finger... think
the grief more great... than was the pain of a great botch that
grieved his whole hand little more than a month before. So that
in this point, of the number of sick beggars so sore increased so
late, albeit we will forbear so to say to him as we might well say,
yet will we be so bold to deny it him till he bring in some better
thing than his bare word for the proof.

And in good faith, if he be put to the proof of the other point
also—that is to wit, that “for very constraint” those poor sick folk
“die for hunger”—we verily trust and think he shall seek far and
find very few, if he find any at all. For albeit that poor householders
have these dear years made right hard shift for corn—
yet, our Lord be thanked, men have not been so far from all
pity... as to suffer poor, impotent persons die at their doors for
hunger.

Now, whereas he saith that “the alms of all well-disposed people
of this realm is not half enough to sustain them”; and the “well-disposed
people” he calleth, in this matter, all them that giveth
them alms; and he speaketh not of one year nor twain, but of
these many years now past, for neither be the number of the
clergy nor their possessions nor the friars’ alms—in which
things he layeth the cause why the alms of good people is not
half sufficient to keep and sustain the poor and sick beggars from
famishing—any great thing increased in these ten or twelve
or twenty years last passed; and therefore, if that he said were true:
then by all these twenty years at the least, the alms of good people
hath not been half able to sustain the poor and sick beggars from
famishing. And surely if that were so... that in four or five years in
which was plenty of corn, the poor and sick beggars, for lack of
men’s alms, died so fast for hunger: though many should
fall sick never so fast again, yet had they in the last two dear years died up of likelihood almost every one. And whether this be true or not we purpose not to dispute; but to refer and report ourselves to every man’s eyes and ears… whether any man hear of so many dead… or see so many the fewer.

When he hath laid these sure stones to begin the ground and foundation of his building with—that sore and sick beggars be so “sore increased” that the alms of all the good people of this realm “is not half enough to sustain them,” and that therefore by “very constraint” they daily “die for hunger”—upon them he layeth another stone: that the cause of all this evil is the great possessions of the spiritualty… and the great alms given to the friars. But herein first he layeth that—besides tithes and all such other profits as rise unto the Church by reason of the spiritual law or of men’s devotion—that they have the third part of all the temporal lands of the realm. Which whoso can tell as much of the revenues of the realm as he can tell little that made the book… doth well know that though they have much, yet is the “third part of all” far another thing, and that he saith in this point untrue. Then goeth he to the poor friars. And there, as we told you, he showeth that the alms given them… of certainty amounteth yearly unto 43,333 pounds, 6 shillings, 8 pennies, sterling. Peradventure men would ween the man were some apostate, and that he never could be so privy to the friars’ reckoning… but if he had been long their limiter… and seen some general view of all their whole accounts. But surely, since the man is bad enough beside, we would be loath folk should reckon him for apostate; for surely he was never friar, for aught that we know—for we never wist that ever in his life he was half so well disposed. And also, when ye hear the ground of his reckoning, ye will yourselves think that he neither knoweth much of their matters… and of all the realm beside make as though he knew many things for true… which many men know for false.

For first he putteth for the ground of his reckoning that there are in the realm… two-and-fifty thousand parish
churches; which is one plain lie, to begin with. Then he
putteth that every parish, one with another, hath ten households
in it—meaning besides such poor houses as rather ask
alms than give; for of such, ye wot well, the friars get no quarterage.
And that point, albeit that the ground be not sure—yet because
it may to many men seem likely, therefore we let it pass. But
then he showeth further, for a sure truth, a thing that all men
know surely for a great lie: that is to say, that of every
household in every parish, “every of the five orders of friars
hath every quarter a penny.” For we know full well… and so do many
of you too… first, that the common people speak but of four orders—the
White, the Black, the Augustinian, and the Grey—and which
is the fifth, in many parts of the realm few folk can tell you.
For if the question were asked about, there would be, peradventure,
found many more (the more pity it is) that could name
you the Green friars than the Crutched. Ye know right well also
that in many a parish in England, of forty households ye
shall not find four pay neither five pence a quarter nor four
neither; and many a parish never a penny. And as for the five pence
quarterly, we dare boldly say that ye shall find it paid in
very few parishes through the realm, if ye find it paid in
any. And yet this thing being such a stark lie as many men
already knoweth… and every man shortly may find it… he putteth
as a plain, well-known truth, for a special post to bear
up his reckoning. For upon these grounds now maketh he a
clear reckoning in this manner ensuing… which is good also to
be known for folk that will learn to cast account: “There be 52,000
parishes; and in each of them 10 households. So have ye the
whole sum of the households: 5 hundred thousand and 20
thousand.” Even just. Go now to the money, then. “Every order
of the five orders of friars hath of every of these households a
penny a quarter. Summa: For every house, among all the five orders,
every quarter, five pence.” And hereby may ye learn that 5 times
1 maketh 5. “Now this is,” he showeth you, “among the five orders, of every house, for the whole year, twenty pence”; and so learn ye there that 4 times 5 maketh 20. “Summa,” saith he: “5 hundred thousand and 20 thousand quarters of angels.” Here we would not that because the realm hath no coin called the “quarter angel,” ye should therefore so far mistake the man as to ween that he meant so many quarter sacks of angels. For indeed (as we take him), by the naming and counting of so many “quarters of angels” he meaneth nothing else but to teach you a point of reckoning, and to make you perceive and know… that 20 pennies is the fourth part of 6 shillings, 8 pennies. For after that rate it seemeth that he valueth the angel noble. Then goeth he forth with his reckoning and showeth you that 5 hundred thousand and 20 thousand quarters of angels… maketh 2 hundred threescore thousand half angels. And by this, lo, ye may perceive clearly that he meant not quarter sacks of angels; for then they would have held, ye wot well, many more pieces of forty pence… than forty times this whole sum cometh to. Then he showeth you further that 260,000 half angels… amount just unto 130,000 angels. Wherein every man may learn that the half of 60 is 30 and that the half of twain is one. Finally, then, he casteth it all together and bringeth it into pounds. “Summa totalis: 43 thousand pounds, 3 hundred and 33 pounds, 6 shillings, 8 pennies.” But here, to continue the plainness of his reckoning… he forgot to tell you that 3 nobles make 20 shillings, and that 20 shillings make a pound. But who can now doubt of this reckoning, when it cometh so round… that of so great a sum he leaveth not out the odd noble? But, now, since all this reckoning is grounded upon two false grounds (one, upon 52,000 parish churches; the other, that every of the “five” orders hath, every quarter, of every household a penny), this reckoning of 43,333 pounds, 6 shillings, 8 pennies, seemeth to come much like to pass as if he

1, 13, 19 showeth: tells 2 of: from 3 summa: total 7 ween: suppose 7 so: that 11 the fourth part: one-fourth 14–15 2 hundred . . . thousand: 260,000 17 wot: know 20 just: exactly 22 casteth: puts 23 summa totalis: sum total 25 plainness: clarity; spelling out 27 doubt of: be skeptical of; have any misgiving about 28 so round: to such a perfect finish 31 every: every one 31 of: from 33 pass: completion
would make a reckoning with you that every ass hath eight ears. And for to prove it with, bear you first in hand that every ass hath four heads... and then make “Summa: four heads.” Then might he boldly tell you further... that every ass head hath two ears; for that is commonly true, except any be cut off. “Summa, then: two ears. And so, summa totalis: eight ears.” At this account of eight ears of one ass ye make a lip and think it so mad that no man would make no such. Surely it were a mad account indeed; and yet, as mad as it were, it were not so mad by half as is his sad and earnest account that he maketh you now so solemnly of the friars’ quarterage. For this should he ground but upon one lie, whereas he groundeth the other upon twain as open lies as this, and as great. Now might we, and we would, say that all his reckoning were naught... because he reckoneth 20 pennies for the quarter of the angel... and all the remnant of his reckoning followeth forth upon the same rate. But we would be loath to put him in the fault that he deserve not. For surely it might be that he was not aware of the new valuation; for he ran away before the valuation changed. But now, upon this great sum of 43,333 pounds, 6 shillings, 8 pennies—upon these good grounds heaped up together—he bringeth in his ragman’s roll of his rude rhetoric against the poor friars, beginning with such a great exclamation that we heard him hither!... and suddenly were all afraid when we heard him cry out so loud, “O grievous and painful exactions thus yearly to be paid, from the which the people of your noble progenitors, ancient Britons, ever stood free!” And so goeth he forth against the poor friars with “Danes” and “Saxons” and “noble King Arthur,” and “Lucius the emperor,” the Romans, the Greeks, and the great Turk, showing that all these had been utterly marred and never had been able to do nothing in the war... if their people had given their alms to friars.

2 bear you first in hand: first assert to you
4 boldly: with assurance
5 except: except if; unless
7 ears of: ears on // lip: face
9 were: would be
10 sad: serious
11 quarterage: quarterly payment
13 open: manifest; obvious
14 naught: worthless
16 remnant: rest
17 put him in the fault: put on him blame
19 ran away: i.e., ran away from England
22 ragman’s roll: rambling repertoire // rude: amateurish
24 hither: here (in purgatory)
31 showing: saying
31 had: would have // marred: ruined
After his railing rhetoric ended against the friars, then this sum of “43,333 pounds, 6 shillings, 8 pennies” he addeth unto all the others that he said before that all the clergy hath besides; which he summeth not, but saith that this and that together amount unto “more” between them “than half” of the whole “substance of the realm.” And this he affirmeth as boldly as though he could reckon the whole revenues and substance of all England… as readily as make the reckoning of his beggars’ purse.

Then showeth he that this better half of the whole substance is shifted among fewer than the four-hundredth part of the people. Which he proveth by that he saith that all the clergy “compared unto the remnant of the men only” be “not the hundredth person”; and if they be compared unto the remnant of “men, women, and children,” so “are they not,” he saith, “the four-hundredth person.” But, now, some folk that have not very long ago, upon great occasions, taken the reckoning of priests and religious places in every diocese… and, on the other side, the reckoning and the number of the temporal men in every county… know well that this man’s mad reckoning goeth very far wide… and seemeth that he hath heard these wise reckonings at some congregation of beggars. And yet, as though because he hath said it he had therefore proved it, he runneth forth in his railing rhetoric against the whole clergy—and that in such a sort and fashion that very hard it were to discern whether it be more false or more foolish. For first, all the faults that any lewd priest or friar doth—all that layeth he to the whole clergy; as well and as wisely as though he would lay the faults of some lewd lay people to the default and blame of all the whole temporalty. But this way liketh him so well that, thus laying to the whole clergy the faults of such as be simple and faulty therein; and yet not only laying to their charge the breach of chastity, and abuse in fleshly living, of such as be naught…but also madly, like a fond fellow, laying much more to their charge,
and more earnestly reproving, the good and honest living of
those that be good; whom he rebuketh and abhorreth because
they keep their vows and persevere in chastity… for
he saith that they be the marrers and destroyers of the realm,
bringing the land into wilderness for lack of generation, by
their abstaining from wedding: then aggrieveth he his great
crimes with heinous words, gay repetitions, and grievous exclamations,
calling them “blood-suppers” and “drunken in the blood
of holy martyrs and saints”—which he meaneth for the condemning
of holy heretics. “Greedy golofers” he calleth them, and
“insatiable whirlpools,” because the temporality hath given
them possessions… and give to the friars their alms. And all
virtuous, good priests and religious folk he calleth “idle holy
thieves”… because they spend their time in preaching and
prayer. And then saith he, “These be they that make so many
sick and sore beggars. These be they that make these whores and
bawds. These be they that make these thieves. These be they
that make so many idle persons. These be they that corrupt the
generations. And these be they that with the abstaining from
wedding hinder so the generation of the people… that the realm
shall at length fall in wilderness but if they wed the sooner.” And
now, upon these heinous crimes laid unto the whole clergy—
and laid, as every wise man seeth, some very falsely and some
very foolishly—after his goodly repetitions he falleth to his great
and grievous exclamations, crying out upon the “great, broad,
bottomless ocean sea of evils,” and upon the “grievous shipwreck
of the commonwealth,” the “translating” of the King’s
kingdom, and the “ruin” of the King’s “crown.” And therewith
rolling in his rhetoric from figure to figure, he falleth to a
vehement invocation of the King… and giveth him warning of
his great “loss,” asking him fervently, “Where is your sword,
power, crown, and dignity become?”—as though the King’s
Grace had clean lost his realm… especially for lack of people to
reign upon… by cause that priests have no wives. And surely

1 honest: upright; respectable // living: way of living; conduct
2 rebuketh: finds fault with // abhorreth: detests 3 chastity: celibacy
4 marrers: ruiners 5, 20 generation: procreation; reproduction
6 aggrieveth: aggravates 7 crimes: charges // heinous: vitriolic
7 gay: showy 7, 25 grievous: melodramatic 8 blood-suppers: bloodsuckers
10, 13 holy: arrant; out-and-out // golofers: gluttons; gobblers 11 temporality: laity
15, 16, etc. make: cause there to be 16 sore: disabled
17 bawds: brothel keepers; procurers 18–19 the generations: i.e. procreation (by
committing adultery) 21 in: into // but if: unless
21 at length: eventually // the sooner: before then 22 upon: on top of
22 heinous: high 22, 23 laid: attributed
23 every wise man: everyone with any sense 24 goodly: grandiose
25, 26 upon: about 26 ocean sea: ocean // evils: disasters
26 grievous: calamitous; tragic 27 translating: taking away 28 kingdom: kingship
30 vehement: histrionic; dramatic 31 fervently: impassionedly
31–32 where is . . . dignity become: what has become of . . . dignity
34 upon: over // by cause: by reason of the fact
the man cannot fail of such eloquence; for he hath gathered these goodly flowers out of Luther’s garden, almost word for word, without any more labor but only the translating out of the Latin into the English tongue.

But to inflame the King’s Highness against the Church… he saith that the clergy laboreth “nothing” else but to make the King’s subjects “fall into disobedience and rebellion” against His Grace.

This tale is a very likely thing! As though the clergy knew not that there is nothing earthly that so much keepeth themselves in quiet, rest, and surety… as doth the due obedience of the people to the virtuous mind of the Prince! Whose high goodness must needs have much more difficulty to defend the clergy and keep the Church in peace… if the people fell to disobedience and rebellion against their prince. And therefore every child may see that the clergy would never be so mad as to be glad to bring the people to disobedience and rebellion against the prince… by whose goodness they be preserved in peace… and were in such rebellion of the people likely to be the first that should fall in peril. But neither is there desired by the clergy nor never shall, by God’s grace, happen… any such rebellion as the beggars’ proctor and his fellows, whatsoever they say, long full sore to see.

But this man against the clergy fetcheth forth old, fern years and runneth up to King John’s days, spending much labor about the praise and commendation of that good, gracious king, and crying out upon the pope that then was, and the clergy of England, and all the lords and all the commons of the realm… because King John, as he saith, made the realm “tributary” to the pope; wherein he meaneth, peradventure, the Peter pence. But surely therein is all his whole accusation a very cold tale when the truth is known. For so is it in deed that, albeit there be writers that say the Peter pence were granted by King John for the release of the interdiction, yet were they paid in deed ere ever King John’s great-grandfather was born; and thereof is there proof enough. Now, if he say, as indeed some writers say, that King

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1 fail of: want for; suffer any lack of  2 goodly: resplendent; impressive
6 laboreth: strive for  9 this . . . thing: i.e., what a likely story
11 quiet . . . surety: peace and quiet and safety  12 the Prince: i.e., King Henry
15 prince: sovereign  16 may: can // glad: disposed  19 were: would be
22 proctor: spokesman // fellows: cohorts  23 full sore: very badly
24 fern: far bygone  25 runneth up: goes back
26-27 crying out upon: denouncing  28 commons: commoners
29 saith: puts it  30 peradventure: perhaps  31 cold: unconvincing; lame
32 deed: actuality  34 paid . . . ere: in fact being paid before
John made England and Ireland tributary to the pope and the See Apostolic by the grant of a thousand marks: we dare surely say again that it is untrue… and that all Rome neither can show such a grant nor never could… and if they could, it were right naught worth. For never could any king of England give away the realm to the pope, or make the land tributary, though he would; nor no such money is there paid nor never was. And as for the Peter pence, if he mean them: neither was the realm tributary by them… nor King John never granted them. For they were paid before the Conquest, to the Apostolic See toward the maintenance thereof, but only by way of gratitude and alms. Now, as for the archbishop Stephen… whom, he saith, being a traitor to the king… the pope made Archbishop of Canterbury against the king’s will: therein be there, as we suppose, two lies at once. For neither was that Stephen ever traitor against the king, as far as ever we have heard, nor the pope none otherwise made him archbishop than he made all others at that time; but the same Stephen was well and canonically chosen Archbishop of Canterbury by the convent of the monks at Christ’s Church in Canterbury, to whom, as the king well knew and denied it not, the election of the Archbishop at that time belonged. Nor the king resisted not his election because of any treason that was laid against him, but was discontented therewith—and after that his election was passed and confirmed by the pope, he would not of long season suffer him to enjoy the bishopric—because himself had recommended another unto the monks… whom they rejected, and preferred Stephen. And that this is as we tell you, and not as the beggars’ proctor writeth for a false foundation of his railing, ye shall may perceive not only by divers chronicles… but also by divers monuments yet remaining, as well of the election and confirmation of the said Archbishop… as of the long suit and process that after followed thereupon.

Now sheweth he himself very wroth with the spiritual

3 surely: with certainty // again: in reply
5 were right naught worth: would be worth absolutely nothing
7 though he would: even if he wanted to // 9 by: on account of
10 Conquest: i.e., Norman Conquest // Stephen: Stephen Langton (d. 1228).
18 well and: quite; good and // 23 laid: alleged // discontented: unhappy
24 therewith: i.e., with the monks’ choosing of Langton
25 of long season: for a long time // suffer: allow // 26 himself: he himself
27 preferred: put forward // 28 proctor: spokesman // 29 may: be able to
30 divers: several // chronicles: historical accounts
30 monuments: documents; official records // 32 suit: litigation
32 process: legal proceeding // 34 wroth: angry // spiritual: ecclesiastical
jurisdiction, which he would in any wise were clean taken away, saying that it must needs destroy the jurisdiction temporal; whereas the good princes past have granted… and the nobles in their times, and the people too, have by plain parliaments confirmed them, and yet hitherto, blessed be God, they agree better together… than to fall at variance for the wild words of such a malicious makebate—which for to bring the spirituality into hatred… saith that “they call” their jurisdiction a “kingdom.” In which word he may say his pleasure; but of truth, he seldom seeth any spiritual man at this day that so calleth any spiritual jurisdiction that he useth. Now, where this man useth as a proof thereof… that the spirituality nameth themselves always before the temporalty: this manner of naming cometh not of them, but of the good mind and devotion of the temporalty—so far forth that at the parliament, when that any acts be conceived, the words be commonly so couched that the bill saith it is enacted first by “our Sovereign Lord the King,” and by the lords “spiritual and temporal,” and the commons, in that present parliament assembled. And these bills be often drawn, put forth, and passed first in the Commons House, where there is not one spiritual man present.

But such truth as the man useth in this point… such useth he where he calleth the poor friars’ alms an “exaction,” surmising that it is exacted by force and the people compelled to pay it; whereas every man well wotteth that they have, poor men, no way to compel no man to give them aught, not though they should die for default. But this good, honest, true man saith that whoso will not pay the friars their quarterage, they will make him be taken as a heretic. We be well content that ye take this for no lie… as many as ever have known it true. But who heard ever yet that any man taken for a heretic… did so much as once say that he thought it conveyed by the malice of

1 in any wise were clean: by all means have completely 3, 19 temporal: secular 5 plain: plenary; fully assembled // them: i.e., the legal rights of the Church 5 yet hitherto: still to this day 6 they: i.e., the clergy and all these lay people 6 agree better together: better get along with one another // at: into 6 variance: discord; dissension // for: because of 7 makebate: troublemaker 7–8 which . . . hatred: who in order to make the clergy hated 9 kingdom: kingship; sovereignty // word: statement 9–10 his pleasure: what he wants to 10, 21–22 spiritual man: clergyman 11, 18 spiritual: ecclesiastical 11 useth: exercises 13 spiritually: clergy 13 nameth: mention 13, 15 temporalty: laity 15 mind: attitude 19 commons: commoners 20 drawn: drawn up 24 surmising: implying 26 wotteth: knows 27 aught: anything // though: even if 28 default: lack of it // true: truthful 29 whoso: whoever 29 quarterage: quarterly payment 29–30 make him be: have him; cause him to be 30, 32 taken: arrested and taken into custody 32 for: as 33 conveyed: brought about
any friar for refusing to pay the friar’s quarterage? This lie, lo, is a little too loud for any man that were not waxen shameless!

Like truth is there in this that he saith: if any man trouble a priest for any temporal suit, the clergy forthwith will make him a heretic and burn him… but if he be content to “bear a fagot for their pleasure.” The falsehood of this cannot be unknown. For men know well in many a shire how often that many folk indict priests of rape at the sessions. And as there is sometimes a rape committed indeed—so is there ever a rape surmised, were the women never so willing… and oftentimes where there was nothing done at all. And yet of any such that so procured priests to be indicted, how many have men heard taken and accused for heretics? Ye see not very many sessions pass but in one shire or other this pageant is played;

whereas through the realm, such as be put to penance for heresy… be not so many in many years as there be priests indicted in few years. And yet of all such so taken, for heresy, he shall not find four this fourscore years—peradventure not this four hundred years—that ever pretended themselves so troubled for indicting of a priest. So that his lie is herein too large to get any cloak to cover it!

Now, where he saith that the “captains” of Dr. Alen’s “kingdom” have “heaped” him up “benefice upon benefice,” and have “rewarded” him “ten times as much” as the “five hundred pounds” which he “paid” for a fine by the praemunire; and that thus hath the spirituality rewarded him “because he fought so manfully” against the King’s “crown” and his “dignity”: all that know the matter do well perceive that the man doth in this matter as he doth in others—either lieth for his pleasure… or else little wotteth how that the matter stood. For it is well known that Dr. Alen was in the praemunire pursued only by spiritual men—and had much less favor, and much more rigor, showed him therein by the greatest of the clergy… than by any temporal men.
He saith also to the King’s Highness, “Your Grace may see what a work there is in London—how the bishop rageth for indicting of certain curates of extortion and incontinency the last year, in the wardmote inquest.” Would not upon these words every stranger ween that there had been in London many curates indicted of extortion and rape, and that the bishop would labor sore to defend their faults, and that there were about that matter a great commotion in all the city? How shameless is he that can tell this tale… in writing, to the King’s Highness, for a truth… whereof neither bishop nor curate, nor mayor, nor alderman, nor any man else… ever heard word spoken? It were hard to say whether we should take it for wiliness or lack of wit… that he saith all this work was in the City “the last year”—and then his book neither was put up to the King… nor beareth any date. So that a man would ween he were a fool that so writeth of “the last year” that the reader cannot wit which year it was. But yet ween we he doth it for a wiliness. For since he knoweth his tale false, it is wisdom to leave the time unknown, that his lie may be uncontrolled. For he would that men should ween alway that it was in one year or other.

But finally, for a special point, he bringeth in Richard Hunne, and saith that if he had not “commenced an action of praemunire against a priest, he had been yet alive and none heretic at all.” Now is it of truth well known… that he was detected of heresy before the praemunire sued or thought upon. And he began that suit to help to stop the other with; as indeed it did for the while. For albeit that he that was sued in the praemunire was nothing belonging to the bishop of London, before whom Richard Hunne was detected of heresy: yet, lest such as would be glad sinisterly to misconstrue everything toward the blame of the clergy… might have occasion to say that the matter were hotly handled against him to force him to forbear his suit of the praemunire, the bishop therefore did the more forbear… till it appeared clearly to the temporal judges and all that were anything learned in the
temporal law... that his suit of the praemunire was nothing
worth in the king’s law, forasmuch as by plain statute the
matter was out of question that the pleas to be held upon mortuaries
belong unto the spiritual court. After which
thing well appearing, the matter went forth before the bishop...
and he there well proved naught, and his books after brought
forth... such, and so noted (with his own hand, in the margins),
as every wise man well saw what he was... and was full sorry
to see that he was such as they there saw him proved.

Now goeth he further and asketh the King, “Did not Dr.
Horsey and his accomplices most heinously, as all the world
knoweth, murder in prison that honest merchant Richard
Hunne... for that he sued your writ of praemunire against a
priest that wrongfully held him in plea in a spiritual court... for
a matter whereof the knowledge belonged unto your high
courts? And what punishment hath he for it? After that he
had paid, as it is said, six hundred pounds for him and his
accomplices—as soon as he had obtained your most gracious
pardon, he was immediately promoted by the captains of his
kingdom with benefice upon benefice, to the value of four
times as much! Who is he of their kingdom that will not
rather take courage to commit like offense, seeing the promotions
that fell to such men for their so offending? So weak and
blunt is your sword to strike at one of the offenders of this
crooked and perverse generation!” We have here somewhat encumbered
you with a piece of his own words... because ye should have
a show of his vehement eloquence... with which the bold beggars’
proctor so arrogantly presumeth in his bill to ask the
King a question... and to bind His Highness to answer as His
Mastership appointed him. For if His Grace say nay: then he
telleth him before... that “all the world” wotteth yes. But surely if
he call “all the world” all that ever God made, then is there three
parts that knoweth the contrary. For we dare be bold to warrant
you that in heaven, hell, and here among us in purgatory,
of all that this man so boldly affirmeth... the contrary is well and clearly known. And if he call “the world” but only men among you there living upon middle earth: yet so shall he peradventure find in some part of “the world,” if he seek it well, more than four or five good, honest men... that never heard speak of the matter. And of such as have heard of the matter and know it well, he shall find enough—and specially, we think, the King’s Grace himself (whose Highness he is so homely to ask the question and appoint him his answer himself!)—that of all five things which he hath here in so few lines affirmed... there is not one true, but lies every one. For first, to begin where he leaveth: when he saith that the clergy have, since the death of Richard Hunne, “promoted” Dr. Horsey with “benefice upon benefice,” “four times as much” as “six hundred pounds”—the plain untruth of this point may every man soon know that will soon inquire. For he liveth yet at Exeter... and there liveth upon such as he had before, without that new heap of benefices given him by the “captains” of his “kingdom” for killing of Richard Hunne—or thank, either, save only of God for his long patience in his undeserved trouble. But to the end that ye may see how little this man forceth how loud the lie, consider that he saith that the clergy gave unto Dr. Horsey, after he came out of prison, “benefice upon benefice, to the value of four times as much” as “six hundred pounds.” Now, if this be true, then hath Dr. Horsey had in benefices—besides all such as he had before his trouble—the value of two thousand four hundred pounds! We trust that the man, his substance, and his livelihood is so well known that we need not to tell that the beggars’ proctor in this point hath made one loud lie. Another is that he saith that Hunne was kept in plea in the spiritual law for a matter determinable in the king’s court: for the matter was for a mortuary, which by plain statute is declared to pertain to the spiritual law. The third is that Hunne was “honest”—except heresy be honest. The fourth is that “Dr. Horsey and his accomplices” murdered him...
in prison; for thereof is the contrary well known, and that the man hanged himself, for despair, despite, and for lack of grace. We might, and we would, lay for the fifth... the payment which he speaketh of: the “six hundred pounds” with which money he would men should ween that he bought his pardon. Wherein he layeth a good great sum... to the end that folk well witting that Dr. Horsey was not likely to have so much money of his own... should ween therewith that the clergy laid out the money among them... and then gave him benefices whereof he might pay them again. But this layeth he from himself... and showeth not to whom; for he saith “it is said” so. And yet were it no wrong that it were accounted his own... till he put it better from him... and prove of whom he heard it. Howbeit, since there is other store enough, we shall leave this lie in question between him and we wot ne’er whom else... and we shall for the fifth lay you that lie that he layeth forth himself: that is to wit, where he saith that the chancellor purchased the King’s “most gracious pardon” for the murdering of Hunne. For this is the truth: that he never sued any pardon therefor; but after that the matter had been by long time and great diligence so far forth examined... that the King’s Highness at length (as time always trieth out the truth) well perceived his innocence, and theirs also that were accused and indicted with him, his noble Grace when they were arraigned upon that indictment and thereto pleaded that they were not guilty... commanded his attorney general to confess their plea to be true; which is the thing that His Highness, as a most virtuous prince, useth for to do... when the matter is not only just, but also known for just, upon the part of the party defendant. By cause that, like as where the matter appeareth doubtful he doth, as reason is, suffer it to go forth and letteth the truth be tried, so where he seeth and perceiveth the right to be on the other side, His Highness will in no wise have the wrong set forth or maintained in his
name. Now, when it was, then, thus indeed—that neither
the chancellor nor any man else ever sued any charter of
pardon for the matter—this is, then, the fifth lie that this man hath
made in so few lines. Which things whoso well consider… cannot
but marvel of the sore pithy point wherewith he knitteth
up all his heavy matter, saying to the King, “Who is there
of their kingdom that will not take courage to commit like offense,
seeing the promotions that fall to such men for their
offending? So weak and so blunt is your sword to strike at one
of the offenders of this crooked and perverse generation!” Lo
how this great zelator of the commonwealth crieth out upon
the King… that his sword is not strong and sharp to strike off
innovents’ heads! He hath of likelihood ransacked up all Dame
Rhetoric’s rolls to find out this goodly figure—to call upon
the King and ask His Highness, “Where is your sword?” and tell
him his sword is too dull—as though he would bid him bear it to
the cutlers to grind… that he might strike off Dr. Horsey’s
head… whom His Grace had found faultless… and testified him
himself for an innocent! If this man were here matched with
some such as he is himself, that hath the eloquence that he
hath; that could find out such comely figures of rhetoric
as he findeth, set forth and furnished with such vehement
words as he thundereth out like thunderblasts; that hath no
less matters in his mouth than the “great, broad, bottomless
ocean sea full of evils,” the “weakness” and dullness of the King’s
“sword,” the “translation” of the King’s “kingdom,” the “ruin” of
the King’s “crown”—with great exclamations (“O grievous
and painful exactions!” “O case most horrible!” “O grievous
shipwreck of the commonwealth!”)—what might one that had suchlike
elocuence say here to him? Surely so much, and in such
wise, as we seele, poor, puling souls neither can devise nor
utter. But verily, two or three things we see and may well say:
that neither be these great matters meet for the mouth of the

2 sued: tried to obtain 4 made: told  / whoso: whoever (will) 5 of: at
5 sore: terribly  5–6 knitteth . . . matter: wraps up his whole weighty case
9 blunt: dull 11 zelator: zealous supporter  / upon: against
14, 21 find out: come up with 14 goodly figure: splendid metaphor
16 hear: take 17 grind: sharpen 18 faultless: not guilty
19, 30 here: i.e., here in purgatory 21 find out: come up with
21 comely: felicitous 22 vehement: dramatic 24 less: lesser
25 ocean sea: ocean  / evils: disasters 26 translation: taking away
26 kingdom: kingship; sovereignty 28 case: situation  / grievous: tragic
31 seele, poor, puling: poor, pitiful, crying  / devise: think of 33 meet: fitting
beggars’ proctor… nor such preaching of reformation and amendment of the world meet matters for him to meddle with which with open heresies and plain, pestilent errors busily goeth about to poison and infect the world; nor very convenient for him to take upon him to give counsel to a king…

when he showeth himself to have so much presumption and so little wit… as to ask the King a question and appoint him his answer—and therein to tell him that “all the world” knoweth that thing to be true… which the King hath himself already, by his attorney and his judges in open judgment, and in his high court of record, testified and confessed for false. If that man were not for malice as mad… not as a March hare, but as a mad dog that runneth forth and snatcheth he seeth not at whom—the fellow could never else with such open folly so suddenly oversee himself. But it were wrong with the world if malice had as much wit, circumspection, and providence in the pursuit of an ungracious purpose… as it hath haste, evil will, and wiliness in the first enterprising. For as an ape hath some similitude of a man, and as a fox hath a certain wiliness somewhat resembling an imperfect wit: so fareth this fellow, that beginneth, as one would ween, at good zeal and charity borne toward the poor beggars, but forthwith he showeth himself that he nothing else intendeth… but openly to destroy the clergy, first… and after that, covertly, as many as have aught above the state of beggars. And whereas he would in the beginning, by the touching of great matters, fain seem very wise—within a while in the progress he proveth himself a very stark fool. And whereas he would seem to show many notable things which no man had marked but he—he provideth wisely that no man may believe him, he maketh so many lies… and all that ever he doth further, he buildeth upon the same.

He layeth that the living which the clergy hath is the only cause that there be so many beggars that be sick and sore. Very well and wisely; as though the clergy by their substance made men blind and lame! The clergy also is the

cause, he saith, why they “die for hunger.” As though every layman gave to beggars all that ever he could… and the clergy gave them never a groat. And as though there would not more beggars walk abroad if the clergy left off such laymen as they find.

But he proveth you that the clergy must needs be the cause why there be so many poor men and beggars. For he saith that before the clergy came in, there were but few poor people—and yet they begged not, neither, but men, he saith, gave them “enough unasked.” But, now, where sat he when he saw the people give poor folk so fast their alms unasked that no man needed to beg, before the clergy began? This man of likelihood is of great age… and ere e’er the clergy began was wont to sit at St. Savior’s with a sore leg; but he begged not, men gave him so much unasked. For whereas he allegeth the Bible for him, in the Acts of the Apostles… verily we marvel much what the man meaneth. For there he may see that the apostles and the deacons, which were then the clergy, had altogether in their own hands… and distributed to every man as themselves thought good. And therefore we wonder what he meaneth, to speak of that book. For we think that he meaneth not to hurt the clergy so now… as to put all into their hands. And surely but if he mean so… else is this place nothing for his purpose.

Now, herein he showeth also a high point of his wit: where he saith that the great living that the clergy hath—which he layeth (and lieth) to be more than half of the whole revenues and substance of the realm—is shifted among fewer than the four-hundredth part of the people. As though that of the clergy’s part there had no lay people their living—no servant any wages, none artificer any money for working, no carpenter, no mason, any money for building—but all the money that ever cometh in their hands, they put it by and by in their own bellies, and no layman hath any relief thereof. And therefore this point was wisely written, ye see as well as we. Now, for the truth thereof:

if it were true that he saith, that the clergy compared to the

3 groat: A coin worth about a nickel.
4 walk abroad: be walking around; be out there
5 find: provide a living for (by having them in their employ)
8 yet: even 13 ere e’er: before ever 14 sore: bum
15 allegeth the Bible for him: claims that the Bible backs him up
17 may: can // which: who 18 had altogether in: received everything into
22 but if: unless 23 place: text // nothing for: not at all to
24 wit: perspicacity; astuteness 26 layeth: alleges 27 substance: capital; wealth
27 shifted: distributed 27–28 the four-hundredth part: 0.25 percent; one out of four hundred
30 artificer: craftsman 32 in their: into their // by and by in: directly into
33 hath: gets // relief: aid 34 wisely: brilliantly
residue of the men only... be not one to a hundred, then shall ye not need to fear the great Turk and he came tomorrow—except ye suffer among you to grow in great number these Lutherans that favor him. For we dare make you the warranty that if his lie be true... there be more men a great many in London and within four shires next adjoining... than the great Turk bringeth into Hungary. But in this ye must hold him excused... for he meddeth not much with algorism, to see to what sum the number of men ariseth that is multiplied by a hundred. All his practice in multiplication meddeth with nothing but lies; and therein, match him with whom ye will, he will give you a hundred for one. Whereof if ye lack, let this be the example: that he saith, “If the abbot of Westminster should sing every day as many Masses for its founders as he is bound to do by its foundation, a thousand monks were too few.” Ye doubt not, we think, but he can tell you who hath bound them, to how many... and so can make ye the plain reckoning that the abbot is bound in the year to no fewer Masses than 365,000. He knoweth what is every man’s duty save his own. He is meet to be a beggars’ proctor... that can so prowl about and can tell allthing.

But now were all his painted process, ye wot well, nothing worth but if he devised against all these mischiefs some good and wholesome help. It is, therefore, a world to see what politic devices he findeth against the “great, broad, bottomless ocean sea of evils”—what remedies to repair the “ruin” of the King’s “crown,” to restore and uphold his honor and “dignity,” to make his “sword” sharp and strong, and, finally, to save all the “shipwreck of the commonwealth.” Ye would peradventure ween that the man would now devise some good, wholesome laws for help of all these matters. Nay, he will none thereof. For he saith he doubteth that the King is not able to make any law against them. For he saith that the clergy is “stronger” in the Parliament than the King himself. For in the higher house... he reckoneth that the spirituality is more in number and stronger than the temporality. And in the

1 residue: rest  2 and: if // except: except if; unless  3 suffer: allow
4 warranty: guarantee  7 meddeth: messes  8 algorism: arithmetic
10 meddeth: has to do  14 foundation: foundationary charter
15 were: would be  18 save: except  19 meet: fit // proctor: spokesman
20 about: around // allthing: all things
21 all his painted process: his whole specious line of argument // wot: know
22 mischiefs: calamities  23 help: remedy // politic devices: sagacious expedients
24 findeth: comes up with; provides // ocean sea: ocean  25 evils: disasters
27 save: avert // all the: the entire  28 peradventure: perhaps // ween: think
30 will none thereof: will have none of that // doubteth: fears
33 spirituality: clergy  34 temporality: laity
 Commons House he saith that “all the learned men of the realm” except the King’s “learned council” be feed with the Church to “speak” “against” the King’s “crown” and “dignity” in the Parliament, “for them”… and therefore he thinketh the King unable to make any law against the faults of the clergy.

This beggars’ proctor would fain show himself a man of great experience, and one that had great knowledge of the manner and order used in the King’s parliaments. But then he speaketh so savorly thereof… that it well appeareth, of his wise words, he neither can any skill thereof… nor never came in the house. For as for the higher house, first, the King’s own royal person alone more than counterpoiseth all the lords spiritual present with him—and the temporal, too. And over this, the spiritual lords can never in number exceed the lords temporal, but must needs be far underneath them, if it please the King. For His Highness may call thither by his writ many more temporal lords at his own pleasure. And being as they be… there was never yet seen that the spiritual lords banded themselves there as a party against the temporal lords. But it hath been seen that the thing which the spiritual lords have moved and thought reasonable… the temporal lords have denied and refused; as appeareth upon the motion made for legitimation of the children born before the marriage of their parents. Wherein albeit that the reformation which the lords spiritual moved… was a thing that nothing pertained to their own commodity; and albeit that they laid also for their part the constitution and ordinance of the Church and the laws of other Christian countries: yet could they not obtain against the lords temporal, that nothing alleged to the contrary but their own wills. And therefore in the higher house the spiritual party never appeared yet so strong that they might overmatch the temporal lords. And then how much are they too feeble for them and the King too—whose Highness alone is over strong for them both…and may by his writ call to his parliament more temporal lords when he will. Now, where he saith that in the Commons House
“all the learned men” of the realm are feed to speak for the clergy except the King’s “learned council”: there be two follies at once. For neither be all the learned men of the realm knights or burgesses in the Commons House… and the King’s “learned council” is not there at all. And therefore it seemeth that he hath heard somewhat of some men that had seen as little as himself. And surely if he had been in the Commons House (as some of us have been), he should have seen the spirituality not gladly spoken for. And we little doubt but that ye remember acts and statutes passed at sundry parliaments… such, and in such wise, and some of them so lately, as yourselves may see that either the clergy is not the stronger part in the King’s Parliament… or else have no mind to strive. And for the further proof that the King’s Highness is not so weak and unable in his own Parliament as this beggars’ proctor so presumptuously telleth him, His Grace well knoweth, and all his people too, that in their own convocations His Grace never devised nor desired anything in his life… that ever was denied him. And therefore this gay invention of this beggars’ proctor—that he feigneth the King’s Highness to be in his high court of Parliament more weak and feeble than the clergy—is a very feeble device.

But, now, since he will have no law devised for the remedy of his great complaints, what help hath he devised else? The help of all this gear is, he saith, none other thing… but to let him and such royal railers… rail and jest upon the Church… and tell the people the priests’ faults—and for the lewdness of part, bring the whole clergy in contempt and hatred among all the temporal folk. Which thing he saith the King must needs suffer… if he “will eschew the ruin of [his] crown and dignity.” And this thing, he saith, shall be more “speedful” and effectual in the “matter”… “than all the laws that ever can be made, be they never so strong.” Lo, good lords and masters, then shall ye need no more parliaments! For here is, God be thanked, an easy way, wisely found, to remedy—with railing!—the “great, broad, bottomless

ocean sea of evils,” and to save the commonwealth from shipwreck, and the King’s crown from ruin.

But now to the poor beggars. What remedy findeth their proctor for them? To make hospitals? Nay, beware of that; thereof he will none, in no wise. For thereof he saith “the more the worse”… because they be profitable to priests. What remedy, then? Give them any money? Nay, nay, not a groat. What other thing, then? Nothing in the world will serve but this: that if the King’s Grace “will build a sure hospital that never shall fail to relieve” all the sick beggars forever, let him give nothing to them… but look what the clergy hath, and take all that from them. Is not here a goodly mischief for a remedy? Is not this a royal feast, to leave these beggars meatless… and then send more to dinner with them? Oh, the wise! Here want we voice and eloquence to set out an exclamation in the praise and commendation of this special, high provision. This bill putteth he forth in the poor beggars’ name. But we verily think if themselves have as much wit as their proctor lacketh, they had liefer see their bill-maker burned… than their supplication sped. For they may soon perceive that he mindeth not their alms… but only the spoil of the clergy. For so that the clergy lose it—he neither deviseth further… nor further forceth who have it.

But it is easy to see whereof springeth all his displeasure. He is angry, and fretteth, at the spiritual jurisdiction… for the punishment of heretics and burning of their erroneous books. For ever upon that string he harpeth—very angry with the burning of Tyndale’s Testament. For these matters he calleth them “blood-suppers drunk in the blood of holy saints and martyrs.” Ye marvel, peradventure, which “holy saints and martyrs” he meaneth. Surely by his “holy saints and martyrs” he meaneth their holy schismatics and heretics… for whose just punishment these folk that are of the same sect fume, fret, froth, and foam… as fierce and as angrily as a new-hunted sow. And for the rancor conceived upon this displeasure… cometh up all his complaint of the possessions of the clergy. Wherein he spareth and forbeareth the nuns yet, because they have no jurisdiction
upon heretics; for else he would have cried out upon their possessions too. But this is now no new thing, nor the first time that heretics have been in hand with the matter. For first was there, in the eleventh year of King Henry IV, one John Badby burned for heresy. And forthwith thereupon was there at the next parliament, held the same year, a bill put in... declaring how much temporal land was in the Church; which reckoning the maker thereof guessed at by the number of knights’ fees, of which he had went he had made a very just account.

And in this bill was it devised to take their possessions out again. Howbeit, by the bill it appeared well unto them which well understood the matter... that the maker of the bill neither wist what land there was, nor how many knights’ fees there was, in the Church... nor well what thing a knight’s fee is; but the bill devised of rancor and evil will by some such as favored Badby, that was burned, and would have his heresies fain go forward.

And so that bill, such as it was, such was it esteemed... and set aside for naught. So happed it then, soon after, that in the first year of the King’s most noble progenitor King Henry V, those heresies secretly creeping on still among the people, a great number of them had first covertly conspired and after openly gathered and assembled themselves... purposing by open war and battle to destroy the king and his nobles and subvert the realm. Whose traitorous malice that good Catholic king prevented, withstood, overthrew, and punished—by many of them taken in the field... and after, for their traitorous heresies, both hanged and burned. Whereupon forthwith, at the parliament held the same year, likewise as that royal prince, his virtuous nobles, and his good Christian commons... devised good laws against heretics: so did some of such as favored them... eftsoons put in the bill against the spiritualty. Which eftsoons considered for such as it was and coming of such malicious purpose as it came... was again rejected and set aside for naught. Then was there long after

1 upon heretics: over heretics // upon their: about their
3 been ... matter: taken up this matter 7 declaring: stating // temporal: secular
9 went: thought // just: accurate // account: computation
10–11 out again: back out 12 wist: knew 14 well: exactly 15 evil: ill
16 fain: i.e., by gum; darn well 18 esteemed: regarded
19, 35 for naught: as worthless 26 prevented: anticipated
27 taken in the field: taken captive on the battlefield 30 royal: first-rate
30 commons: commoners 32, 33 eftsoons: for a second time
32 spirituality: clergy
that… one Richard Howndon burned for heresy. And then
forthwith were there a rabble of heretics gathered themselves
together at Abingdon… which not intended to lose any more
labor by putting up of bills in the parliaments, but to make
an open insurrection and subvert all the realm… and then to
kill up the clergy and sell priests’ heads as good cheap as
sheep’s heads—three for a penny, buy who would. But God saved the
Church and the realm both, and turned their malice upon their
own heads. And yet after their punishment, then were
there some that renewed the bill again. And yet long after this
was there one John Goose roasted at the Tower Hill; and thereupon,
forthwith, some other John goose began to bear that bill abroad
again… and made some gagging a while, but it availed him
not. And now, because some heretics have been of late
abjured, this gosling therefore hath made this beggars’ bill…
and gaggeth again upon the same matter—and that, as he
thinketh, by a proper invention likely to speed now: because he
maketh his bill in the name of the beggars… and his bill couched
as full of lies as any beggar swarmeth full of lice.

We neither will nor shall need to make much business about
this matter. We trust much better in the goodness of good
men… than that we should need for this thing to reason against
an unreasonable body. We be sure enough that good men were
they that gave this gear into the Church… and therefore naught
should they be, of likelihood, that would pull them out thence again. To
which ravin and sacrilege our Lord, we trust, shall never suffer
this realm to fall.

Holy Saint Augustine in his days, when he perceived that
some evil people murmured at the possessions that then were
given into his church, did, in an open sermon, among all the
people, offer them their lands again… and that his church
and he would forsake them… and bade them take them who
would. And yet was there not found in all the town… albeit
that the people were (as these Africans be) very barbarous,
fierce, and boisterous… yet was there none, as we say, found—any
one!—so bad… that his heart would serve him to enter into one foot.

When Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, bought up in the dear years all the lands that were in every man’s hand… so that all the people were fain to sell their inheritance, for hunger: yet, idolater as he was, he would never suffer for any need the possessions of the priests to be sold, but made provision for them beside… and suffered them to keep their lands still, as the Bible beareth witness. And we verily trust that the good Christian princes of the Christian realm of England shall never fail of more favor toward the clergy of Christ… than had that prince idolater to the priests of his idols. Yet is it not enough to the cruel mind of this man to take from the whole clergy all that ever they have… but that he would further have them bound unto carts and whipped, to drive them to labor.

Of all thieves is this one of the worst and most cruel kind. For of all thieves men most abhor them that when they have taken a man’s money from him… then take and bind him and beat him, too. But yet is this wretch much worse. For he fareth as a cruel thief that would without respect of his own commodity… take a man’s money from him and cast it he care not where… and then bind the man to a tree and beat him for his pleasure. Oh, the charity!

But he saith he would have them whipped to compel them to “labor and get their living in the sweat of their faces.” And this would he not, good man, but for fulfilling of God’s “commandment.” For he saith that it is commanded them in the first chapter of Genesis. And therefore is he therein so indifferent that he excepteth none, but calleth the best but “idle holy thieves”… and so would have them all robbed and despoiled, bound and beaten, to compel them to work with their hands, to “get their living in the sweat of their faces” for the fulfilling of God’s “commandment.” Among this company that he would suddenly send forth new-robbed, with right naught left them, is there many a good man that hath lived full godly

2 foot: i.e., square foot of any of those properties 3–9: See Genesis 47:20–22.
3 dear years: years of dearth; years of famine 5 fain: forced
6, 8 suffer(ed): allow(ed) 8 beside: separately 11 fail of: i.e., fail to show
16 labor: i.e., manual labor 18 abhor them that: detest those who
19 bind him: tie him up 21 fareth as: acts like // respect: consideration
22 commodity: interest 28–29: See Genesis 3:19
29 indifferent: impartial; nondiscriminating 30 holy: arrant; out-and-out
35 suddenly: instantly // new-robbed: just-now robbed
35 right naught: absolutely nothing 36 full godly: in a very godly way
many a fair day… and duly served God and prayed for us (which we have well found!): many an old man, many a sore sick man, and many blind and many lame, too. All which as soon as they be driven out of their own doors… this charitable man would be very well content to see them bound and beaten too… because they be of the clergy. For exception maketh he none in this world.

He layeth unto the charge of the clergy that they live idle all, and that they be all bound to “labor and get their living in the sweat of their faces” by the precept that God gave to Adam in the first chapter of Genesis. Here this man showeth his cunning. For if this be so—then were the priests in the Old Law bound thereto as well as is the clergy now. And then how happed it that of this point there was no mention made by Moses?

How happed it that God in that law provided them much larger living than he did the lay people? And that, such kind of living as declared that his pleasure was that they should live out of labor, and upon the labor of other men’s hands? The holy apostle Saint Paul… although himself in some places forbore to take his living freely, but rather chose to live off his own labor than to be in their danger which would haply have said that he preached because he would live at ease thereby—and this did he especially to put such false apostles to silence… as for such desire of idle living fell somewhere to false preaching—yet neither did he so in every place… and also confessed and said that he might well and lawfully have done the contrary, affirming it for good reason that he that serveth the altar should live off the altar, and saying also, “If we sow unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things?” Now, Christ his own mouth said unto the people… that they should not leave their duties unpaid unto the priests. And this good Christian man would have them all clean taken from them… and, yet, the priests well beaten, too.

He reckoneth all the clergy “idle” because they labor not with their hands till their faces sweat. But our Savior Christ
reckoned far otherwise in blessed Mary Magdalene. Whose idle sitting at her ease and hearkening… he accounted and declared for better busyness than the busy stirring and walking about of his good hostess, Martha—which was yet of all worldly business occupied about the best; for she was busy about alms and hospitality… and the guesting of the best poor man, and most gracious guest, that ever was guested in this world.

Now, if this cannot yet content this good man, because of God’s “commandment” given unto Adam that he should eat his bread in the sweat of his face: then would we fain wit whether himself never go to meat… till he have wrought so sore with his hands that his face sweateth. Surely we believe he laboureth not so sore before every meal. But yet it were not good to trust his answer; for he will haply say yes… and not let for one lie among so many. Howbeit, he thinketh it, peradventure, enough for him… that he sitteth and studieth till he sweat in seeking out old heresies, and devising new. And verily, if he look that such busyness should serve him for a discharge of hand labor, much better may we think discharged thereof… many good men whom he would have beaten thereto, living their lives in fasting, prayer, and preaching—and studying about—the truth.

But it is good to look betimes what this beggars’ proctor meaneth by this “commandment” of hand labor that he speaketh of. For if he confess that it bindeth not every man: then is it laid to no purpose against the clergy. For there was a small clergy when that word was said to our first father, Adam. But, now, if he call it a precept, as he doth… and then will that it extend unto all the whole kind of man… as a thing by God commanded unto Adam and all his offspring: then, though he say little now, he meaneth to go further hereafter than he speaketh of. For if he might first have the clergy put out of their living… and all that they have clean taken from them… and might have them joined to these beggars that be now; and,

2 hearkening: listening with eager and respectful attention  4 which: who
4 worldly: earthly  10 fain wit: like to know  11 himself: he himself
11 meat: dinner  // wrought so sore: worked so hard  13 so sore: that hard
13 were not: would not be  14 haply: maybe
14 let for one: scruple over one; forbear to tell one more
15 peradventure: perhaps  17 seeking out: digging up; reviving
17 devising new: thinking up new ones
18 look: expect  // discharge of: dispensation from  18, 23 hand: manual
19 discharged thereof: dispensed from it  22 betimes: in good time
22 proctor: spokesman  24 confess: admit  26 said: i.e., given
27–28 will that it: will have it  28 all . . . man: the whole entire human race
over that, added unto them and sent a-begging too… all those that the
clergy find now full honestly—this pageant once played, and
his beggars’ bill so well sped—then, when the beggars should
have so much less living and be so many more in multitude,
surely likewise as for the beggars he now maketh his bill to the
King’s Highness against bishops, abbots, priors, prelates,
and priests, so would he then, within a while after, make another
bill to the people against merchants, gentlemen,
kings, lords, and princes… and complain that they have
all… and say that they do nothing for it, but live idle… and that
they be commanded in Genesis to live by the labor of their
hands “in the sweat of their faces,” as he saith by the
clergy now. Wherein if theyween that they shall stand in
other case than the clergy doth now, they may peradventure
sore deceive themselves. For if they will think that their case
shall not be called all one because they have lands and goods to
live upon—they must consider so hath the clergy too. But that is
the thing that this beggars’ proctor complaineth upon… and would
have them taken away. Now, if the landed men suppose that
their case shall not seem one with the case of the clergy…
because they shall haply think that the Church hath their
possessions given them for causes which they fulfill not; and
that if their possessions happen to be taken from them, it
shall be done upon that ground; and so the lay landed men
out of that fear, because they think that suchlike occasion
and ground and consideration faileth and cannot be found
in them and their inheritance—surely if any man, clerical or lay,
have lands in the gift whereof hath been any condition adjoined
which he fulfilleth not, the giver may well with reason use
therein such advantage as the law giveth him. But, on the other
side, whoso will advise princes or lay people to take from the
clergy their possessions… alleging matters at large—as laying to
their charge that they “live not as they should,” nor “use not well
their possessions”—and that therefore it were well done to take
them from them by force and “dispose them better”: we dare
boldly say whoso giveth this device, as now doth this beggars’
proctor, we would give you counsel to look well what will follow. For he shall not fail, as we said before, if this bill of his were sped… to find you soon after, in a new supplication, new bald reasons enough that should please the people’s ears… wherewith he would labor to have lords’ lands and all honest men’s goods to be pulled from them by force and distributed among beggars. Of which there should, in this wise that he deviseth, increase and grow so many… that they should be able for a sudden shift to make a strong party. And surely as the fire ever creepeth forward and laboreth to turn all into fire—so will such bold beggars as this is… never cease to solicit and procure all that they can… the spoil and robbery of all that aught have… and to make all beggars as they be themselves.

We be content that ye believe us not… but if it have so proved already by those uplandish Lutherans that rose up in Almaine. Which, being once raised by such seditious books as is this “Beggars’ Supplication”… and such seditious heretics as is he that made it, set first upon spiritual prelates. But shortly thereupon they so stretched unto the temporal princes… that they were fain to join, in aid of themselves, with those whom they laughed at first to see them put in the peril—hoping to have had the profit of their loss… till they saw that they were likely to lose their own with them. And for all the punishment that they pursued upon those rebellious persons—of whom there were in one summer slain above sixty thousand—yet is that fire rather covered than quenched, because they suffered it creep forth so far at first… that dissension grew thereby among the lords themselves, as there can never lack some needy, ravenous landed men… that shall be ready to be captains in all such rebellions; as was the Lord Cobham called Oldcastle… sometime a captain of heretics in England, in the days of King Henry V.

And surely there would soon follow some sore change in the temporality… if this beggars’ proctor have his malicious supplication sped against the spiritualty.
But yet, lest folk should abhor his hard heart and cruelty, the man tempereth his matter with a goodly visage of the sore inward sorrow that he taketh for the diminishment of mankind... and with the great zeal that he beareth to generation for the good increase of Christian people in the land. For he would for that cause in any wise that all the clergy should have wives. For he asketh the King’s Highness (as the man hath caught a great pleasure to appose the King... wherein he useth a figure of rhetoric that men call “sauce malapert”) “what an infinite number of people might have been increased to have peopled your realm... if this sort of folk had been married like other men.” This matter that priests must needs have wives he bringeth in diversely in three or four places. And among others he hath one... wherein he showeth in railing against the clergy a principal part of his excellent eloquence. For there he useth his royal figure of rhetoric called “repetition,” repeating often, by the whole clergy, “these be they” in the beginning of his clause: “These be they that have made a hundred thousand idle whores in your realm”; “These be they that corrupt the generation of mankind in your realm”; “These be they that draw men’s wives into incontinency in your realm.” And after divers of such “these be they”s, he concludeth and knitteth up the matter with his accustomed vehemence fetched out of Luther’s volumes, asking, “Who is able to number the great, broad, bottomless ocean sea full of evils... that this mischievous and sinful generation bringeth up upon us?” As though all the whole clergy were of this condition, and no man else but they. But among all his “these be they”s, this is one which, as the sorest and the most vehement, he setteth in the forefront of them all: “These be they that by their abstaining from marriage... do let the generation of the people; whereby all the realm at length, if it should be continued, shall be made deserted and uninhabitable.”

Lo the deep insight that this beggars’ proctor hath in the “broad, bottomless ocean sea full of evils” to save the “grievous

shipwreck of the commonwealth”! He seeth far farther than ever
Christ was aware of... or any of his blessed apostles... or any of the old
holy fathers of Christ’s faith and religion since his holy Ascension
hitherto... till now that Luther came of late, and Tyndale after
him, and spied out this great secret mystery that neither God
nor good man could espy. If their abstaining from marriage
should make all the land “deserted” and “uninhabitable,” how happeth it
that habitation endureth therein so long? For the land hath
lasted since the beginning of their abstaining from marriage,
ye wot well, many a fair day! And now if, their abstaining
from marriage notwithstanding, the land hath been upheld
with the generation of you that are the temporalty, so long: ye shall
likewise hereafter, by God’s grace and the help of good
prayers for keeping the land from wilderness, be able to beget
children still yourselves... and shall not need to call neither
monks nor friars to help you.

Now, if it be so that the clergy be, as he saith, but the hundredth
part of the men... and yet not so much neither: there is not, then, so
great peril of the land to fall to wilderness... but that the ninety-nine
parts may maintain it populous... though the hundredth part
abstain. But he, for to show that he hath not left his anxious
favor toward his native country though he be run away from
it for heresy, feareth sore lest, the hundredth part forbearing marriage,
all the ninety-nine parts shall not be able so to preserve it
with generation... but that it shall wax not only deserted... but also
(whereof we most wonder) uninhabitable; that is to say, such as of itself
shall not be able for man’s habitation. But he peradventure
taketh “uninhabitable” for deserted, desolate, and not inhabited...
because men should see that he can so roll in his rhetoric... that he
wotteth not what his own words mean.

And somewhat yet is it to be considered that in such part of
his book that he would have it appear that their living is too
much—there he would make it seem that they were very few. And
where he would have them take wives—he would have them seem
so many... that their abstaining from marriage were able to
bring all the land into desolation and wilderness. And thus he

5 great: big // secret: esoteric
10, 30 wotteth: know(s)
12, 25 generation: reproducing; procreating
12 temporary: laity // so: this
14–15 beget children still: go on begetting children
17–18, 20, 23 the hundredth part: (the) 1 percent
18 yet not so much: not even that much
19–20, 24 ninety-nine parts: (other) 99 percent
20 may maintain: can keep
21 left: lost
22 favor: partiality
23 sore: terribly // lest: i.e., that
25 wax: become
27 able for man’s habitation: capable of being inhabited by human beings
27 peradventure: perhaps
29 roll: luxuriate; revel
32 living: financial wherewithal
handleth either part so wisely… that there lacketh him nothing earthly therein… but even a pennyweight of wit. For fault whereof, his wily folly foreseeth not that one part of his process ever impugneth another. For they that were right now so small a part of people that a little would suffice for their living… be now suddenly so many that if they were married, “infinite number of people,” he saith to the King, would “increase,” to people his realm with. Now, if that be true, that of them alone, if they were married, so infinite number of people would increase… that it would make the realm populous: then either are they, contrary to his count, more than the hundredth part (for one out of a hundred is no very perceivable miss, nor one added to a hundred no very perceivable increase)... or else, if they be but the hundredth part, as he made his reckoning right now, yet if it be then true that he saith since— that of the hundredth part married, so infinite number of people might increase to people the realm—then can he not deny but that of the ninety-nine parts there may grow ninety-nine times infinite number of people. And then, that being so: though the clergy, being (as he saith) but the hundredth part, never marry, yet shall the poor fool not need to wake and wax lean for fear of the realm falling to wilderness. In which he seeth that there may of the ninety-nine parts residue… grow and increase ninety-nine times infinite number of people to make the land populous.

Yet marvel we much of one thing: that in all his fear that generation should fail because the clergy marrieth not… he seeth no man unmarried in all the realm but them. How many servants? How many tall serving men are there in the realm that might if men saw such a sudden necessity… rather marry than the clergy, that have vowed to God the contrary? But he forceth not so much for the matter that he maketh his pretext… as he doth indeed to have all vows void… that he might get Luther some lewd companions in England.
But, now, what if this good man had the rule of this matter—and would put out all the clergy and bid them go wed? He should peradventure find some that would not much stick thereat; but they should be of the worst sort, and such as now be slander of their order—and whom it were most need to keep from generation, lest evil crows bring you forth evil birds. But as for the good priests and good religious whose children were likely to be best and to be best brought up: they would not marry, for breach of their vows. And thus should ye have the naughty generations increase—whereof there be too many already—and of the better never the more.

What would this good man do now with good folk of the clergy, that would not marry? He would of likelihood bind them to carts and beat them—and make them wed in the waniand. But, now, what if women will not wed them? Namely since he sendeth them out with right naught—saving slander, shame, and villainy! What remedy will he find therefor? He will of likelihood compel the women to wed them; and if the wench be nice and play the wanton and make the matter strange—then will he beat her to bed too.

Surely we cannot but here confess the truth: these nice and wanton words do not very well with us. But we must pray God and you to pardon us. For in good faith, his matter of monks’ “marriages” is so merry and so mad that it were able to make one laugh that lieth in the fire; and so much the more—in how much he more earnestly presseth upon the King in this point—to have, in any wise, the clergy robbed, despoiled, bound, beaten—and wedded. Whereby what opinion he hath of wedding... ye may soon perceive; for ye see well that if he thought it good, he would not wish it them.

Many that read his words... ween that he were some merry mad guest; but he seemeth us far otherwise. For except he were a wondrous sad man of himself, he could never speak so earnestly in so mad a matter.
Yet one thing would we very fain wit of him. When he had robbed, despoiled, bound, beaten, and wedded all the clergy, what would he then? Should any of them be curates of men’s souls, and preach, and administer the sacraments to the people, or not?

If they should—it were a very strange fashion to rob him, bind him, and beat him on the one day… and then kneel to him, and confess to him, and receive the Sacrament of his hand, on the other day; reverently hear him preach in the pulpit… and then bid him go get him home and clout shoes. Either he must mean to have it thus (which none honest man could endure to see) or else (of which twain we wot ne’er well whither is the worse) he intendeth to have all holy orders accounted as nothing, and to have no more sacraments administered at all, but whereas soon after Christ’s Ascension his Church buried the ceremonies of the Jews’ synagogue with honor and reverence… so would he now that Christian people should kill and cast out on a dunghill the blessed sacraments of Christ with rebuke and shame. And surely, to tell you the truth, this is his very final intent and purpose, and the very mark that he shooteth at—as a special point and foundation of all Luther’s heresies, whereof this man is one of the banner bearers. And therefore here would his own high, sore words have good place against himself. For this mischievous device of his… is in deed a “great, broad, bottomless ocean sea full of evils” wherein would not fail the “grievous shipwreck” of the commonwealth—which God would soon forsake if the people once forsook his faith and contemned his holy sacraments, as this beggars’ proctor laboreth to bring about. Which thing his device and conveyance well declareth, although he forbear expressly to say so far… because of the good and gracious Catholic mind that he well knoweth, and by His Grace’s excellent writings perceiveth, to be borne by the King’s Highness… to the Catholic faith. For which he covereth his malicious intent
and purpose toward the faith… under the cloak of many temporal benefits… that he saith should succeed and follow to the King’s Highness and his realm… if these his high, politic devices were once by His Grace agreed.

For in the end of all his bill, he gathereth his high commodities together, saying that if the King take all from the clergy, set them abroad at the wide world with right naught to wed and take wives, and make them labor for their living till they sweat; bind them to carts and beat them well—he saith to the King in the beggars’ names, “Then shall as well the number of our aforesaid monstrous sort… as of the bawds, whores, thieves, and idle people decrease. Then shall these great yearly exactions cease. Then shall not your sword, power, crown, dignity, and obedience of your people be translated from you. Then shall you have full obedience of your people. Then shall the idle people be set a-work. Then shall matrimony be much better kept. Then shall the generation of your people be increased. Then shall your commons increase in riches. Then shall none take our alms from us. Then shall the Gospel be preached. Then shall we have enough and more. Then shall be the best hospital that ever was founded for us. Then shall we pray to God for your noble estate long to endure."

Lo, here hear ye heaped up many great commodities… if they were all true. But we showed you before, and have also proved you, that his bill is much grounded upon many great lies; whereof he by and by began with some, and after went forth with more. And now, to the intent that the end should be somewhat suitly to the remnant, as he began with lies and went forth with lies… so will he with lies likewise make an end—saving that in the beginning he gave them out by tale, and in the end he bringeth them in by heaps. For first he saith that then shall the number of sore and sick beggars decrease. How so? Shall there by the robbing, wedding, binding, and beating of the clergy… blind beggars get their sight again, or lame

3–4 these . . . devices: these superb, sagacious proposals of his
4 agreed: i.e., agreed to 5 all his: his whole 6 high: great
5, 24 commodities: benefits; improvements 7 abroad at: out there in
7 right naught: absolutely nothing 11 monstrous: grotesque
11 bawds: brothel keepers; procurers 14 translated: taken
16 matrimony: the marital covenant 18 commons: commoners
19 none: no one 22 estate: position 25 showed: told
27 by and by: right away; at the outset 29 suitly to: congruent with
29 remnant: rest 31 by tale: one at a time 33 sore: disabled
34 wedding: marrying off 35 again: back
beggars their legs? Is there no man in all the clergy sick and
sore, that shall be by this way sent unto them? Should there not
many that now be in good health wax shortly sick and sore…
and sit and beg with them? Were this a diminishment of
sick and sore beggars—to make more and send to them?

Then shall, he saith, “bawds” and “whores, thieves, and idle people”
“decrease.” This man weeneth he were cousin to God and could do as
he did: “Dixit et facta sunt.” For as soon as he hath devised it…
now weeneth he that if they were all put out and so served by and by,
then were all forthwith in good order. As soon as he saith “Let
them wed”… now he weeneth that forthwith, every priest,
monk, and friar hath a wife. As soon as he hath said “Bind them
and beat them to work”… forthwith, he weeneth, every man is at his
work. And all this he reckoneth sure ere ever he provide work
for them… or where they shall dwell… or who shall take so many
to work at once that never were wont to work before; and this
where he seeth many walk idle already… that either no beating
can drive to work… or else no man will take to work. First,
we trust that among the clergy there be many men of that
goodness and virtue… that scant a devil could find in his
heart to handle them in such dispiteous and despiteful
manner. But go to, let their honest living and virtue lie still in
question—yet at the leastwise he will grant they be good
or naught. Now, then, if they be good: he is too very a villain that
would serve good men so. And on the other side, if they be all as
he would have them all seem—unthrifty, lewd, and naught—
how can it be that by the reason of so many so naughty… so
suddenly set out at large, ye should have bawds, harlots,
thieves, and idle people decrease? Except he think that those
whom he calleth naught already, being, as they now be, kept
in, and in honest fashion refrained—and many kept up in
cloisters—will be better ruled abroad, running at the wild world as
bucks broken out of a park. Over this, how can there by the
“marriages” of priests, monks, and friars… be fewer whores and
bawds, when by the very “marriage” itself—being as it were
incestuous and abominable—all were stark harlots that “married” them, and all stark bawds that should help to bring them together?

“Then shall,” he saith, “these great yearly exactions cease.” How can such things cease as never yet began? Ye remember what things he called exactions: the friars’ “quarterage”… which he said that they exact of “every household”… and compel them to pay it upon pain of heresy—bearing of a fagot or burning.

Can he among so many as payeth it not… lay you one example that ever any said he was so served this seven years, this sevenscore years, this seven hundred years? Can he say that ever it was exacted of himself?

We know where he dwelled… and that if he had had none other cause to run away, surely for any fear of friars that ever exacted of him “quarterage”… he would not have been afraid to dwell by the best of their beards.

“Then shall idle folk,” he saith, “be set a-work.” By what means? Whom hath he devised more to set idle men a-work?—but if he look that idle men shall be set a-work by them whom he sendeth out of their own houses without money or ware, neither he nor they wot whither.

“Then shall matrimony be much better kept.” Why so? Because there be more men unmarried sent out abroad to break it? Who (if they be such as he calleth them) were (if they went all abroad) well likely to break many another man’s marriage ere they made all their own.

“Then shall the generation of your people be increased.” Is that the greatest fault he findeth—the lack of generation? If he saw as far as he would seem to see… then should he spy that it were first more need to provide houses to dwell in—with land laid thereto, for tillage; or else experience teacheth that there is generation enough for the corn that the ground beareth. And that thing once well provided for, there will enough be found to multiply more generation… of such as may lawfully wed and would wed… if they wist where, after wedding, their wife and their children should dwell.

1 incestuous: So considered because in canon law, these men are regarded as siblings to everyone else.
2 bawds: procurers
6, 14 quarterage: quarterly payment
8 heresy: i.e., a heresy charge and punishment
8 bearing of a fagot: See note for 131/6.
9 lay: adduce
10 any: i.e., any one of them
10 look: expects
20 ware: goods; inventory
18 but if: unless
18 lay: know where
21 matrimony: the marital covenant
22, 24 abroad: at large; on the loose
23 were: would be
24 ere: before
25 made all: all made
27 fault: lack; deficiency
28 would: wants to
29 laid: adjoined
31 corn: grain
32 enough: i.e., enough men
34 wist: knew
“Then shall not your sword, power, crown, and dignity, and obedience of your people, be taken from you.” Who hath taken it away now? Who hath his sword borne but His Highness himself, or such his deputies as he appointeth it unto? His crown no man weareth but himself, as far as ever any of us heard. And yet if His Highness have any crowned kings under him, his “sword, power, crown, and dignity” is nothing defaced nor diminished, but honored and enhanced by that. But all the mischief is that the spiritual court hath examination of heretics; this is all the grief. For as for obedience of the King’s people, His Highness findeth none taken from him. Was there ever king in this realm better obeyed than he? Hath His Highness of any part of his realm been better obeyed, or more humbly served, than of his clergy? Was there ever any king in the realm that had his crown translated from him… because the clergy had lands given them? Or because men gave alms to the poor friars? In good faith, ye may trust us, we never knew none such. When the beggars’ proctor proveth any such, ye may then believe him; and in the meantime, ye may well believe he lieth.

“Then shall ye have obedience of your people.” Yet again? Till he find in the King’s realm some that dare disobey him, it were not much against reason that, harping so much upon that string… that every man’s ear perceiveth so false and so far out of tune, he should confess himself a fool.

“Then shall your people increase in riches.” Wherefor the rather? Not one halfpenny, for aught that he hath spoken yet—except he mean when he taketh the land from the clergy… then to divide it among the people, and make a dole of the friars’ alms too. And if he mean so—when he saith it out plainly, then will we tell you what he meaneth more. But in the mean season, to prove him both false and foolish… it is enough to tell him that the people cannot wax rich by their coming to them that are sent out naked and bring naught with them.

“Then shall none beg our alms from us.” No, pardie—none but all they that ye will have sent out naked to you. Which

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4 his deputies: deputies of his  6 yet: even  7 nothing: not at all
7 defaced: effaced; discredited  8, 10 all the: the whole
9 mischief: woe; vexation // spiritual: ecclesiastical  10 grief: trouble
13 of any: by any  14 of: by  15 translated: taken
17 in good faith: in all seriousness  18 proctor: spokesman
22 were not: would not be  25 riches: wealth // wherefore: by what
26 rather: more // aught: anything // spoken yet: mentioned thus far
27 except: unless  29 mean so: means that  31 mean season: meantime
31 false: untruthful  32 wax: grow
32–33 their . . . that: the coming to them of people who
33 naught: nothing  35 none: no one // pardie: by George
would be more than ye would be glad to see sit and beg with
you—and see them ask your alms from you… that were wont to
give alms to you.

“Then shall the Gospel be preached.” Yea, marry, that; that. There is
the great matter that all this gaping is for! For undoubtedly all the
gaping is for a new gospel. Men have been wont this many
years to preach the gospel of Christ in such wise as Saint
it… and in such wise as the old holy doctors—Saint Jerome, Saint
Augustine, Saint Ambrose, Saint Gregory, Saint Chrysostom,
Saint Basil, Saint Cyprian, Saint Bernard, Saint Thomas,
and all the old holy fathers since Christ’s days until your own
days—have understood it. This gospel hath been, as we say,
always thus preached. Why saith he now that if the clergy were
cast out for naught, that then the Gospel should be preached?
Who should then be these preachers? He meaneth not that the clergy
shall; ye may see that well. Who, then? Who but some lay Lutherans?
And what gospel shall they preach? Not your old gospel,
of Christ; for that is it which was wont to be preached unto you.

And he would ye should now think that “the Gospel” shall begin to
be preached—and yet not begin to be preached among you… till the
clergy be cast out. What gospel shall that be, then, that shall then
be preached? What gospel but Luther’s gospel, and Tyndale’s gospel?—
telling you that “only faith” sufficeth you for salvation, and
that there needeth no good works; but that it were sacrilege and
abomination to go about to please God with any good works.
And that there is no purgatory; nor that the sacraments be
nothing worth. Nor that no law can be made by man to bind you;
but that by your “only faith” ye may do what ye will—and that if ye
obey any law or governor, all is of your own courtesy, and not of
any duty at all, faith hath set you in such a lewd liberty.

This and many a mad, frantic folly shall be the gospel that then
shall be preached… whereof he boasteth now as of one of the most
special commodities that shall succeed upon his goodly and
godly devices.
Will ye plainly perceive that he meaneth thus? After all his mischiefs rehearsed against the Church, he hath another matter in his mind… which he dare not yet speak of, but he maketh thereof a secret overture, leaving it in such wise at large… as he would that men should guess what he meant… and yet he reserveth himself some refuge to flit therefrom when he list. For if he should see that men should dislike it… he would in such case say that he meant some other thing. And therefore he purposeth it under these words: “Here leave we out the greatest matter of all, lest we, declaring such a horrible carrion of evil against the ministers of iniquity, should seem to declare the one only fault—or, rather, the ignorance—of our best-beloved minister of righteousness. Which is to be hidden till he may be learned by these small enormities that we have spoken of… to know it plainly himself.”

This thing put forth like a riddle, hard to read what it should signify, we have had since (by such as we before showed you, that died and came hither) plainly declared unto us. And surely whoso well adviseth his words, and well pondereth his whole purpose… and the summary effect of his book, shall may soon perceive what he meaneth in that place. For what should that thing be that he leaveth out… that should be the “greatest of all,” and that should be laid against the “ministers of iniquity” (which he meaneth and calleth the whole clergy), and that should be “such a horrible carrion of evil”… that it should pass and exceed any mischievous matter that he had already spoken against before? What manner of mischievous matter should this be? This “horrible carrion of evil” that he “leaveth out” since it is, he saith, the “greatest matter of all”… must needs, ye wot well, be greater against the clergy… than all that “great, broad, bottomless ocean sea of evils”; more than all his “these be they”s; more than the making of such great number of “beggars,” of “idle men, bawds, whores, and thieves”; more than the...
hindering of matrimony, “corrupting” of generation; more than “translating” the King’s “kingdom”; more than bringing the King’s “crown” to “ruin”; more than bringing the “commonwealth” to “shipwreck,” and all the realm to wilderness. What thing can this “horrible carrion” be that the clergy doth, that he “leaveth out” for the while, that so far exceedeth these mischievous matters before remembered… that in comparison of it he calleth them all “small enormities,” and as a man would say, little pretty peccadilloes?

Verily, by this thing meaneth he none other… but the preaching of the very, whole corpus and body of the blessed faith of Christ… and the administering of the blessed sacraments of our Savior Christ—and of all those, in especial the consecrating of the Sacred Body, the Flesh and Blood, of our Savior Christ. For the teaching and preaching of all which things, this beggars’ proctor—
or, rather, the devil’s proctor—with other beggars that lack grace and neither beg nor look for none… bear all this their malice and wrath to the church of Christ. And seeing there is no way for attaining their intent but one of the twain—that is to wit, either plainly to write against the faith and the sacraments (wherein if they got them credence and obtained, they then see well the Church must needs fall therewith) or else to labor against the Church alone… and get the clergy destroyed, whereupon they perceive well that the faith and sacraments would not fail to decay—they, perceiving this, have therefore first assayed the first way already, sending forth Tyndale’s translation of the New Testament: in such wise handled as it should have been the fountain and wellspring of all their whole heresies. For he had corrupted and purposely changed in many places the text… with such words as he might make it seem to the unlearned people… that the Scripture affirmed their heresies itself.

Then came, soon after, out in print the dialogue of Friar Roy and Friar Jerome… between the father and the son, against the Sacrament of the Altar; and the blasphemous book entitled The Burying of the Mass. Then came forth, after, Tyndale’s wicked

2 translating: taking away // kingdom: kingship
6–7 mischievous matters before remembered: above-mentioned iniquitous things
7 of: with 8 enormities: irregularities; aberrations // a man would: one might
8 little pretty peccadilloes: cute little foibles 10 very: true
12 in especial: in particular 14, 15 proctor: spokesman
16–17 this . . . wrath: this malice and wrath of theirs 17 to: toward
18 the twain: i.e., these two ways 19 plainly: openly and directly
20 them: themselves // obtained: succeeded
24 decay: crumble // assayed: tried out 25, 34 forth: out
26 handled: manipulated // as it should have been: i.e., as to make it appear to be
33–34 The Burying of the Mass: Better known as Read Me and Be Not Wroth, this book is an adaptation (done by Friar Jerome Barlowe, possibly with Friar Roy, and published in 1528) of Niklaus Manuel’s Die Krankheit der Messe (The Illness of the Mass).
book of Mammona; and after that, his more wicked book of Obedience. In which books afore-specified they go forth plainly against the faith and holy sacraments of Christ’s church—and most especially against the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, with as villainous words as the wretches could devise. But when they have perceived by experience that good people abhorred their abominable books, then they, being thereby learned that the first way was not the best for the furtherance of their purpose, have now determined themselves to assay the second way: that is to wit, that forbearing to write so openly and directly against all the faith and the sacraments as good Christian men could not abide the reading, they would, with little touching of their other heresies, make one book specially against the Church, and look how that would prove. Which if it succeeded after their appetites—that they might with false crimes laid unto some… or with the very faults of some… bring the whole Church in hatred and have the clergy destroyed—then should they more easily win their purpose that way. For when the preachers of the faith and very gospel were destroyed or far out of credence with the people… then should they have their own false gospels preached; as ye may perceive that this man meaneth where he saith that “then shall the Gospel be preached.” And therefore this is the thing which this man as yet “leaveth out” against them: that is to wit, the preaching of the right faith and the sacraments; which thing he reckoneth in the clergy a more “horrible” “carrion” than all the crimes wherein he hath belied them before. And therefore saith he that he leaveth it out lest he should “seem to declare the one and only fault” of the King’s Highness. Which “one only fault” he meaneth His Grace’s most famous and most gracious book… that His Highness, as a prince of excellent erudition, virtue, and devotion toward the Catholic faith of Christ, made—of The Assertion of the Sacraments—against the furious book of Martin Luther. This godly deed done by His Highness, with the acceptation of his godly, well-deserved title of Defensor of the Faith, given

1 Mammona: I.e., The Parable of the Wicked Mammon (1528).
2 Obedience: I.e., The Obedience of a Christian Man (1528).
3 books afore-specified: afore-mentioned books // plainly: openly and directly
4 devise: think of; come up with // abhorred: were horrified by / loathed
5 being: i.e., having // determined themselves: decided // assay: try out
6–13 touching of: touching upon; discussing of // make: write
7–9 specially: specifically // look . . . prove: see how that turned out
10–14 succeeded after their appetites: turned out the way they wanted it to
15, 26 crimes: accusations of wrongdoing // laid unto: made against
16 very: actual // 26, 28, 29 fault(s): misdeed(s) // 17 have: get
17–29 win their purpose: achieve their goal // 28, 29 very: true
18 which: i.e., by which // 30 gracious: godly
19 made: wrote // assertion: defense // 32 furious: insane
His Grace by the See Apostolic—this calleth this beggars’ proctor the King’s “one and only fault,” and “ignorance” of their false faith (in estimation of these heretics); which this beggars’ proctor saith that he will for the while hide and cover under his cloak of silence… till the King may by these “enormities” wherewith he belieoth the Church in his beggars’ bill (which enormities he calleth “small” enormities in comparison of the preaching of the Catholic faith and the sacraments) be learned… what lesson, trow ye? None other, surely, but that they hope that as well His Highness as his people… may by such beggars’ bills be first allured, and brought in, to contemn, hate, and destroy the Church; and then, thereby, learn the other lesson, which he now “leaveth out” for the while: that is to wit, to set at naught the Catholic faith and all the blessed sacraments… after the teaching of Luther’s and Tyndale’s gospel. And therefore saith he, as we told you before, that “then shall the Gospel be preached.”

And in the meantime the man useth, as he weeneth himself, toward the King’s Grace a very wise fashion of flattery, calling him their “best-beloved minister of righteousness.” Yet be they not only run away for fear of the righteousness of their “best-beloved minister of righteousness”… but also would it should seem that His Highness were such a minister of righteousness as either set so little by righteousness that he would wittingly suffer… or else had so little insight in righteousness that he could not perceive… so “great” a matter, and “such a horrible carriion of evil” committed by the Church, as were so heinous, so huge and so great, that in comparison thereof… the “translating” of his “kingdom,” the “ruin” of his “crown,” the “shipwreck” of his “commonwealth,” the dispeopling of his realm, and bringing all his land into desolation and wilderness… were but slight matters and “small enormities.” And that His Highness should toward this great, horrible, and intolerable mischievous demeanor of the Church… be aiding and assistant, either of evil mind or of “ignorance,”
till that… by their beggarly bill… being turned into the hatred and the destruction of the Church, he might thereby be illumined to learn and perceive that the faith which His Grace had before

1, 4 proctor: spokesman  2 fault: misdeed // their: i.e., the Apostolic See’s having a 3 estimation: i.e., the view  4, 13 while: time being  5 by: by way of 5, 7, 31 enormities: irregularities; aberrations  6 belieoth: slanders 6, 12, etc. Church: i.e., clergy  7–8 comparison of: comparison to  8 be: i.e., have 8 trow ye: do you think  9 surely: assuredly 11 contemn: scorn 15 after: in accord with  18 he weeneth himself: he himself believes  19 wise: astute 22 would it should: (this man) would have it  24 set . . . by: cared . . . about 24 wittingly suffer: knowingly tolerate 25 insight in righteousness: i.e., understanding of what righteousness is 26, 27 great: serious  28 translating: removal // kingdom: kingship 33 mischievous: iniquitous // demeanor: behavior  34 evil mind: ill intent 35–36 turned . . . Church: i.e., converted to hating the Church and being bent on its destruction 36 illumined: enlightened
both learned and taught, and whereof himself is the Defensor, is false and feigned... and that the sacraments be but men's inventions; and that thereupon he should be content to learn the gospel of Luther and the testament of Tyndale. And thus ye may see what the beggars' proctor meant by his proper invented riddle; by which, as ye see, under a fond face of flattery he useth toward his prince and sovereign lord (whose Majesty, both by the law of God and the duty of his allegiance, he were highly bound to reverence) an open, plain despite and contumely.

Now, to the intent that ye may yet farther perceive and see that they by the destruction of the clergy... mean the clear abolition of Christ's faith: it may like you to confer and compare together two places of his beggars' bill. In one place, after that he hath heaped up together all his lies against the whole clergy (and thereto adjoined his grievous exclamation “O the grievous shipwreck of the commonwealth!”), he saith that “in ancient time, before the coming” of the clergy, there were “but few poor people, and yet they did not beg, but there was given them enough unasked,” because “at that time,” he saith, “there was” no clergy—whom he calleth always “ravenous wolves”—“to ask it from them”; and this, saith he, appeareth in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. In this place we let pass his threefold folly. One, that he would by that there were no beggars in one place... prove thereby that there were none in all the world beside. For as he, for lack of wit and understanding, mistaketh the book, he weeneth that there were none that begged in Jerusalem. Which if it were true... yet might there be enough in other places. Another of his follies is in that he allegeth a book for him that nothing proveth his purpose. For in all that whole book shall he neither find that there was at that time few poor people... nor that poor people at that time begged not. For of truth, there were poor people and beggars, idle people, and thieves too... good plenty, both then and always before... since almost as long as Noah's flood—and yet peradventure seven years before that, too. And so were there, in deed, in Jerusalem also,
among them all... till Christendom came in; and yet remained
then among such people there as turned not to the faith of
Christ. The third folly is... he layeth that book for him which in
deed proveth plain against him. For where he saith it appeareth
there that the clergy was not then come, we cannot in the
world devise of what people he speaketh: paynims, Jews, or
Christian men. If he mean among paynims... his folly and his
falsehood both is too evident. For who knoweth not that among
the paynims they had always their priests—whose living was
well and plenteously provided for; as ye may perceive not
only by many other stories, but also by many places in the
Bible, and especially in the forty-seventh chapter of Genesis. If he
speak of the Jews... every man wotteth well that they had a clergy
thousands of years before the book that he allegeth—and their
living far more largely provided for... than any part of the
people beside; and that by God’s own ordinance. Now, if he
speak of the Christian people that was at that time in Jerusalem—
where the faith began—his book maketh sore against him.
For there was a clergy as soon as there was any Christian people.

For the clergy began then. And that clergy had not a part of
the Christian people’s substance, but had it altogether... and did
distribute it as they saw need; which no man doubtheth but that
the parties showed them—or else in some needs they must
needs have lacked. So that here were many poor men... if they be
poor that have naught left; and all they beggars... if they be
beggars that be fain to show their need and ask; and the clergy
had altogether. And yet layeth this wise man this book for him... being such as, if he should have sat and studied therefore,
he could not have found a book that made more against him.

But as we said before, we shall let his false folly pass... and
pray you to consider what he would have you believe. He saith,
and would ye should ween, that there were few poor folk—and no
beggars nowhere—before the clergy of Christendom came in; but
that all the poverty and beggary came into the world with the Christian
clergy. Now knoweth every man that the Christian clergy and the
Christian faith came into the Christian people together; so that in
effect his words weigh to this: that all poverty and beggary came into
the world with the Christian faith!

Set now to this place the other place of his, in the end and
conclusion of his book, where he saith that after the clergy
despoiled once, and cast out, “then shall the Gospel be preached”…
and “then shall we [beggars] have enough and more.” Lo, like as in the
one place he showeth that all beggary came in with the clergy that
brought in the faith: so showeth he in the other that there should
with the clergy all beggary go forth again… if they were so clean
cast out that Christ’s gospel being cast out with them and the
faith which came in with them, they might have that gospel
preached—as they say they should, and as indeed they should—which
they call “the Gospel”; that is to wit, Luther’s gospel, and Tyndale’s
testament, preaching the destruction of Christ’s very faith and
his holy sacraments, advancing and setting forth all boldness of
sin and wretchedness, and, under the false name of “Christian freedom,”
spurring forward the devilish unbridled appetite of
lewd, seditious, and rebellious “liberty”… that slew in one
summer, as we showed you before, above sixty thousand of the poor uplandish
Lutherans in Almaine. And this is all that these heretics
look for as the fruit of their seditious books and beggars’
bills—trusting by some such ways to be eased of their beggary…
which they now sustain being run out of the realm for
heresy. For if they might (as they fain would) have the clergy cast
out, and Christ’s gospel cast off, and their own gospel
preached: then hope they to find that word true where he saith,
“Then shall we have enough and more.”

For of all that ever he hath said, he hath not, almost, said one
true word save this. And surely this word would after their gospel
once preached and received be found over true. For then
should the beggars—not such beggars as he seemeth to speak for,
that be sick, sore, and lame, but such bold, presumptuous beggars
as he is indeed… whole and strong in body, but weak and sick in
soul, that have their bodies clean from scabs and their souls
foul infected with ugly great pocks and leprosy—these beggars would
hope to have, and except good men take good heed would not fail
to have, enough and a great deal more. For after that they
might, the clergy first destroyed, bring in once after that the
preaching of Luther’s gospel and Tyndale’s testament, and might
with their heresies and false faith infect and corrupt the people…
causing them to set the blessed sacraments aside, to set
holy days and fasting days at naught, to contemn all good
works; to jest and rail against holy, vowed chastity; to blaspheme
the old holy fathers and doctors of Christ’s church, to
mock and scorn the blessed saints and martyrs that died for
Christ’s faith; to reject and refuse the faith that those holy martyrs
lived and died for, and in the stead of the true faith of
Christ continued this fifteen hundred years, to take now the false faith of
a fond friar… of old condemned and of new reforged, within so
few days… with contempt of God and all good men, and
obstinate rebellious mind against all laws, rule, and governance;
with arrogant presumption to meddle with every
man’s substance, with every man’s land, and every man’s
matter nothing pertaining to them—it is, we say, no doubt
but that such bold, presumptuous beggars will, if ye look not
well to their hands, not fail to have, as he writeth, “enough
and more too.” For they shall gather together at last, and assemble
themselves in plumps and in great routs, and from
asking fall to the taking of their alms themselves…and
under pretext of reformation (bearing every man that aught
hath… in hand that he hath too much) shall assay to make new
division of every man’s land and substance—never
ceasing, if ye suffer them, till they make all beggars as they be
themselves…and at last bring all the realm to ruin; and this
not without butchery and foul bloody hands.

And therefore this beggars’ proctor… or, rather, the proctor of
hell… should have concluded his “supplication” not under the
manner that he hath done—that after the clergy cast out, “then
shall the Gospel be preached; then shall beggars and bawds decrease; then shall idle folk and thieves be fewer; then shall the realm increase in riches,” and so forth—but he should have said, “After that the clergy is thus destroyed and cast out, then shall Luther’s gospel come in, then shall Tyndale’s testament be taken up; then shall false heresies be preached; then shall the sacraments be set at naught; then shall fasting and prayer be neglected; then shall holy saints be blasphemed; then shall Almighty God be displeased; then shall he withdraw his grace and let all run to ruin; then shall all virtue be had in derision; then shall all vice reign and run forth unbridled; then shall youth leave labor and all occupation; then shall folk wax idle and fall to unthriftiness; then shall whores and thieves, beggars and bawds, increase; then shall unthrifts flock together and swarm about, and each bear him bold of other; then shall all laws be laughed to scorn; then shall the servants set naught by their masters, and unruly people rebel against their rulers; then will rise up rifling and robbery, murder and mischief, and plain insurrection… whereof what would be the end, or when you should see it, only God knoweth.” All which mischief may yet be withstood easily, and with God’s grace so shall it, if ye suffer no such bold beggars to seduce you with seditious bills, but, well perceiving that their malicious purpose is to bring you to destruction, ye, like good Christian people, avoiding their false trains and grins, give none ear to their heinous heresies, nor walk their seditious ways, but persevering in your old faith of Christ… and observing his laws with good and godly works and obedience of your most gracious king and governor… go forth in goodness and virtue; whereby ye cannot fail to flower and prosper in riches and worldly substance; which well employed, with help of God’s grace, about charitable deeds to the needy—and the rather in remembrance and relief of us,

1 beggars: i.e., the number of beggars
1, 14 bawds: brothel keepers; procurers
3 richesse: wealth
7 set at naught: regarded as worthless
11 had: held
13 wax: become
16 other: behave aggressively toward one another
17 set naught by: flout
19 rifling: ransacking and plundering
19 mischief: vandalism
20 plain: outright
21 mischief: evil
23 suffer: allow
26 false trains and grins: treacherous lures and snares
31 flower: flourish
34 the rather: preferably
whose need is relieved by your charity showed for our sake to your neighbor—be able to purchase you much pardon of the bitter pain of this painful place, and bring you to the joyful bliss… to which God hath with his blessed blood bought you and with his holy sacraments ensigned you. And thus will we leave the man’s malicious folly… tending to the destruction, first, of the clergy, and after of yourselves… wherein his mad reckoning hath constrained us to trouble you with many trifles, God wot, full unmeet for us; and now will we turn us to the treating of that one point… which though it specially pertaineth to ourselves, yet much more specially pertaineth it unto you: that is to wit, the impugnation of that uncharitable heresy wherewith he would make you, to our great harm and much more your own, believe that we need none help and that there were no purgatory.

The end of the
First Book
The Second Book

When we consider in ourselves, dear brothers and sisters in our Savior Christ, the present painful pangs that we feel… and therewith ponder, upon the other part, the perilous estate of you that are our friends there living in that wretched world: wit you very surely that this pestilent opinion begun against purgatory… not so much grieveth us for the lack that we should find thereby in the relief of our own intolerable torments… as doth, for the love that we bear you, the fear and heaviness that we take for that peril and jeopardy that should everlastingly fall to your own souls thereby.

Nor of all the heavy tidings that ever we heard here… was there never none so sore smote us to the heart as to hear the world wax so faint in the faith of Christ… that any man should need now to prove purgatory to Christian men—or that any man could be found which would in so great a thing so fully and fastly believed for an undoubted article this fifteen hundred years… begin now to stagger and stand in doubt… for the unwise words of any such malicious person as is he that made The Beggars’ Supplication. For whose answer and full confutation it seemeth us sufficient… that ye may clearly perceive his words to be of little weight… while ye see that the man hath neither learning, wisdom, nor good intent, but all his bill utterly grounded upon error, evil will, and untruth. And surely this were to us great wonder: if Christian men should need any other proof in this world to reprovesuch seditious folk with… than the only token of the devil’s badge which themselves bear ever about them; the badge, we mean, of malice, and of a very deadly devilish hate.

For whereas our Savior Christ hath so left love and charity for the badge of his Christian people… that he commandeth every man so largely to love other… that his love should extend
and stretch unto his enemy; nor there is no natural man, neither paynim, Jew, Turk, nor Saracen, but he will rather spare his foe than hurt his friend: this kind of folk is so far fallen not only from all Christian charity, but also from all humanity and feeling of any good affection natural, and so changed into a wild, fierce, cruel appetite more than brutish and bestial, that they first, without ground or cause, take their friends for their foes—hating the Church deadly because it willeth their weal and laboreth to amend them—and after, to do the Church hurt, whom they take for their enemies, they labor to do us much more hurt whom they call still for their friends. For they, to get pulled from the clergy the frail commodities of a little worldly living, labor to have us—their fathers, their mothers, their friends and all their kin—left lying in the fire here helpless and forgotten, they little force how long. And in this they show their affection much more unnatural and abominable than he that would with his sword thrust his friend through the whole body, to the hard haft… to give his enemy behind him a little prick with the point. This way of theirs were very naught and detestable… although they truly meant indeed as much good as they falsely pretend. For whereas they cloak their cruel purpose and intent… under color of a great zeal toward the commonwealth, which they lay to be sore impaired by great pomp and inordinate living used in the Church—we be so far from the mind of defending any such spiritual vice, carnal uncleanness, or worldly pomp and vanity used in the clergy… that we would to God it were much less than it is… not in them only, but also in the temporalty. And there is none of neither sort but if he were here with us but one half hour, he would set little by all such worldly vanities all his life after, and little would he force or reckon whether he wear silk or sackcloth. But surely this man, if he meant well, the faults of evil folk he would lay to themselves, and not unto the whole clergy. He would also labor for amendment and bettering; not for destruction and

1 natural man: i.e., non-Christian person with normal sensibilities  
2 paynim: pagan  
5 affection: attachment / sensibility  
8, 10, 24 Church: i.e., clergy  
8 deadly: to death; with a passion  
9 weal: well-being; good  
9, 10, 13 labor(eth): strive(s)  
10, 11 hurt: harm  
12 pulled: taken away  
12 frail: ephemeral; short-lived // commodities: comforts  
15, 30 force: care  
16 affection: disposition; attitude // much: i.e., to be much  
16 unnatural: abnormal; inhuman  
18 haft: handle  
19 were: would be  
20 naught: wicked // although: even if  
21 pretend: claim (to mean)  
23 lay: allege // sore: terribly  
24 inordinate: out-of-line / exorbitant  
24 living: conduct / lifestyle  
24, 26 used in: engaged in by; indulged in by  
25 mind: intention  
26 would: wish  
28 temporalty: laity // none: no one  
28 sort: group  
29 set little by: place little value on; care little about  
30 reckon: take account of  
32 faults: wrongdoings // evil: bad
undoing finally. He would hold himself within his bounds, only devising against men’s vices—and not start out therewith into plain and open heresies! But surely so hath it ever hitherto proved... that never was there any that showed himself an enemy to the church... but, though he covered it never so close for the while, yet at the last always he proved himself, in some part of his works, so very an enemy to the Catholic faith of Christ... that men might well perceive that his malice toward the clergy grew first, and sprang, of infidelity and lack of right belief. And of this point was there never a clearer example than this beggars’ proctor, which was so far forth farced, stuffed, and swollen with such venomous heresies... that albeit he longed sore to keep them in for the season, and only to rail against the clergy and hide his enemious intent toward the faith—yet was he not able to contain and hold, but was fain, for bursting, to puff out one blast of his poisoned sect against us seely souls; the goodness of God driving him to the disclosing and discovering of his malicious heresy... to the intent ye should thereby perceive out of what ungracious ground his enmity sprang that he bore against the Church. Which things once perceived and considered... must needs diminish and bereave him his credence among all such as are not affectionate toward his errors, and infected and envenomed with his mortal heresies—and of such folk we trust he shall find very few.

For surely not only among Christian people and Jews, of whom the one hath, the other hath had, the perceiving and light of faith, but also among the very miscreant and idolaters—Turks, Saracens, and paynims—except only such as have so far fallen from the nature of man into a brutish, beastly persuasion as to believe that soul and body die both, at once, else hath always the remnant commonly thought and believed that after the bodies dead and deceased, the souls of such as were neither deadly damned wretches forever... nor, on the other side, so good but that their offenses done in this

world hath deserved more punishment than they had suffered and sustained there... were punished and purged by pain after the death ere ever they were admitted unto their wealth and rest.

This faith hath always not only faithful people had; but also, as we say, very miscreants and idolaters have ever had a certain opinion and persuasion of the same—whether that of the first light and revelation given of such things to our former fathers... there hath always remained a glimmering that hath gone forth from man to man, from one generation to another, and so continued and kept among all people... or else that nature and reason have taught men everywhere to perceive it. For surely that they have such belief... not only by such as have been traveled in many countries among sundry sects, but also by the old and ancient writers that have been among them, we may well and evidently perceive. And in good faith, if never had there been revelation given thereof, nor other light than reason: yet, presupposed the immortality of man’s soul, which no reasonable man distrusted; and thereto agreed the righteousness of God, and his goodness, which scant the devil himself denieth... purgatory must needs appear. For since that God, of his righteousness, will not leave sin unpunished; nor his goodness will perpetually punish the fault after the man’s conversion: it followeth that the punishment shall be temporal. And, now, since the man often dieth before such punishment had... either at God’s hand, by some affliction sent him, or at his own, by due penance done—which the most part of people wantonly doth forsloth—a very child, almost, may see the consequent: that the punishment at the death remaining due and undone... is to be endured and sustained after. Which... since his majesty is so excellent whom we have offended... cannot of right and justice be but heavy and sore.

Now, if they would, peradventure as in magnifying of God’s high goodness, say that after a man’s conversion once to God again... not only all his sin is forgiven, but all the

1 deserved: merited  3 wealth: felicity
4 faithful people: people having the light of right faith; i.e., Jews and Christians
5 miscreants: infidels; unbelievers  8 former fathers: earliest ancestors
13 been traveled: done some traveling  // sundry sects: various religious groups
14 old: early  // ancient: time-honored; classical  15, 28 may: can  15 well and: quite
15 evidently: clearly  // in good faith: really and truly  18 reasonable: rational
18 distrusted: doubted  // thereto: along with that  // agreed: granted
19 scant: scarcely  20 appear: i.e., be a part of the picture  21 of: on account of
22 nor his goodness will: i.e., nor, on account of his goodness, will he
22 fault: offense; sin  23 conversion: turnaround (to God); i.e., repentance of that sin
24–25 such punishment had: i.e., having undergone such punishment
26–27 most part: majority  27 wantonly: blithely; nonchalantly
27 forsloth: shirk out of laziness; slough off
28 the consequent: i.e., what follows from all this
30 his... offended: i.e., the majesty of him whom we have offended is so superlative
31 sore: severe  32 peradventure: perhaps  // magnifying: lauding; glorifying
33–34 after... again: once a person has turned back to God
whole pain, also; or that they will under color of enhancing the merit and goodness of Christ’s Passion tell us that his pain suffered for us standeth in stead of all our pain and penance, so that neither purgatory can have place nor any penance need to be done by ourselves for our own sins: these folk that so shall say… shall, under pretext of magnifying his mercy, not only sore diminish his virtue of justice, but also much hinder the opinion and persuasion that men have of his goodness. For albeit that God of his great mercy may forthwith forgive some folk freely their sins and pain both, without prejudice of his righteousness, either of his liberal bounty… or for some respect had unto the fervent, sorrowful heart that fear and love with help of special grace have brought into the penitent at the time of his return to God; and also that the bitter Passion of our Savior besides the remission of the perpetuity of our pain do also lessen our purgatory and stand us here in marvelous high stead: yet if he should use this point for a general rule—that at every conversion from sin with purpose of amendment and recourse to confession… he shall forthwith fully forgive, without the party’s pain or any other recompense for the sins committed save only Christ’s Passion paid for them all—then should he give great occasion of lightness and bold courage to sin.

For when men were once persuaded that be their sins never so sore, never so many, never so mischievous, never so long continued… yet they shall never bear pain therefor; but, by their “only faith” and their baptism, with a short return again to God… shall have all their sin, and pain also, clean forgiven and forgotten—nothing else but only to cry him “Mercy!” as one woman would that treadeth on another’s train—this way would, as we said, give the world great occasion and courage not only to fall boldly to sin and wretchedness, but also careless to continue therein, presuming upon that thing that such heretics have persuaded unto some men already: that three or four words ere they die shall sufficiently serve them to bring them straight to heaven. Whereas, besides the fear that

1, 10, 28 pain: penalty 1 color: pretext // enhancing; extolling 3 standeth in stand: takes the place 4 place: i.e., any reason to exist 6 magnifying: praising // sore: badly 7 diminish: minimize; underestimate 7 hinder: impair; damage 10 of: to 11 bounty: generosity 11 respect: consideration // had: taken 15 the remission: i.e., its remitting 15, 28 pain: punishment 18 conversion: turning away 20 pain or: i.e., being punished or there being made 22 lightness: readiness 22 bold: brazen 24–25, etc. never so: no matter how 25 sore: serious 25 mischievous: iniquitous; evil 26 bear pain therefor: undergo any punishment for them 27 only faith: faith alone // short: quick 28 again: back 29 cry: call out to 29 mercy: i.e., pardon me 31 the world: everyone 34 persuaded unto some men: convinced some people of 35 ere: (just) before
they should have lest they shall lack at last the grace to turn at all… and so, for fault of those three or four words, fall to the fire of hell; if they believe therewith the thing that truth is besides—that is to wit, that though they hap to have the grace to repent and be forgiven the sin, and so to be delivered of the endless pain of hell, yet they shall not so freely be delivered of purgatory… but that, besides the general relief of Christ’s holy Passion (extended unto every man not after the value thereof, but after the stint and rate appointed by God’s wisdom), great and long pain abideth them here among us (whereof their willingly taken penance in the world, and affliction there put unto them by God… and there patiently borne and suffered, with other good deeds there in their life done by them… and, finally, the merits and prayers of other good folks for them… may diminish and abridge the pain; which will else hold them here with us in fire and torments intolerable, only God knoweth how long)—this thing, we say, as it is true indeed… so if the world well and firmly for a sure truth believe it… cannot fail to be to many folk a good bridle and a sharp bit to refrain them from sin. And, on the other side, the contrary belief would send many folk forward to sin… and thereby, instead of purgatory, into everlasting pain.

And therefore is this place of our temporal pain of purgatory not only consonant unto his righteous justice, but also the thing that highly declareth his great mercy and goodness— not only for that the pain thereof, huge and sore as it is, is yet less than our own sin deserveth, but also, most especially, in that by the fear of pain to be suffered and sustained here, his goodness refraineth men from the boldness of sin and negligence of penance… and thereby keepeth and preserveth them from pain everlasting; whereas the light forgiveness of altogether… would give occasion by boldness of sin and presumption of easy remission… much people to run down headlong thither. And therefore were, as we said, that way very far contrary
not only to God’s justice and righteousness, but also to
his goodness and mercy. Whereupon, as we said before, it must
needs follow that since the pain is always due to sin… and
is not always clean forgiven without convenient penance
done or other recompense made; nor pain is not always done,
nor any recompense made, in the man’s life… and yet the man
discharged of hell by his conversion: all the pain that remaineth
must needs be sustained here with us in purgatory.

But, now, if these heretics, as they be very self-willed and
willful, will set at naught the common opinion and belief
and persuasion of almost all the world; and, as they be very
unreasonable, make little force of reason, and ever ask for Scripture…
as though they believed Holy Scripture… and yet when it
maketh against them, they then with false and fond glosses of
their own making… do but mock and shift over in such a
trifling manner that it may well appear they believe not Scripture
neither—yet, since they make as they believed Scripture and
nothing else, let us therefore see whether that purgatory do not
appear opened and revealed unto Christian people in Holy Scripture
itself.

And first, it seemeth very probable and likely that the good
king Hezekiah for none other cause wept at the warning of his
death given him by the prophet… but only for the fear of
purgatory. For albeit that divers doctors allege divers
causes of his heaviness and loathness at that time to depart and
die, yet seemeth there none so likely as the cause that ancient
doctors allege: that is to wit, that he was loath to die for the fear
of his estate after his death, forasmuch as he had offended God
by overmuch liking of himself—wherewith he wist that God was
displeased with him, and gave him warning, by the prophet, that
he should live no longer. Now considered he so the weight of his
offense… that he thought and esteemed the only loss of this
present life far under the just and condign punishment thereof;
and therefore fell in great dread of far sorer punishment
after. But being as he was a good-faithful king, he could not lack

3, 5, 7 pain: punishment  4 convenient: suitable
10 set at naught: count for nothing  // common: shared
11 all: i.e., everyone in  12 unreasonable: irrational
12 make little force of: make little account of; attach little importance to
14 maketh: goes; militates  // fond: foolish
15 mock and shift over: i.e., make light of and get around it
16 trifling: offhand; dismissive  // may well appear: is quite evident (that)
17 as: i.e., as though  18 purgatory: i.e., the existence of purgatory
19 opened: manifested  21–24: See Isaiah 38, 2 Kings 20, and 2 Chronicles 32.
21 probable: tenable  23, 30 the prophet: i.e., Isaiah
23 divers: various  24, 27 doctors: (biblical) scholars
25 heaviness: dejection  28 estate: situation
29 liking of: being pleased with  // wist: knew  32 only: mere
34 sorer: more severe  35 being as: considering that
35 good-faithful: right-believing
sure hope, through his repentance, of such forgiveness… as should preserve him from hell. But since his time should be so short that he should have no leisure to do penance for his fault—he therefore feared that the remnant of his righteous punishment should be performed in purgatory. And therefore wept he tenderly, and longed to live longer… that his satisfaction done there in the world, in prayer and other good, virtuous deeds, might abolish and wear out all the pain that else were toward him here among us. To which his fervent boon and desire, at the contemplation of his penitent heart, our Lord of his high pity condescended, and granted him the lengthening of his life for fifteen years—making him, for his further comfort, sure thereof by the show of a manifest miracle. But whereto granted our Lord that longer life? To be bestowed upon worldly delight and pleasure? Nay; nay, verily! But to the intent it might appear that it was, of God’s great mercy, granted for the redeeming of his purgatory by good works for his satisfaction: he was promised by the prophet not only that he should within three days be recovered and whole… but also that he should go into the Temple to pray. So that it may thereby appear for what end and intent he longed so sore for a longer life.

Now, if the beggars’ proctor, or Tyndale or Luther either, list to say that in this point we do but guess at that good king’s mind… and therefore purgatory thereby rather somewhat reasoned than well and surely proved: thereto may we well answer and say that the circumstance of the matter considered, with the virtuous holiness and cunning of such as so long ago have taken the Scripture thus, that place alone is a far better proof for purgatory than ever any of them could hitherto lay against it yet. For albeit this beggars’ proctor saith that right wise and cunning men will say that there is no purgatory at all… by which wise men he meaneth Luther and Tyndale and himself—yet was there never any of them all that yet laid any substantial thing, either reason or authority, for them… but only jest and rail, and say that purgatory is a thing of the pope’s own making, and that souls do nothing till Doomsday but lie still and sleep.
And thus telling such wise tales for their own part... and making mocks and mows at everything that maketh against their folly for our part, they go forth in their evil will and obstinacy, and with murmur and grudge of their own conscience... content themselves with the only feeding of their malicious minds by the increase of their faction... of such as fall into their fellowship rather of a light mind, and lewd pleasure to take a part, than of any great credence that they give unto them—or greatly force which way they believe. For surely if these folk were reasonable and indifferent—as it is not well possible for them to be, after that they refuse once to believe the Catholic Church, and in the understanding of Scripture lean only to their own wits—but else, as we say, if they could with an equal and indifferent mind consider and weigh what they hear, they should soon see their heresy reproved and purgatory surely confirmed... not only by probable reason taken of the Scripture, as in the place that we rehearsed you of Hezekiah, but also by plain and evident texts.

For have ye not the words of Scripture, written in the book of the Kings, “Dominus deducit ad inferos et reducit” (“Our Lord bringeth folk down into hell and bringeth them thence again”)? But they that be in that hell where the damned souls be—they be never delivered thence again. Wherefore it appeareth well that they whom God delivereth and “bringeth thence again” be in that part of hell that is called purgatory.

What say they to the words of the prophet Zechariah, “Tu quoque in sanguine testamenti tui eduxisti vinctos tuos de lacu in quo non erat aqua” (“Thou hast in the blood of thy testament brought out thy bound prisoners out of the pit,” or “lake,” “in which there was no water”)? In that they whom the prophet there speaketh of were “bound”... we may well perceive that they were in a prison of punishment. And in that he calleth them the “prisoners” of God, it is easy to perceive that he meaneth not any that were taken and imprisoned by any other than the
damned spirits, the very jailers of God. And in that he saith that there is in that “lake” no “water”… we may well perceive that he spoke it in description of that dry pit of fire… wherein there is no refreshing. For as hot are we here as they are in hell. And what heat is in the pit where there lacketh water… our Savior himself declareth by the words of the rich glutton lying in such a lake; from whence, at sight of poor Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom, he desired heavily to have him sent unto him with one drop of water to refresh his tongue— that after all the delicates that it had tasted in his life… lay there then sore burning, and never set half so much by twenty tons of wine… as he set by one poor drop of water. So that, as we show you, these words of the prophet Zechariah, “Thou hast brought out thy bound prisoners out of the lake wherein is no water,” do right well appear to be spoken of these poor imprisoned souls whom Christ after his bitter Passion, by his precious blood wherewith he consecrated his church in his new testament, delivered out of the lake of fire wherein they lay bound for their sins. But now is there no man that doubteth whether Christ delivered the damned souls out of hell or not. For in that hell is there no redemption; and in limbus patrum the souls were in rest. Wherefore it appeareth clearly that those prisoners whom he brought out of their pain… he brought only out of purgatory. And so see these heretics purgatory clearly proved by the plain words of this holy prophet.

Another place is there also in the Old Testament that putteth purgatory quite out of question. For what is plainer than the places which in the book of the Maccabees make mention of the devout remembrance, prayer, alms, and sacrifice… to be done for souls, when the good and holy man Judas Maccabeus gathered money among the people to buy sacrifice with… to be offered up for the souls of them that were dead in the battle? Doth not this place of Scripture so openly declare the need that we souls have in purgatory… and the relief that we

6, 33 declare(th): show(s)   8 desired heavily: wanted desperately
9 that: which   // delicates: choice foods and drinks   10 sore: terribly
11 set: placed   // much: much value   // by: on   12 poor: little; measly
12 show: tell   17 testament: covenant   19 doubteth: wonders; is in doubt as to
21 limbus patrum: the limbo of the fathers; the place in which good departed souls were detained until Jesus ascended into heaven   22 appeareth clearly: is clear to see
26, 33 place: text   27 out of: beyond   28 places: passages
32 them that were dead: those who had died   33 openly declare: manifestly show
find by the prayer and suffrages of good people upon earth…
that all the heretics that bark so fast against us can find
neither gloss nor color to the contrary?

What shift find they here? Surely a very shameless shift…
and are fain to take them to that tackling that is their sheet
anchor always… when they find the storm so great that
they see their ship goeth all to wreck. For first they use to set some
false gloss to the text that is laid against them, and deny the
right sense.

But, now, if the text be so plain that they can have no such
color—then, when they can have no more hold, but see that
their part goeth all to naught, they fall to a shameless boldness
and let not to deny the Scripture and all, and say the holy scripture
which is laid against them is none holy scripture at all; as
Luther playeth with the godly epistle of Christ’s blessed apostle
Saint James. And even the same do those heretics with the
authority of this holy book of Maccabees: they be not ashamed
to say that it is not Scripture. But upon what ground do they
deny it for Scripture? Because it is not found and accounted
for Holy Scripture among the Jews? They neither do nor can
deny but that it is taken for Holy Scripture by the church of
Christ. For if they would deny that, both the whole Church
beareth witness against them at this day… and it also appeareth plainly
by Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine, and other old holy doctors
that the Church so took it also in their days and before. Then
would we gladly wit of these new men—these enemies, we mean, of
ours—whether the church of Christ be not of as great authority
and as much to be believed in the choice and election of Holy
Scripture as the Jews. If they will say yes: then answer they
themselves; for then is the book of the Maccabees by the choice of
the Church proved Holy Scripture though the Jews never accounted
it so. Now, if they will say no… and will contend that it
cannot be accounted Holy Scripture, though the church of Christ

1 suffrages: liturgical intercessory petitions  2 fast: zealously
3, 8 gloss: interpretation (to give it)  3, 11 color: spin (to put on it)
4 shift: dodge; escape hatch  5 fain: forced // take them: betake themselves
7 goeth all to wreck: is about to be totally wrecked // use: are wont
10 have: get  11 hold: shelter  12 part: side of the argument
12 goeth all to naught: is all coming to nothing // fall: resort  13 let: scruple
16 even: exactly  24 old holy doctors: early biblical scholars
26 wit: inquire // new: modern  28 in: with regard to
28 choice: identifying; determining // election: selecting
30 choice: determination  31, 33 though: even if
so take it, but if the Jews so took it too: then go they near to

put out Saint John’s Gospel out of Scripture too; for the Jews
never took it for none. And surely if they admit for Scripture
that book that the Jews admitted, and deny that book to be
Scripture which the church of Christ receiveth for Scripture:

then do they say that the Spirit of God was more effectually
present and assistant unto the synagogue of the Jews in the law
of his prophet Moses… than unto the church of his own only-begotten
Son in the law of Christ’s Gospel!

If they consider well the books of the Maccabees, they shall

find such things therein as may give them good occasion to
put little doubt but that it should be of great and undeniable
authority. For they shall find there that the great, good and
godly, valiant captain of God’s people did institute and
ordain the great feast of the Dedication of the Temple of
Jerusalem, called Festum encaeniorum; of the annual institution
of which feast… we read nowhere else but in the book of
the Maccabees. And yet find we that feast ever after continued
and had in honor until Christ’s own days; and our
Savior himself went to the celebration of that same feast, as
appeareth in the Gospel of Saint John. So that it may well
appear that the books of that noble history whereof remaineth so
noble a monument and remembrance… continually kept and
reserved so long after, and honored by Christ’s own precious
Person, and testified by his holy evangelist in the book
of his holy Gospel… cannot be but undoubted truth and of
divine authority.

And surely if they deny the book of the Maccabees for Holy
Scripture because the Jews account it not for such—then shall
they by the same reason refuse the authority of the book of
Sapience… and prove themselves insipiens. And likewise if

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1 but if: unless  // go they near: they come close  2 put out: i.e., booting
5 receiveth for: accepts as  8 his: i.e., God’s  13 good and: quite
16 Festum encaeniorum: the Feast of Lights; Hanukkah  19 had: held
21–22 may well appear: is quite evident  23 monument: record
24 reserved: preserved  25 testified: vouched for  26 undoubted: indisputable
30 reason: reasoning  // refuse: deny  // authority: i.e., scripturalness
31 Sapience: Wisdom  // insipiens: unwise persons
they take all Scripture beside the New Testament to be of none other force and authority than it is accounted in the rule and canon of the Jews—then shall the whole psalter of David (the very sum of clear and lightsome prophecies!) lose among them great part of its authority, since it is not taken in like force and strength among the Jews as it is in Christ’s church.

Finally, for the book of the Maccabees: since the church of Christ accounteth it for Holy Scripture, there can no man doubt thereof but he that will take away all credence and authority from the whole Scripture of God—the very Gospels and all. For if these heretics deny for Holy Scripture any book that the church of Christ accounteth for Holy Scripture, then deny they one of the greatest foundations of all Christian faith—and the thing which their master, Martin Luther, himself hath already confessed for true. For he affirmeth himself that God hath given unto the church of Christ that gift… that the Church cannot fail surely and certainly to “discern between the words of God and the words of men,” and that it cannot be deceived in the choice of Holy Scripture and rejecting of the contrary; so far forth that he confesseth (as he needs must, of necessity) that the noble doctor and glorious confessor Saint Augustine said very well… when he said that he should not have believed the Gospel but for the authority of the Church. For he had not known which had been the very book of the Gospels, and which not, among so many as were written, but by the authority of the Church, whom the Spirit of God assisted as it ever doth and ever shall… in the choice and receiving of Holy Scripture and rejection of the counterfeit and false. Whereby it appeareth clearly, not only by that holy doctor Saint Augustine, but also by the confession of the archheretic Luther himself, that the Church cannot be deceived in the choice of Holy Scripture and rejection of the contrary—so far forth that it neither can receive as Holy Scripture any book that is none… nor reject for other

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1 beside: other than
2 sum: summit; acme
3 lightsome: luminous
18, 31 be deceived: make a mistake
19, 27, 31 choice: identifying; determining
21 confessor: A male saint who gave heroic witness to the faith but was not martyred.
21–22 said very well: spoke very correctly
22 should: would
23 had not: would not have
24 had been: i.e., qualified as being
24 the very . . . Gospels: i.e., one of the bona fide, scriptural Gospels
27 receiving: admitting
30 confession: acknowledgment; admission
32 receive: accept
33 for: i.e., as
than Holy Scripture any book that is Holy Scripture indeed. And surely if the Church might so be deceived in the choice of Holy Scripture that they might take and approve for Holy Scripture any book that were none: then stood all Christendom in doubt and unsurety whether Saint John’s Gospel were Holy Scripture or not; and so forth, of all the New Testament.

And therefore, since, as we have showed you, by the heretics’ own confessions… the church of Christ cannot be deceived in the choice and election of Holy Scripture; by which their confession they must needs abide and not flit therefrom (as they daily do change, and vary from, their own words in many other things) except that they will, in the falling from that point, refuse the strength and authority of the New Testament of Christ; and since, as yourselves well perceiveth also, the church of Christ receiveth and taketh and (as ye see by Saint Jerome and other old holy doctors this thousand years) hath approved and firmly believed the holy book of the Maccabees to be one of the volumes of Holy Scripture; and then in that book ye see so manifestly purgatory proved… that none heretic, as shameless as they be, can yet for shame say the contrary, but are by the plain and open words of that holy book so driven up to the hard wall… that they can no further, but are fain to say that the book is no part of Scripture; which shift they must needs forsake again or else revoke their own words and therewith also the authority of all Christ’s Gospel: there shall, if either reason or shame can hold, never need any further thing for the proof of purgatory to stop the mouths of all the heretics that are or shall be to the world’s end.

But yet, since they be so shameless and unreasonable that the thing which they can in no wise defend… they cannot, yet, find in their proud heart to give over; but when it is proved by divers plain texts of the Old Testament… then, having no probable reason for their part, they never the more give place to truth, but stick to their obstinate nay: let us see

2 surely: certainly  2, 3 might: could  2, 8 be deceived: err  2, 9 choice: identifying
3 for: i.e., as  4 stood all Christendom: all of Christendom would stand
5 unsurety: uncertainty (as to)  6 so forth, of: i.e., the same goes for
7 showed: told  8 confessions: acknowledgments
9 election: selecting  9–10 their confession: admission of theirs
11 vary: deviate  11, 24 words: statements  11 in: with regard to
12 except that they will: unless they want to  13 refuse: deny
15 receiveth: accepts  16 holy doctors: theologians / biblical exegetes
19, 27 purgatory: i.e., the existence of purgatory
20 for shame: i.e., be so shameless as to  21 open: clear
22 can: i.e., can go  // fain: constrained  23 shift: subterfuge; ploy
24 forsake: give up  // revoke: negate  26 shame: i.e., fear of embarrassment
26 hold: prevail; hold sway with them  27 stop: shut  29 unreasonable: irrational
30 wise: way  31 give over: admit defeat regarding  32 divers: several
33 probable reason: plausible argument; argument that holds any water
33 for their part: on their side; supporting their position
whether our purpose be not proved by good and substantial authority in the New Testament also.

And first let us consider the words of the blessed apostle and evangelist Saint John, where he saith, “Est peccatum usque ad mortem; non dico ut pro eo roget quis.” “There is,” saith he, “some sin that is unto the death; I bid not that any man shall pray for that.” This sin, as the interpreters agree, is understood of desperation and impenitence; as though Saint John would say that whoso depart out of this world impenitent

or in despair, any prayer after made can never stand him in stead. Then appeareth it clearly that Saint John meaneth that there be others which die not in such case, for whom he would men should pray… by cause that prayer in such souls may be profitable. But that profit can no man take neither being in heaven, where it needeth not, nor being in hell, where it booteth not. Wherefore it appeareth plainly that such prayer helpeth only for purgatory; which they must therefore needs grant… except they deny Saint John.

What say they to the words of Saint John in the fifth chapter of the Apocalypse: “I have heard,” saith he, “every creature that is in heaven, and upon the earth, and under the earth, and that be in the sea… and all things that be in them—all these have I heard say, 'Benediction and honor and glory and power forever be to him that is sitting in the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

Now wotteth every man well that in hell, among damned souls, is there none that giveth glory to Christ for the redemption of man. For they, for anger that (by their own default) they have lost their part thereof—and cannot, for proud heart, take their fault to themselves—fall to blasphemy as the devil doth himself… and impute their sin to the fault of God’s grace, and their damnation to the blame of his creation. So that the praise and glory that is given by creatures in hell unto the Lamb for man’s redemption… is only by the souls in purgatory, that be, and shall be, partners of that redemption; as the creatures walking upon earth or sailing in the sea… that give the
honor to Christ for man’s redemption… be only the Christian people, which look and hope to be partners thereof; and not infidels, that believe it not. But the blessed creatures in heaven give honor to Christ for man’s redemption… for that joy and pleasure that their charity taketh in the society and fellowship of saved souls. And in this place it is a world to see the folly of some heretics—what evasion they seek to void from this place of Scripture. They say that it is no more to be understood by souls here in purgatory, nor Christian men living upon earth, than by fishes in the sea, and the devil and damned souls in hell… because the text saith that every creature in the sea, and in hell, spoke that laud and honor to the Lamb. But by this wise way might they prove that when ye pray for “all Christian souls,” ye mean to pray for our Lady’s soul, and for Judas’s too; and that our Savior, when he sent his apostles and bade them preach his Gospel to “every creature”—they may bear you in hand that he bade them preach to oxen and cows, and their calves too… because all they be creatures. But as they were sent to none other creature… than such as he meant of, though he spoke of “all”; nor ye mean to pray for no souls but such as have need and may have help, though ye speak of “all”: so, though Saint John spoke of “every” creature in hell giving honor to Christ for man’s redemption, yet meant he but such as be in that hell in which they rejoice therein and shall be partners thereof; which be only we in purgatory, and not the devils and damned souls, that blaspheme him—though their just punishment redound, against their will, to the glory of God’s righteousness.

If all this will not satisfy them… will ye see yet another clear place, and such as none heretic can avoid? Doth not the blessed apostle Saint Peter, as appeareth in the second chapter of the Apostles’ Acts, say of our Savior Christ in this wise: “Quem Deus suscitavit, solutis doloribus inferni”? In these words he showeth that pains of hell were loosed. But these pains were neither pains of that hell in which the damned souls be pained—which neither were loosed then nor never be loosed, but

2, 24 partners: partakers 2 which: who
3 that… not: who do not believe in it 6, 7, 29 place: text; passage
6 world: wonder 7 to: in order to // void: escape
8, 10 by: as referring to 12 wise way: brilliant tack
16 bear you in hand: assert to you; try to get you to believe
19 meant of: had in mind 20 may have help: can be helped
25 that: which 28 will ye: would you like to 29 avoid: get around
33 showeth: asserts 35 pained: punished / put to pain
be and shall be, as our Savior saith himself, everlasting—nor these pains that were then loosed were not the pains in limbus patrum; for there were none to be loosed; for the good souls were there, as our Savior showeth himself, in quiet, comfort, and rest. And so appeareth it evidently... that the pains of hell that were loosed... were only the pains of purgatory—which is also called “hell,” by occasion of the Latin word and the Greek word both. For in these tongues (forasmuch as before the resurrection of our Savior Christ there was never none that ascended up into heaven) there was no people that any otherwise spoke of souls... than that they were gone down “beneath,” into the “low place.” And therefore in the words of the Common Creed is it said of our Savior Christ after his Passion, “Descendit ad inferna”; that is to say, “He descended down beneath, into the low places.”

In stead of which “low places” the English tongue hath ever used this word “hell.” And certain is it and very sure... that Christ descended not into all these “low places,” nor into every place of “hell,” but only into limbus patrum and purgatory. Which two places, because they be parts of habitations of souls beneath (all which habitations beneath have in English been always called “hell”), therefore are these two places (among others) taken and comprehended under the name of “hell.” Which word “hell” nothing else signifieth unto us in its general signification but “the habitations of souls beneath” (or “under”) “us, in the low places under the ground.” Albeit, because limbus patrum and purgatory be called in English also by their special names besides, therefore is most commonly this word “hell” restrained to the special signification of that low place beneath... in which the damned souls be punished. This much have we showed you of this word “hell”... because we would not that the common taking thereof might bring you into any error. So that by this place ye see proved, by the plain words of Saint Peter, that Christ at his resurrection did loose and unbind pains in hell... which, as we have showed you, could be nowhere there but in purgatory. For in the special hell of damned souls the pains were not loosed.

4 showeth: makes known 5 evidently: conclusively 9 none that: anyone who 12 Common: i.e., Apostles’ 15 stead: place 26, 28, 35 special: specific; particular 27 restrained: restricted 29, 34 showed: explained to 30 of: about 30–31 would not that... might: i.e., would not want... to 31 place: text (Acts 2:24)
And in *limbus patrum* was no pains to be loosed. And therefore except they deny Saint Peter… they cannot deny purgatory.

And yet if they deny Saint Peter—we shall then allege them Saint Paul; whom they be best content to hear of, by cause that of the difficulty of his writing they catch, sometimes, some matter of contention for the defense of their false exposition. This blessed apostle, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (the third chapter), speaking of our Savior Christ (the very foundation, and the only foundation, of all our faith and salvation), saith: “If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw—every man’s work shall be made open; for the Day of our Lord shall declare it. For in the fire it shall be showed, and the fire shall prove, what manner of thing every man’s work is. If any man’s work that he hath built thereon do abide: he shall have a reward. If any man’s work burn: he shall suffer harm, but he shall be safe—but yet as by fire.” In these words the Apostle showeth that likewise as some men abiding upon Christ and his very, lively faith… build up thereupon such good works as are so good and so pure that they be like fine gold, fine silver, or such fine precious stones… as when they be cast in the fire it can find no filth to fetch out of them, and therefore they remain in the fire safe and undiminished: so are there some, on the other side, which though they do not (as many others do) with mortal sins and lack of good works wound their faith unto the death and fall from Christ, the foundation that they must build upon—yet do they, abiding upon that foundation, build up thereupon many such simple and frail and corruptible works as can never enter heaven. And such be venial sins… as idle words, vain and wanton mirth, and such other things like, which be but like wood, hay, or straw. Which works when the soul after his departing out of the world bringeth hither into purgatory, he cannot so get through it as doth the soul whose works were wrought clean, or fully purged by penance ere he died. For *that* soul in the fire can feel no harm—like as fine gold can in the fire nothing lose of its
weight. But this soul, that bringeth with him such frail works... either wrought by themselves or inserted, peradventure, and mixed, amidst of some good and virtuous work—as, for example, some lack (peradventure sufficient attention and heed, taken by some sudden wavering of the mind) in time of prayer, or some surreption and creeping in of vainglory and liking of their own praise in their alms given or other good deed done... not forthwith resisted and cast out, but kept and fed upon too long... and yet neither so long, peradventure, nor so great, as our Lord will for that thought deprive him the merit and reward of his work—lo, in such cases, as the Apostle saith, the Day of our Lord (which is to the whole world the day of the general judgment, and to every man particular... the day of his own judgment after his death) shall show his work; what manner thing it is, the fire shall prove and declare. For here in purgatory, like as the fire can in the clean souls take none hold... but they shall be therein without any manner pain or grief: so shall it in the souls that are uncleaned and have their works imperfect, unclean, and spotted... hastily catch, hold, and keep them fast and burn them with incessant pain, till the filthiness of their sins be clean purged and gone; and that shall be in some sooner, in some later... as their sins, or the spots remaining thereof, be more easy or more hard to get out. And that is the thing that Paul signifieth by the "wood," "hay," and "straw"—of which the one is a light flame, soon ended; the other smoldereth much longer; and the third is hottest and endureth longest. But yet hath it an end; and so shall have, at length, all the pains of them that shall be purged here. But whatsoever soul mishap to die in deadly sin and impenitent: since he is thereby fallen off forever from our Savior Christ (that was his foundation)—and hath built up wretched works upon your ghostly enemy the devil... wherewith he hath so thoroughly poisoned himself that he can never be purged—the fire shall therefore lie burning upon him forever, and his pain never lessened, nor his filthy spots never the more diminished.

And forasmuch as ye never can conceive a very right imagination

1 frail: unsound       2, 4, 9 peradventure: perhaps
4 sufficient: i.e., of sufficient       6 surreption: sudden onset
8 forthwith: promptly       10 deprive him: deprive him of; deny him
11 the Apostle: i.e., Saint Paul       12, 13 to: for       15 prove: put to the test
15 declare: make known       19 spotted: morally blemished; stained by sin
21 clean: completely       22, 35 spots: stains       25 light: quick
29 mishap: have the misfortune   // deadly: mortal       32 ghostly: spiritual
of these things which ye never felt; nor it is not possible to find you any example in the world very like unto the pains that seely souls feel when they be departed thence: we shall therefore put you in remembrance of one kind of pain... which though it be nothing like for the quantity of the matter, yet may it somewhat be resembled by reason of the fashion and manner. If there were embarked many people at once to be by ship conveyed a long journey by sea, of such as never came thereon before... and should hap all the way to have the seas rise high, and sore wrought... and sometime, soon upon a storm, to lie long after, wallowing at an anchor: there should ye find diverse fashions of folk. Some peradventure (but of them very few) so clean from all evil humors, and so well attempered of themselves, that they shall be, all that long voyage by sea, as lusty and as jocund as if they were on land. But far the most part shall ye see sore sick... and yet in many sundry manners: some more, some less; some longer time diseased, and some much sooner amended. And divers that a while had went they should have died for pain... yet after one vomit or twain so clean rid of their grief... that they never feel displeasure of it after. And this happeth after as the body is more or less disposed in itself thereto. But then shall ye sometimes see there some others whose body is so incurably corrupted... that they shall walter and tolter, and wring their hands, and gnash the teeth... and their eyes water, their head ache, their body fret, their stomach wamble, and all their body shiver for pain... and yet shall never vomit at all; or if they vomit, yet shall they vomit still and never find ease thereof. Lo, thus fareth it, as a small thing may be resembled to a great, by the souls deceased and departed the world: that such as be clean and unspotted can in the fire feel no disease at all; and, on the other side, such as come thence so deadly poisoned with sin that their spots be indelible and their filthiness unpurgeable... lie fretting and frying in the fire forever; and only such as neither be fully cleansed nor, yet, sore defiled, but that the fire may fret out the spots of their sin—of this
sort only be we that here lie in purgatory. Which these cruel
heretics would make you believe that we feel none harm at
all; whereof the blessed Apostle, as we have showed you, writeth
unto the Corinthians the contrary.

Now, if they would bear you in hand that because some doctors
do construe those words of the Apostle in divers other
senses (as they do construe in divers senses almost every text
in Scripture, sometimes after the letter, sometimes moral, and
sometimes otherwise… and all to the profit and edifying of the
hearsers); if these heretics would therefore pretend that Saint
Paul in that place meant nothing of purgatory, but the fire that
shall be sent before the Doom, or worldly tribulation, or some
such other thing: ye shall well understand that though his
words may be verified, and well and profitably applied, unto
such things also, yet letteth that nothing these words to be
properly by Saint Paul spoken of purgatory; no more than it
letteth these words to be properly spoken by Christ—“Ego in
flagella paratus sum”—and many another verse in the Psalter also,
though the same words may be well applied and verified of many
another man offering himself patiently to the sufferance of
unjust punishment. And therefore, lest these heretics should
with any such inventions beguile you and make you believe that we,
for the furtherance of our own cause, expound the Apostle’s
words wrong, and so make them seem to say for our part: ye
shall understand that those words have been expounded and
understood of purgatory this thousand years, and more, by the
ancient holy doctors of Christ’s church, as well Greeks as
Latins. And, among others, the great clerk Origen, in more places
of his works than one, declareth plainly that the fore-remembered
words of the Apostle are spoken by the pains of
purgatory. The holy confessor and great pillar of Christ’s
church Saint Augustine, in divers of his godly and erudite
books, expoundeth that place of Saint Paul to be clearly spoken
of purgatory. And over this, the blessed pope Saint Gregory, in
the fourth book of his godly Dialogues, beareth witness that the Apostle in the place aforesaid wrote those words of purgatory. So that ye may plainly perceive that this exposition is neither our device nor any newfound fantasy, but a very truth well perceived and witnessed by great, cunning men, and holy, blessed saints, more than a thousand years ago.

Now, if these heretics will be so mad to flit in this case from Saint Paul... and say they be bound to believe nothing but only the Gospel: let us then yet see further whether we may not plainly prove you purgatory by the very words of the Gospel itself. Doth not our blessed Savior himself say that there is a certain sin which a man may so commit “against the Holy Ghost”... that it shall never be remitted nor forgiven “neither in this world nor in the world to come”? Now, as for to dispute what manner sin that should be—both the matter were very hard... and also, we shall here nothing need to touch it. But of one thing both ye and we may make us very sure: that there is nor can be any sin committed in the world so sore, so grievous, nor so abominable... but that if a man work with God’s grace, by contrition and heaviness of heart... with humble confession of mouth and good endeavor of penance and satisfaction in deed, against his thought, word, and deed by which God was offended—he shall obtain of God’s goodness remission, forgiveness, and pardon.

But it may peradventure so befall that by some kind of unkindness used toward God extending to the blasphemy of his Holy Spirit—the committer of that sin may so far offend that he shall, for his desert and demerit, have the grace of Almighty God so clearly withdrawn from him that our Lord shall never offer his grace after, nor nevermore call upon him. And then, his grace once clearly withdrawn from a man—he can never be able to repent and return again to God. For grace is the light wherewith men see the way to walk out of sin, and grace is the staff without help whereof no man is able to rise out of sin, according to the words of Holy Writ spoken to man in the person of

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1 beareth witness: i.e., corroborates this view 1–2 the Apostle: i.e., Saint Paul
2 place: text // of: with reference to 3 exposition: interpretation 4 device: idea
4 newfound: newly come up with // fantasy: figment of the imagination
4 very: bona fide; actual 5 witnessed: vouched for // cunning: erudite
7 to: i.e., as to // case: instance 11–14: See Matthew 12:31–32.
14 dispute: debate
15 matter... hard: i.e., would that be a very tough debate topic
16 nothing need to touch it: have no need to discuss it
17 may make us very sure: can rest quite assured // is: i.e., neither is
18 sore: terrible 20–21 of mouth: i.e., in speech 25 peradventure: perhaps
25 befall: happen 26 unkindness: vileness // used: shown
26 blasphemy: i.e., blaspheming
28 for his desert and demerit: i.e., as he deserves and has merited
29, 31 clearly: completely
our Lord God, “Ex te perditio tua; ex me salvatio tua”; “Thy perdition cometh of thyself; but thy salvation cometh of me, by the aid and help of my grace.” Which grace, as we tell you, being from some man utterly withdrawn for some manner unkind behavior toward God and blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, that sin—

for lack of repentance, which can never come where grace is clean gone—shall “never be forgiven in this world nor in the world to come.” And in such a manner kind of unkindness toward God and blasphemy toward the Holy Ghost… fall also all such wretches as have the grace of God ever calling and knocking upon them for repentance all the days of their life… and yet, all that notwithstanding, will not use it, nor work therewith, nor turn to God… but willingly will die desperate and impenitent wretches.

This kind of blasphemers of God’s goodness and his Holy Spirit… have in the miserable passing of their sinful souls out of their sensual bodies the grace of God so fully and so finally withdrawn from them forever… that they be thereby fixed and confirmed in an unchangeable malice… which, eternally dwelling with them, is the very special cause of their everlasting torment. But in this matter, as we said, we wade out of our purpose… saving that it seemed us yet necessary, since our Savior, in the place that we speak of, doth himself show that there is a certain sin so touching the Holy Ghost that it shall “never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come”—it seemed, as we say, somewhat necessary to say somewhat therein, lest some that read it might conceive a wrong opinion and a false fear drawing them toward despair… that if they mishappened (which our Lord forbid!) to fall into blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, they could never after be forgiven how sore soever they repented, or how heartily and how busily soever they should pray therefor. In which thing since we have showed you what we take for truth, we shall leave

4 manner: kind of // unkind: vile  8 in: into
8 manner: dispositional; habitual // unkindness: vileness
13 willingly: deliberately // desperate: (as) despairing
20 special: proximate  21–22 wade out of: veer off from
22 purpose: subject; point at issue  23 place: passage
24 show: state // touching: concerning
26–27 say somewhat therein: i.e., go into that passage a little
28 false: erroneous; unfounded  29 mishappened: had the misfortune
31 how sore soever: no matter how intensely  32 busily: assiduously
32 therefore: for that // in: regarding
33 showed: told; made known to
that matter, and show you how those words of Christ prove you our principal purpose: that is to say, that there is a purgatory. Howbeit, we shall scantly need to show you that; for the very words be plain and evident of themselves. For when our Lord saith that the “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost” shall not be forgiven “neither in this world nor in the world to come,” he giveth us clear knowledge that of other sins, some shall be forgiven in “this world”—and some in “the world to come.”

Now are there in “this” world every sin forgiven in such as shall be saved souls… except such venial sins and such temporal pain as, yet due to the deadly sins, rest and remain to be purged here in purgatory. For none other place is there than this in the world to come after man’s life… in which either sin or pain due to any sin shall be remitted. For into heaven shall neither sin nor pain enter; and in hell shall never none be released. And therefore when Christ, by showing that some kind of sin shall not be remitted in the “world to come”—doth give men knowledge that, on the other side, some sins shall in the “world to come” be remitted and forgiven.

And then, since no man doubteth but that neither in hell shall any sins be forgiven nor in heaven: very reason teacheth that the place in which some sins shall be forgiven after this life… can be none other but purgatory.

There is, as we suppose, no Christian man living but he will think that any one place of Holy Scripture is enough to the proof of any truth. Now have we proved you purgatory by the plain texts of more places than one, two, or three. And yet shall we give you another… so plain, as we suppose, and so evident for the proof of purgatory, as none heretic shall find any good color of escape. For our Savior Christ saith, as it is rehearsed in the twelfth chapter of Matthew, that men shall “yield a reckoning of every idle word”… and that shall be after this present life. Then wotteth every man that by that “reckoning” is

understood a punishment therefor—which shall not be in hell… and much less in heaven. And therefore can it be nowhere else but in purgatory.

Lo, thus may ye see purgatory clearly proved by the very Scripture itself: by the book of the Kings; by the prophet Zechariah; by the holy book of the Maccabees; by the words of Saint John; by the apostle Saint Peter; by the writing of our Savior Christ himself. So that we not a little marvel either of the ignorance or shameless boldness of all such as having any learning… dare call themselves Christian men and yet deny purgatory. For if they have learning and perceive not these clear and open texts… we marvel of their ignorance. With which while they join a proud pretense of learning… they fall into the reproof that Saint Paul spoke of the paynim philosophers: “Dicentes se esse sapientes, stulti facti sunt” (“While they called themselves wise, they proved stark fools”). Now, if they perceive well these texts of Holy Scripture so plainly proving purgatory… and yet themselves stick stiff in the denying: we then marvel much more that they dare for shame call themselves Christian men… and then deny the thing which the blessed apostles of Christ—the sacred majesty of our Savior himself, in the Holy Scripture, in his holy Gospels, so manifestly and so plainly affirmeth.

And yet many another plain text is there in Holy Scripture… that, as the old holy doctors bear witness, well proveth our purpose for purgatory… which we speak here nothing of, since fewer texts than we have already showed you… both might and ought to suffice you. For any one plain text of Scripture sufficeth for the proof of any truth, except any man be of the mind that he will have God tell his tale twice ere he believe him.

Now, if these heretics fall to their accustomed frowardness… and, as they be wont to do, will rather deny that the swan is white and the crow black… than agree that any text in Holy Scripture hath any other sense than themselves list to say; and will in this point, for the maintenance of their heresy,
set at naught Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Saint Ambrose, Saint Gregory, Saint Chrysostom, Saint Basil, Saint Cyprian, and finally all the old holy fathers and blessed saints that anything say against them: yet can they neither deny that the Catholic Church of Christ hath always believed purgatory, condemning for heretics all such as would hold the contrary, nor, if they grant that, can they then by any manner means avoid it but that the thing is true that all the Church so full and whole, so long, hath in such wise believed, although there were not found in all Holy Scripture one text that so plainly proved it as they might find many that seemed to say the contrary—except they will not only say that our blessed Lady lost her virginity after the birth of Christ... but, over that, be driven further, to diminish the strength and authority of the very Gospel itself; which if the Church may err in the right faith... had clearly lost its credence.

And therefore, as we say, whereas we by plain Scripture have proved you purgatory, yet if there were therein not one text that anything seemed to say for it, but divers and many texts which as far seemed unto the misunderstanders to speak against purgatory... as many divers texts of the Gospel appeared unto the great heretic Helvidius to speak against the perpetual virginity of Christ’s blessed mother: yet since the Catholic Church of Christ hath always so firmly believed it for a plain truth... that they have always taken the obstinate affirmers of the contrary for plain, erroneous heretics—it is a proof full and sufficient for purgatory to any man that will be taken for a member of Christ’s church, and is alone a thing sufficient in any good Christian audience to stop the mouths of all the proud, high-hearted, malicious heretics that anything would bark against us.

But when they be so confuted and concluded... that they have nothing to say: yet can they not hold their peace... but fall to blasphemy and ask why there cometh none of us out of purgatory
and speak with them. By which blasphemous question
they may as well deny hell, and heaven too, as they deny
purgatory. For there cometh as many to them out of purgatory…
as out of either of the other twain. And surely if there came one
out of any of them all three… unto folk of such incredulity as
those heretics be: yet would they be never the better. For if
they believe not now them whom they should believe, no more
would they believe him neither that should come out of purgatory
to tell it them—as Abraham answered the rich man that required
the same in hell; and as it well appeared also by the
miscReant Jews which were so little amended by the coming
again of Lazarus out of limbus patrum… that lest others
should believe him, they devised to destroy him. And yet if the
thing that they require would content them—it hath not lacked.
For there hath in every country and in every age apparitions
been had, and well known and testified, by which men have
had sufficient revelation and proof of purgatory… except
such as list not to believe them; and they be such as would be
never the better if they saw them.

For whoso listeth to believe that altogether is lies that he
heareth so much people speak of and so many good men write
of—for no country is there in Christendom in which he shall not
hear, credibly reported, of such apparitions divers times there
seen and appearing; and in the books of many a holy saint’s
writing shall he find such apparitions in such wise told and
testified as no good man could in any wise mistrust them. And,
over this, when the apostles at Christ’s appearing to the Eleven in the
house… took him at the first for a spirit, it well appeareth that
apparitions of spirits was no new thing among the Jews.

Which ye may well perceive also by that the better sort of them said
in excusing of Saint Paul, “What if some angel or some spirit
have spoken to him?”—as is mentioned in the Apostles’ Acts. So
that, as we say, whoso list to take all this for lies… and is so
faithless, and so proudly curious, that he looketh ere he believe

2 may as well: could as rightly  4 one: someone
5 them all three: all three of them  // incredulity: skepticism
9–10 required the same: made the same request  10–13: See John 12:9–11.
11 miscreant: unbelieving  // which: who  12 again: back
12 limbus patrum: See note for 179/21.  13 devised: plotted
14 require: ask for / make a requisite (for their belief)  // lacked: been lacking
16, 26 testified: authenticated  18, 20, 33 list(eth): choose(s)
18, 34 believe: i.e., believe in  20, 33 whoso: whoever
20 altogether is: i.e., it is all a pack of  23 divers: various
26 in . . . them: in any way be skeptical of them  27 over this: moreover
27–28: See Luke 24:37.  28 well appeareth: is clear to see
34 curious: cautious; leery  // believe: i.e., believe in
them to have such apparitions specially showed unto himself, and miracles wrought in his presence... would wax the worse and he saw them, and would ascribe it either to some fantasy or to the devil’s work—as did those Jews that ascribed Christ’s miracles to Beelzebub.

For surely if such people were in the case of Saint Thomas of India—that they were otherwise very virtuous and good, having in that only point some hardness of belief as he had in Christ’s resurrection—our Lord, we doubt not, would of his special goodness provide some special way, for their satisfaction, to recover them with. But, now, since they be plain carnal, high-hearted, and malicious, longing for miracles as did these crooked-hearted Jews which said unto Christ that they longed to see him show some miracle—he doth, therefore, with these folk as Christ did with them. For as he answered them, by the example of Jonas the prophet, that he would none show before that perverse and faithless people till he were dead: so answereth he these perverse and crooked, malicious people... that he will show them no such apparition till they be dead. And then shall he send them where they shall see it so surely—and, to their pain, see such a grisly sight as shall so grieve their hearts to look thereon—that they shall say as Christ said to Saint Thomas of India: “Beati qui non viderunt et crediderunt”; “Blessed and happy be they that believed this gear and never saw it.” For surely in this world the goodness of God so tempereth such apparitions... as his high wisdom seeth it most profitable for help and relief of the dead and instruction and amendment of the quick—keeping such apparitions, of his great mercy, most commonly from the sight of such as would turn his goodness into their own harm. And surely of his tender favor toward you... doth his great goodness provide that such apparitions, revelations, and miracles should not be too copious and common—whereby good men, seeing the thing at eye, should lose the great part of that they now merit by faith; and evil folk, when they were once familiar

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1 specially: personally  2 wax: become // and: if
3 fantasy: hallucination  4–5: See Matthew 12:24.  6 case: situation
6–7, 22 Saint Thomas of India: I.e., the apostle Thomas, who is believed to have established the Church in what is now called Kerala.
7–9: See John 20:24–25.  8 hardness of belief: difficulty believing
9, 10 special: exceptional  11 recover them: come to their rescue
11 carnal: unspiritual // high-hearted: arrogant  14, 16 show: perform
14 he: i.e., our Lord God  15 with them: i.e., with those Jews
17 faithless: unbelieving  22 as: i.e., what  22–24: See John 20:29.
24 this gear: i.e., in this thing  25 tempereth: regulates  27 quick: living
28 from: away from  33 at eye: with their own eyes
33 great part: greater part; lion’s share // that: that which  34 evil: bad
with it, would then as little regard it as they now little believe it. Now it is a world to see with what folly they fortify their false belief... and into what fond fantasies they fall while they decline from the truth. For while they deny purgatory... they now affirm (and especially Luther himself) that souls unto Doomsday do nothing else but sleep. Woe would they be if they fell into such a sleep as many a soul sleepeth here—and as Judas hath already slept fifteen hundred years in hell!

Then say they that if there were any purgatory... out of which the pope might deliver any soul by his pardon: then were he very cruel in that he delivereth them not without money; and also that he riddeth them not hence all together, at once. The first is a great folly: that—since our Lord sendeth them thither for satisfaction to be made in some manner for their sin—the pope should rather, against God’s purpose, deliver them free... than change the manner of their satisfaction from pain unto prayer, almsdeed, or other good works to be done by their friends for them, in some point profitable and necessary for the whole corps of Christendom or some good member of the same.

Now is there in the second not only much more folly, but it importeth also plain and open blasphemy. For presupposed that the pope may deliver all souls out of purgatory: yet if he were therefore cruel as often as he leaveth any there—this unreasonable reason layeth cruelty to the blame of God, which may undoubtedly deliver all souls thence, and yet he leaveth them there. This blasphemy should also touch his high Majesty for keeping any soul in hell; from whence no man doubteth but that he might, if he list, deliver them all forever. But as he will not deliver any thence: so will he not without good order deliver any soul hence. For as of his justice they be worthy to lie there forever: so be we worthy to lie here for the while... and in God no cruelty though he suffer his mercy to be, commonly, suspended and tempered with the balance of his justice. And though he take us not hence all at once, orderless and at adventure: his high

3 a world: a wonder; an amazing thing // folly: nonsense
4 fond fantasies: ridiculous notions // while: when // decline: fall away
6 unto: until 11, 29 might: could 11 his pardon: i.e., granting an indulgence
12 were he: would he be 13 that: i.e., in that // riddeth: clears; gets
13, 36 hence: out of here 14, 22 folly: idiocy 14 since: given that
15 thither: there 19 friends: relatives and friends; loved ones
23 importeth: involves // plain and open: clear and obvious 24, 26 may: could
25 unreasonable: irrational 26 reason: argument // which: who
27, 31 thence: from there 28 touch: cast aspersions on 29 whence: where
30 list: wanted to 31 order: protocol 32 hence: from here
32 as of: i.e., just as in accord with // they: i.e., the souls in hell
32 he worthy: deserve 33 be we worthy: do we deserve 34 suffer: allow
34 commonly: ordinarily 36 orderless: i.e., without any protocol or criterion
36 at adventure: indiscriminately
wisdom is praiseworthy, and not worthy blame. Our Lord forbid
that ever we so should (and such is his grace that we never shall, for
any pain possible that we can suffer here) hold ourselves content to
hear such foolish words as imply so plain blasphemy against
God’s high, merciful Majesty. For surely these folk in putting
forth of this their unwise argument… make a countenance to
throw it against the pope, but in very deed they cast it at
God’s head.

For as for the pope—whoso consider it well—goeth farther
from the example of God that is set for Christ’s vicar in his Church…
by giving over-liberal pardon… than by being therein too scarce
and strait. For God remitteth not here at adventure (though he
may do his pleasure), but observeth right good and great respect—
as the prayers and intercessions made for us, or other
satisfaction done for us, by some other men. And this order
useth, and of reason ought to use, his vicar also in the dispensing
toward our relief… the precious treasure of our
comfort that Christ hath put in his keeping. For else, if either
the pope or God should always forthwith deliver every man here—
or, rather, keep every man hence, as these heretics would make
men believe that God doth indeed… and would that the world
should so take it—then should God or the pope, as we somewhat
have said before, give a great occasion to men boldly to fall
in sin… and little to care or force how slowly they rise again.

Which thing neither were meet for the pope’s office… nor
agreeable to the great wisdom of God—and much less meet
for his mercy. For by that means should he give innumerable
folk great occasion of damnation… which, presuming upon
such easy, short remission, would lustily draw to lewdness
with little care of amendment.

And so appeareth it that the thing which these wise men
would have ye take for cruel… is of truth most merciful; and
the thing which they would have to seem very benign and
piteous is in very deed most rigorous and most cruel;
likewise as a sharp master that chastiseth his servant… is in

1 worthy: deserving of 2 for: despite 4 imply: involve as a necessary consequence
4 so plain: such obvious 5 surely: certainly 6 this their unwise argument: this
nonsensical argument of theirs 6–7 make a countenance to throw: make it look as though
they were throwing 7, 34 very deed: actual fact 7 cast: are throwing
9 whoso consider it well: i.e., whoever really thinks about it will see this
9 goeth: i.e., he would go 11 by . . . pardon: i.e., by granting indulgences too liberally
11–12 therein . . . strait: too sparing and strict in this regard 12 at adventure: capriciously
13 may: can // his pleasure: as he pleases // observeth . . . respect: i.e., takes some things
into quite good and great consideration 14 as: such as 15 order: protocol
20 hence: out of here 21–22 would . . . should: would have everyone
22 somewhat: more or less 24 in: into // care or force: worry or care
25 neither were meet: would be neither fitting 26 agreeable to: in keeping with
26–27 meet for: congruous with 28 which: who 29 short: quick
29 lustily: cheerfully; enthusiastically // draw to: go in for // lewdness: licentiousness
30 of: about 31 wise: sensible 32 of truth: in actuality 33 benign: kind; gracious
34 piteous: compassionate // rigorous: unbending; stringent 35 sharp: severe
that point more favorable than is an easy one that for lack of punishment letteth them run on the bridle and giveth them occasion of hanging. Which thing hath place also between the father and the child. And therefore in Holy Scripture that father is not accounted for unloving and cruel... that beateth his child; but rather, he that leaveth it undone. For “he that spareth the rod,” saith Holy Writ, “hateth the child.” And God, therefore, that is of all fathers the most tender-loving, and most benign and merciful, leaveth no child of his uncorrected, but “scourgeth every child that he taketh to him.” And therefore neither God remitteth at adventure the pains of purgatory... nor no more must the pope neither... but if that he will, while he laboreth to do good and be piteous to us that are dead, be cruel and do much more harm to them that be quick... and while he will draw us out of purgatory... drive many of them into hell. From desire of which kind of “help” we so far abhor... that we would all rather choose to dwell here long, in most bitter pain, than by such way to get hence as might give occasion of any man’s damnation.

Now, where they likewise object—in countenance against the clergy, but yet in very deed they strike the stroke at us, whom they would bereave the suffrages of good people—objecting that no man may satisfy for another... nor that the prayer nor alms nor other good deed done by one man may stand another in stead, but that every man must needs allthing that he will have help of... do it, every whit, himself; and so, that no man’s good deed done among you for us in relief of our pain could in any manner serve us: this opinion, as it is toward us very pestilent and pernicious, so is it of itself very false and foolish. For first, if all that ever must avail any man... must needs be done by himself, and no man’s merit may be applied to the help of another: then were wiped away from all men all the merits of Christ’s bitter Passion; in which though it be true that God died on the cross,
because of the unity of God and man in person—yet had his
tender manhood all the pain for us, and his impassible Godhead
felt no pain at all. Whereof serveth also the prayers that every
man prayeth for other? Wherefore did Saint Paul pray for all
other Christian men—and desire them all to pray for him also, and
each of them for other—that they might be saved?

And why is there so special a mention made, in the Acts of
the Apostles, that at the delivery of Saint Peter out of prison the
Church made continual prayer and intercession for him… but
for to show that God the rather delivered him for other
men’s prayers? And think ye that if God have pity upon
one man for another’s sake… and delivereth him at another
man’s petition from a little pain or imprisonment in the
world there upon earth, he hath not at other men’s humble
and hearty prayer much more pity upon such as lie in
much more heavy pain and torment here in the hot fire of
purgatory?

Then find these folk another knot hard, as they think, to
undo. For they say that “if another man’s merits may serve me,
whereto should I need to do any good myself?” This objection is
much like as if they would say, “If other men may take me out of the
fire, whereto should I labor to rise myself?” Very truth it is
that sometimes the good works of one man, wrought with good
affection, may purchase another man grace for to amend and
work for himself. But surely, of common course, he that will not
himself work with them… getteth little good of other men’s
good deeds. For if thyself do still draw backward while other,
good men with their prayer labor to pull thee forward, it
will be long ere thou make any good day’s journey. And therefore
that holy doctor Saint Augustine, in the blessed book that he
made of the cure and care that men should have of us seely departed
souls, toucheth quickly the very point that there can none take
profit of other men’s good deeds… but only such as have
deserved by some good thing in their own deeds… that other
men’s deeds should help them. And that hath every man done, at the leastwise by his final repentance and purpose of amendment, that departeth the world in the state of grace.

For he that is out of that state cannot take the profit of other men’s merits done for him. And therefore damned souls cannot by other men’s merits be delivered of damnation; nor, in like wise, he that intendeth to persevere in sin and do no good for himself. But since that we be not in that case, but have with help of God’s grace deserved to be partners of such good deeds as ye that are our friends will of your goodness do for us, ye may by your merits highly relieve us here and help to get us hence. And surely great wonder were it if we should not be able to take profit of your prayers. For there will no wise man doubt but that the prayer of any member of Christendom… may profit any other that it is made for… which hath need and is a member of the same. But none is there yet living that is more very member of Christ’s mystical body—that is, his church—than we be; nor no man living that hath more need of help than we. For in surety of salvation we be fellows with angels; in need of relief we be yet fellows with you. And therefore, being so sure members of one body with angels, holy saints, and you; and having necessity both of their help and yours: there is no doubt but since every member that need hath may take good by other, we stand in the case that both angels’ and saints’ intercessions and your good prayers and almsdeed done for us, whatsoever these heretics babble, may do us marvelous much good.

The passion by God’s most gracious favor appeared unto their friends after the death and showed themselves helped and delivered hence by pilgrimage, almsdeed, and prayer—and especially by the sacred oblation of that Holy Sacrament offered for them in the Mass! If these heretics say that all such things be lies, then be they much worse yet than

5 done: i.e., earned  6 of: from  8 good: i.e., good thing  
9, 24 case: position; situation  9 deserved: merited // partners: partakers  
10, 29 friends: relatives and friends; loved ones  11, 15, etc. may: can  
12 hence: out of here // surely… it: certainly it would be a great wonder  
14 no wise man: no one with any sense  15 which: who  
17 very: truly a  19, 20 in: with respect to  19 surety: certainty  
19, 20 fellows: peers; on a par  20 yet: still  
21 so sure: such firmly established; so certainly  22 necessity: need  
27 marvelous much: a tremendous amount of  
29 showed themselves: i.e., made it known that they were  
30 hence: from here
their master was—Luther himself—as long as any spark of
shame was in him. For he confesseth in his sermons that many
such apparitions be true; and his heart could not for very
shame serve him… that so many so often told in so many places,
so faithfully reported by so many honest folk, and so substantially
written by so many blessed saints… should be all false.
Wherein if these men list, like lusty scholars, to pass and overgo
their mad master in this point, and deny these things altogether—
yet shall there stick in their teeth… the scripture of the
Maccabees whereof we told you: that Judas Maccabeus gathered
and sent a great offering to Jerusalem, for to buy sacrifice to be
offered for them that he found slain in the field… and certain
things about them, taken of the idols, forbidden them by the
Law; which caused him to fear lest they were for their sins
fallen after their death into pain; and therefore made that
gathering, that alms and offering, as himself saith, that they
might thereby be loosed and delivered of their sins. So that
there appeareth *plainly* by Scripture… that such suffrages stand
us seely souls in stead. Against which authority if they will
with their master labor to break out, and deny that book for Holy
Scripture—we have stopped them that gap already, with such
a bush of thorns as will prick their hands through a pair of
hedging gloves ere they pull it out.

And finally, for this point that the suffrages of the Church
and the prayers of good Christian people stand us here in relief
and comfort, there needeth in this world (as Saint Augustine saith,
and Saint Damascene) none other manner proof than that all Christendom
hath ever used to do so, and have thought themselves
always *bound* to do, damning always for heretics all them
that would affirm the contrary.

And in this point may they have a marvelous great thing
against them in the judgment of every good man: the great
antiquity of the service of Christ’s church… by which the Church
hath so long ago customably recommended in their prayers all

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2 confesseth: acknowledges; admits 4 serve him: give him to think
5 faithfully: earnestly / convincingly // honest: respectable
5 substantially: soundly 7 list: want // lusty scholars: ambitious students
7 pass: surpass // overgo: outdo 8, 20 master: teacher 8, 31 in: on
9–17: See 2 Maccabees 12:38–45. 12 in the field: on the battlefield
12 and: i.e., with 13 about them: i.e., on or near their bodies
13 taken of the idols: idol-related 15 pain: punishment
15 made: i.e., he made 18–19 stand… stead: do benefit us poor souls
20 labor: try 27 manner: kind of
28 ever used to do so: always habitually done this (i.e., pray for the souls in purgatory)
29 damaging: condemning 31 may: can // marvelous: terrifically
33 service: liturgy // by: in // Church: i.e., clergy 34 so: i.e., from so
34 customably: customarily // recommended: commended
Christian souls to God. For we trust that though these heretics find many men both glad to hear and light to believe every lewd tale that can be surmised against the Church that now is—yet trust we that they shall find few or none so far out of all frame… but that they will at the least believe that there hath been some good and godly men, wise and well learned too, among the clergy in days past, one time or other. Go, then, to the old time, and to the good men that then were, and hear what they said, and see what they did, and believe and follow them. There remaineth yet, and books enough thereof, the very Mass in the very form and fashion… as Saint Basil, and Saint Chrysostom, and other holy fathers in that virtuous time, said it—in which ye shall find that in their daily Masses they prayed ever for all Christian souls.

Ye shall also perceive clearly by Saint Chrysostom in a sermon of his… that in his time there were in the funeral service, at the burying of the corpse, the selfsame psalms sung that ye sing now at the Dirge. Whereby it well appeareth that it is no newfound thing; for his time was far above a thousand years ago—and yet was that thing long used before his days. And because ye shall know that the more surely: he saith that the guise and custom to pray for souls… was instituted and begun in the Church by the blessed apostles themselves. And so, while so good men so long ago began it… and good folk hath ever since continued it, ye may soon guess whether they be good men or no that now provoke you to break it.

Now, where they say that if the Mass could do us any good, that then the priests be very cruel that will say none for us but they be waged: this word is as true as their intent is fraudulent and false. For their purpose is in those words to make the world ween that the clergy were so covetous, and cruel therewith, that there will no priest pray for us poor souls here… without he be hired thereto; whereof, our Lord be thanked, we find full well the contrary. For albeit that of Luther’s priests we can have none help, since their “Masses” offer not up the Sacrament to God neither for quick nor dead—nor make no very priests among them, since they take priesthood for no sacrament—
yet of good Christian priests we find great relief, as well in their Dirges and much other suffrages by old institution of the Church specially said for us... though no man give them one penny through the year. And so may all the world wit that this word of these heretics hath much malice and little effect therein.

But, now, though the priests pray for us of their own charity—yet when good people desire them thereto and give them their alms therefor, then are they doubly bound... and then riseth there much more good and profit upon all sides. For then take we fruit both of the prayer of the one and the alms of the other. And then taketh the priest benefit of his own prayer made both for the giver and for us. The giver also getteth fruit both of his own merciful alms...

and of double prayer also—that is to wit, both the prayer of the priest that prayeth for us, which commonly prayeth for him too, and also the prayer of us, which with great fervor of heart pray for our benefactors incessantly... and are so far forth in God's undoubted favor... that very few men living upon earth are so well heard as we—besides that of all kinds of alms that any man can give, the most meritorious is that which is bestowed upon us, as well for that it is unto the most needy... and also to them that are absent, and finally, for that of all manner alms it is most grounded upon the foundation of all Christian, virtuous faith. For as for to poor folk, a natural man will give alms, either for pity of some piteous sight... or for weariness of their importunate crying. But as for us poor souls past the world, whom he that giveth alms neither seeth nor heareth—would never bestow one penny upon us but if he had a faith that we live still, and that he feared that we lie in pain... and hoped of his reward in heaven. Which kind of faith and good hope joined with his gift and good work... must needs make it one of the best kinds of almsdeed that any man can do in the world.

And since that it so is (as indeed it is!), what uncharitable and
what unfaithful folk are these… that for hatred which they owe to
priested… would make you believe that there were no purgatory…
and would rather wish, by their wills, that their own fathers should
lie here in fire till the Day of Doom… than any man should give
a priest one penny to pray for them!

And yet is there here one thing well to be considered: that
they rather hate priests for hatred of Christ’s faith… than speak
against purgatory for hatred of priests. Which thing though it
seem you dark at the first hearing, ye shall yet, if ye look
well, very well perceive. For if it so were that this kind of
people did speak against purgatory only for the hatred of the
pope and the clergy, then would they grant that saved souls are yet
purged in the fire here for their sins unsatisfied in the
world, and it should then suffice them to say for their purpose…

that neither priest nor pope nor any man else, nor any
man’s alms or prayer, can in this place of punishment anything
relieve us. For this were enough, ye see well, to serve their
purpose against the clergy. But yet, because they have a far
farther purpose against all good Christian faith, they be not content,
therefore, to leave at this point, but step them forth
farther and deny purgatory utterly… to the end that men should
take boldness to care the less for their sins. And if they
might once be believed therein—then would they step yet farther and
deny hell and all; and after that, heaven too. But as for heaven,
albeit that as yet they deny it not—yet pull they many a simple
soul thence… which were it not for their mischievous doctrines
were else well likely to be there a full bright and glorious saint.

And surely the more that wise men advise themselves upon
this matter, the more shall they marvel of the mad mind of
them that deny purgatory… or say that the prayers or good
works of men living in the world can do us here no good. For
every man that any wit hath… wotteth well that the surest way
were in every doubt best to be taken. Now, suppose, then, that
purgatory could in no wise be proved… and that some would yet say

1 unfaithful: unbelieving   //  owe: bear
2 priested: the ordained; those who have been made priests
3 by their wills: if the choice was theirs to make   //  fathers: parents
4 the Day of Doom: Judgment Day   //  than: i.e., than that   //  rather: more
7 Christ’s: the Christian   //  though: even if   //  you: i.e., to you
9 dark: hard to see (as being true); hard to believe
13 unsatisfied: not made satisfaction for; not made up for   //  anything: at all
15 were: would be   //  purpose: design(s)   //  good: bona fide; authentic
17 take boldness: be emboldened   //  care: worry   //  for: about
22 thence: away from there   //  mischievous: iniquitous / destructive
28 wise: sensible / sane   //  advise themselves upon: reflect on   //  of the: at the
29 mind: mentality; way of thinking   //  wit hath: has any sense
32 wotteth: knows
32–33 the . . . taken: i.e., when in doubt, it’s always best to take the safest route
34 wise: way   //  say: state
 plainly that there were one, and some would say plainly nay. Let us now see whether sort of these twain might take most harm if their part were the wrong. First, he that believed there were 
5 purgatory, and that his prayer and good works wrought for his friends' souls might relieve them therein, and because thereof used much prayer and alms for them: he could not lose the reward of his good will... although his opinion were untrue, and that there were no purgatory at all; no more than he loseth his labor now that prayeth for one whom he feareth to lie in purgatory, whereas he is already in heaven. But on the other side, he that believeth there is none... and therefore prayeth for none: if his opinion be false, and that there be purgatory indeed (as indeed there is!), he loseth much good, and getteth him also much harm; for he both feareth much the less to sin and to 
10 lie long in purgatory—saving that his heresy shall save him thence and send him down deep into hell.

And it fareth between these two kinds of folk as it fared between a lewd gallant and a poor friar. Whom when the gallant saw going barefoot in a great frost and snow, he asked him 
20 why he did take such pain. And he answered that it was very little pain if a man would remember hell. “Yea, Friar,” quoth the gallant, “but what and there be none hell? Then art thou a great fool!” “Yea, Master,” quoth the friar, “but what and there be hell? Then is Your Mastership a much more fool!”

Moreover, there was never yet any of that sort... that could for shame say that any man is in peril for believing that there is purgatory. But they say only that there is none in deed... and that they may without any sin affirm their opinion for truth. But, now, upon the other side, many a hundred thousand—that is to wit, all the whole church of Christ that is or ever hath been—affirm that the affirming of their opinion against purgatory... is a plain, damnable heresy. Wherefore it well and plainly appeareth, and every wise man well seeth, that it is the far surer way to believe in such wise as both the parties agree to be out of all peril... than that way which so far the greater party, and much farther the better party, affirm to be
undoubted deadly sin. And, now, whereas every fool may see that any wise man will take the surest way—which is, as ye see doubly proved, to believe that there is purgatory—yet said the wise proctor of beggars that wise men will say there is none.

For he saith that many great learned men, and right cunning men, will not let to put themselves in jeopardy of shame, and of death also, to show their minds, that there is no purgatory. He is loath to say that these be heretics; but he saith these be they that men “call” heretics. Wherein he speaketh much like as if he would point with his finger to a flock of fat wethers and say, “These be such beasts as men call sheep.”

But now would we fain see which be these wise men and well learned—which shall not fail upon their own confession to agree that their adversaries take the sure way and farthest out of peril… and themselves the most dangerous and farthest from all surety. But yet would we for the while fain hear who they be. Surely none other but Luther and Tyndale… and this beggars’ proctor, and a few such of that sect—men of such virtue, wisdom, and learning… as their lewd writing, and much more their lewd living, showeth.

But now are they far another manner sort—both in number, wisdom, learning, truth, and good living—which affirm and say the contrary. And surely if three or four hundred good and learned men would faithfully come forth and tell one that some of his friends were in a far country, for debt, kept in prison… and that his charity might relieve them thence; if then three or four fond fellows would come and say the contrary, and tell him plain there is no such prison at all as he is borne in hand that his friends are imprisoned in; if he would now be so light to believe those three or four naughty persons… against those three or four hundred good and honest men—he then should well decipher himself… and well declare thereby that he would gladly catch hold of some small handle to keep his money fast, rather than help his friends in their necessity.

Now, if ye consider how lately this lewd sect began which among Christian men barketh against purgatory, and how few,
way for very shame of their folly, hath hitherto fallen into
them; and then if ye consider, on the other side, how full and
whole the great corps of all Christian countries so many hundred
years… have ever told you the contrary: ye shall, we be very sure,
for every person speaking against purgatory… find for the
other part more than many a hundred.

Now, if these men will, peradventure, say that they care not for
such comparison… neither of time with time, number with
number, nor company with company; but since some one man is
in credence worth some sevenscore, if they will therefore call us to
some other reckoning and will that we compare of the best choice on
both sides a certain, and match them man for man: then have we
(if we might for shame match such blessed saints with a sort
as far unlike) Saint Augustine against Friar Luther; Saint
Jerome against Friar Lambert; Saint Ambrose against Friar
Huessgen; Saint Gregory against priest Pomeranus; Saint
Chrysostom against Tyndale; Saint Basil against the beggars’
proctor.

Now if our enemies will, for lack of other choice, help forth
their own part with their wives—then have they some
advantage indeed; for the other, holy saints had none. But yet
shall we not lack blessed, holy women against these friars’ wives.
For we shall have Saint Anastasia against Friar Luther’s wife;
Saint Hildegard against Friar Huessgen’s wife; Saint Bridget
against Friar Lambert’s wife; and Saint Catherine of Siena
against priest Pomeranus’ wife. Now, if they will have in these
matches the qualities of either side considered: then have we
wisdom against folly; cunning against ignorance; charity
against malice; true faith against heresies; humility against
arrogance; revelations against illusions; inspiration of God
against inventions of the devil; constancy against wavering;
abstinence against gluttony; continence against lechery; and
finally every kind of virtue against every kind of vice. And
over this, whereas we be not yet very sure whether that all these
naughty persons whom we have rehearsed you of the worse side…
be fully fallen so mad as utterly to deny purgatory (saving in that

1 always: at any rate; at least
1 shame of their folly: i.e., fear of being shamed for their foolishness
1 fallen into: fallen in with; joined
2 side: hand
6, 20 part: side
7 peradventure: perhaps
9 company: party; band
10 sevenscore: A score is twenty. // call: challenge
11 will that we: will have us
12 certain: i.e., certain one
13 might: could // for shame: without being shameful; with propriety
13 a sort: a kind (of saints) / an assortment (of people)
14 as: so
14 unlike: unlike them / unlike blessed saints
16 Saint Gregory: i.e., Pope Saint Gregory the Great
18 proctor: spokesman
28 cunning: learnedness
32 continence: chastity
33 finally: ultimately
34 over this: furthermore
35 naughty: wicked
36 be fully fallen so mad: are gone quite so crazy
we see them, in many things, all of one sect)—yet if there were of them far many such more, they shall not, yet, find of that simple suit half so many… as for our part remaineth holy, blessed saints to match them. For likewise as many their holy works, eruditely written and by the help of the Holy Ghost indited, evidently declare that not only Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Saint Ambrose, and that holy pope Saint Gregory, with Saint Chrysostom, and Saint Basil, fore-remembered… and those holy women also that we have spoken of… but, over that, the great, solemn doctor Origen, all the three great doctors and holy saints of one name in Greece—Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nyssene, Gregory Emissene—Saint Cyril, Saint Damascene, the famous doctor and holy martyr Saint Cyprian, Saint Hilary, Saint Bede, and Saint Thomas, and finally all such as are of that suit and sort, either Greeks or Latins… have ever taught and testified and exhorted the people to pray for all Christian souls and preached for purgatory: so doth there no man doubt but that all good and devout Christian people from Christ’s days hitherto… hath firm and fast been of the same belief, and with their daily prayers and almsdeed done for us have done us great relief. So that, as we said, both for number of many folk and goodness of chosen folk our enemies are far under us. And yet have we for the vantage, as we have before declared you, the fear of Hezekiah, the book of the Kings, the words of the prophet Zechariah, the faith of Maccabeus, the authority of Saint John, the words of Saint Peter, the sentence of Saint Paul, the testimony of Saint Matthew, and the plain sentence of our Savior Christ.

Now, if these heretics be so stiff and stubborn that rather than they will confess themselves concluded, they will hold on their old ways and fall from worse to worse… and like as they have already against their former promise first rejected reason and after law, and then all the doctors and old holy fathers of Christ’s church, and finally the whole Church itself… so if they will at length, as we greatly fear they will, reject all Scripture and cast off Christ and all—now, as we say, if they so do—yet
have we left at the worst way… Luther against Luther, Huessgen against Huessgen, Tyndale against Tyndale, and finally every heretic against himself. And then when these folk sit in Almaine, upon their bare bench, in judgment on us and our matters, we may as the knight of King Alexander appealed from Alexander to Alexander… from Alexander the drunk to Alexander the sober: so shall we appeal from Luther to Luther—from Luther the drunken to Luther the sober, from Luther the heretic to Luther the Catholic—and likewise in all the remnant.

For this doth no man doubt, but that every one of them all, before they fell drunk of the dregs of old poisoned heresies… in which they fell a-quaffing with the devil, they did full sadly and soberly pray for all Christian souls. But since that they be fallen drunk in wretched and sinful heresies, they neither care

for other men’s souls nor for their own neither. And on the other side, if ever they work with grace to purge themselves of those poisoned heresies wherewith they be now so drunk, they will then give sentence on our side, as they did before. It were not evil that we showed you somewhat for example whereby ye may see what soberness they were in before…and in what drunkenness the devil’s draught hath brought them. And in whom should we show it better than in Luther himself, archheretic and father abbot of all that drunken fellowship? First this man was so fast of our side, while he was well and sober, that yet when he began to be well washed… he could not find in his heart utterly to fall from us, but when his head first began to daze of that evil drink, he wrote that purgatory could not be proved by Scripture… and yet, that notwithstanding, he wrote in this wise therewith: “I am very sure that there is purgatory, and it little moveth me what heretics babble. Should I believe a heretic born of late, scant fifty years ago, and say the faith were false that hath been held so many hundred years?” Lo, here this man spoke well upon our side. But yet said he therewith one thing or twain that could not stand therewith…and thereby may ye see that he began to reel. For he both affirmed that

1 at the worst way: if worst comes to worst  2 finally: ultimately
4 Almaine: Germany   // bare: paltry; inconsequential
4 matters: contentions; tenets  9 in all the remnant: with all the rest
11, 17 poisoned: noxious; toxic  12 full sadly: quite seriously
14 care: have concern  15 for: about  16 side: hand
18 sentence: judgment; verdict  18–19 it… example: i.e., it would not
be a bad idea for us to give you something by way of example
20 in what: into what  21 draught: drink; libation  23 all that: that whole
23 first: at first  24 fast of: firmly on   // while: when
24 well and: good and; quite  25 yet: even
25 well washed: well soaked; quite inebriated  26 fall: fall away
27 of: from   // evil: bad  28–29 in this wise: words to this effect
31 scant: scarcely  34 twain: two  35 began: was starting
purgatory could not be proved by Scripture... and affirmed further that nothing could be taken for a sure and certain truth but if it appeared by “clear and evident Scripture.” Which two things presupposed, how could any man be sure of purgatory?

But the help is that both those points be false. For both is purgatory proved by Scripture... and the Catholic faith of Christ’s church were sufficient to make men sure thereof albeit there were not in all Scripture one text for it, and divers that seemed against it, as we have showed you before.

But here, as we say, ye see how shamefully he staggered and began to reel. Howbeit, soon after, being so dizzy-drunken that he could neither stand nor reel, but fell down sow-drunk in the mire—then, like one that nothing remembered what he had said, nor heard not his own voice, he began to be himself that babbling heretic against whom he had written before... and being not fully fifty years old... began to gainsay the faith of almost fifteen hundred years before his days in the church of Christ, besides fifteen hundred years three times told... among other faithful folk before. For now, in his drunken sermon that he wrote upon the Gospel of the rich man and Lazarus, whereas he had, in his other books before, framed of his own fantasy new, fond fashions of purgatory... and told them forth for as plain matters as though he had been here and seen them—now, in this mad sermon of his, he saith plainly that there is none at all, but that all souls lie still and sleep, and so sleep shall until the Day of Doom. O sow-drunken soul!—drowned in such an insensible sleep that he lieth and routeth... while the apostles, the evangelists, all the doctors of Christ’s church, all the whole Christian people, and among them Christ himself, stand and cry at his ear... that we seely Christian souls lie and burn in purgatory; and he cannot hear, but lieth still in the mire and snorteth, and there dreameth that we lie still and sleep as he doth.
And thus, whereas the beggars’ proctor writeth that wise men say there is no purgatory—ye see now yourselves how wise is he whom they take for the wisest of all that sort, as him that is now the very wellspring and archheretic of all their sect. Of all which wise men we leave it to your wisdom to consider… whether ye find any whom your wisdoms would in wisdom compare with any of those old holy doctors and saints whom we have rehearsed before. But this man, we wot well, for another of these wise men meaneth William Tyndale. Whose wisdom well appeareth in that matter by that he layeth against it nothing but scoffing; wherein he saith that the pope may be bold in purgatory… because it is, he saith, a thing “of his own making”—whereas we have proved you by Scripture that purgatory was perceived and taught, and dead men’s souls prayed for, so long ere any pope began.

But forasmuch as he saith that wise men will say there is no purgatory, among which wise men we doubt not but the wise man accounteth himself (for he layeth for that part, as himself weeneth, very wise and weighty reasons… the wisdom whereof we have already proved you very plain frantic folly): we will now finish the dispicions of all this debate and question… with the declaration of one or two points of his especial wisdom; and with one of which himself wisely destroyeth all his whole matter!

First, ye see well that albeit in deed he intendeth to go further if his bill were once well sped, yet he pretendeth nothing in visage but only the spoil, wedding, and beating of the clergy; to whom he layeth not all only such faults as ye have heard—and hath proved his purpose with such grounds as we have proved false—but also layeth one great necessity to take all from them… because they break the statute made of mortmain, and purchase more lands still against the provision thereof. And then saith he that any land which once cometh in their hands… cometh never out again. For he saith that they have such laws concerning their lands… as they may neither give any nor sell.
For which cause lest they should at length have all... he deviseth to let them have nothing.

Now, first, where he maketh as though there came yet, for all the statute, daily much land into them, and that there can none at all come from them: neither is the one so much as he would make it seem... and the other is very false. For truly there may come, and doth come, land from them by escheat—as we be sure many of you have had experience—and also, what laws soever they have of their own that prohibit them to sell their lands, yet of this are we very sure: that, notwithstanding all the laws they have, they may sell in such wise, if they will, all the lands they have... that they can never recover foot again. And besides all that, albeit there be laws made by the Church against such sales as shrewd husbands would else boldly make of the lands of their monasteries—yet is there not so precise provision made against all sales of their lands... but that they be alienated for cause reasonable, approved by the advice and counsel of their chief head. And many a man is there in the realm that hath lands given or sold out of abbeys and out of bishoprics both; so that this part is a plain lie.

The other part is also neither very certain nor very much to purpose. For truly, though that in the city of London, to which there is granted by authority of Parliament that men may there devise their lands into mortmain by their testaments, there is somewhat among given into the Church—and yet not all to them, but the great part unto the companies and fellowships of the crafts—in other places of the realm there is nowadays no great thing given... but if it be, sometimes, some small thing for the foundation of a chantry. For as for abbeys, or such other great foundations, there be not nowadays many made, nor have been of good while... except somewhat done in the universities. And yet whoso consider those great foundations that have this great while been made anywhere... shall well perceive that the substance of them be not all founded upon temporal lands newly taken out of the temporal hands into the Church, but of such as the Church had long before...
and now the same translated from one place unto another.
And over this shall he find that many an abbey whose whole
living this man weeneth stood all by temporal lands given
therein in their foundation... have the great part thereof in benefices
given in and impropriated unto them. So that if he consider
the substance of all the great foundations made this
great while... and all that hath into such, these many days,
been given; and then consider well therewith how cold the charity
of Christian people waxeth by the means of such devil’s proctors
as under pretext of begging for the poor... intend and
labor to quench the fervor of devotion to-God-ward in simple
and soon-led souls: he shall not need to fear that all the
temporal land in the realm shall come into the spiritualty.
And yet if men went now so fast to give in still to the Church
as they did before, while devotion was fervent in the people
and virtue plenteous in the Church: yet might it be—and in other
countries is provided for well enough—both that men’s devotion
might be favored... and yet not the Church have all.

But this wise man, lest they should have all, would leave
them right naught. For his wisdom weeneth there were no
mean way between every whit and never a whit but nothing
at all. And surely where that he layeth so sore to them the
new purchasing of more temporal lands—either bought or
given them—it appeareth well he would say sore to them if they
pulled the land from men by force... which now layeth so highly
to their charge because they take it when men give it them;
which thing we suppose himself, as holy as he is, would not
much refuse. Nor they be not much to be blamed if they
receive men’s devotion, but if they bestow it not well. And
yet where he saith there can no statute hold them, but they
purchase still and break the statute—wherein he would seem
cunning because he had a little smattering in the law—it
were good, ere he be so bold to put his ignorance in writing,
that he should see the statute better. Which when he list to look

1 the same: i.e., the same capital // translated: (has simply been) transferred
2 over this: additionally 3, 20 weeneth: thinks 3 stood all by: depended entirely on
3, 13, 23 temporal: secular 4 thereof: i.e., of their living
5 substance: (means of) subsistence; capital // made: built (in) 9 waxeth: is becoming
6 proctors: spokesmen 11 labor: strive // to-God-ward: toward God
7 into: i.e., into the possession of // spirituality: clergy 14 went... still: now went in
8 favored: countenanced; i.e., given a green light 19 wise: sensible / brilliant
9 mean way: middle ground
10 right naught: absolutely nothing // wisdom: brilliant self // were: i.e., is
11 layeth so sore to them: levels against them as such a serious charge
12 appeareth well: is clear to see (that) // say sore: really lay into
13 pulled: seized; expropriated // which: who
14 25–26 layeth... charge: so highly blames them 28 refuse: i.e., refuse to do
15 receive: accept // bestow: expend 30 hold: deter; stop 31 break: violate
16 would: wants to 32 cunning: learned // because he had: i.e., because of his having
17 were: would be // bold to: confident as to 34 list: cares
upon again and let some wiser man look with him, if he
consider well what remedy the statutes provide, and for whom, he
shall find that the makers of the statute not so much feared the great,
high point that pricketh him now—lest the whole temporal
lands should come into the Church—as they did the loss of
their wards, and their unlikelihood of escheats and some other
commodities that they lacked when their lands were alienated into
the Church; and yet not into the Church only, but also into any
mortmain. And for this they provided that if any more were
alienated into the Church or into any manner of mortmain, the
king or any other lord, mediate or immediate, that might take
loss thereby might enter thereinto; to the intent that ere ever the
purchase were made, they should be fain in such wise to sue to
every one of them for his license and good will… that each of them
should be arbiter of his own hurt or loss and take his
amends at his own hand. And this statute is not made only
for the advantage of the temporal lords against the clergy,
but it is made indifferently against all mortmain—which is as
well temporal folk as spiritual, and for the benefit as well of
spiritual men as temporal. For as well shall a bishop or an
abbot have the advantage of that statute if his tenant alienate
his lands into any mortmain… as shall an earl or a duke. And,
now, when the Church pulleth not away the land from the owner,
by force, but hath it of his devotion… and his gift given of his
own offer, unasked—and yet not without license of all such as the
statute limiteth—where is this great fault of theirs, for which,
lest they should take more in the same manner, he would they should
lose all that they have already? What wisdom is this: when he
layeth against them their deed wherein they break no law? And,
yet, since they cannot take it without the King and the lords,
his words, if they weighed aught, should run to the reproach and
blame of them whom he would fain flatter… without fault found
in them whom he so sore accuseth! But, now, the special, high
point of his wisdom, for which we be driven to speak of this
matter, he specially declareth in this. Ye see well that he would that
the temporal men should take from the clergy… not only all these

1 upon: at // wiser: more intelligent and sensible       4 the whole: all of the
4 temporal: secular       6 wards: minors entrusted to their guardianship
6 escheats: See note for 214/7.       7 commodities: benefits
9, 10, etc. mortmain: See note for 213/31.       13 fain: obliged // wise: a way
14, 25 license: permission       16 amend: reccompense // hand: discretion
18 indifferently: impartially; neutrally     19, 20, 36 temporal: lay
19, 20 spiritual: clerical; ordained       23 pulleth not away: does not expropriate
24 hath: receives       26 limiteth: specifies // fault: offense; wrongdoing
27 would they should: would have them       28, 34 wisdom: intelligence and good sense
29 layeth: levels as a charge       30 yet: furthermore // without: i.e., without the permission of
31 weighed aught: carried any weight; amounted to anything // should: would
32, 33 them: those       32 would fain: is trying to       33 sore: strongly
35 declareth: shows       36 temporal men: i.e., secular authorities
lands purchased since the statute of mortmain, but also all that ever they had before, too... and yet over this, all the whole living that ever they have by any manner means besides... because he thinketh that they have too much by altogether. And when he hath given his advice thereto and said that they have too much: 

then saith he, by and by, that if there were any purgatory in deed, it were well done to give them yet more—and that they have then a great deal too little. But, now, so is it that purgatory there is in deed; nor no good Christian man is there but he will and must believe and confess the same. Whereof it plainly followeth that, his own agreement added unto the truth (that is to say, that the Church hath, as he saith, too little if there be a purgatory, added unto the truth that there is a purgatory... and that every true Christian man doth and must confess it), then hath, lo, the wise man brought all his purpose so substantially to pass... that, by his own plain agreement added unto the undoubtable truth, no man may do that he would have all men do—despoil and pillage the Church—but he that will first plainly profess himself a plain and undoubted heretic!

And therefore, since ye now see the wit of this wise man that laboreth to bring us out of your remembrance; since ye see the simple ground of his proud “supplication,” and ye perceive the rancor and malice that his matter standeth on—for fulfilling whereof he would, by his will, bring all the world in trouble—and since ye see that he hateth the clergy for the faith, and us for the clergy... and in reproving purgatory proveth himself an infidel; since we have made it you clear that your prayers may do us good, and have showed it you, so plainly that a child may perceive it, not only by the common opinion of all people and the fast, infallible faith of all Christian people from Christ’s days until your own time... confirmed by the doctrine of all holy doctors, declared by good reason, and proved by the Scripture of God, both apostles and evangelists, and our Savior Christ himself: we will encumber you no further with disputing upon the matter, nor argue the thing as doubtful, that is undoubted and questionless.

1 mortmain: See note for 213/31.        4 altogether: the whole amount; 100 percent
6 by and by: immediately after    7, 9 deed: actuality; reality
7 it were well done: i.e., then the right thing to do would be        10, 14 confess: acknowledge
11, 16 agreement: concession       12, 18 Church: i.e., clergy       14 true: orthodox
15, 20 wise: brilliant        15 all his: his whole // purpose: case // substantially: soundly
16 pass: completion // plain: explicit    17 that: that which       19, 36 undoubted: indubitable
20 wit: intelligence, acuity       22 simple ground: imbecilic basis    23 matter: plea; appeal
24 by his will: intentionally       26 reproving: rejecting; arguing against
28 may: can
29 may: could // common: shared // opinion: conviction    30 fast: steadfast
32 good reason: sound reasoning        34 encumber: burden        35 disputing upon: discussing
36 as: as if it were // doubtful: debatable; unsettled // questionless: beyond question
But letting pass over such heretics as are our malicious mortal enemies; praying God of his grace to give them better mind—we shall turn us to you, that are faithful folk and our dear, loving friends, beseeching your goodness, of your tender pity, that we may be remembered with your charitable alms and prayer. And in this part, albeit we stand in such case that it better becometh us to beseech and pray every man… than to find any fault with any man—yet are we somewhat constrained… not to make any matter of quarrel or complaint against any man’s unkindness, but surely to mourn and lament our own hard fortune and chance in the lack of relief and comfort… which we miss from our friends… not of evil mind withdrawn us, or of unfaithfulness, but of negligence forslothed, and foded forth of forgetfulness. If ye that are such (for ye be not all such) might look upon us and behold in what heavy plight we lie, your sloth would soon be quickened, and your oblivion turn to fresh remembrance.

For if your father, your mother, your child, your brother, your sister, your husband, your wife, or a very stranger, too… lay in your sight somewhere in fire… and that your means might help him—what heart were so hard, what stomach were so stony, that could sit in rest at supper, or sleep in rest abed, and let a man lie and burn? We find, therefore, full true that old-said saw “Out of sight, out of mind.”

And yet surely, to say the truth, we cannot therein with reason much complain upon you. For while we were with you there… for wantonness of that wretched world we forgot in like wise our good friends here. And therefore can we not marvel much though the justice of God suffer us to be forgotten of you as others have been before forgotten of us. But we beseech our Lord for both our sakes to give you the grace to mend for your part that common fault of us both… lest when ye come hither hereafter, God of like justice suffer us to be forgotten of them that ye leave there behind you, as ye forget us that are hither before you. But albeit that we cannot well, as we say, for the like fault in ourselves,
greatly rebuke or blame this negligence and forgetfulness
in you—yet would we for the better wish you that ye might
without your pain… once, at the least wise, behold, perceive,
and see what heaviness of heart, and what a sorrowful shame, the seely
soul hath at his first coming hither… to look his old friends
in the face here… whom he remembereth himself to have so fouly
forgotten while he lived there. When, albeit that in this place no
man can be angry, yet their piteous look and lamentable
countenance casteth his unkind forgetfulness into his mind—
5
wit ye well, dear friends, that among the manifold great and
grievous pains which he suffereth here… whereof God send you
the grace to suffer either none or few!… the grudge and grief of
his conscience in the consideration of his unkind forgetfulness
is not of all them the least. Therefore, dear friends, let our
10
folly learn you wisdom. Send hither your prayer, send
hither your alms before you; so shall we find ease thereof…
and yet shall ye find it still. For as he that lighteth another the
candle hath never the less light himself; and he that bloweth the
fire for another, to warm him, doth warm himself also therewith:
so surely, good friends, the good that ye send hither before
you… both greatly refresheth us… and yet is wholly reserved here
for you, with our prayers added thereto for your further
advantage.

Would God we could have done ourselves as we now counsel you!

And God give you the grace which many of us refused… to make
better provision while ye live than many of us have done! For
much have we left in our executors’ hands… which would God we
had bestowed upon poor folk for our own souls and our
friends’… with our own hands. Much have many of us bestowed
upon rich men in gold rings and black gowns; much in

3 your pain: pain on your part 4 seely: poor 5, 15, etc. hither: here
8 piteous: heartrending // lamentable: plaintive 10 wit: know
12 grudge: uneasiness; pangs 15 learn: teach 16 ease: relief
27 would God: i.e., we wish to God 31 tapers: candles // high: magnificent
31 solemn: grand 32 about: connected with; surrounding 33 wot: knows
34 other side: contrary // done us great displeasure: caused us a lot of grief
solicitude and loving diligence of the quick used about the burying of the dead… is well allowed and approved before the face of God: yet much superfluous charge used for boast and ostentation—namely devised by the dead before his death—is of God greatly misliked; and most especially that kind and fashion thereof wherein some of us have fallen… and many besides us, that now lie damned in hell. For some hath there of us while we were in health… not so much studied how we might die penitent and in good Christian plight… as how we might be solemnly borne out to burying—have gay and goodly funerals, with heralds at our hearse… and offering up our helmets, setting up our escutcheon and coat armors on the wall… though there never came harness on our backs, nor never ancestor of ours ever bore arms before. Then devised we some doctor to make a sermon at our Mass in our Month’s Mind… and there preach to our praise, with some fond fantasy devised of our name; and after Mass, much feasting, riotous and costly; and finally, like madmen, made men merry at our death… and take our burying for a bridal. For special punishment whereof, some of us have been by our evil angels brought forth full heavily, in full great despite, to behold our own burying… and so stood, in great pain, invisible, among the press… and made to look on our carrion corpse carried out with great pomp… whereof our Lord knoweth we have taken heavy pleasure.

Yet would ye peradventure ween that we were in one thing well eased: in that we were, for the time, taken hence, out of the fire of our purgatory. But in this point if ye so think… ye be far deceived. For likewise as good angels and saved souls in heaven… never lose nor lessen their joy by changing of their places, but, though there be any special place appointed for heaven (furthest from the center of the whole world, or wheresoever it be; be it bodily or above all bodily space), the blessed, heavenly spirits, wheresoever they be come, be either still in heaven or in their heavenly joy; nor Gabriel when he came down

1 quick: living // used: observed; exerted
2 allowed: sanctioned
3 charge used: expense put out // boast: pomp
4 devised: arranged for // dead: deceased
5 of: by // misliked: disliked
9 plight: condition // solemnly: grandly
10 gay: resplendent
10 goodly: large-scale / impressive
11 hearse: Pagoda-like structures decorated with banners, heraldic devices, and lighted candles, sometimes bearing complimentary verses attached by loved ones.
12 coat armors: coats of arms // escutcheon: shield with armorial bearings
13 harness: armor
14 devised we: we arranged for // doctor: eloquent priest
15 Month’s Mind: A memorial Mass celebrated a month after the person’s death.
16 fond: foolish; silly // fantasy: fanciful composition; flight of fancy
16 devised of: contrived from
17 riotous: lavish
18 finally: ultimately
19 bridal: wedding feast // special: specific
21 in full greatly: in utter misery
21 in full great despite: out of very great spite
23 press: crowd
24 heavy: an awful lot of / miserable
26 peradventure: perhaps // ween: think
29 far deceived: very much mistaken
33 bodily: physical // above: beyond
to our Lady… never forbore any part of his pleasure, but he had it, peradventure, with some new degree increased, by the comfort of his joyful message… but diminished might it never be, not and he had an errand into hell: right so fareth it, on the other side, that neither damned wretches at any time… nor we for the space of our cleansing time—though we have, for the generality, our common place of pain appointed us here in purgatory, yet if it please our Lord that at any season our guardians convey some of us to be, for some considerations, any time elsewhere… as some, percase, to appear to some friend of ours, and show him how we stand… and, by the sufferance of God’s sovereign goodness, to tell him with what alms, prayer, pilgrimage, or other good deed done for us he may help us hence; in which thing the devil is loath to walk with us, but he may not choose, and can no further withstand us than God will give him leave; but whithersoever he carry us, we carry our pain with us, and like as the body that hath a hot fever as fervently burneth if he ride on horseback as if he lay lapped in his bed, so carry we still about no less heat with us… than if we lay bound here. And yet, the despiteful sights that our evil angels bring us to behold abroad… so far augmenteth our torment… that we would wish to be drowned in the darkness that is here, rather than see the sights that they show us there. For among they convey us into our own houses… and there double us our pain with sight, sometimes, of the selfsame things which while we lived was half our heaven to behold. There show they us our substance and our bags stuffed with gold; which when we now see, we set much less by them than would an old man that found a bag of cherry stones which he laid up when he was a child. What a sorrow hath it been to some of us when the devils hath in despiteful mockage cast in our teeth our old love borne to our money… and then showed us our executors as busily rifling and ransacking our houses as though they were men of war that had taken a town by force. How heavily hath it, think you, gone unto our heart when
our evil angels have grinned and laughed and showed us
our late wives so soon waxen wanton… and forgetting us, their old
husbands that have loved them so tenderly and left them so
rich, sit and laugh and make merry (and more too, sometimes)
with their new wooers… while our keepers in despite keep us
there in pain to stand still… and look on. Many times would we
then speak if we could be suffered, and sore we long to say to her,
“Ah, wife, wife! Iwis this was not covenant, wife… when ye
wept and told me that if I left you to live by, ye would never
wed again!” We see there our children, too… whom we loved so
well… pipe, sing, and dance, and no more think on their
fathers’ souls than on their old shoes; saving that sometimes
cometh out “God have mercy on all Christian souls.” But it cometh
out so coldly, and with so dull affection, that it lieth but
in the lips and never came near the heart. Yet hear we sometimes
our wives pray for us more warmly: For in chiding with
her second husband, to spite him with, “God have mercy,”
saith she, “on my first husband’s soul! For he was iwis an
honest man, far unlike you!” And then marvel we much, when
we hear them say so well by us. For they were ever wont to
tell us otherwise.

But when we find in this wise our wives, our children, and
friends… so soon and so clearly forget us; and see our executors
rap and rend unto themselves—catch every man what he can,
and hold fast that he catcheth—and care nothing for us: Lord
God, what it grieved us that we left so much behind us… and had
not sent hither more of our substance before us, by our own
hands! For happy find we him among us… that sendeth before
all that may be forborne. And he that is so loath to part with aught,
that hoardeth up his good and had as lief die, almost, as to break
his heap; and then at last, when there is none other remedy but
that he must needs leave it, repenteth himself suddenly, and
lacketh time to dispose it, and therefore biddeth his friends to
bestow it well for him—our Lord is yet so merciful that, of his
goodness, he accepted the good deeds that his executors do in performing
his device. And since that late is better than never, our Lord somewhat alloweth the man’s mind… by which he would his goods that he hath immoderately gathered and greedily kept together as long as he might… were yet at the leastwise well bestowed at last, when he must needs go from them. Which mind yet more pleaseth God than that a man cared not what were done with them. And therefore, as we say, the goodness of God somewhat doth accept it. But yet surely, since we might and ought to have done it ourselves, and of a filthy affection toward our goods could not find in our heart to part from any part of them: if our executors now deceive us and do no more for us than we did for ourselves, our Lord did us no wrong though he never gave us thank of all our whole testament, but imputed the frustration and not-performing of our last will unto our own fault, since the delay of our good deeds—driven off to our death!—grew but of our own sloth and fleshly love to-the-world-ward… with faintness of devotion to-God-ward, and of little respect and regard unto our own soul. And over this, if our executors do these good things indeed that we do thus at last devise in our testament, yet our default (driving all to our death, as we told you before)—though God, as we said, of his high goodness leaveth not all unrewarded—yet this warning will we give you, that ye deceive not yourselves: we that have so died have thus found it… that the goods disposed after us… get our executors great thank, and be toward-us-ward accounted before God much less than half our own; nor our thank nothing like to that it would have been if we had in our health given half as much for God’s sake with our own hands. Of which we give you this friendly warning not for that we would discourage you to dispose well your goods when ye die, but for that we would advise you to dispose them better while ye live.

And among all your alms… somewhat remember us. Our wives there, remember here your husbands. Our children
there, remember here your parents. Our parents there, remember here your children. Our husbands there, remember here your wives. Ah, sweet husbands! While we lived there in that wretched world with you; while ye were glad to please us… ye bestowed much upon us and put yourselves to great cost—and did us great harm therewith! With gay gowns and gay kirtles, and much waste in apparel—rings and ouches, with partlets and pastes garnished with pearls—with which proud picking up, both ye took hurt and we too, many more ways than one, though we told you not so then. But two things were there special… of which yourselves felt then the one… and we feel now the other. For ye had us the higher-hearted and the more stubborn to you… and God had us in less favor—and that, alack, we feel. For now that gay gear burneth upon our backs, and those proud pearled pastes hang hot about our cheeks, those partlets and those ouches hang heavy about our necks and cleave fast, fire-hot… that woe be we there, and wish that while we lived… ye never had followed our fantasies, nor never had so cockered us, nor made us so wanton; nor had given us other ouches than onions or great garlic heads, nor other pearls for our partlets and our pastes than fair orient peas. But, now, forasmuch as that is past and cannot be called again, we beseech you, since ye gave them us, let us have them still; let them hurt none other woman, but help to do us good. Sell them for our sakes to set in saints’ copes… and send the money hither by Mass-pennies, and by poor men that may pray for our souls.

Our fathers also, which while we lived fostered us up so tenderly…and could not have endured to see us suffer pain: now open your hearts and fatherly affection… and help us at the leastwise with a poor man’s alms. Ye would not when we were with you have letted to lay out much money for a great marriage. Which if ye meant for our sakes and not for your own worldly worship, give us now some part thereof and relieve us here with much less cost than one marriage… and more pleasure than fifteen, though every one were a prince or a princess of a realm.
Finally, all our other friends... and every good Christian man and woman, open your hearts and have some pity upon us! If ye believe not that we need your help, alas the lack of faith! If ye believe our need and care not for us, alas the lack of pity! For whoso pitieth not us, whom can he pity? If ye pity the poor... there is none so poor as we, that have not a brat to put on our backs. If ye pity the blind... there is none so blind as we, which are here in the dark—saving for sights unpleasant and loathsome—till some comfort come. If ye pity the lame... there is none so lame as we, that neither can creep one foot out of the fire... nor have one hand at liberty to defend our face from the flame. Finally, if ye pity any man in pain... never knew ye pain comparable to ours, whose fire as far passeth in heat all the fires that ever burned upon earth... as the hottest of all those passeth a feigned fire painted on a wall. If ever ye lay sick and thought the night long, and longed sore for day while every hour seemed longer than five—bethink you, then, what a long night we seely souls endure... that lie sleepless, restless, burning and broiling in the dark fire one long night of many days, of many weeks, and some of many years, together. You walter, peradventure, and tolter in sickness from side to side, and find little rest in any part of the bed; we lie bound to the brands, and cannot lift up our heads. You have your physicians with you, that sometimes cure and heal you; no physic will help our pain, nor no plaster cool our heat. Your keepers do you great ease and put you in good comfort; our keepers are such as God keep you from!—cruel damned spirits, odious, envious, and hateful; dispiteous enemies and despiteful tormentors... and their company more horrible and grievous to us... than is the pain itself and the intolerable torment that they do us wherewith from top to toe they cease not continually to tear us.

But, now, if our other enemies these heretics (almost as cruel as they!), procuring to their power that we should be long left in the devil’s hands, will (as their usage is to rail instead of reasoning)
make a game and a jest now of our heavy pain, and peradventure laugh at our lamentation… because we speak of our “heads,” our “hands,” our “feet,” and such our other gross, bodily members as lie buried in our graves; and of our garments that we did wear, which come not hither with us: we beseech you, for our dear Lady’s love, to let their folly go by, and to consider in your own wisdom that it were impossible to make any mortal man living perceive what manner pain, and in what manner wise, we bodiless souls do suffer and sustain—or to make any man upon earth perfectly to conceive in his imagination and fantasy… what manner of substance we be; much more impossible than to make a born-blind man to perceive in his mind the nature and difference of colors. And therefore, except we should of our painful state tell you nothing at all (and there would they have it), we must of necessity use you such words as yourself understand, and use you the similitudes of such things as yourself is in ure with. For since neither God, angel, nor soul… is in such wise blind, dumb, deaf, or lame… as be those men that for lack of eyes, legs, hands, tongue, or ears… be weak and impotent in the powers that proceed from them; but have in themselves a far more excellent sight, hearing, deliveriness, and speech… by means incogitable to man… than any man can have living there on earth: therefore doth Holy Scripture in speaking of such things… use to represent them to the people by the names of such powers, instruments, and members… as men in such things use and occupy themselves. Which manner of speaking in such case whosoever have in derision… declareth very well how little faith he hath in Christ’s own words; in which our Savior, himself, speaking of the souls of the rich glutton and poor, needy Lazarus, and of the patriarch Abraham also, speaketh in like manner as we do—of “finger,” and “tongue” too, whereof they had neither nother there. And therefore whoso maketh a mock at our words in this point, ye may soon see what credence ye should give him; wherein we be content

1 a game: an object of ridicule   // a jest: an idle tale   // heavy: grievous
1 peradventure: perhaps   3 gross: material   4 bodily: physical
6 for our dear Lady’s love: for love of our dear Lady
6 let their folly go by: ignore their foolishness   7 wisdom: good sense
7 that: i.e., the fact that   // were: would be   8, 9, 11 manner: kind of
9 wise: way   11 fantasy: conceptualization; ideation
15 and there would they: i.e, which is the way they would   15, 16 use: use for
17 in ure: familiar   18 wise: a way   20 weak: lacking
21 deliveriness: agility   24 use to: habitually   25 members: parts of the body
26 occupy: employ   27 have: hold   28 declareth: shows
32 neither nother: neither the one nor the other
ye give him even as much as ye see yourselves that he giveth to God. For more ye ought not, and surely less ye cannot. For he giveth God not a whit, but taketh in his heart that story told by God for a very fantastic fable.

And therefore, as we say, passing over such jesting and railing of those uncharitable heretics (mortal enemies unto us and to themselves both!): consider you our pains, and pity them in your hearts, and help us with your prayers, pilgrimages, and other almsdeeds; and of all thing, in special procure us the suffrages and blessed oblation of the Holy Mass—whereof no man living so well can tell the fruit as we that here feel it.

The comfort that we have here, except our continual hope in our Lord God, cometh at seasons from our Lady… with such glorious saints as either ourselves, with our own devotion while we lived, or ye with yours for us since our decease and departing, have made intercessors for us. And among others, right especially be we behelden to the blessed spirits our own proper good angels. Whom when we behold coming with comfort to us, albeit that we take great pleasure and greatly rejoice therein—yet is it not without much confusion and shamefastness… to consider how little we regarded our good angels, and how seldom we thought upon them, while we lived. They carry up our prayers to God and good saints for us; and they bring down from them the comfort and consolation to us. With which when they come and comfort us—only God and we know what joy it is to our hearts, and how heartily we pray for you. And therefore, if God accept the prayer after his own favor borne toward him that prayeth, and the affection that he prayeth with: our prayer must needs be profitable, for we stand sure of his grace… and our prayer is for you so fervent that ye can nowhere find any such affection upon earth. And therefore, since we lie so sore in pains, and have in our great necessity so great need of your help, and that ye may so well do it… whereby shall also rebound upon yourselves an inestimable profit: let never any slothful oblivion

1 even: just 4 fantastic: imaginative; unreal 5 jesting: jeering 9 allthing: all things // in special: in particular 12 except: other than 13 at seasons: at appointed times / every so often 17 right: very 18 proper: respective 18, 21 good: i.e., guardian 20 confusion: discomfiture; embarrassment // shamefastness: shame 22 upon: about 27 after: in accord with 28, 31 affection: feeling 31 sore: terribly 33 may: can 34 oblivion: obliviousness
erase us out of your remembrance, or malicious enemy of ours
cause you to be careless of us, or any greedy mind upon your
good withdraw your gracious alms from us. Think how soon
ye shall come hither to us. Think what great grief and rebuke
would then your unkindness be to you; what comfort, on the contrary
part, when all we shall thank you; what help ye shall have
here of your good sent hither. Remember what kin ye and we be
together; what familiar friendship hath ere this been between us;
what sweet words ye have spoken, and what promise ye have
made us. Let now your words appear and your fair promise be
kept. Now, dear friends, remember how nature and Christendom
bindeth you to remember us. If any point of your old favor,
any piece of your old love, any kindness of kindred, any care of
acquaintance, any favor of old friendship, any spark of charity,
any tender point of pity, any regard of nature, any
respect of Christendom… be left in your breasts, let never the
malice of a few fond fellows—a few pestilent persons—borne toward
priesthood, religion, and your Christian faith… erase out
of your hearts the care of your kindred, all force of your old
friends, and all remembrance of all Christian souls. Remember
our thirst while ye sit and drink; our hunger while ye be feasting;
our restless watch while ye be sleeping; our sore and grievous
pain while ye be playing; our hot-burning fire while ye be in
pleasure and sporting. So mote God make your offspring after
remember you. So God keep you hence, or not long here, but
bring you shortly to that bliss… to which, for our Lord’s love,
help you to bring us… and we shall set hand to help you thither
to us.

Finis

Cum privilegio