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THE BOOK OF MARGERY KEMPE



A NEW TRANSLATION
CONTEXTS
CRITICISM

Translated and Edited by

LYNN STALEY

COLGATE UNIVERSITY



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Book One

Here begins a short treatise and a comfortable for sinful wretches, wherein they may have great solace and comfort for themselves and understand the high and unspeakable mercy of our sovereign Savior Christ Jesus, whose name be worshiped and magnified without end, that now in our days to us, unworthy, deigns to exercise his nobleness and his goodness. All the works of our Savior are for our example and instruction, and what grace that he works in any creature is our profit if lack of charity be not our hindrance.

And therefore, by the leave of our merciful Lord Christ Jesus, to the magnifying of his holy name, Jesus, this little treatise shall treat somewhat piecemeal of his wonderful works, how mercifully, how benignly, and how charitably he moved and stirred a sinful caitif unto his love, which sinful caitif for many years was in will and in purpose through the stirring of the Holy Ghost to follow our Savior, making great promises of fastings with many other deeds of penance. And ever she was turned again aback in time of temptation, like the reed stalk which bows with every wind and never is stable unless no wind blows, until the time that our merciful Lord Christ Jesus, having pity and compassion for his handiwork and his creature, turned health into sickness, prosperity into adversity, worship into reproof, and love into hatred. Thus all these things turning upside down, this creature—who for many years had gone wayward and ever been unstable—was perfectly drawn and stirred to enter the way of high perfection, which perfect way Christ our Savior in his proper person exemplified. Steadily he trod it and dutifully he went before. Then this creature, of whom this treatise through the mercy of Jesus shall show in part the life, was touched by the hand of our Lord with great bodily sickness, where through she lost reason and her wits for a long time until our Lord by grace restored her again, as it shall more openly be showed afterward. Her worldly goods, which were plenteous and abundant on that day, in little while after were full barren and bare. Then was pomp and pride cast down and laid aside. Those who before had honored her, then full sharply reprov'd her; her kindred and those who had been friends were now her greatest enemies. Then she, considering this wonderful changing, seeking succor under the wings of her ghostly mother, Holy Church, went obediently to her ghostly father, accusing herself of her misdeeds, and afterwards did great bodily penance.

And in short time our merciful Lord visited this creature with plentiful tears of contrition day by day, in so much that some men said she might weep whenever she wanted and slandered the work of God. She was so used to being slandered and reprov'd, to being chided and rebuked by the world for the grace and virtue with which she was endued through the strength of the Holy Ghost that it was to her a manner of solace and comfort when she suffered any trouble for the love of God and for the grace that God wrought in her. For ever the more slander and reproof that she suffered, the more she increased in grace and in devotion of holy meditation, of high contemplation, and of wonderful speeches and dalliance which our Lord spoke and dallied to her soul, teaching her how she should be despised for his love, how she should have patience, setting all her trust, all her love, and all her affection in him only. She knew and understood many secret and privy things which should befall afterward, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And often times, while she was kept with such holy speeches and dalliance, she should so weep and sob that many men were greatly awonder, for they knew full little how homely our Lord was in her soul. Neither could she herself ever tell the grace that she felt; it was so heavenly, so high above her reason and her bodily wits, and her body so feeble in the time of the presence of grace that she might never express it with her word as she felt it in her soul.

Then had this creature much dread for the illusions and deceits of her ghostly enemies. Then went she by the bidding of the Holy Ghost to many worshipful clerks, both archbishops and bishops, doctors and bachelors of divinity also. She spoke also with many anchorites¹ and showed them her manner of living and such grace as the Holy Ghost of his goodness wrought in her mind and in her soul, as her wit would serve her to express it. And they all that she showed her secrets unto said she was much bound to love our Lord for the grace that he showed unto her and counseled her to follow her movings and her stirrings and trustfully believe they were of the Holy Ghost and of no evil spirit. Some of these worthy and worshipful clerks took it, upon peril of their souls and as they would answer to God, that this creature was inspired with the Holy Ghost and bid her that she should have them write and make a book of her feelings and her revelations. Some offered to write her feelings with their own hands, and she would not consent in any way, for she was commanded in her soul that she should not write so soon.

And so it was twenty years and more from that time this creature had first feelings and revelations before she had any written. Afterward, when it pleased our Lord, he commanded her and charged her that she should have written her feelings and revelations and the form of her living so that his goodness might be known to all the world. Then had the creature no writer who would fulfill her desire nor give credence to her feelings until

1. Hermits.

the time that a man dwelling in Germany,² who was an Englishman in his birth and had since wedded in Germany and had there both a wife and a child, having good knowledge of this creature and of her desire, moved I trust through the Holy Ghost, came into England with his wife and his goods and dwelled with the foresaid creature until he had written as much as she would tell him for the time that they were together. And, afterward, he died. Then was there a priest for whom this creature had great affection, and so she commoned with him of this matter and brought him the book to read. The book was so badly written that he could hardly understand it, for it was neither good English nor German, nor were the letters shaped or formed as other letters are. Therefore the priest believed fully there should never man read it, unless it were special grace. Nevertheless, he promised her that, if he could read it, he would copy it out and write it better with good will. Then was there so much evil spoken of this creature and of her weeping that the priest dared not for cowardice speak with her but seldom, nor would he write, as he had promised unto the foresaid creature. And so he avoided and deferred the writing of this book well into a fourth year, or else more, notwithstanding the creature spoke often to him about it. At the last he said unto her that he could not read it, wherefore he would not do it. He would not, he said, put himself in peril thereof. Then he counseled her to go to a good man who had been much conversant with him who wrote first the book, supposing that he should best be able to read the book, for he had once read letters of the other man's writing that had been sent from beyond the sea while he was in Germany. And so she went to that man, praying him to write this book and never to reveal it as long as she lived, granting him a great sum of good for his labor. And this good man wrote about a leaf, and yet it was little to the purpose, for he could not well fare therewith—the book was so badly set and so unreasonably written. Then the priest was vexed in his conscience, for he had promised her to write this book, if he might come to the reading thereof, and he did not his part as well as he might have done, and prayed this creature to get again the book if she kindly might. Then she got again the book and brought it to the priest with right glad manner, praying him to do his good will, and she would pray to God for him and purchase him grace to read it and also to write it. The priest, trusting in her prayers, began to read this book, and it was much easier, as he thought, than it was the time before. And so he read it over before this creature, every word, she sometimes helping where any difficulty was.

This book is not written in order, everything after the other as it was done, but as the matter came to the creature in mind when it was written, for it was so long before it was written that she had forgotten the time and the order when things befell. And therefore she had nothing written but that she knew right well for very truth.

2. The term includes the Low Countries.

When the priest began first to write on this book, his eyes failed so that he might not see to make his letter, nor might he see to mend his pen. All other thing he might see well enough. He set a pair of spectacles on his nose, and then it was worse than it was before. He complained to the creature of his trouble. She said his enemy had envy at his good deed and would hinder him if he might, and she bade him do as well as God would give him grace and not leave off. When he came again to his book, he might see as well, he thought, as ever he did before, by daylight and by candlelight both. And because of this, when he had written a quire, he added a leaf onto it, and then wrote he this proem³ to express more openly than does the next following, which was written before this one. Anno domini 1436.

A short treatise of a creature set in great pomp and pride of the world, who since was drawn to our Lord by great poverty, sickness, shames, and great reproofs in many divers countries⁴ and places, of which tribulations some shall be showed afterward, not in order as they befell, but as the creature could have mind of them when it was written for it was twenty years and more from the time this creature had forsaken the world and diligently cleaved unto our Lord before this book was written, notwithstanding this creature had great counsel to have her tribulations and her feelings written, and a White Friar⁵ freely offered to write if she wished. And she was warned in her spirit that she should not write so soon. And many years after, she was bidden in her spirit to write. And then it was written first by a man who could neither write good English nor German. So it was unable to be read except by special grace, for there was so much abuse and slander of this creature that few men would believe this creature. And so at the last, a priest was sorely moved to write this treatise, and he could not read it well for four years all together. And afterward, by the request of this creature and by the compulsion of his own conscience, he tried again to read it, and it was much easier than it was before. And so he began to write in the year of our Lord 1436, on the day next after Mary Magdalene⁶ according to the information of this creature.

1. When this creature was twenty years of age or somewhat more, she was married to a worshipful burgess and was with child within a short time, as nature would. And, after she had conceived, she was labored with great attacks of illness until the child was born, and then, what for the labor she had in childing and for the sickness going before, she despaired of her life, thinking she might not live. And then she sent for her ghostly father, for she had a thing in conscience which she had never shown be-

3. Preface. "Quire": a collection of manuscript leaves.

4. In Middle English, *country* has the additional meaning of region.

5. Carmelite friar, a member of one of the four mendicant, or begging, orders.

6. The day of Mary Magdalene is July 22.

fore that time in all her life. For she was ever hindered by her enemy, the devil, evermore saying to her that, while she was in good health, she needed no confession but could do penance by herself alone,⁷ and all should be forgiven, for God is merciful enough. And therefore this creature oftentimes did great penance in fasting on bread and water and other deeds of alms with devout prayers, except she would not show this sin in confession. And, when she was at any time sick or troubled, the devil said in her mind that she should be damned, for she was not shriven of that sin. Wherefore, after her child was born, she, not trusting her life, sent for her ghostly father, as was said before, in full will to be shriven⁸ of all her lifetime as nearly as she could. And, when she came to the point to say that thing which she had so long concealed, her confessor was a little too hasty and began sharply to reprove her before she had fully said her intent, and so she would no more say for aught he might do.

And anon, for the dread she had of damnation on the one side and his sharp reproving on that other side, this creature went out of her mind and was wonderfully vexed and labored with spirits for half a year, eight weeks and some odd days. And in this time she saw, as she thought, devils open their mouths, all inflamed with burning flames of fire as if they should have swallowed her in, sometimes menacing her, sometimes threatening her, sometimes pulling her and hailing her both night and day during the foresaid time. And also the devils cried upon her with great threats and bade her that she should forsake her Christianity, her faith, and deny her God, his mother, and all the saints in heaven, her good works and all good virtues, her father, her mother, and all her friends. And so she did. She slandered her husband, her friends and her own self; she spoke many a reproving word and many a harsh word; she knew no virtue nor goodness; she desired all wickedness; just as the spirits tempted her to say and do, so she said and did. She would have killed herself many a time because of her stirrings and have been damned with them in hell. And as a witness thereof she bit her own hand so violently that it was seen all her life afterward. And also she tore the skin on her body against her heart grievously with her nails, for she had no other instruments, and worse she would have done, save she was bound and kept with strength both day and night so that she might not have her will.

And, when she had long been labored in these and many other temptations, so that men thought she should never have escaped nor lived, then on a time, as she lay alone and her keepers were away from her, our merciful Lord Christ Jesus, ever to be trusted, worshiped by his name, never forsaking his servant in time of need, appeared to his creature, who had forsaken him, in likeness of a man, most seemly, most beautiful, and

7. Auricular confession, or confessing to a priest, was central to the sacrament of penance, but some people, the Lollard followers of John Wyclif, who were seen as heretics, felt that the penitent needed no intermediary between the soul and God.

8. Confessed.

most amiable that ever might be seen with man's eye, clad in a mantle of purple silk, sitting upon her bedside, looking upon her with so blessed a countenance that she was strengthened in all her spirits, said to her these words: "Daughter, why have you forsaken me, and I forsook never you?"

And anon, as soon as he had said these words, she saw verily how the air opened as bright as any lightning, and he rose up into the air, not right hastily and quickly, but fairly and easily so that she might well behold him in the air until it was closed again. And anon the creature was stabled in her wits and in her reason as well as ever she was before, and prayed her husband, as soon as he came to her, that she might have the keys of the buttry in order to take her meat and drink as she had done before. Her maidens and her keepers counseled him that he should deliver her no keys, for they said she would but give away such good as there was, for she knew not what she said, or so they thought. Nevertheless, her husband, ever having tenderness and compassion for her, commanded they should deliver to her the keys. And she took her meat and drink as her bodily strength would serve her and knew her friends and her household and all others who came to her to see how our Lord Jesus Christ had wrought his grace in her, so blessed may he be who ever is near in tribulation. When men think he is far from them, he is full near by his grace. Afterward, this creature did all other occupations that fell to her to do wisely and soberly enough, save she knew not verily the draught of our Lord.

2. And, when this creature was thus graciously come again to her mind, she thought she was bound to God and that she would be his servant. Nevertheless, she would not leave her pride nor her pompous array that she had used before that time, neither for her husband's nor for any other man's counsel. And yet she knew full well that men spoke much villainy of her, for she wore gold pipes on her head and her hoods with the tippets were dagged. Her cloaks also were dagged and laid with divers colors between the dags so that they should be more conspicuous to men's sight and she the more worshipped.⁹

And, when her husband would speak to her to leave her pride, she answered harshly and shortly and said that she was come of worthy kindred; he seemed never the man to have married her, for her father was sometime mayor of the town N.,¹ and since then he was an alderman of the high Guild of the Trinity in N.² And therefore she would save the worship of her kindred whatsoever any man said. She had full great envy of her neighbors, that they should be arrayed as well as she. All her desire was to be worshipped by the people. She would not beware of anyone's

9. The gold pipes are ornaments to a fashionable headdress. Again in the name of fashion, various parts of clothing were slashed and pointed (dagged) in arresting ways; sometimes colors were sewn in between the slashes.

1. Kempe uses N. as a sort of "wild card" designation.

2. The Guild of the Trinity was the most prestigious of the town of Lynn's parish fraternities.

chastising nor be content with the goods that God had sent her, as her husband was, but ever desired more and more.

And then, for pure covetousness and to maintain her pride, she began to brew and was one of the greatest brewers in the town N. for three or four years until she lost much good, for she had no experience of it.³ For, though she had ever so good servants and cunning in brewing, yet it would never prove with them. For, when the ale was as fair standing under the barm⁴ as any man might see, suddenly the barm would fall down so that all the ale was lost, every brewing after the other, so that her servants were ashamed and would not dwell with her. Then this creature thought how God had punished her before that time and she could not beware, and now again by the loss of her goods, and then she left off and brewed no more. And then she asked her husband mercy because she would not follow his counsel before, and she said that her pride and her sin were the causes of all her punishing, and she would amend where she had trespassed with a good will.

But yet she left not wholly the world, for now she thought of a new household occupation. She had a horse mill. She got herself two good horses and a man to grind men's corn, and thus she trusted to get her living. This provision endured not long, for in a short time afterward, on Corpus Christi Eve, befell this marvel.⁵ This man was in good health of body and his two horses fat and in good condition and had drawn well in the mill before. Now he took one of the horses and put him in the mill as he had done before, and this horse would draw no draught in the mill for anything the man might do. The man was sorry and tried with all his wits how he should make this horse draw. Sometimes he led him by the head; sometimes he beat him, and sometimes he cherished him, and all availed not, for he would rather go backward than forward. Then this man set a sharp pair of spurs on his heels and rode on the horse's back in order to make him draw, and it was never the better. When this man saw it would be in no way, then he set up this horse again in the stable and gave him food, and he ate well and freshly. And then he took the other horse and put him in the mill. And just as his fellow did so did he, for he would not draw for anything that the man might do. And then this man forsook his service and would no longer abide with the foresaid creature.

Anon, as it was noised about the town of N. that neither man nor beast would do service to the said creature, then some said she was accursed; some said God took open vengeance upon her; some said one thing; and some said another. And some wise men, whose minds were more grounded in the love of our Lord, said it was the high mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that had summoned and called her from the pride and van-

3. Brewing is one of the occupations associated with women.

4. The barm is the yeast formed on brewing liquors.

5. The feast of Corpus Christi was observed in England from 1318. It was celebrated on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday (in midsummer) and focused upon the Host, the body of Christ.

ity of the wretched world. And then this creature, seeing all these adversities coming on every side, thought they were the scourges of our Lord that would chastise her for her sin. Then she asked God mercy and forsook her pride, her covetousness, and the desire she had for the worships of the world, and did great bodily penance, and began to enter the way of everlasting life, as shall be said afterward.

3. On a night, as this creature lay in her bed with her husband, she heard a sound of melody so sweet and delectable, she thought, as if she had been in paradise. And therewith she started out of her bed and said, "Alas, that ever I did sin; it is full merry in heaven."

This melody was so sweet that it passed all the melody that ever might be heard in this world, without any comparison, and caused this creature when she heard any mirth or melody afterward to have full plenteous and abundant tears of high devotion with great sobbings and sighings after the bliss of heaven, not dreading the shames and the scorns of the wretched world. And ever after this draught she had in her mind the mirth and the melody that was in heaven, so much that she could not well restrain herself from the speaking thereof. For, where she was in any company, she would say oftentimes, "It is full merry in heaven." And they who knew her governance before that time and now heard her speak so much of the bliss of heaven said unto her, "Why speak you so of the mirth that is in heaven; you know it not, and you have not been there anymore than we," and were angry with her for she would not hear any speak of worldly things, as they did and as she did before.

And after this time she had never desire to common fleshly with her husband, for the debt of matrimony⁶ was so abominable to her that she had rather, she thought, eat or drink the ooze, the muck in the channel, than to consent to any fleshly commoning, save only for obedience. And so she said to her husband, "I may not deny you my body, but the love of my heart and my affection is drawn from all earthly creatures and set only in God."

He would have his will, and she obeyed with great weeping and sorrowing because she might not live chaste. And oftentimes this creature lived chaste, counseled her husband to live chaste, and said that they oftentimes, she knew well, had displeased God by their inordinate love and the great delectation that they both had in using⁷ one another, and now it was good that they should, by both their wills and the consent of them both, punish and chastise themselves willfully by abstaining from their lust of their bodies. Her husband said it was good to do so, but he might not yet; he should when God would.⁸ And so he used her as he had done

6. Both partners in a marriage were officially described as owing one another the "debt" of matrimony, i.e., sexual relations, whereby children, one of the "goods" of marriage, were produced.

7. This is Kempe's term, and a common expression at the time; see the Lexicon.

8. I.e., when God wished it.

before; he would not spare. And ever she prayed to God that she might live chaste, and three or four years after, when it pleased our Lord, he made a vow of chastity, as shall be written after, by the leave of Jesus.

And also, after this creature heard this heavenly melody, she did great bodily penance. She was shriven sometimes twice or three times a day, and especially of that sin which she so long had concealed and covered, as it is written in the beginning of the book. She gave herself to great fasting and to great waking. She rose at two or three o'clock and went to church and was there in her prayers unto time of noon and also all the afternoon. And then was she slandered and reprov'd by many people because she kept so straight a living. Then she got herself a hair cloth from a kiln such as men use for drying malt and laid it in her kirtle⁹ as subtly and privily¹ as she might so that her husband should not spy it, nor did he; and yet she lay by him every night in his bed, and wore the hair cloth every day, and bore children during that time.

Then she had three years of great labor with temptations which she bore as meekly as she could, thanking our Lord for all his gifts, and was as merry when she was reprov'd, scorned, or mocked for our Lord's love, and much more merry than she was before in the worship of the world. For she knew right well she had sinned greatly against God and was worthy of more shame and sorrow than any man could do to her, and the despite of the world was the right way toward heaven, since Christ himself chose that way. All his apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins, and all who ever come to heaven, passed by the way of tribulation, and she desired nothing so much as heaven. Then was she glad in her conscience when she believed that she was entering the way that would lead her to the place that she most desired. And this creature had contrition and great compunction² with plenteous tears and many violent sobbings for her sins and for her unkindness against her maker. She recalled the unkindnesses of her childhood as our Lord would bring them to her memory full many a time. And then, she beholding her own wickedness, she might but sorrow and weep and ever pray for mercy and forgiveness. Her weeping was so plenteous and so continuing that many people thought that she might weep and leave off when she would, and therefore many men said she was a false hypocrite and wept for the world for succor and for worldly good. And then full many forsook her who had loved her before while she was in the world and would not know her, and ever she thanked God for all, nothing desiring but mercy and the forgiveness of sin.

4. The first two years when this creature was thus drawn to our Lord, as for any temptations, she had great quiet of spirit. She might well endure fasting; it grieved her not. She hated the joys of the world. She felt

9. Woman's gown.

1. Secretly.

2. Remorse, penitence.

no rebellion in her flesh. She was strong, as she thought, so that she dreaded no devil in hell, for she did such great bodily penance. She thought that she loved God more than he her. She was smitten with the deadly wound of vain glory and felt it not, for she desired many times that the crucifix should loose his hands from the cross and embrace her in token of love.

Our merciful Lord Christ Jesus, seeing this creature's presumption, sent her, as is written before, three years of great temptation, of which one of the hardest I purpose to write for an example for those who come after, so that they should not trust in their own selves, nor have joy in themselves as this creature had; for without doubt, our ghostly enemy sleeps not, but he full busily searches our complexions and our dispositions, and wherever he finds us most frail, there, by our Lord's sufferance, he lays his snare, which may no man escape by his own power. And so he laid before this creature the snare of lechery when she thought that all fleshly lust had wholly been quenched in her. And for so long she was tempted with the sin of lechery for ought that she could do. And yet she was often shriven; she wore the hair cloth and did great bodily penance and wept many a bitter tear and prayed full often to our Lord that he would preserve her and keep her so she would not fall into temptation, for she thought she had rather be dead than consent thereto. And in all this time she had no lust to common with her husband, but it was very painful and horrible to her.

In the second year of her temptations it befell so that a man whom she loved well said unto her on Saint Margaret's Eve³ before evensong that, despite anything, he would lie by her and have his lust of his body, and she should not withstand him, for, if he might not have his will that time, he said, he should else have it another time, she could not choose.

And he did it in order to prove her, what she would do; but she thought that he had meant it in full earnest at that time and said but little about it. So they parted asunder for then and went both to hear evensong, for their church was Saint Margaret's. This woman was so labored with the man's words that she might not hear her evensong,⁴ nor say her Pater Noster,⁵ or think any other good thought, but was more labored than ever she was before. The devil put in her mind that God had forsaken her, and else should she not have been so tempted. She believed the devil's persuasions and began to consent because she could think no good thought. Therefore thought she that God had forsaken her. And, when evensong was done, she went to the man before said so that he should have his lust,

3. St. Margaret's feast day was July 20. She was the virgin martyr tortured and killed for her espousal of Christian virginity by Olybrius, ruler of Antioch. The church of St. Margaret in Lynn, where Margery worshipped, was one of the town's main churches; it was attached to a priory of Benedictine monks. For views of the church, see Raguin and Stanbury, *Mapping Margery Kempe*.

4. The daily service of evening prayer.

5. "Our Father," the Lord's Prayer.

as she thought that he had desired, but he made such simulation that she could not know his intent, and so they parted asunder for that night.

This creature was so labored and vexed all that night that she knew never what she might do. She lay by her husband, and, whether to common with him, it was so abominable unto her that she might not endure it, and yet it was lawful unto her at a lawful time if she had wanted. But ever she was labored with the other man, whether to sin with him inasmuch he had spoken to her. At the last, through the inopportunity of temptation and the lack of discretion, she was overcome, and consented in her mind, and went to the man to learn if he would then consent to her. And he said he wouldn't for all the good in this world; he had rather been hewn as small as meat for the pot. She went away all shamed and confused within herself, seeing his stableness and her own unstableness.

Then thought she of the grace that God had given her before, how she had two years of great quiet of soul, repentance of her sin with many bitter tears of compunction, and a perfect will never to turn again to her sin, but rather, she thought, to be dead. And now she saw how she had consented in her will to do sin. Then she fell half in despair. She thought she would have been in hell for the sorrow that she had. She thought she was worthy of no mercy, for her consenting was so willfully done, nor never worthy to do him service because she was so false unto him. Nevertheless she was shriven many times and often, and did her penance, whatsoever her confessor would enjoin her to do, and was governed after the rules of the Church. That grace God gave this creature, blessed may he be, but he withdrew not her temptation but rather increased it, as she thought.

And therefore she knew that he had forsaken her and dared not trust to his mercy, but was labored with horrible temptations of lechery and of despair nearly all the next year following, save our Lord of his mercy, as she said herself, gave her each day for the most part two hours of compunction for her sins with many bitter tears. And afterward she was labored with temptations of despair as she was before and was as far from feeling grace as those who had never felt any. And that might she not bear, and therefore always she despaired. Save for the time that she felt grace, her labors were so wonderful that she could hardly fare with them, but ever mourned and sorrowed as though God had forsaken her.

5. Then on a Friday before Christmas Day, as this creature, kneeling in a chapel of Saint John⁶ within a church of Saint Margaret in N., wept wonder sore, asking mercy and forgiveness for her sins and her trespasses, our merciful Lord Christ Jesus, blessed may he be, ravished her spirit and said unto her: "Daughter, why weep you so sorely? I am come to you, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross, suffering bitter pains and passions for

6. For a picture of St. Margaret's church, including the location of this chapel, see Raguin and Stanbury, *Mapping Margery Kempe*.

you. I, the same God, forgive you your sins to the utterest point. And you shall never come into hell nor into purgatory, but, when you shall pass out of this world, within the twinkling of an eye you shall have the bliss of heaven, for I am the same God who has brought your sins to your mind and made you to be shriven thereof. And I grant you contrition to your life's end. Therefore I bid you and command you, boldly call me Jesus, your love, for I am your love and shall be your love without end. And, daughter, you have a hair cloth upon your back. I want you to take it away, and I shall give you a hair cloth in your heart that shall please me much better than all the hair cloths in the world. Also, my worthy daughter, you must forsake what you love best in this world, and that is eating of meat. And instead of that flesh you shall eat my flesh and my blood, that is the very body of Christ in the sacrament of the altar.⁷ This is my will, daughter, that you receive my body every Sunday,⁸ and I shall flow so much grace into you that all the world shall marvel thereof. You shall be eaten and gnawed by the people of the world as any rat gnaws the stockfish.⁹ Dread you not, daughter, for you shall have the victory of all your enemies. I shall give you grace enough to answer every clerk in the love of God. I swear to you by my majesty that I shall never forsake you in well nor in woe. I shall help you and keep you so that there shall never devil in hell part you from me, nor angel in heaven, nor man on earth, for devils in hell may not, angels in heaven will not, and man on earth shall not. And daughter, I want you to leave off your bidding of many beads¹ and think such thoughts as I will put into your mind. I shall give you leave to pray until six of the clock to say what you wish. Then shall you lie still and speak to me by thought, and I shall give to you high meditation and very contemplation. And I bid you go to the anchorite at the Friar Preachers,² and show him my secrets and my counsels which I show to you, and work after his counsel, for my spirit shall speak in him to you."

Then this creature went forth to the anchorite, as she was commanded, and showed him the revelations, such as were showed to her. Then the anchorite, with great reverence and weeping, thanking God, said, "Daughter, you suck even on Christ's breast,³ and you have an earnest penny⁴ of heaven. I charge you, receive such thoughts when God will give them as meekly and as devoutly as you can, and come to me and tell me what they are, and I shall, with the leave of our Lord Jesus Christ, tell you whether they are of the Holy Ghost or else of your enemy the devil."

7. The Eucharist.

8. It was unusual in the Middle Ages to receive Communion so often; once a year was mandated.

9. Salted and dried fish.

1. Saying many prayers.

2. Dominican priory at Lynn.

3. Late-medieval devotional literature frequently described Jesus using feminine, or nutritive, language. See Bynum [1987], 270-76.

4. Pledge penny.

6. Another day this creature gave herself to meditation, as she was bidden before, and she lay still, not knowing what she might best think. Then she said to our Lord Jesus Christ, "Jesus, what shall I think?" Our Lord Jesus answered to her mind, "Daughter, think on my mother, for she is the cause of all the grace that you have."

And then anon she saw Saint Anne⁵ great with child, and then she prayed Saint Anne if she could be her maiden and her servant. And anon our Lady was born, and then she busied herself to take the child to herself and keep it until it was twelve years of age with good food and drink, with fair white clothes and white kerchiefs. And then she said to the blessed child, "Lady, you shall be the mother of God." The blessed child answered and said, "I would I were worthy to be the handmaiden of her who shall conceive the son of God." The creature said, "I pray you, Lady, if that grace fall on you, forsake not my service."

The blissful child passed away for a certain time, the creature being still in contemplation, and later came again and said, "Daughter, now am I become the mother of God."

And then the creature fell down on her knees with great reverence and great weeping and said, "I am not worthy, Lady, to do you service." "Yes, daughter," she said, "follow me, your service pleases me well."

Then she went forth with our Lady and with Joseph, bearing with her a vessel of sweetened and spiced wine. Then they went forth to Elizabeth, Saint John the Baptist's mother, and, when they met together, both of them worshipped each other, and so they dwelled together with great grace and gladness twelve weeks.⁶

And then Saint John was born, and our Lady took him up from the earth with all manner of reverence and gave him to his mother, saying of him that he would be a holy man, and blessed him. Afterward they took their leave of one another with compassionate tears. And then the creature fell down on her knees to Saint Elizabeth and asked her if she would pray for her to our Lady so that she might give her service and pleasure. "Daughter, it seems to me," said Elizabeth, "you do right well your duty."

And then went the creature forth with our Lady to Bethlehem and purchased her lodging every night with great reverence, and our Lady was received with a glad manner. Also she begged for our Lady fair white clothes and kerchiefs to swaddle her son when he was born, and, when Jesus was born, she prepared bedding for our Lady to lie in with her blessed son. And afterward she begged food for our Lady and her blessed child. Afterward she swaddled him with bitter tears of compassion, having mind of the sharp death that he should suffer for the love of sinful men, saying to him, "Lord, I shall fare fair with you; I shall not bind you sorely.⁷ I pray you be not displeased with me."

5. St. Anne is the mother of the Virgin Mary.

6. For the Gospel account of this visit, see Luke 1.39-56.

7. Swaddle him tightly.

Meaning of
forgiving Christ.

level of Mary's
infancy

7. And after, on the Twelfth Day,⁸ when the three kings came with their gifts and worshipped our Lord Jesus Christ, being in his mother's lap, this creature, our Lady's handmaiden, beholding all the process by contemplation, wept wonder sore. And, when she saw that they would take their leave to go home again into their country, she might not suffer that they should go from the presence of our Lord; and, for wonder that they would go away, she cried wonder sore.

And soon after, came an angel and bade our Lady and Joseph go from the country of Bethlehem into Egypt. Then went this creature forth with our Lady, day by day purveying her lodging with great reverence, with many sweet thoughts and high meditations and also high contemplations, sometimes enduring in weeping two hours and often longer in the mind of our Lord's Passion, without ceasing, sometimes for her own sin, sometimes for the sins of the people, sometimes for the souls in purgatory, sometimes for those who are in poverty or in any trouble, for she desired to comfort them all. Sometimes she wept full plenteously and full violently for desire of the bliss of heaven and because she was so long deferred therefrom. Then this creature coveted greatly to be delivered out of this wretched world. Our Lord Jesus Christ said to her mind that she should abide and languish in love. "For I have ordained you to kneel before the Trinity to pray for all the world, for many hundred thousand souls shall be saved by your prayers. And therefore, daughter, ask what you wish, and I shall grant you your asking." This creature said, "Lord, I ask mercy and preservation from everlasting damnation for me and for all the world; chastise us here however you wish and in purgatory, and keep us from damnation for your high mercy.

8. Another time, as this creature lay in her prayer, the Mother of Mercy, appearing to her, said, "Ah, daughter, blessed may you be, your seat is made in heaven before my son's knee, and that of whomever you will have with you."

Then asked her blessed son, "Daughter, whom will you have as your fellow with you?"

"My most worthy Lord, I ask for my ghostly father Master N."

"Why do you ask more for him than for your own father or for your husband?"

"For I may never requite him the goodness that he has done for me and the gracious labors that he has had about me in the hearing of my confession."

"I grant you your desire for him, and yet shall your father be saved and your husband also, and all your children."

Then this creature said, "Lord, since you have forgiven me my sin, I

8. The Feast of the Epiphany, twelve days after Christmas, which celebrates the coming of the Wise Men.

make you my executor of all the good works that you work in me. In praying, in thinking, in weeping, in pilgrimage going, in fasting, or in speaking any good word, it is fully my will that you give Master N. half to the increase of his merit as if he did them himself. And the other half, Lord, spread on your friends and your enemies and on my friends and my enemies, for I will have only you for my reward."

"Daughter, I shall be a true executor to you and fulfill all you wish, and for your great charity that you have to comfort your fellow Christians you shall have double reward in heaven."

9. Another time, as this creature prayed to God that she might live chaste by the leave of her husband, Christ said to her mind, "You must fast on Friday both from food and from drink, and you shall have your desire before Whitsunday, for I shall suddenly slay your husband."

Then on the Wednesday in Easter week, after her husband would have had knowledge of her as he was wont before, and when he came near her, she said, "Jesus, help me," and he had no power to touch her at that time in that way, nor never after with any fleshly knowing.

It befell on a Friday before Whitsunday Eve,⁹ as this creature was in a church of Saint Margaret at N., hearing her mass, she heard a great noise and a dreadful. She was sorely astonished, sorely dreading the voice of the people, who said God would take vengeance upon her. She kneeled upon her knees, holding down her head, her book in her hand, praying our Lord Christ Jesus for grace and for mercy. Suddenly there fell down from the highest part of the church vault, from under the foot of the rafter, on her head and on her back, a stone which weighed three pounds and a short end of a beam weighing six pounds, so that she thought her back broke asunder, and she fared as if she had been dead for a little while. Soon after she cried, "Jesus, mercy," and anon her pain was gone.

A good man who was called John of Wyreham, seeing this wonderful event and supposing that she was greatly distressed, came and pulled her by the sleeve and said, "Dame, how fare you?"

The creature, all whole and sound, thanked him for his manner and for his charity, much marveling and greatly wondering that she felt no pain and had felt so much a little before. Nor twelve weeks after she felt any pain. Then the spirit of God said to her soul, "Hold this for a great miracle, and, if the people will not believe this, I shall work many more."

A worshipful doctor of divinity who was called Master Alan, a White Friar,¹ hearing of this wonderful work, inquired of this creature all the form of this process. He, desiring the work of God to be magnified, got the same stone that fell upon her back and weighed it, and afterward he

9. Whitsunday is the Feast of the Pentecost, celebrating the gift of the Holy Ghost and thus the creation of the Church; it falls seven Sundays after Easter.

1. The Carmelite friar, Alan of Lynn.

*Christ from
his chastity*

got the beam's end that fell upon her head, which one of the wardens of the church had laid in the fire to burn it. And this worshipful doctor said it was a great miracle and our Lord was highly to be magnified for the preserving of this creature against the malice of her enemy, and told it to many people, and many people greatly magnified God in this creature. And also many people would not believe it, but rather believed it was a token of wrath and vengeance than they would believe it was any token of mercy or favor.

10. Soon after, this creature was moved in her soul to go visit certain places for ghostly health, inasmuch as she was under authority,² and could not go without the consent of her husband. She asked her husband to grant her leave, and, he, fully trusting it was the will of God, soon consenting, they went together to such places as she was moved. And then our Lord Christ Jesus said to her, "My servants desire greatly to see you."

Then was she welcomed and made much of in divers places. Wherefore she had great dread of vainglory and was much afraid. Our merciful Lord Christ Jesus, worshipped by his name, said to her, "Dread you not, daughter, I shall take vainglory from you. For those who worship you, they worship me; those who despise you, they despise me, and I shall chastise them therefore. I am in you, and you in me. And those who hear you, they hear the voice of God. Daughter, there is no sinful man on earth living, who, if he will forsake his sin and work after your counsel, such grace as you promise him, I will confirm for your love."

Then she and her husband went forth to York and to other divers places.

11. It befell upon a Friday on Midsummer Eve in right hot weather, as this creature was coming from York bearing a bottle with beer in her hand and her husband a loaf in his bosom, he asked his wife this question, "Margery, if there came a man with a sword and would smite off my head unless I should common naturally with you as I have done before, tell me the truth from your conscience—for you say you will not lie—whether would you suffer my head to be smote off or else suffer me to meddle with you again, as I did at one time?"

"Alas, sir," she said, "why move you this matter, and have we been chaste these eight weeks?"

"For I will know the truth of your heart."

And then she said with great sorrow, "Forsooth I had rather see you be slain than we should turn again to our uncleanness."

And he said again, "You are no good wife."

And then she asked her husband what was the cause that he had not

2. The Middle English term is "cured," meaning that she was under the authority of someone else, in this case, since she is married, her husband.

meddled with her eight weeks before, since she lay with him every night in his bed. And he said he was so made afraid when he would have touched her that he dared do no more.

"Now, good sir, amend yourself and ask God mercy, for I told you nearly three years since that you should be slain suddenly, and now is this the third year, and yet I hope I shall have my desire. Good sir, I pray you grant me what I shall ask, and I shall pray for you that you shall be saved through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall have more reward in heaven than if you wore a hair cloth or a jacket of mail. I pray you, suffer me to make a vow of chastity in whatever bishop's hand that God will."

"No," he said, "that will I not grant you, for now may I use you without deadly sin and then might I not so."

Then she said again, "If it be the will of the Holy Ghost to fulfill what I have said, I pray God you may consent thereto; and, if it be not the will of the Holy Ghost, I pray God you never consent thereto."

Then went they forth toward Bridlington in right hot weather, the aforesaid creature having great sorrow and great dread for her chastity. And, as they came by a cross, her husband set himself down under the cross, calling his wife unto him and saying these words unto her, "Margery, grant me my desire, and I shall grant you your desire. My first desire is that we shall lie still together in one bed as we have done before; the second, that you shall pay my debts before you go to Jerusalem; and the third, that you shall eat and drink with me on Fridays as you were wont to do."

"No, sir," she said, "to break the Friday I will never grant you while I live."

"Well," he said, "then shall I meddle you again."

She prayed him that he would give her leave to make her prayers, and he granted it well. Then she kneeled down beside a cross in the field and prayed in this manner with great abundance of tears, "Lord God, you know all things; you know what sorrow I have had to be chaste in my body to you all these three years, and now might I have my wish, and I dare not for love of you. For, if I would break that manner of fasting which you commanded me, to keep the Friday without food or drink, I should now have my desire. But, blessed Lord, you know I will not go against your will, and great now is my sorrow unless I find comfort in you. Now, blessed Jesus, make your will known to me, unworthy, so that I may follow thereafter and fulfill it with all my might."

And then our Lord Jesus Christ with great sweetness spoke to this creature, commanding her to go again to her husband and pray him to grant her what she desired. "And he shall have what he desires. For, my worthy daughter, this was the cause that I bade you to fast, for you should the

3. A vow of married chastity would sacramentally eliminate sexual union with marriage.

sooner obtain and get your desire, and now it is granted you. I wish no longer for you to fast, therefore I bid you in the name of Jesus eat and drink as your husband does."

Then this creature thanked our Lord Jesus Christ for his grace and his goodness, then rose up and went to her husband, saying unto him, "Sir, if it pleases you, you shall grant me my desire, and you shall have your desire. Grant me that you shall not come in my bed, and I grant you to requite your debts before I go to Jerusalem. And make my body free to God so that you never challenge me by asking the debt of matrimony after this day while you live, and I shall eat and drink on the Friday at your bidding."

Then said her husband again to her, "As free may your body be to God as it has been to me."

This creature thanked God greatly, rejoicing that she had her desire, praying her husband that they should say three Our Father's in the worship of the Trinity for the great grace that he had granted them. And so they did, kneeling under a cross, and afterward they ate and drank together in great gladness of spirit. This was on a Friday on Midsummer Eve. Then went they forth toward Bridlington and also to many other countries and spoke with God's servants, both anchorites and recluses and many other of our Lord's lovers, with many worthy clerks, doctors of divinity, and bachelors also in many different places. And this creature to divers of them showed her feelings and her contemplations, as she was commanded to do, to learn if any deceit were in her feelings.

12. This creature was sent by our Lord to divers places of religion, and among them she came to a place of monks where she was right welcome for our Lord's love, save there was a monk who bore great office in that place who despised her and set her at naught. Nevertheless she was set at table with the abbot, and many times during the meal she said many good words as God would put them in her mind, the same monk who had so despised her being present, and many others, to hear what she would say. And through her dalliance his affection began greatly to incline toward her and he began to have great savor in her words. So that afterward the aforesaid monk came to her and said, she being in church and he also at that time, "Damsel, I hear said that God speaks unto you. I pray you tell me whether I shall be saved or not and in what sins I have most displeased God, for I will not believe you unless you can tell me my sin."

The creature said to the monk, "Go to your Mass, and if I may weep for you, I hope to have grace for you."

He followed her counsel and went to his mass. She wept wonderfully for his sins. When Mass was ended, the creature said to our Lord Christ Jesus, "Blessed Lord, what answer shall I give to this man?"

"My worthy daughter, say in the name of Jesus that he has sinned in lechery, in despair, and in the keeping of worldly goods."⁴

"A, gracious Lord, this is hard for me to say. He shall cause me much shame if I tell him any lie."

"Dread you not, but speak boldly in my name, in the name of Jesus, for these are not lies."

And then she said again to our Lord Jesus Christ, "Good Lord, shall he be saved?"

"Yes," said our Lord Jesus, "if he will forsake his sin and work after your counsel. Charge him that he forsake his sin and be shriven thereof and also forsake the outside duties that he has."

Then came the monk again, "Margery, tell me my sins."

She said, "I pray you, sir, ask not thereafter, for I am surety for your soul. You shall be saved if you will work after my counsel."

"Forsooth, I will not believe you unless you tell me my sin."

"Sir, I understand that you have sinned in lechery, in despair, and in the keeping of worldly good."

Then stood the monk still, somewhat abashed, and afterward he said, "Whether have I sinned — with wives or with single women?"

"Sir, with wives."

Then said he, "Shall I be saved?"

"Yes, sir, if you will work after my counsel. Sorrow for your sin, and I shall help you to sorrow; be shriven thereof and forsake it voluntarily. Leave the outside duties that you have, and God shall give you grace because of my love."

The monk took her by the hand and led her into a fair building, made her a great dinner, and afterward gave her gold to pray for him. And so she took her leave at that time. Another time when the creature came again to the same place, the aforesaid monk had forsaken his duties on her counsel, and was turned from his sin, and was made sub-prior of the place, a well governed man and well disposed, thanked be God, and made this creature great comfort and highly blessed God that ever he saw her.

13. On a time, as this creature was at Canterbury in the church among the monks, she was greatly despised and reproved because she wept so hard, both by the monks and the priests and by secular men, nearly all day, both morning and afternoon, also in so much that her husband went away from her as if he had not known her and left her alone among them, choose her as she could, for other comfort had she none from him on that day. So an old monk, who had been treasurer with the Queen while he was in secular clothing, a rich man, and greatly feared by many people, took her by the hand, saying unto her, "What can you say of God?"⁵

4. These are the three classic vices of lust, pride (of which despair is a variety), and avarice.

5. Perhaps a reference to John Kynnton, chancellor of Queen Joanna, wife of Henry IV.

Then said this creature in her thought, "Lord, what does this betoken?"
"It betokens vengeance."

"A, good Lord, what vengeance?"

Then said our Lord again to her, "There shall be an earthquake; tell it to whom you wish in the name of Jesus. For I tell you forsooth, right as I spoke to Saint Bridget, right so I speak to you, daughter, and I tell you truly it is true, every word that is written in Bridget's book, and by you it shall be known for very truth. And you shall fare well, daughter, in spite of all your enemies. The more envy they have for you because of my grace, the better shall I love you. I were not a rightful God unless I proved you, for I know you better than you know yourself whatever men say of you. You say I have great patience for the sin of the people, and you say the truth, but, if you saw the sin of the people as I do, you would have much more marvel in my patience and much more sorrow in the sin of the people than you have."

Then the creature said, "Alas, worthy Lord, what shall I do for the people?"

Our Lord answered, "It is enough for you to do as you do."

Then she prayed, "Merciful Lord Christ Jesus, in you is all mercy and grace and goodness. Have mercy, pity, and compassion for them. Show your mercy and your goodness upon them. Help them; send them very contrition, and let them never die in their sin."

Our merciful Lord said, "I may no more, daughter, for my rightfulness, do for them than I do. I send them preaching and teaching, pestilence and battles, hunger and famine, loss of their goods with great sickness, and many other tribulations, and they will not believe my words, nor will they know my visitation. And therefore I shall say to them that I made my servants to pray for you, and you despised their works and their living."

21. During the time that this creature had revelations, our Lord said to her, "Daughter, you are with child."

She said again, "A, Lord, how shall I then do for keeping of my child?"

"Our Lord said, "Daughter, dread you not, I shall ordain for a keeper."

"Lord, I am not worthy to hear you speak and thus to common with my husband. Nevertheless, it is to me a great pain and great distress."

"Therefore is it no sin to you, daughter, for it is to you rather reward and merit, and you shall have never the less grace, for I will that you bring me forth more fruit."

Then said the creature, "Lord Jesus, this manner of living belongs to your holy maidens."

"Yes, daughter, believe right well that I love wives also, and specially those wives who would live chaste, if they might have their will, and do

life in Rome; in 1370 her new order, the Brigittine Order, was confirmed by Pope Urban V. She was canonized in 1391.

their business to please me as you do, for, though the state of maidenhood is more perfect and more holy than the state of widowhood, and the state of widowhood more perfect than the state of wedlock; yet daughter I love you as well as any maiden in the world. There may no man hinder me from loving whom I will and as much as I will; for love, daughter, quenches all sin. And therefore ask of me the gifts of love. There is no gift so holy as is the gift of love, nor nothing to be so much desired as love; for love may purchase what it can desire. And therefore, daughter, you may no better please God than continually to think on his love."

Then this creature asked our Lord Jesus how she should best love him.

And our Lord said, "Have mind of your wickedness and think on my goodness."

She said again, "I am the most unworthy creature that ever you showed grace unto on earth."

"A, daughter," said our Lord, "fear you not. I take no heed what a man has been, but I take heed what he will be. Daughter, you have despised yourself; therefore you shall never be despised by God. Have mind, daughter, what Mary Magdalene was, Mary the Egyptian, Saint Paul,⁷ and many other saints who are now in heaven; for of unworthy I make worthy, and of sinful I make rightful. And so have I made you worthy to me, once loved and evermore loved with me. There is no saint in heaven whom you will speak with but he will come to you. Whom God loves, they love. When you please God, you please his mother and all the saints in heaven. Daughter, I take witness of my mother, of all the angels in heaven, and of all the saints in heaven that I love you with all my heart, and I may not forego your love."

Our Lord said then to his blissful mother, "Blessed Mother, tell my daughter of the greatness of love I have unto her."

Then this creature lay still all in weeping and sobbing as though her heart should have burst for the sweetness of speech that our Lord spoke unto her soul. Quickly after, the Queen of Mercy, God's mother, dallied to the soul of this creature, saying, "My worthy daughter, I bring you sure tidings, witnessing my sweet son Jesus, with all angels and all saints in heaven who love you full highly. Daughter, I am your mother, your lady, and your mistress to teach you in all manner how you shall please God best."

She taught this creature and informed her so wonderfully that she was abashed to speak it or tell it to any—the matters were so high and so holy—save only to the anchorite who was her principal confessor; for he had the most knowledge of such things. And he charged this creature by virtue of obedience to tell him what ever she felt, and so she did.

7. St. Paul began as Saul, one of the great persecutors of Christians. His dramatic conversion is described in Acts 9. "Mary Magdalene": New Testament follower of Jesus; she was among the first witnesses of the Resurrection; she is linked to passionate love of Jesus, to penitential grief and to revelation. "Mary the Egyptian": Mary of Egypt, legendary fifth-century courtesan from Alexandria, who, upon conversion, left her life of luxury and sin for one of relentless penance and poverty.

22. As this creature lay in contemplation, sorely weeping in her spirit, she said to our Lord Jesus Christ, "A, Lord, maidens dance now merrily in heaven. Shall not I do so? For, because I am no maiden, lack of maidenhood is to me now great sorrow. It seems to me I wish I had been slain when I was taken from the font stone⁸ so that I should never have displeased you, and then should you, blessed Lord, have had my maidenhead without end. A, dear God, I have not loved you all the days of my life, and that sorely rues me. I have run away from you, and you have run after me. I would fall into despair, and you would not allow me."

"A, daughter, how often have I told you that your sins are forgiven you and that we are joined together without end? You are to me a singular love, daughter, and therefore I promise you you shall have a singular grace in heaven, daughter, and I promise you I shall come to your end at your dying with my blessed mother and my holy angels and twelve apostles, Saint Katherine, Saint Margaret, Saint Mary Magdalene, and many other saints who are in heaven, who give great worship to me for the grace that I give to you, God, your Lord Jesus.

"You need dread no grievous pains in your dying, for you shall have your desire, that is to have more mind of my Passion than of your own pain. You shall not dread the devil of hell, for he has no power in you. He dreads you more than you do him. He is angry with you, for you torment him more with your weeping than does all the fire in hell; you win many souls from him with your weeping. And I have promised you that you should no other purgatory have than slander and speech from the world, for I have chastised you myself as I wished, by many great dreads and torments that you have had with evil spirits, both sleeping and waking for many years. And therefore I shall preserve you at your end through my mercy so that they shall no power have over you, neither in body nor in soul. It is great grace and miracle that you have your bodily wits for the vexation that you have had with them before. I have also, daughter, chastised you with the dread of my Godhead, and many times have I frightened you with great tempests of winds so that you thought vengeance would have fallen on you for sin. I have proved you by many tribulations, many great sorrows, and many grievous sicknesses in so much that you have been anointed for dead; and all through my grace have you escaped.

"Therefore dread you not, daughter, for with my own hands, which were nailed to the cross, I shall take your soul from your body with great mirth and melody, with sweet smells and good odors, and offer it to my Father in heaven. There you shall see him face to face, dwelling with him without end. Daughter, you shall be right welcome to my Father and to my mother and to all my saints in heaven, for you have given them drink full many times with tears of your eyes. All my holy saints shall enjoy your coming home. You shall be fulfilled of all manner of love that you covet.

8. I.e., at baptism.

Then shall you bless the time that you were wrought and the body that has you bought.⁹ He shall joy in you and you in him without end. Daughter, I promise you the same grace that I promised Saint Katherine, Saint Margaret, Saint Barbara,¹ and Saint Paul, in so much that what creature on earth, until the day of judgment, asks you any boon and believes that God loves you, he shall have his boon, or else a better thing. Therefore, those who believe that God loves you, they shall be blessed without end.

"The souls in purgatory shall joy in your coming home, for they know well that God loves you specially. And men on earth shall joy in God for you, for he shall work much grace for you and make all the world to know that God loves you. You have been despised for my love, and therefore you shall be worshipped for my love. Daughter, when you are in heaven, you shall be able to ask what you will, and I shall grant you all your desire. I have told you before that you are a singular lover, and therefore you shall have a singular love in heaven, a singular reward, and a singular worship. And, forasmuch as you are a maiden in your soul, I shall take you by the one hand in heaven and my mother by the other hand, and so shall you dance in heaven with other holy maidens and virgins, for I may call you dearly bought and my own worthy darling. I shall say to you, my own blessed spouse, 'Welcome to me with all manner of joy and gladness, here to dwell with me and never to depart from me without end, but ever to dwell with me in joy and bliss, which no eye may see, nor ear hear, nor tongue tell, nor heart think; that I have ordained for you and for all my servants who desire to love me and please me as you do.'"

23. There came once a vicar to this creature, praying her to pray for him and learn whether he should more please God to leave his curacy and his benefice² or to keep it still, for he thought he profited not among his parishioners. The creature, being in her prayers, having mind of this matter, Christ said unto her spirit, "Bid the vicar keep still his curacy and his benefice and do his diligence in preaching and teaching to them in his own person and sometimes procure another to teach them my laws and my commandments so that there be no default on his part, and, if they do never the better, his meed shall never be the less."

And so she gave her message as she was commanded, and the vicar kept still his curacy.

As this creature was in a church of Saint Margaret in the choir, where a body was present, and he, who was husband of the same body while she lived, was there in good health in order to offer her mass penny after the custom of the place, our Lord said to the foresaid creature, "Lo, daughter, the soul of this body is in purgatory, and he who

9. This is one of several complements in the text.

1. St. Barbara, third-century virgin persecuted by her father for her conversion to Christianity.

2. A curacy is a priest's responsibility for the souls in his parish; a benefice is his ecclesiastical appointment and hence his living.

had, should be a detraction to the parish church or not. The parishioners who pursued were right strong and had great help from lordship, and also, most of all, they were rich men, worshipful merchants, and had gold enough, which may speed in every need, and that is a pity that meed should speed rather than truth. Nevertheless the prior who was their parson, though he was poor, manfully he withstood them through the help of some of his parishioners who were his friends and loved the worship of their parish church. So long this matter was in plea that it began to irk them on both sides, and it was never the nearer an end. Then the matter was put before my lord of Norwich, Alnwick,⁹ to see if he might by negotiation bring it to an end. He labored this matter diligently, and, in order to establish rest and peace, he offered the foresaid parishioners much of their desire with certain conditions, in so much that those who held with the parson and with their parish church were full sorry, dreading greatly that those who sued in order to have a font should obtain and get their intent and so make the chapel equal to the parish church.

Then the priest who afterward wrote this book went to the creature of whom this treatise makes mention, as he had done before in the time of legal action, and asked her how she felt in her soul in this matter, whether they should have a font in the chapel or not.

"Sir," said the creature, "dread you not, for I understand in my soul, though they would give a bushel of nobles,¹ they should not have it."

"Ah, mother," said the priest, "my lord of Norwich has offered it to them with certain conditions, and they have a time of advisement in order to say no or yes, whether they will, and therefore I am afraid they will not deny it but be right glad to have it."

This creature prayed to God that his will might be fulfilled. And, forasmuch as she had by revelation that they should not have it, she was the more bold to pray our Lord to withstand their intent and to slake their boasting. And, so as our Lord would, they obeyed not nor liked not the means that were offered them, for they trusted fully to have their intent by lordship and by process of law; and, as God would, they were deceived of their intent, and because they would have had all, they lost all. And so, blessed may God be, the parish church stood still in its worship and its degree as it had done two hundred years before and more, and the inspiration of our Lord was, by experience, proved for very truth and surety in the foresaid creature.

26. When the time came that this creature should visit those holy places where our Lord was quick and dead, as she had by revelation years before, she prayed the parish priest of the town where she was dwelling to say for her in the pulpit that, if any man or woman claimed any debt

9. William Alnwick, bishop of Norwich (1426-36).

1. The noble was a gold coin equal to six shillings and eight pence.

of her husband or of her, they should come and speak with her before she went, and she, with the help of God, should make compensation to each of them so that they should hold themselves content. And so she did. Afterward she took her leave of her husband and of the holy anchorite, who had told her before the process of her going and much trouble that she should suffer by the way, and, when all her fellowship forsook her, how a broken-backed man should lead her forth in safety through the help of our Lord. And so it befell in deed, as it shall be written afterward. Then she took her leave of Master Robert² and prayed him for his blessing, and so forth from other friends. And then she went forth to Norwich and offered at the Trinity,³ and after she went to Yarmouth, and offered at an image of our Lady, and there she took her ship.

And the next day they came to a great town called Zierikzee,⁴ where our Lord of his high goodness visited this creature with abundant tears of contrition for her own sins and sometimes for other men's sins also. And specially she had tears of compassion in the mind of our Lord's Passion. And she was houseled each Sunday where there was time and place convenient for it, with great weepings and violent sobbings so that many men marveled and wondered about the great grace that God wrought in his creature.

This creature had eaten no meat nor drunk any wine for four years before she went out of England. And now her ghostly father charged her by virtue of obedience that she should both eat meat and drink wine, and so she did a little while. Afterward, she prayed her confessor if he would hold her excused though she ate no meat, and suffer her to do as she wanted for a time that pleased him. And soon after, through the moving of some of her company, her confessor was displeased because she ate no meat, and so was much of all the company. And they were most displeased because she wept so much and spoke always of the love and goodness of our Lord, as well at the table as in other places. And therefore shamefully they reprov'd her and greatly chided her and said they would not suffer her as her husband did when she was at home and in England. And she said meekly again unto them, "Our Lord almighty God is as great a lord here as in England, and as great cause have I to love him here as there, blessed may he be."

For these words her fellowship was angrier than they were before, whose wrath and unkindness to this creature was a matter of great heaviness, for they were held right good men, and she desired greatly their love if she might have had it by the pleasure of God. And then she said to one of them specially, "You do me much shame and great grievance."

He answered again anon, "I pray God that the devil's death may overcome you soon and quickly." And many more cruel words he said to her than she could rehearse.

And soon after some of the company on whom she trusted best, and

2. Robert Spryngolde, parish priest of St. Margaret's church and Margery's chief confessor.

3. Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Norwich.

4. In the Netherlands.

her own maiden also, said she should no longer go in their fellowship, and they said they would take away her maiden from her so that she should be no strumpet in her company. And then one of them, who had her gold in his keeping, with great anger left her a noble to go where she would and help herself as well as she might, for with them, they said, she should no longer abide, and forsook her that night.

Then on the next morning there came to her one of her company, a man who loved her well, praying her that she would go to his fellows and meek herself unto them and pray them that she might go still in their company until she came to Constance.⁵ And so she did, and went forth with them until she came to Constance with great distress and great trouble, for they caused her much shame and much reproof as they went in divers places. They cut her gown so short that it came but a little beneath her knee and made her put on a white canvas in the manner of a sackcloth garment, for she would be taken as a fool, and the people should not make much of her nor hold her in reputation. They made her sit at the table's end, beneath all the others so that she dared hardly speak a word. And, notwithstanding all their malice, she was held in more worship than they wherever they went. And the good man of the house where they were hosteled, though she sat lowest at the table's end, would always take care of her before all of them if he could and might, and sent her from his own meal such service as he had, and that grieved her fellowship badly.

As they went by the way toward Constance, it was told them they should be harmed and have great distress unless they had great grace. Then this creature came by a church and went in to make her prayer, and she prayed with all her heart, with great weeping and many tears, for help and succor against her enemies. Anon our Lord said to her mind, "Dread you not, daughter, your fellowship shall no harm have while you are in their company."

And so, blessed may our Lord be in all his works, they went forth in safety to Constance.

27. When this creature and her fellowship were come to Constance, she heard tell of an English friar, a master of divinity and the Pope's legate, who was in that city. Then she went to that worshipful man and showed him her life from the beginning unto that hour, as nearly as she might in confession, because he was the Pope's legate and a worshipful clerk. And after she told him what trouble she had with her fellowship. She told him also what grace God gave her—of contrition and compunction, of sweetness and devotion, and of many divers revelations that our Lord had revealed unto her—and the dread that she had of illusions and deceits of her ghostly enemies, wherefore she lived in great dread, desiring to put them away and to feel none if she might withstand them.

5. In Germany, on Lake Constance (in German, it is *Konstanz*).

And, when she had spoken, the worshipful clerk gave her words of great comfort and said it was the work of the Holy Ghost, commanding and charging her to obey them and receive them when God would give them and have no doubts, for the devil has no power to work such grace in a soul. And also he said he would support her against the evil will of her fellowship.

Afterward, when it pleased her fellowship, they prayed this worthy doctor to dinner. And the doctor told the foresaid creature, warning her to sit at the meal in his presence as she did in his absence and keep the same manner of governance that she kept when he was not there. When the time was come that they should sit at the meal, every man took his place as he pleased, the worshipful legate and doctor first sat, and afterward the others, and at the last the said creature at the table's end sitting and no word speaking, as she was wont to do when the legate was not there. Then the legate said unto her, "Why are you no merrier?"

And she sat still and answered not, as he himself had commanded her to do. When they had eaten, the company made great complaint about this creature to the legate, and said utterly she should no longer be in their company unless he would command her to eat meat as they did and leave her weeping and that she should not speak so much of holiness.

Then the worshipful doctor said, "Nay, sirs, I will not make her eat meat while she may abstain herself and be the better disposed to love our Lord. If one of you all made a vow to go to Rome barefoot, I would not absolve him of his vow while he might fulfill it; neither will I bid her eat meat while our Lord gives her strength to abstain. As for her weeping, it is not in my power to restrain it, for it is the gift of the Holy Ghost. As for her speaking, I will ask her to cease until she comes where men will hear her with a better will than you do."

The company was wroth and in great anger. They gave her over to the legate and said utterly they would no more meddle with her. He full benignly and goodly received her as though she had been his mother and received her gold—about twenty pounds—and yet one of them withheld wrongfully about sixteen pounds. And they withheld also her maiden and would not let her go with her mistress, notwithstanding she had promised her mistress and assured her that she should not forsake her for any need. And the legate ordained for this creature and made her exchange as if she had been his mother.

Then this creature went into a church and prayed our Lord to ordain her a leader. And anon our Lord spoke to her and said, "You shall have right good help and a good leader."

And quickly after there came to her an old man with a white beard. He was of Devonshire, and he said, "Damsel, will you pray me for God's love and for our Lady's to go with you and be your guide, for your countrymen have forsaken you?"

She asked what was his name.

He said, "My name is William Weaver."

She prayed him for the reverence of God and of our Lady that he would help her in her need, and she should well reward him for his labor. And so they were accorded.

Then she went to the legate and told him how well our Lord had ordained for her, and took her leave of him and of her company that so unkindly had refused her and also of her maiden, who was bound to have gone with her. She took her leave with a full heavy manner and mournful, having great heaviness, inasmuch as she was in a strange country and did not know the language, nor the man who should lead her either.

And so the man and she went forth together in great dread and heaviness. As they went together, the man said unto her, "I am afraid you shall be taken from me, and I shall be beaten for you and forebear my tabard."⁶

She said, "William, dread you not; God shall keep us right well."

And this creature had every day mind of the Gospel which tells of the woman who was taken in adultery and brought before our Lord.⁷ And then she prayed, "Lord, as you drove away her enemies, so drive away my enemies, and keep well my chastity that I vowed to you, and let me never be defiled, for if I am, Lord, I make my vow I will never come in England while I live."

Then went they forth day by day and met with many jolly men. And they said no evil word to this creature but gave her and her man food and drink, and the good wives where they were at inn laid her in their own beds for God's love in many places where they came. And our Lord visited her with great grace of ghostly comfort as she went by the way. And so God brought her forth until she came to Bologna. And, after she came thither, came her other fellowship, which had forsaken her before, thither also. And, when they heard say that she was come to Bologna before them, then had they great wonder, and one of their fellowship came to her, praying her to go to his fellowship and try to see if they would receive her again into their fellowship. And so she did.

"If you will go in our fellowship, you must make a new covenant, and that is this: you shall not speak of the Gospel where we come, but you shall sit still and make merry, as we do, both at the midday meal and at supper."

She consented and was received again into their fellowship. Then went they forth to Venice, and they dwelled there thirteen weeks. And this creature was houseled every Sunday in a great house of nuns and had great welcome among them, where our merciful Lord Christ Jesus visited this creature with great devotion and plenteous tears so that the good ladies of the place were much astonished thereof.

Afterward, it happened, as this creature sat at table with her fellowship, that she repeated a text from a Gospel just as she had learned before,

6. Outer garment.

7. John 8.3-11.

along with other good words. And anon her fellowship said she had broken covenant. And she said, "Yes, sirs, forsooth I may no longer hold you in covenant, for I must needs speak of my Lord Jesus Christ though all this world had forbidden it to me."

And then she took to her chamber and ate alone six weeks until the time that our Lord made her so sick that she thought to have been dead, and afterward, suddenly, he made her whole again. And all the time her maiden left her alone and made the company's food and washed their clothes, and to her mistress, to whom she had promised service, she would not at all attend.

28. Also this company, which had put the foresaid creature from their table so that she should no longer eat among them, ordained a ship for themselves to sail in.⁸ They bought vessels for their wine and ordained bedding for themselves, but nothing for her. Then she, seeing their unkindness, went to that same man where they had been, and purveyed her bedding, as they had done, and came where they were and showed them what she had done, purposing to sail with them in that ship that they had ordained. Afterward, as this creature was in contemplation, our Lord warned her in her mind that she should not sail in that ship, and he assigned her another ship, a galley, that she should sail in. Then she told this to some of the company, and they told it forth to their fellowship, so then they dared not sail in the ship which they had ordained. And so they sold away their vessels which they had ordained for their wines and were right fain to come to the galley where she was, and so, though it was against their will, she went forth with them in their company, for they dared not otherwise do.

When it was time to make their beds, they locked up her clothes, and a priest who was in their company took away a sheet from the foresaid creature and said it was his. She took God to witness that it was her sheet. Then the priest swore a great oath, and by the book in his hand, that she was as false as she might be and despised her and greatly rebuked her. And so she had ever much tribulation until she came to Jerusalem.

And, before she came there, she said to them that she supposed they were grieved with her. "I pray you, sirs, be in charity with me, for I am in charity with you; forgive me if I have grieved you by the way. And, if any of you have in anything trespassed against me, God forgive it you as I do."

And so they went forth into the Holy Land till they might see Jerusalem. And, when this creature saw Jerusalem, riding on an ass, she

8. Medieval English pilgrims to Jerusalem who intended to take the sea route would have taken about six weeks to arrive in a Mediterranean port. They then booked passage with a shipping company in the pilgrimage business. Some of these ships were quite large, and accommodations were minimal, so the pilgrim had to provide his or her own bedding. If the pilgrim had signed on with a tour, meals would be provided. Once in the Holy Land, travel was strictly regulated, and pilgrims were charged admission fees to important sites. See *Guide to the Holy Land* (1986) and the Introduction by Musto for accounts of medieval pilgrims' experiences.

Go to Jerusalem

thanked God with all her heart, praying him for his mercy that, as he had brought her to see this earthly city Jerusalem, he would grant her grace to see the blissful city Jerusalem above, the city of heaven. Our Lord Jesus Christ, answering to her thought, granted her to have her desire. Then, for joy that she had and the sweetness that she felt in the dalliance of our Lord, she was in point to have fallen off her ass, for she might not bear the sweetness and grace that God wrought in her soul. Then two German pilgrims went to her and kept her from falling, of which one was a priest. And he put spices in her mouth to comfort her, thinking she had been sick. And so they helped her forth to Jerusalem.

And, when she came there, she said, "Sirs, I pray you be not displeased though I weep sorely in this holy place where our Lord Jesus Christ was quick and dead."

Then went they to the temple in Jerusalem, and they were let in on the one day at evensong time and abided therein till the next day at evensong time.⁹

Then the friars¹ lifted up a cross and led the pilgrims about from one place to another where our Lord had suffered his pains and his passions, every man and woman bearing a wax candle in their hand. And the friars always, as they went about, told them what our Lord suffered in every place. And the foresaid creature wept and sobbed so plenteously as though she had seen our Lord with her bodily eye suffering his Passion at that time. Before her in her soul she saw him verily by contemplation, and that caused her to have compassion. And when they came up onto the Mount of Calvary, she fell down so that she might not stand or kneel but wallowed and twisted with her body, spreading her arms abroad, and cried with a loud voice as though her heart should have burst asunder, for in the city of her soul she saw verily and freshly how our Lord was crucified. Before her face she heard and saw in her ghostly sight the mourning of our Lady, of Saint John and Mary Magdalene, and of many others who loved our Lord. And she had so great compassion and so great pain to see our Lord's pain that she might not keep herself from crying and roaring though she should have died from it.

And this was the first cry that ever she cried in any contemplation. And this manner of crying endured many years after this time for aught that any man might do, and therefore suffered she much despite and much reproof. The crying was so loud and so wonderful that it made the people astonished unless they had heard it before or else they knew the cause of the crying. And she had them so often that they made her right weak in her bodily mights, and, namely, if she heard of our Lord's Passion. And

9. Entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was limited to between six and twelve pilgrims at a time. They were brought in one door, charged admission, locked in for the time of their vigils, and let out by another.

1. The Franciscans enjoyed the most prominent presence of any order in the Holy Lands. They had a convent that joined the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

sometimes, when she saw the crucifix, or if she saw a man or a beast, whether it were, had a wound or if a man beat a child before her or smote a horse or another beast with a whip, if she might see it or hear it, she thought she saw our Lord being beaten or wounded just as she saw in the man or in the beast, as well in the field as in the town, and by herself alone, as well as among the people.

First when she had her cryings at Jerusalem, she had them often times, and in Rome also. And, when she came home into England, first at her coming home it came but seldom, as it were once in a month, afterward once in the week, afterward daily, and once she had fourteen on one day, and another day she had seven, and so as God would visit her, sometime in the church, sometime in the street, sometime in the chamber, sometime in the field when God would send them, for she knew never time nor hour when they should come. And they came never without passing great sweetness of devotion and high contemplation.

And, as soon as she perceived that she should cry, she would keep it in as much as she might, so that the people should not have heard it, for it annoyed them. For some said it was a wicked spirit vexed her; some said it was a sickness; some said she had drunk too much wine; some banned her; some wished she had been in the harbor; some would she had been in the sea in a bottomless boat; and so each man as he thought. Other ghostly men loved her and favored her the more. Some great clerks said our Lady cried never so, nor no saint in heaven, but they knew full little what she felt, nor would they not believe that she might have abstained from crying if she wished. And therefore, when she knew that she should cry, she kept it in as long as she might and did all that she could to withstand it or else to put it away until she waxed as blueish gray as any lead, and ever it should labor her mind more and more, unto the time that it broke out. And, when the body might no longer endure the ghostly labor but was overcome with the unspeakable love that wrought so fervently in the soul, then fell she down and cried wonder loud. And the more that she would labor to keep it in or to put it away, much the more should she cry and the louder.

And thus she did in the Mount of Calvary, as it is written before. She had such very contemplation in the sight of her soul, as if Christ had hung before her bodily eye in his manhood. And, when through dispensation of the high mercy of our sovereign savior Christ Jesus, it was granted this creature to behold so verily his precious tender body, completely rent and torn with scourges, more full of wounds than ever was a dove house of holes, hanging upon the cross with the crown of thorns upon his head, his blissful hands, his tender feet nailed to the hard tree, the rivers of blood flowing out plenteously from every member, the grisly and grievous wound in his precious side shedding out blood and water for her love and her salvation, then she fell down and cried with loud voice, wonderfully turning and twisting her body on every side, spreading

her arms abroad as if she should have died, and could not keep herself from crying or from these bodily movings, for the fire of love that burnt so fervently in her soul with pure pity and compassion.

It is not to be marveled at if this creature cried and made wonderful face and countenance, when we may see each day with our eyes both men and women, some for loss of worldly good, some for affection of their kindred or for worldly friendships through over much study and earthly affection, and most of all for inordinate love and fleshly affection if their friends are parted from them, they will cry and roar and wring their hands as if they had no wit nor any mind, and yet know they well enough that they displease God. And, if a man counsel them to leave off or cease their weeping or crying, they will say that they may not; they loved their friend so much and he was so gentle and so kind to them that they may in no way forget him. How much more might they weep, cry, and roar if their most beloved friends were with violence taken in their sight and with all manner of reproof brought before the judge, wrongfully condemned to the death, and namely so spiteful a death as our merciful Lord suffered for our sake? How should they suffer it? No doubt but they should both cry and roar and avenge themselves if they might, else men would say they were no friends. Alas, alas, for sorrow, that the death of a creature who had often sinned and trespassed against its maker shall be so unmeasurably mourned and sorrowed. And it is offense to God and hindrance to the souls on each side. And the compassionate death of our Savior, by which we are all restored to life, is not had in mind by us unworthy and unkind wretches, nor will we support our Lord's own secretaries² whom he has endowed with love, but rather detract them and hinder them as much as we may.

29. When this creature with her fellowship came to the grave where our Lord was buried, anon, as she entered that holy place, she fell down with her candle in her hand as though she should have died for sorrow. And afterward she rose up again with great weeping and sobbing as though she had seen our Lord buried even before her. Then she thought she saw our Lady in her soul, how she mourned and how she wept her son's death, and then was our Lady's sorrow her sorrow.

And so over all where that ever the friars led them in that holy place she always wept and sobbed wonderfully, and especially when she came where our Lord was nailed on the cross. There cried she and wept without measure so that she might not restrain herself. Also they came to a stone of marble that our Lord was laid on when he was taken down from the cross, and there she wept with great compassion, having mind of our Lord's Passion. Afterward she was houseled on the Mount of Calvary, and then she wept, she sobbed, she cried so loud that it wonder was to hear

2. I.e., the holy men and women who mark out the Christlike life.

it. She was so full of holy thoughts and meditations and holy contemplations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and holy dalliance that our Lord Jesus Christ dallied to her soul that she could never express them afterward, so high and so holy they were.

Great was the grace that our Lord showed to this creature while she was three weeks in Jerusalem. Another day, early in the morning, they went again to the great hills. And their guides told where our Lord bore the cross on his back, and where his Mother met with him, and how she swooned, and how she fell down and he fell down also. And so they went forth all the morning until they came to the Mount Syon. And ever this creature wept abundantly all the way that she went for compassion of our Lord's Passion. In Mount Syon is the place where our Lord washed his disciples' feet, and a little later he made his Last Supper with his disciples. And therefore this creature had great desire to be houseled in that holy place where our merciful Lord Christ Jesus first consecrated his precious body in the form of bread and gave it to his disciples. And so she was, with great devotion, with plenteous tears, and with violent sobbings, for in this place is plenary remission.³

And so is it in four other places in the temple. One is in the Mount of Calvary; another at the grave where our Lord was buried; the third is at the marble stone that his precious body was laid on when it was taken from the cross; the fourth is where the holy cross was buried, and in many other places in Jerusalem.

And, when this creature came into the place where the apostles received the Holy Ghost, our Lord gave her great devotion. Afterward she went to the place where our Lady was buried,⁴ and as she kneeled on her knees for the time of hearing two masses, our Lord Jesus Christ said unto her, "You come not hither, daughter, for any need but for merit and for meed, for your sins were forgiven you before you came here, and therefore you come hither for the increase of your meed and of your merit. And I am well pleased with you, daughter, for you stand under the obedience of Holy Church and because you will obey your confessor and follow his counsel, which through the authority of Holy Church has pardoned you of your sins and absolved you so that you should not go to Rome or to Saint James unless you yourself want to. Notwithstanding all this, I command you in the name of Jesus, daughter, that you go visit these holy places and do as I bid you, for I am above all Holy Church and I shall go with you and keep you right well."

Then our Lady spoke to her soul in this manner, saying, "Daughter, well are you blessed, for my son Jesus shall flood so much grace into you that all the world shall wonder at you. Be not ashamed, my worthy daughter, to receive the gifts that my son shall give you, for I tell you in truth

3. Complete remission of all sins.

4. This is where the Church of St. Mary was founded, in a garden near Cedron Brook (*Guide to the Holy Land*, p. 37).

they shall be great gifts that he shall give you. And therefore, my worthy daughter, be not ashamed of him that is your God, your Lord, and your love, no more than I was when I saw him hang on the cross, my sweet son, Jesus, to cry and to weep for the pain of my sweet son, Jesus Christ; nor was Mary Magdalene ashamed to cry and weep for my son's love. And therefore, daughter, if you will partake in our joy, you must partake in our sorrow."

This sweet speech and dalliance this creature had at our Lady's grave, and much more than she could ever rehearse. Afterward she rode on an ass to Bethlehem⁵ and when she came to the temple and to the crib where our Lord was born, she had great devotion, much speech, and dalliance in her soul, and high ghostly comfort with much weeping and sobbing so that her fellows would not let her eat in their company. And therefore she ate her meals by herself alone.

And then the Gray Friars⁶ who had led her from place to place received her into them and set her with them at meals so that she should not eat alone. And one of the friars asked one of her fellowship if that was the woman of England whom they had heard spoke with God. And, when this came to her knowledge, she knew well that it was truth that our Lord said to her before she went out of England, "Daughter, I shall make all the world to wonder at you, and many men and many women shall speak of me for love of you and worship me in you."

30. Another time this creature's fellowship would go to the River Jordan and would not let her go with them. Then this creature prayed our Lord that she might go with them, and he bade that she should go with them whether they would or not. And then she went forth by the grace of God and asked them no permission. When she came to the River Jordan, the weather was so hot that she thought her feet should have burnt for the heat that she felt. Afterward, she went forth with her fellowship to the Mount Quarentyne,⁷ where our Lord fasted forty days.⁸ And there she prayed her fellowship to help her up onto the Mount. And they said no, for they could not well help themselves. Then she had much sorrow, for she might not go on the hill. And anon happened a Saracen, a comely man, to come by her, and she put a groat⁹ in his hand, making to him a sign to bring her onto the Mount. And quickly the Saracen took her under his arm and led her up onto the high Mount where our Lord fasted forty days.

Then was she sorely athirst and had no comfort of her fellowship. Then God of his high goodness moved the Gray Friars with compassion, and

5. The Church of the Nativity, whose high altar was dedicated to Mary.

6. Franciscans.

7. Near Jericho.

8. After his baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness and fasted for forty days. Afterward, he was tempted by the devil. See Matthew 3.13-4.3.

9. A silver coin worth four pennies.

they comforted her when her countrymen would not know her. And so she was evermore strengthened in the love of our Lord and the more bold to suffer shames and reproofs for his sake in every place where she came for the grace that God wrought in her of weeping, sobbing, and crying, the which grace she might not withstand when God would send it.

And ever she proved her feelings true. And those promises that God had promised her while she was in England and in other places also, they fell to her in effect just as she had felt before, and therefore she dared better receive such speeches and dalliances and the more boldly work thereafter.

Afterward, when this creature was come down from the Mount, as God would, she went forth to the place where Saint John the Baptist was born. And afterward she went to Bethany where Mary and Martha dwelled and to the grave where Lazarus was buried and raised from death into life.¹ And she went also into the chapel where our blessed Lord appeared to his blissful mother, first of all others, on Easter Day in the morning.² And she stood in the same place where Mary Magdalene stood when Christ said to her, "Mary, why do you weep?"³

And so she was in many more places than are written, for she was three weeks in Jerusalem and in the countries thereabout. And she had ever great devotion as long as she was in that country. And the Friars of the Temple⁴ made her great welcome and gave her many great relics, desiring that she should have dwelled still among them, if she had wished, for the faith they had in her. Also the Saracens made much of her and conveyed her and led her about in the country where she wished to go. And she found all people good unto her and gentle, save only her own countrymen. And, as she came from Jerusalem toward Ramleh,⁵ then would she have turned again to Jerusalem for the great grace and ghostly comfort that she felt when she was there and in order to purchase herself more pardon.

And then our Lord commanded her to go to Rome, and so forth home into England, and said unto her, "Daughter, as oftentimes as you say or think, 'Worshipped be all those holy places in Jerusalem that Christ suffered bitter pain and passion in,' you shall have the same pardon as if you were there with your bodily presence, both for yourself and for all those that you will give it to."

And, as she went forth to Venice, much of her fellowship was right sick, and ever our Lord said to her, "Dread you not, daughter, no man shall die in the ship that you are in."

1. John 11.1-44.

2. This event is apocryphal; it is memorialized in a chapel within the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

3. For this scene, which is crucial to medieval devotional literature and particularly important to Margery's spirituality, see John 20.1-18.

4. Franciscans of the convent of the Holy Sepulcher.

5. Town outside Jerusalem on the road to Jaffa.

And she found her feelings right true.

And, when our Lord had brought them again to Venice in safety, her countrymen forsook her and went away from her, leaving her alone. And some of them said that they would not go with her for a hundred pounds. And, when they were gone away from her, then our Lord Jesus Christ, who ever helps at need and never forsakes his servant who truly trusts to his mercy, said to his creature, "Dread you not, daughter, for I shall ordain for you right well and bring you in safety to Rome and home again into England without any villainy to your body if you will be clad in white clothes and wear them as I said to you while you were in England."

Then this creature, being in great heaviness and great doubt, answered again in her mind, "If you are the spirit of God that speaks in my soul and I may prove you for a true spirit with counsel of the church, I shall obey your will, and, if you bring me to Rome in safety, I shall wear white clothes, though all the world should wonder on me, for your love."

"Go forth, daughter, in the name of Jesus, for I am the spirit of God, the which shall help you in all your needs, go with you, and support you in every place, and therefore mistrust me not. You found me never deceiving, nor do I bid you do anything but that which is worship to God and profit to your soul if you will do thereafter, and I shall flood on you great plenty of grace."

Then anon, as she looked on the one side, she saw a poor man sitting, who had a great hump on his back. His clothes were all patched, and he seemed a man of fifty winters age. Then she went to him and said, "Good man, what ails your back?"

He said, "Damsel, it was broken in a sickness."

She asked what was his name and what countryman he was.

He said his name was Richard, and he was of Ireland. Then she thought of her confessor's words (who was a holy anchorite, as is written before), who said to her while she was in England, in this manner, "Daughter, when your own fellowship has forsaken you, God shall ordain a broken backed man to lead you forth where you will be."

Then she with a glad spirit said unto him, "Good Richard, lead me to Rome, and you shall be rewarded for your labor."

"No, damsel," he said, "I know well your countrymen have forsaken you, and therefore it would be hard for me to lead you. For your countrymen have both bows and arrows, with which they might defend both you and themselves, and I have no weapon except a cloak full of patches. And yet I fear that my enemies shall rob me and perhaps take you away from me and defile your body, and therefore I dare not lead you, for I would not for a hundred pounds that you had shame in my company."

And then she said again, "Richard, dread you not; God shall keep us both right well, and I shall give you two nobles for your labor."

Then he consented and went forth with her.

Soon after there came two Gray Friars and a woman who came with them from Jerusalem, and she had with her an ass, which bore a chest and an image therein made after our Lord. And then said Richard to the foresaid creature, "You shall go forth with these two men and women, and I shall meet with you at morning and at evening, for I must attend to my purchase and beg my living."

And so she did after his counsel and went forth with the friars and the woman. And none of them could understand her language, and yet they ordained for her every day food, drink, and lodging as well as they did for themselves, and rather better, so that she was ever bound to pray for them. And every evening and morning Richard with the broken back came and comforted her as he had promised. And the woman who had the image in the chest, when they came into good cities, she took the image out of her chest and set it in worshipful wives' laps. And they would put shirts thereupon and kiss it as though it had been God himself. And, when the creature saw the worship and the reverence that they gave to the image, she was taken with sweet devotion and sweet meditations so that she wept with great sobbing and loud crying. And she was moved in so much the more as, while she was in England, she had high meditations on the birth and the childhood of Christ, and she thanked God forasmuch as she saw these creatures had such great faith in that she saw with her bodily eye just as she had before with her ghostly eye. When these good women saw this creature weep, sob, and cry so wonderfully and mightily that she was nearly overcome therewith, then they ordained a good soft bed and laid her thereupon and comforted her as much as they might for our Lord's love, blessed may he be.

31. The foresaid creature had a ring which our Lord had commanded her to have made while she was at home in England and had her engrave thereupon, "Jesus est amor meus."⁶ She had much thought how she should keep this ring from thieves and stealing as she went through the countries, for she thought she would not have lost the ring for a thousand pounds, and much more, because she had it made at the bidding of God. And also she wore it by his bidding, for she purposed before, before she had it by revelation, never to have worn a ring. And, as it happened, she was lodged in a good man's house, and many neighbors came in to welcome her for her perfection and her holiness, and she gave them the measure of Christ's grave, which they received full kindly, having great joy thereof, and thanked her highly for it. Afterward this creature went to her chamber and let her ring hang by her purse string which she bore at her breast. In the morning on the next day, when she would have taken her ring, it was gone; she might not find it. Then she had much heaviness and complained to the good wife of the house, saying in this manner,

6. "Jesus is my love."

“Madam, my good marriage ring to Jesus Christ, as one might say, it is lost.”

The good wife, understanding what she meant, prayed her to pray for her, and she changed her manner and her countenance wonderfully, as though she had been guilty. Then this creature took a candle in her hand and sought all about her bed where she had lain all night, and the good wife of the house took another candle in her hand and busied herself to seek also about the bed. And at the last she found the ring under the bed on the boards, and with great joy she told the good wife that she had found her ring. Then the good wife, obeying her, prayed this creature for forgiveness as she could, “Good Christian, pray for me.”

Afterward this creature came to Assisi and there she met with a Friar Minor, an Englishman, and he was held as a solemn clerk. She told him of her manner of living, of her feelings, of her revelations, and of the grace that God wrought in her soul by holy inspirations and high contemplations, and how our Lord dallied to her soul, in a manner of speaking. Then the worshipful clerk said that she was much beholden to God, for he said he had never heard of anyone living in this world to be so homely with God by love and homely dalliance as she was, thanked be God of his gifts, for it is his goodness and no man's merit.

Upon a time when this creature was in church at Assisi, our Lady's veil which she wore here on earth was shown with great light and great reverence.⁷ Then this creature had great devotion. She wept, she sobbed, she cried with great plenty of tears and many holy thoughts. She was there also on Lammas Day,⁸ when there is great pardon of plenary remission, in order to purchase grace, mercy, and forgiveness for herself, for all her friends, for all her enemies, and for all the souls in purgatory. And there was a lady come from Rome to purchase her pardon. Her name was Margaret Florentine, and she had with her many Knights of Rhodes,⁹ many gentlewomen, and much good conveyance. Then Richard, the broken backed man, went to her, praying her that this creature might go with her to Rome and himself also, in order to be kept from the peril of thieves. And then that worshipful lady received them into her company and let them go with her to Rome, as God would.

When the foresaid creature was come into Rome, and those who were her fellows before—and had put her out of their company—were in Rome also and heard tell such a woman was come thither, they had great wonder how she came there in safety. And then she went and ordered herself white clothes and was clad all in white, just as she was

7. The lower church of St. Francis holds the Veil of Our Lady. “Great light”: i.e., large candles, which were expensive.

8. August 1, the feast of St. Peter in Chains, commemorating Peter's freeing from chains and thus our own freedom from the “chains” of sin. In England, Lammas was a day on which quarter rents were collected, and it was associated with agricultural harvest.

9. One of the military orders of the Church.

commanded to do years before in her soul by revelation, and now it was fulfilled in effect.

Then was this creature received into the hospice of Saint Thomas of Canterbury¹ in Rome, and there was she houseled every Sunday with great weeping, violent sobbing, and loud crying and was highly beloved of the master of the hospice and by all his brothers. And then through the stirring of her ghostly enemy there came a priest who was held a holy man in the hospice and also in other places of Rome, who was one of her fellows and one of her own countrymen. And notwithstanding his holiness, he spoke so evilly of this creature and slandered so her name in the hospice that through his evil language she was put out of the hospice so that she might no longer be shriven nor houseled therein.

32. When this creature saw she was forsaken and put from among the good men, she was full heavy, mostly because she had no confessor nor might not be shriven then as she wished. Then prayed she our Lord of his mercy that he would dispose for her as was most pleasing unto him, with great plenty of tears. And afterward she called unto her the foresaid Richard with the broken back, praying him to go over to a church against the hospice and inform the parson of the church of her manner of governance, and what sorrow she had, and how she wept because she might not be shriven nor houseled, and what compunction and contrition she had for her sins. Then Richard went to the parson and informed him of this creature, and how our Lord gave her contrition and compunction with great plenty of tears, and how she desired to be houseled every Sunday if she might, and she had no priest to be shriven to. And then the parson, hearing of her contrition and compunction, was right glad and bade she should come to him in the name of Jesus and say her confession of sins, and he should house her his own self, for he could not understand any English.

Then our Lord sent Saint John the Evangelist² to hear her confession, and she said “Benedicite.” And he said “Dominus”³ verily in her soul so that she saw him and heard him in her ghostly understanding as she should have another priest by her bodily wits. Then she told him all her sins and all her heaviness with many sorrowful tears, and he heard her full meekly and benignly. And afterward he enjoined her penance that she should do for her trespass and assoiled her of her sins with sweet words and meek words, highly strengthening her to trust in the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and bade her that she should receive the sacrament of the altar in the name of Jesus. And afterward he passed away from her. When he was gone, she prayed with all her heart all the time as she heard

1. The hospice of St. Thomas of Canterbury in Rome was for English pilgrims to the city.

2. St. John, the beloved disciple, who also appeared to St. Elizabeth of Hungary. “Benedicite”: bless you.

3. Lord.

her to pray for them. And ever her own countrymen were obstinate, and specially a priest who was among them. He stirred many people against her and said much evil of her, for she wore white clothing more than others did, who they thought were holier and better than ever she was. The cause of his malice was because she would not obey him. And she knew well it was against the health of her soul to obey him as he wished that she should have done.

34. Then the good man, the German priest to whom she was shriven, through the stirring of the English priest who was her enemy, asked her if she would be obedient unto him or not. And she said, "Yes, sir."

"Will you do then as I shall bid you do?"

"With right good will, sire."

"I charge you then that you leave your white clothes, and wear again your black clothes."

And she did his commandment. And then had she feeling that she pleased God with her obedience. Then she suffered many scorns from the wives of Rome. They asked her if highwaymen had robbed her, and she said, "No, Madame."

Afterward, as she went on pilgrimage, it happened that she met with the priest who was her enemy, and he delighted greatly that she was put from her will and said unto her, "I am glad that you go in black clothing as you used to do."

And she said again to him, "Sir, our Lord was not displeased though I wore white clothes, for he willed that I do so."

Then the priest said to her again, "Now know I well that you have a devil within you, for I hear him speak in you to me."

"A, good sir, I pray you drive him away from me, for God knows I would right fain do well and please him if I could."

And then he was right angry and said full many sharp words. And she said to him, "Sir, I hope I have no devil within me, for, if I had a devil within me, know well I should be angry with you and, sir, I think that I am not angry with you for any thing that you can do unto me."

And then the priest parted away from her with a heavy countenance.

And then our Lord spoke to this creature in her soul and said, "Daughter, dread you not whatever he says unto you; for, though he ran every year to Jerusalem, I have no delight in him; for as long as he speaks against you, he speaks against me, for I am in you and you are in me. And hereby may you know that I suffer many sharp words, for I have often said to you that I should be new crucified in you by sharp words, for you shall not otherwise be slain than by suffering sharp words. For this priest who is your enemy, he is but a hypocrite."

Then the good priest her confessor bade her by virtue of obedience and also as part of penance that she should serve an old woman who was a poor creature in Rome. And she did so six weeks. She served her as she

would have done our Lady. And she had no bed to lie in nor any clothes to be covered with save her own mantle. And then she was full of vermin and suffered great pain therewith. Also she fetched home water and sticks on her neck for the poor woman and begged food and wine both for her. And, when the poor woman's wine was sour, this creature herself drank that sour wine and gave the poor woman good wine that she had bought for her own self.

35. As this creature was in the Apostle's Church at Rome on St. John Lateran's Day,⁵ the Father of Heaven said to her, "Daughter, I am well pleased with you, inasmuch as you believe in all the sacraments of Holy Church and in all faith that belongs to it, and specially because you believe in the manhood of my son and because of the great compassion that you have for his bitter Passion."

Also the Father said to this creature, "Daughter, I will have you wedded to my Godhead, for I shall show you my secrets and my counsels, for you shall dwell with me without end."⁶

Then the creature kept silence in her soul and answered not thereto, for she was full sore afraid of the Godhead, and she had no knowledge of the dalliance of the Godhead, for all her love and all her affection was set on the manhood of Christ and thereof had she good knowledge, and she would for no thing have parted therefrom. She was so much affected by the manhood of Christ that when she saw women in Rome bearing children in their arms, if she might learn that there were any men children, she should then cry, roar, and weep as though she had seen Christ in his childhood. And, if she might have had her will, oftentimes she would have taken the children out from the mothers' arms and have kissed them in the place of Christ. And, if she saw a seemly man, she had great pain to look on him in case she might have seen him who was both God and man. And therefore she cried many times and often when she met a seemly man and wept and sobbed full sorely in the manhood of Christ as she went in the streets at Rome, so that those who saw her wondered full much on her, for they knew not the cause.

And therefore it was no wonder if she were still and answered not the Father of Heaven when he told her that she should be wedded to his Godhead. Then said the second person, Christ Jesus, whose manhood she loved so much, to her, "What say you, Margery, daughter, to my Father of these words that he speaks to you? Are you well pleased that it is so?"

And then she would not answer the second person but wept wonder sore, desiring to have still himself and in no way to be parted from him.

Then the second person in the Trinity answered to his Father for her

5. The feast celebrating the dedication of the church of St. John Lateran, November 9.

6. This speech implies that attachment to the manhood of Jesus was preliminary to knowledge of the first person of the Trinity, God the Father.

and said, "Father, have her excused, for she is yet but young and not fully learned as to how she should answer."

And then the Father took her by the hand in her soul before the Son and the Holy Ghost and the Mother of Jesus and all the twelve apostles and Saint Katherine and Saint Margaret and many other saints and holy virgins, with a great multitude of angels, saying to her soul, "I take you, Margery, for my wedded wife, for fairer, for fouler, for richer, for poorer, so that you be buxom and obedient to do what I bid you do. For, daughter, there was never a child so buxom to the mother as I shall be to you, both in well and in woe, to help you and comfort you. And thereto I make you surety."

And then the Mother of God and all the saints that were there present in her soul prayed that they might have much joy together. And then the creature with high devotion, with great plenty of tears, thanked God for this ghostly comfort, holding herself in her own feeling right unworthy of any such grace as she felt, for she felt many great comforts, both ghostly comforts and bodily comforts. Sometimes she felt sweet smells with her nose; it was sweeter, she thought, than ever was any sweet earthly thing that she smelled before, nor might she ever tell how sweet it was, for she thought she might have lived thereby if they would have lasted.

Sometimes she heard with her bodily ears such sounds and melodies that she might not well hear what a man said to her in that time unless he spoke the louder. These sounds and melodies had she heard nearly every day for the term of twenty-five years when this book was written, and especially when she was in devout prayer, also many times while she was at Rome and in England both.

She saw with her bodily eye many white things flying all about her on every side, as thick in a manner as motes in the sun; they were right delicate and comfortable, and the brighter that the sun shone, the better she might see them. She saw them many different times and in many different places, both in church and in her chamber, at her meal and in her prayers, in field and in town, both going and sitting. And many times she was afraid what they might be, for she saw them as well in nights in darkness as in daylight. Then, when she was afraid of them, our Lord said unto her, "By this token, daughter, believe it is God that speaks in you, for whereso God is, heaven is, and where God is there are many angels, and God is in you and you are in him. And therefore be not afraid, daughter, for this betokens that you have many angels about you to keep you both day and night so that no devil shall have power over you nor no evil man harm you."

Then from that time forward she used to say when she saw them come, "Benedictus qui venit in nomine domini."⁷

7. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" are the words used by the priest to welcome Christ's entrance into the elements of the Mass; they here suggest Margery's own sacramental awareness.

Also our Lord gave her another token, which endured about sixteen years, and it increased ever more and more, and that was a flame of fire wonderfully hot and delectable and right comfortable, not wasting but ever increasing of flame, for, though the weather was never so cold, she felt the heat burning in her breast and at her heart, as verily as a man should feel the material fire if he put his hand or his finger therein.⁸

When she felt first the fire of love burning in her breast, she was afraid thereof, and then our Lord answered to her mind and said, "Daughter, be not afraid, for this heat is the heat of the Holy Ghost, which shall burn away all your sins, for the fire of love quenches all sins. And you shall understand by this token that the Holy Ghost is in you, and you know well wherever the Holy Ghost is, there is the Father, and where the Father is, there is the Son, and so you have fully in your soul all the Holy Trinity. Therefore you have great cause to love me right well, and yet you shall have greater cause than ever you had to love me, for you shall hear what you never heard, and you shall see what you never saw, and you shall feel what you never felt.

For, daughter, you are as sure of the love of God as God is God. Your soul is more sure of the love of God than of your own body, for your soul shall part from your body, but God shall never part from your soul, for they are joined together without end. Therefore, daughter, you have as great cause to be merry as any lady in this world, and, if you knew, daughter, how much you please me when you suffer me willfully to speak in you, you should never do otherwise, for this is a holy life, and the time is right well spent. For, daughter, this life pleases me more than wearing of the jacket of mail or of the hair shirt or fasting on bread and water, for, if you said every day a thousand Pater Noster's,⁹ you should not please me as well as you do when you are in silence and suffer me to speak in your soul.

36. "Fasting, daughter, is good for young beginners and discreet penance, namely that their ghostly father gives them or enjoins them to do. And to bid many beads,¹ it is good to those who can do no better, and yet it is not perfect. But it is a good way toward perfection. For I tell you, daughter, those who are great fasters and great doers of penance, they would that it should be held the best life; also those who give themselves to say many devotions, they would have that the best life, and those who give many alms, they would that that was held the best life. And I have oftentimes, daughter, told you that thinking, weeping, and high contemplation is the best life on earth. And you shall have more merit in heaven for one year of thinking in your mind than for a hundred years of praying

8. This sensation of inward burning is one commonly reported by medieval mystics such as Richard Rolle.

9. "Our Father's"; i.e., the Lord's Prayer.

1. i.e., say many prayers.

with your mouth, and yet you will not believe me, for you will bid many beads whether I will or not.

"And yet, daughter, I will not be displeased with you whether you think, say, or speak, for I am always pleased with you. And, if I were on earth as bodily as I was before I died on the cross, I should not be ashamed of you as many other men are, for I should take you by the hand among the people and make you great welcome so that they should well know that I loved you right well. For it is suitable for the wife to be homely with her husband. Be he never so great a lord and she so poor a woman when he wedded her, yet they must lie together and rest together in joy and peace. Right so must it be between you and me, for I take no heed what you have been but what you would be. And oftentimes have I told you that I have clean forgiven you all your sins. Therefore must I needs be homely with you and lie in your bed with you. Daughter, you desire greatly to see me, and you may boldly, when you are in your bed, take me to you as your wedded husband, as your most worthy darling, and as your sweet son, for I will be loved as a son should be loved by the mother and will that you love me, daughter, as a good wife ought to love her husband. And therefore you may boldly take me in the arms of your soul and kiss my mouth, my head, and my feet as sweetly as you will.²

"And, as often as you think on me or would do any good deed to me, you shall have the same reward in heaven as if you did it to my own precious body which is in heaven, for I ask no more of you but your heart to love what loves you, for my love is ever ready for you."

Then she gave thanks and praise to our Lord Jesus Christ for the high grace and mercy that he showed unto her, an unworthy wretch.

This creature had divers tokens in her bodily hearing. One was a manner of sound as if it had been a pair of bellows blowing in her ear. She, being abashed thereof, was warned in her soul no fear to have, for it was the sound of the Holy Ghost. And then our Lord turned that sound into the voice of a dove, and afterward he turned it into the voice of a little bird which is called a red breast that sang full merrily oftentimes in her right ear. And then should she evermore have great grace after she heard such a token. And she had been used to such tokens about twenty-five years at the writing of this book.

Then our Lord Jesus Christ said to his creature, "By these tokens may you well know that I love you, for you are to me a very mother, and to all the world, because of that great charity that is in you, and yet I myself am the cause of that charity, and you shall have great reward therefore in Heaven.

37. "Daughter, because you are so buxom to my will and cleave as sorely unto me as to a man's hands cleaves the skin of dried fish when it

2. The language of intimate physical love was used both by male and by female mystics to express spiritual desire and ecstasy.

is boiled, and will not forsake me for any shame that any man can do to you, and you say also that though I stood before you in my own person and said to you that you should never have my love, nor ever come into heaven, nor ever see my face, yet say you, daughter, that you would never forsake me on earth, nor never love me the less, nor ever do the less business to please me, though you should lie in hell without end, for you may not forbear my love on earth, nor can you have any other comfort but me only, which I am, your God, and am all joy and all bliss to you. Therefore I say to you, worthy daughter, it is impossible that any such soul which has so great meekness and charity toward me should be damned or parted from me. And therefore, daughter, dread you never, for all the great promises that I have promised to you and to all of yours and to all your ghostly fathers shall ever be true and truly fulfilled when the time comes. Have no doubt thereof."

Another time while she was in Rome, a little before Christmas, our Lord Jesus Christ commanded her to go to her ghostly father, Wenslawe by name, and bid him give her leave to wear again her white clothes, for he had put her therefrom by virtue of obedience, as is written before. And, when she told him the will of our Lord, he dared not once say no. And so she wore white clothes ever after.

Then our Lord bade her that she should at Christmas go home again to her host's house where she was at hostel before. And then she went to a poor woman whom she served at that time by the bidding of her confessor, as is before written, and told the poor woman how she must go from her. And then the poor woman was right sorry and made great moan for her departing. And then this creature told her how it was the will of God that it should be so, and then she took it the more easily.

Afterward, as this creature was in Rome, our Lord bade her give away all her goods and make herself bare for his love. And anon she, with a fervent desire to please God, gave away such goods as she had and such as she had borrowed also from the broken-backed man who went with her. When he knew how she had given away his goods, he was greatly moved and evil pleased for she gave away his goods, and spoke right sharply to her.

And then she said unto him, "Richard, by the grace of God we shall come home into England right well. And you shall come to me in Bristol in Whitsun week, and there shall I pay you right well and truly, by the grace of God, for I trust right well that he who bade me give it away for his love will help me to pay it again." And so he did.

38. After this creature had thus given away her goods and had neither penny nor halfpenny to help herself with, as she lay in Saint Marcello's Church in Rome, thinking and studying where she should have her living, inasmuch as she had no silver to sustain herself withal, our Lord answered to her mind and said, "Daughter, you are not yet so poor as I was when I hung naked on the cross for your love, for you have clothes on

When the day came, she was all ready in the Minster to come to her answering. Then came her friends to her and bade her be of good cheer. She, thanking them, said so she should. And quickly came a goodly priest and took her by the arm to help her through the press of the people and brought her before a worshipful doctor, who had admonished her before to appear before him in the chapter-house on this day in York Minster. And with this doctor sat many other clerks, full reverend and worshipful, of which clerks some loved the said creature right well. Then the said worshipful doctor to her, "Woman, what do you here in this country?"

"Sir, I come on pilgrimage to offer here at Saint William."

Then said he again, "Have you a husband?"

She said, "Yes."

"Have you any letter of record?"

"Sir," she said, "my husband gave me leave with his own mouth. Why fare you thus with me more than you do with other pilgrims that are here, who have no letter any more than I have? Sir, then you let go in peace and quiet and in rest, and I may no rest have among you. And, sir, if there be any clerk among you all who can prove that I have said any word otherwise than I ought to do, I am ready to amend it with good will. I will maintain neither error nor heresy, for it is my full will to hold as the Holy Church holds and fully to please God."

Then the clerks examined her in the Articles of the Faith and in many other points as they wished, to which she answered well and truly so that they might have no occasion in her words to trouble her, thanked be God.

And then the doctor who sat there as a judge summoned her to appear before the Archbishop of York and told her what day at a town called Ca-wood,⁸ commanding her to be kept in prison until the day of her appearing came. Then the secular people answered for her and said she should not go into prison, for they would themselves be surety for her and go to the Archbishop⁹ with her. And so the clerks said no more to her at that time, for they rose up and went wherever they would and let her go where she would, worship to Jesus. And soon after there came a clerk unto her—one of the same who had sought against her—and said, "Damsel, I pray you are not displeased with me, though I sat with the doctor against you; he cried so upon me that I dared not do otherwise."

And she said, "Sir, I am not displeased with you therefore."

Then said he, "I pray you, then, pray for me."

"Sir," she said, "I will, readily."

52. There was a monk who should preach in York, who had heard much slander and much evil language of the said creature. And, when

7. Shrine in York Minster of William Fitzherbert, archbishop of York (d. 1154).

8. A town in Yorkshire, south of York.

9. Henry Bowet was archbishop of York from 1407 to 1423. He was notorious for his stern stand against lollardy.

he should preach, there was a great multitude of people to hear him, and she was present with them. And so, when he was in his sermon, he rehearsed many matters so openly that the people conceived well it was because of her, wherefore her friends that loved her well were full sorry and heavy thereof, and she was much the more merry, for she had matter to prove her patience and her charity wherethrough she trusted to please our Lord Christ Jesus. When the sermon was done, a doctor of divinity who loved her well, with many others also, came to her and said, "Margery, how have you done this day?"

"Sir," she said, "right well, blessed be God. I have cause to be right merry and glad in my soul that I may suffer anything for his love, for he suffered much more for me."

Anon after came a man of good will who loved her right well, with his wife and others, and led her seven miles thence to the Archbishop of York, and brought her into a fair chamber, where came a good clerk, saying to the good man who had brought her thither, "Sir, why have you and your wife brought this woman hither? She shall steal away from you, and then shall you have shame of her."

The good man said, "I dare well say she will abide and be at her answering with good will."

On the next day she was brought into the Archbishop's chapel, and there came many of the Archbishop's household, despising her, calling her "lollard" and "heretic," and swearing many a horrible oath that she should be burnt. And she, through the strength of Jesus, said again to them, "Sirs, I fear you shall be burnt in hell without end unless you amend yourselves of your swearing of oaths, for you keep not the commandments of God. I would not swear as you do for all the good of this world."

Then they went away as if they were ashamed. She then, making her prayer in her mind, asked grace so to conduct herself that day as was most pleasant to God and profit to her own soul and good example to her fellow Christians. Our Lord, answering her, said it should be right well. At the last, the said Archbishop came into the chapel with his clerks, and sharply he said to her, "Why go you in white? Are you a maiden?"

She, kneeling on her knees before him, said, "No, sir, I am no maiden; I am a wife."

He commanded his household to fetch a pair of fetters and said she should be fettered, for she was a false heretic. And then she said, "I am no heretic, nor shall you prove me one."

The Archbishop went away and let her stand alone. Then she made her prayers to our Lord God almighty to help her and succor her against all her enemies, ghostly and bodily, a long while, and her flesh trembled and quaked wonderfully so that she was fain to put her hands under her clothes so that it should not be espied.

Afterward the Archbishop came again into the chapel with many worthy clerks, among which was the same doctor who had examined her before and the monk who had preached against her a little time before in York. Some of the people asked whether she were a Christian woman or a Jew; some said she was a good woman, and some said no. Then the Archbishop took his seat, and his clerks also, each of them in his degree, many people being present. And in the time while the people were gathering together and the Archbishop taking his seat, the said creature stood all behind, making her prayers for help and succor against her enemies with high devotion, so long that she melted all into tears. And at the last she cried loudly therewith, so that the Archbishop and his clerks and many people had great wonder of her, for they had not heard such crying before. When her crying was passed, she came before the Archbishop and fell down on her knees, the Archbishop saying full roughly unto her, "Why weep you so, woman?"

She, answering, said, "Sir, you shall wish some day that you had wept as sorely as I."

And then anon, after the Archbishop put to her the Articles of our Faith, to which God gave her grace to answer well and truly and feadily without any great study so that he might not blame her, then he said to the clerks, "She knows her faith well enough. What shall I do with her?"

The clerks said, "We know well that she knows the Articles of the Faith, but we will not suffer her to dwell among us, for the people have great faith in her dalliance, and perhaps she might pervert some of them."

Then the Archbishop said unto her, "I am badly informed of you; I hear said you are a right wicked woman."

And she said again, "Sir, so I hear said that you are a wicked man. And, if you are as wicked as men say, you shall never come into heaven unless you amend yourself while you are here."

Then he said full roughly, "Why, you, what say men of me?"

She answered, "Other men, sir, can tell you well enough."

Then said a great clerk with a furred hood, "Peace, you speak of yourself and let him be."

Afterward said the Archbishop to her, "Lay your hand on the book here before me and swear that you shall go out of my diocese as soon as you may."

"No, sir," she said, "I pray you, give me leave to go again into York to take my leave of my friends."

Then he gave her leave for one day or two. She thought it was too short a time, wherefore she said again, "Sir, I may not go out of this diocese so hastily, for I must tarry and speak with good men before I go, and I must, sir, with your leave, go to Bridlington¹ and speak with

1. Bridlington was the site of the cult of St. John of Bridlington (d. 1379), who was prior of the house of Augustinian Canons there.

my confessor, a good man, who was the good prior's confessor, who is now canonized."²

Then said the Archbishop to her, "You shall swear that you shall neither teach nor challenge the people in my diocese."³

"No, sir, I shall not swear," she said, "for I shall speak of God and reprove those who swear great oaths wheresoever I go, unto the time that the pope and holy church have ordained that no man shall be so hardy to speak of God, for God almighty forbids not, sir, that we shall speak of him. And also the gospel makes mention that, when the woman had heard our Lord preach, she came before him with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed be the womb that bore you and the teats that gave you suck.'⁴ Then our Lord said again to her, 'Forsooth so are they blessed that hear the word of God and keep it.' And therefore, sir, I think that the gospel gives me leave to speak of God."

"A, sir," said the clerks, "here know we well that she has a devil within her, for she speaks of the gospel."⁵

Immediately a great clerk brought forth a book and laid Saint Paul for his part against her that no woman should preach.⁶

She, answering thereto, said, "I preach not, sir, I go in no pulpit. I use but communication and good words, and that will I do while I live."

Then said a doctor who had examined her beforetime, "Sir, she told me the worst tales of priests that ever I heard."

The bishop commanded her to tell that tale.

"Sir, by your reverence, I spoke but of one priest by way of example, who as I have learned went wayward in a wood through the sufferance of God for the profit of his soul until the night came upon him. He, destitute of his lodging, found a fair garden, in which he rested that night, having a fair pear tree in the midst all flourished with flowers and embellished, and blooms full delectable to his sight, where came a bear, great and violent, ugly to behold, shaking the pear tree and knocking down the flowers. Greedily this grievous beast ate and devoured those fair flowers. And, when he had eaten them, turning his tail end in the priest's presence, voided them out again at the shameful part.

"The priest, having great abomination of that loathly sight, conceiving great heaviness for doubt of what it might mean, on the next day wandered forth on his way all heavy and pensive and fortunated to meet with a seemly aged man, like a palmer or a pilgrim, who inquired of the priest the cause of his heaviness. The priest, rehearsing the matter before written, said he conceived great dread and heaviness when he beheld that

2. William Sleightholme (see also the reference to Sleytham in chapter 53, p. 95) was confessor to St. John of Bridlington.

3. Women were prohibited from preaching. Julian of Norwich draws a careful distinction between teaching and preaching.

4. Luke 11.27-28.

5. Lollards were known as "Bible men and women."

6. 1 Corinthians 14.34-35.

loathly beast befoul and devour such fair flowers and blooms and afterward so horribly devoid them before him at his tail end, and he not understanding what this might mean.

"Then the palmer, showing himself the messenger of God, thus addressed him, 'Priest, you yourself are the pear tree, somewhat flourishing and flowering through saying your service and administering the sacraments, though you do so undevotedly, for you take full little heed how you say your matins⁷ and your service, just so it is blabbered to an end. Then go you to your mass without devotion, and for your sin have you full little contrition. You receive there the fruit of everlasting life, the sacrament of the altar, in full feeble disposition. Afterward all the day after you mis-spent your time, you give yourself to buying and selling, chopping and changing, as if you were a man of the world. You sit at the ale, giving yourself to gluttony and excess, to lust of your body, through lechery and uncleanness. You break the commandments of God through swearing, lying, detraction, and backbiting, and the use of other such sins. Thus by your misgovernance, like the loathly bear, you devour and destroy the flowers and blooms of virtuous living to your endless damnation and many men's hindering unless you have grace from repentance and amending."

Then the Archbishop liked well the tale and commended it, saying it was a good tale. And the clerk who had examined her beforetime, in the absence of the Archbishop, said, "Sir, this tale smites me to the heart."

The foresaid creature said to the clerk, "A, worshipful doctor, sir, in the place where my dwelling is mostly, is a worthy clerk, a good preacher, who boldly speaks against the misgovernance of the people and will flatter no man. He says many times in the pulpit, 'If any man is evil pleased with my preaching, note him well, for he is guilty.' And right so, sir," said she to the clerk, "fare you by me, God forgive it you."

The clerk knew not well what he might say to her. Afterward the same clerk came to her and prayed her for forgiveness that he had been so against her. Also he prayed her specially to pray for him. And then anon after, the Archbishop said, "Where shall I find a man who might lead this woman from me?"

Quickly many young men started up, and every man said, "My Lord, I will go with her."

The Archbishop answered, "You are too young; I will not have you."

Then a good sober man from the Archbishop's household asked his Lord what he would give him if he should lead her. The Archbishop offered him five shillings, and the man asked for a noble. The Archbishop, answering, said, "I will not spend so much on her body."

"Yes, good sir," said the said creature, "our Lord shall reward you right well again."

7. The service that, with lauds, is the first of the canonical hours of morning prayer.

Then the Archbishop said to the man, "See, here is five shillings, and lead her fast out of this country."

She, kneeling down on her knees, asked his blessing. He, praying her to pray for him, blessed her and let her go.

Then she, going again to York, was received by many people and by full worthy clerks, who delighted in our Lord who had given her, not lettered, wit and wisdom to answer so many learned men without villainy or blame. Thanks be to God.

53. Afterward that good man who was her leader brought her out of the town and then went they forth to Bridlington to her confessor, who was named Sleytham,⁸ and spoke with him and with many other good men who had comforted her beforetime and done much for her.

Then she would not abide there but took her leave to walk forth on her journey. And then her confessor asked her if she dared not abide because of the Archbishop of York, and she said, "No, forsoothe."

Then the good man gave her silver, beseeching her to pray for him. And so she went forth unto Hull. And there on a time, as they went in procession, a great woman greatly despised her, and she said no word thereto. Many other folk said that she should be set in prison and made great threats. And notwithstanding all their malice, yet a good man came and prayed her to a meal and made her right good welcome. Then the malicious people, who had despised her before, came to this good man and bade him that he should do her no good, for they held that she was no good woman.

On the next day at morn her host led her out at the town's end, for he dared no longer keep her. And so she went to Hessle and would have gone over the water at Humber. Then she happened to find there two Friar Preachers and two yeomen of the Duke of Bedford.⁹ The friars told the yeomen what woman she was, and the yeomen arrested her as she would have taken her boat, and arrested a man who went with her also.

"For our Lord," they said, "the Duke of Bedford has sent for you. And you are held the greatest Lollard in all this country or about London either. And we have sought you in many a country, and we shall have a hundred pounds for bringing you before our Lord."

She said to them, "With good will, sirs, I shall go with you wherever you will lead me."

Then they brought her again into Hessle, and there men called her Lollard, and women came running out of their houses with their distaffs, crying to the people, "Burn this false heretic."

So, as she went forth toward Beverly with the said yeomen and the friars before said, they met many times with men of the country, who said

8. I.e., William Sleightholme.

9. John, duke of Bedford, third son of Henry IV, and at this time lieutenant of the kingdom during Henry V's absence abroad. "Humber": the Humber river in Yorkshire.

unto her, "Damsel, forsake this life that you have, and go spin and card as other women do, and suffer not so much shame and so much woe. We would not suffer so much for any good on earth."

Then she said to them, "I suffer not so much sorrow as I would do for our Lord's love, for I suffer but sharp words, and our merciful Lord Christ Jesus, worshipped be his name, suffered hard strokes, bitter scourgings, and shameful death at the last for me and for all mankind, blessed may he be. And therefore it is right naught what I suffer in regard to what he suffered."

And so, as she went with the foresaid men, she told them good tales until one of the duke's men who had arrested her said unto her, "I regret that I met with you, for it seems to me that you say right good words."

Then said she unto him, "Sir, regret nor repent you not that you met with me. Do your lord's will, and I trust all shall be for the best, for I am right well pleased that you met with me."

He said again, "Damsel, if ever you are a saint in heaven, pray for me."

She answered, saying to him again, "Sir, I hope you shall be a saint yourself and every man who shall come to heaven."

So they went forth until they came into Beverly, where dwelled the wife of one of the men who had arrested her. And thither they led her and took away from her her scrip and her ring. They ordained her a fair chamber and an honest bed therein with the necessaries, locking the door with the key and bearing away the key with them. Afterward they took the man whom they arrested with her, who was the Archbishop of York's man, and put him in prison. And soon after, that same day came tidings that the Archbishop was come into the town where his man was put in prison. It was told the Archbishop of his man's imprisonment, and anon he had him let out. Then that man went with an angry manner to the said creature, saying, "Alas that ever I knew you. I have been imprisoned for you."

She, comforting him, said again, "Have meekness and patience, and you shall have great reward in heaven for it."

So went he away from her. Then she stood looking out of a window, telling many good tales to those who would hear her, in so much that women wept sorely and said with great heaviness of their hearts, "Alas, woman, why shall you be burnt?"

Then she prayed the good wife of the house to give her drink, for she was badly off for thirst. And the good wife said her husband had born away the key, wherefore she might not come to her nor give her drink. And then the women took a ladder and set it up to the window and gave her a pint of wine in a pot and took her a wine cup, beseeching her to set away the pot secretly and the wine cup, so that when the good man came he might not spy it.

54. The said creature, lying in her bed the next night following, heard with her bodily ears a loud voice calling, "Margery."

With that voice she woke, greatly afraid, and, lying still in silence, she made her prayers as devoutly as she could for the time. And soon our merciful Lord, overall present, comforting his unworthy servant, said unto her, "Daughter, it is more pleasing unto me that you suffer despites and scorns, shames and reproofs, wrongs and troubles than if your head were smote off three times a day every day for seven years. And therefore, daughter, fear not what any man can say unto you, but in my goodness and in your sorrows that you have suffered therein have you great cause to rejoice, for, when you come home into heaven, then shall every sorrow turn you to joy."

On the next day she was brought into the chapter house at Beverley, and there was the Archbishop of York and many great clerks with him, priests, canons, and secular men. Then said the Archbishop to the said creature, "What, woman, are you come again? I would fain be delivered of you."

And then a priest brought her forth before him, and the Archbishop said, all who were present hearing, "Sirs, I had this woman before me at Cawood, and there I, with my clerks, examined her in her faith and found no default in her. Furthermore, sirs, I have since that time spoken with good men who hold her a perfect woman and a good woman. Notwithstanding all this, I gave one of my men five shillings to lead her out of this country for the quieting of the people. And, as they were going on their journey, they were taken and arrested, my man put in prison for her, also her gold and her silver was taken away from her with her beads and her ring, and she is brought here again before me. Is there any man who can say anything against her?"

Then other men said, "Here is a friar who knows many things against her."

The friar came forth and said that she disproved all men of holy church and much ill language he uttered that time of her. Also he said that she should have been burnt at Lynn, had his order, that was the Friar Preachers,¹ not been there. "And, sir, she says that she may weep and have contrition when she wishes."

Then came those two men who had arrested her, saying with the friar that she was Cobham's daughter² and was sent to bear letters about the country. And they said she had not been at Jerusalem nor in the Holy Land nor on other pilgrimages, just as she had been in truth. They denied all truth and maintained the wrong, as many others had done before. When they had said enough for a great while and a long time, they were in peace.

Then the Archbishop said to her, "Woman, what say you hereto?"

1. The Dominicans.

2. This is probably a reference to Sir John Oldcastle, who was Lord Cobham, the Herefordshire Lollard who had escaped from the Tower and remained in hiding from 1413 to 1417, when he was captured, tried, and executed.

She said, "My Lord, save your reverence, all the words that they say are lies."

Then said the Archbishop to the friar, "Friar, the words are not heresy; they are slanderous words and erroneous."

"My Lord," said the friar, "she knows her faith well enough. Nevertheless, my Lord of Bedford is angry with her, and he will have her."

"Well, friar," said the Archbishop, "and you shall lead her to him."

"No, sir," said the friar, "it falls not for a friar to lead a woman about."

"And I will not," said the Archbishop, "that the Duke of Bedford be angry with me for her."

Then said the Archbishop to his men, "Take heed of the friar till I will have him again," and commanded another man to keep the said creature also, till he would have her again another time when he liked.

The said creature prayed him of his lordship that she should not be put among men, for she was a man's wife. And the Archbishop said, "Nay, you shall no harm have."

Then he who was charged with her took her by the hand and led her home to his house and had her sit with him at meat and drink, showing her goodly welcome. Thither came many priests and other men again to see her and speak with her, and many people had great compassion that she was so badly fared with.

In a short time after, the Archbishop sent for her, and she came into his hall. His household was at a meal, and she was led into his chamber, even to his bedside. Then she, obeying, thanked him for his gracious lordship that he had showed to her beforetime.

"Yes, yes," said the Archbishop, "I am worse informed of you than ever I was before."

She said, "My Lord, if it pleases you to examine me, I shall confess the truth, and, if I am found guilty, I will obey your correction."

Then came forth a Friar Preacher who was suffragen³ to the Archbishop, to whom the Archbishop said, "Now, sir, as you said to me when she was not present, say now while she is present."

"Shall I so?" said the suffragen.

"Yes," said the Archbishop.

Then said the suffragen to the said creature, "Damsel, you were at my Lady Westmorland's."⁴

"When, sir?" said she.

"At Easter," said the suffragen.

She, not replying, said, "Well, sir?"

Then said he, "My Lady her own person was well pleased with you and liked well your words, but you counseled my Lady Greystoke, who is a

3. Assistant.

4. Lady Westmorland was Joan de Beaufort, the daughter of John of Gaunt and Catherine Swynford (his longtime mistress and third wife); she was married to Ralph Neville, the earl of Westmorland.

baron's wife and daughter to my lady of Westmorland,⁵ to forsake her husband, and now have you said enough to be burnt for."

And so he multiplied many sharp words before the Archbishop; it is not expedient to rehearse them. At the last she said to the Archbishop, "My Lord, if it be your will, I saw not my Lady Westmorland these two years and more. Sir, she sent for me before I went to Jerusalem and, if it pleases you, I will go again to her for record that I moved no such matter."

"Nay," said those who stood about, "let her be put in prison, and we shall send a letter to the worshipful lady, and, if it be truth that she says, let her go free without danger."

And she said she was right well satisfied that it was so. Then said a great clerk who stood a little beside the Archbishop, "Put her for forty days in prison, and she shall love God the better while she lives."

The Archbishop asked her what tale it was that she told the Lady of Westmorland when she spoke with her. She said, "I told her a good tale of a lady who was damned because she would not love her enemies and of a bailiff who was saved because he loved his enemies and forgave it that they had trespassed against him, and yet he was held an evil man."

The Archbishop said it was a good tale. Then his steward and many more with him said, crying with a loud voice to the Archbishop, "Lord, we pray you let her go hence at this time, and, if ever she comes again, we shall burn her ourselves."

The Archbishop said, "I believe there was never woman in England so treated as she is and has been." Then he said to the said creature, "I know not what I shall do with you."

She said, "My Lord, I pray you let me have your letter and your seal as a record that I have excused myself against my enemies and nothing is charged against me, neither error nor heresy, that may be proved upon me, thanked be our Lord, and John, your man, again to bring me over the water."

And the Archbishop full kindly granted her all her desire, our Lord reward him his meed, and delivered her scrip with her ring and her beads, which the Duke's men of Bedford had taken from her before. The Archbishop had great marvel where she had good to go with about the country, and she said good men gave it to her in order that she should pray for them. Then she, kneeling down, received his blessing and took her leave with right glad countenance, going out of his chamber. And the Archbishop's household prayed her to pray for them, but the steward was angry because she laughed and made good cheer, saying to her, "Holy folk should not laugh."

She said, "Sir, I have great cause to laugh, for the more shame and despite I suffer, the merrier may I be in our Lord Jesus Christ."

5. Lady Greystoke was the daughter of Joan de Beaufort by her first husband and the wife of John de Greystoke.

Then she came down into the hall, and there stood the Friar Preacher who had caused her all that woe. And so she passed forth with a man of the Archbishop's, bearing the letter which the Archbishop had granted her for a record, and he brought her to the water of Humber, and there he took his leave of her, returning to his lord and bearing the said letter with him again, so was she left alone, without knowledge of the people. All the foresaid trouble befell her on a Friday, thanked be God of all.

55. When she had passed the water of Humber, anon she was arrested as a Lollard and led toward prison. There happened to be a person who had seen her before the Archbishop of York and got her leave to go where she would and excused her against the bailiff and undertook for her that she was no Lollard. And so she escaped away in the name of Jesus.

Then met she with a man of London and his wife with him. And so went she forth with them till she came to Lincoln, and there suffered she many scorns and many annoying words, answering again in God's cause without any hindrance, wisely and discreetly so that many men marveled at her cunning. There were men of law who said unto her, "We have gone to school many years, and yet are we not sufficient to answer as you do. Of whom have you this cunning?"

And she said, "Of the Holy Ghost."

Then asked they, "Have you the Holy Ghost?"

"Yes, sirs," said she, "there may no man say a good word without the gift of the Holy Ghost, for our Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples, 'Study not what you shall say, for it shall not be your spirit that shall speak in you, but it shall be the spirit of the Holy Ghost.'"

And thus our Lord gave her grace to answer them, worshipped may he be.

Another time there came great lords' men unto her, and they swore many great oaths, saying, "It is given us to know that you can tell us whether we shall be saved or damned."

She said, "Yes, forsooth I can, for, as long as you swear such horrible oaths and break the commandment of God knowingly as you do and will not leave your sin, I dare well say you shall be damned. And, if you will be contrite and shriven of your sin, willfully do penance and leave it while you may, in will no more to turn again thereto, I dare well say you shall be saved."

"What, can you nothing otherwise tell us but thus?"

"Sirs," she said, "this is right good, I think."

And then they went away from her. After this she came homeward again till she came to West Lynn.⁶ When she was there, she sent into Bishop's Lynn after her husband, after Master Robert, her confessor, and after Master Alan, a doctor of divinity, and told them in part of her tribulation. And afterward she told them that she might not come home to

6. The parish of West Lynn is opposite the parish of King's Lynn.

Bishop's Lynn from the time that she had been to the Archbishop of Canterbury for his letter and his seal.⁷

"For, when I was before the Archbishop of York," she said, "he would give no credence to my words inasmuch as I had not my lord's letter and seal of Canterbury. And so I promised him that I should not come into Bishop's Lynn till I had my lord's letter and the seal of Canterbury."

And then she took her leave of the said clerks, asking their blessing, and passed forth with her husband to London. When she came there, she was helped quickly about her letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury. And so she dwelled in the city of London a long time and had right good welcome of many worthy men.

Afterward she came toward Ely in order to have come home into Lynn, and when she was three miles from Ely, there came a man riding after at a great speed and arrested her husband and her also, purposing to lead them both into prison. He cruelly rebuked them and greatly reviled them, repeating many reproving words. And at the last she prayed her husband to show him my Lord's letter of Canterbury. When the man had read the letter, then he spoke fair and kindly unto them, saying, "Why showed me not your letter before?"

And so they parted away from him and then came into Ely and, from thence, home into Lynn, where she suffered much despite, much reproof, many a scorn, many a slander, many a banning, and many a cursing. And on a time a reckless man, little caring for his own shame, with will and with purpose, cast a bowlful of water on her head as she came in the street. She, nothing moved therewith, said, "God make you a good man," highly thanking God thereof, as she did many more other times.

56. Afterward God punished her with many great and divers sicknesses. She had the flux⁸ a long time till she was aointed, thinking to have been dead. She was so feeble that she might not hold a spoon in her hand. Then our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to her in her soul and said that she should not die yet. Then she recovered again for a little while. And anon after, she had a great sickness in her head and afterward in her back so that she feared to have lost her wit from it. Afterward, when she was recovered from all these sicknesses, in short time followed another sickness which was set in her right side, enduring the term of eight years, save eight weeks, at different times. Sometimes she had it once in a week, continuing sometimes thirty hours, sometimes twenty, sometimes ten, sometimes eight, sometimes four, and sometimes two, so hard and so sharp that she must void what was in her stomach as bitter as though it had been gall, neither eating nor drinking while the sickness endured but ever groaning till it was gone.

7. This is probably an allusion to Henry Chichele, who succeeded Thomas Arundel as archbishop of Canterbury (1414-43).

8. Dysentery.

they will not themselves be saved, for all they will sometimes hear the word of God, but they will not always do thereafter, and they will not sorrow themselves for their sins, nor will they suffer any other to suffer for them. Nevertheless, daughter, I have ordained you to be a mirror among them, to have great sorrow so that they should take example by you in order to have some little sorrow in their hearts for their sins so that they might through it be saved, but they love not to hear of sorrow nor of contrition. But, good daughter, do you your duty and pray for them while you are in this world, and you shall have the same meed and reward in heaven as if all the world were saved by your good will and your prayer. Daughter, I have many times said to you that many thousand souls shall be saved through your prayers, and some who lie on the point of death shall have grace through your merits and your prayers, for your tears and your prayers are full sweet and acceptable unto me."

Then she said in her mind to our Lord Jesus Christ, "A, Jesus, blessed may you be without end, for I have many a great cause to thank you and love you with all my heart, for it seems to me, Lord, that you are all charity to the profit and health of man's soul. A, Lord, I believe that he shall be right wicked who shall be parted from you without end. He shall neither will good, nor do good, nor desire good. And therefore, Lord, I thank you for all goodness that you have showed unto me, right unworthy wretch."

And then on the same Sunday, when the priest took the cross staff and smote on the church door⁹ and the door opened against him, and then the priest entered with the sacrament and all the people following into church, then thought she that our Lord spoke to the devil and opened hell gates, confounding him and all his host and what grace and goodness he showed to those souls, delivering them from everlasting prison, in spite of the devil and all his. She had many a holy thought and many a holy desire which she could never tell nor repeat, nor might her tongue ever express the abundance of grace that she felt, blessed be our Lord for all his gifts.

When they were come into the church and she beheld the priests kneeling before the crucifix, and, as they sang, the priest who executed the service that day drew up a cloth before the crucifix three times, every time higher than the other, so that the people should see the crucifix, then was her mind all wholly taken out of all earthly things and set all in ghostly things, praying and desiring that she might at the last have the full sight of him in heaven who is both God and man in one person.¹ And

9. This is the point in the ceremony when the Palm Sunday procession prepared to re-enter the church, a moment that re-enacted both Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his breaking down of Hell's gates on Holy Saturday.

1. Throughout Lent the Crucifix was hidden by a painted veil suspended on the rood screen, the carved screen that separated lay worshippers from the altar. At the climax of the Palm Sunday ceremony, the worshippers gathered in front of the rood screen and knelt as the veil was drawn up on pulleys, the anthem "Ave Rex Noster" was sung, and the priests venerated the Crucifix (Duffy [1992], p. 27).

then should she, all the mass time after, weep and sob full plenteously; and sometimes while crying right fervently she thought that she saw our Lord Christ Jesus as verily in her soul with her ghostly eye as she had seen before the crucifix with her bodily eye.

79. Then she beheld in the sight of her soul our blissful Lord Christ Jesus coming toward his Passion, and, before he went, he kneeled down and took his mother's blessing.² Then she saw his mother falling down in swooning before her son, saying unto him, "Alas, my dear Son, how shall I suffer this sorrow and have no joy in all this world but you alone. A, dear Son, if you will die anyway, let me die before you and let me never suffer this day of sorrow, for I may never bear this sorrow that I shall have for your death. I would, Son, that I might suffer death for you so that you should not die, if man's soul might so be saved. Now, dear son, if you have no pity on yourself, have pity on your mother, for you know full well there can no man in all this world comfort me but you alone."

Then our Lord took up his mother in his arms and kissed her full sweetly and said to her, "A, blessed mother, be of a good cheer and of a good comfort, for I have told you full often that I must needs suffer death, otherwise no man should be saved nor ever come into bliss. And mother, it is my father's will that it be so, and therefore I pray you let it be your will also, for my death shall turn me to great worship and you and all mankind to great joy and profit, whomever trusts in my passion and works thereafter. And therefore, blessed mother, you must abide here after me, for in you shall rest all the faith of Holy Church, and by your faith Holy Church shall increase in her faith. And therefore I pray you, worthy mother, cease from your sorrowing, for I shall not leave you comfortless. I shall leave here with you John, my cousin, to comfort you instead of me; I shall send my holy angels to comfort you on earth; and I shall comfort you in your soul my own self, for, mother, you know well I have promised you the bliss of heaven and that you are sure thereof. A, worthy mother, what would you better than where I am king you be queen, and all angels and saints shall be buxom to your will?

"And what grace you ask me I shall not deny your desire. I shall give you power over the devils so that they shall be afraid of you and you not of them. And also, my blessed mother, I have said to you beforetime that I shall come for you my own self when you shall pass out of this world with all my angels and all my saints that are in heaven and bring you before my father with all manner of music, melody, and joy. And there shall I set you in great peace and rest without end. And there shall you be crowned as Queen of Heaven, as lady of all the world, and as Empress of

2. Kempe's extrabiblical account of the Passion, which emphasizes the relationships between Jesus and those who loved and followed him, is indebted to Nicholas Love's influential treatise *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*. Margery imaginatively places herself in these scenes.

Hell. And therefore, my worthy mother, I pray you bless me and let me go do my father's will, for therefore I came into this world and took flesh and blood from you."

When the said creature beheld this glorious sight in her soul and saw how he blessed his mother and his mother him, and then his blessed mother might not speak one word more to him but fell down to the ground, and so they parted asunder, his mother lying still as if she had been dead, then the said creature thought she took our Lord Jesus Christ by the clothes and fell down at his feet, praying him to bless her, and therewith she cried full loudly and wept right sorely, saying in her mind, "A, Lord, where shall I become? I had far rather that you would slay me than let me abide in the world without you, for without you I may not abide here, Lord."

Then answered our Lord to her, "Be still, daughter, and rest with my mother here, and comfort you in her, for she who is my own mother must suffer this sorrow. But I shall come again, daughter, to my mother and comfort her and you both and turn all your sorrow into joy."

And then she thought our Lord went forth his way, and she went to our Lady and said, "A, blessed Lady, rise up and let us follow your blessed son as long as we may see him so that I may look enough upon him before he dies. A, dear Lady, how may your heart last and see your blissful son see all this woe? Lady, I may not endure it, and yet am I not his mother."

Then our Lady answered and said, "Daughter, you hear well it will not otherwise be, and therefore I must needs suffer it for my son's love."

And then she thought that they followed forth after our Lord and saw how he made his prayers to his father in the Mount of Olives and heard the goodly answer that came from his father and the goodly answer that he gave his father again.³ Then she saw how our Lord went to his disciples and bade them wake; his enemies were near. And then came a great multitude of people with much light and many armed men with staves, swords, and poleaxes to seek our Lord Jesus Christ. Our merciful Lord as a meek lamb saying unto them, "Whom seek you?"

They answered with a sharp spirit, "Jesus of Nazareth."

Our Lord said again, "Ego sum."⁴

And then she saw the Jews fall down on the ground; they might not stand for dread, but anon they rose again and sought as they had done before. And our Lord asked, "Whom seek you?"

And they said again, "Jesus of Nazareth."

Our Lord answered, "I it am."

3. After the Last Supper, Jesus took his disciples to the Mount of Olives, where he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed that his cup of suffering might be taken from him if it was God's will. The disciples were not able to stay awake during Jesus' agony though he asked them to pray with him. Shortly afterward he was betrayed by Judas and arrested. See Luke 22.39-54 for a Gospel account.

4. I am he.

And then anon she saw Judas come and kiss our Lord, and the Jews laid hands upon him full violently.

Then had our Lady and she much sorrow and great pain to see the lamb of innocence so contemptibly be held and drawn by his own people that he was specially sent unto. And immediately the said creature beheld with her ghostly eye the Jews putting a cloth before our Lord's eye, beating him and buffeting him in the head and bobbing him before his sweet mouth, crying full cruelly unto him, "Tell us now who smote you."

They spared not to spit in his face in the most shameful way that they could. And then our Lady and she her unworthy handmaiden for the time wept and sighed full sorely, for the Jews fared so foul and so venomously with her blissful Lord. And they would not spare to pull his blissful ears and draw the hair of his beard. And anon after she saw them draw off his clothes and make him all naked and then draw him forth before them as if he had been the greatest malefactor in all the world. And he went forth full meekly before them, all mother-naked as he was born, to a pillar of stone and spoke no word against them but let them do and say what they would. And there they bound him to the pillar as straight as they could and beat him on his fair white body with switches, with whips, and with scourges. And then she thought our Lady wept wonderfully sorely. And therefore the said creature must needs weep and cry when she saw such ghostly sights in her soul as freshly and as verily as if it had been done in deed in her bodily sight, and she thought that our Lady and she were always together to see our Lord's pains. such ghostly sights had she every Palm Sunday and every Good Friday, and in many other ways for many years together. And therefore cried she and wept full sorely and suffered full much despite and reproof in many a country.

And then our Lord said to her soul, "Daughter, these sorrows and many more suffered I for your love, and divers pains, more than any man can tell on earth. Therefore, daughter, you have great cause to love me right well, for I have bought your love full dearly."

80. Another time she saw in her contemplation our Lord Jesus Christ bound to a pillar, and his hands were bound above his head. And then she saw sixteen men with sixteen scourges, and each scourge had eight lead-tipped lashes on the end, and every metal tip was full of sharp prickles as if it had been the rowels⁵ of a spur. And those men with the scourges made covenant that each of them should give our Lord forty strokes. When she saw this piteous sight, she wept and cried right loudly as if she should have burst for sorrow and pain. And, when our Lord was utterly beaten and scourged, the Jews unloosed him from the pillar and gave him his cross to bear on his shoulder.

And then she thought that she and our Lady went by another way in

5. The rowel is the part of a spur that is a small wheel with several rotating sharp points.

order to meet with him, and, when they met with him, they saw him bear the heavy cross with great pain; it was so heavy and so rough that hardly he might bear it. And then our Lady said unto him, "A, my sweet son, let me help to bear that heavy cross." And she was so weak that she might not but fell down and swooned and lay still as a dead woman.

Then the creature saw our Lord fall down by his mother and comfort her as he might with many sweet words. When she heard the words and saw the compassion that the mother had of the son and the son of his mother, then she wept, sobbed, and cried as though she should have died for the pity and compassion that she had of that piteous sight and the holy thoughts that she had in the meantime, which were so delicate and heavenly that she could never tell them afterward as she had them in feeling.

Afterward she went forth in contemplation through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to the place where he was nailed to the cross. And then she saw the Jews with great violence rend from our Lord's precious body a cloth of silk, which had cleaved and hardened with his precious blood so completely and straightly to our Lord's body that it drew away all the hide and all the skin from his blessed body and renewed his precious wounds and made the blood to run down all about on every side. Then that precious body appeared to her sight as raw, as a thing that was newly flayed out of the skin, full piteous and rueful to behold. And so had she a new sorrow so that she wept and cried right sorely.

And anon after she beheld how the cruel Jews laid his precious body to the cross and afterward took a long nail, rough and huge, and set it to his one hand and with great violence and cruelty they drove it through his hand. His blissful mother and this creature beholding how his precious body shrunk and drew together with all the sinews and veins in that precious body for the pain that it suffered and felt, they sorrowed and mourned and sighed full sorely. Then saw she with her ghostly eye how the Jews fastened ropes on the other hand, for the sinews and veins were so shrunken with pain that it might not come to the hole that they had marked for it, and drew thereon to make it meet with the hole. And so her pain and her sorrow ever increased. And afterward they drew his blissful feet in the same manner.

And then she thought in her soul she heard our Lady say to the Jews, "Alas, you cruel Jews, why fare you so with my sweet son and did he you never any harm? You fill my heart full of sorrow."⁶

And then she thought the Jews spoke again violently to our Lady and put her away from her son. Then the foresaid creature thought that she cried out on the Jews and said, "You cursed Jews, why slay you my Lord Jesus Christ? Slay me rather, and let him go."

6. The anti-Judaism of the *Book* should be compared to other Middle English treatments of the Passion, which are often more intensely expressed. For remarks about Kempe's use of contemporary anti-Judaism as a critique of Margery's fellow Christians, see Staley (1994), pp. 68-71.

And then she wept and cried passingly sore so that many of the people in the church wondered on her body. And anon she saw them take up the cross with our Lord's body hanging thereon and made a great noise and a great cry and lifted it up from the earth a certain distance and afterwards let the cross fall down into the hole. And then our Lord's body shook and shuddered, and all the joints of that blissful body burst and went asunder, and his precious wounds ran down with rivers of blood on every side. And so she had ever more cause of more weeping and sorrowing. And then she heard our Lord hanging on the cross say these words to his mother, "Woman, see your son, Saint John, the Evangelist."

Then she thought our Lady fell down and swooned, and Saint John took her up in his arms and comforted her with sweet words as well as he could or might.

The creature said then to our Lord, as it seemed to her, "Alas, Lord, you leave here a care-full mother. What shall we now do and how shall we bear this great sorrow that we shall have for your love?"

And then she heard the two thieves speak to our Lord, and our Lord said to the one thief, "This day you shall be with me in paradise."

Then was she glad of that answer and prayed our Lord, for his mercy, that he would be as gracious to her soul when she should pass out of this world as he was to the thief; for she was worse, she thought, than any thief.

And then she thought our Lord commended his spirit into his father's hands and therewith he died. Then she thought she saw our Lady swoon and fall down and lie still as if she had been dead. Then the creature thought that she ran all about the place as if she had been a mad woman, crying and roaring. And afterward she came to our Lady and fell down on her knees before her, saying to her, "I pray you, Lady, cease from your sorrowing, for your son is dead and out of pain, for I think you have sorrowed enough. And, Lady, I will sorrow for you, for your sorrow is my sorrow."

Then she thought she saw Joseph of Arimethea take down our Lord's body from the cross and lay it before our Lady on a marble stone. Our Lady had then a manner of joy when her dear son was taken down from the cross and laid on the stone before her. And then our blissful Lady bowed down to her son's body and kissed his mouth and wept so plentifully over his blessed face that she washed away the blood from his face with the tears of her eyes. And then the creature thought she heard Mary Magdalene say to our Lady, "I pray you, Lady, give me leave to handle and kiss his feet, for at these get I grace."⁷

Anon our Lady gave leave to her and all those that were there about to do what worship and reverence they would to that precious body. And anon Mary Magdalene took our Lord's feet and our Lady's sisters took his

7. Mary asks to venerate the most humble aspect of the physical body of Jesus. She is traditionally pictured at the feet of Jesus, and later in chapter 85 (p. 152) Margery, for whom the Magdalene is a powerful example of love and piety, venerates Jesus' toes.

hands, the one sister one hand and the other sister another hand, and wept full sorely while kissing those hands and those precious feet.

And the said creature thought that she ran ever to and fro as if she had been a woman without reason, greatly desiring to have had the precious body by herself alone so that she might have wept enough in the presence of that precious body, for she thought that she would have died with weeping and mourning in his death for the love that she had of him.

And immediately she saw Saint John the Evangelist, Joseph of Arimethea, and other friends of our Lord come and would bury our Lord's body and prayed our Lady that she would suffer them to bury that precious body. Our doleful Lady said to them, "Sirs, would you take away from me my Son's body? I might never look upon him enough while he live; I pray you, let me have him now he is dead, and part not my son and me asunder. And, if you will bury him anyway, I pray you bury me with him, for I may not live without him."

And the creature thought that they prayed our Lady so fair, till at the last our Lady let them bury her dear son with great worship and with great reverence as it belonged to them to do.

81. When our Lord was buried, our Lady fell down swooning as she would have come from the grave, and Saint John took her up in his arms and Mary Magdalene went on the other side to support and comfort our Lady in as much as they could or might. Then the said creature, desiring to abide still by the grave of our Lord, mourned, wept, and sorrowed with loud crying for the tenderness and compassion that she had of our Lord's death and many a lamentable desire that God put in her mind for the time. Wherefore the people wondered upon her, having great marvel what ailed her, for they knew full little the cause. She thought she would never have parted thence but desired to have died there and be buried with our Lord.

Afterward the creature thought she saw our Lady go homeward again. And, as she went, there came many good women toward her and said, "Lady, woe is us that your son is dead and that our people have done him so much despite."

And then our Lady, bowing down her head, thanked them full meekly with manner and with countenance, for she might not speak, her heart was so full of heaviness. Then the creature thought, when our Lady was come home and was laid down on a bed, that she made for our Lady a good hot drink⁸ and brought it to her to comfort her, and then our Lady said unto her, "Do it away, daughter. Give me no food but my own child."

The creature said again, "A, blessed Lady, you must needs comfort yourself and cease from your sorrowing."

8. On this extrabiblical detail, see Gibson (1989), p. 51.

"A, daughter, where should I go or where should I dwell without sorrow? I tell you certain, there was never woman on earth had so great a cause to sorrow as I have, for there was never woman in this world bore a better child, nor a meeker to his mother, than my son was to me."

And she thought she heard our Lady cry anon with a lamentable voice and said, "John, where is my son Jesus Christ?"

And Saint John answered again and said, "Dear Lady, you know well that he is dead."

"A, John," she said, "that is to me a care-full counsel."

The creature heard as clearly this answer in the understanding of her soul as she would understand one man speak to another. And anon the creature heard Saint Peter knocking at the door, and Saint John asked who was there. Peter answered, "I, sinful Peter, who has forsaken my Lord Jesus Christ."

Saint John would have had him come in, and Peter would not till our Lady bade him come in. And then Peter said, "Lady, I am not worthy to come in to you," and was still without the door.

Then Saint John went to our Lady and told her that Peter was so abashed that he dared not come in. Our Lady bade Saint John go again quickly to Saint Peter and bid him come in to her. And then the creature in her ghostly sight beheld Saint Peter come before our Lady and fall down on his knees with great weeping and sobbing, and say, "Lady, I cry you mercy, for I have forsaken your worthy son and my sweet master who has loved me full well, and therefore, Lady, I am never worthy to look on him nor you either but by your great mercy."

"A, Peter," said our Lady, "dread you not, for though you have forsaken my sweet son, he forsook never you, Peter, and he shall come again and comfort us all right well, for he promised me, Peter, that he would come again on the third day and comfort me. A, Peter," said our Lady, "full long time shall I think it till that day comes that I may see his blessed face."

Then our Lady lay still on her bed and heard how the friends of Jesus made their complaint for the sorrow that they had. And ever our Lady lay still, mourning and weeping with heavy manner, and at the last Mary Magdalene and our Lady's sisters took their leave of our Lady to go buy ointment that they might anoint therewith our Lord's body. Then the creature was left still with our Lady and thought it a thousand years till the third day came, and that day she was with our Lady in a chapel where our Lord Jesus Christ appeared unto her and said, "Salve sancta parens⁹ And then the creature thought in her soul that our Lady said, "Are you my sweet son, Jesus?"

And he said, "Yes, my blessed Mother, I am your own son, Jesus." Then he took up his blessed mother and kissed her full sweetly. And then the

9. "Greetings, blessed parent." The greeting is used as part of the Mass of the Blessed Mary. See also *Meditations*, p. 199.

creature thought that she saw our Lady feel and examine our Lord's body all about, and his hands and his feet, if there were any soreness or any pain. And she heard our Lord say to his mother, "Dear Mother, my pain is all gone, and now shall I live for evermore. And, mother, so shall your pain and your sorrow be turned into full great joy. Mother, ask what you will I shall tell you."

And when he had suffered his mother to ask what she would and had answered her questions, then he said, "Mother, by your leave I must go speak with Mary Magdalene."

Our Lady said, "It is well done, for, son, she has full much sorrow for your absence. And, I pray you, be not long from me."

These ghostly sights and understandings caused the creature to weep, to sob, and to cry full loudly so that she might not measure herself nor restrain herself from it on Easter Day and other days when our Lord would visit her with his grace, blessed and worshipped may he be. And anon after the creature was in her contemplation with Mary Magdalene, mourning and seeking our Lord at the grave, and heard and saw how our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her in likeness of a gardener, saying, "Woman, why weep you?"¹

Mary, not knowing what he was, all inflamed with the fire of love, said to him again, "Sir, if you have taken away my Lord, tell me, and I shall take him again."

Then our merciful Lord, having pity and compassion for her, said, "Mary."

And with that word she, knowing our Lord, fell down at his feet and would have kissed his feet, saying, "Master."

Our Lord said to her, "Touch me not."

Then the creature thought that Mary Magdalene said to our Lord, "A, Lord, I see well you will not that I be so homely with you as I have been before," and made a heavy countenance.

"Yes, Mary," said our Lord, "I shall never forsake you, but I shall ever be with you without end."

And then our Lord said to Mary Magdalene, "Go tell my brothers and Peter that I am up risen."

And then the creature thought that Mary went forth with great joy, and that was a great marvel to her that Mary rejoiced, for, if our Lord had said to her as he did to Mary, she thought she could never have been merry. That was when she would have kissed his feet, and he said, "Touch me not." The creature had such great sorrow and heaviness in that word that ever when she heard it in any sermon, as she did many times, she wept, sorrowed, and cried as if she would have died of the love and desire that she had to be with our Lord.

1. For this encounter, see John 20.1-81.

82. On Purification Day or else Candlemas Day,² when the said creature beheld the people with their candles in church, her mind was ravished into a beholding of our Lady offering her blissful son, our Savior, to the priest Simeon in the temple, as verily to her ghostly understanding as if she had been there in her bodily presence to have offered with our Lady's own person. Then was she so comforted by the contemplation in her soul that she had in the beholding of our Lord Jesus Christ and of his blessed Mother, of Simeon the priest, of Joseph, and of other persons who there were when our Lady was purified, and of the heavenly songs that she thought she heard when our blissful Lord was offered up to Simeon that she might hardly bear up her own candle to the priest, as other folk did at the time of offering, but went wavering on each side as if she had been a drunken woman, weeping and sobbing so sorely that scarcely she might stand on her feet for the fervor of love and devotion that God put in her soul through high contemplation.

And sometimes she might not stand but fell down among the people and cried full loudly, so that many men wondered on her and marveled what ailed her, for the fervor of the spirit was so much that the body failed and might not endure it. She had such holy thoughts and meditations many times when she saw women be purified of their children. She thought in her soul that she saw our Lady be purified and had high contemplation in beholding the women who came to offer with the women who were purified. Her mind was all drawn from the earthly thoughts and earthly sights and set altogether on ghostly sights, which were so delectable and so devout that she might not in the time of fervor withstand her weeping, her sobbing, nor her crying, and therefore suffered she full much wondering, many a jibe and many a scorn.

Also when she saw weddings, men and women being joined together after the law of the church, anon she had in meditation how our Lady was joined to Joseph and of the ghostly joining of man's soul to Jesus Christ, praying to our Lord that her love and her affection might be joined to him only without end, and that she might have grace to obey him, love and dread him, worship and praise him, and no thing to love but what he loved, or no thing to will but what he would, and ever to be ready to fulfill his will both night and day without grudging or heaviness, with all gladness of spirit, and many more holy thoughts than she ever could repeat, for she had them not of her own study nor of her own wit, but of his gift whose wisdom is incomprehensible to all creatures, save only to those whom he chooses and illumines more or less as he himself wills, for his will may not be constrained, it is in his own free disposition.

2. February 2 is the Feast of the Purification; it was marked by an elaborate procession in which each parishioner carried a candle. See Duffy (1992), pp. 15ff. The Feast commemorates Mary's purification after childbirth and her presentation of the baby Jesus in the Temple. See Luke 2.22-38 for the Gospel account of the scene Margery "sees."

I thank you for all the times that you have harbored me and my blessed mother in your bed. For these and for all other good thoughts and good deeds that you have thought in my name and wrought for my love you shall have with me and with my mother, with my holy angels, with my apostles, with my martyrs, confessors and virgins, and with all my holy saints all manner of joy and bliss lasting without end."

87. The said creature lay full still in the church, hearing and understanding this sweet dalliance in her soul as clearly as one friend should speak to another. And, when she heard the great promises that our Lord Jesus Christ promised her, then she thanked him with great weepings and sobbings and with many holy and reverent thoughts, saying in her mind, "Lord Jesus, blessed may you be, for this deserved I never of you, but I would I were in that place where I should never displease you from this time forward."

With such manner of thoughts and many more than I could ever write she worshipped and magnified our Lord Jesus Christ for his holy visitation and his comfort. And in such manner visitations and holy contemplations as are before written, much more subtle and more high without comparison than are written, the said creature had continued her life through the preserving of our Savior Christ Jesus more than twenty-five years when this treatise was written, week by week and day by day, unless she were occupied with sick folk or else were hindered by other needful occupation that was necessary unto her or to her fellow Christians. Then it was withdrawn sometimes, for it will be had but in great quiet of soul through long exercise. By this manner of speech and dalliance she was made mighty and strong in the love of our Lord and greatly stabled in her faith and increased in meekness and charity with other good virtues. And she stably and steadfastly believed that it was God that spoke in her soul and no evil spirit, for in his speech she had the most strength and the most comfort and the most increase of virtue, blessed be God.

Divers times, when the creature was so sick that she thought to have been dead and other folk thought the same, it was answered in her soul that she should not die but she should live and fare well, and so she did. Sometimes our Lady spoke to her and comforted her in her sickness. Sometimes Saint Peter, or Saint Paul, sometimes Saint Mary Magdalene, Saint Katherine, Saint Margaret, or whatever saint in heaven that she could think on through the will and sufferance of God. They spoke to the understanding of her soul, and informed her how she should love God and how she should best please him, and answered to whatever she would ask of them, and she could understand by their manner of dalliance which of them it was who spoke unto her and comforted her. Our Lord of his high mercy visited her so much and so plenteously with his holy speeches and his holy dalliance that many times she knew not how the day went. She supposed sometimes of five hours or six hours it had not

been the space of an hour. It was so sweet and so devout that it fared as if she had been in heaven. She thought it never long thereof, nor was she was ever irked thereof; the time went away she knew not how. She had rather have served God, if she might have lived so long, a hundred years in this manner of life than one day as she first began. And oftentimes she said to our Lord Jesus, "A, Lord Jesus, since it is so sweet to weep for your love on earth, I know well it shall be right joyful to be with you in heaven. Therefore, Lord, I pray you, let me never have another joy on earth but mourning and weeping for your love. For I think, Lord, though I were in hell, if I might weep there and mourn for your love as I do here, hell should not annoy me, but it should be a manner of heaven, for your love puts away all manner of dread of our ghostly enemy, for I had rather be there as long as you would and please you than be in this world and displease you. Therefore, Lord, as you will, so may it be."

88. When this book was first in writing, the said creature was more at home in her chamber with her writer and, for the speed of the writing, said fewer beads than she had done for years before. And, when she came to church and would hear mass, purposing to say her matins and such other devotions as she had used before that time, her heart was drawn away from the saying and set greatly on meditation. She being afraid of displeasing our Lord, he said to her soul, "Dread you not, daughter, for as many prayers as you would say I accept them as though you said them, and both your study, that you study in order to have written the grace that I have showed to you, and he who writes pleases me right much. For, though you were in the church and wept both together as sorely as ever you did, yet should you not please me more than you do with your writing, for daughter, by this book many a man shall be turned to me and believe therein.

"Daughter, where is a better prayer by your own reason than to pray to me with your heart or your thought? Daughter, when you pray by thought, you yourself understand what you ask of me, and you understand also what I say to you, and you understand what I promise you for you and for yours and for all your ghostly fathers. And, as for Master Robert, your confessor, I have granted you what you have desired, and he shall have half your tears and half the good works that I have wrought in you. Therefore he shall truly be rewarded for your weeping as though he had wept himself. And believe well, daughter, that you shall be full merry in heaven together at the last and shall bless the time that ever one of you knew the other. And, daughter, you shall bless me without end that ever I gave you so true a ghostly father; for, though he has been sharp to you sometimes, it has been greatly to your profit, for you would else have had too great an affection for his person. And, when he was sharp to you, then you ran with all your mind to me, saying, 'Lord, there is no trust but in you alone.' And then you cried to me with all your heart, 'Lord, for thi

wowndys smarte drawe alle my lofe into thyn hert.⁶ And, daughter, so have I done.

"You think oftentimes that I have done right much for you, and you think that it is a great miracle that I have drawn all your affection toward me, for sometimes you were so affected toward some singular person that you thought at that time it would have been in a manner impossible to have withdrawn your affection from him. And afterward you have desired, if it had pleased me, that the same person should have forsaken you for my love, for, if he had not supported you, few men would have set any price by you, as it seemed to you. And you thought, if he had forsaken you, it had been the greatest reproof that ever came to you before the people, and therefore you would have suffered that reproof with good will for my love if it had pleased me. And thus with such doleful thoughts you increased your love toward me, and therefore, daughter, I receive your desires as if they were done in deed. And I know right well that you have right true love toward that same person, and I have often said to you that he should be right fain to love you and that he should believe it is God who speaks in you and no devil. Also, daughter, that person has pleased me right well, for he has often in his sermons excused your weeping and your crying, and so has Master Alan also done, and therefore they shall have full great meed in heaven. Daughter, I have told you many times that I would maintain your weeping and your crying by sermons and preaching.

"Also, daughter, I tell you that Master Robert, your ghostly father, pleases me full much when he bids you believe that I love you. And I know well that you have great faith in his words, and so you may right well, for he will not flatter you. And also, daughter, I am highly pleased with him, for he bids you that you should sit still and give your heart to meditation and think such holy thoughts as God will put in your mind. And I have often times bid you so myself, and yet you will not act thereafter without much grudging. And yet I am not displeased with you, for, daughter, I have often said unto you that whether you pray with your mouth or think with your heart, whether you read or hear reading, I will be pleased with you. And yet, daughter, I tell you, if you would love me, that thinking is the best for you and shall most increase your love toward me; and the more homely that you suffer me to be in your soul on earth, it is worthy and rightful that I be the more homely with your soul in heaven. And therefore, daughter, if you will not act after my counsel, act after the counsel of your ghostly father, for he bids you do the same that I bid you do.

"Daughter, when your ghostly father says to you you displease God, you believe him right well, and then take you much sorrow and great

6. "Lord, for your wounds' smart, draw all my love into your heart." See chapter 65 (p. 118) for another version of this couplet.

heaviness and weep full fast till you have gotten grace again. And then I come oftentimes to you myself and comfort you, for, daughter, I may not suffer you to have pain any while but that I must make a remedy. And therefore, daughter, I come to you and make you sure of my love and tell you with my own mouth that you are as sure of my love as God is God and that no thing is so sure to you on earth that you may see with your bodily eye. And therefore, blessed daughter, love him who loves you and forget me not, daughter, for I forget not you, for my merciful eye is ever upon you. And that knows my merciful mother full well, daughter, for she has oftentimes told you so, and many other saints also. And therefore, daughter, you have great cause to love me right well and to give me all your whole heart with all your affections, for that I desire and nothing else of you. And I shall give you there again all my heart. And, if you will be buxom to my will, I shall be buxom to your will, daughter, believe it right well.

89. Also, while the foresaid creature was occupied about the writing of this treatise, she had many holy tears and weepings, and oftentimes there came a flame of fire about her breast, full hot and delectable, and also he who was her writer could not sometimes keep himself from weeping. And often in the meantime, when the creature was in church, our Lord Jesus Christ with his glorious Mother and many saints also came into her soul and thanked her, saying that they were well pleased with the writing of this book. And also she heard many times a voice of a sweet bird singing in her ear, and oftentimes she heard sweet sounds and melodies that passed her wit to tell them. And she was many times sick while this treatise was in writing, and, as soon as she would go about the writing of this treatise, she was suddenly in a manner hale and whole.

And often she was commanded to make herself ready in all haste. And on a time, as she lay in her prayers in the church at the time of Advent⁷ before Christmas, she thought in her heart she would that God of his goodness would make Master Allen to say a sermon as well as he could. And, as quickly as she had thought thus, she heard our Sovereign Lord Christ Jesus say in her soul, "Daughter, I know right well what you think now of Master Allen, and I tell you truly that he shall say a right holy sermon. And look that you believe steadfastly the words that he shall preach as though I preached them myself, for they shall be words of great solace and comfort to you, for I shall speak in him."

When she had heard this answer, she went and told it to her confessor and two other priests in whom she trusted much. And, when she had told them her feeling, she was full sorry for dread whether he should say as well as she had felt or not, for revelations are hard sometimes to understand. And sometimes those that men think are revelations, they are de-

7. Advent is the penitential period that precedes Christmas.

ceits and illusions, and therefore it is not expedient readily to give credence to every stirring but soberly abide and prove if they are sent of God. Nevertheless, as to this feeling of this creature, it was very truth showed in experience, and her dread and her heaviness turned into great ghostly comfort and gladness.

Sometimes she was in great heaviness for many days together for her feelings, when she knew not how they should be understood; for the dread that she had of deceits and illusions, so that she thought she would that her head had been smitten from the body till God of his goodness declared them to her mind. For sometimes what she understood as bodily was to be understood as ghostly, and the dread that she had of her feelings was the greatest scourge that she had on earth and specially when she had her first feelings, and that dread made her full meek, for she had no joy in the feeling till she knew by experience whether it was true or not. But ever blessed may God be, for he made her always more mighty and more strong in his love and in his dread and gave her increase of virtue with perseverance.

Here ends this treatise, for God took him to his mercy who wrote the copy of this book, and, though he wrote not clearly nor openly to our manner of speaking, he in his manner of writing and spelling made true sentence, the which, through the help of God and of her who had all this treatise in feeling and working, is truly drawn out of the copy into this little book.

Book Two

1. After our Sovereign Savior had taken the person who wrote first the treatise before said to his manifold mercy, and the priest of whom is before written had copied the same treatise after his simple cunning, he held it expedient to the honor of the blissful Trinity that God's holy works should be notified and declared to the people, when it pleased him, to the worship of his holy name. And then he began to write in the year of our Lord 1438, on the feast of Saint Vital Martyr¹ such grace as our Lord wrought in his simple creature the years that she lived after, not all but some of them, after her own tongue.

And first here is a notable matter, which is not written in the foresaid treatise. It befell soon after the creature, before written, had forsaken the occupation of the world and was joined in her mind to God as much as frailty would suffer. The said creature had a son, a tall young man, dwelling with a worshipful burgess in Lynn, using merchandise² and sailing over the sea, whom she desired to have drawn out of the perils of this wretched and unstable world if her power might have attained thereto. Nevertheless she did as much as was in her, and, when she might meet with him at leisure, many times she counseled him to leave the world and follow Christ, insomuch that he fled her company and would not gladly meet with her.

So on a time it happened that the mother met with her son though it was against his will and his intent at that time. And, as she had done before time, so now she spoke to him again that he should flee the perils of this world and not set his study nor his business so much thereupon as he did. He, not consenting but sharply answering again, she, somewhat moved with sharpness of spirit, said, "Now since you will not leave the world at my counsel, I charge you, at my blessing, keep your body clean at the least from woman's fellowship till you take a wife after the law of the Church. And, if you do not, I pray God chastise you and punish you therefore."

They parted asunder, and soon after the same young man passed over the sea in the way of merchandise, and then, what through the evil enticing of other persons and the folly of his own governance, he fell into the sin of lechery. Soon after, his color changed, his face waxed full of welks and plotches as if it had been a leper's. Then he came home

1. April 28.

2. Using in the sense of being employed in.