



The Book of Privy
Counseling
in Middle English

Edited by Derek Cameron

The Book of Privy Counseling in Middle English

Introduction

The Book of Privy Counseling was written in England in the late fourteenth century. The author frequently uses the word “boistous” (meaning rough, simple, or uneducated), whose popularity the *Middle English Dictionary* places in the 1390s, so that would be a reasonable date for the work.

The text in this electronic version is edited from Phyllis Hodgson’s critical edition, as reproduced in Marianne Sommers’ *The Mystagogic Process of The Book of Privy Counseling*. I added the paragraph numbers. Hodgson’s principal source was the British Library’s Harleian manuscript number 674, beginning at folio 92a. Robert Harley (1661–1724), first Earl of Oxford, initiated this collection in 1704; Harley’s great-granddaughter, Margaret Cavendish Bentinck (1715–1785), Duchess of Portland, sold the now expanded collection to the nation in 1753.

English in the fourteenth century was written with two extra letters: *yogh*, written as ȝ and ȝ (Unicode x'021c' and x'021d') and *thorn*, written as þ and þ (Unicode x'00de' and x'00fe'). Your device’s font will need to include these characters to display this electronic version correctly. Writers at the time often used the letter v in place of an initial u, and the letter u where nowadays we would put an internal v.

The author is a kindred spirit of John of the Cross (1542–1591), urging the novice to remain in the depths of stillness until the arrival of infused contemplation. This practice, or “working” as the author calls it, eventually becomes continual. Conceptual thinking is abandoned in favor of pure beingness. All feelings of a separate self disappear. This is the path common to all inward-looking traditions, regression to the prepersonal layers of consciousness.

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Text

1. Goostly freende in God, as touching þin inward ocupacion, as me þink þee disposid, I speke at þis tyme in specyal to þi-self, & not to alle þoo þat þis writyng scholen here in general. For 3if I schuld write vnto alle, þan I must write þing þat were acordyng to alle generally. Bot sif I at þis tyme schal write vnto þee in special, þerfore I write none oper þing bot soche as me þink þat is moste speedful & acording to þin disposicion only. If eny oper be so disposid as þou arte, to whom þis writing may profite as vnto þee, in so moche þe betir, for I am wel apaied. Neuerþeles, at þis tyme, þin owne inward disposicion is only by it-self, as I may conceiue it, þe poynte & þe prik of my beholdyng. & þerfore to þee, in persone of alle oper liche vnto þee, I sei þus:

2. Whan þou comyst bi þi-self þenk not before what þou schalt do after, bot forsake as wel good þou3tes as iuel þou3tes. & prey not wif þi mouþ bot þee list rizt wel; & þan, 3if þou ou3t schalt sey, loke not how moche ne how litil þat it be, ne charge not what it is ne what it bemeniþ, be it orison, be it psalm, ympne or antime, or any oper preyer, general or specyal, mental wif-inne enditid bi þou3t or vocale wif-uten by pronounsing of worde. & loke þat noþing leue in þi worching mynde bot a nakid entent stretching into God, not clopid in any specyal þou3t of God in hym-self, how he is in him-self or in any of his werkes, bot only þat he is as he is. Lat hym be so, I prey þee, & make him on none oper wise. Seche no ferþer in hym by sotiltee of witte. þat byleue be þi grounde. þis nakid entent, freely fastenid & groundid in verrey beleue, schal be nou3t elles to þi þou3t and þi felyng bot a nakid þou3t & a blynde feling of þin owne beyng: as 3if þou seidist þus vnto God with-inne in þi menyng, "þat at I am, Lorde, I offre vnto þee, wif-outyn

any loking to eny qualite of þi beyng, bot only þat þou arte as þou arte, wiþ-outen any more.”

3. Þat meek derknes be þi mirour & þi mynde hole. Þenk no ferþer of þi-self þan I bid þee do of þi God, so þat þou be on wiþ hym in spirit as þus, wiþ-outyn departyng & scatering of mynde. For he is þi being, & in him þou arte that at þou arte, not only bi cause & bi beyng, bot also he is in þee boþ þi cause & þi beyng. & þerfore þenk on God as in þis werk as þou dost on þi-self, & on þi-self as þou dost on God, þat he is as he is & þou arte as þou arte, so þat þi þouzt be not scaterid ne departid, bot onid in hym þat is al; euermore sauyn þis difference betwix þee & him, þat he is þi being, & þou not his. For þof it be so þat alle þings ben in hym bi cause & bi beyng, & he be in alle þinges here cause & here being, 3it in him-self only he is his owne cause and his owne being. For as noþing may be wiþ-outyn him, so he may not be wiþ-outyn him-self. He is being boþe to him-self and to alle. & in þat he is only departid from alle that he is being boþe of hym-self & of alle; & in þat he is one in alle & alle in him, that all þinges han her beinges in him, & he is being of alle. Þus schal þi þouzt & þi felyng be onid wiþ hym in grace wiþ-outyn departing, alle corious sechinges in þe queinte qualitees of þi blinde beyng or of his fer put bac; þat þi þouzt be nakid & þi felyng noþing defoulid, & þou, nakidly as þou arte, wiþ þe touching of grace be priuely fed in þi felyng only wiþ hym as he is; bot blyndly & in partie, as it may be here in þis liif, þat þi longyng desire be euermore worching.

4. Loke up þen liztly & sey to þi Lorde, ouper wiþ mouþ or mening of hert: “Þat at I am, Lorde, I offre vnto þee, for þou it arte.” & þenk nakidly, pleynty, & boistously þat þou arte as þou arte, wiþ-outyn any maner of corioste.

5. Þis is litil maistrie for to þink, 3if it were bodyn to the lewdist man or womman þat leuip in þe comounist wit of kynde in þis liif, as me þenkip. & þerfore softly, mornyngly & smylyngly I merueyle me somtyme whan I here sum men sey (I mene not simple lewid men & wommen, bot clerkes & men of grete kunnyng) þat my wrytyng to þee & to oper is so harde & so hei3, & so curious & so queinte, þat unneþes it may be conceiuid of þe sotelist clerk or wittid man or womman in þis liif, as þei seyn. Bot to þees men most I answeere & sey þat it is moche worþi to be sorowid, & of God & his louers to be mercyfully scornid & bitterly reprodid, þat now þees dayes not only a fewe folkes, bot generally nighond alle (bot 3if it be one or two in a contrey of þe specyall chosen of God) ben so bleendid in here coryous kunnyng of clergie & of kynde, þat þe trewe conceite of þis lizt werk — þorow þe whiche þe boistousest mans soul or wommans in þis liif is verely in louely meeknes onyd to God in parfite charite, may no more, ne 3it so moche, be conceyuid of hem in sobfastnes of spirit, for her blyndnes & here corioustee, þen may þe kunnyng of þe grettest clerk in scole of a 3ong childe at his A.B.C. & for þis blyndnes erryngly þei clepin soche simple teching coriouste of witte, whan, 3if it be witterly lokyd, it schal be founden bot a symple & lizt lesson of a lewid man.

6. For I holde him to lewyd & to boistous þat kan not þenk & fele þat him-self is, not what him-self is bot þat hym-self is. For þis is pleynli proprid to þe lewdist kow or to þe moste vnresonable beest (3if it mi3t be seide, as it may not, þat one were lewder or more vnresonable þen anoper) for to fele þe owne propre beyng. Moche more þan it is proprid to man, þe whiche is singularly endowid wiþ reson abouen alle oper beestes, for to þenk & for to fele his owne propre being.

7. & þerfore com down into þe lowest poynte of þi witte, þe which sum man holdeþ by verrey preof þat it is þe hizest, & þenk on þe lewedest maner, bot bi sum man þe wisest, not what þi-self is, bot þat þi-self is. For whi to þee for to þenk what þou arte in alle propirte longeþ moche craftte of clergie & of kunnyng & moche sotil seching in þi kyndely wittys. & þis hast þou done now many day wiþ help of grace, so þat þou wost now as in partye, & as I suppose it is profitable to þee for þe tyme, what thou art: a man in kind & a foule stinking wreche by synne. Þou knowest wel how; & peraventure þee þenkith sumtyme to wele alle þe filþis þat folowen & fallen to a wreche. Fy on hem! Late hem go, I prey þee. Stire no ferþer in hem for ferde of stynche. Bot for to þenk þat þou arte, mayest þou haue of þi lewydnes & þi boistouste wiþ-outyn any grete kunning of clergie or of kynde.

8. & þerfore, I prey þee, do no more now in þis caas bot þenk boistously that þou arte as þou arte, be þou never so foule ne so wrechid; so þat þou haue before-tymes (as I suppose þou hast) ben lawefully amendid of alle þi sinnes in special & in general, after þe trewe counseil of Holi Chirche; for elles schalt þou neuer ne none oper by my consent be so bolde to take apon 3ow þis werk. Bot 3if þou fele þat þou hast done þat in þee is, than schalt þou set þee to þis werk. & þof-all þou fele þi-self 3it than so vile & so wrechid þat for kombraunce of þi-self þou wost not þi-self what is best þee for to do wiþ þi-self, þis þan schalt þou do as I sei þee:

9. Take good gracyous God as he is, plat and pleyn as a plastre, & legge it to þi seek self as þou arte. Or, 3if I oper-wise schal sey, bere up þi seek self as þou arte, & fonde for to touche bi desire good gracyous God as he is, þe touching of whome is eendeles helpe, by witnes of þe womman in þe gospel: Si tetigero vel fimbriam vestimenti eius, salua ero. "If I touche bot þe hemme of his cloþing, I schal be saaf."

Miche more schalt þou þan be maad hole of þi seeknes for þis heize heauenly touching of his owne beyng, his owne dere self. Step up þan stifly & taast of þat triacle; bere up þi seek self as þou arte vnto gracious God as he is, wiþ-outyn any corious or special beholdyng to eny of alle the qualitees þat longyn to þe beyng of þi-self or of God, wheþer þei be clene or wrechid, gracyous or kyndely, godli or manly. It chargeþ not now in þee bot þat þi blynde beholdyng of þi nakid beyng be gladli born up in listines of loue, to be knittid & onid in grace & in spirit to þe precious beyng of God in him-self only as he is, wiþ-outyn more.

10. & þof al þat þi wantoun seching wittys kon finde no mete vnto hem in þis maner of doying, & þefore grochingly þei wilen bid þee algates to leue of þat werk & do sum good on here corious maner (for it semþ to hem þat it is no þing worþ þat þou dost, & al is for þei kan no skile þer-apon), bot I wolde loue it þe betir, for by þat it semþ þat it is more worþi þen þei ben. & whi schuld I not þan loue it þe betir, & namely whan þer is no werk þat I may do, ne þat may be wrouzt in þe coriouste of any of my wittis, bodely or goostly, þat miȝt bring me so ny vnto God & so fer fro þe wored as þis nakid litil felyng & offring up of my blynde beyng wold do?

11. & þefore, al-þof þi wittis kon fynde no mete vnto hem in þis werk, & þefore þei wolde haue þee away, ȝit loke þat þou leue not for hem, bot be þou here maystre. & go not bak in fedying of hem, be þei neuer so wode. Þan gost þou bak in fedying of þi wittes whan þou suffrest hem seche in þe diuerse corious meditacions of þe qualitees of þi beyng; þe whiche meditacions, þof al þei be ful good & ful profitable, neuertheles, in comparison of þis blynde felyng & offring up of þi beyng, þei ben ful diuerse & scaterying from þe perfeccion of onheed, þe whiche falliþ for to be bitwix God & þi soule. & þefore holde þee before in þe first poynt

of þi spirit, þe whiche is þi beyng; & go not bak for nokyns þing, seme it neuer so good ne so holy þe þing þat þi wittis wolde lede þee vnto.

12. & fulfille þe counseil & þe teching of Salamon, seiing þus to his son: Honora Dominum de tua substancia, et de primiciis frugum tuarum da pauperibus: et inplebuntur horrea tua saturitate et vino torcularia redundabunt.

“Worschip þi Lorde wiþ þi substaunce, & wiþ þe first of þi frutes fede þou þe pore: & þi bernes scholen be fillid wiþ fulheed & þi grape stockes schul rebounde ful of wyne.” Þis is þe text þat Salamon spake to his sone bodely, as 3if he had seyde to þin vnderstondyng, as I schal sey in his persone vnto þee goostly:

13. “Þou goostly frende in God, loke þat all corious seching in þi kyndely wittys left, þou do hole worschip to þi Lorde God wiþ þi substaunce, offring up vnto him pleinely & holy þin owne self, al þat þou arte & soche as þou arte, bot generaly & not specyaly (þat is, wiþ-outyn specyall beholdyng to þat þat þou arte), þat þi sizt be not scaterid ne þi felyng defoulid, þe whiche wolde make þee les on wiþ þi God in purete of spirit. & wiþ þe first of þi frutes fede þou þe pore; þat is wiþ the first of þi goostly or bodely qualitees, þe whiche ben growen vp wiþ þee from þe first bygynnyng of þi makyng into þis day.”

14. Alle þe 3iftes of kynde & of grace þat euer God 3ave þee, I clepe hem þi frutes, wiþ þe whiche þou art holden to fostre & fede in þis liif, boþe bodely & goostly, as wel alle þy breþren & sistren in kynde & in grace as þou arte þin owne propre self. Þe first of þees 3iftes clepe I þe first of þi frutes. Þe first 3ift in iche creature is only þe being of þe same creature. For þof it be so þat þe qualitees of þi beyng ben so fast onyd to þe self beyng as þei ben wiþ-outyn departyng, 3it, for þei hangen alle upon it, verely it may be clepid, as it

is, þe first of þy ʒiftes. & þus it is only þi beyng þat is þe first of þi frutes. For ʒif þou breide oute þe corious beholdyng of þin hert to eny or to alle þe sotil qualitees & þe worþi condicions þat fallen to þe being of man, þe whiche is þe nobelist beyng of maad þinges, euermore þou schalt fynde þat þe first poynte & þe pricke of þi beholdyng, what-so-euer it be, is þi nakid being. As ʒif þou seidest þus in þi-self in ich one of þi beholdynges, stering þi-self by þe menes of þis beholdyng to þe loue & þe preising of þi Lorde God þat not only gave þee to be, bot so nobli to be as þe qualitees of þi beyng wolen witnes in þi beholdyng, seiing þus: “I am & I see & fele þat I am, & not only I am, bot so I am & so & so & so & so,” rekenyng up in þi beholdyng alle þe qualitees of þi beyng in special. & þen, þat more þen al þis is, lap up alle þis in general & sey þus: “Þat at I am & how þat I am, as in kynde & in grace, alle I haue is of þee, Lord, & þou it arte. & al I offre it vnto þee principaly to þe preising of þee, for þe help of alle myn euyn-Christen & of me.” & þus maist þou se þat þe first & þe poynte of þi beholding is moste substantialy set in þe nakid sizt & þe blynde felyng of þin owne being. & þus it is only þi being þat is þe first of þi frutes.

15. Bot þof al it be þe first of ich one of þi frutes, & þof al þat þe oþer frutes hangyn alle vpon it, ʒit it spedith not now in þis caas to lap ne to cloþe þi beholdyng to it in eny or in alle þe corious qualitees of it, þe which I clepe þi frutes & in whiche þou hast ben trauailid before þis tiye. Bot it suffisith now vnto þee to do hole worschip vnto God wiþ þi substaunce & for to offre up þi nakid beyng, þe whiche is þe first of þi frutes, in contynowel sacrificize of preising of God, boþe for þi-self & for all oþer as charite askith, vncloþid wiþ any qualite or special beholdyng þat on eny maner fallith or may falle vnto þe beyng of þi-self or of any oþer, as þou woldest by þat beholding help þe nede, forþer þe spede, or encrese þe profite to perfeccion of þi-self or of any oþer. Lat

be þis: it wil not be þus in þis caas trewly. For it profitiþ more soche a blynde comoun beholding to þe nede, þe spede, & þe perfeccion of þi-self & of all oþer in purete of spirit þen any special beholdyng þat eny man may haue, seme it neuer so holy.

16. þis is soþ by witnes of Scripture, bi ensauple of Crist & bi quik reson. For as alle men weren lost in Adam, for he fel fro þis onyng affeccion, & as alle, þat þis werk, acordyng to here clepyng wol witnes here wille of saluacion, ben sauid & schul be by þe vertewe of þe Passion of only Crist, offring him-self up in verreiest sacrificze, al þat he was in general & not in special, wip-outyn special beholdyng to any o man in þis liif, bot generaly and in comon for alle: rizt so a verey & a parfite sacrificer of him-self þus by a comon entent vnto alle doþ þat in him is to knit alle men to God as effectuely as him-self is.

17. & more charite may no man do þen þus to sacrifice him-self for all his breþren & sistren in grace & in kynde. For as þe soule is more worþi þen þe body, so þe knittyng of þe soule to God (þe liif of it) by þe heuenly fode of charite is betir þan þe knittyng of þe body to þe soule (þe liife of it) bi eny erþli fode in þis liif. þis is good for to do bi it-self bot wipout þe toþer it is neuer weel done. þis & þe toþer is þe betir; bot þe toþer by it-self is þe best. For þis bi it-self deserueþ neuer saluacion; bot þe toþer by it-self, where þe plente of þis defailiþ, deseruiþ not only saluacion bot ledeþ to þe grettist perfeccion.

18. For it nedip not now in encrese of þi perfeccion to go bak in fedyng of þi wittys, as it is in beholdyng of þe qualitees of þi beyng, so þat þou miȝtest by soche beholdyng fede & fille þin affeccion wip louely & liking felynges in God & goostly pinges, & þin vnderstondyng wip goostly wisdome of holy meditacions in seching after þe knowyng of God. For, ȝif þou

wilt holde þee besily, as þou maist by grace, euermore contynowly in þe first poynte of þi spirit, offring up vnto God þat nakid blynde felyng of þin owne beyng, þe which I clepe þe first of þi frutes, sekir be þou þat þe oper hynder end of Salamons lesson schal be ful verrely fulfillid as he hoteþ, wip-outyn besines of þi-self in corious seching & ransakyng wip goostly wittis amonges eny of þe qualitees þat longin not only to þe beyng of þi-self bot also to þe beyng of God.

19. For wite þou rizt wel þat in þis werk þou schalt no more beholdyng haue to þe qualitees of þe beyng of God þan to þe qualitees of þe beyng of þi-self. For þer is no name, ne felyng ne beholdyng more, ne so much, acordyng vnto euerlastyngnes, þe whiche is God, as is þat þe whiche may be had, seen, & felt in þe blynde & louely beholdyng of þis word IS. For 3if þou sey, “Good” or “Faire Lorde,” or “Swete,” “Merciful,” or “Riztwise,” “Wise” or “Alwitty,” “Mizti” or “Almizti,” “Witte” or “Wisdom,” “Mizte” or “Strengþe,” “Loue” or “Charite,” or what oper soche þing þat þou sey of God: al it is hid & enstorid in þis litil word IS. For þat same is to him only to be, þat is all þees for to be. & 3if þou put to an hundrid þousand soche sweet wordes as þne þees — good, faire, & all þees opers — 3it 3edest þou not fro þis word IS. & 3if þou sey hem alle, þou puttest not to it. & 3if þou sey rizt none, þou takist not fro it. & þefore be as blynde in þe louely beholdyng of the beyng of þi God as in þe nakid beholdyng of þe beyng of þi-self, wip-outyn any corious seching in þi wittys to loke after any qualite þat longep to his being or to þine. Bot alle coriouste left & fer put bak, do worschip to þi God with þi substaunce, al þat þou arte þat þou arte vnto all him þat is as he is, þe whiche only of him-self, wip-outyn moo, is þe blisful being boþe of him-self & of þee.

20. & þus schalt þou knittingly, & in a maner þat is meruelous, worschip God wip him-self; for þat þou arte þou

hast of him & he it is. & þou al þou haddest a biginnyng in þi substancyal creacion, þe whiche was sumtyme nouzt, 3it hap þi beyng ben euermore in hym wip-outyn beginnyng & euer schal be wip-outyn ending, as him-self is. & þerfore I oft crie, & euer upon one:

21. "Do worschip to þi God wip þi substaunce, & comoun profite to alle þat ben men wip þe first of þi frutes; & þan schul þi bernes be fulfillid wip fulheed." Pat is, þan schal þi gostly affeccion be fillid with þe fulheed of loue & of vertuouus leuyng in God, þi grounde & þi purete of spirit. "& þi grape-stockes scholen rebounde ful of wyne." Pat is, þin inward goostly wittis, þe whiche þou arte wonte for to streine & presse to-geders bi diuerse corious meditacions & resonable inuestigacions abouten þe goostly knowing of God & þi-self in beholding of his qualitees & of þine, scholen þan rebounde ful of wyne. By þe whiche wine in Holy Scripture is verrely & mistely vnderstonden goostly wisdom in verrey contemplacion & heiz sauour of þe Godheed.

22. & all þis schal be done sodenly, listely, & gracyously, wip-outyn besines or trauaile of þi-self, only by þe mynistracion of aungelles þorow vertewe of þis louely blynde werk. For vnto it alle aungelles knowing done special seruise as þe maiden vnto þe lady.

23. In grete comendacion of þis listi sleizt worching, þe whiche in it-self is þe heiz wisdom of þe Godheed graciousli descendyng into mans soule, knitting it & onyng it vnto him-self in goostly sleizt & prudence of spirit, þe wise man Salamon brestip up & seip:

24. Beatus homo qui inuenit sapienciam, et qui affluit prudentia. Melior est adquisicio eius negociacione auri et argenti. Primi et purissimi fructus eius. Custodi, fili mi, legem atque consilium; et erit vita anime tue et gracia

faucibus tuis. Tunc ambulabis fiducialiter in via tua, et pes tuus non inpinget. Si dormieris, non timebis; quiesces, et suavis erit sompnus tuus. Ne paueas repentino terrore, et irruentes tibi potencias impiorum, quia Dominus erit in latere tuo, et custodiet pedem tuum ne capiaris. Alle þis is to þin vnderstondyng þus: He is a blisful man þat may fynde þis onyng wisdom & þat may abounde in his goostly worching wiþ þis louely sleiþt & prudence of spirit, in offring up of his owne blynde feling of his owne beyng, all corious kunnyng of clergie & of kynde fer put bak. Þe purchasing of þis goostly wisdom & þis sleiþt worching is betir þan þe getyng of golde or of siluer. By þe whiche golde & siluer is moraly vnderstonden al oþer bodely & goostly knowyng, þe whiche is getyn bi corious seching & worching in oure kyndely wittis beneþe us, wiþ-inne vs, or euen with us, in beholdyng of eny of þe qualitees þat longyn to þe beyng of God or of eny create þing. & whi is it beter, he putteþ to þe cause & seiþ: for primi et purissimi fructus eius. That is: “for first & purest ben þe frutes of it.” & no wonder, for whi þe frute of þis worching is hiþe goostly wisdom, sodenly & frely riftid of þe spirit inly in it-self & vnformid, ful fer fro fantasie, impossible to be streinid or to falle vnder þe worching of naturele witte. Þe whiche naturele witte, be it neuer so sotyl ne so holy, may be clepid in comparison of þis bot feynid foly formyd in fantome, as fer fro þe verrey sopfastnes whan þe goostly sonne schini as is þe derknes of þe moneschine in a mist at midwinters niþt fro þe briþtnesse of þe sonnebeme in þe clerest tyme of missomer day.

25. “Kepe, my sone,” he seiþ, “þis lawe & þis counseil,” in þe whiche all þe comaundementes & þe counselle, as wel of þe Olde Testament as of þe Newe, ben verily & parfitely fulfillid, with-outyn any special beholdyng to any one singularly in it-self. & on oþer wise is not þis maner of worching clepid a lawe, bot for it conteneþ in it fully alle þe braunches & þe frutes of þe lawe. For 3if it be witterly lokid,

þe grounde & þe strengþe of þis worching schal be seen nouzt elles bot þe glorious 3ifte of loue, in þe whiche, by þe teching of þe apostle, alle þe lawe is fulfillid: Plenitudo legis est dileccio. "Þe fulheed of þe lawe is loue."

26. & þis louely lawe & þis liuely counseil, 3if þou kepe it, as Salamon seip, "schal be liif to þi soule" wiþ-inne softnes of loue to þi God, "& grace to þi chekes" with-outyn in þe trewest teching & þe semeliest gouernaunce of þi bodely beryng in outward forme of leuing to þin euy-Cristen. & in þees two, þe tone wiþ-inne & þe toper wiþ-outyn, by þe teching of Crist, "hangeþ alle þe lawe & þe profezies": In hiis enim duobus tota lex pendet et prophete: silicet dileccio dei et proximi.

27. & þefore, when þou arte made þus parfite in þi worching, boþe wiþ-inne & wiþ-outyn, þen schalt þou go tristely groundid in grace, þe gide of þi goostly wey, loueli lifyng up þi nakid blinde beyng to þe blisful beyng of þi God, þe whiche ben bot one in grace, þof al 3e ben diuerse in kynde. "& þe fote of þi loue schal not sporne." Þat is to sey, fro þou haue þe preue of þi goostly werk in continowaunce of spirit, þan schalt þou not so liztly be lettyd & drawn bac by þe corious questions of þi sotil wittys, as þou arte now in þi begynnyng. Or elles þus: þen schal þe fote of þi loue neiþer snapir ne sporne on eni maner of fantasie causid of þi corious seching in þi wittys. For whi vtterly in þis werk, as it is seide before, is al corious seching in any of þi kyndeli wittis fer put bak & fully for3eten for ferde of fantasie or any feinid falsheed þat may falle in þis liif, þe whiche in þis werk might defoule þe nakid felyng of þi blynde beyng & drawe þee away fro þe worþines of þis werk.

28. For 3if eny maner of special þouzt of any þing, bot only of þi nakid blinde beyng (þe whiche is þi God & þin entent),

come in þi mynde, þen arte þou away & drawn bac to worche in þe sleizt & þe coriouste of wittys, in scatering & departyng of þee & of þi mynde boþe fro þee & þi God. & þerfore holde þee hole & vnscaterid as forþ as þou maist bi grace & bi sleizt of goostly contynowaunce. For in þis blinde beholdyng of þi nakid beyng, þus onyd to God as I telle þee, schalt þou do al þat þou schalt do: ete & drink, sleep & wake, go & sit, speke & be stille, ligge & rise, stonde & knele, renne & ride, trauaile & rest. Þis schalt þou iche day offre up vnto God & for þe moste precious offring þat þou canst make. & it schal be þe cheef of alle þi doynges, in all þi doynges, wheþer þei be actyue or contemplatyue. For, as Salamon seiþ in þis processe, “zif þou slepe” in þis blynde beholdyng from al þe noise & þe steryng of þe fel fende, þe fals worlde, & þe freel flessche, “þou schalt not drede any peril” ne any deceyte of þe feende. For whi vtterly in þis werk he is masid & maad blynde in a peynful vnknowyng & a wood wondryng to wite what þou doost. Bot no force þerof, for “þou schalt gracyously rest” in þis louely onheed of God & þi soule; “& þi sleep schal be ful softe,” for it schal be goostly fode & inly strengþe, as wel to þi body as to þi soule. & þis same Salamon seiþ sone after: Vniuerse carni sanitas est. “It is helpe to al þe freelte & þe seeknes of flesche.” & worþely; for siþ al seeknes & corrupcion fel into þe flesche whan þe soule fel fro þis werk, þan schal alle helpe come to þe flesche whan þe soule bi þe grace of Jhesu, þe whiche is þe cheef worcher, riseþ to þis same werk azein. & þis schalt þou hope only to haue bi þe mercy of Jhesu & þi louely consent. & þerfore I preie þee, wiþ Salamon here in þis processe, þat þou stonde stifly in þis werk, euermore beryng up vnto him þi louely consent in listines of loue. Et ne paueas repentino terrore et irruentes tibi potencias impiorum. “& be not astonyed” wiþ any vnrestful drede, þof þe feend (as he wol) come “wiþ a sodeyn feerdnes,” bussching & betyng on þe walles of þin house þere þou sittest, or þof he stire any of his mizty lemys

to rise & “to renne in apon þee” sodenly, as it is wip-outyn any auysement. Pus schal it be, wite þou rizt wel, þou what-so-euer þat þou be þat settyst þee to worche trewly in þis werk, þou schalt verrely see & fele, or elles smel, taste, or here som astoniing maad by þe feende in some of þi fyue wittys wip-outyn. & al is done for to drawe þee downe fro þe heizt of þis precious worching. & þefore take good kepe of þin herte in þis tyme of þis tourment, & lene wip a tristi listines to þe loue of oure Lorde.

29. Quia Dominus erit in latere tuo, et custodiet pedem tuum ne capiaris. Þat is: “for oure Lorde schal be in þi side,” redy & nei3 to þin help, “& he schal kepe þi fote,” þat is, þe stiing up of þi loue bi þe whiche þou gost to God, “so þat þou schalt not be takyn,” bi no sleizt ne gile of þin enemyes, þe feend & his fautours, þe wored & þe flessche. Lo! frende, pus schal our Lorde & our loue miztely, wisely & goodly sokoure, kepe, & defende alle þoo þat for loue-trist þat þei fele in hym wylen vtterly forsake þe kepyng of hem-self.

30. Bot where schal soche a soule be founden so frely fastnyd & foundid in þe feip, so fully mekid in nou3tning of it-self & so louely led & fed in þe loue of our Lorde, wip ful knowing & felyng of his almi3tyheed, his vnwetyng wisdom & his glorious goodnes: hou he is one in alle & alle in hym, in so mochil þat, wip-outyn full 3eeldyng up vnto hym al þat of hym is, by hym & in hym, a louyng soule is neuermore verely mekyd in ful nou3tning of it-self; so þat for þis nobil nou3tning of it-self in verrey meeknes & þis hy3e allyng of God in parfite charite, it deserueþ to haue God (in whose loue it is deeply drenchid in ful & in fynal forsakyng of it-self as nou3t or lesse, 3if lesse mizt be) miztely, wisely & goodly sokouryng it & kepyng it & defendyng it fro all aduersitees, bodyly & goostly, wip-outyn besynes or trauaule, rewarde or auisement of it-self?

31. Lateþ be 3oure manly obieccions, 3e half-mekyd soulys, & seiþ not in 3our resonable trasing þat soche a meek & an vtter forsakyng of þe kepyng of a mans self, whan he felip hym þus touchid bi grace, is any temtyng of God, for 3e fele in 3oure reson þat 3e dor not do so 3owre-self. No, holde 3ow payed wiþ 3oure parte, for it suffiseþ to þe sauing of 3oure soules in actyue degree, & late oþer contemplatyue soulis alone þat doren. & muse 3e not & merueyle 3ou not of here wordes & here werkes, þof al þou þenk hem passe þe cours & þe comoun dome of 3oure reson.

32. O, for schame! hou ofte schul 3e rede & here, & neiþer 3eue feiþ ne credence þerto? I mene þe þing þat alle oure old Fafers han wretyn & tauzt before us, & þe þing whiche is þe frute & þe floure of alle Holy Scripture. Ouper it semip þat ye ben blynde & mowen not with beleue se þat ye rede or here; or elles 3e ben touchid wiþ sum priue spice of enuye, þat 3e mowe not trist so grete good to falle to 3oure brepren for 3e lackip it 3our-self. It is good 3e be ware, for 3our enmye is sotyl & in purpose to make 3ow to 3eue more feiþ to 3oure owne witte þan to olde teching of trewe Faders or to þe worching of grace & þe wille of oure Lorde.

33. How ofte haue 3e red & herde, & of hou many boþe holy, wise & trewe, þat as sone as Beniamyn was borne his moder Rachel deied? By Beniamyn contemplacion, by Rachel we vnderstonden reson. & as sone as a soule is touchid wiþ verrey contemplacion, as it is in þis noble nouztynyng of it-self & þis hize allyng of God, sekerly & verrely þan dizep alle mans reson. & siþen 3e reden þis so ofte, not only of one or two bot of ful many ful holy & full worþi, whi beleuyn 3e not it? & 3if 3e beleuyn it, how dore 3e þen ransake & seche wiþ 3oure reson in þe wordes & þe dedes of Beniamyn? By þe whiche Beniamyn ben vnderstonden alle þoo þat in excesse of loue ben rauschid abouen mynde, þe prophete seiing þus: Ibi Beniamyn adolescentulus in mentis excessu. Þat is

to sey: "Pere is Beniamyn, a 3ong childe, in excesse of mynde." Loke þefore þat 3e be not liche to þoo wrechid wommen in body þat sleen here owne children whan þey ben newe borne. Beep ware, it is good, & setteþ not þe poynte of 3oure presumptuous spere at þe mi3t, þe witte, & þe wille of oure Lorde, stifly in þat þat in 3ow is, & for blyndenes & lackyng of experience, as 3e wolde bere hym down whan 3e wene best to holde him up.

34. For siþ in þe first biginnyng of Holy Chirche in þe tyme of persecucion, dyuerse soules & many weren so merueylously touchid in sodeynte of grace þat sodenly, wiþ-outyn menes of oper werkes comyng before, þei kasten here instrumentes, men of craftes, of here hondes, children here tables in þe scole, & ronnen wiþ-outyn ransakyng of reson to þe martirdom wiþ seintes: whi schul men not trowe now, in þe tyme of pees, þat God may, kan & wile & doþ — 3e! touche diuerse soules as sodenly with þe grace of contemplacion? & þis I trowe he wil do ful gracyously in chosyn soulis. For he wol worþely be knowen in þe eende, to þe wondryng of alle þe worlde. For soche a soule, þus loueliche nou3tynyng it-self, & þus heily allyng his God, schal ful gracyously be kept from alle casting down of his goostly or bodely enemyes, wiþ-outyn besines & trauaile of it-self, only by þe goodnes of God; as þe godly reson askiþ, þat he trewly kepe all þoo þat for besines aboute hys loue foraskiþ & list not kepe him-self. & no wonder þof þei be meruelously kept, for þei ben so fully mekyd in booldnes & strengþheed of loue.

35. & who-so dar not do þis, & seiþ azens þis, ouper þe deuil is in his brest & reuiþ him þe loue-trist þat he schuld haue to his God & þe weel-wilnes þat he schuld haue to his euen-Cristen; or elles he is not 3it as parfiteky mekyd as hym nedid to be, I mene 3if he purpose to þat liif þat is verrey contemplatyue. & þefore be þou not abasched þus to be

mekid to þi Lorde, ne þus for to slepe in þis blynde beholdyng of God as he is, from alle þe noise of þis wickid wored, þe fals feende & þe frele flesche; for our Lorde schal be redy to help þee & kepe þi fote þat þou be not takyn.

36. & wel is þis werk licnyd to a slepe. For as in þe slepe þe vse of þe bodely wittys is cesid, þat þe body may take his ful rest in fedyng & strengping of þe bodyly kynde; rizt so in þis goostly slepe þe wantoun questyons of þe wilde goostly wittys, ymaginatyue resons, ben fast bounded & vtterly voidid, so þat þe sely soule may softly sleep & rest in þe louely beholdyng of God as he is, in ful fedyng & strengping of þi goostly kynde.

37. & þefore bynde in þe wittys in offring up of þis nakid blynde felyng of þin owne beyng. & loke euer as I ofte sey, þat it be nakyd & not clad wip any qualite of þi beyng. For 3if þou clope it wip any qualite, as wip þe worþiness of þi beyng or wip any oþer priue condycion þat fallip to þe beyng of man forby þe beyng of eny oþer creature, þan as fast þou 3euest mete to þi wittys, by þe whiche þei han occasyon & a strengþe to drawe þee to many þinges, & so to be scaterid, þou woste neuer how. Beware bi þis disceite, I prey þee.

38. Bot now, paraenture, at þe sotil examinacion of þi corious wittys, bi-cause þei can no skyle in þis werk, þou merueylist þee in maner of þis werk, & hast it suspecte. & þat is no wonder; for þou hast ben 3it hedirtoward ouer wise in þi wittys to kun any skyle of any soche doying. & paraenture þou askyst in þin herte how þou schuldest wite wheþer þis werk were plesyng to God or not; or, 3if it be plesaunt, how þat it may be þat it is so plesaunt as I sey þat it is. To þis I answere & sey þat þis questyon is moued of a corious witte, þe whiche wil on no wise late þee consent to

þis werk er þe tyme be þat þer be maad aseep to þe coriouste þereof by sum feire skile.

39. & herfore schal I not lette; bot I schal in party make me liche to þee, fauoring þi proude witte, þat þou be aftirward liche vnto me, folowing my counseil wip-outyn setting of merkes in þi meeknes. For, as witnessiþ Seinte Bernard:

40. “Parfite meeknes settiþ no merkes.” Þan settest þou merkes in þi meeknes whan þou wilt not fulfille þe counseil of þi souereyn goostly, bot 3if þi witte se þat it be to do. Lo! here maist þou see þat I coueite souereinte of þee. & trewly so I do, & I wol haue it. I trowe loue steriþ me þerto more þen any abilnes þat I fele in my-self in any heizt of kunnyng, or 3it of worching, or degree of my leuyng. God amende þat is amys, for he wote fully, & I bot in party!

41. Bot now (for to make aseep to þi proude witte) in comendyng of þis werk, trewly I telle þee þat 3if a soule, þat is þus ocupied, had tonge & langage to sey as it felip, þan alle þe clerkes of Cristendome schuld wondre on þat wisdam. 3e! & in comparison of it, all here grete clergie schuld seme apeerte foly. & þefore no wondre þof I kan not telle þee þe worþines of þis werk wip my boystouse beestly tonge. & God forbede þat it scholde be so defoulid in it-self for to be streynid vnder þe steringes of a fleschly tonge! Nay, it may not be, & certes it wil not be, & God forbede þat I schuld coueyte it! For al þat is spokyn of it is not it, bot of it. Bot now, siben we mowe not speke it, lat us speke of it, in confusion of proude wittys, & namely of þine, þe whiche is only, occasionly at þe leest, þe cause of þis writyng at þis tyme.

42. At þe first, I aske of þee what is perfeccion of mans soule & whiche ben þe propirtees þat fallyn to þis perfeccion. I answeere in þi persone, & I sey þat perfeccion of

mans soule is not elles bot an onheed maad bitwix God & it in parfite charitee. Pis perfeccion is so heiz & so pure in it-self, abouen þe vnderstondyng of man, þat it may not be knowen ne perceyuid in it-self. Bot þere where þe propirtees þat fallen to þis perfeccion ben verely seen & perceyuid, þere it is liche þat þe substaunce is aboundyng. & forþi it is wite here wheche ben þe propirtees þat fallyn to perfeccion, in declaryng þe nobilte of þis goostly excersise before alle oþer.

43. The propirtees þat fallyn to perfeccion, þe whiche iche parfyte soule falleþ to haue, ben vertewes. & þan, 3if þou wilt verrely beholde to þis werk in þi soule & to þe propertee & þe condicion of iche vertewe diuersely, þou schalt fynde alle vertewes ben cleerly & parfityly comprehendid in it, wip-outyn any crokyng or corrupcion of þe entent.

44. I touche no vertewe here in specyally, for it nedip not; þou hast hem touchid in maner in oþer diuerse places of myn owne wrytyng. For þis same werk, 3if it be verrely conceyued, is þat reuerent affeccion & þe frute departid fro þe tre þat I speke of in þi lityl pistle of preier. Pis is þe cloude of vnknowyng; þis is þat priue loue put in purite of spirit; þis is þe Arke of þe Testament. Pis is Denis deuinite, his wisdom & his drewry, his lizty derknes & his vnknowyn kunnynges. Pis is it þat settip þee in silence as wele fro þou3tes as fro wordes. Pis makip þi preier ful schorte. In þis þou arte lernid to forsake þe wored & to dispise it.

45. & þat more is, in þis þou arte lernid to forsake & dispise þin owne self, after þe teching of Crist in þe gospel, seiing þus: Si quis vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum; tollat crucem suam et sequatur me. Þat is: "Who-so wole come after me, late hym forsake hym-self, late hym bere his cros & folow me." As if he seide þus to þin vnderstondyng acordyng to our mater: "Who-so wil come meekly, not wip

me bot after me, to þe blis of heuen or to þe mounte of perfeccion." For Crist ʒede before bi kynde, & we comyn after bi grace. His kynde is more worþi þen grace, & grace is more worþi þen oure kynde. & in þis he lateþ us wetyn fully þat we mowen on now wise folow hym to þe mounte of perfeccion, as it falliþ to be in þe vse of þis werk, bot ʒif it be only sterid & led bi grace.

46. & þat is ful soþe. For wite þou riȝt wel, & all liche vnto þee þat þis writyng scholen ouþer rede or here, þat þof al I bid þee þus pleyndly & þus booldly set þee to þis werk, neverþeles I fele verely, wiþ-outyn errour or doute, þat Almyȝty God wiþ his grace behoueþ algates be þe cheef sterer & worcher, ouþer wiþ mene or wiþ-outyn; & þou only, or eny oþer liche vnto þee, bot þe consenter & sufferer: sauynȝ þat þis consent & suffring schal be, in þe tyme of þis werk, actuely disposid & ablid to þis werk in purite of spirit, & semely borne up to þi Souereyn, as þou mayst be lernid by þe proef in þe goostly siȝt of þi spirit.

47. & siþ so is þat God of his goodness steriþ & touchiþ diuerse soulis diuersely, as it is som wiþ mene & some wiþ-outyn, who dar þan seie þat God stereiþ not þee in þis writyng, or any oþer liche vnto þee þat þis schal ouþer rede or here, only by me mene, þof I be vnworþi, sauynȝ his worschipful wille, þat hym likiþ to do as hym likiþ? I suppose it schal be þus: þe werk schal witnes whan þe proef worchip. & þerfore, I preie þee, dispose þee for to receyue þis grace of þi Lorde, & here what he seiþ. "Who-so wil come after me" (in þe maner before seide) "late hym forsake hym-self." I prey þee, how may a man more forsake him-self & þe world, & more dispise him-self & þe wored, þen for to dedein for to þink of eny qualite of here beinges?

48. For wite þou wel for certeyn þat, þof al I bid þee forgete alle þinges bot þe blynde felyng of þi nakid beyng, ʒit

neuerpeles my wille is, & þat myn entent in þe biginning, þat þou schuldest forzete þe felyng of þe beyng of þi-self as for þe felyng of þe beyng of God. & for þis skyle I prouid þee in þe bigynnyng þat God is þi beyng. Bot for me þouzt þat þou were not 3it abil sodenly to be liftid up to þe goostly felyng of þe being of God for rudenes in þi goostly felyng, þefore, to late þee climbe þerto by degree, I bad þee first gnawe on þe nakid blinde felyng of þin owne beyng, vnto þe tyme þat þou miztest be maad able to þe hize felyng of God þi goostly contynowaunce of þis priue werk. For þof al I bid þee in þe biginnyng, bicause of þi boistouste & þi goostly rudeness, lappe & cloþe þe felyng of þi God in þe felyng of þi-self, 3it schalt þou after whan þou arte maad by contynowaunce more sleiz in clenness of spirit, nakyn, spoyle, & vtterly vncloþe þi-self of al maner of felyng of þi-self, þat þou be able to be cloþid wip þe gracyous felyng of God self.

49. & þis is þe trewe condicion of a parfite loue, only & vtterly to spoyle hym-self of him-self for þat þing þat he louip, & not admit ne suffre to be cloþed bot only in þat þing þat he louip; & þat not only for a tyme, bot eendlesly to be vmbilappid þerin, in ful & fynal forzetyng of hym-self. Þis is þe werk of loue þat none may knowe bot he þat felip it. Þis is þe lesson of oure Lorde whan he seip: "Who-so wil loue me, late hym forsake him-self"; as who seip: "Late him spoyle hym-self of him-self 3if he wil be verely cloþid in me, þat am þe side garnement of loue & of lastyng þat never schal haue eende."

50. & þefore, euer whan þou beholdest to þi worchyng, & seest & felest þat it is þi-self þat þou felest & not God, þen schalt þou make sorow earnestly, & hertely longe after þe felyng of God, euirmore desiryng wip-outyn cesyng to forgo þe woful wetyng & þe foule felyng of þi blynde beyng; & coueite to fle fro þi-self as from venym. & þan forsakyst þou

þi-self & dispisest þee ful felly, as þi Lorde biddep þee. & þan, when þou coueitest so streitly, not for to vnbe — for þat were woodnes & dispite vnto God — bot to forgo þe wetyng & þe felyng of þi beyng (þe whiche behouip algates be, 3if Goddes loue schal parfiteley be felt as it may be here) & seest & felest þat on no wise þou maist come to þi purpose, for þer wil algates folow & go wiþ þi doying a nakid felyng of þi blynde beyng, be þou never so besy (bot 3if it be any seeldom schort tyme whan God wol let þee fele hym-self in habundaunce of loue), þe whiche nakyd felyng of þi blynde beyng wol euymore prees aboven þee, bitwix þee & þi God, as wolen in þi begynnyng þe qualitees of þi beyng bitwix þee & þi-self: þan wol þee þenk it a wel heuy & a ful peynful birþen of þi-self. 3e! Jhesu help þee þanne, for þan hast þou nede. For alle þe woo þat may be wiþ-outyn þat is not a poynte to þat. For þan arte þi-self a cros to þi-self. & þis is trewe worching & wey to oure Lorde, as him-self seip: “Late him bere his cros,” first in þe peynfulnes of hym-self, & sip “folow me” into blis or þe mounte of perfeccion, taastyng þe softeness of my loue in godly felyng of my-self. Lo! here mayst þou see þat þee behouip soroufully desire to forgo þe felyng of þi-self, & peynfully bere þe birþin of þi-self as a cros, er þou maist be onyd to God in goostly felyng of him-self, þe whiche is parfite charite.

51. & here mayst þou sumwhat se & in party fele, al after þat þou arte touchid & goostly merkid wiþ þis grace, þe worþines of þis werk before alle oper.

52. & I preie þee, how schuldest þou com to þis worching by þe vse of þi wittys? Sekirly neuer; ne 3it by þi faire wise, þi sotyle & þi queinte ymaginacions & meditacions, 3e, þof þei be of þi wrechid leuyng, þe Passion of Criste, þe ioies of oure Lady, or of alle þe seintes & aungelles of heuen, or 3it of eny qualite or sotilte or condicion þat perteynþ to þe beyng of þi-self or of God. Sekirly me had leuer haue soche a nakid

blynde felyng of my-self as I touchid before (not of my doynge, bot of my-self. Many men clepen here doynge hem-self, & it is not so; for one am I þat do, & anoper aren my dedes þat ben done. & þe same it is of God; for one is he in him-self, & anoper ben his werkes). & raper it schuld breke myn herte in teres for lackyng of felyng of God & for þe painful birpin of my-self, & kyndil my desire in loue & desiryng after þe felyng of God, þan alle þe sotyle & þe queynte ymaginacions or meditacions þat man kan telle or may fynde wretyn in book, be þei neuer so holy ne schewe þei neuer so feire to þe sotyle ize of þi corious witte.

53. Neuerþeles 3it ben þees faire meditacions þe trewest wey þat a synner may haue in his begynnyng to þe goostly felyng of him-self & of God. & me wolde þenk þat it were impossible to mans vnderstondyng — þof al God may do what he wil — þat a synner schuld com to be restful in þe goostly felyng of him-self & of God, bot 3if he first sawe & felt by ymaginacion & meditacion þe bodely doynge of hym-self & of God, & þerto sorowed for þat þat were to sorowen, & maad joie for þat þat were to joien. & who-so comeþ not in bi þis weye, he comeþ not trewly; & þefore he mote stonde þeroute, & dop so whan he weneþ þat he is best þer-in. For many weneþ þat þei be wip-inne þe goostly dore, & 3it stonden þei þer-oute, & scholen do vnto þe tyme þat þey sechen meekly þe dore. & somme þer ben þat fynden þe dore sone, & comen inne raper þen somme; & þat is longe on þe porter pleynty, wip-outyn prees or deseert of hem-self.

54. It is a merueilous housholde, goostlines, for whi þe Lorde is not only portour hym-self, bot also he is þe dore: þe porter he is bi his Godheed, & þe dore he is by his manheed. þus seiþ hym-self in þe gospel:

55. Ego sum ostium. Per me si quis introierit, saluabitur; et siue egredietur siue ingredietur, pascua inueniet. Qui uero non intrat per ostium sed ascendit aliunde, ipse fur est et latro. Þat is to þin vnderstondyng as 3if he seide þus acordyng to oure mater: "I þat am almi3ty by my Godheed & may leuefully as porter late in whom I wol, & bi what wey þat I wol, 3it, for I wol þat þer be a comoun pleyn wey & an open entre to alle þat wolen come, so þat none be excusid by vnknowyng þe wey, I haue clopid me in þe comoun kynde of man, & maad me so opyn þat I am þe dore by my manheed, & who-so entreþ bi me, he schal be saaf.

56. Þei entren by þe dore, þat in beholdyng of þe Passion of Criste sorowen here wickydnes, the whiche ben cause of þat Passion, wip bitter reprovyn of hem-self, þat deseruid & not suffrid, & pite & compassion of þat worþi Lorde, þat so vili suffrid & noþing deseruid; & siþen lifte up here hertes to þe loue & þe goodnes of his Godheed, in þe whiche he voucheþ-saaf to meke hym so lowe in oure deedly manheed. Alle þees entren bi þe dore, & þei scholen be saaf. & wheþer þei gone inne, in þe beholdyng of þe loue & þe goodnes of his Godheed, or oute, in beholdyng of þe peyne of his manheed, þei scholen fynde goostly fode of deuocion inow3, soffisaunt & aboundyng to þe helpe & sauynge of here soules, þof al þei comen neuer ferþer inwardes in þis liif.

57. & who-so entreþ not by þis dore, bot clymbeþ oþer-wise to perfeccion by þe sotil seching & þe corious fantastic worchyng of his wilde wantoun wittis, leuyng þis comoun pleyn entre touchid before & þe trewe counseil of goostly faders: he, þat what-so-euer he be, is not only a nizt þeef bot a day skulker. A nizt þeef he is, for he goþ in þe derknes of synne, more lenyng in his presumpcion to þe syngulerte of his owne witte & his wille þen to any trewe counseil or to þis comon pleyn wey touchid before. A day skulker he is, for, vnder colour of clere goostly leuyng, priuely he pikip þe

outward signes & wordes of contemplacion & hap not þe frute. & þus for he felip in him sumtyme a liking longing, so lityl as it is, to come nere God, þefore, bleendid vnder colour of þis, he wenip al be good inow3 þat he dop, whan it is þe perilousest purpose þat may be, a 3ong man to folow þe feersnes of his desire vnrewlid bi counseil; & namely whan it is singularly set to climben in hize þinges, not only abouen him-self bit abouen þe comoun plein wey of Cristen men touchid before, þe whiche I clepe, by þe teching of Criste, þe dore of deuocion & þe trewest entre of contemplacion þat may be in þis liif.

58. But now forþe of oure mater þat specialy in þis writyng perteynep vnto þee, & to alle oper liche vnto þee in þat disposicion only. What þerof 3if þis be þe dore, schal a man þan whan he hap dore euer stonde þerate or þereinne & com none innermore? I answeere for þee, & I sey þat it is good þat he so do euer, til þe grete rust of his boistous bodelynes be in grete party rubbid awei, his counseil & his concience to witnes; & namely, euer to he be clepid innermore bi þe priue teching of þe spirit of God, þe whiche techyng is þe rediest & þe sekerist witnes þat may be had in þis liif of þe clepyng & þe drawyng of a soule innermore to more special worching of grace.

59. Euydence of þis touching a man may haue þus: 3if he fele in his contynoweel excersise as it were a soft growyng desire to come nere God in þis liif, as it may be by a specyall goostly felyng, as he herip men speke of, or elles fyndeþ wretyn in bokes. For he þat felip hym not sterid in heryng & redyng of goostly worching, & namely in his iche dayes excersise by a growing desire to come nere God, lat hym stonde 3it styll at þe dore, as a man clepid to saluacion bot not 3it to perfeccion.

60. & of o þing I warne þee. What-so-euer þou be þat þis writing schalt ouper rede or here, & namely in þis place where I am make a difference bitwix hem þat ben clepid to saluacion & hem þat ben clepid to perfeccion, þat of wheper partie þat þou fele is þi clepyng, loke neiþer þat þou deme ne discusse in þe dedes of God ne of man, ferþer þen only þi-self — as whom he steriþ & clepiþ to perfeccion & whom he clepiþ not; or of þe schortnes of tyme, whi he clepiþ hym raþer þen hym. If þou wilt not erre, loke not þat þou deme; bot onys here & vnderstonde. If þou be clepid, ʒeue preisyng to God, & prey þat þou falle not. & ʒif þou be not ʒit clepid, prey meekly to God þat he clepe þee whan his wille is. Bot teche him not what he schal do. Late hym alone. He is mizty, witty, & willy inowʒ to do þe best for þee & alle þat hym loueþ.

61. Haue þees wiþ þi parte. Wheper þat þou haue, þee nedep not to pleyne þee; for þei ben boþe precious. Þe first is good & algates nedep to be had. Þe secound is betir, gete who-so gete may; or (ʒif I soþelier schal sey), who-so bi grace is getyn & cleped þerto of oure Lorde.

62. Proudly mowe we prees & snapir & þe eende; boþe certes wiþ-outyn him it is nouʒt þat we do, hym-self saying: Sine me nichil potestis facere. Þat is to þin vnderstondyng: “Wiþ-outyn me steryng & principaly mouyng, & ʒe only bot consentyng & suffryng, ʒe mowen nouʒt do þing þat is parfiteli plesyng to me,” as schuld be in maner of þe werk of þis writyng.

63. & alle þis I sey in confusion of here erryng presumpcion þat, in þe coryouste of here clergie or here kyndely witte, wolen algates be principal worchers hem-self, God bot suffryng or only consentyng, whan verrely þe contrary is soþ in þinges contemplatyue. For only in hem ben alle corious skyles of clergie or of kyndely kunnyng fer put bak, þat God

be þe principal. Neuerþeless, in þinges leueful & actyue, mans clergie & his kyndely kunnyng schal worche with God by & by, only by his consent in spirit prouid by þees þre witnes: Scripture, counseil, & comoun custum of kynde & degre, eelde & compleccyon; in so moche þat man schal not folow þe steryng of þe spirit, seme it neuir so liking ne so holy; I mene in þinges actyue — bot 3if it falle vnder his clerigial or his kyndely kunnyng, þof al it be neuer so strongly stuffid by alle or by eny of þees þre witnes touchid before. & verrely it is grete skile þat man be more þen his werkes. & for þis it is þat by þe statute & þe ordinaunce of Holy Chirche, þer schal no man be admittyd to þe prelacye, þe whiche is þe heiest degre of actyue leuyng, bot 3if þe office of þat cure wol falle vnder his kunnyng by testimony of trewe examynacion. So þat, in þinges actyue, mans clergie & his kyndely kunnyng schal principaly abounde as in worching, God graciously consentyng, wip þees þre witnes aprouid. & skilfully, for alle þinges actyue be beneþe & vnder þe wisdam of man. Bot in þinges contemplatyue þe heiest wisdom þat may be in man as man is fer put vnder, þat God be þe principal in worching, & man bot only consenter & sufferer.

64. & þus I vnderstond þis worde of þe gospel: Sine me nichil potestis facere — þat is: “Wipout me 3e mowe do noþing” — on o maner of actyues & on anoper in contemplatyues. In actyues be-houep hym be, ouper wip suffring or wip consent or elles wip boþe, 3if ou3t schal be done, wheper it be leueful & plesaunt to hym or not: in contemplatyues, bi principal worching, askyng of hem nou3t elles bot only sufferaunce & here consent. So þat generally to vnderstonde: in alle our doynge, leueful & vnleueful, actyue or contemplatyue, wip-outyn hym we mowe do noþing. He is wip us in synne only bi suffraunce & not by consent, to oure fynal damnacion bot 3if we meekly amende us. In dedes þat be actyue & leueful, he is wip us boþe by

suffring & by consent, to our reproof 3if we go bak & oure grete mede 3if we do forþ. In dedes þat ben contemplatyue he is wip us, principaly steryng & worching, and we only but suffring & consenting, to oure grete perfeccion & goostly onyng of oure soule vnto hym in parfite charite. & þus sip alle þe men of þis liif mowen be deuided in þre, in synners, in actyues, & in contemplatyues, þefore generally, acordyng to alle þis wored, þis worde of oure Lorde may be seide vnto alle: "Wip-outyn me" only suffryng & not consentyng as in synners, or elles boþe suffryng & consentyng as in actyues, or þat more þane all þis is, principaly steryng & worching as in contemplatyues, "3e mowen do noþing."

65. Lo! here many wordes & lityl sentence. Neuerþeless, alle þis haue I seide to late þee wite in whiche þinges þou schalt vse þe werk of þe wittes, & in whiche nou3t; & how þat God is wip þee in o werk & how in anoper. & 3it, parauenture, in þis knowing þou maist eschewe disceytes, in þe whiche þou mi3test haue fallen ne had þis be schewid. & þefore, sip it is seide, late it be, þof al it be bot little perteynyng to oure mater. But now forþe of oure mater.

66. Þou mayst aske me þis questyon: By what o tokyn or mo, 3if þee liste telle me, may I rapest wite wip-outyn errour wheþer þis growyng desire þat I fele in myne iche dayes worching & þis likyng steryng þat I haue in redyng & heryng of þis mater be verrelly a clepyng of God to a more specyal worching of grace, as is þe mater of þis writyng; or it is a norischyng & a fedyng of my spirit to abide styll & to worche forþ in my comoun grace, þis þat þou clepest þe dore & þe comoun entre of alle Cristen men?

67. To þis I answeere so febely as I kan. Þou seest wel here þat I sette þee here in þis writyng two kyndes of euidences, bi þe whiche þou schalt proue þi goostly clepyng of God as to þis werk, one wip-inne, anoper wip-outyn. Of þe whiche

two, neiþer may suffise in þis caas fully, as me þenkeþ, wiþ-outyn þat oper. Bot where þei boþe ben to-geders one & acordyng, þan is þin euidence ful inow3 wiþ-outyn eny failing.

68. The first of þees two euidence, þe whiche is wiþ-inne, is þis growyng desire þat þou felist in þin iche dayes worching. & of þis desire þou schalt wite þus moche: þat þof al þat þe desire be a werk of þe soule blynde in it-self — for ri3t is þe desire of þe soule as gropyng & steppyng is of þe body; & boþe ben gropyng & steppyng blynde werkes of þe body, þou wost wel þi-self — bot þof þat þe werke of þis desire neuer be so blynde, 3it neuerþeless þer comouneþ & folowþ wiþ it a maner of goostly si3t, þe whiche is in partye cause & a mene forþering þis desire. Beholde þan besily to þin iche dayes excersise, what it is in it-self. & þan 3if it be þe mynde of þi wrechidnes, þe Passyon of Criste, or eny soche þat longeþ to þe comoun entre of Cristen men touchid before, þan 3if it so be þat þis goostly si3t, þat þus comouneþ & foloweþ wiþ þi blynde desire, rise from þees comoun beholdynges, sekirly þan it is a tokyn to me þat þe growing of þis desire is bot a norisching & a fedying of þi spirit to abide stille & to worche forþ in þi comoun grace, & no cleping ne stering of God to any more special grace.

69. Now, forþermore, þe toþer secounde euidence wiþ-outyn is a likyng stering þat þou felest in redyng or hering of þis mater. I clepe þis euidence with-outen, for it comiþ froo wiþ-outyn by þe windowes of þi bodily wittys, as by heryng & seing in þe tyme of þi redyng. Now touching þe secounde euidence, 3if it so be þat þis likyng stering, þat þou felist in heryng & redyng of þis mater, laste ne contynew no lenger with þee bot only þe tyme of þi reding or hering, bot it cesiþ þanne, or elles sone after, so þat þou neiþer wakenest ne slepiþ þer-in ne þer-wiþ, & namely it foloweþ þee not in þi cotidiane excersise, as it were going & presing bitwix þee &

it, stering & ledyng þi desire; þan it is a token verrey, in my conseit, þat þis likyng stering þat þou felist in hering & redyng of þis mater, is bot a kyndely gladnes þat iche Cristen soule hap in hering or redyng of þe trewe (& nameli of þat þe whiche touchip sotely & declareþ verely þe propertees of perfeccion þat most ben acording to þe soule of man, & namely of God) & no goostly touching of grace, ne cleping of God to any oþer more special worching of grace þen is þat þe whiche is þe dore & þe comoun entre to Cristen men.

70. But 3if it so be þat þis likyng stering, þat þou felest in redyng & hering of þis mater, be so abounding in it-self þat it go wip þee to bedde, it riseþ wip þee at morow, it folowep þee forþ al þe day in al þat þou doste, it reuip þee fro cotidiane wonte excersise & gob bitwix it & þee, it comouneþ & folowep þi desire, in so moche þat þee þenk it al bot o desire or þou wost neuer what, it chaungeþ þi gesture & makeþ þi chere semely. Lastyng it, alle þing esep þee & noþing may greue þee. A þousand miles woldest þou renne to comoun mouply wip one þat þou wist verrely felt it; & 3it, when þou comest þere, kanst þou nou3t sey, speke who-so wil, for þee list not speke bot of it. Fewe ben þi wordes, bot ful of frute & of fir. A schorte worde of þi mouþ conteneþ a wored ful of wisdam, 3it semeþ it bot foly to hem þat wonen in here wittis. Þi silence is softe, þi speche ful speedful, þi preier is preue, þi pride ful pure, þi maners ben meek, þi mirþe ful mylde, þi list is likyng to pleye wip a childe. Þou louest to be only & sit by þi-self; men wolden let þee, þee þinkip, bot 3if þei wrou3t wip þee. Þee list not rede book ne here book, bot only of it, so þat þin inwarde euidence & also þin vtter weren boþe acordyng & knittyng in one.

71. 3e! & 3if boþe þese euidence wip alle here fautours wretyn now here — fro þou haue ones had hem alle or eny

of hem — sese for a tyme, & þou be lefte as þou were bareyn, þee þenkþ, as wel fro þe felyng of þis newe feruour as from þin olde wont werk, so þat þee þenkþ þee fallen doun bitwix two, hauing neuer neiper bot lacking hem boþe: 3it be not ouer heuy for þis; bot suffre meekly & abide paciently þe wille of oure Lorde. For now arte þou in þe goostly see, to my licnes, schipping ouer fro bodeliness into goostlines.

72. Many grete stormes & temptacions, paraenture, scholen rise in þis tyme, & þou wost neuer wheþer to renne for socour. Alle is away fro þi feling, comoun grace & specyal. Be not ouer feerde, al-þof þou haue mater as þee þenkþ; bot haue a loue-trist in oure Lorde, so litil as þou maist gete for þe tyme, for he is not fer. He schal loke up, paraenture rizt sone, & eft touche þee wip a more feruent stering of þat same grace þan euer þou feltest any before. Þen arte þou al hole & alle good inow3, as þee þenkþ, last while it laste may. For sodenly, er euer þou wite, alle is away, & þou leuyst bareyn in þe boþe, blowyn wip blunderyng, now heder now þeder, þou wost neuer where ne wheder. 3it be not abascht, for he schal come, I behote þee, ful sone, whan hym likþ to leþe þee & douztely delyuer þee of alle þi dole, fer more worþely þen he euer did before. 3e! & 3if he eft go, eft woll he come a3eyn; & iche time, 3if þou wel bere þee by meek suffryng, wil he come more worþelyer & merilier þen oþer. & alle þis he doþ for he wil haue þee maad as pleying to his wille goostly as a roon gloue to þin honde bodely.

73. & siþ he sumtyme goþ & somtyme comeþ, þerfore doubli in þus double werk wol he priuely proue þee & worche þee to his owne werk. By þe wipdrawyng of þi feruour, þe whiche þee þenkþ his goyng, þof al it be not so, wole he propirly proue þi pacyence. For wite þou rizt wel þat, þof God sumtyme wipdrawe þees sensible swetnes,

þees feruent felynges & þees flaumyng desires, neuerþeles he wipdraweþ neuer þe raper his grace in his chosen. For sekirly I may not trowe þat his special grace may euer be wipdrawen fro his chosen þat onys haue ben touchid þer-wip, bot 3if synne deedly were in þe cause. Bot alle þees sensible swetnes, þees feruent felynges & þees flawmyng desires, þe whiche in hemself ben not grace bot tokenes of grace, þees ben oft-tymes wipdrawyn in þe prouyng of oure pacience, moo þan we wene. For grace in it-self is so heiz, so pure, & so goostly, þat it may not be felt in oure sensible partye. Þe tokenes þerof mowen, bot not it. & þus sumtyme oure Lorde wol wipdrawe þi sensible feruours boþe in bygyng & prouyng of þi pacience; & not only for þis skyle, bot for many oþer, þe whiche I set not here at þis tyme. Bot forþ of oure mater.

74. By þe worþines, þe oftnes & þe growyng of þees sensible felynges touchid before (þe whiche þee þenkeþ his comyng, þof al it be not so), he wol norische & fede þi spirit to last & to lyue in loue & worscheping of hym. So þat þus, bi paciens in absens of þees sensible felynges, þe tokenes of grace, & by þat liuely norisching & þat louely fedyng of þi spirit in here presence, he wol make þee in boþe to-gedir so blipely bowyng & so pleasauntly pliiing to þe perfeccion & þe goostly onheed to his owne wille (þe whiche onyng is parfite charite) þat þou schalt be as glad & as a bliþe to forgo soche sensible felynges at his wille, as for to haue hem & fele hem in contynowaunce alle þi liif-tyme.

75. & in þis tyme is þi loue boþe chaste & parfite. In þis tyme it is þat þou boþe seest þi God & þi loue, & nakidly felist hym also bi goostly onyng to his loue in þe souereyn poynte of þi spirit, as he is in hym-self, bot blyndely, as it may be here, vtterly spoylid of þi-self & nakidly cloped in hymself as he is, vncloped & not lappid in any of þees sensible felynges (be þei neuer so sweet ne so holy) þat

mowen falle in þis liif. Bot in purete of spirit propirly & parfityly he is parceyuid & felt in him-self as he is, fer lengþid fro any fantasye or fals opinion þat may falle in þis liif.

76. Þis sizt & þis felyng of God, þus in hym-self as he is, may no more be departyd fro God in hym-self (to þin vnderstondyng þat þus felist or þus seest) þen may be departyd God him-self fro his owne beyng, þe whiche ben bot one boþe in substaunce & also in kynde. So þat as God may not be fro his beyng for onheed in kynde, so may not þat soule, þat þus seep & felip, be fro þat þing þat he þus seep & felep for onheed in grace.

77. Lo! þus & by þees tokenes maist þou sumwhat fele, & in partye proue, þe maner & worþines of þi cleping & þi steryng in grace in þi goostly worching wip-inne, in þi redyng or hering of þis mater wip-outen. & þan, fro þe tyme be þat þou, or eny oper liche vnto þee as in spirit, haue had verrey experience of alle þees tokenes, or any of hem — for at þe first tyme þer ben bot ful fewe þat ben so specialy touchid & merkyd wip þis grace þat þei mowen haue sone or sodenly, in verrey felyng, þe proef of hem alle; neuerþeles, it suffiseþ to haue sum one or two, þof a man haue not alle at þe first tyme — & þerfore, 3if þou felest þat þou hast trew experience of one or two, prouid by trewe examynacion of Scripture & of counseil & of concyence: þan it is speedful to þee sumtyme for to cees of þees queinte meditacions & þees sotyle ymaginacions of þe qualitees of þi beyng & of Goddes, & of þe werkes of þi-self & of God (in þe whiche þi wittes han ben fed & wip þe whiche þou hast ben led fro wordlines & bodelines to þat abilnes of grace þat þou arte inne) & for to lerne how þou schalt be ocupied goostly in felyng of þi-self & of God, whom þou hast lernid so wel before by þenkyng & ymagenyng of 3oure doynges.

78. Ensaumple of þis schewid Criste in þis liif. For whi, 3if it so had ben þat þer had ben none hier perfeccion in þis liif bot in beholdyng & in louyng of his manheed, I trowe þat he wolde not þan haue assendid vnto heuen whiles þis woreld had lastid, ne wipdrawen his bodely presence fro his specyall louers in erþe. Bot for þer was an hier perfeccion, þe whiche man may haue in þis liif (þat is to sey, a pure goostli felyng in þe loue of his Godheed) þerfore he seide to his disciples, þe whiche grocheden to forgo his bodely presence (as þou doost in partie & in maner to forgo þi corious meditacions & þi queinte sotyl wittes) þat it was speedful to hem þat he went bodely fro hem: Expedi vobis ut ego vadam; þat is: "It is speedful to 3ow þat I go bodely fro 3ow." Vppon þis worde seip þe doctour þus: "Þat bot 3if þe schap of his manheed be wipdrawen fro oure bodely 3en, þe loue of his Godheed may not fasten in oure goostly 3en." & þus I sey vnto þee, þat it is speedful sumtyme to leue of þi corious worching in þi wittes & leere þee to taast sumwhat, in þi felyng goostly, of þe loue of þi God.

79. & to þis felyng schalt þou come bi þat wey þat I telle þee, by helpe of grace goyng before. & þat is, þat þou euermore wip-uten cesyng lene to þe nakid felyng of þi-self, euermore offryng þi beyng vnto God as for þe most precious offring þat þou maist make. Bot loke, as I ofte seide, þat it be nakid for drede of disceite. 3if it be nakid, þan wol it be ful peynful to þee in þe biginnyng to abide þer-in any while. & þat is, as I before seyde, for þi wittys fynden no mete þer-in vnto hem. Bot no force þer-of, for I wol loue it þe betyr. Late hem faste awhile, I preie þee, fro here kyndely delite in here kunning; for, as it is wel seide, a man kyndely desirþ for to kunne; bot certes he may not taast of goostly felyng in God bot only by grace, haue he neuer so moche kunning of clergie ne of kynde. & þerfore, I preie þee, seche more after felyng þen after kunning; for kunning oft-tymes disceyuiþ wip pride, bot meek louely felyng may not begile.

Scientia inflat, karitas edificat. In knowyng is trauaile, in feling is rest.

80. Bot now mayst þou seye: What rest is þis þat þou spekist of? For me þenkiþ þat it is trauayle, pynnyng, & no rest. For whan I set me to do as þou seyst, I fynde þer pine & batayle on alle sides. For on þat o partye my wittys wolden haue me away, & I wil not; & on þat oper partye I wolde fele God & lake þe felyng of my-self, as I may not. So þat batayle is on alle sides & peyne; & þis þenk me a queynte rest þat þou spekist of.

81. To þis I answeere & sey: þat þou arte not used in þis werk, & þerfore it is more peynful to þee. Bot 3if þou were wonte þer-to, & knewest by experience what profite were þer-in, þou woldest not wilfully come oute þer-of to haue alle þe bodely ioie & rest of þis woreld. & 3it it is grete peyne & a trauayle also. Bot in þat I clepe it a rest, for þe soule is not in dwere what it schal do, & also for a soule is maad sekir (I mene in þe tyme of þis doynge) þat it schal not moche erre.