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Chaucer's Meagre Reference to the Variable World

PART IV

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THE CHURCH'S TEACHINGS IN THE ACTUAL WORLD

In her life a good wife named Alice who came from "juxta Bathon," as Chaucer tells us, has been three times to Jerusalem, let alone of other shrines, although it can be regarded as certain that she went on merry-making pilgrimage to the shrines with a gay company. Pilgrimages to sacred places came to a travel for pleasure through various provinces in the later Middle Ages. Pilgrims no more traveled to sacred places for the purpose of expiation of sins as in the sermon of Chaucer's Parson.

... whan a man hath sinned openly, of which sinne the fame is openly spoken in the contree; and thanne holy chirche by Iugement destreineth him for to do open penaunce. / Commune penaunce is that preestes enioinex (enjoin) comunly in certeyn caas; as for to goon, peraventure, naked in pilgrimages, or bare-foot.¹

The jolly Alice could not confine herself to her home; she desires to be on the gad. She would like to see and to be seen, so that she is anxious to lose no occasion for "wandrynge," whether a merry jaunt or pilgrimage.

I hadde the bettre leyser for to pleye,
And for to se, and eek for to be seyn
Of lusty folk.²

It was thought in the Middle Ages that teeth set wide apart had much to do

1 I (X) 104-105.

2 III (D) 551-553

with a fondness for “wandrynge” and for wantonness as well.³ Besides her company in play, indeed, Alice has had five husbands at “chirche dore.” By no virtue could the good Wife, wanton and amorous, control her irresistible passions and appetite, which she put down to Venus the planet. At Venus’s command she could not withdraw her chamber from any good fellow.

Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,
And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardynesse;

. . . .
Allas! allas! that evere love was synne!
I folwed ay myn inclinacioun
By vertu of my constellacioun.⁴

Much sinned she for her hardiness as much as her wantonness. Under the influence of Mars, as she remarks in a reminiscent frame of mind, she always lost all control over herself. Chaucer depicts her as a woman of spirit; defiant and full of competitive spirit, quick to take offense and fond of display. He might have heard her vainly boast of her skill in cloth-making which was surpassed by none in Ypres and Ghent. Seized with a paroxysm of fury she must have said that she lost her temper, should any woman march up to make an offering before her in parish church. It is in her nature that she gives us the discourse on marriage based upon her experience. The eloquent Pardoner, though sure of discourse, interfered with her discourse on “wo that is in mariage” by saying:

by god and by seint Iohn,
Ye been a noble prechour in this cas!
I was aboute to wedde a wyf; allas!
What sholde I bye it on my flesh so dere?
Yet hadde I lever wedde no wyf to-yere!⁵

Curry says that it can not be imagined that Chaucer portrayed his Wife on a

3 M. Bowden, *A Commentary on the General prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, New York, 1957, p. 228.

4 III (D) 611-616.

5 III (D) 164-168.

living model.⁶ Whether or not the Wife is a woman in fiction whom her creator's imagination conjured up, Chaucer, as he assured that he wrote his pilgrims as they were, may have had in his mind some model on whom he created her although it seemed unlikely that an individual model could be found in real life.

A great lady like Joan of Kent or Alice Perrers shows herself in the medieval history.⁷ Turning to history, indeed, we have little expectation of being able to find a corresponding counterpart to the Wife among wives of craftsmen. History scarcely refers to lives enough of the lower middle-class women as such. The Hundred Years War and the Black Death enabled the middle-class men to raise their station; some enjoyed the privileges of knights and others the monopolies of trade. The wealthy freeholders, constrained to knighthood, had been used for public offices, while the knightly class not so eager to perform knight service, both active and civil, had an inclination for manorial administration.⁸ Supported by the King and the magnates wealthier merchants and tradesmen came to be of some political importance. Wool merchants who made a large fortune out of wool export were raised to the gentry, or some of the wealthiest to the peerage; leaders of influential guilds participated in city government. So Chaucer's Merchant with a forked beard seems to be one of merchant princes although Chaucer pretends, it seems, not to know who his Merchant is. Typical of the Merchant Staplers, wool merchants,⁹ was Richard Lyons, for instance, who dealing in wool reached stations of great wealth and power. Chaucer's Five Burgesses qualified for aldermanship are likely to be citizens of some political importance. Their wives, ostentative and ambitious, expect their husbands to participate in city government. Mr. D. W. Robertson refers to the Burgesses and their wives in his *Chaucer's London*, in which he says that these wives only expect their husbands to rise above their station.¹⁰

After all we, here, encounter fictitious craftsmen in history or historical books. Mr. Robertson gives a reference to Chaucer's Burgesses to supplement his description of the historical facts of the fourteenth century. If these fictitious

6 W. C. Curry, *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences*, 2nd. ed., New York, 1960, p. 117.

7 See M. McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, Oxford, 1959.

8 See A. R. Myers, *England in the Late Middle Ages*, Penguin Books, 1956, pp. 27f. and pp. 45f.

9 E. M. Carus-Wilson suggests that the Merchant Staplers are distinguished from the Merchant Adventurers. See *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, London, 1967, pp. XV f.

10 Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. in 1968. See pp. 80-81.

craftsmen could scarcely be identified with actual guildmen,¹¹ they are not men in fiction as Chaucer himself declares that:

Me thynketh it accordaunt to resoun
 To telle yow al the condicioun
 Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
 And whiche they weren, and of what degree.¹²

Chaucer gives us the average craftsmen of his time. Craftsmen are rich, ostentatious, extravagant and ambitious type of men. But he never tells us that his Burgesses are elected aldermen. Most actual guilds to which the Burgesses belonged were not influential enough to represent their guilds in city council as aldermen, but that is no reason why they are not so realistic. Prominent members of the influential guilds like mercers', drapers', and grocers', were, Mr. Robertson says, qualified to be chosen aldermen.¹³ It seems likely that Chaucer deliberately avoided selecting his Burgesses from the tradesmen of guilds, whether victualling or non-victualling, who, backed by the King or great magnates, were in conflict with each other in the 1380's.¹⁴ Acquainted with the King and the great lords, he seems to have chosen neutral guilds. A wife of Simkin, the wealthiest village craftsman of the *Reeve's Tale*, who came of a middle-class family, is as proud and pert as her husband.

A wyf he (Simkin) hadde, yeomen of noble kyn;
 The person of the toun hir fader was.

 And she was proud, and peert as is a pye (magpie).
 A ful fair sighte was it upon hem two;
 On halydayes biforn hire wolde he go
 With his tynet bounden aboute his heed,
 And she cam after in a gyte of reed;
 And Symkyn hadde hosen of the same.
 Ther dorste no wight clepen hire but "dame."¹⁵

11 Khul states that London City Council was represented by four members of haberdashers' guild in 1377. See Bowden, *Commentary*, p. 183.

12 I (A) 37-40.

13 *Chaucer's London*, pp. 80-81

14 Bowden, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

15 I (A) 3942-3943, 3950-3956. Cf. portraits of the Five Burgesses and their wives, I (A) 361-378.

Chaucer mentions that the parish priest, her father, purposed to make his granddaughter his heir to the profits of his cure. Such a man or woman stands for a wealthy, insolent kind of a middle-class man or woman who is extravagant in his or her way or living. Aside from their temperament the middle-class men's character have much to do with the social shift of the time. History tells us that the reasons why these men are arrogant, vainglorious and live in clover, yet they are mercenary and preoccupied with unaristocratic value of money are found in the facts that they bought as it were their stations for the money they gained from wool or cloth trade and wool farming. Here's the *Perfect Woman* which admonishes that:

Fair of speche schalt thou be, gladde, and of mylde mood,
 Trewe in worde and in dede, and in conscience good;
 Keep thee from synne, fro vilonye, and fro blame,
 And loke that thou beere (bear) thee so that men seie
 thee no schame;
 For he that in good lijf renneth (runneth),
 Ful ofte weel he wynneth,
 My leve child.¹⁶

It seems probable that a woman of the gentry class is advised to be a reputable woman. She appears to have been admonished to live according to the ideal of the gentlefolk with whom her family were ranked. This only shows how most of such women did not meet their ideal of ladyhood in real life. Presumably she, one would suppose, was not a respectable woman as was suggested in Chaucer's newly-knighted Franklin. His young son would not behave as a squire.

I have a sone, and by the Trinitee,
 I hadde levere than twenty pound worth lond,
 Though it right now were fallen in myn hond,
 He were a man of swich discrecioun
 As that ye (Squire) been! Fy on possessioun,
 But if a man be vertuous withal!
 I have my sone snybbed (chided), and yet shal,

¹⁶ Quoted by G. G. Coulton in his *Social Life in Britain*, Cambridge, 1956, p. 447.

For he to vertu listeth nat entende.¹⁷

The Court of Heaven affords a parallel. In her *Tale* the Wife of Bath says that:

Looke who that is moost vertuous alwey,
 Pryvee and apert (public), and moost entendeth ay
 To do the gentil dedes that he kan;
 Taak hym for the grettest gentil man.
 Crist wole we clayme of hym our gentillesse.¹⁸

A virtue of courtesy of a court circle has a religious parallel in that of the Heavenly Court. Courtesy comes from Heaven. Of course men are liable to sin against disinterestedness, temperance, gentleness, prudence, continence and so on. But men and women of middle classes, in particular, lived up not to the Christian ideal, but to what they saw and heard although gentlefolk, lay and ecclesiastical alike, could by no means approach the ideal. The middle-class men had been forced to live up to such a realistic way of living while the gentlefolk could afford to hold up the ideal. Whether or not Chaucer's men and women of middle classes disapproved of holy Scripture and trusted in what they saw and heard is not known. They appear to enjoy their lives; they are in high spirits. It seems likely that they never know what they ought to be doing. They, judged according to the medieval ideal of Christianity, commit sins. Yet Chaucer speaks highly of their well-off living. In a *Protestant Woman* we read:

Item, This deponent (Joan Cliffland), being demanded by the said Margery (Margery Backster, wife of a carpenter at Martham in Norfolk) how she believed touching the sacrament of the altar, said that she believed the sacrament of the altar 'after the consecration, to be the very body of Christ in form of bread. To whom Margery said; "Your belief is nought. For if every sacrament were God, and the very body of Christ, there should be an infinite number of gods, because that a thousand priests, and more, do every day make a thousand such gods, and afterwards eat them, and void them out

17 V(F) 682-689.

18 III(D) 1113-1117.

again in places, where, if you will seek them, you may find many such god. And, therefore, know for certainty, that by the grace of God it shall never be my god, because it is falsely and deceitfully ordained by the priests in the church, to induce the simple people to idolatry; for it is only material bread."¹⁹

These middle-class men are the kind of men to be mercenary,²⁰ preoccupied with calculation of gain and loss, and to hold an epicurean view of life, who take a materialistic view as to the unquestionable truth. Chaucer's Franklin finds delight in dining well.

To lyven in delit was evere his wone,
 For he was Epicurus owene sone,
 That heeld opinion that pleyn delit
 Was verrailly felicitee parfit.²¹

So assiduous and mercenary were the wealthier freeholders and substantial merchants who amassed wealth and enjoyed a high standard of living; they, aided by financial necessities of the King who waged war against France and the lords' favour, rose into the gentry class. The retirement of knights from their services, both active and civil, had benefited wealthier freeholders, and the expansion of wool trade was favourable for the merchants and guild tradesmen handling wool to rise to fame and importance.²² The proceeds from the export of wool were the most important source of English revenue. John Lydgate's *Horse, Goose, and Sheep* says:

Off Brutis Albion / his wolle is cheeff richesse,
 In prys surmountyng / euery othir thyng
 Sauff Greyn & corn: marchauntis al expresse,

19 Quoted in *Social Life*, p. 463.

20 See 'De l'Evesque qui benei lo con' quoted by Clem C. Williams in his *Genre and Art of the Old French Fabliaux*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1969, pp. 60-61:

Car totes béent mals au prendre
 Et cil qui ne lor a que tandre,
 N'en qura jamais bon servise.

21 I(A) 335-338.

22 See E. Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History*, Oxford, 1955, pp. 104f.

Woolle is cheeff tresoure / in this lond growyng.²³

Chaucer is silent about wool trade; he can't fail to know about it as a comptroller in London customhouse. He avoided referring to such matters, presumably because he knew well it, not because he fed up with it.²⁴ The Merciless Parliament of 1388 convicted Nicholas Brembre, leader of the victualling guild and mayor of London, who as a collector worked with Chaucer in London customhouse for several years. A court poet was under the necessity of seeking some great lords' patronage in the Middle Ages. The merchant, urban or rural, must have been assiduous and thought hard about "th'encrees of his wynnyng" as did the merchant of the *Shipman's Tale*:

and forth this marchant rideth
To Flaundres-ward; his prentys wel hym gydeth,
Til he came into Brugges murily.
Now gooth this marchant faste and bisily
Aboute his nede, and byeth and creaunceth (borrows on credit).²⁵

The narrator makes no reference to "a porcioun of ware" which the merchant buys in Bruges, yet it seems certain that cloth must be contained in his wares. The town of Bruges had a large trade in English wool and at the same time much trade in cloth with English merchants.²⁶ And it seems probable that the wealthier franklins were sordid and stingy. Extravagant as he is, Chaucer's Franklin has a mercenary spirit and he must have managed practical affairs²⁷ although he acts in a lordly way. In his *Tale* he refers to business dealings which Aurelius, though a squire, had with the magician. Making a bargain with the magician Aurelius says:

"Fy on thousand pound!
This wyde world, which that men seye is round,

23 Ll. 351-354. Quoted by F. J. Furnivall in *political, Religious and Love Poems*, Oxford, 1965.

24 Cf. E. Power, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

25 VII(B²) 1489-1493.

26 See E. Power, *op. cit.*, p. 92, p. 96.

27 Cf. I(A) 355-356:

At sessiouns ther was he (the Franklin) lord and sire;
Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.

I wolde it yeve, if I were lord of it.
 This bargayn is ful dryve, for we been knyht,
 Ye shal be payed trewely, by my trouthe!
 But looketh now, for no necligence or slouthe
 Ye tarie us heere no lenger than to-morwe."²⁸

It is conceivable that the Franklin, if identified as John Bussy of Lincolnshire as is suggested by Manly,²⁹ must have amassed wealth by wool growing. There is no suggestion that the Franklin farmed out his demesne and his demesne is left to his reeve's management.³⁰ However sheep farming had flourished already from the thirteenth century onwards and Lincolnshire was one of wool growing centers of England. Lincolnshire wool was famous for its quality.³¹

With the rise of the middle classes the wealthier men, constrained to knighthood, who were franklins and mechants, joined the circle of courtiers. In Chaucer's audience and readers were comprised the prominent franklins, the influential merchants, such clerks and knights as were of middle-class origin. In apology Chaucer pleads that his narrators of stories of the fabliau type are rude and mean; he makes an apology to court audience or readers, for instance, for his Franklin's rudeness, saying:

sires, by cause I (the Franklin) am a burel man,
 At my bigynnyng first I yow biseche,
 Have me excused of my rude speche.
 I lerned nevere rethorik, certeyn;
 Thyng that I speke, it moot be bare and pleyn.³²

Even among courtiers the Christian ideal of knighthood and priesthood was being unpopular under the influence of the new ideas of middle-class men in the late Middle Ages. Langland says much of disbelief among "hiegh men."³³

28 V(F) 1227-1233.

29 J. M. Manly, *Some New Light on Chaucer*, New York, 1951, p. 162.

30 Cf. I(A) 597-600:

His (the Reeve's) lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,
 His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye
 Was hoolly in this Reves governyng,
 And by his covenant yaf the rekenyng.

31 E. Power, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

32 V(F) 716-720.

33 See, for instance, *Piers the Plowman*, B, X, 101-104.

Chaucer's Monk disapproves of the rule framed by St. Augustine or St. Benedict as to claustration and labour; he must have said to fictitious Chaucer: what is the sense of losing his wits poring over a book in the cloister?; what is the use of doing manual labour?; how does the monastic life serve the world?³⁴ Apart from the bourgeois ideas the difficulty with the Christian ideal of asceticism which expects men to refrain from pleasure is that it cannot easily be realized. An anonymous poem reflects the upside-down teachings of church.

Vertues & good lyuinge is cleped ypocrisie;
 trowthe & godis lawe is clepud heresie;
 pouert & lownes is clepud loselrie (profligacy);
 trewe prechinge & penaunce is clepud folie.
 pride is clepud honeste,
 and coueityse wisdom.
 richesse is clepud worthynes,
 and lecherie kyndely (natural) thing,
 & glotenyte but murthe (mirth).
 enuye and wraethe men clepen rightfulness;
 slouthe men clepen nedfulness
 to norshe mennes kynde.
 and thus mannes lif that shulde be holi
 is turned into cursednes.
 rightwisdom is not dred,
 and mercy is but scorned;
 lesinges (lying) and fables ben clepude good lore,
 and cristes gospel but a chape (jape).
 And thus for defaute of trewe techinge,
 men wenden to helle by many weies.
 The joye of heuene men setten not bi,
 but al bi wordli likinge.³⁵

Medieval churchmen, both regular and secular, do not show themselves to be

³⁴ See I(A) 173-188.

³⁵ 'Abuses of the Age, II', 1-8, 10-23. Printed by R. H. Robbins, *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, pp. 144-145.

exceptional. The priests who ought to foster Church teachings were deprived. So were also the monks and nuns who secluded themselves from the world, strove to attain the unworldly ideal of the Church. These churchmen, too, tended to sins against God as sinful men. It is true that prelates were tempted by wealth to commit a sin against avarice as is complained by Gower.

Every rule of Christ rejects the delights of the world, but prelates now sin in this respect. Christ was poor, but they are overloaded with gold...and the prelate thinks that riches are his own way of life. Their wealth and their passionate greed for it have grown large, and even though they possess a very great deal, they seek after more.³⁶

Prelates like Chaucer's Monk disapproved of the laws of God; they complacently led the same idle lives as lay lords did, going hunting, riding round their monasteries. It is not certain whether Chaucer's Monk would have a historical counterpart in William de Cloune, Abbot of Leicester or not,³⁷ but the abbey of Leicester practiced sheep farming.³⁸ As the market demand, foreign or home, for wool increased the supply filled the growing demand. Indeed both abbeys and bishops had organized sheep farming of their estates from the early twelfth century onwards.³⁹ In the early fourteenth century abbeys of Peterborough and Crowland, the Bishop of Winchester, for instance, produced a large amount of wool. Lydgate mentions:

The wollë skynnys / makith men to rise
To gret richesse / in many sondry wise;
The sheepe al-so / turnyth to gret profite,
To helpe of man / berith furris blak & white.⁴⁰

However, the heavy taxes levied by Edward III on wool, the repeated visitation of the Black Death and the decrease in population resulted in the general

³⁶ *The Major Latin Works of John Gower*, tr. Eric W. Stockton, Seattle, 1962, pp. 116.

³⁷ M. Bowden, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116.

³⁸ E. M. Carus-Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

³⁹ E. Power, *op. cit.*, pp. 32f.

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, 361-364.

decline of demesne farming, and the large-scale production of wool was replaced by the tenant farming on a small scale in the course of the later fourteenth century. But clerics scarcely shared in the expense of the war with France, and accumulated wealth.⁴¹ A reference to sheep farming is little made by Chaucer; he mentions that a poor widow keeps a sheep together with sows and cows:

Thre large sowes hadde she, and namo,
Thre keen, and eek a sheep that highte Malle.⁴²

Chaucer's Prioress is a woman counterpart of his Monk, a prelate. Whether or not she knows that she in imitating a court lady has a ladylike disregard for the principles of the monastic rule, she delights in behaving herself like a court lady. She seems to boast of it; she is at the head of St. Leonard's at Stratford-Bow. Chaucer represents the Prioress and the Monk as sinful and warmly human, but by no means says about a bishop with character who is flesh and blood. Chaucer's work is lacking in the description of the life of a cleric who is fit to be a bishop. In comparison with wealthy abbeys and prelates parsons were poor, but not so badly-off. And seeking for a large income many parsons farmed out their benefices. In place of such an absentee parson a vicar or a curate ministered to the parishioners at a low wage.⁴³ Bishops insisted on a living wage for vicars. But the monks and nuns eager in raising money appropriated the revenue of parish churches. So did the bishops.⁴⁴ And the revenue of the church was useful to an absentee parson who was retained by some guild tradesman, or by some great lord or lady. Many a parson, looking for an easy office of a chantry priest, ran to London. The lure of money ensnared a parson. Langland laments:

Persones and parsheprestes · pleynede to the bisshop,
That hure (their) parshens ben poore · sitthe the pestelence tyme,
To haue licence and leue · in Londone to dwelle,
And syngre ther for symonye · for seluer ys swete.⁴⁵

41 G. M. Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, London, 1948, pp. 102-103.

42 VII(B²) 4020-4021.

43 H. S. Bennett, *Life on the English Manor*, Cambridge, 1956, p. 327.

44 F. D. Matthew ed., *The English Works of Wyclif*, London, p. 97.

45 C, I, 81-84.

Some parsons set aside their spiritual duties in cloth making⁴⁶; some gained a profit in dealing in various goods.⁴⁷ As for Chaucer's Parson stress is laid on his poverty and disinclination to get an easy employment as a chantry priest. He dwells, Chaucer says, at his parish, busies himself with the cure of souls.

He sette nat his benefice to hyre
 And leet his sheep encombred in the myre
 And ran to Londoun unto Seinte Poules
 To seken hym a chaunterie for soules,
 Or with a bretherhed to been withholde.⁴⁸

Obviously Chaucer never described his Parson as Chaucer saw him. Chaucer might have created him, having an individual parson in mind. There must undoubtedly have been such a parson who was contented with honest poverty. As has been shown, nevertheless, the Parson shows himself to be exceptional. He would rather give to his poor parishioners out of his church alms and revenue when they could not pay their tithes. Then, Chaucer presumably portrayed the Parson as a parson was expected to be; Chaucer represents as ideal the Parson, together with the Knight and the Plowman. None of these idealized men, whether lay or ecclesiastical, who represented the basic orders of medieval society, was Chaucer described them.

In his *Tale* the Parson deals, chiefly with the seven deadly sins and their remedies, and on penitence. The *Somme des Vices et des Vertus* of Frère Lorens is Chaucer's source of the treatise on the sins and the *Summa Casuum Poenitentiae* of Raymund of Pennaforte the sermon on penitence.⁴⁹

Now shal men understonde that, al be it so that noon erthely man may eschue alle venial synnes, yet may he refreyne hym by the brennyng love that he hath to oure Lord Jhesu Crist, and by preyeres and confessioun and othere goode werkes, so that it shal but litel greve (harm). / For, as seith Seint Augustyn, "If a man love God in swich manere that al that evere he dooth is in the love

46 M. McKisack, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

47 H. S. Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

48 I(A) 507-511.

49 F. N. Robinson, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd. ed., Boston, 1957, pp. 765-766.

of God, and for the love of God, verrailly, for he brenneth (burns) in the love of God, / looke, how muche that a drope of water that falleth in a fourneys (furnaces) ful of fyr anoyeth (harms) or greveth, so muche anoyeth a venial synne unto a man that is perfit in the love of Jhesu Crist." / Men may also refreyne venial synne by receyvynge worthily of the precious body of Jhesu Crist; / by receyvynge eek of hooly water; by almesdede; by general confessioun of *Confiteor* (Confess) at masse and at complyn (evening service); and by blessynge of bisshopes and of preestes, and by oothere goode werkes.⁵⁰

The sacrament of the altar, the six works of mercy, the Ave Maria and the Pater Noster can also be found in the Parson's treatise. The treatise comprises the Church doctrine in which the parsons are expected to instruct the parish folk. The Parson urges caution against the deadly sins; they lead to men's downfall. Each sin "amenuseth (diminishes) the love that men sholde han to God moore and moore." Men's passions, being regarded as sins, are difficult of control. Men are governed by their passions. Sins come from Adam and Eve who, contrary to God's laws, were exiled from heaven.

There may ye seen that deedly synne hath, first, suggestion of the feend, as sheweth heere by the naddre (adder); and afterward, the delit of the flessch, as sheweth heere by Eve; and after that, the consentynge of resoun, as sheweth heere by Adam. / For trust wel, though so were that the feend tempted Eve, that is to seyn, the flessch, and the flessch hadde delit in the beautee of the fruyt defended, yet certes, til that resoun, that is to seyn, Adam, consented to the etynge of the fruyt, yet stood he in th'estaat of innocence. / Of thilke Adam tooke we thilke synne original; for of hym fleshly descended be we alle, and engendred of vile and corrupt mateere. / And whan the soule is put in oure body, right anon is contract original synne; and that that was erst but oonly peyne of concupiscence, is afterward bothe peyne and synne. / And therefore be we all born sonnes of wratthe and of dampnacioun perdurable, if

50 X(I) 382-386.

it nere baptesme that we receyven, which bynymeth (takes away) us the culpe (culpability). But for sothe, the peyne dwelleth with us, as to temptacioun, which peyne highte concupiscence.⁵¹

If a man rules his own fleshly dictates he can gain God's love. Sinful men, though liable to sin against God, accumulate good deeds they can be God's sons. Penitence "maketh a man lyk to God, and maketh hym Goddes owene deere child." The Parson advises people to repent of their sins and encourages them in doing good deeds.

... the goode werkes quyken agayn, and comen agayn, and helpen, and availen to have the lyf perdurable in hevене, whan we han contricioun. / But soothly, the goode werkes that men doon whil they been in deedly synne, for as muche as they were doon in deedly synne, they may nevere quyke agayn. / For certes, thyng that nevere hadde lyf may nevere quykene; and natheles, al be it that they ne availle noght to han the lyf perdurable, yet availen they to abregge (abridge) of the peyne of helle, or elles to geten temporal richesse, / or elles that God wole the rather enlumyne (illumine) and lightne the herte of the synful man to have repent-aunce; / and eek they availen for to usen a man to doon goode werkes, that the feend have the lasse power of his soule. / And thus the curteis Lord Jhesu Crist ne wole that no good werk be lost; for in somewhat it shal availle.⁵²

The Parson is aware enough of his spiritual duty that, if he as a sinful man acts against the Church teachings he must foster, he is no longer qualified for cares of man's soul.

Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
 And this figure he added eek therto,
 That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?
 For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,

51 X(I) 331-335.

52 X(I) 241-246.

No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
And shame it is, if a prest take keep,
A shiten (defiled) shepherde and a clene sheep.
Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,
By his clenness, how that his sheep sholde lyve.⁵³

He not only instructs people in Church teachings; he himself sets examples of the doctrine to people. Or he rather, Chaucer says, practiced what he preached and afterward he preached on it.

... first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte.⁵⁴

(昭和49年9月27日受理)

53 I(A) 498-506.

54 I(A) 497.