

ALEXANDER BARCLAY'S *SHIP OF FOOLS*:
AN ANNOTATED EDITION
AND MODERNIZED TEXT

By

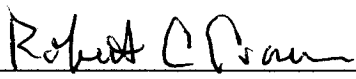
Jonathan Wright

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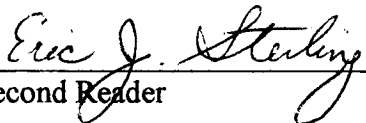
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JONATHAN WRIGHT'S HOMEPAGE

Wright, Jonathan

Associate Professor of English

Contact Information:

Phone: (334) 386-7225

Office: 427 Brooks Hall

Email: jwright@faulkner.edu

cell
233-1111

Education:

PhD, University of Alabama, 2006

MLA, Auburn University at Montgomery, 1998

BS, English, Troy State University of Montgomery, 1995

AA, Faulkner University, 1987

Duties and Interests at Faulkner University:

Dr. Wright typically teaches one section of composition and multi literature each semester and serves as the sponsor of Faulkner's Tau Delta. As a Hudson Strode Renaissance Program Fellow at t Alabama, Dr. Wright specialized in medieval and Renaissance lit. Consequently, he especially enjoys teaching English Literature S Medieval Studies, and Shakespeare Survey.

Other Interests:

Life outside the classroom for Dr. Wright includes serving God a spending time with his wife, Wanda, and his twin daughters, Eli entertaining family, friends, and students in his home, reading f working on research and creative writing projects, attending pla Shakespeare Festival, listening to music, watching movies, and Starbuck's.

Honors or Awards:

Benjamin B. Williams Scholarship (AUM)

Who's Who Among Students (AUM)

Hudson Strode Renaissance Program Fellowship (UA)

Hudson Strode Summer Research Grant (UA)

Publications:

Drunkenness Unmakes the Man: Self-Destructive Drinking in Sh Alabama, 2006. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2007.

Member of editorial team for Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence a An Annotated Critical Edition. Ed. Robert C. Evans. West Cornwa 2003.

Entries "John Day" and "George Cavendish" in Tudor England: A Arthur F. Kinney and David W. Swain. New York: Garland, 2001

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for Wanda

with much love and many thanks

INTRODUCTION

Although Alexander Barclay's *Ship of Fools* has been largely forgotten by modern scholarship, it is nevertheless a significant text that should be salvaged from the depths of obscurity. As an English adaptation of Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff* (*Ship of Fools*), Barclay's *Ship* has a rich heritage. Brant's 1494 publication was well-received in Germany, and it became progressively more popular as it was translated into the other major European languages. Since the age of print was in its infancy at the close of the fifteenth century, the fact that multiple versions soon appeared in Latin, French, and English, along with versions in Low German, Dutch, and Flemish, conveys both the quality of Brant's work and the impact it had at the onset of the Renaissance. Indeed, some scholars suggest that Brant's widespread success was due in large part to the French imitations and to the two English translations of Henry Watson and Alexander Barclay. Watson published his prose piece in 1509, the same year in which Barclay published his rendition in verse. Barclay's translation, however, proved to be far more memorable and, consequently, more influential. Thus Watson's version was not reprinted after 1517, but Barclay's *Ship of Fools* was reprinted in 1570. This late reprint date, together with references to a "ship of fools" in a variety of mid-17th century English works, make it likely that Barclay had an audience over a century beyond the date of his first publication. The

The Ship of Fools of the World

This present book named The Ship of Fools of the World was translated in the College of Saint Mary Ottery in the county of Devonshire out of Latin, French, and Dutch into English tongue by Alexander Barclay, Priest and, at that time, Chaplain in the said college. Translated the year of our Lord God MCCCCCVIII. Imprinted in the city of London in Fleet Street at the sign of Saint George by Richard Pinson to his cost and charge. Ended the year of our Savior MDIX, the XIV day of December.

Alexander Barclay Excusing the Rudeness of His Translation.

Go, Book! Abash thee thy rudeness to present*

To men advanced to worship* and honor

By birth or fortune or to men eloquent:

By thy submission excuse thy translator.

But when I remember the common behavior

Of men, I think thou ought to quake for fear

Of tongues envious, whose venom may thee dere.*

Ship's ability to ride the swells of popularity over many decades is reason enough to give Barclay a second look, but the factors that contributed to Barclay's achievement also enhance the case for restoring his *Ship*.

The *Ship of Fools* was popular, in part, because it appealed to a wide variety of readers. Scholars of Barclay's day would have appreciated his use of satire and emblems as well as the seriousness of the book itself. The book featured a Latin text alongside an English translation; this format, together with heavy annotations of biblical and classical sources, gave the *Ship of Fools* an air of scholarship. Since Barclay's work included woodcuts designed to illustrate the text's traditional themes, even readers who were less than fully literate would not have been disappointed.

Although critics generally consider the woodcuts in Barclay's book to be artistically inferior to those in Brant's *Narrenschiff*, the woodcuts still created enough aesthetic appeal to contribute significantly to the work's success. Furthermore, while some scholars suggest that the woodcuts may have assisted persons who had difficulty following the poem itself, others also contend that the cuts richly contribute to the symbolic nature of the text. Barclay's generous use of proverbs, moreover, is another factor that probably contributed to the *Ship*'s popularity. As with the woodcuts, even the humblest of readers could enjoy the practical wisdom that the proverbs offered. Barclay's choice of proverbs also gave his work a distinctive flair, for Barclay not only excluded some of Brant's original sayings (which had been omitted in the Latin

version Barclay relied on), but he also included many English proverbs in his text. Nevertheless, the annotations, woodcuts, and proverbs that once made the *Ship of Fools* memorable have been forgotten by modern scholars, and the riches of Barclay's contributions and influence, from both an historical and a literary perspective, have been virtually unexplored. If significant obstructions are not lifted so that modern readers may more easily discover the *Ship of Fools*, then it is quite possible that Barclay's work will remain a sunken treasure.

Barclay's *Ship* lies hidden beneath at least two main obstacles: poor accessibility and problematic editions. Even though T. H. Jamieson's 1874 publication of Barclay's work may be considered the "standard edition," his text does not exist in most libraries. If a reader did locate Jamieson's edition, he or she would have to contend with an old-spelling text and with Barclay's original punctuation, which often seems extremely obscure to modern readers. Furthermore, Jamieson provides no helpful explanatory notes, and he omits the woodcuts originally printed with Barclay's work in lieu of the "superior" cuts printed for Brant's *Narrenschiff*. Of even greater significance is Jamieson's failure to include the classical and Christian annotations that accompanied Barclay's version.

Although Da Capo Press did reprint Barclay's 1509 edition in 1970 (complete with woodcuts and marginalia), this edition unfortunately lacks any critical analysis and proves to be extremely difficult reading for most modern readers. This is

especially true because the English portion of Barclay's text is printed in "black letter" or "gothic" type. David Anderson's 1974 dissertation provides the most authentic modern text available, and it does offer light annotations. These notes, however, are appended at the end of his second volume rather than being printed immediately after each relevant stanza. Furthermore, although Anderson provides a helpful index and introduction, he retains the original old spelling and punctuation while omitting the woodcuts, most of the original Latin, and all of the original marginal notations. Consequently, even the most recent and most scholarly edition of Barclay's *Ship of Fools* not only presents problems for many modern readers, but it also lacks much of the substance of the original.

However, although poor accessibility and legibility presently obstruct the modern reader's view of the *Ship*, such obstacles can be removed, and it has been the major purpose of the present thesis to begin such work. This thesis attempts to demonstrate how, with some concentrated effort, a modern edition could be created that would make Barclay's work both more readily available and more readily understood. Such an edition would seek to minimize the factors that make Barclay's text so difficult a reading experience for modern readers -- especially for those who are not specialists in early Renaissance literature. Barclay's book contains much information that would interest historians and intrigue even less scholarly readers seeking data about life in Renaissance England, but Barclay's dated spelling, arcane

diction, black letter print, and seemingly bizarre (or sometimes absent) punctuation often make establishing his meaning somewhat frustrating and certainly very time-consuming.

For example, the first stanza of Barclay's chapter dealing with "falshode / gyle / and discetye / & suche as folowe them" (fol.ccvii) quickly illustrates the need for a modern edition:

The vayne & disceytfull craft of alkemy
 The corruptyng of wyne and other marchandyse
 Techyth and sheweth vnto vs openly
 What gyle and falshode men nowe do exercyse
 All occupyers almost / suche gyle dyuyse
 In every chaffer / for no fydeyte
 Is in this londe / but gyle and subtylte

Although this stanza is not at all the most difficult Barclay produced, it would certainly not be smooth sailing for many readers, especially non-specialists. However, a modern edition would be far less intimidating and far more inviting:

The vain and deceitful craft of alchemy, / The corrupting of wine and

other merchandise, / Teacheth and showeth unto us openly / What
 guile and falsehood men do now exercise. / All occupiers* almost such
 guilt devise / In every chaffer;* for no fidelity / Is in this land, but guile
 and subtlety.

*occupiers: *i.e., those who practice specific occupations*

*chaffer: *i.e., trade or kind of business*

Clearly, modern spelling, punctuation, and annotations make the above passage much more lucid and more meaningful. The prose format is also more reader-friendly, for prose is not only easier to read but also consumes less page space. And since both Jamieson's and Anderson's editions of Barclay's poem each consist of two hefty volumes, students and librarians alike would probably be grateful for a more compact version. Furthermore, a modern, annotated text would be most beneficial for those scholars who wish to evaluate Barclay's basic merits as a poet and to explore the historical and literary significance of his poem.

Therefore, reclaiming Barclay's lost text seems a worthy endeavor, and the following thesis is offered as an effort at a significant first step in that direction. My chief goal while working on the thesis has simply been to "translate" the entire text of the *Ship* into modern English spelling and punctuation, and that goal has now been accomplished. In rendering Barclay's whole lengthy text in this way, I have sought to

stay as close as possible to the original phrasing while at the same time attempting to clarify any ambiguities of meaning, syntax, and punctuation. Sometimes, of course, this attempt has involved choosing one possible meaning over another: as any writer knows, the placement or absence of a even a single comma (for instance) can sometimes significantly alter the meaning of an unpunctuated phrase. In instances such as these, I have chosen the possible meaning that seemed to make the best sense in context. Obviously, however, a reader who wants exposure to all the potential ambiguities of Barclay's *Ship* should struggle through the original text.

In the sample modernized text that follows (which does not reproduce the entire book but only the first two dozen or so chapters), I have sometimes used square brackets to insert words or phrases (in unitalicized type) when doing so would seem to clarify Barclay's meaning for a modern reader. At other times, I have also used square brackets to insert brief glosses or definitions of particular words; these have been italicized and preceded by the abbreviation "i.e." (Latin for "that is"). When a word or phrase required a gloss or definition of greater length, this need has been signaled by the immediate insertion of an asterisk. Such asterisks alert the reader to check the list of relevant comments I have provided after many of Barclay's stanzas. Asterisks are also used to call attention to explanations of historical or mythological references or (in some cases) to textual comments. When alternative explanations of a word or phrase seemed possible, I have tried to indicate the various

possibilities. In annotating the individual stanzas, I have relied greatly on the standard *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*.

An example of two stanzas should help clarify the nature and format of the annotations just described. First, though, I reproduce Barclay's original passage:

But to thentent that euery man may knowe
 The cause of my wrytynge:cert] I intende
 To profyte and to please both hye and lowe
 And blame theyr fautes wherby they may amende
 But if that any his quarell wyll defende
 Excusynge his fautes to my derysyon
 Knowe he that noble poet] thus haue done

Afore my dayes a thousande yere ago
 Blamyng and reuylyng the inconuenyence
 Of people/wyllyng them to withdrawe therefro
 Them I ensue:nat lyke of intellygence
 And though I am nat to them lyke in science
 Yet this is my wyll mynde and intencion
 To blame all vyce lykewyse as they haue done

In my translation, these two stanzas are rendered and annotated as follows:

But to the intent [*i.e., in order*] that every man may know
 The cause of my writing, certes [*i.e., certainly*] I intend
 To profit and to please both high and low [persons]
 And blame their faults, whereby [*i.e., so that*] they may amend.
 But if that any [person] his quarrel will defend,
 Excusing his faults to my derision,*
 Know he* that noble poets thus have done

* But if that . . . derision: *But if anyone intends to defend himself from my satire or mockery; or: if anyone intends to defend himself by deriding me*

* Know he: *let him know*

Afore my days a thousand year[s] ago,
 Blaming and reviling the inconvenience*
 Of people, willing [*i.e., desiring*] them to withdraw therefro[m].
 Them I ensue* ([though] not like of intelligence
 And though I am not to them like in science).*

Yet this is my will, mind, and intention:

To blame all vice, likewise [*i.e., in the same way*] as they have done.

* inconvenience: *i.e., unseemly behavior; impropriety*

* Them I ensue: *i.e., I am following the example of these past poets*

* not like of intelligence . . . science: *i.e. I am not their equal in intelligence or knowledge*

My hope is that such modernized spelling, punctuation, along with such annotation, will make Barclay almost as accessible to modern readers as he was to his immediate contemporaries. By trying to make Barclay easier to understand, I also hope to make it easier for us to comprehend why his book exerted such enormous influence in how day in and subsequent decades.

It would be premature here, within the context of a deliberately brief introduction to my translation, to attempt to define precisely how Barclay and his poem affected his age. However, it seems likely that examining values Barclay expresses in his poem may ultimately help illuminate the values held by many people during the highly transitional period of the early Renaissance. Barclay's desire to identify and banish all of the world's fools not only reveals but helps reinforce both his own values and, perhaps, the values of many of his contemporaries. Although it cannot be said that Barclay's views were shared by an entire culture, the *Ship's* popularity indicates that many of his contemporaries agreed with him. For example,

Barclay's push for morality and his consequent disdain for alchemists, adulterers, gamblers, and drunkards was not unique at a time when the Bible still provided the most influential moral standard. Similarly, other voices besides Barclay's also criticized church corruption at the dawn of the Reformation. Despite its humorous text and clever woodcuts, then, the *Ship* also seems to provide serious commentary on the social problems that plagued England during the early modern era. Yet Barclay's contributions to literature, religion, politics and social reconstruction remain largely hidden and forgotten. Surely the wealth of possibilities for Renaissance scholars that lies undisturbed beneath the surface of Barclay's work compels us to uncover and rediscover his *Ship of Fools*.

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- * Abash thee . . . present: *i.e., because you are crude, present yourself without presumption*
- * worship: *i.e., worth or rank*
- * dere: *i.e., hurt, harm, or injure*

Tremble, fear, and quake thou ought (I say again),

For to the reader thou showest by evidence

Thyself of rhetoric private* and barren,

In speech superflue and fruitless of sentence.*

Thou plainly blamest (without all difference)*

Both high and low, sparing each man's name.

Therefore no marvel though many do thee blame.*

- * of rhetoric private: *i.e., deprived of (or lacking in) rhetorical skill*
- * In speech . . . sentence: *i.e., superfluous in language and devoid of deep meaning*
- * without all difference: *i.e., without making any social distinctions*
- * no marvel . . . blame: *i.e., it isn't surprising that you are criticized by many*

But if thou fortune [*i.e., happen*] to lie before a state*

(As king,* or prince, or lords great or small,

Or doctor divine, or other graduate),

Be this thy excuse to content their mind withal [*i.e., with*]:

My speech is rude, my terms common and rural,

And I for rude people much more convenient*

Than for estates [*i.e., persons of status*], learned men, or eloquent.

* state: *i.e., a person of high rank or exalted position*

* As king: *i.e., such as a king, or prince, etc.*

* And I for . . . convenient: *i.e., I am more appropriate for uneducated people*

But of this one point thou needest not to fear:

That any good man (virtuous and just)

With his ill speech shall thee hurt or dere,

But thee defend, as I suppose and trust.*

But such unthrifths as sue [*i.e., follow*] their carnal lust

(Whom thou for vice dost sharply rebuke and blame)

Shall thee dispraise, imperishing [*i.e. impairing*] thy name.

* But thee defend . . . trust: *i.e., I predict that virtuous people will come to your defense*

An Exhortation of Alexander Barclay.

But ye that shall read this book, I you exhort,
 And you that are hearers thereof also I pray [*i.e.*, *beseech*]:
 Whereas ye know that ye be of this sort,*
 Amend your life and expel that vice away.
 Slumber not in sin; amend you while ye may.
 And if ye so do and ensue* virtue and grace,
 Within my ship ye get no room nor place.

* Whereas . . . sort: *i.e.*, *if or when you are aware that you behave badly or foolishly*

* ensue: *i.e.*, *follow; practice*

Barclay the Translator to the Fools.

To ship, gallants! The sea is at the full!
 The wind us calleth; our sails are displayed [*i.e.*, *unfurled*].
 Where may we best arrive -- at Lynn or else at Hull?*

To us may no haven in England be denayed.
 Why tarry we? The anchors are upweighed.
 If any cord or cable us hurt, let other hinder.*

Let slip the end, or else hew it in sunder!*

* Lynn, Hull: *English port towns*

* deny: *variant spelling of "deny"*

* let other hinder: *the meaning is unclear*

* hew it in sunder: *i.e., cut it into two pieces*

Return your sight (behold!) unto the shore:

There is great number that fain* would be aboard.

They get no room. Our ship can hold no more.

Hawse in the cock!* Give them none other word!

God guide us from rocks, quicksand, tempest, and ford!

If any man of war,* weather, or wind appear,

Myself shall try the wind and keep the steer.*

fain: *i.e., gladly, willingly*

hawse in the cock: *i.e., hoist in the small boat that transports people to and from a ship*

man of war: *i.e., battleship*

try the wind . . . steer: *i.e., test the wind and control the rudder*

But I pray you, readers, have ye no disdain,

Though Barclay have presumed of audacity*

This ship to rule as chief master and captain.

Though some think themselves much worthier than he,

It were great marvel, forsooth,* since he hath be[en]

A scholar long, and that in divers [*i.e., many; various*] schools;

But he might be captain of a ship of fools.

* of audacity: *i.e., audaciously*

* It were great marvel, forsooth: *i.e., it would truly be surprising*

But if that any one be in such manner case*

That he will challenge the mastership from me,

Yet in my ship can I not want a place,

For in every place myself I oft may see.*

But this I leave, beseeching each degree*

To pardon my youth and too bold enterprise,

For hard is it duly* to speak of every vice.

* in such manner case: *i.e., in such a condition or state of mind*

* For in every place . . . see: *i.e., I see my own foolishness everywhere*

* each degree: *i.e., each rank or segment of society*

* duly: *i.e., in due manner; appropriately*

For if I had tongues an hundred, and wit to feel
 All things natural and supernatural,
 A thousand mouths, and voice as hard as steel,
 And seen all the seven sciences liberal,
 Yet could I never touch the vices all
 And sin of the world, nor their branches comprehend --
 Not though I lived unto the world's end.

But if these vices which mankind doth encumber
 Were clean expelled and virtue [put] in their place,*
 I could not have gathered of fools so great a number
 Whose folly from them out chaseth God's grace.
 But every man that knows him in that case,
 To this rude book let him gladly intend
 And learn the way his lewdness to amend.*

* and virtue . . . place: *i.e., and replaced by virtues*

* his lewdness to amend: *i.e., how to overcome or eradicate his vice or wickedness*

After that I have long mused by myself of the sore [*i.e., greatly*] confounded

and uncertain course of man's life and things thereto belonging, at the last I have by my vigilant meditation found and noted many degrees of errors whereby mankind wandereth from the way of truth. I have also noted that many wise men and well lettered [*i.e., highly educated*] have written right fruitful [*i.e., profitable; useful*] doctrines whereby they have healed these diseases and intolerable perturbations of the mind, and the ghostly wounds thereof, much better than Esculapius, which was first inventor of physic and (among the Gentiles) worshipped as a god.¹ In the country of Greece were studies first founded and ordained, in the which began and sprang wholesome medicine which gave unto infect[ed] minds fruitful doctrine and nourishing. Among whom Socrates, that great beginner and honorer of wisdom, began to dispute of the manners of men. But for that [*i.e., because*] he could not find [the] certain end of goodness and highest felicity in natural things nor induce men to the same, he gave the high contemplations of his mind to moral virtues. And in so much passed he all other[s] in philosophy moral that it was said that he called philosophy down from the imperial heaven. When this Socrates perceived the minds of men to be prone and extremely inclined to viciousness, he had great affection [*i.e., desire*] to subdue such manners, wherefore in common places of the city of Athens he instruct[ed] and informed the people in such doctrines as compasseth [*i.e., contain;*

1. Aesculapius is the "Latin form of the Greek Asklepios, god of medicine and healing" (Benét 12). "Gentiles": heathens; pagans; non-Christians.

encompass] the clear and immaculate wells of the most excellent and sovereign god.² After the decease of Socrates succeeded the godly Plato, which [*i.e., who*] in moral philosophy overpassed also a great part of his time [*i.e., surpassed the achievements of most of his contemporaries*]. And certainly not without a cause was he called godly. For by what study might he more wholly or better succor mankind than by such doctrines as he gave? He wrote and ordained laws most equal and just. He edited [*i.e., gave out; set forth*] unto the Greeks a commonwealth stable, quiet, and commendable, and ordained the society and company of them most jocund and amiable. He prepared a bridle to refrain the lust and sensuality of the body.³ And, finally, he changed the ill ignorance, feebleness, and negligence of youth unto diligence, strength, and virtue.

In time also of these philosophers sprang the flourishing age of poets, which [*i.e., who*] among lettered men had not small room and place, and that for [because of] their eloquent rhetoric and also for their merry fictions and inventions. Of the which poets, some wrote in most ornate terms -- in ditties heroical [*i.e., epic poems*], wherein the noble acts and lives both of divine and human creatures are wont [*i.e., accustomed*] to be noted and written. Some wrote of tilling of the ground, some of

2. Many Christians of Barclay's time believed that anything really true that had been discovered by the pagan philosophers was (for the very reason of its truth) compatible with Christianity.

3. In Barclay's time, it was common to imagine the passions as a horse and reason as a rider. Reason was supposed to keep the passions tightly reined in; hence the bridle metaphor.

the planets, of the courses of the stars, and of the moving of the heaven and firmament, some of the empire and shameful subjection of disordered love, and many other[s] of the miserable ruin and fall of kings and princes for vice (as tragedies).⁴ And some other[s] wrote comedies with great liberty of speech (which comedies we call “interludes”), among whom Aristophanes, Eupolis, and Cratinus (most laudable poets) passed all other[s].⁵ For when they saw the youth of Athens and all the remnant of Greece inclined to all ills, they took occasion to note such misliving, and in so plain words they reprovéd without favor the vices of the said ill-disposed people, of what [*i.e., no matter what*] condition or order [*i.e., status or rank*] they were.

Of this ancient writing of comedies, our Latin poets devised a manner of writing not inelegant. And first Lucilius composed one satire in the which he wrote by name the vices of certain princes and citizens of Rome, and that with many bourds [*i.e., mockings; jests*], so that with his merry speech mixed with rebukes he correct[ed] all them of the city that disorderly lived.⁶ But this merry speech used he not in his writing to the intent to exercise wanton words or unrefrained lascivity, or to put his pleasure in such dissolute language, but to the intent to quench [*i.e., extinguish*] vices and to provoke the commons to wisdom and virtue and to be

4. The falls of kings and princes, caused by vice, were often described in tragedies.

5. Aristophanes lived ca. 450-380 B.C. (Benét 46). Eupolis and Cratinus were two other famous others of Greek “old comedy” (Howatson 255).

6. Gaius Lucilius (ca. 180-102 B.C.) is generally considered the founder of Roman poetic satire; only bits and pieces of his thirty books survive (Howatson 330).

ashamed of their folly and excessive living [*i.e., unbalanced or immoderate lifestyle*]. Of him all the Latin poets have taken example and beginning to write satires, which the Greeks named comedies (as Fabius specifies in his 10th book of Institutions). After Lucilius succeeded Horace (much more eloquent in writing), which in the same deserved great laud [*i.e., praise*]. Persius also left to us only one book by the which he committed his name and laud to perpetual memory. The last and prince of all was Juvenal, which in his jocund poems comprehended all that was written, most eloquent and pleasant, of all the poets of that sort before his time.⁷

O, noble men, and diligent hearts and minds! O laudable manners and times! These worthy men exiled idleness, whereby they have obtained not small worship and [have] great commodity [*i.e., profit or advantage*], example, and doctrine left to us, their posteriors [*i.e., descendants*]. Why begin we not to understand and perceive? Why worship not the people of our time these poets? Why do not they reverence to the interpreters of them? Do they not understand that no poets write but other [*i.e., unless, except*] their mind [*i.e., intent*] is to do pleasure or else profit to the reader? Or else they together will do both profit and pleasure. Why are they despised of [*i.e., by*] many rude carters [*i.e., boorish drivers of carts*] nowadays, which [*i.e., who*]

7. "Fabius" refers to Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (Quintilian), the great Roman teacher of rhetoric, whose *Institutio oratoria* was published ca. 95 A.D. (Howatson 478). Horace (65- 8 B.C.) was one of the greatest Roman poets (Howatson 287). Persius (34-62 A.D.) wrote six famous satires (Howatson 424-25). Juvenal (early second century A.D.) was noted for his fierce satirical poetry (Howatson 309).

understand not them and, for lack of them [*i.e., because of their ignorance of these poets*], have not Latin to utter and express the will of their mind[s]? See whether poets are to be despised: they laud virtue and him that useth it, rebuking vices with [*i.e., along with*] the users thereof. They teach what is good and what is evil, [and teach] to what end vice and [to] what end virtue bringeth us. And do not poets revile and sharply bite in their poems all such as are unmeke [*i.e., impudent*], proud, covetous, lecherous, wanton, delicious [*i.e., voluptuous; self-indulgent*], wrathful gluttons, wasters, enviers, enchanters, faith-breakers, rash, unadvised, malapert [*i.e., presumptuous; impudent*], drunken, untaught fools and such like? Should their writing (that such things dispraise and revile) be despised of [*i.e., by*] many blind dotards that now live, which [*i.e., who*] envy that any man should have or understand that thing which they know not? The poets also with great lauds [*i.e., praises*] commend and exalt the noble followers of virtue, ascribing to every man rewards after [*i.e., according to*] his merits. And, shortly to say, the intention of all poets hath ever been to reprove vice and to commend virtue.

But since it is so that now in our days are so many negligent and foolish people that they are almost innumerable, which [*i.e., who*], despising the love of virtue, follow the blindness and vanity of the world, it was expedient that of new [*i.e., nowadays*] some lettered man -- wise, and subtle of wit -- should awake and touch the open vices of fools that now live, and [should] blame their abominable life. This form and liberty of writing and charge hath taken upon him the right excellent and worthy

Master Sebastian Brant (doctor of both the laws and noble orator and poet to the commonwealth of all people) in plain and common speech of Dutch [*i.e.*, *German (Deutsch)*] in the country of Almayne [*i.e.*, *Germany*], to the [*i.e.*, *in*] imitation of Dante (Florentine) and Francis Petrarch, poets heroical, which in their maternal language have composed marvelous poems and fictions. But among diverse inventions composed of [*i.e.*, *by*] the said Sebastian Brant, I have noted one named *The Ship of Fools* [as being] much expedient and necessary to the reader, which the said Sebastian composed in [the] Dutch [*i.e.*, *German*] language. After him, one called James Locher, his disciple, translated the same into Latin, to the understanding of all Christian nations where Latin is spoken. Then, another (whose name to me is unknown) translated the same into French. I have overseen [*i.e.*, *read over; inspected*] the first invention in Dutch and, after that, the two translations in Latin and French, which, in blaming the disordered life of men of our time agreeth in sentence [*i.e.*, *moral meaning*] [although] threefold in language.

Wherefore, willing to redress the errors and vices of this our realm of England (as the foresaid composers and translators have done in their countries), I have taken upon me (howbeit [*i.e.*, *albeit*] unworthy) to draw into our English tongue the said book named *The Ship of Fools*, as near as to the said three languages as the parcity [*i.e.*, *scarcity; limits*] of my wit [*i.e.*, *mind; intelligence*] will suffer [*i.e.*, *permit*] me. But ye readers, give ye pardon unto Alexander de Barclay if ignorance, negligence, or lack of wit [*i.e.*, *knowledge or intellectual skill*] cause him to err in this translation.

His purpose and singular desire is to content your minds. And soothly [*i.e., truly*], he hath taken upon him the translation of this present book neither for hope of reward nor laud of man, but only for the wholesome instruction, commodity, and doctrine of wisdom, and to cleanse the vanity and madness of foolish people, of whom over-great number is in the realm of England. Therefore let every man behold and over-read this book, and I then doubt not but he shall see the errors of his life, of what[ever] condition that he be [*i.e., regardless of his social status*]. In like wise, as he shall see in a mirror the form of his countenance and usage [*i.e., behavior or conduct*], and if he amend such faults as he readeth here (wherein he knoweth himself guilty), and pass forth the residue of his life in the order of good manners, then shall he have the fruit and advantage whereto I have translated this book.

Here Beginneth the Prologue.

Among the people of every region

And over the world, (south, north, east, and west)

Soundeth godly doctrine in plenty and foison [*i.e., abundance*]

Wherein the ground of virtue and wisdom doth rest.

Read [*i.e., peruse; consider*] good and bad, and keep thee to the best!

Was never more plenty of wholesome doctrine,*

Nor fewer people that doth thereto incline.

* Was never . . . doctrine: *i.e., there has never been a greater supply of virtuous teachings*

We have the Bible, which godly doth express
 Of the Old Testament the laws mystical,
 And also of the New our error to redress,
 Of philosophy and other arts liberal,
 With other books of virtues moral.
 But though such books us godly ways show,
 We all are blind: no man will them ensue.

Banished is doctrine: we wander in darkness
 Through all the world. Our self we will not know;
 Wisdom is exiled. Alas, blind foolishness
 Misguideth the minds of people high and low!
 Grace is decayed; ill governance doth grow.
 Both prudent Pallas and Minerva* are slain,
 Or else to heaven returned are they again.

* Pallas and Minerva: *Pallas Athene was the Greek goddess of wisdom; Minerva was her Roman counterpart* (Reid 2: 665-666)

Knowledge of truth, prudence, and just simplicity

Hath us clean left, for we set of them no store.*

Our faith is defiled; love, goodness, and pity,*

Honest manners now are reputed of no more.

Lawyers are lords, but justice is rent and tore [*i.e., torn*]

Or closed like a monster with doors three,

For without meed* or money, no man can her see.

* we set of them no store: *i.e., we don't value them or pay them adequate attention*

* and pity: *i.e., and pity and*

* meed: *i.e., reward, recompense, wages; perhaps also bribes*

All is disordered: virtue hath no reward.

Alas, compassion and mercy both are slain!

Alas, the stony hearts of people are so hard

That nought can [them] constrain their follies to refrain,

But still they proceed and each other maintain.*

So wander these fools, increasing without number,

That [*i.e., so that*] all the world they utterly encumber.

* each other maintain: *i.e., their follies reinforce one another*

Blasphemers of Christ, hostlers,* and taverners,

Crackers* and boasters, with courtiers adventurous,

Bawds and pollers,* with common extortioners

Are taken [*i.e., reputed; considered*] nowadays in the world most glorious.

But the gifts of grace, and all ways gracious,

We have excluded. Thus live we carnally --

Utterly subdued to all lewdness and folly.

* hostlers: *i.e., persons who keep or groom horses in stables; manual laborers*

* Crackers: *i.e., boasters or liars*

* pollers: *i.e., plunderers, spoilers*

Thus is* of Fools a sort almost innumerable,

Defiling the world with sin and villainy

(Some thinking themselves much wise and commendable,

Though all their days they live unthrifily).*

No goodness they perceive, nor to no good apply.*

But if he* have a great womb, and his coffers full,

Then is none held* wiser between London and Hull.

* Thus is: *i.e., Therefore there is*

* unthriftilly: *i.e., unprofitably; disadvantageously*

* nor to no good apply: *i.e., they exert themselves in no worthy efforts*

* But if he have: *i.e., But if any person has*

* womb: *stomach? metaphorically, a money sack?*

* held: *i.e., reputed; considered*

But to assemble these fools in one bond*

And their demerits worthily to note,

Fain shall I ships of every manner londe

None shall be left, [neither] bark, galley, ship, nor boat.

One vessel cannot bring them [*i.e., the fools*] all afloat,

For if all these fools were brought into one barge,

The boat should sink, so sore should be the charge.*

* bond: *perhaps a form of "band" (i.e., group)*

* londe: *form of "land"; i.e., from every nation or place*

* so sore should be the charge: *i.e., so great would be the weight*

The sails are hawsed! A pleasant cool doth blow!

The fools assembleth as fast as they may drive!

Some swimmeth after; other[s] as thick doth row

In their small boats as bees about a hive.

The number is great, and each one doth strive

For to be chief, as purser and captain,

Quarter-master, lodesman [*i.e., pilot or steersman*], or else boatswain.

They run to our ship! Each one doth greatly fear

Lest his slack pace should cause him 'bide [*i.e., abide or remain*] behind.

The wind riseth, and is like [seems likely] the sail to tear!

Each one enforceth the anchor up to wind!*

The sea swelleth by planets (well I find).*

These obscure clouds threateneth us tempest!

All are not in bed which [*i.e., who*] shall have ill rest!

* Each one . . . wind: *i.e., each person should help raise the anchor!*

* swelleth by planets (well I find): *presumably meaning "I see the rising of the tides"*

We are full lade [*i.e., loaded*], and yet forsooth I think

A thousand are behind, whom we may not receive [*i.e., take on board*].

For if we do, our navy clean shall sink:

He oft all loses that covets all to have.

From London rocks (almighty God) us save,

For if we there anchor other [*i.e., either*] boat or barge,

There be so many that they us will overcharge.*

* overcharge: *i.e., overwhelm*

Ye London gallants, arrear!* Ye shall not enter!

We keep the stream* and touch not the shore!

In city nor in court we dare not well adventure*

Lest, perchance, we should displeasure have therefore [*i.e., for that reason*].

But if ye will needs, some shall have an oar,*

And all the remnant shall stand afar at large

And read their faults painted about our barge.*

* arrear: *i.e., keep back! get away!*

* We keep the stream: *i.e., we keep to the middle of the river or current*

* adventure: *i.e., come near; approach*

* But if ye will needs . . . oar: *i.e., if you insist, however, some of you will be given an oar*

* all the remnant . . . barge: *i.e., those of you not permitted to board can still observe your faults as they are displayed in our ship*

Like as a mirror doth represent again
 The form and figure of man's countenance,
 So in our ship shall he see written plain
 The form and figure of his misgovernance.
 What man is faultless, but either ignorance
 Or willfulness causeth him [to] offend?
 Then let him not disdain this ship 'til he amend!

And, certainly, I think that no creature
 Living in this life mortal, in transitory,*
 Can himself keep and steadfastly endure
 Without all spot,* as worthy of eternal glory;
 But, if he call to his mind and memory
 Fully the deeds of both his youth and age,
 He will grant* in this ship to keep some stage.*

* in transitory: *i.e., in a state of mutability or transition*

* spot: *i.e., blemish; blame; fault*

* will grant: *i.e., will be permitted*

* stage: *i.e., position, seat, or (perhaps in this case) a tier of rowers*

But whosoever will knowledge* his own folly

And it repent, living after[wards] in simpleness,*

Shall have no place nor room more in our navy

But become fellow to Pallas the goddess.*

But he that fixed is in such a blindness

That, though he be nought,* he thinketh all is well,

Such shall in this barge bear a bauble and a bell.*

* knowledge: *i.e., acknowledge or admit*

* simpleness: *i.e., innocence; simplicity; humility*

* Pallas: *Pallas Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom*

* though he be naught: *i.e., even though his virtue is negligible*

* bauble and a bell: *a bauble was a fool's scepter (a carved head with ass' ears mounted on a stick); bells were another conventional attribute of fools*

These, with other like [*i.e., similar*], may each man see and read,

Each by themselves in this small book overall.

The faults shall he find (if he take good heed)

Of all estates, as degrees temporal,*

With guiders of dignities spiritual,*

Both poor and rich, churls and citizens:

For haste to leap aboard, many bruise their shins.

* Of all estates, as degrees temporal: *i.e., of all social ranks, such as worldly rankings*

* guiders of dignities spiritual: *i.e., leaders of the church*

Here is beardless youth, and here is crooked age;

Children with their fathers that ill them do ensign [*i.e., instruct; teach*]

And doth not intend their wantonness to swage [*i.e., assuage; diminish*],

Neither by word nor yet by discipline.

Here be men of every science and doctrine;

Learned and unlearned; man, maid, child, and wife

May here see and read the lewdness of their life.

Here are vile women, whom love immoderate

And lust venereal bringeth to hurt and shame.

Here are prodigal gallants, with movers of debate,*

And thousands more whom I not well dare name.

Here are backbiters, which [*i.e., who*] good livers defame;

Breakers of wedlock; men proud and covetous;

Pollers and pikers with folk delicious.*

* movers of debate: *i.e., provokers of strife and argument*

* Pollers and pikers: *i.e., plunderers and petty thieves*

* delicious: *i.e., luxurious; sensually self-indulgent*

It is but folly to rehearse the names here

Of all such fools (as in one shield or targe),*

Since that their folly distinctly shall appear

On every leaf, in pictures fair and large,

To* Barclay's study and Pinson's cost and charge.*

Wherefore (ye readers) pray that they both may be saved

Before God, since they your follies have thus graved.

* targe: *i.e., a light shield; a buckler*

* To: *i.e., due to; as a result of*

* Pinson's cost and charge: *i.e., the investment made by Richard Pinson, the printer
and publisher of the book*

* graved: *i.e., engraved; described; published*

But to the intent [*i.e., in order*] that every man may know

The cause of my writing, certes [*i.e., certainly*] I intend

To profit and to please both high and low

And blame their faults, whereby they may amend.

But if that any his quarrel will defend,

Excusing his faults to my derision,*

Know he [*i.e.*, *let him know*] that noble poets thus have done

* But if that . . . derision: *i.e.*, *But if anyone intends to defend himself from my satire or mockery*

Afore my days a thousand year[s] ago,

Blaming and reviling the inconvenience*

Of people, willing [*i.e.*, *desiring*] them to withdraw therefro[m].

Them I ensue* ([though] not like of intelligence

And though I am not to them like in science).*

Yet this is my will, mind, and intention:

To blame all vice, likewise [*i.e.*, *in the same way*] as they have done.

* inconvenience: *i.e.*, *unseemly behavior; impropriety*

* Them I ensue: *i.e.*, *I am following the example of these past poets*

* not like . . . of science: *i.e.*, *I am not their equal in intelligence or knowledge*

To tender youth my mind [*i.e.*, *intent*] is to avail*

That they eschew* [*i.e.*, *avoid*] may all lewdness and offense

(Which doth their minds often sore assail,
 Closing the eyes of their intelligence).
 But if I halt in meter* or err in eloquence,
 Or be too large in language,* I pray you blame not me,
 For my matter is so bad it will none other be.*

* avail: *i.e., afford help; offer assistance*

* if I halt in meter: *i.e., if my poem is metrically inept or deficient in rhythm*

* too large in language: *i.e., too wordy or indecorous or grandiloquent [?]*

* For my matter is so bad . . . be: *i.e., my subject-matter is so blameworthy that I cannot restrain my language*

Hereafter followeth the book named *The Ship of Fools of the World*, translated out of Latin, French, and Dutch into English in the College of St. Mary, Ottery, by me, Alexander Barclay, to the felicity and most wholesome instruction of mankind. The which containeth all such as wander from the way of truth and from the open path of wholesome understanding and wisdom, falling into diverse blindnesses of the mind, foolish sensualities, and unlawful delectations of the body. This present book might have been called not inconveniently the "Satire" -- that is to say, the reprehension of foolishness. But the novelty of the name was more pleasant unto the first author to call it *The Ship of Fools*. For, in likewise as old poets satiriens

[*i.e., satirical*]⁸ (in diverse poetries conjoined) reproveth the sins and illness of the people at that time living, so and in like wise this our book representeth unto the eyes of the readers the states and conditions of men, so that every man may behold within the same the course of his life and his misgoverned manners, as he should behold the shadow of the figure of his visage within a bright mirror.

But concerning the translation of this book, I exhort the readers to take no displeasure for that [*i.e., because*] it is not translated word-by-word, according to the verses of my author. For I have but only drawn into our mother tongue, in rude language, the sentences [*i.e., meanings*] of the verses as near as the parcify of my wit will suffer me, sometimes adding, sometimes detracting and taking away such things as seemeth [to] me necessary and superfluous. Wherefore, I desire of you readers pardon of my presumptuous audacity, trusting that ye shall hold me excused if ye consider the scarceness of my wit and my inexpert youth. I have in many places overpassed [*i.e., deleted*] diverse poetical digressions and obscureness of fables and have concluded my work in rude [*i.e., simple*] language, as shall appear in my translation. But the special cause that moveth me to this business is to avoid the execrable inconveniences of idleness, which (as Saint Bernard sayeth) is mother of all vices and [also] to the utter derision of obstinate men delighting them[selves] in follies

8. The *OED* records Barclay's use of this adjective as the earliest in English.

and misgovernance. But because the name of this book seemeth to the reader to proceed of [from] derision and by that mean that the substance thereof should not be profitable, I will advertise you that this book is named *The Ship of Fools of the World*, for this world is nought [nothing] else but a tempestuous sea in the which we daily wander and are cast in diverse tribulations, pains, and adversities -- some by ignorance and some by willfulness (wherefore such doers are worthy to be called fools, since they guide them[selves] not by reason, as creatures reasonable ought to do). Therefore the first author, willing to divide such fools from wisemen and good livers, hath ordained upon the sea of this world this present ship to contain these fools of the world, which are in great number. So that who[ever] readeth it, perfectly considering his secret deeds, he shall not lightly excuse himself out of it, whatsoever good name that he hath outward in the mouth of the commonty [*i.e., the community*]. And, to the intent that this my labor may be the more pleasant unto lettered men, I have adjoined unto the same the verses of my author, [along] with diverse concordances of the Bible to fortify my writing by the same, and also to stop the envious mouths (if any such shall be) of them that by malice shall bark against this my business.

Here Beginneth the Fools, and (First) Unprofitable Books

I am the first fool of all the whole navy

To keep the pomp, the helm, and eke [*i.e., also*] the sail;
 For this is my mind, this one pleasure have I:
 Of books to have great plenty and apparel [*i.e., ornament*].
 I take no wisdom by them, nor yet avail,*
 Nor them perceive [*i.e., understand*] not; and then I them despise.
 Thus am I a fool, and all that sew [*i.e., follow*] that guise.*

* avail: *i.e., advantage*

* guise: *i.e., conduct; behavior. In other words: Not only am I a fool, but so are all other people who behave as I do.*

That in this ship the chief place I govern
 (By this wide sea with fools wandering)
 The cause is plain and easy to discern:
 Still am I busy books assembling.
 For to have plenty it is a pleasant thing
 (In my conceit)* and to have them ay [*i.e., always*] in hand;*
 But what they mean I do not understand.

* conceit: *i.e., opinion*

* For to have . . . hand: *i.e., In my opinion, it is pleasant to possess many books and to be handling them constantly*

But yet I have them in great reverence
 And honor, saving them from filth and ordure*
 By often brushing and much diligence.
 Full goodly bound in pleasant coverture
 Of damask, satin, or else of velvet pure,
 I keep them sure, fearing lest they should be lost,
 For in them is the cunning [*i.e., knowledge*] wherein I me boast.*

* ordure: *i.e., dirt; excrement; dung*

* For in them . . . boast: *i.e., They contain the knowledge in which I take pride*

But if it fortune that any learned men
 Within my house fall to disputation,
 I draw the curtains to show my books then,
 That they of my cunning should make probation.*
 I keep [*i.e., I am careful*] not to fall in altercation
 And while they common* my books, I turn and wind,*
 For all is in them, and nothing in my mind.

* That they . . . probation: *i.e., so that they can have proof of my knowledge*

* common: *i.e., converse about*

* turn and wind: *i.e., turn this way and that*

Tholomeus* the rich caused long ago [*i.e., ago*]
 Over all the world good books to be sought.
 Done was his commandment anon [*i.e., at once*]:
 These books he had and in his study brought,
 Which passed [*i.e., surpassed*] all earthly treasure (as he thought).
 But nevertheless, he did him not apply
 Unto their doctrine,* but lived unhappily.

* Tholomeus: *Ptolemaeus II, king of Egypt (Lemprière 525-26)*

* He did not him apply: *i.e., he did not himself behave in accord with their teachings*

Lo, in like wise [*i.e., similarly*] of books I have store,
 But few I read (and fewer understand).
 I follow not their doctrine nor their lore;
 It is enough to bear a book in hand!
 It were too much to be it such a band*
 For to be bound to look within the book:
 I am content on the fair covering to look.

* It were too much: *i.e., it would be too much of a chore or obligation*

Why should I study to hurt my wit thereby,*
 Or trouble my mind with study excessive,
 Since many [persons there] are which study right busily
 And yet thereby shall they never thrive?
 The fruit of wisdom can they not contrive,*
 And many to study so much are inclined
 That utterly they fall out of their mind.

* Why should I . . . thereby: *i.e., Why should I harm my intelligence by studying?*
 * contrive: *i.e., find out; discover; concoct*

Each is not lettered that now is made a lord,
 Nor each a clerk that hath a benefice;*
 They are not all lawyers that pleas doth record;*
 All that are promoted are not fully wise.
 On such chance now Fortune throws her dice
 That though one know but the Irish game,*

Yet would he have a gentleman's name.*

* Each is not lettered . . . benefice: *i.e., Not everyone who becomes a lord these days is literate, nor is literacy even necessary to secure a position within the church*

* They are not all lawyers . . . record : *i.e., literacy is not necessary for success in law*

* Irish game: *i.e., an old game resembling backgammon*

* Yet would he have . . . : *i.e., he wants to have and/or he will be able to have*

So in likewise, I am in such case:

Though I nought can, I would be called wise.*

Also, I may set another in my place

Which (*i.e., who*) may for me my books exercise,

Or else I shall ensue the common guise*

And say "concedo"* to every argument

Lest, by my speech, my Latin should be spent.*

* So in likewise . . . wise: *i.e., I am in a similar situation: though I know (can) nothing, I want to be called wise*

* Or else I shall ensue . . . : *i.e., Or I will follow the common pattern of behavior*

* "concedo": *i.e., "I concede"; "I give up"*

* Lest, by my speech . . . : *i.e., Lest I risk using up all my Latin by speaking too much*

I am like other clerks, which [*i.e.*, *who*] so frowardly them[selves] guide*

That after they are once come unto promotion,

They give them[selves] to pleasure [and] their study set aside,

Their avarice covering with feigned devotion.

Yet daily they preach, and have great derision

Against the rude laymen and all for covetise*

(Though their own conscience be blinded with that vice).

* clerks, which so frowardly . . . guide: *i.e.*, *priests, who conduct themselves in such a perverse manner or behave so much against expectation*

* covetise: *i.e.*, *covetousness; inordinate desire for wealth; greed*

But if I durst [*i.e.*, *dare*] truth plainly utter and express,

This is the special cause of this inconvenience:

That greatest fools, and fullest of lewdness,

Having least wit and simplest science [*i.e.*, *knowledge*],

Are first promoted and have greatest reverence.*

For, if one can flatter, and bear a hawk on his fist,*

He shall be made parson of Honiton or of Clyst.*

* have greatest reverence: *i.e.*, *receive the most respect or enjoy the best reputation*

* bear a hawk on his fist: *i.e.*, *carry a trained hawk (used for hunting smaller*

animals)

* Clyst: *Clyst Honiton was a town not far from Ottery St. Mary, Barclay's residence (Rossiter 158). Because local landowners appointed parish priests, Barclay implies that a priest's social skills were often more important than his learning in winning him a position in the church*

But he that is in study ay firm and diligent,
 And without all favor preacheth Christ's lore,
 Of [*i.e., by*] all the commonty* nowadays is sore shent,*
 And by estates* threatened to prison oft therefore.
 Thus, what avail is it to us to study more
 (To know other [*i.e. either*] scripture, truth, wisdom, or virtue)
 Since few (or none) without favor dare them shew?*

* commonty: *i.e., the community or the common people*

* shent: *i.e., disgraced*

* estates: *i.e., by persons of high social status or rank*

* shew: *i.e., variant of "show"*

But O, noble doctors,* that worthy are of name,
 Consider our old fathers; note well their diligence.
 Ensue [*i.e. follow*] ye their steps; obtain ye such fame
 As they did living (and that by true prudence).*

Within their hearts they planted their science,*

And not in pleasant books; but now too few such be.

Therefore in this ship let them come row with me!

* doctors: *i.e., learned men; educated persons*

* prudence: *i.e., wisdom*

* Within their hearts . . . science: *i.e., they took deep delight in their knowledge*

The Envoy of Alexander Barclay, Translator,

Exhorting the Fools Accloyed [*i.e., satiated; stuffed*] with this Vice

To Amend Their Folly:

Say, worthy doctors and clerks curious:*

What moveth you of books to have such number,

Since diverse doctrines, through way contrarious,*

Doth man's mind distract and sore [*i.e., greatly*] encumber?

Alas, blind men, awake out of your slumber!

And, if ye will needs your books multiply,

With diligence endeavor you some to occupy.*

- * worthy doctors . . . : *i.e., learned men and inquisitive priests*
- * through way contrarious: *i.e., because of their disagreements and contradictions*
- * occupy: *i.e., make use of; employ*

Of Evil Counselors, Judges, and Men of Law.

He that office hath and high authority

To rule a realm as judge or counselor

Which [*i.e., who*], seeing justice, plain right, and equity

Them falsely blindeth by favor or rigor

Condemning wretches guiltless and to a transgressor

For meed showing favor, such is as wise a man

As he that would seethe a quick [*i.e., living*] sow in a pan.*

As he that would . . . pan: *i.e., Anyone who holds high judicial office and ignores abuses of justice is as wise as a person who would try to boil [seethe] a living pig*

Right many labor [*i.e., strive*] now with high diligence

For to be lawyers [in order] the commons to counsel* [and]

Thereby to be in honor had and in reverence;

But only they labor for their private avail [*i.e., advantage*].

The purse of the client shall find him apparel*

And yet he knows he neither law, good counsel, nor justice

But speaketh at adventure,* as men throw the dice.

* the commons to counsel: *i.e., to give legal advice to commoners*

* The purse of the client: *i.e., the client's fees will pay for the lawyer's fine clothes*

* at adventure: *i.e., by chance; haphazardly; without forethought or planning*

Such in the senate are taken oft to counsel

(With states of this and many a[n] other region)*

Which [*i.e., who*] of their manners unstable are and frail,*

Nought of law civil knowing nor canon*

But wander in darkness; clearness they have none.

O noble Rome, thou got not thy honors

Nor general [*i.e., broad*] empire by such counselors.

* (With states . . . region): *i.e., by political bodies both here and elsewhere*

* of their manners unstable . . . : *i.e., who are unsure of proper conduct*

* Nought . . . canon: *i.e., knowing nothing of either civil or ecclesiastical law*

When noble Rome all the world did govern

Their counselors were old men, just and prudent,

Which [*i.e., who*] equally did everything discern,

Whereby* their empire became so excellent.

But now-a-days he shall have his intent [*i.e., desire*]

That hath most gold, and so it is befall*

That angels work wonders in Westminster Hall.*

* Whereby: *i.e., as a result of their prudence*

* it is befall: *i.e., it has happened*

* That angels work wonder: *Barclay refers ironically to the gold coins of the time, which were stamped with the impressions of angels and were thus called "angels"; Westminster Hall was the center of government and justice*

There cursed coin maketh the wrong seem right.

The cause* of him that liveth in poverty

Hath no defense, tuition,* strength, nor might.

Such is the old custom of this faculty*

That colors* oft cloak Justice and equity.

None can the matter feel nor understand

Without [*i.e., unless*] the angel be weighty in his hand.

* cause: *i.e., legal case or proceedings*

* tuition: *i.e., protection; guidance*

* faculty: *i.e., the members of a profession (e.g., lawyers)*

* colors: *i.e., false appearances; more specifically, a deliberately deceptive legal plea*

Thus for the hunger of silver and of gold

Justice and right is in captivity

And (as we see) not given free but sold,

Neither to estates nor simple commonty.*

And though that many lawyers [of] rightwiseness be,*

Yet many other[s] disdain to see the right

And they are such as blind Justice's sight.*

* Neither to estates . . . commonty: *i.e., whether a person is a commoner or a person of high social status, bribes are necessary when dealing with the law and lawyers*

* And though that . . . be: *i.e., And even though many lawyers do display righteousness*

* blind Justice's sight: *i.e., perhaps an ironic allusion to iconographic depictions of the goddess of Justice, whose blindness was supposed to symbolize impartiality but here suggests lack of perception*

There is one and other alleged at the bar

And namely such as crafty were in gloze

Upon the law:* the clients stand afar,

Full little knowing how matter goes;

And many other [lawyers] the laws clean transpose,*

Following the example of lawyers dead and gone

Till the poor clients be eaten to the bone.

* gloze / Upon the law: *This seems to mean that some lawyers are clever or skillful (crafty) in offering specious legal interpretations*

* clean transpose: *i.e., turn completely upside-down*

It is not enough to conform thy mind

Unto the other's feigned [*i.e., pretended*] opinion;

Thou should say truth: so Justice doth thee bind,

And also law giveth thee commission

To know her [*i.e., Justice*] and keep her without transgression,

Lest they whom thou hast judged wrongfully

Unto the high judge for vengeance on thee cry.

Perchance thou thinkest that God taketh no heed

To man's deeds nor works of offense.

Yes, certainly he knows thy thought and deed:

Nothing is secret nor hid from his presence.

Wherefore, if thou wilt guide thee by prudence

Or thou give judgment of matter less or more,
 Take wise men's rede [*i.e., advice*] and good counsel before.

Look in what balance, what weight, and what measure
 Thou servest other[s], for thou shall served be
 With the same after this life, I thee ensure [*i.e., assure*].
 If thou righteously judge by law and equity
 Thou shalt have presence of God's high majesty,
 But if thou judge amiss, then shall Eacus,
 (As poets sayeth) hell judge, thy reward discuss.*

* then shall Eacus . . . discuss: *Aeacus, associated in Greek myth with justice, was one of three judges who assessed the dead in the underworld (Howatson 7). "Discuss" was a synonym for "decide."*

God is above and reigneth sempiternally,*
 Which [*i.e., who*] shall us deem [*i.e., judge*] at his last judgment
 And give rewards to each one equally
 After such form as he his life hath spent.
 Then shall we them see whom we as violent

Traitors have put to wrong in word or deed,
 And after our desert even such shall be our meed.*

* sempiternally: *i.e., everlastingly, eternally*

* And after . . . meed: *i.e., we will be rewarded as we deserve to be*

There shall be no bail nor treating of main price;*
 Nor worldly wisdom there shall nothing prevail.
 There shall be no delays until another size,*
 But other quit [*i.e. either acquittal*] or to infernal jail.
 Ill judges so judged: lo, here their travail*
 Worthily rewarded in woe withouten end.
 Then shall no grace be granted nor space to amend.

* treating of main price: *i.e., negotiating about the money for which a person is
 ransomed or redeemed*

* size: *i.e., an assize for the administration of justice; a jury*

* travail: *i.e., work; labors; conduct*

The Envoy of Alexander Barclay

The Translator.

Therefore ye young students of the Chancery*
 (I speak not to the old; the cure of them is past),
 Remember that justice long hath in bondage be [*i.e. been*];
 Reduce ye her now unto liberty at the last.*
 Endeavor you her bonds to loose or to brast [*i.e., burst*]
 Her ransom is paid and more* (by a thousand pound),
 And yet, alas, the lady Justice lieth bound.

* Chancery: *the Chancery court was one of the very highest in England*

* Reduce . . . at the last: *i.e., lead her finally back to freedom*

* Her ransom . . . more: *i.e., her release has been more than paid for*

Though your fore-fathers have take[n] her prisoner
 And done her in a dungeon not meet for her degree,*
 Lay to [*i.e., apply*] your hands and help her from danger
 And her restore unto her liberty, [so]
 That poor men and moneyless may her once see.
 But certainly I fear lest she hath lost her name
 Or by long [im]prisonment shall after ever be lame.

* meet for her degree: *i.e., appropriate to her status*

Of Avarice or Covetous[ness] and Prodigality

You that are given over much to covetous[ness],
 Come near; a place is here for you to dwell.
 Come near, you wasteful people, in like wise [*i.e.*, *also*]:
 Your room shall be high in the top-castle.
 You care for no shame, for heaven nor for hell.
 Gold is your god, riches gotten wrongfully.
 You damn your soul, and yet live in penury.

He that is busy every day and hour
 Without measure, manner, or moderation
 To gather riches and great store of treasure
 (Thereof no joy taking, [nor] comfort or consolation),
 He is a fool, and of blind and mad opinion.
 For that which he getteth and keepeth wrongfully
 His heir often wasteth much more unthriftilly.

While he here liveth in this life caduke* and mortal,
 Full sore he laboreth, and oft hungry goeth to bed,
 Sparing from himself* for him that never shall
 After do him good, though he were hard bested.*
 Thus is this covetous wretch so blindly led
 By the fiend [*i.e.*, *Satan*] that here he liveth wretchedly
 And after his death [is] damned eternally.

* *caduke*: *i.e.*, fleeting, transitory

* Sparing from himself: *i.e.*, *denying his own needs in order to leave his heir more*

* hard bested: *i.e.*, *hard-pressed or needy*

There [*i.e.*, *in hell*] wandereth he in dolor and darkness
 Among infernal floods tedious and horrible.
 Let's see what availeth then all his riches
 Ungraciously gotten. His pains are terrible.
 Then would [he] amend, but it is impossible.
 In hell is no order nor hope of remedy,
 But sorrow upon sorrow, and that everlastingly.

Yet find I another vice as bad as this,
 Which is the vice of prodigality.
 He [*i.e., a prodigal person*] spendeth all in riot and amiss,
 Without all order, pursuing poverty.
 He liketh not to live still in prosperity,
 But all and more he wasteth out at large.
 “Beware the end” is the least point of his charge.*

* least point of his charge: *i.e., the least of his concerns*

But of the covetous somewhat to say again:
 Thou art a fool thy soul to sell for riches
 Or put thy body to labor or to pain,
 Thy mind to fear, thy heart to heaviness.
 Thou fool, thou fleest no manner [of] cruelty*
 So thou may get money to make thy heir a knight.
 Thou slayest thy soul whereas thou save it might.

* thou fleest . . . : *i.e., you avoid no kind of cruelty*

Thou hast no rest; thy mind is ever in fear
 Of misadventure [*i.e.*, *mishap*]. Nor never art [thou] content.
 Death is forgotten; thou carest not a hair
 To save thy soul from infernal punishment.
 If thou be damned, then art thou at thy stent.*
 By thy riches (which thou here hast left behind
 To thy executors) thou shalt small comfort find.

* stent: *variant form of "stint" (i.e., finished; at an end)*

Their custom is to hold fast that [which] they have.
 Thy poor soul shall be farthest from their thought.
 If that thy carcass be brought once in the grave
 And that they have thy bags in hands caught,
 What say they then? "By God, the man had nought! [*i.e.*, *nothing*]
 While he here lived he was too liberal [*i.e.*, *generous*]."
 Thus damned is thy soul, [and] thy riches cause of all.

Who will deny but it is necessary

Of riches for to have plenty and store?*

To this opinion I will not say contrary;

So it be ordered after holy lore:*

While thy self leavest, depart some to the pope.*

With thine own hand trust not thy executors.

Give for God, and God shall send* at all hours.

* Who will deny . . . : *i.e., who can deny the importance of having plenty of money?*

* So it be . . . : *i.e., as long as one's money is used according to Christian teachings*

* While thy self leavest . . . pope: *i.e., when you die, bequeathe some money to the church*

* send: *i.e., be responsive*

Read Tullius' [*i.e., Cicero's*] works, the worthy orator,

And written shalt thou find in right fruitful sentence

That never wise man loved over-great honor

Nor to have great riches put over-great diligence.*

But only their mind was set on sapience [*i.e., wisdom*]

And quietly to live in just simplicity.

For in greatest honor is greatest jeopardy.

* Nor to have . . . : *i.e., Nor ever made any great effort to be wealthy*

He that is simple and on the ground doth lie
 And that can be content with enough or sufficiency
 Is surer by much than he that lieth [*i.e., lies; resides*] on high --
 Now up, now down, unsure as a balance.*
 But soothly, he that set will [*i.e. will set*] his pleasance*
 Only on wisdom and still therefore labor
 Shall have more good than all earthly treasure.

* unsure as a balance: *i.e., swinging up and down like a the arms of a scale*

* set will his pleasance: *i.e., focus his desire or set his goal*

Wisdom teacheth to eschew all offense,
 Guiding mankind the right way to virtue.
 But of covetous[ness] comes all inconvenience;
 It causeth man of word to be untrue,
 Forswearing and falsehood doth it also ensue [*i.e., provoke*],
 Bribery and extortion, murder and mischief.
 Shame is his end: his living is reprove.*

Shame is his end: *i.e., a covetous life results in shame and reproof*

By covetous[ness] Crassus brought was to his end.*

By it the worthy Romans lost their name.

Of this one ill a thousand ills doth descend,

Beside envy, pride, wretchedness, and shame.

Crates the philosopher* did covetous[ness] so blame

That to have his mind unto his study free

He threw his treasure all whole into the sea.

* Crassus: *Marcus Lucinius Crassus (115-53 BC); known as "the Rich" (Howatson 158; Lemprière 178)*

* Crates the philosopher: *a philosopher of the Cynic school who was famous for giving away his money and property (Lemprière 178)*

But shortly to conclude: both bodily bondage

And ghostly [*i.e., spiritual*] also proceedeth of this covetous[ness].

The soul is damned; the body hath damage [such]

As hunger, thirst, and cold, with other prejudice,

Bereft the joys of heavenly paradise.

For gold was their god, and that is left behind;

Their bodies buried the soul clean out of mind.

The Envoy of Alexander Barclay, Translator.

Therefore thou covetous, thou wretch, I speak to thee:

Amend thy self; rise out of this blindness.

Content thee with enough for thy degree.*

Damn not thy soul by gathering frail riches.

Remember, this is a vale of wretchedness.

Thou shalt no rest nor dwelling place here find.

Depart thou shalt and leave it all behind.

* Content thee . . . degree: *i.e., be content with your current status*

Of New Fashions and Disguised Garments

Who that new garments loves or devises,

Or weareth [them] by his simple wit and vanity,

Giveth by his folly and unthrifty guises

Much ill example to young commonty.*

Such one is a fool and scant shall ever thee.*

And commonly it is seen that nowadays

One fool gladly follows another's ways.

* *commonty: i.e., body of the common people*

* *scant shall ever thee: i.e., will be niggardly or ungenerous toward you? If "thee" is a misprint for "be," then perhaps the sense is "such a person will never amount to anything"*

Draw near, ye courtiers and gallants disguised,

Ye counterfeit caitiffs [*i.e., wretches*] that are not content

As God hath you made; His work is despised.*

Ye think you more crafty than God omnipotent.

Unstable is your mind; that shows by your garment.

A fool is known by his toys and his coat,*

But by their clothing now may we many note.

* *His work is despised: i.e., you despise his work*

* *coat: i.e., garb indicating a profession*

Apparel is appaired.* All sadness* is decayed.

The garments are gone that [be]longed to honesty,

And in new sorts new fools are arrayed,

Despising the custom of good antiquity.

Man's form is disfigured with every degree [*i.e., rank*]

(As knight, squire, yeoman, gentleman and knave),

For all in their going ungoodly them behave.

* appaired: *i.e., injured or impaired*

* All sadness: *i.e., all sense of seriousness or sobriety*

The time hath been, not long before our days,

When men with honest ray [*i.e., array*] could hold themselves content

Without these disguise and counterfeited ways,

Whereby their goods are wasted, lost, and spent.

Socrates, with many more in wisdom excellent,

Because they would naught [*i.e., nothing*] change that [which] came of nature,*

Let grow their hair without cutting or scissure.

* Because they would . . . : *i.e., because they would tamper with none of the features with which they were born or that seemed natural*

* scissure: *i.e., scissoring*

At that time was it reputed to laud* and great honor

To have long hair, the beard down to the breast.

For so they used that were of most valor
 Striving together* who might be godliest,
 Saddest, [*i.e., most serious*] most cleanly,* discreetest, and most honest.
 But nowadays, together we contend and strive
 Who may be gayest, and newest ways contrive.

* it [was] resputed to laud: *i.e., it was considered praiseworthy*

* Striving together . . . : *i.e., engaging in friendly competition with one another to see who might prove the most virtuous*

* cleanly: *i.e., morally or spiritually clean*

Few keepeth measure,* but [indulge in] excess and great outrage
 In their apparel. And so therein they proceed
 That their good [*i.e., wealth*] is spent, their land laid to mortgage
 Or sold out right. Of thrift they take no heed,
 Having no penny them to succor at their need.
 So when their good by such wastefulness is lost,
 They sell again their clothes for half that they cost.

* Few keepeth measure: *i.e., few people observe moderation*

A fox-furred gentleman of the first year or head,*
 If he be made a bailiff, a clerk, or a constable
 And can keep a park or court and read a deed,
 Then is velvet to his state meet [*i.e.*, *suitable*] and agreeable,
 Howbeit [*i.e.*, *even though*] he were more meet to bear a bauble.*
 For his fool's hood his eyes so sore [*i.e.*, *greatly*] doth blind
 That pride expelleth his lineage from his mind.

* of the first year or head: *i.e.*, “*Man newly ennobled or raised in rank (said of a deer when it has reached the age when antlers are first developed)*” [Anderson 2: 851]

* bauble: *i.e.*, *a scepter for a jester or a fool (a carved head with asses' ears mounted on a stick)*

Yet find I another sort almost as bad as they, [such]
 As young gentlemen descended of ancestry
 Which [*i.e.*, *who*] go full wantonly in dissolute array,
 Counterfeit, disguised, and much unmannerly,
 Blazoning and guarded* too low or else too high
 And wide without measure. Their stuff to waste thus goeth,
 But other[s] some they suffer to die for lack of clothe.*

*Blazoning and guarded: *i.e., adorned and ornamented with lace, braid, or embroidery*

* But other some . . . clothe : *i.e., even while some others are threatened with death because they lack clothing*

Some, their necks charged [*i.e. loaded*] with collars and chains,

As golden withthes* their fingers full of rings,

Their necks naked almost unto the raines,*

Their sleeves blazing [*i.e., blowing or puffed up*] like to a crane's wings,

Thus by this devising such counterfeited things,

They deform that figure that God himself hath made.

On pride and abusion* thus are their minds laid.

* withthes: *i.e., halters (Anderson 2: 954). A withe was a bind, tie, or shackle*

* raines: *i.e., linen garments (most likely undergarments)*

* abusion: *i.e., misuse, misapplication, or perversion*

Then the courtiers, careless that on their master wait,

Seeing him his vesture in such form abuse,

Assayeth [*i.e., attempt*] such fashion for them[selves] to counterfeit.

And so to sue [*i.e., follow*] pride continually they muse;

Then steal they or rob they. Forsooth [*i.e., in truth*], they cannot choose,

For without land or labor, hard is it to maintain.*

But to think on the gallows: that is a careful pain.

* maintain: *i.e., meet one's expenses*

But be it pain or not, there [*i.e., at the gallows*] many such end.

At Newgate* their garments are offered to be sold;

Their bodies to the gibbet [*i.e., gallows*] solemnly ascend,

Waving with the weather while [*i.e., as long as*] their neck will hold.

But if I should write all the ills manifold

That proceedeth of this counterfeit abusion

And misshapen fashions, I never should have done [*i.e., conclude*].

* At Newgate: *i.e., in prison; Newgate was a famous London prison*

For both states, commons, man, woman, and child

Are utterly inclined to this inconvenience,

But namely [*i.e., particularly*] therewith these courtiers are defiled.

Between master and man I find no difference.

Therefore, ye courtiers, [ac]knowlege your offense!

Do not your error maintain, support, nor excuse,

For fools ye are your raiment thus to abuse.

To ship! Gallants, come near, I say again

(With your set bushes curling as men of Inde)!*

Ye counterfeited courtiers, come (with your fleeing brain,

Expressed by these variable garments that ye find

To tempt chaste Damsels and turn them to your mind).

Your breast ye discover and neck.* Thus your abusion

Is the Fiend's bait and your soul's confusion.

* With your set bushes . . . Inde: *i.e., with your prepared beards, curled like those on men from India*

* Your breast ye discover and neck: *i.e., you expose your neck and chest*

Come near, disguised fools! Recieve your fool's hood!

And ye that in sundry colors are arrayed,

Ye guarded gallants wasting thus your good,

Come near with your shirts [em]broidered and displayed

In form of surplice.* Forsooth [*i.e., in truth*], it may be said
 That of your sort right few shall thrive this year
 Or that your fathers weareth such habit* in the quere.*

* surplice: *i.e., wide-sleeved linen clothing worn by clerics or clergy over a cassock*
 * habit: *i.e., probably a gown or robe in this context*
 * quere: *i.e., variant spelling of "choir"*

And ye gentle women whom this lewd vice doth blind,
 Laced on the back, your peaks* set a loft,
 Come to my ship. Forget ye not behind
 Your saddle on the tail if ye list [*i.e., intend*] to sit soft.
 Do on your deck, slut,* if ye purpose to come oft
 (I mean your copintank*); and, if it will do no good
 To keep you from the rain, ye shall have a fool's hood.

* peaks: *i.e., fashionable headdresses (Anderson 2: 949)*
 * Do on your deck, slut: *i.e., put on your covering, you hussy*
 * copintank: *i.e., a high-crowned hat*

By the ale stake* know we the ale house,
 And every inn is known by the sign.

So a lewd woman and a lecherous
 Is known by her clothes, be they coarse or fine,
 Following new fashions not granted by doctrine.*
 The butcher showeth his flesh it to sell;
 So doth these women, damning their souls to hell.

* ale stake: *i.e., stake or pole projecting from an ale house (Anderson 2: 940)*

* not granted by doctrine: *i.e., that violate custom or Christian teachings*

What shall I more write of our enormity [*i.e., excessiveness*]?
 Both man and woman (as I before have said)

Are rayed [*i.e., dressed*] and clothed not after their degree
 (As [if] not content with the shape that God hath made).
 The cleanliness of clergy is near also decayed.

Our old apparel, alas, is now laid down,
 And many priests ashamed of their crown.

Unto laymen we us reform again,*

As [if] of Christ our master in manner half ashamed.

My heart doth weep, my tongue doth sore complain,

Seeing how our state is worthy to be blamed.
 But if all the folly of our holy realm were named,
 Of mis-apparel of old, young, low, and high,
 The time should fail and space to me deny.

* Unto laymen . . . : *i.e., we clergy dress as if we were laymen once again*

Alas, thus all states of Christian men declines
 And of women also, disforming their figure
 Worse than the Turks, Jews, or Saracens.*
 Ah, England, England! -- amend, or be thou sure
 Thy noble name and fame cannot endure.
 Amend, lest God do grievously chastise
 Both the beginners and followers of this vice.

*Saracens: *i.e., nomadic peoples of Syro-Arabian desert*

The Envoy of Alexander Barclay The Translator.

Reduce, courtiers, clearly unto your rem[em]brance

From whence this disguising was brought wherein ye go.

As I remember, it was brought out of France.

This [*i.e., such fashion*] is to your pleasure, but pain ye had also, [such]

As French pocks [*i.e., pox*], hot ills, with other pains more.*

Take ye in good worth the sweetness with the sour,

For often pleasure endeth with sorrow and dolor.*

* As French pocks . . . : *i.e., from France the English brought not only fashionable clothes but also various (venereal) diseases*

* dolor: *i.e., grief, suffering, or pain*

But ye proud gallants that thus your self disguise,

Be ye ashamed! Behold unto [*i.e., look upon*] your prince.

Consider his sadness;* his honesty devise [*i.e. consider*].

His clothing expresseth his inward prudence.

Ye see no example of such inconvenience [*i.e., impropriety*]

In his highness, but godly wit and gravity.

Ensee him [*i.e., follow his example*], and sorrow for your enormity.

* sadness: *i.e., seriousness and sobriety*

Away with this pride! This stateliness let be!*

Read of the prophets' clothing or vesture,
 And of Adam (first of your ancestry),
 Of John the Prophet: their clothing was obscure,
 Vile, and homely. But now what creature
 Will them ensue? Truly, few by their will;
 Therefore such fools my navy shall fulfill.*

* This stateliness let be: *i.e., turn away from this pomposity*

* Therefore . . . fulfill: *i.e., such fools will make up part of my navy*

Of Old Fools (That is to say, the longer they
 live, the more they are given to folly.)

Howbeit [*i.e., even though*] I stoop and fast decline
 Daily to my grave and sepulchre,
 And though my life fast do incline
 To pay the tribute of nature,*
 Yet still remain I and endure

In my old sins and them not hate --

Nought young, worse old: such is my state.

* the tribute of nature: *i.e., nature's tax (death)*

The madness of my youth rotted in my age

And the blind folly of my iniquity

Will me not suffer [*i.e., permit*] to leave mine old usage

Nor my fore-living, full of enormity.*

Lame are his limbs,* and also I cannot see.

I am a child, and yet lived have I

An hundredth winter, increasing my folly.

* nor my fore-living: *i.e., nor can I leave my previous excessive way of living*

* Lame are his limbs: *it isn't clear why Barclay switches to third-person phrasing here*

But though I might learn, my will is not thereto.*

But busy I am, and fully set my thought,

To give example to children to misdo

By my lewd doctrine, bringing them to nought.
 And when they are once into my dance brought,
 I teach them my folly (wisdom set aside):
 My self example, beginner, and their guide.

* But though . . . thereto: *i.e., though I am able to learn, I have no inclination to do so*

My lewd life, my folly and my self-willed mind
 (Which I have still kept hitherto in this life)
 In my testament [*i.e., will*] I leave written behind,
 Bequeathing part both to man, child, and wife.
 I am the actor of mischief and of strife.
 The folly of my youth and the inconvenience [*i.e., impropriety*]
 In age I practice, teaching by experience.

I am a fool, and glad am of that name,
 Desiring laud for each ungracious deed
 And of my folly to spread abroad the fame
 To show my vice and sin, as void of dread

Of heaven or hell. Therefore I take no heed,
 But as some strive disputing of their cunning,
 Right so do I in lewdness and misliving.

Sometime I boast me of falsehood and deceit,
 Sometime of the seed that sown is by me
 Of all mischief (as murder, flattery, debate,
 Covetous[ness], backbiting, theft, and lechery).
 My mind [*i.e., intent*] is not to mend my iniquity,
 But rather I sorrow that my life is wore [*i.e., worn or spent*], [so]
 That I cannot do as I have done before.

But since my life so suddenly doth appear
 That bide [*i.e., stay*] I cannot still in this degree,*
 I shall inform and teach my son and heir
 To follow his father and learn this way of me.
 The way is large, God wot [*i.e., knows*]: glad shall he be
 Learning my lore with affection and desire
 And follow the steps of his unthrifty sire.

* That bide . . . degree: *i.e., so that I cannot stay in my present living condition*

I trust [*i.e., I am confident*] so crafty and wise to make the lad
 That me his father he shall pass and excel.
 O that my heart shall then be wonder glad
 If I hear of, may know, see, or hear tell,
 If he be false, feigning, subtle, or cruel,
 And so still endure! I have a special hope
 To make him scribe [*i.e., secretary*] to a cardinal or pope.

Or else, if he can be a false extortioner,
 Facing* and boasting to scratch and to keep,
 He shall be made a common customer*
 (As I hope) of Lynn, Calais, or of Diepe.*
 Then may he after to some great office creep.
 So that if he can once plead a case,
 He may be made judge of the common place.*

* Facing: *i.e., boasting or swaggering*

- * customer: *i.e., officer of the custom-house or trading center (Anderson 2: 943)*
- * of Lynn, Calais, or of Diepe: *Calais and Diepe are port cities in Northern France; King's Lynn is an English port*
- * of the common place: *i.e., common pleas court*

Thus shall he live as I have all his days,
 And in his age increase his foolishness.
 His father came to worship [*i.e., great reputation*] by such ways;
 So shall the son if he himself address [*i.e., set himself*]
 To sue [*i.e., follow*] my steps in falsehood and lewdness.
 And at least (if he can come to no degree [*i.e. high status*]),
 This ship of fools shall he govern with me.

Barclay to the Fools.

Awake, age! Alas, what thinkest thou be?*

Awake, I say, out of thy blind darkness!

Rememberest thou not that shortly thou shalt die?

Arise from sin; amend thy foolishness.

Though thy youth rooted were in viciousness,
 Arise in age. [It] Is full time to leave it.

Thy grave is open, thy one foot in the pit.

* Alas . . . be?: *i.e., who do you think you are?*

Leave thy boasting of that thou hast done amiss!

Bewail thy sins, saying with rueful moan,

“Delicta iuuentutis mee deus ne memineris.”*

Amend thee or thy youth [will] be fully gone.

That sore [*i.e., greatly*] is hard to heal that breeds in the bone.*

He that is nought young, proceeding so in age,

Shall scant ever his viciousness assuage.*

* “Delicta . . . memineris”: *i.e., “God, remember not the sins of my youth” (Psalm 25:7; Anderson 2: 854)*

* That sore . . . bone: *i.e., it is very difficult to break engrained habits*

* He that . . . assuage: *i.e., whoever is nothing or negligible when he is young, if he continues in that condition into old age, will hardly ever overcome his vices*

What thing is more abominable in God’s sight

Than vicious age? Certainly no thing.

It is eke [*i.e., also*] worldly shame, when thy courage and might
 Is near decayed, to keep thy lewd living
 And, by example of thee [*i.e., by your example*], thy young children to bring
 Into a vicious life and [cause them] all goodness to hate.
 Alas, age! -- thus thou art the fiend's bait.*

* Alas . . . bait: *i.e., in this way you tempt others to sin*

Of the Erudition of Negligent Fathers Anent
 Their Children.*

Of the Erudition . . . Children: *i.e., of the education practised by negligent fathers in relation to their children*

That fool that suff'reth [*i.e., allows; permits*] his child for to offend
 Without rebuking, blame, and correction
 And him not exhorteth himself to amend
 Of such faults as by him are done,
 Shall it sore [*i.e., greatly*] repent (God wot [*i.e., knows*] how soon);
 For oft the father's folly, favor, and negligence

Causeth the child for to fall to great offense.

A miserable fool evermore shall he be,

A wretch unadvised [*i.e., thoughtless*] and a caitiff blind,

Which [*i.e., who*] his children's faults forceth [himself] not to see,

Having no care for to induce their mind

To godly virtue (and vice to leave behind).

For while they are young, fearful, and tender of age,

Their vice and folly is easy to assuage [*i.e., weaken*].

Two divers[e] sorts of these fools may we find

By whom their children are brought to confusion.

The one is negligent; the other is stark blind,

Not willing to behold his child's ill condition

While he is in youth. But for a conclusion:

He is a fool that will not see their vice,

And [so is he] he that seeeth and will it not chastise.

Alas, thou art a cursed counselor
 To wanton youth, that tender is of age,
 To let them wander without governor [*i.e., supervisor*]
 Or wise master in youth's furious rage.*
 Get them a master their folly to assuage [*i.e., control*]:
 For, as a herdless flock strayeth in jeopardy,
 So children without guide wandereth in folly.

furious rage: *i.e., in their time of powerful emotions and passions*

Too much liberty, pleasure, and license
 Given unto youth (whether it be) or age*
 Right often causeth great inconvenience [*i.e., improper behavior*]
 [Such] As riot, misrule with other sore damage, [including]
 Their land and goods sold or laid to gage.*
 But thou, foolish father, art ready to excuse
 Thy young children of their sin and abuse.

* youth . . . or age: *i.e., whether a person is young or old*

* laid to gage: *i.e., pawned or mortgaged*

Thou sayest they are over-tender to eschew*
 Their foolish manners and that they have no skill
 To know the ways of goodness or virtue
 Nor to discern what is good, [and] what is ill.
 Thou blind dotard! These words hold thou still.*
 Their youth cannot excuse thy foolishness.
 He that can [*i.e., knows*] ill as well might learn goodness.

* over-tender to eschew: *i.e., too young to reject*

* Thou blind dotard . . . still: *i.e., shut your mouth, you old fool!*

A young heart is as apt to take* wisdom
 As is an old, and, if it rooted be,
 It soweth seed of holy life to come.
 Also, in children we often times see
 Great aptness outward and sin of gravity;*
 But fill an earthen pot first with ill liquor,
 And ever after it shall smell somewhat sour.

* apt to take: *i.e., capable of taking*

* Great . . . gravity: *this seems to mean, "we often see in children a great external display of ability and of grave conduct"*

So youth brought up in lewdness and in sin
 Shall scant it shrape [*i.e.*, *scrape*] so clean out of his mind
 But that still after some spot will bide within.
 A little twig pliant is by kind [*i.e.*, *by its very nature*];
 A bigger branch is hard to bow or wind.
 But suffer the branch to a big tree to grow,
 And rather it shall break than either wind or bow.*

* And rather . . . bow: *i.e.*, *it will break altogether before it will either bend or be capable of being wound*

Correct thy child while he is like a twig
 (Supple and pliant, apt to [*i.e.*, *susceptible to*] correction).
 It will be hard, forsooth [*i.e.*, *in truth*], when he is big
 To bring his stubborn heart to subjection.
 What hurteth punishment with moderation
 Unto young children? Certainly nothing.
 It voideth [*i.e.* *expels*] vice, [be]getting virtue and cunning [*i.e.*, *knowledge*].

Say, foolish father, hadst thou liefer [*i.e. rather*] see
 Thy son's neck unwrested [*i.e., twisted off*] with a rope
 Than with a rod his skin should broken be?
 And oft thou trusteth and hast a steadfast hope
 To see thy son promoted near as high as is the Pope.
 But yet, perchance, mourn thou shalt full sore [*i.e., very much*]
 For his shameful end, fortun'd for lack of lore.*

* fortun'd for lack of lore: *i.e., caused by lack of proper instruction*

Some follow their children's will and lewd pleasure,
 So granting them their mind [*i.e., desires*] that after it doth fall
 To their great shame, their sorrow, and dolor,
 As did to Priamus (a King imperial)
 Which suffered his men, his son chief of them all,
 By force from Greece to rob the fair Helen,
 Whereby both father and son were after slain,*

* Priamus . . . slain: *Priam, King of Troy; his son Paris committed adultery with Helen, thus causing the war that ultimately led to Troy's destruction and to the death of Hector, the great Trojan hero (and another son of Priam)*

With noble Hector and many thousands more --

The city of Troy unto the ground clean brent [*i.e., burned*].

I read in the Chronicles of the Romans also

How Tarquin the proud* had shame and punishment

For ravishing chaste Lucrece against her assent.

Wherefore herself she slew, her[self] seeing thus defiled,

For the which deed this Tarquin was exiled

* Tarquin the proud: *for the legend of Tarquin and Lucretia, see Howatson 330*

From Rome: wand'ring in the coasts of Italy.

Did not the traitor Catiline* also conspire

(And many more sworn to his cruel tyranny)

Against the Romans to oppress their Empire?

But he and all his [followers] were murdered for their hire [*i.e. reward*],

And not unworthily. Behold whereto they come

Which are not informed in youth to ensue [*i.e.*, *follow*] wisdom.

* the traitor Catiline: *Lucius Catilina* (d. 62 B.C.), one of the most notorious of all Roman traitors (Howatson 119)

The son oft followeth the father's behavior,

And if the father be discreet and virtuous,

The son shall such ways practice both day and hour.

But if that the father be lewd and vicious

(By falsehood living and by ways cautelous [*i.e.*, *deceitful; crafty*]),

The son also the same ways will ensue,

And that much rather than goodness or virtue.

Therefore, it needeth that better provision

Were found for youth by sad [*i.e.*, *serious*] and wise counsel --

Far from their fathers of this [foolish] condition

And other lewd guides, which [*i.e.*, *who*] might their minds assail

Greviously with sin. So were it their avail*

From their fathers' fraud and falsehood to decline

And them submit to some laudable man's doctrine.

* were it their avail: *i.e., it would be to their advantage*

Peleus, sometime a noble and worthy king,
 Subdued Achilles unto the doctrine
 Of Phoenix which was both worthy and cunning.*
 Wherefore [*i.e., for this reason*] Achilles right gladly did incline
 With his heart and mind unto his discipline,
 Whereby [*i.e., so that*] his name so noble was at the last
 That all Asia in worthiness he passed.*

* Phoenix . . . cunning: *Phoenix was the knowledgeable (i.e., "cunning") tutor of Achilles, the son of King Peleus (Howatson 436-37)*

* all Asia . . . he passed: *i.e., he surpassed all other men of Asia in worthiness*

Right so Philippus, a king worthy of name
 Over all Greece, made great inquisition
 To find one wise, sad [*i.e., sober; serious*], and laudable of fame
 To Alexander (his son) for to give instruction.
 Found was great Aristotle at the conclusion,
 Disciple of Plato which in every science [*i.e., branch of knowledge*], [who]

Informed [*i.e., instructed*] this child with perfect diligence.*

* perfect diligence: *Philip, King of Macedon, was the father of Alexander the Great*

Which [*i.e., this same*] Alexander afterward had so great dignity,

(What by his strength, his cunning, and boldness)

That he was lord both of land and sea,

And none durst [*i.e., dared to*] rebel against his worthiness.

Lo, hear the laud, the honor, and noblesse [*i.e., nobility*]

Which doth proceed of [*i.e., from*] virtue and doctrine [*i.e., learning*]!

But few are the fathers that now hereto incline.

Few [fathers there] are that [*i.e., who*] forceth nowadays to see

Their children taught, or to do any cost*

On some sad [*i.e., serious*] man, wise, and of authority:

All that [which] is thereon bestowed think they lost.

The foolish father oft times maketh great boast

That he his son to abundant riches shall advance,

But nothing he speaketh of virtuous governance.

* do any cost: *i.e., are willing to spend any money*

The father made but small shift [*i.e., effort; movement*] or provision

To induce [*i.e., instruct*] his son by virtuous doctrine;

But when he is dead and past, much less shall the son

To study of grace [*i.e., worthy study*] his mind or heart incline,

But abuse his reason and from all good decline.

Alas, foolish fathers, give your advertence [*i.e., attention*]

To Crates' complaint, * comprised in this sentence [*i.e., maxim; famous saying*]:

* Crates' complaint: *Anderson notes that this reference alludes to "Plutarch's Paidagogia, vii, 13 (2: 855).*

If it were granted to me to show my thought,

Ye foolish fathers, "caitiffs" [*i.e., wretches*] I might you call

Which [*i.e., who*] gather riches to bring your child to nought,

Giving him occasion for to be prodigal,

But good nor cunning show ye him none at all.

But when ye draw to age, ye then most commonly

Sorrow for your sufferance [*i.e., permissiveness*], but without remedy.

An old sore to heal is oft[en] half incurable;
 Right so are these children rooted in mischief.
 Some after ever liveth a life abominable,
 To all their kin [a] great sorrow and reproof.
 The one is a murderer, the other a fearless thief.
 The one of God nor good man hath no force* nor care;
 Another so out-wasteth that his friends are full bare.*

* no force: *i.e., no matter; presumably meaning "no concern"*

* Another . . . bare: *this seems to mean that another sort of fool is so wasteful in his expenditures that he impoverishes his generous friends*

Some their land and livelihood in riot [*i.e., excess*] out-wasteth
 At cards and tennis and other unlawful games,
 And some with the dice their thrift away casteth.
 Some their souls damn and their body shames
 With fleshly lust (which many one defames),
 Spending the flowers of youth much unthriftilly
 On divers [*i.e., various*] branches that [be]long to lechery.*

* branches: *i.e., kinds of conduct*

Another delighteth himself to gluttony,

Eating and drinking without manner or measure.

The more that some drink, the more they wax dry;

He is most gallant which longest can endure.

Thus, without measure, overcharge they their nature,

So that their soul is lost, their body and good [*i.e., wealth*] is spent -- [all]

For lack of doctrine [*i.e., learning*], nurture and punishment.

So hear plain prose, example, and evidence

How youth which is not nourished in doctrine

In age is given unto all inconvenience [*i.e., impropriety*].

But nought [*i.e., nothing*] shall make youth sooner for to incline

To noble manners nor godly discipline

Than shall the doctrine of a master [*i.e., teacher; tutor*] wise and sad,

For the root of virtue and wisdom thereby is had.

Without doubt, nobleness is much excellent,
Which oft causeth youth to be had in great honor;
To have the name and laud they are content,
Though it be not gotten by their own labor.
But what availeth them this lewd, obscure error
Of such high birth themselves to magnify,
Since they defile it with vice and villainy?

Why art thou proud, thou fool, of that noblesse
Which is not gotten by thy own virtue,
By thy good manners, wit, nor worthiness?
But this forsooth oft times find I true:
That of a good beast ill whelps [*i.e., offspring*] may we show.
In like wise of a mother that is both chaste and good,
Often is brought forth a full ungracious brood.

But though the child be of lewd condition,
And of his nature froward and variable,

If the father be slack in the correction
 Of his child, he only [*i.e., only the father*] is culpable
 Which [*i.e., who*] will not teach him manners commendable.
 Thus is the father a fool for his sufferance [*i.e., permissiveness*]
 And the son also for his misgovernance.

The Envoy

Avoid, fathers, your favor and sufferance
 Anent [*i.e., concerning; toward*] your children in their fault and offense.
 Reduce ye clearly unto your remembrance*
 That many a thousand inconvenience[s]
 Have children done by their fathers' negligence.
 But to say truth briefly in one clause:
 The father's favor only is the cause.

* Reduce . . . remembrance: *i.e., remember clearly*

Of Tale Bearers, False Reporters, &
 Promoters of Strifes.

Of fools yet find I another manner sort [*i.e.*, *variety*; *kind*]

Which are cause of brawling, strife and division.

Such are double-tongued, that [*i.e.*, *who*] leasings [*i.e.*, *falsehoods*] report,

Thereby trusting to come to great promotion.

But such lewd caitiffs at the conclusion

Between two millstones their legs put to grind,

And for reward their confusion shall they find.

Some are that think the pleasure and joy of their life

To bring men in blawling, [*i.e.*, *brawling?*] to discord and debate,

Enjoying to move them to chiding and to strife,

And, where love before was, to cause mortal hate

With the commonty and many great estate.*

Such [conduct] is much worse than [that of] either murderer or thief,

For oft of his [*i.e.*, *the tale-bearer's*] tales proceedeth great mischief.

* With the commonty . . . estate: *i.e.*, *with common folk and the powerful*

Within his mouth is venom, jeopardous and vile.

His tongue still laboreth leasings [*i.e., lies*] to contrive;

His mind still museth on falsehood and guile

Therewith to trouble such as gladly would not strive [*i.e., argue; fight*].

Sometimes his words as darts he doth drive

Against good men, for only his delight

Is set to [*i.e., focused on*] slander, to defame and backbite.

And namely [*i.e., especially*] them that are faultless are and innocent

(Of conscience clean and manners commendable)

These drivels [*i.e., imbeciles*] slander, being full diligent

To divide lovers that are most agreeable.

His [*i.e., the tale-bearer's*] tongue infects his mind abominable,

Infecteth love, and overturneth charity

Of them that long time have lived in amity.

But he that accused is thus without all fault

And so slandered of [*i.e., by*] this caitiff [*i.e., wretch*] unthrifty

Knoweth nought of this jeopardous assault,

For he nought doubteth that is no thing faulty.*

Thus, while he nought feareth, cometh suddenly

This venemous dolor [*i.e.*, *sorrow*], disdainning his good name;

And so, [although he is] guiltless, [he is] put to rebuke and to shame.

* For he nought . . . faulty: *i.e.*, *a person without flaws is not suspicious*

Thus, if one search and seek the world overall,

Than a backbiter nought is more perilous.

His mind [is] mischievous; his words are mortal;

His damnable bite is foul and venemous.

A thousand lies of guiles odious

He casteth out where he would have debate,

Engendering murder when he his time can wait.

Whereas [*i.e.*, where ever] any friends liveth in accord

Faithful and true, this coward and caitiff

With his false tales them bringeth to discord,

And with his venom keepeth them in strife.

But howbeit that [*i.e., even though*] he thus pass[es] forth his life
 Sowing his seed of debate and mischief,
 His dart oft returneth to his own reprove [*i.e., reproof*].

But not withstanding [*i.e., nevertheless*], such [a tale-bearer] boldly will excuse
 His false defaming as faultless and innocent.
 If any him for his deeds worthily accuse,
 He covereth his venom as simple [*i.e., innocent*] of intent.
 Other[s there] are which [*i.e., who*] flatter and to every thing assent,
 Before face [*i.e., to one's face*] following the way of adulation,
 Which [*i.e., who*] afterward sore hurteth by detraction.

The world is now all set on [*i.e., intent upon*] defamation.
 Such [*i.e., persons*] are most cherished that best can forge a tale,
 Which [*i.e., who*] should be most had in abomination
 (And so they are of wise men, without fail).
 But such as are void of wisdom and counsel
 Inclined their ears to slander and detraction
 Much rather [*i.e., sooner*] than they would to a noble sermon.

But every slanderer and beginner of strife,
 Losers [*i.e.*, *destroyers*] of love, and infecters of charity,
 Unworthy are to live here at large in this life,
 But in dark dungeon they worthy are to be,
 And there to remain (in prison) til they die.
 For with their ill tongues they labor to destroy
 Concord, which cause is of love and of joy.

An old queen [*i.e.*, *whore*] that hath been nought [*i.e.*, *nothing*] all her days,
 Which oft hath for money her body let to hire [*i.e.*, *rented out*],
 Thinketh that all other doth follow her old ways.
 So she and her bowl fellows,* sitting by the fire
 (The bowl about walking),* with their tongues they conspire
 Against good people to slander them with shame.
 Then [*i.e.*, *in this way*] shall the naughty daughter learn of the bawdy dame.

* bowl fellows: *i.e.*, *drinking companions*

* the bowl about walking: *i.e.*, *as the bottle is passed around?*

By his works known is every creature,
 For if one good, loving, meek, and charitable be,
 He labors no debates among men to procure,
 But coveteth to nourish true love and charity;
 Whereas the other [kind of person], full of falsehood and iniquity,
 Their singular pleasure put [*i.e., focus their whole desire*] to engender variance;
 But oft their foolish study returns to their mischance.*

* oft . . . mischance: *i.e., often their stratagems boomerang*

Therefore, ye backbiters that folk thus defame,
 Leave off [*i.e., abandon*] your lewdness and note well this sentence
 Which Christ himself said to great rebuke and shame
 Unto them that slandereth a man of innocence:
 Woe be to them which by malevolence
 Slandereth or defameth any creature;
 But well is him that with patience can endure.

Of Him That Will Not Follow nor Ensue
Good Counsel, and Necessary

Of fools yet another sort doth come
Unto our ship (rowing with great travail),
Which [*i.e., who*] nought [*i.e., nothing*] perceive of doctrine nor wisdom,
And yet disdain they to ask wise counsel
Nor it to follow for their own avail [*i.e., advantage*].
Let such fools thereat have no disdain
If they alone endure their loss and pain.

He is a fool that doth covet and desire
To have the name of wisdom and prudence;
And yet (if one sought through a city or a shire)
None could be found of less wisdom nor science [*i.e., knowledge*].
But while he thinketh him full of sapience,
Crafty and wise, doubtless he is more blind
Than is that fool which is out of his mind.

But though he be wise, and of might marvelous

Endued [i.e., endowed] with rhetoric [i.e., powers of speech] and with eloquence

And of himself both ware [i.e., *careful and cautious*] and cautelous [i.e., *crafty*]

If he be tached [i.e., *stained; defiled*] with this inconvenience [i.e., *flaw*]

(To disdain others' counsel and sentence [i.e., *wisdom*]),

He is unwise. For oft a fool's counsel

Turneth a wise man to comfort and avail [i.e., *advantage*].*

* For oft . . . avail: *i.e., often even a wise man can profit from a fool's advice*

But specially [i.e., *in particular*] the rede [i.e., *counsel*] and advisement

Of wise men, discreet and full of gravity,

Helpeth thine own, be thou never so prudent [i.e., *no matter how prudent you are*],

To thy purpose giving strength and audacity [i.e., *boldness; confidence*].

One man alone knows not all policy;

Though [i.e., *even if*] thou have wisdom, cunning, and science,

Yet hath another much more experience.

Some cast out words in painted eloquence,
 Thinking thereby to be reputed wise
 (Though they have neither wisdom nor science [*i.e., knowledge*]).
 Such manner [*i.e., kind of*] fools themselves do exercise [*i.e., work*]
 A plough and team craftily to devise
 To ear [*i.e., plough*] the path that fools erst [*i.e. earlier*] hath made;
 The truth under gloze [*i.e., disguise or gloss*] of such [fools] is hid and laid.

For why? They trust alway[s] to their own mind
 And furor begun [*i.e., established madness*], whether it be good or ill,
 As if any other [person] no wiser rede [*i.e., counsel*] could find.
 Thus they ensue [*i.e., follow*] their private foolish will
 Oft in such matters wherein they have no skill,
 As did Pyrrhus which began cruel battle
 Against Orestes,* refusing wise counsel,

* Pyrrhus . . . Orestes: *Pyrrhus was another name for the Greek mythic figure Neoptolemus; his conflict with Orestes is described in the Andromache of Euripides (Howatson 382)*

But followed his own rash mind, without avail,
 As [*i.e., being*] blind and obstinate of [*i.e., in*] his intention.
 Wherefore he was discomfited [*i.e., defeated*] in battle,
 Himself slain, his men put to confusion.
 [Similarly,] If that the Trojans in their abusion
 With false Paris had conformed their intent
 To Helen's counsel, Troy had not been brent [*i.e., burned*].

For that [*i.e., because*] Priam his mind would not apply [*i.e., listen*]
 To the counsel of Cassandra, prophetess,
 The Greeks destroyed a great part of Asia.
 Hector, also by his self-willedness,
 Was slain with pain for all his doughtiness*
 Of [*i.e., by*] Achilles in open and plain battle
 For not following of his father's counsel.

* for all . . . doughtiness: *i.e., in spite of all his valor and bravery*

If Hector that day had bidden [*i.e., stayed*] within Troy

And unto his father been obedient,
 Perchance he should have lived in wealth and joy
 Long time after and come to his intent [*i.e., achieved his purpose*];
 Whereas [*i.e., instead*] his body was with a spear through rent [*i.e., torn*]
 Of [*i.e., by*] the said Achilles, cruel and unkind,
 (Alas!) for suing [*i.e., following*] his own self-willed mind.

I read of Nero* (much cursed and cruel)
 Which [*i.e., who*] to wise counsel himself would not agree,
 But in all mischief all other[s] did excel,
 Delighting him in sin and cruelty.
 But how did he end? Forsooth [*i.e., truly*], in misery;
 And at the last (as [if] weary of his life)
 Himself he murdered with his own hand and knife.

* Nero: *On this notorious Roman emperor, see Howatson 383.*

The Bible witnesseth how the prophet Toby* [*i.e., Tobit*]
 Gave his dear son in chief commandment*

That if he would live sure without jeopardy,
 He should sue [*i.e., follow*] the counsel of men wise and prudent.*
 The story of Rehoboam is also evident,
 Which [*i.e., who*], for not suing of counsel and wisdom,
 Lost his Empire, his scepter and kingdom.*

* Toby: "*Tobit, in Tobit 4 (Apocrypha), gives a great deal of advice to his son Tobias*" (Anderson 2: 857).

* Gave . . . commandment: *i.e., instructed his son*

* Rehoboam . . . kingdom: "*in 2 Chronicles 12: 14-15, we find out that 'he did what was wrong, he did not make a practice of seeking guidance of the Lord'*" (Anderson 2: 857).

If that it were not for cause of brevity,
 I could show many of our predecessors
 Which [*i.e., who*], not following counsel of men of gravity,
 Soon have decayed from their old honors.
 I read of dukes, kings, and emperors
 Which, despising the counsel of men of age,
 Have after had great sorrow and damage.

For he surely which [*i.e., who*] is so obstinate

That only he trusteth to his own blindness

(Thinking all wisdom within his dotting pate [*i.e., stupid head*]),

He often endeth in sorrow and distress.

Wherefore, let such their course swiftly address

To draw our plough, and deep[ly] to ear [*i.e., plough*] the ground, [so]

That by their labor all fools may be found.

The Envoy of Alexander Barclay

the Translator.

O man unadvised, thy blindness set aside!

Knowledge [*i.e., admit*] thine own folly! Thy stateliness [*i.e., pomposity*] expel!

Let [*i.e. fail*] not for [*i.e., because of*] thy elevate mind nor foolish pride

To order thy deeds by good and wise counsel.

Howbeit [*i.e., even though*] thou think thy reason doth excel

All other men's wit, yet oft it doth befall [*i.e., it often happens that*]

Another's is much surer, and thine [is] the worst of all!

Of Disordered and Ungodly Manners.

Draw near, ye fools of lewd condition,
 Of ill behavior, jest, and countenance.
 Your proud looks, disdain, and derision
 Expresseth your inward, foolish ignorance.
 Now will I touch [*i.e., examine*] your mad misgovernance*
 Which [*i.e., who*] haste to folly and foolish company,
 Trailing your bauble in sign of your folly.

*misgovernance: *i.e., misconduct, misbehavior*

In this our time, small is the company
 That have good manners worthy of reverence,
 But many thousands follow villainy,
 Prone to all sin and inconvenience [*i.e., misconduct*],
 Striving [to see] who soonest may come to all offense
 Of [*i.e., by; through*] lewd conditions and unlawfulness,
 Blindness of ill and defiled foolishness.

All miserable men, alas, have set their mind
 On loathsome manners, clean destitute of grace.
 Their eyes [are] dimmed, their hearts are so blind
 That heavenly joy none forceth [*i.e., strive*] to purchase.
 Both young and old proceedeth in one trace [*i.e., way; path*],
 With rich and poor, without all [*i.e., any*] difference:
 As bond-men [*i.e., slaves*] subdued to folly and offense.

Some are bushed,* their bonnets set on side;
 Some wave their arms and head to and fro;
 Some in no place can steadfastly abide,
 More wild and wanton than either buck or doe.
 Some are so proud that on foot they cannot go,
 But get* they must with countenance unstable
 Showing them fools, frail and variable.

* bushed: *i.e., having a bushy head of hair*

* get: *i.e., to go; to make one's way[?]*

Some chide that all men do them hate;
 Some giggle and laugh without gravity;
 Some[one] thinks himself a gentleman or state [*i.e., a person of rank*],
 Though he a knave, caitiff, and bond-churl be.
 These fools are so blind [that] themselves they cannot see.
 A young boy that is not worth an onion
 With gentry or priesthood is fellow and companion.*

* A young boy . . . companion: *i.e., either he is presumptuous enough to act as if he is fit for such company, or such persons are foolish enough to accept him in their company*

Bribers* and bailiffs* that live upon tolling*
 Are in the world much set by [*i.e. esteemed*] nowadays.
 Sergeants* and catchpoles* that live upon polling,*
 Courtiers and caitiffs [*i.e., wretches*], beginners of frays, [all]
 Live, still [*i.e., always; even now*] increasing their unhappy ways.
 And a thousand more of divers faculties [*i.e., professionals*]
 Live, advancing them[selves] of [*i.e., by*] their enormities [*i.e., excesses*].

* Bribers: *i.e., thieves; scoundrels; vagrants; officials who exact bribes*

* bailiffs: *i.e., estate managers; administrators*

- * live upon tolling: *i.e., earn their livings by collecting tolls or other payments*
- * Sergeants: *i.e., officers who enforce the judgments of authority figures*
- * catchpoles: *i.e., tax collectors or warrant officer who arrest persons for debts*
- * polling: *i.e., plundering by excessive taxation*

Within the church and every other place

These fools use their lewd conditions [*i.e., practices*],

Some staring, some crying; some have great solace [*i.e., pleasure*]

In ribald words, some in divisions;

Some them[selves] delight in scorns and derisions;

Some pride ensueth [*i.e., follow; pursue*] and some gluttony,

Without all nurture* given to villainy.

* nurture: *misprint for "nature" (i.e., unnaturally)?*

Their life is foolish, loathsome, and unstable --

Light-brained! Their heart and mind is inconstant.

Their gait [*i.e., manner of walking*] and look [are] proud and abominable;

They have nor order,* as fools ignorant

Changing their minds thrice in one instant.

Alas, this lewdness and great enormity

Will them not suffer [*i.e., allow; permit*] their wretchedness to see.

* They have nor order: *i.e., nor do they display any order*

Thus are these wretched caitiffs fully blind.

All men and women that good are [*i.e., who are good*] doth them hate,

But he that with good manners endueth [*i.e., endows; equips*] his mind

Avoideth his [*i.e. any*] wrath, hatred, and debate.

His deeds pleaseth both commonty and estate.*

And namely [*i.e., in particular*], such as are good and laudable

Thinketh his deeds right and commendable.

* commonty and estate: *i.e., both the common people and persons of rank*

As wise men sayeth, both virtue and cunning [*i.e., knowledge; skill*],

Honor and worship, grace and godliness

Of [*i.e., from*] worthy manners take their beginning.

And fear also assuageth [*i.e., inhibits*] wantonness,

Subduing the furor of youth's willfulness.

But shamefastness, truth, constance, [*i.e. constancy*] and probity*

Both young and old bringeth to great dignity.*

* But . . . dignity: *i.e., all these virtues cause both young and old to be respected*

* probity: *i.e., integrity, honesty*

These foresaid virtues, with charity and peace

Together assembled steadfast in man's mind,

Causeth his honor and worthiness to increase,

And his godly life a godly end shall find.

But these lewd caitiffs which [*i.e., wretches who*] doth their minds blind,

With corrupt manners living unhappily,

In shame they live and wretchedly they die.

Of Breaking and Hurting of Amity
and Friendship.

He that injustice useth and grievance
 Against all reason, law, and equity,
 (By violent force putting to utterance*
 A simple man full of humility),
 Such [a person] by his lewdness and iniquity
 Maketh a grave wherein himself shall lie;
 And lewdly he dieth that liveth cruelly.

* put to utterance: *i.e.*, to overcome completely; to bring to ruin; to put to death

A fool froward, cruel, and untrue
 Is he which [*i.e.*, *who*] by his power wrongfully
 His friends and subjects labors to subdue
 Without all law, but clean [*i.e.*, *wholly*, *entirely*] by tyranny.
 Therefore, thou Judge, thy eryl's see thou apply*
 To right justice, and set not thine intent
 By wrath or malice to be too violent.

* thy . . . apply: *Anderson (2: 857) glosses this to mean "pay special attention to,"*

citing the OED as his source, although no separate listing for “erys” appears there

It is not lawful to any excellent

Or mighty man, either lawyer or estate [*i.e., high-ranking person*],

By cruelty to oppress an innocent,

Nor by pride and malice justice to violate,

The law transposing after a froward rate,*

With proud words defending his offense.

God wot [*i.e., knows*] oft such [persons] have simple* conscience[s].

* The law . . . rate: *i.e., turning the law upsidedown in a perverse manner*

* simple: *i.e., rudimentary? undeveloped?*

O that he [*i.e., person*] cursed is and reprobable

Which [*i.e., who*] day and night studieth busily

To find some means false and detestable

To put his friend to loss or hurt thereby.

Our hearts are fully set [*i.e., focused*] on villainy;

There are right few [persons] of high or low degree

That lust [*i.e., desire*] to nourish true love and amity.

Alas, exiled is godly charity

Out of our realm; we all are so unkind.

Our fools setteth greater felicity [*i.e., place more value*]

On gold and goods than on a faithful friend.

Awake, blind fools, and call unto your mind

That, though honest riches be much commendable,

Yet to a true friend it [*i.e., wealth*] is not comparable

Of all things, love is most profitable,

For the right order of love and amity

Is of their manners to be agreeable*

And one of other [*i.e., on one another to*] have mercy and pity,

Each doing for other after [*i.e., in accordance with*] their degree [*i.e., social rank*]

And without falsehood this friendship to maintain

And not depart [from this ideal] for pleasure nor for pain.

* For . . . agreeable: *i.e., it is proper in relations of love and friendship for the parties to live in harmony*

But, alas, now all people have disdain
 On such friendship for to set their delight.
 Amity we have exiled out, certain[ly];
 We love oppression, to slander and backbite.
 Extortion hath strength; pity gone is quite.
 Now in the world such friends are there none
 As were in Greece many years ago[n]e [*i.e. gone by*].

Who[ever] list [*i.e., cares*] t[he] history of Patroclus to read,
 There shall he see plain[ly] written without fail
 How, when Achilles gave no force nor heed
 Against the Trojans to execute battle,
 The said Patroclus did on [*i.e., put on*] the apparel
 Of Achilles, and went forth in his stead
 Against Hector: but lightly [*i.e. quickly; immediately*] he was dead.*

* Patroclus . . . dead: *In Homer's Iliad, when the offended Greek hero Achilles at first refuses to do battle against the Trojan prince Hector, Achilles' friend Patroclus dons his armor and is subsequently killed by Hector*

But then Achilles, seeing this mischance [*i.e., misfortune*]
 Befallen his friend (which [*i.e., who*] was to him so true)
 He him[self] addressed shortly to take vengeance*
 And so in battle the noble Hector slew
 And his dead corpse after his chariot drew,
 Upon the ground trailing ruthfully [*i.e., pitifully*] behind:
 See how he avenged Patroclus, his friend.

* He him . . . vengeance: *i.e., he quickly set about the task of taking revenge*

The history also of Orestes doth express
 Which [*i.e., who*], when Agamemnon his father was slain
 By Aegisthus (which [*i.e., who*] against righteousness
 The said Orestes' mother did maintain [*i.e., provide for?*]),
 The child was young -- wherefore it was but vain
 In youth to strive [*i.e., struggle; resist*]. But when he came to age
 His natural mother slew he in a rage

And also [he slew] Aegisthus, which [*i.e., who*] had his father slain.*

Thus took he vengeance of [*i.e., on*] both their cruelty,*

But yet it [*i.e., this vengeful act*] grew to his great care and pain,
 For suddenly he fell in a madness
 And ever thought that in his furiousness [*i.e., madness*]
 His mother him sued [*i.e., followed*], flaming full of fire,
 And [and that she] ever his death was ready to conspire.

* his father slain: *On Orestes, see Howatson 398*

* both their cruelty: *i.e., on the cruelty of both of them*

Orestes, troubled with this fearful vision,
 As phrenetic [*i.e., frantic*] and mad wandered many a day
 Over many a country, land, and region,
 His friend Pylades* following him always.
 In pain nor woe he [*i.e., Pylades*] would him [*i.e., Orestes*] not deny [*i.e., deny*]
 Till he restored again was to his mind.
 Alas, what friend may we find now so kind?

* *Pylades was Orestes' famously loyal friend (Howatson 475)*

Of Dymades what shall I laud or write

And Pythias* (his fellow amiable [i.e., friend])? --
 Which [i.e., who] in each other such love had and delight
 Than when Denys [i.e., *Dionysius*], a tyrant detestable,
 And of his men some to him agreeable
 Would one of them have murdered cruelly,
 Each one for other off'ered for to die

* Dyamdes . . . Pythius: *i.e., Damon and Pythius [a.k.a. Phintias], whose loyal friendship to one another finally impressed the cruel tyrant Dionysis (Denys); see Howatson 168*

Valerius* writeth a story long and ample
 Of Laelius and of worthy Scipio,*
 Which [i.e., who] of true love hath left us great example,
 For they never left* in dolor [i.e. *sorrow*], weal [i.e., *happiness*], nor woe
 I read in the history of Theseus also
 How he (as the poet's fables doth tell)
 Followed his fellow Perothus [i.e., *Peirithous*] into hell,*

* Valerius: *Valerius Maximus, Roman writer (Howatson 588)*

* Laelius . . . Scipio: *The friendship of Laelius and Scipio Africanus is also a focus of Cicero's treatise De Amicitia (Howatson 170)*

* left: *i.e., forsook one another?*

* in to hell: *On the friendship of Theseus and Peirithous, see Howatson 567*

And, searching [for] him, did wander and compass [*i.e., circumvent*]
 Those loathsome floods and ways tenebrous [*i.e., dark*],
 Fearing no pains of [*i.e., from*] that disordered place
 Nor obscure mists or airs odious,
 Till, at the last, by his ways cautelous [*i.e., crafty*]
 (And [by] Hercules' valiant deeds of boldness),
 He got Perothus out of that wretchedness.

Alas, where are such friends now-a-days?
 Surely in the world none such can be found.
 All [persons] follow their own profit and lewd ways;
 None unto other covets [*i.e., desires*] to be bound.
 Breakers of friendship enough are on the ground*
 Which [*i.e., who*] set nought by friendship so they may have good.*
 All such in my ship shall have a fool's hood.

* Breakers . . . ground: *i.e., there are plenty of false friends lying around*

* Which . . . good: *i.e., who don't value friendship, as long as they can profit*

The Envoy of Barclay to the Fools.

Ye cruel fools, full of ingratitude,

Arise! Be ashamed of your iniquity!

Mollify your hearts unkind, stubborn, and rude,

Grafting in them true love and amity.

Consider this proverb of antiquity

And your unkindness wary [*i.e., accurse*], ban [*i.e., reject*], and curse:

Better is a friend in court than a penny in purse.*

* Better . . . purse: *i.e., friends in influential positions are more valuable than money*

Of Contempt or Despising of Holy Scripture.

He that giveth his ears or credence

To every fool's tales or talking,

Thinking more wisdom and fruitful sentence [*i.e., meaning*]

In their vain tales, than is the reading

Of books which show us the way of godly living

And soul's health: forsooth such one is blind

And in this ship the anchor shall up wind.

Such as [*i.e., Anyone who*] despiseth ancient scripture

(Which proved is of great authority)

And hath no pleasure, felicity, or cure [*i.e., heed; concern*]

Of godly prophets (which wrote of verity) --

A fool he is, for his most felicity

Is to believe the tales of an old wife

Rather than the doctrine of eternal life.

The holy Bible, ground of truth and of law,

Is now of many abject and nought set by

Nor godly scripture is not worth an haw,*

But tales are loved, ground of ribaldry,*

And many blinded are so with their folly

That no scripture think they so true nor good

As is a foolish gest of Robin hood

* *haw: i.e., something of no value*

* *ground of ribaldry: i.e., grounded in or upon ribaldry*

* *gest: a story or romance in verse*

He that to scripture will not give credence

(Wherein are the armies of our tuition*

And of our faith foundation and defense) --

Such one ensueth [*i.e., such a person pursues*] not the condition

Of man reasonable, but by abusion [*i.e., abuse*]

Liveth as a beast, of conscience cruel

As save this world were neither [of] heaven nor hell.*

* *armies of our tuition: i.e., the forces by which our knowledge is defended?*

* *As save . . . hell: i.e., such as, except for in this world, can be found neither in heaven nor in hell? Or perhaps "save this world" should be read as a parenthetical prayer: "[God] save this world!"*

He [*i.e., such a fool*] thinketh that there is no God above

Nor nobler place than is this wretched ground,

Nor God's power such [fools] neither fear nor love
 (With whom [*i.e., with God*] all grace and mercy doth abound,
 Which, when Him list, [*i.e., Who, whenever he cares to*] us wretches may confound).
 Alas, what availeth to give [*i.e., what's the point of giving*] instruction
 To such lewd fools of this condition?

It naught availeth [*i.e., it doesn't help*] unto them to complain
 Of their blindness, nor inform them with virtue;
 Their cursed life [*i.e., lives*] will by no mean[s] refrain
 Their viciousness nor their error eschew
 But rather [*i.e., instead*] study their folly to renew.
 Alas, what profits to such [fools] to express
 The heavenly joy, reward of holiness?

Alas, what availeth to such to declare
 The pain of hell (woe[ful], desolate, and dark)?
 No woe nor care can cause such [fools] to beware [*i.e., abstain*]
 From their lewd life (corrupt and sinful work).
 What profiteth sermons of any noble clerk [*i.e., priest*]

Or godly laws taught at any schools

For to rehearse [*i.e.*, *repeat*] to these mischievous fools?

What helpeth the prophets' scripture or doctrine

Unto these fools obstinate and blind?

Their hearts are hard, not willing to incline

To their [*i.e.*, *the prophets*'] precepts, nor [to] root them in their mind,

Nor them [to] believe (as Christian men unkind).*

For if that they considered heaven or hell,

They would not be so cursed and cruel.

* (as Christian men unkind): *i.e.*, *such obstinate fools are flawed, uncharitable Christians*

And certainly the truth appeareth plain:

That these fools think in their intent

That within hell is neither care nor pain,

Heat nor cold, woe, nor other punishment,

Nor that for sinners is ordained no torment.

Thus these mad fools wandereth every hour

Without amendment, still [*i.e., always*] in their blind error.

Before thy feet thou mayest behold and see

Of our holy faith the books evident:

The old laws and new* laid are before thee,

Expressing Christ's triumph right excellent.

But for all this [*i.e., despite all this*], set [*i.e., focused*] is not thine intent

Their [*i.e., the Old and New Testaments*'] holy doctrine to plant within thy breast,

Whereof should proceed joy and eternal rest.

* The old laws and new: *i.e., the Old and New Testaments of the Bible*

Trowest thou [*i.e., do you believe*] that thy self-willed ignorance

Of godly laws and mystical doctrine

May cleanse or excuse thy blind misgovernance

Or lewd error (which [*i.e., who*] scorn hast to incline

To their precepts and from thy sin decline)?*

Nay, nay: thy cursed ignorance sothly [*i.e. truly*] shall

Drown thy soul in the deep floods infernal.

* which . . . incline: *i.e., you, who scorn to turn toward Biblical teachings and who also scorn to turn away from your sin?*

Therefore let none his cursedness defend,
 Nor [*i.e., and let no one*] holy doctrine, nor godly books despise,
 But rather [let him] study his faults to amend;
 For God is above, all our deeds to devise [*i.e., to consider; to scan*],
 Which [*i.e., Who*] shall reward them [*i.e., those persons*] in a fearful wise*
 With mortal woe (that ever shall endure)
 Which [*i.e., who*] have despised his doctrine and scripture.

* in a fearful wise: *i.e., in a frightening way*

Barclay to the Fools.

Out of your slumber, fools! I rede [*i.e., advise*] you rise,
 Scripture divine, to follow and embrace.*
 Be not so bold it [*i.e., scripture*] to leave nor despise
 But you enforce [*i.e., make an effort*] it to get and purchase.
 Remember: man's comfort and solace

Is wholly [*i.e. completely*] closed within the book of life.

Who that [*i.e., whoever*] it followeth hath a special grace,

But he that doth not a wretch is and caitiff.

* I read . . . embrace: *i.e., I advise you to get up so that you can follow and embrace holy scripture*

Of Fools Without Provision.

He is a fool forsooth and worse

That to his saddle would leap on high

Before or he have girt his horse,*

For down he comes with an an evil [*i.e., painful*] thigh.

But as great a fool forsooth is he

And to be laughed to derision

That ought [*i.e., anything*] beginneth without provision.*

* Before . . . horse: *i.e., before he has placed a saddle on his horse*

* provision: *i.e., foresight; advanced preparation*

Of other fools yet is a much [*i.e. large*] number

But then over-late [*i.e., too late*] is it again to call
 Whom I would gladly bring to intelligence [*i.e., to learn how*]
 To avoid their blindness, which sore [*i.e. greatly*] doth encumber
 Their mind and heart for lacking of science [*i.e., because they lack knowledge*].
 Such [persons] are unaware and given to negligence --
 Mad and mis-minded, private [*i.e., deprived*] of wisdom,
 Making no provision for the time to come.

If any misfortune, adversity, or woe
 (As often happ'neth) to such a fool doth fall [*i.e. occur*],
 Then sayeth he, "I thought it would not have been so" --
 But then over-late [*i.e., too late*] is it again to call.*
 It is not enough (thou fool) to say, "I shall
 For this one day provide me by wisdom."*
 A wise man seeth peril long before it come.

* again to call: *i.e., to revoke or retract*

* I shall . . . wisdom": *i.e., I shall use my wisdom just to deal with today*

He is unwise and of provision poor

That nought [*i.e., nothing*] can see before he have damage.*

When the steed is stolen to shut the stable door, [there]

Comes small pleasure, profit, or [ad]vantage.

But he that can such foolishness assuage

(Beginning by [using] counsel and fore-providence)

Is sure to escape all inconvenience [*i.e. misfortune*].

* That nought . . . damage: *i.e., who cannot foresee damage before it occurs*

When Adam tasted the apple in Paradise

(To him prohibited by divine commandment),

If he had noted the end [*i.e., eventual outcome*] of his enterprise

To Eve he would not have been obedient.

Thus he endured right bitter punishment

For his blind error and improvidence, [so]

That all his lineage [*i.e. descendants*] rue sore for his offense,* [and he]

* rue sore . . . offense: *i.e., are greatly sorry for his offense; or greatly suffer because he offended*

Himself [was] driven out from Paradise all bare
 With Eve, into this vale of wretchedness
 To get their living with labor, pain, and care.
 And also if Jonathan by error and blindness
 Had not received the gifts of falseness
 Unto him given of Tryphon by abusion [*i.e., abuse; deceit*],
 He should have escaped great confusion.*

* Jonathan . . . confusion: *On this deceit, see 1 Maccabees 12:39-54.*

If that he before had noted craftily [*i.e. carefully; with suspicion*]
 His enemies' gifts of fraud full and of treason,
 He might have saved himself from jeopardy
 And all his people by providence and reason.
 Whereas [*i.e., on the contrary, however*], he blind was as at that season
 And to a city [*i.e., Ptolemais*] brought in by a train [*i.e. by a trick*]
 Where he was murdered and all his people slain.

Julius Caesar, the chief of conquerors,

Was ever wary and prudent of counsel,
 But when he had obtained great honors
 And drew to rest as [*i.e., because; as if*] weary of battle,
 Then his unawareness [*i.e., unwariness*] caused him to wail;
 For, if he had read with good advisement [*i.e., thoughtfully*]
 The letter which to the counselhouse was sent,

He had not given his own judgment*
 (As he did by his folly and negligence),
 For which he murdered was incontinent [*i.e., immediately*],
 Without respect had unto his excellence.
 Alas, see here what inconvenience [*i.e., misfortune*]
 Came to this emperor (high and excellent)
 For not being wise, discreet, and provident.

* He . . . judgment: *i.e., he would not have decided to go*

If Nicanor before had noted well
 The end [*i.e., likely result*] of his deeds, he had not been slain

By Judas and the children of Israel --

His hand and tongue cut off (to his great pain)

And then his head, as the Bible showeth plain[ly].*

Thus may all know that will thereto intend*

Whereto they come that careth not the end.*

* If Nicanor . . . plain: *Nicanor's misfortunes are described in 1 Maccabees 42-50*

* Thus . . . intend: *i.e., anyone who is willing to listen may learn*

* Whereto . . . the end: *i.e., what happens to anyone lacking foresight*

But he that beginneth by counsel and wisdom

(Alway[s] proceeding with good provision,

Noting what is past and what is for to come),

Such [a person] follows godly scripture and monition [*i.e., instruction*]

In happy ways, without transgression

Of God's laws and His commandment,

And often times comes to his intent [*i.e., achieves his goals*].

Thus it appeareth plain and evident
 That wise provision, proof [*i.e., testing*], and good counsel
 Are much laudable, and also excellent,
 And to mankind great profit and avail;*
 Whereas those fools have often cause to wail
 For their misfortune (in sorrow vexed sore)
 Which [*i.e., who*] ought begin not provided before.*

* avail: *i.e., of great advantage*

* Whereas . . . before: *i.e. anyone who does anything without using foresight often suffers*

The Envoy of Alexander Barclay.

O man, remember thou canst not abide [*i.e. remain; survive*]
 Still [*i.e., always*] in this life; therefore most specially
 For thy last end thou oughtest to provide;
 For that provision (forsooth) is most godly.
 And then (next after thy mind)* thou ought apply [*i.e., you should try*]
 To flee offense, and bewail thine old sin,
 And in all works and business worldly

What may be the end [*i.e., result*] mark well or [*i.e., before*] thou begin.*

* (next after thy mind): *i.e., after first preparing your mind*

* What may . . . begin: *i.e., you should note carefully the likely outcome of your conduct before you start to do anything*

Of Disordered Love and Venereous [*i.e., lustful*].

Here draw we fools mad [and] together bound

Whom Venus caught hath in her net (a snare),

Whose blind hearts this furor [*i.e. madness*] doth confound --

Their life consuming in sorrow, shame, and care.

Many one she blindeth. Alas, few can beware

Of her darts (headed [*i.e., tipped*] with shame and villainy),

But he that is wounded can scant [*i.e., barely*] find remedy

O cruel Venus! Forsooth, who[ever] doth ensue [*i.e. follow*]

Thy flattering guiles and proud commandment

And hasteth not the darts to eschew

Of blind Cupido but follows his [*i.e. Cupid's? or the fool's own?*] intent,
 Such fools endure much sorrow and torment,
 Wasting their goods [*i.e., possessions*], dishonesting their name,
 As [if] past fear of God and seeking after shame.

How many ills, what inconvenience,
 How great vengeance, and how bitter punishment
 Hath God oft taken for this sin and offense!
 How many cities high and excellent
 Hath Venus destroyed and all-to-brent [*i.e., wholly burned*]!
 What lords and how many a great estate
 Hath love lost, murdered, or else brought in debate!

The noble Trojans murdered are and slain,
 Their city brent [ie., burned], decayed is their kingdom, [and]
 Their king, Priam, by Pyrrhus dead and slain.
 And all this by Paris' unhappy love is come,
 Which [*i.e., who*] -- void of grace and blind without wisdom, [in order to]
 To fill his lust -- from Greece robbed Helen;

But this one pleasure was ground of much pain.*

* The noble Trojans . . . pain: *This stanza briefly summarizes the cause and results of the Trojan war, described in Homer's Iliad. The slaying of King Priam by Pyrrhus (a.k.a. Neoptolemus) is described in Virgil's Aeneid; see Anderson 2: 860*

Also Marcus, a prince of the Romans

(Called Antonius by another name),

After that he had overcome the Persians,

To Rome returned with triumph, laud, and fame

And there ([a fact] which after[wards] was to his great shame)

With Cleopatra's love was taken so in blindness

That he promised to make her empress.*

Also Marcus . . . empress: *on this famous episode, see Howatson 2: 140*

So this blind lover, to fill his enterprise [*i.e. carry out his plan*],

Caused his men two hundred ships ordain [*i.e., prepare*]

And took the sea [*i.e., set sail*], weening* in such form and wise*

His lewd desire to perform and obtain;

But shortly after[wards] was he overcome and slain

Of [*i.e.*, *by*] Caesar. And when he this purpose understood

He bathed his corpse within his layman's [*i.e.* *leman's or loved one's*] blood.*

* weening: *i.e.*, *expecting, hoping*

* in such form and wise: *i.e.*, *in this manner and way*

*And when he . . . blood: *This seems to suggest that once Antony realized that he would be killed, he bathed himself in the blood of the already-dead Cleopatra. Anderson indicates that there is no precedent for this detail (2: 860)*

For two serpents (that venomous were and fell*)

Were set to the breasts of fair Cleopatra:

So this cruel purpose had punishment cruel,

For their intending their country to betray.

And worthy [*i.e.*, *blameworthy*] they were; what man can it deny [*i.e.* *deny*]?

Thus it appeareth plain by evidence

That of [*i.e.*, *from*] false love cometh great inconvenience [*i.e.*, *harm*].

* fell: *i.e.*, *fierce, savage, cruel, painful, etc.*

For he that loveth is void of all reason,
 Wand'ring in the world without law or measure,
 In thought and fear sore [*i.e., greatly*] vexed each season,
 And grievous dolors [*i.e., sorrows*] in love he must endure.
 No creature himself may well assure [*i.e., protect*]
 From love's soft darts (I say, [*i.e., I mean*] none on the ground),*
 But mad and foolish bides [*i.e. remains*] he which [*i.e., who*] hath the wound.

* on the ground: *i.e., no earthly creature can protect himself against Cupid's arrows*

Aye [*i.e., always*] running as [if] phrenetic [*i.e., frantic*], no reason in his mind,
 He hath no constance [*i.e., constancy; certainty*] nor ease within his heart;
 His eyes are blind, his will alway[s] inclined
 To love's precepts, yet cannot he depart [*i.e., escape*].
 The net is strong; the fool, caught, cannot start [*i.e. break free*];
 The dart is sharp; whoever is in the chain
 Cannot his sorrow in visage hide nor feign.*

* Cannot . . . feign: *i.e., cannot disguise or dissemble the sorrow visible in his face*

Read how Phaedra her love fixed so fervent[ly]
 On Hippolytus in prohibit [i.e, forbidden] adultery
 That (when he would not unto her consent)
 To her husband she accused him falsely,*
 As if he [*i.e. Hippolytus*] would [have] her tane [*i.e., taken*] by force to villainy.*
 Hippolytus was murdered for this accusement [*i.e., because of this accusation*],
 But Phaedra for woe hanged herself incontinent [*i.e., immediately*].*

* Read how Phaedra . . . falsely: *on this legend, see Howatson 280. Phaedra was the mother-in-law of Hippolytus*

* As if . . . villainy: *i.e., Phaedra told her husband that Hippolytus had tried to force her to commit illicit intercourse*

* incontinent: *perhaps this is a pun, since "incontinent" could also suggest "unable to restrain one's sexual desire"*

The lewd love of Phasyphe [*i.e., Pasiphae*] abominable
 (As poets sayeth) brought her to her confusion.*
 Nero, the cruel tyrant detestable,
 His natural mother knew by abusion [*i.e., abuse; perversion*].*
 Venus and Cupido, with [*i.e., through*] their collusion,
 Enflamed Messalina in such wise [*i.e., in such a way*]
 That every night her self she would disguise [herself]

- * The lewd love . . . confusion: *When her husband "Minos refused to sacrifice to Poseidon, as he had promised, a fine bull, Poseidon punished him by inflicting on Pasiphae a passion for the bull," with whom she had sex, thus producing the Minotaur (Howatson 412).*
- * Nero . . . abusion: *On Nero's relations with his mother Agrippina the Younger, see Howatson 20*

And secretly go to the brothel house

For to [*i.e., in order to*] fulfill her hot concupiscence [*i.e., lust*].*

What shall I write the deeds vicious

Of Julia or, his cruel offense.

What shall I write [about] the inconvenience [*i.e., harm*]

Which came by Danythys' [*i.e., David's*]* cursed adultery

(Since that the Bible it showeth openly)?

* her hot concupiscence: *Messalina was the third wife of the emperor Claudius; on her reputation for promiscuity, see Howatson 356-57*

* *Anderson follows Pompen in arguing that "Danythys" is a misprint for "Davythys," the Biblical King David, and he suggests that David's affair with Bathsheba is the subject of Barclay's allusion (2: 860)*

What shall I write* the grievous forfeiture

Of Sodom and Gomorah, since the Bible doth tell

Of their sins against God and nature,

For which they sank alive down into hell.

Thus it appeareth what punishment cruel

Our Lord hath taken both in the old law and new (*i.e. Old and New Testaments*)

For this sin: which should us move to eschew.*

* What shall I write: *i.e., How shall I write about . . . ? or What should I write about . . . ?*

* which . . . eschew: *i.e., knowing about these punishments should cause us to avoid the sins that provoked them*

Alexander Barclay to the Fools.

To fools inflamed with love inordinate:

Note these examples, [and with]draw from this vice your mind.

Remember that there is none so great estate*

But that false love him causeth to be blind.

Our foolish women may not be left behind,

For many of them so follows [*i.e., follow*] in this way

That they sell their souls and bodies to go gay.*

* none so great estate: *i.e., no person of such lofty status*

* go gay: *i.e., behave immorally*

The graceless gallants, and the apprentice poor

(Though they naught have) themselves they set naught by*

Without [*i.e., unless*] they be acquainted with some whore

Of Westminster or some other place of ribaldry.

Then fall they to murder, theft, and robbery.

For, were not [*i.e., for, without*] proud clothing, and also fleshly lust

All the fetters and gyves [*i.e. shackles*] of England should rust.

* themselves . . . naught by: *i.e., don't esteem or value themselves*

Therefore fools, awake, and be no longer blind:

Consider that shame, sickness, and poverty

Of love proceedeth,* and draw from it [*i.e., from lust*] your mind.

Suffer not [*i.e., don't allow or permit*] your souls damned and lost to be

By vain lust and carnal sensuality;

For, [al]though the small pleasure do make thee fain,*

The end (oft[en]) is worldly woe and misery

Or (among the fiends) eternal pain.

* Of love proceedeth: *i.e., are the results of lust*

* do make thee fain: *i.e., pleases you*

Of Them That Sin, Trusting Upon the
Mercy of God.

Who that still sinneth without contrition,
Trusting God's mercy and benignity
Because he spareth our transgression,
And he [*i.e. whoever*] that thinketh justice and equity
Is not in God as well as is pity,
Such[a person] is, forsooth, without discretion,
Since he thus sinneth upon presumption [*i.e., presumptuously*].

The wind is up! Our navy is afloat!
A band of fools aboard is come! Yet more
Their cursed manners and mad I shall now note

Whose heart for sin is neither contrite nor sore --
 Not mourning (as they ought to do), [and] therefore
 Without fear still living in their viciousness,
 Nothing [*i.e., not at all*] inclined to godly holiness.

They think nothing on [*i.e., not at all about*] God's righteousness
 But ground them all [*i.e., rely completely*] on his mercy and pity
 For that [*i.e., because*] he readier is unto forgiveness
 Unto all people than [he is willing] them punished to see.
 Truth it is [*i.e., it is indeed true*] that the great enormity [*i.e., wickedness*]
 Of the world hath not a worthy punishment,
 Nor [is] he not damned that doth his sin repent.

Put case He [*i.e., Suppose that God*] giveth not aye [*i.e., always*] like judgment*
 On man's misdeed, nor yet mundane offense;
 And though He be good, meek, and patient;
 Nor shortly [*i.e., quickly*] punisheth our inconvenience [*i.e. misbehavior*];
 Put case also he give not advertence [*i.e., attention*]
 To all mundane faults, sin, and fragility;

Yet none should sin in hope of his mercy.*

* like judgment: *i.e., equally severe or appropriate judgment*

* hope of his mercy: *this stanza seems to mean something like the following: "even if we assume that God doesn't always punish our misdeeds and worldly offenses as they deserve or with uniform harshness; and even if we assume that he exercises great restraint and does immediately punish us or even notice all our shortcomings; still, we should not allow our assumption that he will be merciful to lead us to sin"*

But these fools assembled in a company

Sayeth each to other that oft it is lawful

To perseverant [*i.e., persistent*] sinners, living in iniquity,

To trust in God, since He is merciful. [They ask themselves:]

"What needeth us our wits for to dull,

Laboring our sin and folly to refrain,

Since sin is a thing natural and human?"

Then sayeth another: "Forsooth, thou sayest plain!*

And also our forefathers and progenitors [*i.e., ancestors*]

Before our days offended have certain[ly]

As well as we, in many blind errors;

But, since they have escaped all pains and dolours
 Of hell and now in heaven are certain,
 What need have we to fear infernal pain?"

* thou sayest plain: *i.e., you speak the obvious truth*

Then comes in another with his dotish [*i.e. foolish*] brain,
 "By God," sayeth he, "I know it without fable [*i.e., I know it's true*]
 That heaven was made neither for goose nor crane
 Nor yet for other beasts unreasonable."
 Then of the scripture doth he chat and babble,
 Alleging [*i.e., citing*] our forefathers which [*i.e., who*] have misdome, [and]
 Saying that no sin is new in our season.

Ah, miserable men (destitute of reason)
 That [*i.e., who*] thus on hope do sin unhappily!
 Remember: the sin[s] of [*i.e., by*] our forefathers done
 Have never been left unpunished finally,
 And that, sometime[s], full sharp[ly] and bitterly.*

For, evermore [*i.e., always*] all sin hath had a fall, [either]

With sorrow here, or else woe infernal.

* And that . . . bitterly: *i.e., and remember that sometimes the punishment for sin has been very sharp and bitter*

The sin of Sodom (foul and not natural);

The pride of Rome (which was so excellent);

The offense of David (prophet and king royal); [and]

The furor of Pharoah (fierce and violent)

Have not escaped the righteous punishment

Of God above, the celestial and high Justice,

Which [*i.e., Who*] first or last punisheth every vice.

Remember Richard, lately king of price [*i.e., a king of high repute*],

In England reigning unrighteously awhile; [recall]

How he ([motivated by] ambition and guileful covetous[ness])

With innocent blood his hands did defile.

But, howbeit that [*i.e., even though*] fortune on him did smile

Two year[s] or three, yet God sent him punishment

By his [*God's*] true servant, the red rose redolent [*i.e., fragrant*].*

* Richard . . . redolent: *Richard III, of the House of York (whose symbol was the white rose) was defeated by Henry Tudor, representing the House of Lancaster (whose symbol was the red rose)*

Therefore, remember that God omnipotent

Oft suffereth [*i.e., is patient toward*] sinners in their iniquity,

Granting them space and time of amendment

And not to proceed in their enormity [*i.e. wickedness*].

But those sinners that bide in one degree [*i.e., who fail to change*]

(And in this life their sin will not refrain)

God after[wards] punisheth with infernal pain.

As I have said (therefore) I say again:

Though God be of infinite pity and mercy

(His favor and grace [sur]passing all sin mundane),

Yet justice is with him eternally.

Wherefore I advise thee to note intently [*i.e., attentively*]: [even]

Though pity would spare,* justice will not so,

But [instead will] thee here reward, [or] else with infernal woe.*

* Though pity . . . woe: *i.e., although pity is capable of forgiving sin and might even desire to do so, justice will not be forgiving. Instead, justice will either give you what you deserve while you are here on earth or will punish you with pain in hell*

Alexander Barclay to the Fools.

Sigh, sinners, sigh for your misgovernance;

Lament, mourn, and sorrow for your enormity [*i.e., evil*]!

Away with these clouds of misty ignorance!

Sin not in hope of God's high pity;

And remember how ye daily punished be

With divers [*i.e., various*] diseases both uncouth [*i.e., unknown*] and cruel,

And all for [*i.e., all because of*] your sin. But such as [*i.e., those who*] escapeth free

And still live in sin, may fear the pains of hell.

Of the Foolish Beginning of Great Buildings

Without Sufficient Provision.

Come near, fools, and read your ignorance

And [the] great loss proceeding of [*i.e., from*] your own folly

Which, without good and discreet purveyance [*i.e., preparation*]

Any great work will build or edify [*i.e., construct*].

All such are fools; what man will it deny?

For he that will build before he count his cost

Shall seldom well end, so that [*i.e., whatever*] is made is lost.

Whoever beginneth any work or deed

Of building or of other thing chargeable

And to his costs before taketh no heed

Nor time not counteth to his work agreeable* --

Such is a fool and well worthy a bauble.

For he that is wise will no thing assay

Without he know [*i.e., unless he knows*] how he well end it may.

* Nor time . . . agreeable: *i.e., or who doesn't accurately forecast the amount of time the project will involve*

The wise man counteth his cost before alway[s]

Or [*i.e., before*] he begin[s], and nought will take in hand
 Whereto his might or power might deny,*
 His costs conforming to the stint [*i.e., limits*] of his land,*
 Whereas the fool that nought doth understand
 Beginneth a building without advisement [*i.e., careful thought*]
 But, ere [*i.e., before*] [it is] half be done, his money clean [*i.e., wholly*] is spent.

* and nought . . . deny: *i.e., and will undertake no project for which his abilities or resources are insufficient*

* His costs . . . land: *i.e., making sure that his costs do not exceed the amount of income his property produces*

Many have begun with purpose diligent
 To build great houses and pleasant mansions,
 Them thinking to finish after [*i.e., in accordance with*] their intent.
 But need deceived hath their opinions* --
 Their purpose not worth a couple of onions.
 But when they see that they it end not can,
 They curse the time that ever they it began.

* But need . . . opinions: *i.e., their expectations were undercut by the actual requirements the project demanded*

Of Nebuchadnezzar (that worthy man)

What shall I write or the story to thee tell

(Since that the Bible to thee express it can

In the fourth chapter of the prophet Daniel)?

Was he not punished in pains cruel

For his great pride and his presumption

Which he took it in the building of Babylon?

His gold and treasure he spendeth whole [*i.e., completely*] thereon,

Enjoying him [*i.e., delighting*] in his city excellent.

Right so [*i.e., in exactly the same way*] Nimrod by his invention

The tower of Babylon began for this intent:*

To save him, if the world again were drent [*i.e., drenched; drowned*];

But the high God, considering his blind rage,

His purpose let [*i.e., hindered*] by confusion of language -- [leaving]

* Nimrod . . . intent: *on Nimrod, see Metford 182*

His tower unperfect [*i.e., unfinished*] (to his loss and damage);

His people punished, himself specially [*i.e., particularly*].

Thus it appeareth what great disadvantage

On their head falleth that buildeth in folly.

Thus he is foolish that would edify [*i.e., construct*]

Any great work without riches in excess,

For great buildings requireth great riches.

But many fools are in such a blindness

That hereon nought they set their mind nor thought,

Wherefore to them oft cometh great distress

And to great poverty often are they brought.

Laughed to scorn, their purpose cometh to nought,

And truly I find in books written plain

That our old fathers have never set their brain

On great building, nor yet of them been fain.*

It [be]longeth to [*i.e., is appropriate for*] a lord, a prince, or a king

(That lack no treasure their works to maintain)

To set their minds on excellent building;

Therefore, whosoever will meddle with this thing
 Or any other, before let him be wise [*i.e. take care*]
 That his might and riches thereto may suffice,

* nor yet of them been fain: *i.e., nor have they been disposed toward, or highly pleased with, massive building projects*

Lest all men do mock and scorn his enterprise.
 For, if he ought begin without provision
 And have not [the materials] whereby his building may up rise,
 All that is lost that is made and begun;
 And better it is soothly [*i.e., truly*] (in mine intention [*i.e., view*])
 Nought to begin, and spare labour and pain,
 Than to begin, and then leave off again.

Whoever he be that so doth, certain[ly]
 He shall have mocks mingled with his damage;
 Therefore let such fools sharp[en] their brain[s]
 And better intend to [*i.e., attend to*] their own advantage,
 Considering that process of time and age

Their curious buildings shall at the least confound

And roof and walls make equal with the ground.*

* Considering . . . ground: *i.e., considering that, if nothing else proves destructive, then the simple passage of time will eventually ruin their buildings*

Barclay to the Fools.

Ye fools blinded with curiosity

Which [*i.e., who*] on great building set so sore your mind,

Remember ye not that doubtless [*i.e., inevitably*] ye shall die

And your gay buildings and houses leave behind?

Think ye your comfort alway[s] in them to find

Or, when ye die, them hence with you to have?*

Nay, nay: the last house given to mankind

Is the coarse ground and walls of his grave.

* them hence with you to have: *i.e., do you think you can take them with you when you die?*

Of Gluttons and Drunkards.

That glutton or drunkard, vile in God's sight,
 Shall hardly escape the weight of poverty,
 Which [*i.e., who*] drinketh and devoureth both day and night,
 Therein only setting all his felicity.
 His loathsome lust and his beastiality
 Shall bring unto destruction finally
 His soul, his goods, and his wretched body.

Within our navy he needs shall have a place
 Which [*i.e., who*], without measure on loathsome gluttony
 Setteth his pleasure and singular solace,
 His stomach overcharging [*i.e., stuffing*], vile and ungodly.
 And to none other thing his mind doth he apply
 Save deepest to drink. Such [gluttons] force not of* their souls
 But labor in rinsing peces [*i.e., drinking vessels*], cups, and bowls.

* force not of: *i.e., do not regard, or do not exert*

The madness of drunkenness is so immoderate
 That grievous sores it engendereth and sickness;
 It causeth often great folly and debate, [along]
 With sudden death and careful [*i.e., distressing*] heaviness.
 In things no difference putteth drunkenness.*
 It [en]feebleth the joints and the body within,
 Wasting the brain, [and] making the wit [*i.e., reason*] full thin.

* In things . . . drunkenness: *i.e., drunkenness inhibits the ability to make distinctions*

It engend'reth in the head infirmity,
 Blinding the heart, wit, and discretion;
 The mind it diminisheth, [and also] color and beauty,
 Causing all mischief, shame and, abusion.
 It maketh men mad, and, in conclusion, [it]
 Causeth them live without law or measure [*i.e., moderation*],
 Suing after sin, defiling their nature.*

* Suing after . . . nature: *i.e., causing them to follow sin and betray their humanity*

The people that are accloyed [*i.e., satiated*] with this sin
 On nothing else their minds will apply
 Save to the wine and ale stakes* to run
 And there as beasts to strive and drink a-vie [*in rivalry*].
 Then are they either given to ribaldry
 Or else to brawl and fight at every word.
 Thus drunkenness is the chief cause of discord.

* ale stakes: *i.e., tavern keepers; or flagpoles outside taverns*

But namely [*i.e. in particular*] drunkenness and wretched gluttony
 By their excess and superfluity
 Engend'reth the root of cursed lechery, [along]
 With murder, theft, and great enormity [*i.e., wickedness*].
 So bringeth it many to great adversity,
 And with his [*i.e., its*] furor the world so doth it blind
 That many it bringeth to a shameful end.

This vice (alas) good manners doth confound

And maketh man over-busy of [*i.e., excessive in*] language,

And him that in all riches doth abound

It oft in prison bringeth and in bondage.

It causeth man (to his great sorrow and damage) [to]

Disclose his secret and his privy counsel,

Which causeth him after sore to mourn and wail.

Nought is more loathsome, more vicious nor vile

Than he that is subdued to this vice:

His life shorting [*i.e., shortening*], his body he doth defile,

Bereaving his soul [of] the joy of Paradise.

How many cities and lords of great price

Hath been destroyed by drunken gluttony

And by his fellow[s] [*i.e., companions*], false love, or lechery?

The son of Thomyr had not been overcome

Nor slain by Cyrus (for [*i.e., despite*] all his [*i.e., Cyrus's*] worthiness)

If he himself had guided [*i.e., if he had guided himself*] by wisdom

And the vice avoided of blind drunkenness.*

The great Alexander, taken with this madness,
 With his sword (when he was drunken) slew
 Such of his friends as were to him most true.*

- * The son of Thomyr . . . drunkenness: “*In book I of Herodotus’s History, Spargapises, the son of Queen Tomyris, kills some of Cyrus’ troops but becomes drunken in his revels. The Persians, led by Cyrus, returns and kills” Spargapises and his followers (Anderson 2: 862)*
- * The great Alexander . . . most true: “*Plutarch recounts the story of Alexander’s killing of Clitus after a drinking bout, and his remorse afterwards, in the Lives” (Anderson 2: 863)*

I read also how this conqueror mighty
 Upon a season [*i.e., once*] played at the chess
 With one of his knights, which [*i.e., who*] won finally
 Of him great gold, treasure, and riches,
 And him overcame [*i.e., defeated*], but in a furiousness
 And lade [*i.e., loaded*] with wine, this conqueror upbraid [*i.e., verbally attacked*]
 And to his knight in wrath these words said,

“I have subdued by strength and by wisdom
 All the whole world, which obeyeth to me,

And how hast thou alone me thus overcome?"

And anon [*i.e., at once*] [he] commanded his knight hanged to be.

Then said the knight, "By right and equity

I may appeal, since ye are thus cruel."

Quod [*i.e., said*] Alexander, "To whom wilt thou appeal?

Knowest thou any that is greater than I?

Thou shalt be hanged. Thou speakest treason plain."

The knight said, "Saving your honor,* certainly

I am no traitor. Appeal I will certain[ly]

From drunken Alexander till he be sober again."

His lord then, hearing his desire sound to reason [*i.e., reasonable request*],

Deferred the justice as for that time and season.*

* "Saving your honor . . ." *i.e., "pardon me for disagreeing with you, but . . ."*

* Deferred the justice . . . season": *Barclay has added the story of Alexander, "which according to a note he has taken from Commentator Boetius de. disi. sco. Ubi infert de ebrietate, and which is alluded to in Newman's famous 'appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober' (Pompey, pp. 51-52)" (Anderson 2:863)*

And then after[wards], when his furor was gone,

His knight he pardoned, repenting his blindness,
 And well considered that [*i.e., what*] he should have misdome
 If he to death had him done in that madness.
 Thus it appeareth what great unhappiness
 And blindness cometh to many a creature
 By wine or ale taken without measure.

See here the inconvenience manifold
 Coming of drunkenness, as I [it] written find.
 Some [drunks] are so staring mad* that none can them hold,
 Roaring and crying as [if] men out of their mind --
 Some fighting, some chiding, some to other kind,*
 Nought living to themselves;* and some doting John,*
 Being drunk, thinketh him[self] as wise as Solomon.

* staring mad: *i.e., wide-eyed in madness*

* some to other kind: *i.e., some misbehaving in other ways*

* Nought living to themselves: *i.e., behaving in uncharacteristic ways*

* doting John: *i.e., some foolish common person*

Some [are] sow-drunk* (swallowing meat without measure);

Some [are] maudlin drunk* (mourning loudly and high);

Some (being drunk) no longer can endure

Without [*i.e.*, *unless*] they give them[selves] to bawdy ribaldry;

Some sweareth arms, nails, heart, and body,

Tearing* our lord worse, than the Jews him arrayed.

Some nought can speak, but harkeneth [listen to] what is said.

* sow-drunk: *i.e.*, *so drunk as to behave like a pig*

* maudlin drunk: *i.e.*, *made sad by excessive drinking*

* Tearing: *i.e.*, *blaspheming by swearing profanely by Christ's limbs*

Some spend all that they have and more at waste,

With [*i.e.*, *saying*], "revel and revel!* Dash! [*i.e.*, *Damn!*] Fill the cup, John!"

Some their thrift loseth with dice at one cast;

Some sleep as sluggards till their thrift be gone;

Some show their own counsel, for keep [secrets] can they none;

Some are ape-drunk, full of laughter and of toys.*

Some, merry drunk, [find themselves] singing with wenches and boys.

* "revel and revel?": *i.e.*, "Let's party!"

* toys: *i.e.*, *amorous sports; dallying; frisky movements; antics; tricks; jests; jokes; whims*

Some spew [*i.e. vomit*]; some stacker [*i.e., stagger*]; some utterly are lame,
 Lying on the ground without [the] power to rise;
 Some boast them of bawdry [*i.e. sexual misconduct*], fearing of no shame;
 Some [are] dumb [*i.e., silent*], and some speaketh nine words at thrice;*
 Some charge [*i.e., fill*] their belly with wine in such wise [*i.e., in such a way*]
 That their legs scant [*i.e., hardly*] can bear up the body.
 Here is a sort to drown a whole navy.*

* nine words at thrice: *i.e., babble repeatedly*

* Here is a sort . . . navy: *i.e., this kind of drunk can sink a lot of ships*

Barclay to the Fools.

Alas (mad fools!) how long will ye proceed
 In this beastly living against human nature?
 Cease of your folly: give advertence [*i.e., attention*] and heed [*i.e., remember*]
 That in each thing ought to be had measure [*i.e., moderation*]. [Neither]
 Wine nor ale hurteth no manner [*i.e., no kind of*] creature
 But sharpeth [*i.e., sharpens*] the wit if it be take[n] in kind [*i.e. moderately*];
 But if it be not, then I thee ensure [*i.e., assure*],
 It dulleth the brain, blinding the wit and mind .

Read all books and thou shalt never find
 That drunkenness and wisdom may together be;
 For where[ever] is drunkenness, there madness is by kind [*i.e., naturally*],
 Guiding the haver [*i.e., leading the drunk*] to all enormity [*i.e., excess*].
 And, whereas [*i.e., wherever there*] is madness, thou shalt never see
 Reason nor wisdom take their abiding
 In one instant.* Wherefore [*i.e., therefore*] learn this of [*i.e., from*] me:
 That drunkenness is mortal enemy to cunning [*i.e., knowledge; intellect*].

* thou shalt never see . . . in one instant: *i.e., you will never see madness and reason
 in one place together at the same time*

Of Riches Unprofitable.

Yet find I fools of another sort
 Which gather and keep excessive riches,
 With it denying their neighbors to comfort
 Which [*i.e., who*] for need liveth in pain and wretchedness.
 Such one by fortune may fall into distress

And in like wise after come to misery
 And beg of other, which shall to him deny.

It is great folly, and a desire in vain
 To love and worship riches too fervently
 And so great labor to take, in care and pain,
 False treasure to increase and multiply.
 But yet no wonder is it, certainly,
 Since he that is rich hath greater reverence [*i.e. worldly reputation*]
 Than he that hath sadness, wisdom, and science.*

* sadness, wisdom, and science: *i.e., a serious disposition, knowledge, and learning*

The rich man's rewards stand in best degree [*i.e., are most regarded*],
 But godly manners we have set clean [*i.e., completely*] aside.
 Few loveth virtue, but fewer poverty.
 False covetous[ness] his [*i.e., its*] branches spreadeth wide
 Over all the world, [so] that pity cannot bide
 Among us wretches. Banished is kindness.

Thus lieth the poor in woe and wretchedness,

Without comfort and without authority,

But he only is now reputed wise

Which [*i.e., who*] hath riches in great store and plenty.

Such [a person] shall be made a sergeant or justice

And in the court reputed of most price [*i.e., greatly esteemed*].

He shall be called to counsel in the law, [even]

Though that his brain be scarcely worth a straw.

He shall be mayor, bailiff, or constable,

And he only promoted to honor.

His manners only reputed are laudable,

His deeds praised as greatest of valor.

Men labor and seek to fall in [*i.e., win; enjoy*] his favor.

He shall have love; each one [*i.e., everyone*] to him shall sue [*i.e., solicit*]

For [*i.e., because of*] his riches, but nought for his virtue.

See what rewards are given to riches,
 Without regard had to man's [ethical] condition!
 A straw for [*i.e., worthless are*] cunning, wisdom, and holiness!
 Of riches is the first and chief question:
 What rents, what lands, how great possession,
 What stuff of household, what store of groats* and pence,
 And, after [*i.e., in accordance with*] his good [*i.e., wealth*], his words hath credence.*

* groats: *i.e., English coins worth four pence each*

* And, after . . . credence: *i.e., a man's opinions are valued in accordance with his wealth*

His words are truth: men give to them credence,
 Though they be falsely feigned [*i.e., devious*] and subtle;
 But to the poor [person] none [*i.e., no one*] will give advertence [*i.e. attention*],
 Though that [*i.e., even though*] his words be true as the gospel.
 Yea, let him swear by heaven and by hell,
 By God and his saints and [by] all that God made,
 Yet nought they believe that of [*i.e., by*] him is said.

They [*i.e., rich persons*] say that the poor man doth God despise
 (Though they [*i.e., poor persons*] nought swear but truth and verity)
 And that God punisheth them [*i.e., the poor*] in such wise [*i.e., through poverty*]
 For so despising of His high majesty,
 Keeping them for [*i.e., because of*] their sins in poverty;
 And [wealthy people claim that] they're rich exalted, by His power and grace,
 To such riches, worldly pleasure, and solace [*i.e., delight*].

The rich are rewarded with gifts of diverse sort
 (With capons and conies [*i.e., rabbits*] delicious of scent),
 But the poor caitiff [*i.e., wretch*] abideth without comfort,
 Though he most need have: none doth him present.*
 The fat pig is baste[d], [but] the lean cony is brent [*i.e., burned*].
 He that nought hath, shall so alway[s] bide [*i.e., remain*] poor,
 But he that over much hath, yet [*i.e., nevertheless*] shall have more.

* none doth him present: *i.e., no one gives him anything*

The wolf eats the sheep, the great fish [eat] the small;

The hare[s] with the hounds vexed are and frayed [*i.e., afraid*].

He that [*i.e., whoever*] hath half needs will have all;

The rich man's pleasure cannot be denayed [*i.e., denied*].

Be the poor wroth [*i.e., angry*], or be he well apaid [*i.e., satisfied; content*],

Fear causeth [to] him send unto the rich's [*i.e., the rich person's*] house

His meat from his own mouth, if it be delicious.*

* Be the poor . . . delicious: *i.e., whether a poor person is discontented or content, fear causes him to share even his best provisions with his wealthy superior*

And yet is this rich caitiff [*i.e., wretch*] not content:

Though [*i.e., even if*] he have all, yet would he have more.

And though this good can never of him be spent,*

With nought he departeth [*i.e., he never gives*] to him that is poor, [even]

Though he [*i.e., the poor person*] with need hard vexed were and sore.

O cursed hunger! O mad mind and delight!

To labor for that which never shall do profit!

* And though . . . spent: *i.e., even though he could never expend all his wealth*

* To labor . . . : *i.e., how mad it is to expend so much effort to achieve something that ultimately has no value!*

Say, covetous caitiff, what doth it thee avail [*i.e., what advantage is it to you*]
 For to have all and yet not to be content?
 Thou [under]takest not this sore [*i.e., great*] labor and travail
 To thy pleasure but to they great torment.
 But look thereof what followeth consequent [*i.e., view the results of your conduct*]:
 When thou art dead and past this wretched life,
 Thou leavest behind brawling, debate, and strife.*

* Thou leavest . . . strife: *presumably this refers to quarrels among a rich person's heirs*

To many one [*i.e., to some people*], riches is much necessary
 (Which [*i.e., who*] can it order right as it ought to be)
 But unto other[s] is it utterly contrary
 (Which [*i.e., who*] therewith disdaineth to succour poverty [*i.e., help the poor*]
 Nor them relief [*i.e., relieve*] in their adversity).
 Such [*i.e., the negligent rich*] shall our Lord sore [*i.e., severely*] punish finally
 And his [*i.e., such a rich person's*] petition righteously deny.*

* To many . . . deny: *i.e., some rich persons use their wealth properly, but others refuse to use their wealth to help the poor. God will ultimately punish these latter persons.*

Barclay to the Fools.

Ye great estates [*i.e., persons of rank*] and men of dignity
 To whom God in this life hath sent riches:
 Have ye compassion on painful poverty,
 And them [*i.e., the poor*] comfort in their careful [*i.e., distressing*] wretchedness.
 God him [*i.e., anyone*] loveth and shall reward doubtles [*i.e., certainly*]
 Which [*i.e., who*] to the needy for him [*i.e., on God's behalf*] is charitable
 With heavenly joy, which treasure is endless.*
 So [*i.e., in this way*] shall thy riches to thee be profitable.

* God him . . . endless: *i.e., God will reward in heaven anyone who is charitable toward the earthly poor*

Of Him That Together Will Serve Two Masters.

A fool he is and void of reason
 Which [*i.e., who*] with one hound [in]tendeth to take

Two hares in one instant and season [*i.e., simultaneously*].
 Right so is he that would undertake
 Him[self] to two lords a servant to make.
 For whether that he be lief or loath [*i.e., beloved or repulsive*],
 The one he shall displease, or else both.

A fool also he is without doubt
 (And in his purpose soothly blinded sore)*
 Which doth intend, labor, or go about
 To serve God and also [*i.e., as well as*] his wretched store
 Of worldly riches: for, as I said before,
 He that together will two masters serve
 Shall one displease and not his love deserve.

* (And in his . . . sore): *i.e., and greatly blind in his intention*

For he that with one hound will take also
 Two hares together in one instant

For the most part doth the both two [*i.e.*, *both of them*] forego,

And, if he one have, hard it is and scant [*i.e.*, *small*].

And that blind fool (mad and ignorant)

That draweth three bolts [*i.e.*, *arrows*] at once in one bow

At one mark shall shoot too high, or too low,

Or else too wide, and (shortly for to say)

With one or none of them he strikes the mark.

And he that taketh upon him night or day

Labors divers [*i.e.*, *various*] too chargeable [*i.e.*, *burdensome*] of work

Or diverse offices [*i.e.*, *duties*]: such [persons] wander in the dark.

For it is hard to do well as he ought

To him that on diverse things hath his thought.

With great thoughts he troubleth sore his brain

(His mind unstable, his wit alway[s] wand'ring).

Now here, now there, his body labors in pain

And in no place of steadfast abiding --

Now working, now musing, now running, now riding,

Now on sea, now on land, then to sea again,
 Sometime[s] to France, and now to Flanders or Spain.

Thus it is painful and nothing profitable
 On many labors [for] a man to set his mind,
 For neither his wit nor body can be stable
 Which [*i.e., who*] will his body to divers charges [*i.e., various tasks*] bind.
 While one goeth forward, the other bides behind.
 Therefore I thee counsel for thine own behoove:
 Let go [of] this world and serve the Lord above.

He that his mind setteth God truly to serve
 And his saints, this world setting at nought,
 Shall for reward everlasting joy deserve.
 But in this world, he that setteth his thought
 All men to please and in favor to be brought
 Must lout [*i.e., bow*] and lurk, flatter, laud, and lie
 And cloak a knave's counsel, though it false be.

If any do him wrong or injury,
 He must it suffer and [must] patiently endure
 A double [*i.e., false*] tongue (with words like honey).
 And [*i.e., if*] of his office if he will be sure
 He must be sober and cold of his lang'age
 More to a knave than to one of high lin'age.

Oft must he stoop, his bonnet in his hand;
 His master's back he must oft shrape [*i.e., scrape*] and claw,
 His breast annointing, his mind to understand;
 But, be it good or bad, thereafter must he draw:
 Without [*i.e., unless*] he can jest, he is not worth a straw.
 (But in the mean time [let him] beware that he none check [*i.e., oppose*],
 For then lay'th malice and millstone in his neck.)

He that in court will love and favor have
 A fool must him[self] feign [*i.e., must pretend to be a fool*] (if he were none afore)
 And be as fellow [*i.e., friendly*] to every boy and knave
 And, to please his lord, he must still labor sore.

His manifold charge [*i.e., great responsibilities*] maketh him covet more [so]
 That he had liever [*i.e., rather*] serve a man in misery
 Than serve his maker in tranquility.

But yet, when he hath done his diligence
 His lord to serve (as I before have said),
 For one small fault or negligent offense
 Such a displeasure against him may be laid
 That out is he cast, bare and unpurveyed [*i.e., unprovided for*],
 Whether he be genteel, yeoman, groom, or page.
 Thus worldly service is no sure heritage.

Wherefore I may prove by these examples plain
 That it is better, more godly, and pleasant
 To leave this mundane casualty and pain
 And to thy maker (one God) to be servant --
 Which [*i.e., Who*], while thou livest, shall not let thee want [*i.e., lack anything*]
 That thou desirest justly, for thy service,
 And then after[wards shall] give thee the joys of Paradise

Barclay to the Fools.

Alas, man, arise out of idolatry!

Worship not thy riches, nor thy vain treasure,
Nor this wretched world full of misery,
But laud [*i.e., praise*] thy Maker and thy Savior
With fear, meekness, faith, glory, and honor.
Let thy treasure only in His service be
And here be content with simple behavior,
Having in this lord trust and felicity.

Of Too Much Speaking or Babbling.

He that his tongue can temper and refrain
And assuage the folly of hasty language
Shall keep his mind from trouble, sadness, and pain
And find thereby great ease and advantage,
Whereas a hasty speaker falleth in great damage,

Peril, and loss, in likewise as the pie [*i.e., magpie*]

Betrays her birds by her chatt'ring and cry.

Ye blabbering fools, superflue [*i.e., superfluous*] of language,

Come to our ship! Our anchors are in weighed [*i.e., raised up*]!

By right and law ye may challenge a stage [*i.e., claim a place on board*].

To you of [*i.e., by*] Barclay it shall not be denayed;

Howbeit [*i.e., in spite of*] the charge [*i.e., command*] Pinson* hath on me laid

With many fools our navy not to charge [*i.e., load*],

Yet ye of duty [*i.e., by right*] shall have a simple barge.

* Pinson: *Richard Pinson, the printer of Barclay's book, was understandably concerned that it not include too many lengthy descriptions of too many fools*

Of this sort thousands are without fail

That have delight in words void [*i.e., empty*] and vain,

On men not faulty sometime using to rail [*i.e., verbally assault*],

On foolish words setting their heart and brain.

They often touch [*i.e., mention*], to their own shame and pain,

Such things to which none will their mind apply

(Save [*i.e.*, *except for*] such fools, to their [own] shame and envy).*

* They often touch . . . envy: *i.e.*, *they often mention topics avoided by others, thus bringing dishonor on themselves*

Say, busy fool, art thou not well worthy

To have envy [*i.e.*, *to earn hatred*], and that each one should thee hate,

When by thy words (sounding to great folly)

Thou sore lab'rest to engender debate?

Some runneth fast, thinking to come too late

To give his counsel when he seeth men in doubt,

And lightly his foolish [*i.e.*, *arrow*] bolt shall be shot out.*

* lightly . . . shot out: *i.e.*, *and he quickly shoots his mouth off to make his opinion known*

Is it not better for one his tongue to keep --

Where as [*i.e.*, *which*] he might [do] (perchance) with honesty --

Than words to speak which make him after weep

For great loss, following woe and adversity?

A word, once spoken, revoked cannot be;

Therefore thy finger lay before thy lips,

For [even] a wise man's tongue, without advisement [*i.e., thoughtfulness*], trips.

He that will answer of his own foolish brain

Before that any[one] requireth his counsel

Showeth himself and his hasty folly plain,

Whereby men know his words of none avail [*i.e., of no help; useless*].

Some have delighted in mad blabbering and frail

Which [*i.e., who*] after have suffered bitter punishment

For their words spoken without advisement [*i.e., thought*].

Say, what proceedeth of [*i.e., from*] this mad outrage

But great misfortune, woe, and unhappiness?

But, for [*i.e., despite or after*] all their chatting and plenty of lang'age,

When to the priest they come them to confess

To show their lewd life, their sin, and wretchedness,

When they should speak, and to this point are come,

Their tongues are lost, and there they sit as [if] dumb [*i.e., speechless*].

Many [persons there] have been which [*i.e.*, *who*] should have been counted wise,
 Sad [*i.e.*, *serious*], and discreet, and right well seen in science;*
 But all [this potential respect] they have defiled with this one vice
 Of much speaking: O cursed sin and offense!
 Pity it is that so great inconvenience [*i.e.*, *such great misfortune*]
 So great shame, contempt, rebuke, and villainy
 Should by one small member* come to the whole body.

* right well seen in science: *i.e.*, *considered quite knowledgeable*

* one small member: *i.e.*, *in this case, the troublesome "member" is the tongue*

Let such [persons] take example by the chatt'ring [mag]pie,
 Which doth her nest (and birds also) betray
 By her great chattering, clamor, din, and cry:
 Right so [*i.e.*, *in the same way*] these fools their own folly bewray [*i.e.*, *show*].
 But, touching [*i.e.*, *concerning*] women: of them I will nought [*i.e.*, *nothing*] say.
 They cannot speak, but are as coy and still
 As the whirl wind or clapper [*i.e.*, *clack*] of a mill.*

* clapper of a mill: *a grain mill's clapper made a repetitive smacking sound as two pieces of wood hit together*

But that man or woman or any creature
 That little speaketh or else keepeth silence
 Are ever of themself most steadfast and sure,
 Without envy, hatred, or malevolence,
 Whereas to such [a person] comes much inconvenience [*i.e., misfortune*]
 (Sorrow upon sorrow, malice and disdain)
 Which [*i.e., who*] will no time [*i.e., never*] his speech nor tongue refrain.

Fair speech is pleasant if it be moderate
 And spoken in season, convenient and due [*i.e., appropriately and properly*].
 To keep silence, to [*i.e., in a*] poor man or estate [*i.e., wealthy person*],
 Is a great grace, and singular virtue.
 Lang'age is laudable when it is good and true.
 A wise man, or [*i.e., before*] he speak[s], will be wise and ware [*i.e., aware of*]
 What, to whom, why, how, when, and where.

Barclay to the Fools.

Ye babbling bribers [*i.e., scoundrels*], endeavor you to amend!

Mitigate by measure [*i.e., moderation*] your proud, hasty lang'age.

Keep well your tongues: so [*i.e., thus*] shall ye keep your friend,

For hasty speech engend'reth great damage.

When a word is not said, the bird is in the cage.

Also, the house is surest [*i.e., most secure*] when the doors be barred.

So [*i.e., similarly*], when thy word is spoken and out at large

Thou art not master, but he that [*i.e., whoever*] hath it heard.

If thou take heed and set thereto thy brain,

In this world thou shalt find things three

Which, once past, cannot be called again.

The first is time, lost by man's simplicity [*i.e., foolishness*];

The second (youth) revoked cannot be;

The third (a word spoken) -- it goeth out in the wind.

And yet is the fourth -- that is, virginity

(My forgetful mind had left it near[ly] behind).

Do Nought and Sin Worse Than They Whom They So Correct.

He lacketh reason (and understanding to)

Which [*i.e., who*] to a town or city knoweth the way

And showeth other how they may thither go, [*while*]

Himself wand'ring about from day to day

In mire and fen [*i.e., bogland*], though his journey thither lay.

So [*i.e., similarly*] he is mad which [*i.e., who*] to other doth preach and tell

The way to heaven, and himself go'th to hell.

Now to our Navy, a sort [*i.e., group*] maketh assault

Of fools blind, mad judges and unjust,

Which [*i.e., who*] lightly [*i.e., easily; readily*] noteth another man's fault,

Chasting [*i.e., chastizing*] that sin, which their own mind doth rust

By long abiding, and increase of carnal lust.

They cloak their own vice, sin, and enormity [*i.e., extreme faults*],

Other[s] blaming and chasting [*i.e., chastizing*] with much cruelty.

They mock and mow [*i.e.*, *grimace*] at another's small offense
 And ready are a fault in them to find,
 But of their own folly and inconvenience [*i.e.*, *misconduct*]
 They see nothing, for fully are they blind,
 Not noting the vice rotted in their own mind,
 Their grievous wounds and secret malady.
 For their own ill they seek no remedy.

The hand which men unto a cross do nail*
 Showeth the way oft to a man wand'ring
 Which [*i.e.*, *who*] by the same his right way cannot fail [to find],
 But yet the hand is there still abiding.
 So do these fools, lewd of [*i.e.*, *in*] their own living,
 To other men show mean[s] and way to win
 Eternal joy, [while] themself biding in sin.

* The hand . . . nail: *i.e.*, *a pointing hand attached to a post; a direction-marker*

He certainly may well be called a sote [*i.e.*, *fool*],

Much unadvised, and his own enemy

Which [*i.e., who*] in another's eye can spy a little mote

And in his own cannot feel nor espy

A much [*i.e., great*] stick. So is he, certainly,

Which [*i.e., who*] noteth another's small fault or offense,

To his own great sins giving none advertence [*i.e., no attention*].

Many themself feign [*i.e., pretend to be*] as chaste as was saint John,

And many other feign them meek and innocent,

Some other[s] as just and wise as Solomon,

As holy as Paul, as Job as patient,

As sad [*i.e., serious*] as Seneca, and as obedient

As Abraham, and as Martin* virtuous;

But yet is their life full [*i.e., wholly*] lewd and vicious.

* Martin: *presumably St. Martin of Tours; see Metford 168-69*

Some looketh with an angel's countenance

(Wise, sad [*i.e., serious*], and sober, like an hermit),

Thus hiding their sin and their misgovernance
 Under such cloaks, like a false hypocrite.
 Let such fools read what Cicero doth write,
 Which [*i.e., who*] sayeth that none should blame any creature
 For his fault, without [*i.e., unless*] his own living be sure [*i.e., steadfast*],

Without all spot of sin, fault, or offense.
 For, in like form as [*i.e., just as*] a physician.
 By his practice and cunning or science
 The sickness cureth of another man
 But his own ill nor disease he not can
 Relief [*i.e., relieve*] nor heal, so doth he that doth blame
 Another's sin [while] he [himself is] still living in the same.

Many [there] are which [*i.e., who*] other[s] can counsel craftily
 And show the peril that may come by their sin,
 But themselves they counsel not nor remedy,
 Nor take no way whereby they heaven may win,
 But [instead] lie in that vice that they rotted are in,

Leaving the way that guideth [*i.e., the path that leads*] to joy and rest, [instead]

Their own sensuality ensuing [*i.e., following; pursuing*] as [*i.e., like*] a beast.

Wherefore, ye priests that have the charge and cure [*i.e., care; duty*]

To teach and inform the rude commonty [*i.e., common folk*]

In [*i.e., about*] God's laws (grounded in scripture)

And [who are supposed to] blame all sins, sparing no degree [*i.e., person of status*]:

While ye rebuke this their enormity [*i.e., crime*],

Live so [*i.e., in such a manner*] that none may cause have you to blame.

And if ye do not, it is to your great shame;

For, without doubt, it is [a] great villainy [for]

A man to speak against any offense

Wherein he well knoweth him own self guilty

Within his mind and secret conscience.

Against himself such one giveth sentence

How God (right judge) by righteous judgment

Should him reward with worthy punishment.

The Envoy of Barclay to the Fools.

Ye clerks that on your shoulders bear the shield
 Unto you granted by the university,
 How dare ye adventure [*i.e., undertake*] to fight in Christ's field
 Against sin, without [*i.e., unless*] ye clear and guiltless be?
 Consider the cock and in him shall ye see
 A great example, for with his wings thrice
 He beateth himself to wake his own body
 Before he crow[s] to cause other[s] [to] wake or rise.

Of Him That Findeth Ought [*i.e., Anything*] of Another Man's,
 It Not Restoring to the Owner.

He that ought findeth either by day or night,
 Using it as his own (as [if a] thing gotten justly),
 And thinketh that he so may do by law and right:
 Such [a person] is deceived, and thinketh wrongfully,
 For why [*i.e., because*] the devil (our ghostly [*i.e., spiritual*] enemy)

Doth him so [*i.e., in this way*] counsel and in his ears blow,
Deceiving in his bonds, as he doth many mo [*i.e., more*].

The fervor of [*i.e., zeal for*] riches and disordered love
(Which many have) doth me bind and constrain
Within my ship them sharply to reprove
That [*i.e., who*] [neither by] pen nor hand themselves will not refrain.*
Of [the] covetous now I will not speak again
But [rather] of them that [*i.e., who*] keepeth by force and by might
That thing whereto they have not come by right.*

* That . . . refrain: *the precise meaning of this line is unclear*

* Of covetous . . . right: *i.e., I intend now to speak not merely of those who covet but of those who actually steal*

Some findeth treasures (other men's good [*i.e., possessions*]),
And in their own use [*i.e., to their own advantage*] such good they occupy [*i.e., use*],
Which [*i.e., who*] of their minds are so blind and wood [*i.e., insane*]
And so rooted in their [own] error and folly
That oft they say "say ye!" [*i.e., "ho!"*] and dare bide by [*i.e., stand by the claim*]

That some saint whom they worshiped have

Have [*i.e., has*] send [*i.e., sent*] them the same their honesty to save.*

* That oft . . . to save: *Anderson glosses these lines as follows: "They say 'Ho!' and insist that a saint whom they have worshipped, sent it them (2: 866). In other words, they claim that the stolen goods were actually given to them by a saint whom they worshipped.*

They have no force [*i.e., concern*] nor care, nor they none have will*

To whom the riches so lost did appertain [*i.e., belong*].

That [which] [*i.e., whatever*] fortune hath given they hold fast and keep still,

Never having mind it to restore again.

Such fools fear nothing [*i.e., not at all*] everlasting pain,

Nor note not [*i.e., Nor do they note*] that without true restitution

It small availeth [*i.e., it helps little*] to have made confession.*

* They have . . . have will: *i.e., They neither feel nor want to feel any concern*

* Nor note . . . confession: *i.e., they don't realize that confession a theft isn't enough; the seized goods must be returned before the sin can be erased.*

Hear me, fool (with thy immoderate mind)!

Hear me, and do thy heart thereto [*i.e., to the following advice*] apply:

If thou by fortune any riches find,
 Calling [*i.e., and call*] it thine, thou liest therein falsely.
 If thou have wit [*i.e., reason*] thou canst not well deny
 But that [whatever] God [has] not given, nor [that whatever is not] gotten by labor
 Cannot be right wise [*i.e., proper, or properly yours*]: thus, mend thy blind error.

If thou ought [*i.e., anything*] find that [be]longeth not to thee,
 Then is it another's: the case is clear and plain;
 Wherefore [*i.e., in which case*] thou ought of [*i.e., by*] law and of duty
 Unto the owner it soon to yield again.
 But if he be dead to whom it did attain [*i.e., belong*],
 Thou ought not yet [*i.e., even then, or still*] to keep it near thee more,
 But [ought] to his sectours [*i.e., executors*] or heirs it restore.

Put case [*i.e., Let's suppose*] that they also be past and dead:
 Yet ought thou not to keep it still with thee.
 The law commandeth, and also it is meed [*i.e., fitting or proper*]
 To give it to such [persons] as have necessity,
 With it relieving their painful poverty;

And so [*i.e., in this manner*] shalt thou discharge thy conscience,
 Helping the poor, and [thus] avoid great offense.

But he that others' goods turneth to his own use,
 Spending and wasting that thing that never was his,
 Such [a person] certainly his reason doth abuse
 And by this mean grievously doth amiss;
 Whereby he loseth eternal joy and bliss,
 His soul drowning deep within hell floods
 For his mis-spending of other men's goods.

But to be short and brief in my sentence
 And sooth [*i.e., truly*] to say plain as the matter is:
 Forsooth I see not right great difference
 Between a thief and these fools covetous.
 Both wrongly keepeth that thing that is not his,
 Thinking that God doth not thereto advert [*i.e., pay attention*]
 (Which [*i.e., Who*] noteth thy deeds, thy mind, thought, and heart.

Wherefore, if thou have a righteous conscience,
 Thou wilt nought [*i.e., nothing*] keep which [be]longeth not to thee:
 The law so commandeth, in pain of great offense.
 For of [*i.e., to, with*] God [anything] that thou keepest against equity
 Thou shalt make account after that thou shalt die
 (To thy great pain in hell for ever more)
 If thou no restitution make before.

Here might I touch executors [of wills] in this crime
 (Blaming their deeds, deceit, and covetous[ness]),
 If it were not for wasting of my time:
 For mend they will not them in any wise [*i.e., in any way*]
 Nor leave no points of their deceitful guise.
 Let them take part of that which I here note
 And be parting [*i.e., departing?*] fools in this present boat.

The Envoy of Barclay the Translator to the
 Fools.

Ye false executors whom all the world reproveth [*i.e., reproves*]

And ye that find men's goods or treasures:
I call you as bad as robbers or thieves,
For ye by your falsehood and manifold errors
Keep falsely that thing which is none of yours
And waste here the goods of him that is past.
The soul lieth in pain, [while] ye take your pleasure
With his riches, damning your own souls at the last.

Of the Sermon or Erudition of Wisdom
Both to Wise Men and Fools.

He that delighteth in godly sapience
And it to obtain putteth his business
Above all fools shall have preeminence
And in this world have honor and riches
(Or a worthy crown in heaven's blessedness
Or else both wealth here, and after joy and bliss),
Whereas a fool of both the two shall miss.

Wisdom, with voice replete with gravity
Calleth to all people and sayeth, "O thou mankind,
How long wilt thou live in this enormity?
Alas, how long shalt thou thy wit have blind?
Hear my precepts and write them in thy mind!
Now is full time and season to clear thy sight:
Harken to my words, ground of goodness and right.

Learn, mortal men, [by] studying day and night,
To know me, Wisdom, chief root of chastity.
My holy doctrine thy heart shall clear and light;
My tongue shall show thee right and equity.
Chase out thy folly (cause of adversity)
And seek me, Wisdom, which [*i.e.*, *who*] shall endue [*i.e.*, *endow*] thy mind
With health and wealth, whereby thou life shalt find.

Arise, I say again to thee, mankind,
And seek me, Wisdom, that am [the] well of goodness.
Let not this world thy conscience farther blind

Nor to sin subdue for love of false riches.

Blind not thy heart with mundane wretchedness.

I am worth gold and worth all mundane,

And to mankind [I am] counsellor sovereign.

No manner [*i.e., kind of*] jewel is to me like, certain[ly],

Nor so profitable to mortal creature:

I [sur]pass all riches and cause a man refrain

His mind from sin, and of his end be sure [*i.e., certain*].

There is no treasure nor precious stone so pure

(Carbuncle, ruby, nor a diamond) in land nor sea

Nor other lapidary [*i.e., precious stone*] comparable to me.

And, shortly [*i.e., briefly*] to speak: wisdom is more laudable

Than all the world or other thing mundane.

There is no treasure to wisdom comparable,

But it alone is a virtue most sovereign,

Having nought like [*i.e., comparable*] in valor nor worth certain.

No fool is so rich, nor high of dignity

But that a wise man, [even though] poor, is more worthy than he.

Wisdom preserveth men in authority,

Princes promoting by counsel provident.

By it poor men sometime (and of low degree)

Hath had the whole world to them obedient.

It guideth cities and countries excellent

And governeth the counsel of prince, lord, and king,

Strengthening [*i.e.*, *strengthening*] the body, the heart illumining.

It guideth lords and from bondage doth bring

Them whom folly hath brought in to captivity,

Her [*i.e.*, *Wisdom's*] gifts to mankind freely off[e]ring,

Guiding her disciples [away] from all adversity.

Wisdom, standing upon a stage on high,

Crieth to mankind with loud voice in this wise [*i.e.*, *way*]:

“I truth exalt and vicious men despise.

Learn of [*i.e., from*] me wisdom: cast out your covetous[ness],
For by my might, craft, and wise provision,
Kings unto their dignity doth rise,
Their scepters guiding by my monition [*i.e., advice or warnings*].
I gave them laws to guide each region,
In wealth defending (and in prosperity)
Them and their realms while they guide them by me.

All manner [*i.e., kinds of*] nations that doth to me incline
I guide and govern by law and equity.
In me is right, godly wit, and doctrine.
What blind folly (and how great adversity)
Do they avoid that guide themselves by me!
And he that loveth with worship and honor
Shall know my love, my grace, and my favor.

He that me followeth shall avoid all dolor [*i.e., sorrow*];
I shall him follow, promoting [*i.e., making sure*] in such case
That none shall be before him in valor.

I godly riches in my power embrace
Which man by me may easily purchase.
And he that will his way by me address
I shall reward with heavenly joy endless.

The Father of Heaven, of infinite goodness,
Me comprehendeth [*i.e.*, *includes*] within His deity:
Of Him my first beginning is, doubtless,
And heaven and earth He create[d] hath by me,
And every creature (both on land and sea),
The heaven imperial, planets, and firmament:
God never thing made without my true assent.

Therefore, mankind, set thy mind and intent
To me, Wisdom, to be subject and servant.
To my precepts be thou obedient
And heavenly joy thou shalt not lack nor want.
For doubtless they are mad and ignorant
And fools blinded (whosoever they be)

That will not gladly be servants unto me.”

The Envoy of Barclay to the Fools.

Arise, fools of minds dark and blind!

Receive the gifts of godly Sapience!

Hear her precepts and plant them in your mind

And root out the gaffs* of your old offense.

Call to your minds what inconvenience [*i.e., misfortune*],

How sudden falls, what sorrow and torment

Hath come to many a mighty lord and prince

For not following of her commandment.

* gaffs: *i.e., iron hooks or fishing spears*

Of Boasting or Having Confidence in Fortune.

He is a fool which [*i.e., who*] setteth confidence

On frail Fortune (uncertain and mutable),

His mind exalting in pride and insolence
 Because that she sometime is favorable,
 As if she would so be perdurable [*i.e., forever*].
 Such fools oft (when they think them most sure)
 All suddenly great misfortune endure.

Among our fools he [*i.e. such a person*] ought to have a place
 (And so he shall, for it is reasonable)
 Which [*i.e., who*] thinketh himself greatly in Fortune's grace,
 Boasting that she to him is favorable
 (As if her manner were not to be mutable).
 In this vain hope such their life doth lead
 Till at the last their house [is] borne over their head.*

* house . . . head: *this expression is similar to "pulling a house on one's head," meaning "getting oneself into trouble"*

He shaketh [*i.e., laughs?*], boast[s], and oft doth him avaunt [*i.e., brag*]
 Of Fortune's favor and his prosperity,
 Which suff[e]reth [*i.e., permits*] him nought [*i.e., nothing*] of his will to want,*

So that he knoweth nought of adversity,
 Nor misfortune, nor what thing is poverty.
 O lawless fool, o man blinded of mind!
 Say: what surety in fortune canst thou find?

* Which suff[e]reth . . . want: *i.e., Fortune denies him nothing that he desires*

To what end or unto what conclusion
 Shall Fortune -- frail, unrighteous, and unsure --
 Lead the blind fool by her abusion?
 How darest thou thee in her blindness assure*
 (Since she unstable is and cannot long endure)?
 Her gifts changeth: she is blind and sudden; [even]
 Though she [at] first laugh[s], her end is uncertain.

* How . . . assure: *i.e., how can you presume to be confident in her when she is blind?*

Thou shakest [*i.e., laugh?*] [and] boast oft of her folly in vain,
 For he is most happy which can avoid her snare:

If she exalt someone unto wealth mundane,
 She bringeth another to pain, sorrow, and care.
 While one is laded to [*i.e., amply provided for*], the other's back is bare;
 While she a beggar maketh in good [*i.e., wealth*] abound,
 A lord or state [*i.e., person of rank*] she throweth to the ground.

But, not withstanding [*i.e., despite*] her mutability
 Thou boastest thy good and too much abundance.
 Thou boastest thy wealth and thy prosperity,
 Thy good adventures, and plentiful pleasance [*i.e., enjoyment*].
 Alas, blind fool, amend thy ignorance,
 And in thy wealth to this saying intend [*i.e., attend to this advice:*]
 That Fortune ever hath an uncertain end.

False Fortune, infect [*i.e., infected*] of countenance and of face,
 By her eyes cloudy and variable visage
 Hath many for a while taken to her grace
 Which [*i.e., who*] after[wards], by her wheel unstable and volage [*i.e., fickle*],
 Hath brought them to woe, misfortune, and damage.

She ruleth poor and rich without difference,
Lewdness exalting and damning innocence.

Thus is that man void of all intelligence
Whom Fortune feedeth with chance fortunate
If he therein have over-large confidence
And think[s] that sure [*i.e., certain*] that ever is mutable.
That fool is son to the fiend abominable
That followeth riches and [to] Fortune that is blind -- *
His savior left, and clean out of mind.

* That fool . . . blind: *i.e., the fool who pursues riches becomes the child of Satan and Fortune, the latter of whom is blind*

When the foul fiend (father of unhappiness)
Poor man purposeth [*i.e., intends*] by falsehood to beguile,
He [*i.e., Satan*] sendeth him [*i.e., man*] wealth worldly and false riches
And causeth Fortune awhile on him to smile --
Which [*i.e., who*] with her blindness doth mankind so defile
That, while they trust in her favour too sore [*i.e., greatly*],

They damn their soul in hell for evermore.

By large examples thou each day mayest see

The change of Fortune and the end uncertain:

Wherefore, to boast thee of her commodity [*i.e., profitableness*]

It is great folly and also [a] thing in vain.

From this lewdness thy mind therefore refrain,

And be content with fortune moderate

Nor boast thee not of thy wealth or estate.

This day thou art rich and despisest the poor

Yet so may it fall [*i.e., happen*], that for [*i.e., because of*] thy lewd living

Tomorrow thou beggest thy bread from door to door.

Therefore, remember that blind Fortune, wand[e]ring,

Hath not in her hands power, nor guiding [*i.e., control over*]

The rewards of wealth, nor of felicity,

But [only] God them guideth (by his great majesty).

And all thing[s] changeth, as is to him pleasant [*i.e., as it pleases him*]:

His deeds to wisdom [are] alway[s] agreeable.

Wherefore, blind fool, be not so ignorant

To praise Fortune (which is so variable

And of rewards unsure and changeable).

But, [even] though she smile[s], trust not to her intent,

For among sweet herbs oft lurketh the serpent.

Barclay to the Fools.

Ye fools that have in Fortune confidence

And boast you of wealth and of prosperity,

Leave off your folly, and note by evidence

Her course unsure and her mutability.

None in this life can bide in one degree [*i.e., remain in one place*],

But [are] sometime[s] high, then after[wards] poor and low;

Now nought set by [*i.e., not esteemed*], now in authority;

Now full, now void, as waters ebb and flow.

I am rememb[er]ed [*i.e., reminded*] that I have often seen
 Great worldly riches end in poverty,
 And many one [*i.e., many a person*] that hath in favor been
 (And high promoted in wealth and dignity)
 Hath suddenly fallen into calamity.
 Thus is it folly to trust in Fortune's grace,
 For, while the sea floweth and is at Bordeaux high,
 It as fast ebbereth at some other place.

Of the Over Great and Chargeable [*i.e., burdensome*] Curiosity
 of Men.

Unto more fools here ordain I a barge
 Which [*i.e., who*] meddleth with every man's business
 And not intendeth to [*pay no heed to*] their own loss and charge.
 Great pain and woe such fools oft oppress,
 And let them learn with patient meekness
 To suffer sorrow, for why [*i.e., because*] they shall none lack
 Since they alone the whole world take on their back.

He that will covet to bear more than he may
 And take on his shoulders more than he can sustain:
 Such is a fool, his deeds will not deny* [this conclusion],
 And [he] with his own will goeth to peril and pain.
 He is unwise which [*i.e.*, *who*] is joyous and fain [*i.e.*, *glad*]
 To offer his neck to bear that without fear
 Which were enough for divers men to bear.

* deny: *i.e.*, *deny*

That man that taketh upon his back alone
 The heavy weight of the large firmament
 Or any burden which maketh him to groan
 (Which to sustain his strength is impotent),
 No marvel is if he fall incontinent [*i.e.*, *immediately*];
 And then, when he low on the ground doth lie,
 He oft repenteth his purpose and folly.

We have in many stories many examples great

Showing the lewd end of this curiosity.

I read of Alexander that did often sweat

In great perils to augment his dignity:

He was not content with Europe and Asia,

Nor all the ground under the firmament

(At the last end) could not his mind content,

As if all the earth were not sufficient

For his small body by [*i.e., because of*] curious covetous[ness],

But at the last he must [*i.e., was obliged to*] hold him[self] content

With a small chest, and [a] grave not of great price.

Thus death us showeth what thing should us suffice

And what is the end of our curiosity,

For death is like [*i.e., the same*] to [persons of] high and low degree.

What shall a king at his last ending have

Of all his realm and infinite treasure

Save only his tomb and the ground of his grave?

But, though it be of great price and valor

(As is convenient [*i.e.*, *appropriate*] to his high honor),

Yet little comfort to his soul shall it give

But cause of boasting to them that after live.

Thus when man unto his last end is come

He nought with him beareth of his dignities,

Wherefore Cynicus* a man of great wisdom

(Lord greatest of Greece in lands and cities)

Hath left great example unto [persons of] all degrees,

For his great riches his heart did never blind,

But [instead] worldly pomp [he] set clean out of his mind.

* Cynicus: *Barclay alludes here to Diogenes (ca. 400-325 B.C.), one of the great Cynic philosophers (see Howatson 164), although Anderson notes that Barclay's description of him as a prominent aristocrat is inaccurate (2: 868).*

He forced of [*i.e.*, *cared about*] no castles nor excellent building

(Despising charges and business worldly)

But gave his mind to virtue and cunning
 And namely [*i.e., especially*] to the science of astronomy,
 Considering that great rest of mind and of body
 With him abideth which with bold heart is fain [*i.e., glad*]
 To follow virtue, and leave charges mundane [*i.e., worldly burdens*].

He that so doth [*i.e., the person who behaves in this way*] no weight doth undertake
 Upon his back of so great a gravity
 That his small strength must it again forsake,
 Where[as] he that attempteth greatest things and high
 (Great weight of charges and much dignity)
 Must learn to suffer pain, thought, and vexation,
 By his great charges of perturbation.

What avail [*i.e., advantage*] is it the world to obtain
 In one man's power, and all other to excel, [merely in order]
 To suffer trouble, and vain charges sustain,
 And at the last his poor soul goeth to hell
 (There torn and tormented in pains cruel)?

It were much better to keep a quiet mind

And after our death eternal rest to find.

He that taketh thought for every business

And careth for that which doth not appertain

Nor [be]long to his charge, he is full of blindness

And no hour shall rest, but still [*i.e., always be*] in thought and pain.

Care for thy own charges: thereon set thy brain,

For he a fool is that careth or doth intend

For [*i.e., pay heed to*] another man's charge, which he cannot amend.

Therefore, live in rest after thy degree [*i.e., according to your status*],

Nor on such things do not thy mind apply

Which are no thing appertaining unto thee.

If thou so do, thou shalt find rest thereby:

Avoid thou the charge [*i.e., burden*] of worldly misery.

For goods take no thought, great care, nor travail,*

Which after death shall do thee none avail.

* For goods . . . travail: *i.e., don't waste your thought, care, or labor on goods*

Barclay to the Fools.

Fool, clear thy eyes and of thy self beware!

Care most for thy own business and charge.

For other men's [charges] take no great thought nor care

If thou thy conscience may'st thereof discharge.

A curious man that of his tongue is large [*i.e., who speaks too much*],

Talking or caring of other [*i.e., about others or other things*]: his place is best

High in the foretop of our foolish barge,

For in that place is small quiet or rest.

Of Them That are Alway Borrowing.

A man that is busy both even and morrow

With ravishing claws and insatiable

Of his friends and neighbors to beg and to borrow

To the devouring wolf is most like or semblable [*i.e., comparable*].

Such in our ship shall not want [*i.e.*, *lack; desire*] a bauble,
 For he that still borrows shall scant him quit [*i.e.*, *repay*] or redd*
 And as a wretch the ass shall him over tread.

* redd: *i.e.*, *to clear oneself of debt*

The fool that himself a debtor doth make
 To diverse men (and is borrowing alway[s])
 Right ponderous charges on him doth take,
 Borrowing of [*i.e.*, *from*] one another therewith to pay.
 Though he be glad to have long term and day
 To him assigned to make his payment,
 It nought availeth, for soon the time is spent.

But in the mean time, devouring usury
 Spoileth, making poor many a borrower.
 Where they two borrowed, they promise to pay three, [in order]
 Their day of payment longer to defer.
 Thus doth oft borrowing many thousands mar,

Yet some get malice for that good that they len[d]

And, where they lent twenty, gladly taketh ten.

I will not say but that it is meet, certain[ly],

To lend freely to one that is in need

And will be glad it to content [*i.e.*, *repay*] again.

But he that lendeth to have reward or meed

Or more than he lent may of hell-pain have dread,

And he that so borroweth gain can have none

Thereby in this life, but hell when he is gone*.

* gain . . . gone: *i.e.*, *he can have no profit from such borrowing while he lives, but he will go to hell when he dies.*

Therefore in this satire such [fools] will I reprove

(And none that borrow nor lend on amity).*

The usurers (false Christian men in their belief)

Follow the worn way of their iniquity, [a way]

Prohibit[ed] by law, justice, and equity,

Their unclean hearts and mind unhappily [*i.e.*, *unfortunately*]

On lucre setting coming by usury.*

* (And none . . . amity): *i.e., but I will not reprove those whose lending is motivated by true friendship*

* On lucre . . . usury: *i.e., thy focus on money gained from usury*

They heap their sin in quantity horrible,
 Laboring that lewd burden greater to make,
 And that sore weight tedious and terrible
 With a great rope upon their shoulders take.
 The weight up-taken, all their whole joints quake.
 Thus these caitiffs with this rope and burden heavy
 Themselves hang, damning their soul[s] eternally.

Ah wretched man, alas, make clear thy reason!

Remember: [al]though God thee suffer [*i.e., is patient with*] thus long time,

He granteth [thee] that space to amend thee in season

And not daily to increase thy sin and crime.

Sometime he punisheth with infernal abime [*i.e., hell*]

Shortly [*i.e., immediately*] for sin; sometime, though one misdo[es],

He suff[e]reth long; but yet trust not thereto.*

* trust not thereto: *i.e., don't take God's patience for granted*

The longer unpunished, the sorer is the pain;
 And, if thou wilt not give to me credence,
 Of Sodom and Gomor' the Bible showeth plain
 How God righteously punished their offense,
 And also Salem [*i.e., Jerusalem*], town of great excellence,
 For viciousness God punished bitterly,
 Which should us cause for to live righteously.

The righteous God also did sore [*i.e., greatly*] chastise
 The Nilicolians* [*i.e., Egyptians*] and them utterly destroy
 For their continuing in their sin and vice
 And their lineage long kept from wealth and joy, [and]
 In great trouble, which did their hearts [an]noy:
 Howbeit that [*i.e., even though*] they were good and innocent,
 For their fathers' fault they suffered punishment.

* Nilicolians: *Anderson (2: 868) notes that this name derives from Latin.*

But to our purpose to return again:

He that ought [*i.e., anything*] borroweth which he cannot [re]pay,

Of a wolf ravishing followeth the train;*

But, though he all swallow, yet can he by no way

Devour the time nor the prefixed day.

Wherefore, if he then deceive his creditor,

He [*i.e., the creditor*] oft him chasteth [*i.e., chastizes*] with justice and rigor.

* of a wolf . . . train: *i.e., he follows (and eats?) the bait laid to attract a ravishing wolf*

Right in like wise [*i.e., similarly*], our Lord omnipotent

In this world to live granteth us time and space,

Not still to sin, but unto this intent [*i.e., purpose*]:

To leave our vice, and follow the way of grace.

But if we still continue in one case

And have done no good to pay Him at our day,

In hell prison He justly shall us lay.

Barclay to the Fools.

Thou fool misminded,* too large [*i.e.*, *loose*] of conscience:*

To thee I speak, that art a lewd debtor.

Borrow thou nothing, (noble, groat, nor pence)*

More than thou may'st again pay thy creditor.

Right so [*i.e.*, *likewise*], endeavor thee to pay thy savior

His right and duty, with a glad will and fain,*

That [*i.e.*, *which*] is thy true service, with glory and honor.

Then shalt thou surely escape infernal pain.

* misminded: *i.e.*, *perverted in mind*

* too large of conscience: *i.e.*, *insufficiently conscientious*

* noble, groat, nor pence: *all of these are English coins*

* with a glad will and fain: *i.e.*, *with a glad and happy will*

Of Inprofitable [*i.e.*, *Unprofitable*] and Vain Prayers,

Vows, and Petitions.

That man whose heart unhappy sin doth blind
 And pray'th [while] gazing into the firmament;
 Or he that setteth not his heart and mind
 Upon his words, their sentence [*i.e., meaning*] or intent;
 And he that desireth thing not convenient [*i.e., proper*]:
 Such fools shall not their petition obtain.
 For, without the heart, the tongue laboureth in vain.

Here we reprove, reperue* ye, and revile
 A sort [*i.e., the kind*] of fools (lewd of conditions)
 Whose heart and tongue their souls doth defile
 By their blind prayers and ill petitions.
 Such follow no teaching nor good monitions [*i.e., advice*],
 For often many of them with tongue doth pray
 Their mind, abstract [*i.e., absent-mindedly*], not knowing what they say

* reperue: *As Anderson suggests, this is “[s]urely a misprint for repreue” (2: 868). If “repreue” is equivalent to the modern verb “reprieve,” the word might seem to contradict the meaning and tone of the rest of the line. However, in Barclay’s day “reprieve” could mean “to send back to prison” or “to remit for trial” (OED).*

Man oft desireth with great affection
That thing of God, which thing (if God would grant)
Should be at last unto their destruction.
Examples hereof [*i.e., of this*] thou canst not lack nor want.
The great Midas, sometime king triumphant
Of Phrygia, by his own foolish desire,
With painful hunger his life breath did expire.

This king Midas (of whom I have you told)
Of God desired (with prayer diligent)
That all that he touched turn might unto gold.
His prayer was heard; he obtained his intent --
But not to his wealth [*i.e., profit*], but [instead to his] mortal punishment.
For, when he bread or drink taste or touch should,
Incontinent [*i.e., immediately*] was it turned into gold.

Thus was his prayer to his own damage,
For at the last he died in woe and pain:
For no gold could his sore hunger assuage,

Nor his desire could he not call [*i.e., recall or undo*] again.

Thus his petition desired was in vain,

And where he weened [*i.e., thought; expected*] great wealth to get thereby

He died in shame, hunger, and misery.

Some [people] daily pray with marvelous business [*i.e., diligence*],

Crying and sighing to God omnipotent

For to have plenty of wealth, joy, and riches

And to be made rich, mighty, and excellent.

O cursed livers, o blind men of intent!

On such desire they set their mind and thought

Which thousands unto shameful end hath brought.

What profited [*i.e., what were the advantages of*] the mighty edifices

Of Lycynus,* or livel'ood [*i.e., livelihood or life*] of excess:

What profiteth the money gotten in vices

Of [*i.e., by*] rich Crassus, or Croesus* -- great riches?

They all are dead by their unhappiness.

And that lewdly (not by death natural), [and]

Their blind desires [were the] chief root and cause of all.

* Lycynus: "*Locher, from whom Barclay takes the reference, means perhaps the brother-in-law of Constantine the Great, who despite martial victories, was finally defeated and banished to Salonica (Anderson 2: 869)*

* Crassus, or Croesus: *both were notoriously very rich; see Anderson 2: 869*

Another, which [*i.e., who*] is in youth's prosperity,

For strength and might often to God doth pray;

Some [other persons] of their life to have prolixity [*i.e., great length*]

Desireth God, and here to bide away[s]

In riches, wealth, joy, and solemn array.

But yet they in gluttony take such custom

That they slay themself [*i.e., themselves*] long or [*i.e., before*] their day be come.

Alas, mad fool! Why prayest thou for age

Since it so grievous is and importable [*i.e., unbearable*],

Unstable, and full of dolor and damage,

Odius to youth, and intolerable?

Say, foolish man, which [*i.e., who*] art of mind unstable,

Is it not great folly to any creature

To pray for that thing, which he cannot endure?

Peleus and Nestor* and many other mo [*i.e., more*],

As [*i.e., such as*] Itackes* and Laertes,* sore have complained

For too long age, ever full of pain and woe,

Wherewith their bodies sore have been constrained

And with great sorrows and divers* often pained.

And, to conclude briefly in one sentence:

Oft to age falleth much inconvenience.

* Peleus and Nestor: *old men mentioned by Homer in The Iliad*

* Itackes: "*Barclay has mistaken Locher's adjective Itacusque Laertes for a proper name*" (Anderson 2: 869)

* Laertes: *the elderly father of Odysseus in Homer's Odyssey*

* great sorrows and divers: *i.e., great and diverse sorrows*

Yet are [there] more fools which [*i.e., who*] ought reproved be,

And they are such which [*i.e., who*] still on God doth call

For great rooms, offices, and great dignity,

Nothing intending to [*i.e., ignoring; not imagining*] their grievous fall.

For this is daily seen, and ever shall [be seen]:

That he that covets high to climb aloft,
If he hap [*i.e., happen*] to fall, his fall cannot be soft.

Some other [fools] pray for beauty and fairness [*i.e., good looks*],
And that [*i.e., and do so*] to a cursed purpose and intent,
Whereby they lose the heavenly blessedness,
Their soul subduing to infernal torment.
O ye mad fools, of minds impotent!
Pray your paternoster [*i.e., Lord's Prayer*] with devout heart and mind,
For therein is all that is needful to mankind.

Our savior Christ, while he was on this ground
Among us sinners, in this vale of misery,
Taught his disciples this prayer which doth sound
Near to this sentence, nor greatly doth not vary:
“Our Father which art in heaven, eternally
Thy name be hallowed; grant that to thy kingdom
All we thy servants worthily may come;

In heaven and earth thy will be done alway;
And of thy great grace and thy benignity
Our daily bread grant unto us this day,
Forgiving our sins and our iniquity:
As we forgive them that to us debtors be,
And, to avoid temptation, thy grace unto us len [*i.e., lend*],
And us deliver from every ill. Amen.”

When thou hast cleansed thy mind from sin before
And said this prayer to thy Maker devoutly,
Thou needest not of Him to desire more.
Yet may'st thou pray and desire righteously
For health of soul within thy whole body,
For steadfast faith, and ill name to eschew [*i.e., avoid*],
And chastely to live (by His help) in virtue.

Thus should thou pray, thou wretch, both day and night
With heart and mind, unto thy Creator,
And nought [*i.e., nothing*] by folly to ask against right

To hurt or loss to thy friend or neighbor,
 Nor to thy foe ill will or rigor.
 But if God to thy prayers always should incline,
 Oft should come great sorrow to thee and to all thine.*

* But if . . . thine: *presumably this means that if God listened to all of a person's prayers, including unworthy ones, the person would perhaps merit punishment for some of them.*

The Envoy of Barclay to the Fools.

Man, clear thy mind or [*i.e., ere or before*] thou begin to pray;
 Else [*i.e., otherwise*], though thy prayer be just, it is but vain.
 And keep together thy heart and tongue always[s],
 Or else (doubtless) thou lovest all thy pain.*
 From lewd petitions thy mind thou ought [to] refrain.
 If thou desire ill to thy foe by malice,
 At thy petition God shall have disdain;
 For, though thou be wroth [*i.e., angry*] God is not in like wise.

* Or else . . . pain: *i.e., otherwise you will undoubtedly waste all the effort you put*

into your praying

* For . . . wise: *i.e., even if you are angry with your enemy, God is not*

Of Unprofitable Study.

He that vain study doth haunt or exercise

And loseth his time (of fruit void and barren),

Resorting to riot, which [*i.e., who*] cunning [*i.e., knowledge*] doth despise,

And that of doctrine (in manner)* hath disdain:

Such shall in age of his madness complain

And seeing that he loseth his time thus in folly

Let him come to our foolish company.

* in manner: *i.e., in due measure; in moderation. In other words, Barclay admires learning (or "doctrine"), as long as it is not pursued to excess*

Now in this navy many themselves present

(Of [*i.e., from*] this our realm and from beyond the sea)

Which [*i.e., who*] in their study are lewd and negligent,

Losing their time at the university,

Yet count they themselves of great authority.

With their proud hoods* on their necks hanging,

They have the laud: but other[s] have the cunning [*i.e., knowledge*].*

* hoods: *i.e., badges worn over the gown of college graduates*

* They have . . . cunning: *i.e., although these lackluster students have received the honor of graduation (and the consequent praise), other persons possess real knowledge*

They think that they have all science [*i.e., knowledge*] perfectly

Within their hearts, boasting them of the same,

Though they thereto their mind did never apply:

Without [possessing] the thing, they joy them of the name.*

But such mad fools (to their great loss and shame),

While they should nourish their minds with science,

They seek their pleasure, given to neglynce [*i.e., negligence*].

* Without . . . name: *i.e., although they do not possess genuine knowledge, they take joy in merely being thought or called learned*

They wander in every inconvenience*

From street to street, from tavern to tavern;
 But namely [*i.e., especially*] youth followeth all offense,
 Nothing intending the profit to discern
 Nor fruit of cunning [*i.e., knowledge*], whereby they might govern
 Themselves by reason; but such things they ensue [*i.e., follow; pursue*]
 Whereby they neither get good manners nor virtue.

* They wander . . . inconvenience: *i.e., they ramble into every kind of misconduct*

But he that intendeth to come to the science
 And godly wisdom of our elders: certain[ly]
 He must sore [*i.e., greatly*] study, for without diligence
 And busy labor no man can it obtain.
 None ought to cease, though it first be a pain.
 In good perseverance getteth great riches,
 Where no good cometh by slothful idleness.

But most I marvel of other fools blind
 Which [*i.e., who*] in divers sciences are fast laboring

Both day and night, with all their heart and mind,
 But of grammar know they little or nothing
 (Which is the ground of all liberal cunning [*i.e.*, *knowledge*]).
 Yet many are busy in logic and in law,
 When all their grammar is scarcely worth a straw.

If he have once read the old doctrinal*
 With his [*i.e.*, *its*] diffuse and unperfect brevity,
 He thinketh to have seen the points of grammar all;
 And yet of one error he maketh two or three.
 Precyan or Sulpice* disdaineth he to see.
 Thus many which [*i.e.*, *who*] say that they their grammar can [*i.e.*, *know*]
 Are as great fools as when they first began.

* the old doctrinal: "*The Doctrinale Puerorum of Alexander de Ville-Dieu, also known as Alexander Callus or Alexander Grammaticus, thirteenth century* (Anderson 2: 870).

* Precyan: *i.e.*, *Priscian*. "*Grammarians, ca. 500 A.D. Author of a comprehensive grammar in 18 books, which sums up all grammatical learning of the previous centuries*" (Martinband 226).

* Sulpice: *i.e.* "*Giovanni Sulpizio, Opus Grammaticum, Rome before 1480* (Anderson 2: 870).

One, with his speech round turning like a wheel
 Of logic, the knots doth loose and undo
 In hand with his syllogisms, and yet doth he feel
 Nothing what it meaneth, nor what [be]longeth thereto.
 Now sorts currit: * Now is in hand Plato;
 Another cometh in with Bocardo and Pheryson*
 And out goeth again, a fool in conclusion.

* Now sorts currit: *Pompen (212) suggests that "sorts currit" may allude to logical jargon printed in a book by Pierre Tateret in 1494.*

* Bocardo and Pheryson: *Anderson (2: 870) quotes Pompen: "Still to be found in every modern handbook of Scholastic philosophy. They belong to a set of mnemonic made-up words formed to impress upon the memory the nineteen valid moods of a syllogism (Pompen, p. 213)."*

There is nought else but "est" and "non est."*

Blabbering and chiding, as it were beawlys wise.*

They argue nought else but to prove man a beast:

"Homo est Asinus" [*i.e.*, "*man is an ass*"] is [the] cause of much strife.

Thus pass forth these fools the days of their live[s]

In two syllables,* not giving advertence [*i.e.*, *attention*]

To other cunning [*i.e.*, *knowledge*], doctrine, nor science.

- * “est” and “non est”: *Latin for “it is” and “it is not”; in other words, basic logic distinctions*
- * beawlys wise: *Anderson (2: 870-71) quotes a long explanation by Pompen suggesting that “beawlys” is a misprint for “baylys” or “bayliffe’s.” In this case the fools would argue in the manner of bailiffs -- presumably loudly*
- * two syllables: *this presumably refers to the deliberately simple language employed by logicians*

I will not say but [*i.e., I will not deny*] that it is expedient [for]

Thee to know of logic the craft and cunning [*i.e., skill*],

For by argument it maketh evident

Much obscureness, sometime[s] illumining

The mind and sharpening the wit in many a thing.

But oft yet by it, a thing [that is] plain, bright, and pure

Is made diffuse [*i.e., difficult*], unknown, hard, and obscure.

It is enough thereof to know the ground

And not therein to waste all thy life wholly,

Still grutching [*i.e., murmuring*] like unto the frog’s sound

Or like the chattering of the foolish [mag]pie.

If one affirm, the other will deny:

Sophistry nor logic (with their art talkative)

Show not the way unto the book of life.

With such fools tender youth is defiled
 And all their days on them they set delight,
 But godly doctrine is from their minds exiled
 Which should the body and soul also profit.
 They take no leisure, pleasure, nor respite
 To other sciences, pleasant and profitable,
 But without end in one thing chat and babble.

One runneth to Almayne [*i.e.*, *Germany*], another unto France,
 To Paris, Padway [*i.e.*, *Padua*], Lumbardy, or Spain,
 Another to Bonony [*i.e.*, *Bologna?*], Rome or Orleans,
 To Caen [in France], to Tolouse, Athens, or Cologne,
 And at the last returneth home again
 More ignorant, blinder and greater fools
 Than they were when they first went to the schools.

One, boasting the name of a lawyer or divine,
 His proud hood [wears] high upon his stately neck:
 Thus must a good clerk unto a fool incline
 Lout [*i.e., bow; bend*] with the body and with obedience beck [*i.e., nod*]
 And, though it turn to their rebuke and check,
 Yet nowadays over-many [*i.e., too many*] such there be
 Which [*i.e., who*], instead of [employing] cunning [*i.e., knowledge*], useth audacity.

The hood must answer for the foolish student:
 Their time hath been lost, fruitless, and barren.
 Their friends' goods on such fools are spent
 To their damage, thought, hunger, and pain.
 Thus to conclude: me think [*i.e., I think*] it is but vain
 The friends to labor the days of their life
 To spare* for such scholars which [*i.e., who*] shall never thrive

spare: *i.e., set aside money for; save funds in order to donate them*

The great folly, the pride, and the enormity

Of our students, and their obstinate error,
 Causeth me to write two sentences or three
 More than I find written in mine author.
 The time hath been when I was conductor*
 Of much folly, which now my mind doth grieve;
 Wherefore, of this ship since I am governor,
 I dare be bold mine own vice to reprove.*

* conductor: *i.e., one who leads or encourages*

* Wherefore . . . reprove: *i.e., therefore, since I am now the officer in charge of this ship, I hereby denounce my own previous failings*

Howbeit, I know my words shall such grieve
 As themselves knoweth faulty and culpable;
 But if they be wroth, take they me by the sleeve,
 For they shall bear the hood and I will [bear or hold] the bauble.
 But first (ye students that are of mind unstable,
 Ye wasters [*i.e., spendthrifts*] and getters* by night in field or town),
 Within my navy would I set you to a cable*
 If I not feared lest ye yourself would drown.

* getters: *i.e., begetters of children?*

* cable: *i.e., strong, thick rope to which a ship's anchor is fastened*

Also, I fear lest my ship should sink for sin

If that Cupido and Venus' servitors [*i.e., servants; lovers*])

On the unsure sea my ship entered within

Or all the fools promoted to honors.

I none receive can of high progenitors [*i.e., ancestors*];*

My ship is not dressed for them convenient[ly];

And, too, I fear lest their cruel rigors [*i.e., chills*]

Should raise to my ship some tempest or torment.*

* progenitors: *Anderson (2: 871) notes that Barclay's precise meaning here is unclear*

* Also . . . torment: *the sense of this stanza seems to be that Barclay is disinclined to permit too many lovers (the servants of Venus and Cupid) to come on board, since the chills caused by their infatuations might stir up storms that would capsize the ship*

The Envoy of Barclay to the Fools.

Fie, students! Cleanse your minds of this crime!

Give once your hearts to perfect diligence.

How long in idleness will ye lose your time,
 In pride and riot, [along] with all other offense?
 Alas, what profit get ye by negligence
 But [to] spend your goods in all iniquity?
 And, where your friends think ye labor for science [*i.e., knowledge*],
 Ye lose your time, bringing them to poverty.*

* bringing them to poverty: *i.e., because the friends donate their money to fund the education of the irresponsible students*

Leave off such study as is unprofitable
 (Without fruit outhur [*i.e., or*] godly discipline)*
 And give your minds to sciences laudable
 Where ye may your hearts set and incline
 To Aristotle's or Plato's doctrine
 And not alway[s] on logic or sophistry.
 I will not say but it is a thing divine
 And [of] much worth to know philosophy.

* Without . . . discipline: *i.e., without either reward spiritual discipline*