

# HOLY MAIDENHOOD.

[MODEERNIZED.]

Text of the dis-     Audi filia et vide et inclina aurem tuam et obliviscere  
course.     populum tuum et domum patris tui. David þe psalmist  
Psalm xlv. 11. þus speaks in þe psalter to þe spouse of God, þat is, each  
                  maiden þat has maidens manners; and he saið: "Hear  
                  me, daughter, behold, and bend þine ear, and forget þy  
What each word    people and þy faþers house." Take notice what each  
means.            word here separately signifies. "Hear me, daughter," he  
Why he calls the    says. He calls her daughter, in order þat she may under-  
maiden daughter. stand þat he is teaching her affectionately þe love of a  
                  better life, as a faþer should his daughter, and þat she may  
                  þe more cheerfully listen to him as a faþer. Hear me,  
                  precious daughter, þat is to say, diligently listen to me wið  
                  þe ears of þine head; "and behold," þat is, open þe eyes of  
                  þine heart to understand. "And bend þine ear," þat is,  
                  be buxom or obedient to my instruction. She may answer  
She asks why he    and say, What is þis lore þat þou admonishest so deeply,  
is so earnest.     and teachest me so earnestly? Lo, þis, "Forget þy people  
                  and þy faþers house." David calls þe assembly wiþin þee  
He preaches to    of fleshly ðoughts, þy people, þat lead and draw þee wið  
edification,       þeir prickings of fleshly corruptions to carnal lusts, and  
                  entice þee to marriage and to a husbands embraces, and  
                  make þee to ðink what a delight þere would be þerein.  
and meets sup-    How much good might grow out of þe offspring of you  
posed objections. two! Ah! false ðoughts, cease a suggestion þat defiles þy  
                  mouð; while þou settest forð all þat seems good, and  
                  concealest all þe bitter mischief þat lieð below, and all þe

great loss þat þereby arises. Forget all þis people, my precious daughter, saið David ðe prophet, þat is, cast out of þine heart all þese ðoughts. Þis is þe people of Babylon, þe army of þe devil in hell, þat is wið intent, to lead þe daughter of Sion, into þe service of þe world. Þe high tower of Jerusalem was sometime called Sion, and Sion in þe English language is as much as to say, high vision. And þis tower typifies þe elevated state of virginity, þat beholds as from on high, all widows and wedded women, boð of þem beneað it. For þese, as ðralls to þe flesh, desire þe service of þe world, and remain below on earð. But she stands ðrough her exalted life in þe high tower of Jerusalem, not below on earð, but from þe high tower in heaven. Þis is typified hereby. From þat Sion she looks down on all þe world below her, and by þe life of angels, þe heavenly one, þat she leads, þough in þe body she dwell on earð, she is, as it were, in Sion, þe high tower in heaven, free beyond þem all from all worldly vexations. Ah! þe people of Babylon þat I named just now, þe host of þe devil in hell, þat is, lusts of þe flesh and eggings on of þe fiend, ever war and warp towards þis tower for to cast it adown, and draw into servitude þe maiden þat stands so high þerein, and hence is called daughter of Sion. And is she not really cast down and drawn into servitude, þat of so very high a place, of so great dignity and such honour, as it is to be Gods spouse, Jesu Christs bride, leman of þe lord, before whom all kings bow, lady of all þe world, as he is Lord; like him in reverence, immaculate as he is, and as þe blessed maiden his precious moðer is; like his holy angels, þat observe his behests; so mistress of herself þat she need ðink nought of any oðer ðing but of her leman, wið true love to please him; for he will care for her, he þat hað taken heed of all þat she wants, while she rightly loved him wið true faið. Is not, as I said, she þen sorely cast down and drawn into servitude, þat from so high elevation\* and so happy a freedom, shall descend so low into a man's service, as þat she shall have noðing as mistress of herself, and barter away the heavenly

Hepreaches with zeal.

He edifies.

Sion a high tower.

Maidens in more bliss than widows and wedded.

Babylon.

A nun has Jesus for bridegroom.

Marriage a thraldom.

If she marries  
she loses her free-  
dom and high  
dignity.

lord for a man of clay, and lessen her ladyship, as much as her second husband is of less value and hað less possessions þan her former one had; and instead of being Gods bride and his lady daughter (for boð togeþer she is), shall become a servant under a man, and his ðrall, to do all and suffer all þat he pleases, go it howsoever hard wið her; and instead of such blessed security as she was in, and still might be under Gods guardianship, he shall put her to drudgery to manage house and hinds, and to so many troubles, to care for so many ðings, to endure vexations and anger and shame near every hour, to endure so many woes, for hire so poor as þe world ever pays at þe end. Is not þis to be verily cast down? Is not þis enough slavery in place of þe frolic freedom she had while she was Sions daughter? And yet herein is mingled no mention of þe heavenly losses, þat wiðout comparison pass all oðers. Surely so goes it. Serve God, and all ðings

She must serve  
God alone.

shall turn for þe to good. Betake þyself to him truly, and þou shalt be free from all worldly vexations, nor may any evil harm þee; for, as St. Paul says, all ðings turn to good for þe good, nor can anyðing be wanting to þee þat honourest him þat ruleð all ðings wiðin þy breast. And such sweetness shalt þou find in his love and in his service, and have so much enjoyment þereof and liking in þine heart, þat þou wilt be unwilling to change þe state þou livest in, to be a crowned queen. So gracious is our Lord, who is not willing þat his chosen ones be wiðout þeir reward here. For þere is so much comfort in his grace; þat all þat þey see, suits þem well; and þough to anoðer man it may seem þat þey suffer hardships, it grieveð þem not, but seemeð to þem soft, and þey have more delight þerein þan any oðers have in þe satisfactions of þe world. Þis our Lord giveð þem as an earnest of þe eternal reward þat shall come afterwards. Þus Gods friends have all þe enjoyment of þis world, which þey have forsaken, in a wonderful manner, and heaven in þe end.

Joy in God.

Now then, on þe oðer side, betake þyself to þe world, and þou shalt find þat, in all cases, þe more þou hast, þe more þou shalt give in exchange; and, since þou wouldest not serve God, serve this fickle and frail world; and so þou shalt be oppressed under it, as its ðrall in a ðousand ways; to have in place of one satisfaction two disgusts, and to be so often made wretched by a worðless man, þat þou liest

Vexations in mar-  
riage.

under, for nought or noþing, þat þou shalt loafe þy life, and repent þy condition, þat ever þou putttest þyself into such a servitude for a worldly joy which þou expectedst to secure, and (in reality) hast found þerein sorrow and misery rife. And þat which þou supposedst to be gold is turned to brass, and it is not at all such as þy people, of whom I spake above, promised thou shouldst find. Now þou seest þat þey have tricked þee as traitors; for under a shew of happiness, instead of joy þou hast often hell here, and except þou snatch þyself away, mayst expect þe future hell. Ask þese queens, þese rich countesses, þese saucy ladies, about þeir mode of life. Truly, truly, if þey rightly beþink þemselves and acknowledge the truþ, I shall have þem for witnesses þat þey are licking honey off þorns. Þey buy all þe sweetness wiþ two proportions of bitter, and furþer on in þis writing þat shall be openly shewn. It is by no means all gold þat glitters in þat station, þough no man knows but þemselves what often pains þem. When it is þus wiþ þe rich, what ðinkest þou of þe poor, þat are indifferently dowered and ill provided for, as almost all gentlewomen now are in þe world, þat have not wherewiþ to buy þemselves a bridegroom of þeir own rank, and give þemselves into servitude to a man of low esteem wiþ all þat þey have? Wellaway! Jesu! what unworþy chaffer! Well were it for þem, were þey on þe day of þeir bridal borne to be buried! Þerefore, seely maiden, forget þy people, as David biddeþ. Do away þe ðoughts þat prick þy heart ðrough carnal lusts, and teach þee and edge þee on toward a suchlike servitude for fleshly filþinesses; forget also þy faðers house, as David afterwards admonishes. Þy faðer he calleþ þe impure deed þat begat þee of þy moðer; idem illud carnis incendium; ardentem istum pruritum carnalis concupiscentiæ, qui opus istud odiosum præcessit, commercium istud ferinum, copulam istam impudicam, sordes istius facti putidi atque pravi. It is however in wedlock some ways to be tolerated, as men shall by and bye hear. If þou askest why God created such a ðing to be, I answer þee: God created it never such; but Adam and Eve turned it to be such by þeir sin, and marred our nature; þat is, it is þe house of immorality, and has

Ask rich ladies of their manner of life.

Undowered maidens not easily married.

He insists on his text.

Too gross and false for weak sisters.

Ita episcopus noster, quasi Montanista hæreticus, nuptias sanctissimas vituperat. Scripture interpolated. Mentiris, episcope.

þe more harm in it. Þere is all too much lordliness and mastery þerein, in þis nature þus marred, which David þus called þy faðers house, þat is, þe lust of lechery þat ruleð þerein. Forget, and go out of it wið a hearty will, and God will, after þat will, give þee a strengð assuredly from his dear grace. Þere needs not but þat þou will and let God work. Have trust in his help. Þou shalt beseech him for noþing good, nor begin anyðing þat he will not end it. Ever await his grace, and overcome wið help of it þat same weak nature þat draweð into servitude and casteð so many into miry filð. Et concupiscet, etc. And þen will, saið David, þe king desire þy beauty; þe king of all kings will desire þee for his leman; and þen þou, seely maiden, þat art allotted to him wið þe grace of maidenhood, break not þou þat seal þat sealeð you togeðer. Retain þy name by which þou art wedded to him, nor ever quit for a lust and for a trumpery delight of a moment þat same ðing þat may never be recovered. Maidenhood is a treasure þat, if it be once lost, will never again be found. Maidenhood is þe bloom þat, if it be once foully plucked, never again sprouteð up; but þough it wiðer some time wið various ðoughts, it never may grow after þat. Maidenhood is þe star þat if it be once gone out of þe east adown to þe west, never again ariseð. Maidenhood is a grace granted þee from heaven; if ever þou put it away once, never shalt þou recóver such anoðer, for maidenhood is queen of heaven and þe faið of þe world, by which we are protected. Tis a virtue above all virtues, and to Christ þe most acceptable of all. Whence þou hast, maiden, ever preciously to guard it; for it is so high a ðing and so very dear to God, and so acceptable. Hence it is a loss þat is beyond recovery. If it is dear to God, þat is, so like himself, no wonder: for he is þe loveliest ðing, and wiðout every breach, and was ever, and is, pure beyond all ðings, and loveð purity beyond all ðings. And what is a more lovesome ðing and more to be extolled among earðly ðings þan þe virtue of maidenhood? Wiðout breach and pure, taken from himself, who makeð out of an earðly

Gods grace to subdue lust.

A spiritual bridegroom.

Lost maidenhood irrecoverable.

It sometimes loses some of its beauty by evil thoughts;

but once lost is never found.

Some transcendental doctrine.

High flying notions.

man or woman a heavenly angel, out of a lowly one an exalted one, out of a foe a friend, a help out of what harmeð. Our flesh is our foe, and debases and harmeð us as it defileð us. But if it keep itself wiðout offence, pure, it is our very good friend and help, out of true service; for in it and ðrough it þou earnest, maiden, to be equal to angels in þe high bliss of heaven, and in þe presence of God justified, in case þou ledest þeir life in þe frail flesh wiðout frailty. An angel and a maiden are equal in virtue of maidenhoods excellence, þough in blessedness þey are yet separate and divided. And þough þe maidenhood of þem be þe more blessed now, þine it demands þe more strengð to preserve, and it shall be requited wið a higher reward. Þis virtue is þe only one þat in þis mortal life sheweð in its estate of þe bliss immortal in þe blessed land, where bride takeð not bridegroom, nor bridegroom bride, and which teacheð here on earð, in its mode of life, þe lifeleading of heaven; and in þis world, which is called a land of unlikeness, maintaineð her conduct in þe likeness of þe heavenly nature, þough she be an outlaw þerefrom, and in a frame of clay and in a body of a beast, almost lives as a heavenly angel. Is not þis virtue much to be extolled by all? Þis is besides þe virtue þat holds our frail vessel, þat is our feeble flesh, as St. Paul teaches, in entire holiness. And as þe sweet unguent and expensive beyond oðers, which is yclept balm, preserves þe dead carcass which is þerewið rubbed from rotting, so doð maidenhood a maidens living flesh, maintain wiðout stain all her limbs and her senses, her sight and hearing, her taste and smelling, and every limbs feeling; so þat þey spoil not, nor melt away þrough carnal lusts in þe filð of þe flesh. So þat God hað þrough his grace granted so much love, þat þey be not like þem of whom it is written by þe profet þat þey in þeir filð rotted like boars. Þat is to say, every woman þat is her husbands slave, and liveð in filð, he and she boð. But it is not said of þese þat þey rot þerein if þey lawfully hold to þeir wedlock. But þe same sorry wretches þat, unwedded, wallow in þe same foul mire, are þe devils boars, who rides þem and spurs þem to do all þat he will. Þese wallow in mire, and rot away þerein, till þey arise þrough

Our flesh may be our friend.

A maiden as good as an angel.

Purity the only heavenly virtue.

Maidenhood is balm.

No scripture warrant to disparage wedlock.

It is libertines who do wrong.

repentance, and heal þemselves by a true shrift and by amends made. Blessed maiden ! understand in how high dignity þe virtue of maidenhood holds þee. But þe higher þou standest, þe more sorely be afraid to fall from so high a degree, as þe fall is so much þe worse. Þe spiteful devil has his eyes on þee, so high mounted up towards heaven þrough maidenhoods power, which to him is þe most odious of virtues ; for þrough our Ladys maidenhood, who began it first, þe maiden Mary, he lost þe dominion over mankind on earþ, and þus also hell was robbed of its prey, and heaven will be filled. She sees þee follow her steps ; maiden, do as she did, who offered her maidenhood first to our Lord, when he chose her among all women to be his moþer, and by her maidenhood redeem all mankind. Now þe old fiend beholdeþ þee, and seeþ þee stand in þis virtue so high, like to her, and her Son too, as an angel in heaven in maidenhoods grace ; and he swelleþ wiþ rage, and shooteþ night and day his arrows, dipt in a venomous unguent, toward þy heart, to wound þee wiþ weakness of will, and make þee to fall, as Christ forbad þee to do. And ever as þou standest stronglier against him, so out of vexation and rage he þe madlier warred ; for þe more odious it seems to him to be overcome : þat a þing so feeble as flesh is, and especially þat of women, shall overpass him. Every will of þe flesh, and every lust of lechery þat ariseþ in þy heart is þe fiends arrow. But it woundeþ not except it fasten on þee, and remain so long þat þou wish þat þy will were carried into execution. While þy intellect stands firm, and chastiseþ þy will, so þat þy lust bear þee not to what would be agreeable to þee, it harmeþ þee not, nor soileþ þy soul, for intellect is her shield, under Gods grace. While þe shield is hole, þat is, þe wisdom of þy wit, so þat it break not nor bend, þough þy fleshly will be under it false ; and do as it please, þe fiends arrows fly away again upon himself. And observe for what reason : our bodys lust is þe fiends fosterchild ; our intellect is Gods daughter, and boþ are wiþin us ; hence, þere is a conflict, and needs must be always, for þey cease never more, while here wed well, to war one wiþ oþer. But 'tis well wiþ him, who followeþ wit, God's daughter, for

The devil would cast maidens from their high state.

Mary the virgin.

The devil beholds thee with rage.

Does not like to be defeated by a woman.

Reason Gods messenger.

she holds wið maidenhood þat is her sister. But on þe oðer side, þy will, out of carnal lust, holdeð wið lechery, which is þe devils offspring, as she is, as sin is her moðer. Lechery makes war on maidenhood wið þe help of þe fleshly will, and warreð in þis wise. Her first support is sight; if þou gazest often intently upon any man, lechery anon prepares herself to make war on þy virginity, and first peers upon it face to face. Speech is her second help. If afterwards ye talk togeðer in an idle way, and speak of unprofitable matters, lechery saið, "Shew me þe grace of þy maidenhood," and draws it towards mischief, and þreatens to do it shame and harm afterwards. And she keeps her promise, for soon þe kiss comeð, þat is her ðird support; þen lechery, to shame and to disgrace, spits in maidenhoods face. Þe fourð support towards ruining maidenhood is improper handling. Guard her, þen. For if ye þen put hands in any place improperly, þen lechery smiteð on þe virtue of maidenhood, and woundeð it sore: at last it giveð þat dreary deed, þat dint of deað. Wellaway! for þat rueful work. Never doð maidenhood come alive again after þat wound. Whosoever þat should þen see how þe angels are fluttered, who see þeir sister so sorrowfully fallen, and how þe devils hop and laugh aloud, and beat þeir hands togeðer, stony were his heart if it melted not in tears. Ware þee, seely maiden. It is said þat opportunity makes þe ðief. Flee from and carefully avoid all þings of which þis irremediable loss may arise; þat is, first of all, þe place and þe time, þat might induce þee to do amiss. Against oðer immoralities men may fight standing. But against lechery, þou must turn þe back, if þou wilt overcome, and fight by retreating. And in truð if þou pinkest and lookest up towards þe great reward þat awaiteð maidenhood, þou wilt pass lightly by, and bliþely endure þe damage þat þou sufferest as regards þy fleshly will, and carnal lust, which þou restrainest here, and in a while wilt leave, for bliss þat comeð þerefrom, wiþout any ending. And what is þe bliss? Lo, God himself saið þrough þe profet, "Þey þat have cast off from þem þe lusts of þe flesh and keep my sabbað," þat is to say, keep þem resting

Lechery against reason.

The lechery of the eyes.

Of conversation.

Of kisses.

Of romping.

Then is virginity lost.

The angels disturbed, the devils dance.

Avoid opportunity.

Flee.

- from fleshly work and hold to my covenant, "I promise þem," he saið, "to give þem in my kingdom a place and a name better þan of sons and of daughters." Who could wish for more? Who can þink of þe weal, þe joy and þe bliss, þe exalted nature of þe reward, which þese same few words comprehend? "I will," he saið, "give þem a place and a name better þan of sons and of daughters." Such is his promise, and it is as þough it were promised þem to sing wið angels, whose fellows þey are, by þeir heavenly mode of life, þough as yet here þey dwell in þe flesh on earð. To sing þat sweet song and þat heavenly music, especially merry, which no saints may sing, but maidens only, in heaven: and to follow God Almighty, full of every good, whiðersoever he turneð, as þe oðers must not, þough þey all be his sons and his daughters. Nor do any of þe oðers wear crowns, nor can þeir beauty, nor can þeir vestments compare to þeirs, þe maidens, so immeasurably bright þey be, and sheen to look on. And what shall be þeir song, þeirs alone, and þeir progress after God, whiðersoever he turneð? and þeir condition so fair beyond all oðers? Understand and take heed. All þeir song in heaven is to þank God for his grace and goodness. Þe wedded þank him þat when þey would have fallen at once utterly downwards, þey fell not utterly (so) down, for wedlock preserved þem, þat same law which God hað established for þe unstrong. For well our Lord knew þat all could not maintain þemselves in þe height of þe grace of maidenhood: but he said when he spake þereof, "Not all," quoð he, "receive þis word. Whosoever can receive it, let him receive it, I counsel him," quoð he. What God commands is one þing, what he counsels is anoðer. What þings he commands þem a man must needs keep, if he will be saved, and þey are common alike to all men alive: his counsels are of high matters, and are to his dearest friends, which are vile in þis world and hard to fulfil, þough light to all who have a due love towards him and a true faið. But whosoever keepeð þese counsels, earneð a measure of heavenly reward filled overfull and running over. Such is þe counsel
- Isaiah lvi. 5.
- Dwells on the text, interpreting it of the after life.
- Turns it to maidens.
- Rev. xiv. 9.
- An insight into heaven.
- What song in heaven treats of.
- Matt. xix. 12.
- Distinction between duties of obligation and that which is more expedient.

- Maidenhood not a command, but a recommendation. of maidenhood, which God commandeð not, but counsels. Whosoever will be one of þe troop of his dearest friends, and as it were his darling, let him do his counsel and earn himself crown upon crown. So Saint Paul giveð counsel to maidens to be as he was, and saið þat it is well for þem who so can keep þemselves: nor does he order it any oðerwise. For always as aught is more precious, it is harder to preserve. And if it were commanded and yet not observed, þe breach would be deadly sin. Hence was wedlock legalised in holy church as a bed for þe sick, to sustain þe unstrong, so þat noþing can stand in þe high hill so near to heaven as þe virtue of maidenhood. Þis, þen, is þe song of þem who are in þe law of wedlock, to þank God and glorify him, for þat he at once prepared þem, when þey fell short of maidenhoods elevation, to alight in such a place þat þey were not hurt, þough þey were brought lower, and þat whatsoever in þat got hurt þey should heal wið almsdeeds. Þis, þen, þe wedded sing, þat þrough Gods goodness and mercy of his grace, þough þey have driven downwards, þey halt in wedlock and softly alight in þe bed of its law, for whosoever falleð out of the grace of maidenhood so þat þe curtained bed of wedlock hold þem not, drive down to þe earð so terribly þat þey are dashed limb from limb: boð joint and muscle. Þese shall never sing a song in heaven, but shall sing þe song of þe lamenter evermore in hell, except repentance raise þem to life, and þey heal þemselves wið true shrift and repentance, for if þey are in þe circle of þe widowed, and must in þe circle of þe widowed sing before þe wedded in heaven, þis þen is þeir song to glorify þeir lord, and þank him heartily þat his power kept þem chaste in purity, þat þey had tried þe filð of þe flesh, and þat he had granted þem in þis world to amend þeir sins. Sweet are þese songs. But þe maidens song is altogether unlike þese, being common to þem wið angels. Music beyond all music in heaven. In þeir circle is God himself; and his dear moðer, þe precious maiden, is hidden in þat blessed company of gleaming maidens: nor may any but þey dance and sing, for þat is ever þeir song, to þank God and glorify him þat he gave þem so much grace from himself, þat for him þey renounced every earðly
- 1 Cor. vii. 26.
- Wedlock lawful for the weak.
- Wedlock less spiritual than maidenhood.
- Song of praise by the wedded.
- Fornicators.
- Song of the widowed.
- Song of the maidens.

man and kept þemselves clean ever from carnal defilements in body and in breast: and instead of a man of clay took þe lord of life, þe king of þe high bliss, whence he sheweð þem grace before all oðers, as þe bridegroom doð his wedded spouse. Þis song none but þey may sing. All, as I before said, follow our Lord, and yet none entirely so: for in þe grace of maidenhood and in its virtue, none may follow him, nor þe blessed maiden, þe lady of angels, and grace of maidens, but maidens only. And hence is þeir attire so bright and sheen beyond all oðers, þat þey always go next to God whiðersoever he turneð. And þey all are crowned and rewarded in heaven wið champions crowns. But maidens have beyond þat which is common to all alike, a diadem shining sheener þan þe sun. Aureola it is called in þe Latin language. It is not for human speech to tell of þe like of þe flowers þat are drawn þereon, nor of þe gemstones þerein. So many privileges shew full plainly who are þe maidens, and separate þem from the oðers wið so many graces, world wiðout end. Of þese þree sorts, maidenhood and widowhood; and þirdly, wedlockhood, þou mayst know by þe degrees of þeir bliss, which and by how much it surpasses þe oðers. For wedlock has its fruit þirtyfold in heaven, widowhood sixtyfold; maidenhood wið a hundredfold overpasses boð. Consider, þen, hereby, who-soever from her maidenhood descendeð into wedlock, by how many degrees she falleð downward. She is a hundred degrees elevated towards heaven, while she holds to maidenhood, as þe reward proveð, and she leapeð into wedlock þat is downward to þe þirtieð over þree twenties and yet more by ten ( $60+10=70$ ). Is not þat a big leap downward at one turn? And yet it must be endured. And God hað made it low, as I before said, lest any one should leap: and þen at once be not what belongs to him, and should dive down headlong, wiðout regard, deep into hell. Of such as þese we are not to speak, for þey be scratched out of þe book of life in heaven. But observe more exactly, as we before bad, what þe wedded suffer, þat þou mayst know þereby how merry þou mayst live, a maiden

Maidens follow  
Christ in heaven.  
Rev. xiv. 4.

Maidens aureole.

Maidenhood re-  
warded a hun-  
dredfold.

Wedlock lower in  
grace.

Sorrows of wed-  
lock.

in þy maidenhood, beyond what þey live, in addition to þe mirð and grace in heaven which mouð cannot name. Now þou art wedded and from so high estate alighted so low: from being in likeness of angels, from being Jesus Christs leman, from being a lady in heaven (fallen) into þe filð of þe flesh, into þe manner of life of a beast [Bona verba, katafryx], into þe ðralldom of a man, and into þe sorrows of þe world. Yea now! what fruit has it and for what purpose chiefly is it? All for þat, or partly for þat. Be now well assured, to cool þy lust wið filð of þi body, to have delight of þy fleshly will from mans intercourse, before God it is a nauseous þing to ðink þereon, and to speak þereof is yet more nauseous. Consider, þen, of what sort is þat same þing and þat deed to be done. All þat foul delight is in filð ended, (in a moment,) as þou turnest þine hand. But þat loaðsome beast remains and lasts on; and þe disgust at it long after. If it be illegitimate it haunteð (þe doers) in an inward hell; for þat temporary pleasure þere is an endless pain except þey abandon it and bitterly atone for it on earð under direction of þeir confessor, unless þey scorn to do what þey ðink wrong and ill to hear of. For when it is such, and by far more loaðsome þan any well-conditioned mouð for shame may tell of, what makeð it loved among beastly men, except þeir great immorality which beareð þem as beasts to all þat pleases þem, as þough þey had not in þem any wit nor power of distinguishing þe two, good and evil, as a man hað, nor what is comely and uncomely, any more þan beasts have, wið þeir dumb mouðs. Yea, even less þan beasts, for þese do þeir natural bidding wiðout wit, þough þey be restrained to one time of þe year. Many of þem keep to one mate, and after loss of þat will take to no oþer. And man þat should have wit and do all þat he doð according to its direction, followeð þat filð at every time: and takes one after anoþer, and what is worse, many togeder. See how þis immorality brings þee to þe level, not only of witless beasts dumb and brokenbacked (*prone*), bent towards þe earð; þee þat art in intellect created in þe image of God, and erected boð body and head towards heaven; because þou shouldest raise þy heart towards þat place where þine heritage is;— take notice how þis immorality makeð þee not only an

Its thralldóm.

Why submit?

Delight of carnality momentary.

If unlawful, punished in hell.

Compares men and women to beasts.

Carnality degrades.

The animal nature of the flesh. equal and like to þem, beasts, but doð much more odiously, and what is more to be guarded against, þee, þat misshapest þyself, wilfully and purposely, into þeir nature; þat forfeitest so high a destiny, þe virtue and fitness of maidenhoods grace, for so foul a filð as was above exposed. Who-soever, from being an angel, alighteð to become lower þan a beast, for recompense so loaðsome, see how þey speed. Nay, þou wilt say, as for þat filð, it is nought, but a mans vigour is worð much, and I need his help for maintenance and food; of a womans and mans commerce worldly weal arises, and a progeny of fair children þat must give joy to þeir parents. Now þus hast þou said, and ðinkest þat þou sayest sooð. But I will shew þat þis is all made smooð wiþ falsehood. But first of all, now, whatsoever weal or win come out of it, it is all too dear bought, for which þou soilest þyself and surrenderest þine own dear body to be so given up to ill usage, and dealt wiþ so shamefully, wiþ so irrecoverable a loss as þe grace of maidenhood is; and made prolific also for worldly profit. Wo worð þat barter, to give away for any temporary weal maidenhood, which is queen of heaven, since as of þis loss þere is no recovery, so every value is valueless in comparison of it. Þou sayest þat a wife hað much comfort of her husband, when þey are well consorted, and each is well content wiþ þe oþer. Yea. But tis rarely seen on earð. Be it, however, so: wherein is þeir comfort and delight for þe most part but in þe filð of þe flesh or worldly vanity, which turns all to sorrow and care in þe end. Not only in þe end, but ever and anon; for many þings shall anger and vex þem, and make þem careful and sorry, and sigh for each oþers ills. Many þings shall separate and divide þem which annoy loving persons: and þe dint of deað at þe end sever one from þe oþer. So it cannot but be þat þat vigour must end in misery, and þe greater was þeir satisfaction togeðer þe sorer is þe sorrow at parting. Wherefore woe is þem, since, as St. Austin saið, as to what is tied wiþ excess of affection to any earðly object, the delight is bought for ever wiþ a double dole of bitterness, and a false joy wiþ many a sore pain. But well is she þat loveð God: for she can never

Carnal pleasures make one "lower than a beast."

She argues for the prudence of a match.

He replies by strong language.

Loss of virginity irreparable.

Happiness of wedlock denied.

Married folk have differences.

St. Austin on earthly joys.

lose him any wise, except she play false to him and quit his love. But she will find him ever sweeter and more savoury from age to age, for ever and ever.

Opposes himself to the prudential argument.

Thou spakest above of a mans help towards subsistence and food. See now! little needst þou care about þine own living, a meek maiden as þou art and his dear leman who is lord of all þings, nor doubt but he is easily able and gladly will find þee abundantly all þat þou hast need of. And þough þou hadst want, or sufferedst any distress for

Christ tries his spouses love.

his precious love, as oþer women do for a mans, for þy welfare he permits it to try wheðer þou be true, and he is preparing þy reward, many times greater, in heaven. Under a man's protection þou shalt be sore vexed for his and þe worlds love, which are boð deceptive, and must lie awake in many a care not only for þyself as Gods spouse must, but for many oþers, and often as well for þe detested as þe

Worries of house-wives.

dear; and be more worried þan any drudge in þe house, or any hired hind, and take þine own share often wiþ misery, and bitterly purchase it. Little do blessed spouses of God know of þee here, þat in so sweet ease wiþout such trouble

Spouses of Christ have leisure for spiritual ease.

in spiritual grace and in rest of heart love þe true love, and in his only service lead þeir life. Tis well enough wiþ þem here and far different elsewhere. All þe worlds weal is rife enough for þem. Þey have of it all þat þey much desire. Whatsoever God sees will be of advantage to þem. Nor may any worldly mishap bereave þem of þeir weal, for þey are rich and wealðy wiþin in þe heart. All þe delicacy and all þe ease is on earð as þe oþer þings of earð, godless and impaired (have þeir possessors never so much of þese external worldly advantages), for þey are always alarmed about losing þem, and yet itch after much more:

Wealth is hard to keep, and causes anxiety.

þey gain it wið grief, þey watch over it wið fear, þey quit it wið sorrow. Þey toil to acquire it, þey acquire to lose it, þey lose it to sorrow over it. Þus it is þe worlds wheel þat whirleð þem about. Þieves steal it from þem. Rievers rob it from þem. Þeir superior lords punish and enrage þem. Þe moð fretteð þe cloþes, and plague slayeð þe cattle, and þough none of þese þings make weal to perish, whenever þere is much, þe more þere is, þe more is þat which wasteð it. And I know not why men say

þat þey rule it at all, who, will þey nill þey, guard it for so many oþers, not merely for þeir friends, but for þeir thorough foes, and who can have no more of it, þough þey have sworn it, but þeir own share only. Þis is now stated because of what þou saidst above, þat of þe union of man and wife would arise riches and worldly weal: þat þou understand how little it profiteð þem even here, in þis world, besides þat it robs þem of þe high kingdom of heaven, unless amidst þeir wealð þey be poor wið holiness of heart. Þus, woman, if þou hast a husband to þy mind and enjoyment, also, of worldly weal, must needs happen to þe. And what if it happen, as þe wont is, þat þou have neiþer þy will wið him, nor weal eiþer, and must groan wiðout goods wiðin waste walls, and in want of bread must breed þy row of bairns; and still furþer, viro quem summo odio habes, succumbere, who, þough þou hadst all wealð, will turn it to sorrow; for, suppose now, þat power and plenty were rife wið þee, and þy wide walls were proud and well supplied, and suppose þou hadst many under þee, herdsmen in hall, and þy husband were wrað wið þee, and should become hateful, so þat each of you two shall be exasperated against þe oðer, what worldly good can be acceptable to þee? When he is out, þou shalt have against his return sorrow, care, and dread. While he is at home, þy wide walls seem too narrow for þee; his looking on þee makes þee aghast; his loaðsome voice and his rude grumbling fill þee wið horror. He chideð and jaweð þee, and he insults þee shamefully; he makeð mock at þee, as a lecher wið his hore; he beateð þee and mawleð þee as his bought thrall and patrimonial slave. Þy bones ake, and þy flesh smarteð, þy heart wiðin þee swelleð of sore rage, and þy face externally burneð wið vexation. Qualis denique erit conventus vester in lectulo? Illi autem, qui summo amore inter se diligunt, sæpe in hac re se abinent, quod tamen mane surgentes dissimulant; atque non raro multi, homines nauci, nunquam invicem inter se amant, tam acerbe alter alteram vexat, et alterum altera. Illa autem nolens, quod vult vir, tolerabit, idque sæpius multa repugnans. Eius omnes impuritates atque ludos indecoros, quantumvis cum spurcitia excogitatos, in lectulo nempe,

A rich man is rich for others, and only takes a small share to himself.

Suppose thyself poor.

A husband not loved spoils all enjoyment of wealth.

Husband and wife on ill terms described.

Concubitus no delight then.

Schemata.

- nolens volens perferet. May Christ shield every maiden  
 from inquiring or wishing to know what þese be ; for þey  
 þat try þem most, find þem most odious, and hate what þey  
 haunt, and call þose happy who know not what all þis  
 means. But whosoever lieð in foul pools, deep sunken,  
 pough he be conscious he is badly off, never shall recover  
 himself when he would. Look around, seely maiden, if  
 þe knot of wedlock be once knotted, let þe man be a  
 dump or a cripple, be he whatever he may be, þou must  
 keep to him. If þou art fair, and wið fair cheer fairly  
 salutest all, in no wise shalt þou protect þyself against  
 depreciation and evil blame. If þou art of no great  
 esteem and illtempered, þou mayest boð to oðers and to  
 þy husband become of still less esteem. If þou become of  
 small esteem to him and he of as little to þee, or if þou  
 love him much and he regards þee little, it will grieve þee  
 so strongly þat, quick enough, þou wilt, as many cursed  
 women have done, make poison, and give him a dose of  
 deað in place of remedy. Or whosoever will not act so,  
 may deal wið witches, and to draw his love towards her,  
 will forsake Christ and Christianity, and þe true faið.  
 Now what bliss can þis woman enjoy, who loveð her  
 husband well, and hað his detestation, or who conquers  
 his love in such a manner as þat? When should I have  
 told of all þe ill þat springeð up between þem þat are þus  
 associated? If she cannot breed, she is called gelt. Her  
 lord loveð her less and respects her less, and she as one  
 þat is very bad, weepeð at her fate, and calleð þem glad  
 and happy þat breed a family. But now suppose it all  
 happen þat she have her wish of offspring, as she pleases,  
 and þen let us see what amount of joy arises þerefrom.  
 In concipiendo caro eius sordibus istis inquinatur, as was  
 before shewn. In the gestation is heaviness and hard pain  
 every hour ; in þe actual birð is of all pangs þe strongest,  
 and occasionally deað ; in þe nourishing þe child, many a  
 miserable moment. As soon as it appears in þis life, it  
 bringeð wið it more care þan joy, namely, to its moðer ;  
 for if it is a misshapen birð, as often happens, and if it  
 wants any of its limbs, or if somewhat be amiss, it is a  
 sorrow to her, and a shame to all its kindred, a reproach in  
 an evil mouð, a talk among all men. If it is wellshapen
- A filthy subject.
- No escape from a once wedded husband.
- Then hatred is so strong that women resort to poison,
- or to witches.
- A barren woman called gelt.
- Objections to breeding a family.
- The trouble the child gives.
- Of a misshapen child.

Anxiety about  
losing a child.

A husband is to  
be shunned.

A text (Romans  
vi. 18) against  
fornication, ap-  
plied, by this  
ranter, to mar-  
riage.

Troubles of ges-  
tation.

Painful descrip-  
tion of maternal  
distresses.

Matri longa de-  
cem tulerunt  
fastidia menses.

Travailing in  
childbirth.

and seemeð likely to live, a fear of þe loss of it is instantly born along wið it, for she is never wiþout fear lest it go wrong, till one or oþer of þe two lose þe oðer. And often it occurs þat þe child most loved and most bitterly purchased, sorrows most and disturbs his parents at last. Now what joy hað þe moþer? She hað from þe misshapen child sad care and shame, boð, and for þe ðriving one, fear, till she lose it for good, þough it never would have been in being for þe love of God nor for þe hope of heaven nor for þe dread of hell. Woman! þou oughtest to have shunned þis pain beyond all ðings, for þe welldoing of þy flesh, for þe love of þine own person, for þe healð of þy body, for as S. Paul saið, every sin þat a man doð is wiðout þe body, but þis one. All oþer sins are noðing but sins, but þis is a sin and besides denaturalises þee and dishonoureð þy body. It soileð þy soul, and makeð it guilty before God, and, moreover, defileð þy flesh. It is guilty in two respects: it makeð wrað þe omnipotent wið þat sooty sin, and þou dost wrong to þyself, þat þou so shamelessly treatest þyself. Now let us proceed. Consider we what joy ariseð from gestation of children, when þe offspring in þee quickeneð and groweð. How many miseries immediately wake up þerewið, and work þee woe enough, fight at þine own flesh, and wið many sorrows make war upon þine own nature. Þy ruddy face shall turn lean and grow green as grass. Þine eyes shall be dusky, and under þem be spots, and by þe giddiness of þy brain þy head shall ake sorely. Wiðin þy belly þe uterus shall swell and strut out like a water bag; þy bowels shall have pains, and þere shall be stitches in þy flank, and pain rife in þy loins, heaviness in every limb. Þy breasts shall be a burðen on þy paps, and þe milk in drops which trickle out of þem. All þy beauty is overðrown wið a wiðering. Þy mouð is bitter, and rolls over all þat þou chewest, and wið disgust accepts whatever meat it can; þat is, wið want of appetite, ðrows it up again. Wið al þy pleasure, and þy husbands joy þou art perishing. Ah! wretch, þe anxiety about þy suffering pain depriveð þee of þe nights sleep. When it comeð to þat at last, þere is þe sore sorrowful anguish, þe strong piercing pang, þe comfortless ill, þe pain upon pain, þe miserable wail. While þou art in trouble þerewið, in

- Office of the mid-  
 wife. Inficete  
 episcopo!
- Why he calls up  
 these topics.
- Child squalls.
- Wants caudle.
- His mother  
 anxious about  
 his life.
- I. Corint. vii. 28.
- These arguments  
 irrefragable.
- Maidens do not  
 anticipate all  
 these troubles.
- Housewifely  
 anxieties.
- þe dint of deað, shame þere is to increase þat sorrow; wið  
 þe old wives indelicate skill, who know of þat untoward case.  
 Consider whose help þou must have, be it never so unbe-  
 coming. Þey must needs know all þat herein occurs. Yet  
 let it not seem amiss to þee þat we so speak; for we reproach  
 not women wið þeir sufferings, which þe moðers of us all  
 endured at our own birðs; but we exhibit þem to warn  
 maidens, þat þey be þe less inclined to such ðings, and  
 guard þemselves by a better consideration of what is to be  
 done. After all þis þere comeð from þe child þus born a  
 wanting and a weeping, þat must about midnight make þee  
 to waken, or her þat holds þy place, for whom þou must  
 care. And what are þe oþer nasty offices and matters about  
 þe bosom? to swaddle and to feed þe child for so many un-  
 happy moments. And consider his late growing up and  
 his slow ðriving, and þat þou must even have an anxiety in  
 looking for þe time when þe child will perish, and bring on  
 his moðer sorrow upon sorrow. Þough þou be rich, and  
 have a nurse, þou must, as a moðer, care for all þat to þe  
 nurse belongeð to be done. Þese and oðer miseries which  
 wedlock awakeneð S. Paul comprehendeð in one group of  
 words: þey þat be of þat sort shall suffer tribulation. Who-  
 soever ðinkeð of all þis, and of more þat þere is unmen-  
 tioned, and will not scorn þe deed from which it all ariseð,  
 she is harder hearted than stone of adamant; and more  
 mad, if þat can be, þan madness itself. She is her own  
 foe and her own enemy, and hateð herself. Little knoweð  
 a maiden of all þis same trouble of wives' woe, in her rela-  
 tion to her husband; nor of þeir work so nauseous þat þey  
 in common work; nor of þe pain, nor of þe foul incidents  
 in þe gestation and parturition of a child; nor of a nurses  
 watches, nor of her sad trials in þe feeding and fostering:  
 how much she must at once put into its mouð, neiþer too  
 much nor too little; þough þis be to speak of ðings not of  
 any importance, þough þey display still furþer in what  
 slavery wives be, þat must endure þe like, and in what  
 freedom maidens be, þat are free from þem all. And what  
 if I ask besides, þat it may seem odious, how þe wife stands,  
 þat heareð when she comeð in her child scream, sees þe cat  
 at þe fitch, and þe hound at þe hide; her cake is burning on  
 þe stone hearð, and her calf is sucking (all þe milk up), þe

All this is to  
alarm the maid-  
ens.

earðen pot is running into þe fire, and þe churl is scolding. Þough it be an odious tale, it ought, maiden, to deter þee more strongly from marriage, for it seems not easy to her þat trieð it. Þe seely maiden þat hað fully removed herself out of þat servitude as free daughter of God, and his Sone spouse, need not suffer any ðing of þe like. Wherefore, seely maiden, forsake all such sorrow for þe meed reserved þee, as þou oughtest to do wiðout any fee. Now I have kept my promise above: þat I would show it to be wið falsehood glozed over, what many one saið and ðinkeð it true—of þe happiness and sweetness which þe wedded have; þat it fareð not so, as þose ween who look from þe outside; but it goes quite oðerwise, wið poor and wið rich, wið þose who loafe and þose who love one anoðer; þat þe vexation in every case exceeds þe joy, and þe loss, beyond all, passes þe gain.

He sums up much  
to the disadvan-  
tage of wedlock.  
Ad scalas Gemi-  
nias!

Text of David re-  
peated.

Now, þen, seely maiden, whom David calleð daughter, hear þy faðer, and hearken to his advice, which in þe beginning of þis writing he gave:—Forget þy people þat lieð to þee about þe joy of a husband and of þe world; þy people, þat is to say, þi ðoughts, þat deceitfully lead þee toward all vexation, and forsake þy faðers house, as was before explained, and betake þee to him truly. Wið him þou shalt enjoy, as wið þy wedded husband, world wiðout end, heavenly joys. Blessed is þe spouse of Him, whose maidenhood is untouched, quando ille super illa gignit, illa autem ea illo parit absque labore et sine dolore. Happy is þe husband when none can be a maiden except she love him, nor free except she serve him; whose offspring is immortal, and whose morrow gift is þe kingdom of heaven.

Transcendental  
mysticism.

Exhorts to such  
a mystical hus-  
band;

Now, þen, seely maiden, if it is lief to þee, take him for þy lord, þat ruleð all þat is, and was, and ever shall be; for þough he be richest, he alone beyond all, þe poorest of all þat chooseð him for a husband is acceptable to him. If þou wishest for a husband þat hað much beauty, take him at whose beauty þe sun and þe moon are astonished, to look upon whose countenance þe angels are never satiated, for when he giveð fairness to all þat is fair in heaven and in earð, much more he hað, wiðout all conjecture, retained for himself; and þough he is þus fairest of all ðings, he

whom he extols.

receiveð bliðely, and embraceð openly, þe loapliest of all, and makeð þem seven times sheener þan þe sun. If offspring be desirable to þee, take þyself to him, under whom þou shalt in þy maidenhood bring forð daughters and sons of spiritual teamings, þat never can die, but shall ever before þee play in heaven; þat is to say, þe virtues þat he begetteð in þee by his sweet grace, such as righteousness, and being wary against improprieties; moderation, and temperance, and spiritual strengð to wiðstand þe devil and against sin; simplicity of manner, and affability and tranquillity, endurance and sympathy for every mans sorrow, joy in þe Holy Ghost, and in þe breast peace from envy and wrað, from covetousness and every immoral error; meekness and mildness, and sweetness of heart, þat belongeð of all ðings best to maidenhoods virtues. Such is þe offspring of maidenhood, þe spouse of þe Son of God, þat shall for ever live and play wiðout end before her in heaven. But, maiden, þough þou be intact of body, and have pride, spite, or wrað, covetousness, or wicked will, wiðin in þy heart, þou dost fornication wið þe evil one of hell, and he begetteð on þee þe offspring þat þou bearest. When þy husband, þe Almighty, to whom þou hast wedded þyself, seeð and understandeð þis, þat his enemy lieð wið þee, and þat þou breedest of him an offspring to him most loaðsome, he despiseð þee at once, as is no wonder, and surrenders þee fully to him of whom þou breedest, nor does he keep wið any man, and least of all wið his foeman, any half measures. Whosoever loveð aught but him, or any ðing except for his sake, she enrages him much. Above all ðings know þat þou breedest pride by þe devils begetting, for of all vices þat one is his eldest daughter. Þat first sprang from him while he was yet in heaven, nearly of þe same age; and so it cast its faðer, as soon as it was born, from þe highest heaven into þe abyss of hell wiðout recovery, and made out of an archangel a most odious devil. Þe daughter þat þus dashed her heavenly faðer down, what will she do wið her earðly moðer, þat breedeð her in horedom of þe loaðsome being, þe devil of hell? When God so vengefully doomed his archangel þat begat her in heaven,

Have for offspring the virtues of the soul,

and these shall sport before thee in heaven.

But, the depravities of the heart are misbegotten children, born of fornication with the devil.

God tolerates no such unfaithfulness.

Pride is the devils eldest daughter, and if thou art its mother, what mayst thou expect?

what will he do wið þe woman of clay, meat for worms, who of þe devil breedeð her on earð? If wið maidenhood þou hast meekness and mildness, God is in þy heart. But if in it is presumption or any pride, he is an outlaw from it, for þese must no wise bed in one breast, þey must not dwell togeðer in heaven. Þence God cast pride as soon as it was born, and as it knew not which way it came þiðerward, it can never more find its way þiðer. But dwelling here on earð, she promises as a dwelling place all her moðers—yea, moðers, þough maidens—to her accursed faðer in inmost hell. Be on guard, maiden, against her. She arose of a pure race, þe angels equals, and in purest breasts she breedeð yet. Þe best she has beguiled, and well she may hope to be victor over man, since she once overcame an angel. She is not in cloþes, nor outwardly, in particoloured dress, þough þis be a mark and a proof of her presence at oðer times; but under white, or under black, and likewise under gray, and under green and dark gray, she hideð in þe heart. As soon as þou accountest þyself better þan anoðer, for whatsoever cause, and hast contempt of any, and hast uncourteous and contemptuous ðoughts, of aught that it is said, the oþer doð take pride in, þou marrest þy maidenhood and breakest þy wedlock towards God, and breedest by his foe. Hold not þou cheap, þough þou be a maiden, þe widow nor þe wedded, for as a carbuncle is better þan a jacinet in þe average of each sort, and yet a bright jacinet is better þan a pale carbuncle; so a maiden, as regards þe grace of maidenhood, overpasseð þe widowed and þe wedded; and yet a mild wife or a meek widow is better þan a proud maiden: for þese by reason of þeir sins and þat þey follow þe filð of þe flesh, bow þemselves down as low and vile, and are sore afraid of Gods awful anger; and as þe humble sinner, Mary Magdalene, wið bitter weeping, þey lament þeir guilt, and most inwardly love God, as she did, for þeir forgiveness; and þe one sort, þat keep þemselves wiðout guilt and pure, are as secure, live lustless and lukewarm in Gods love, wiðout any heat from þe Holy Ghost, which burneð so light, wiðout a wasting combustion in all his chosen; while þe oðers, in a heat of a moment,

Pride and God cannot dwell together.

Pride is born of a high lineage.

She is found under a monastic habits.

Compare not thyself with others.

Look not down on wedded women.

Penitents better than proud.

are more melted and liquefied into good, þan þe first in þeir lukewarmness all þeir lifetime. Wherefore, blessed maiden, spouse of þe Son of God, be not þou too confident in þy maidenhood only wiðout oðer good and moral virtues, and especially mildness and meekness of heart, after þe example of þat maiden blessed beyond all oðers, Mary, þe moðer of God. For when þe archangel Gabriel greeted her, and brought her þe tidings of Christs conception, observe how low she let herself be when she answered þus of herself: "Behold, þe ðrall of þe Lord; according to þy word," said she, "may it be to me." And þough she were full of all good manners, she only said of her meekness and sang to Elizabeð, "For now my Lord hað regarded þe low estate of his hand maiden. All people," said she, "shall call me blessed." Take heed, maiden, and understand hereby, þat more for her meekness þan for her maidenhood, she believed she experienced such grace from our Lord.

To all maidenhood meekness is worð much, and maidenhood wiðout it is vile and worð noðing; for a maiden in her maidenhood wiðout meekness is just like oil in a lamp wiðout light. Blessed spouse of God! have þis same virtue, þat þou seem not darksome, but shine as þe sun in þy husband's sight. Vary þy maidenhood wið all good manners, which seem to him fair. Have ever in þine heart þe most blessed of maidens and moðer of maidenhood, and ever beseech her to enlighten þee and give þee love and strengþ to follow in maidenhood her excellencies. Þink of St. Kaðarine, St. Margaret, St. Agnes, St. Juliana, St. Lucy, St. Cecilia, and of þe oðer holy maidens in heaven; how þey not only refused kings sons and earls wið all worldly wealð and earðly joys, but endured strong pains raper þan accept þem and a sorrowful deað at last. Þink how well þey are off now, and how þey revel now in Gods arms as queens of heaven. And if it ever happens þat þy bodys lust, ðrough þe false fiend, leadeð þee towards carnal filð, answer þy ðoughts þus: "Þou makest no progress, deceiver! Such will I be in a maidens life as is an angel in heaven. I will keep myself intact ðrough þe grace of God, as nature me made, þat þe joys of paradise may receive me; such as were, before þey sinned, its first cultiva-

Be not overconfident in thy maidenhood.

Luke i. 38.

Luke i. 48.

Meekness indispensable.

Think of Mary and the virgin saints,

and of their constancy.

Combat the flesh with arguments and resolution.

tors. Altogether, such I will be as is my dear leman, my precious Lord, and as is þat blessed maiden, þat he chose to himself for moðer. Such will I keep myself, truly unpolluted, since I am to him wedded. Nor will I for a lust of a little while, þough it seems a delight, cast away þat ðing, þe loss of which I should repent wiðout recovery, and pay for in hell wið every burning. Þou wretched wight! all for nought þou provokest me to commit sin, and forego þe bliss upon bliss, þe crown upon crown of a maidens reward; and hast a wish and a will to cast me as a wretch into þy pit of punishment; þat instead of þe song of angels out of maidenhoods grace, greet and groan ever wið þe and wið þine in þe eternal horror of hell." If þou þus answerest to þy bodys lust and to þe fiends attempts, he shall flee from þee wið shame. And if he still after þis, soon enough, come to þee and continue to irritate þy flesh and prick þy heart, þy Lord God permitteð þis to enlarge þy reward; for, as St. Paul saið, none is crowned except who-soever fights stoutly in þat fight, and wið strong combating overcomeð her flesh; for þen is þe devil, wið his own guile, shamefully overðrown. When þou, as þe apostle saið, shalt not be crowned, except þou be assailed, for God will crown þee; he will permit þe evil one to assail þee þat þence þou mayst earn crown upon crown. Hence it is of most benefit to þee þat when he grieveð þee most, and wið temptations warreð more madly upon þee, if þou hidest þyself well under Gods wings: for by þis war he prepareð þee in spite of his teeð, þe bliss and þe crown of Christs chosen ones. And may Jesu Christ grant þee ðrough his blessed name, and all þem þat quit þe love of man of clay, to be his leman, and grant þat þey so retain þeir hearts wið *him*, þat neiþer þe promptings of þeir flesh, nor temptations of þe fiend, nor any of his earðly imps, daze þeir hearts wit, nor twist þem out of þe way, on which þey have entered: and may He help þem so in Him to hasten to heaven, till þey be thiðer mounted, as þeir bridal shall be, into all þat ever blissful is, to sit wiðout end, wið þe blessed bridegroom, from whom all happiness is derived.

Amen.

Resolve to remain a maiden,

as if the alternative were hell.

1 Corinth. ix. 25.

Hide thyself in God.

Champions or confessors crown according to B.

He prays his exhortations may avail.