

Wives, Widows and Wimples **Theme 9: Punishing sin**

Document 1

WLC/LM/4, f. 74v: Robert of Gretham, 'Mirur', lines 2925-2947 (composed c.1250, Anglo-Norman)

Transcription by Kathryn Summerwill. Translation by Theresa Tyers

E ne redudent deu ne gent.
D unc deit lur char estre forsmise
D e comune de sainte eglise.
K e par lur male compaignie.
N e seit la bone gent hunie.
E tant deiuent dehors gisir.
D eskil se uoillent repentir.
D unc deuient il al prestre uenir.
L ur pecche e lur estre mustir.
K **ar** repentance uent par de.
D unt li pecchez est pardune.
M ais sachez li pecchez recoure.
K i al prestre ne de descoure
E tut seit li mals pardune.
S i deit li hom estre pene.
P ur ses grant mesfaiz remenbrer.
E pur en auant chastier.
K **ar** chascun serreit des laez.
S il ne fust unkes chastiez.
E chastiez ne poet nuls estre.
F ors par le conseil de sun prestre.
L i prestres nel poet conseilier.
S i il de quei nel uolt mustrer.

When one is not afraid of God nor man,
then their bodies will be put outside of
the community of the holy church so that
their wicked company will not defile the
good men. And they will be placed
outside of the church until such time that
they wish to repent. They must then
come before the priest to lay bare their
sins and their lives. For repentance comes
from God, by which sins are forgiven. But
know that sins will be regained if all is not
recounted to the priest. All sins may be
forgiven if the man is punished, and by
such punishment for his great misdeeds
he will remember his wrongdoing and for
having been chastised. For if not
chastised, each would be overcome if he
is never admonished, and no-one can be
reformed except by the advice of the
priest, and they [the priests] cannot give
guidance about anything that he [the
sinner] is not willing to set out before the
priest.

Document 2

WLC/LM/4, f. 8r: William of Waddington, 'Le Manuel des Péchés' (composed c.1220-1240, Anglo-Norman)

Transcription and translation by Theresa Tyers

Q uatre diables tost ueneient.
E une roe ardante porteient.
S ur la teste la dame le mistrent.
E ies**ques** a cendres le astrent
A ltre fee est uiue releuee\$
S a dame . co lui ad semblee.
M ais les diables la roe ardent.
S ur lui mettent maintenant.
E en poudre lastrent altre fee.
L i hom ki fu la mene.
T ant aueit hudur e pite.
P lus grant nout puis ke fu nee.
T reis fee li astrent co lui sembla.
A llas la peine kele mena.
M ais ele tuz iurs releuait.
K **ar** en peine murir ne poait.
L a reisun apres lui ad cunte.

Suddenly there in the field to which she
had brought him [a grievously ill man
mentioned in previous lines] from his sick
bed, four devils appeared carrying a
burning wheel. They placed this wheel
upon the Lady's head and she was
immediately burnt to the point where
nothing remained of her but ashes. She
was quickly resurrected, but once again
they placed the wheel upon her head and
yet again she was burnt to ashes. The
man that she had brought there to watch
the scene of her suffering was filled with
horror and pity greater than since the day
he was born. This act of burning was
repeated three times.

A lhome ki la fu mene.
P ur quoy ele esteit si pene.
D e la roe ardante enflame.
C este peine dist ele que luis ueez.
P ur co suffre io bien le sachez.
P ur geluse atiffement.
D e ma teste numeement.
K ar pur estre reguarde.
E de bealte plus prisee.
Q uant io ueneie entre gent.
M atiffai trop cointement.

[The author now places a stress on the woman's suffering and plight:] 'Alas, the suffering that it had brought'.

[The Lady then explains to the man why she had had to suffer:] 'The suffering you see is the result of my own actions. Namely, my wish to be looked upon and praised by others for my beauty, having adorned myself so skilfully'.

Document 3

AN/PN 352/20: Penance of Margery Billage of Car Colston for fornication with William Sommer (1591, English) Transcription and translation by Kathryn Summerwill

A declaracion to bee made by Margerie Billage of the parish of Carcolston

The said Margerie shalbee **presente** in the church of Carcolston **of** at morninge prayer upon the xxijth daie of May 1591 and havinge a white sheete aboute her and a white rod in her hande bareheaded s barefooted barelegged shall kneele in the sight of the congregation till the gospell bee redde and then standinge on some forme or deske before the pulpit shall say after the minister as followeth viz./

Good people wheras I not havinge the feare of god before my eyes nor regardinge my soules health have **committed**the filthie synn of fornication with **William** Sommer to the greate displeasure of almightie god the daunger of my soule and evill example of others I am nowe come hither to knowledge my falte and am right hartilie sorie for the same, besechinge god and yow all whome I have ther by offended not onelie to forgeue mee and to take example by my punishmente to leade a chaste and a godlie lief: but also to ioyne with mee in hartie prayer to the throne of the almightie for the assistance of his holie spirite that

A declaration to be made by Margery Billage of the parish of Car Colston.

The said Margery shall be present in the church of Car Colston at morning prayer upon the 23rd day of May 1591, and having a white sheet about her and a white rod in her hand, bareheaded, barefooted, barelegged, shall kneel in the sight of the congregation until the gospel has been read, and then standing on some form or desk before the pulpit shall say after the minister as follows, that is to say:

Good people. Whereas I, not having the fear of God before my eyes, nor regarding my soul's health, have committed the filthy sin of fornication [sex outside marriage] with William Sommer to the great displeasure of Almighty God, the danger of my soul, and evil example [to] others, I have now come here to acknowledge my fault and am right heartily sorry for the same, beseeching God and you all whom I have thereby offended not only to forgive me and to take example by my punishment to lead a chaste and a godly life, but also to join with me in hearty prayer to the throne of the Almighty for the assistance of his holy spirit, that I [shall] never fall into the like [sin] again. Saying as our saviour Christ has taught, that is to say:

Our Father which art in Heaven etc.

I never fall into the
like againe sayinge as our sauour Christe
hath taughte us:
Our Father which arte in heauen
etcetera

Shee is to do the like penance in Screaton
church on trinitie
sondaie next And in Carcolston church in
sondaie sennixt
followinge.

Hoc **vestrum** mandatum Executum est
per predictam Margartam Billage
[Se]cundum formam et
Effectum **presentium**
[In c]uius Rei testimonium Nomen meum
[present]ibus Apposui **per** me Robertum
Winter

Concordat **cum** decreto **Johanum** Martiall
Vestrum mandatum executum est
in **predictam** Margartam Billage
Secundum Formam et effectum
presentium in cuius rei testimonium
nomen meum **presentibus** Apposui
per me **Johanum** Cantrell

[In the hand of John Martiall, Deputy
Registrar of the Archdeaconry of
Nottingham]:
She is to do the like penance in Screveton
church on Trinity Sunday next, and in Car
Colston church a week on Sunday
following.
This agrees with the decree. [Signed]
John Martiall

[In the hand of Robert Winter, vicar of
Car Colston from 1570 to 1614]:
This your mandate was executed by the
aforesaid Margaret Billage according to
the form and effect of these presents. In
witness of which I have placed my name
to these presents. By me Robert Winter.

[In the hand of John Cantrell, parson of
Screveton from 1572, resigned in 1601]:
Your mandate was executed as above by
Margaret Billage, according to the form
and effect of these presents, in witness of
which I have placed my name to these
presents. By me John Cantrell.

Document 4

**Medical Chir. Society Over.X WZ250.D46 DIS: Extracts from John Disney, A
view of ancient laws against immorality and profaneness ... (Cambridge :
Corn. Crownfield, 1729)**

Printed item in English, no transcription or translation available

Document 5

**WLC/LM/8, f. 86r: John Gower, 'Confessio Amantis', Book 4, lines 3619-3638
(composed c.1393, English)
Transcription and translation by Pamela Doohan**

She wepeþ she criep she swoneþ oft
She casteþ hir yhen vp alofte
And seide a monge full pitously
O god þou wotest it am I
For whom Yphis is þus beseine
Ordeigne so . þat men may seine
A þousand winter efter þis
How such a maide did a mys
And as I did do to me
For I ne didd no pite
To hym which for my loue is lore
Do no pite to me þefore
And wit þis worde she fell to grounde
A swonne **and** þer she lay a stounde

She (Araxarathen) wept, she cried, she
swooned often. She cast her eyes
upwards and said very sorrowfully and
continually, 'Oh god, you know it is I for
whom Iphis was so troubled. Arrange it
so that men may see for a thousand
winters after this how such a maiden as I
did wrong, and as I did, do to me.
Therefore, because I did not undergo
grief for him (Iphis), who is lost because
of my love, do not show me any mercy.'
And with these words she fell to the
ground in a swoon, and there she lay for
a moment. The gods who heard her

þe goddesse which hir pleintez herde
And se how woefully she ferde
Hir lif þei toke a weie anon
And shopen hir in to a stone
After þe forme of hir ymage
Of body boþ **and** of visage

complaint and saw how woefully she
behaved took her life away immediately.
They transformed her into stone, a replica
of the shape in her image, of both her
face and her body.