Confessio Amantis (The Lover’s Confession) is a Middle English poem, completed by John Gower in the year 1390. It is a dialogue between Amans (‘the Lover’) and Genius (a priest of the goddess Venus) in which the former confesses that he is guilty of each of the seven deadly sins, and the latter explains how each transgression is offensive to the ideal of love. After getting through six of the seven sins, Amans declares that he is too fatigued to go on and asks that Genius teach him something instead. What follows is Book 7, a very long monologue in which Genius summarizes the entirety of human wisdom, breaking it down into Theory (knowledge of the physical and metaphysical world), Rhetoric (reason and communication), and Practice (virtuous conduct). This is framed as an expansion of what Aristotle taught to his most famous pupil, Alexander the Great. Aristotle (or simply ‘the Philosopher’) was greatly revered in medieval Europe; the dominant philosophy of the age (‘Scholasticism’) was largely concerned with synthesizing his and Christian teachings. Book 7 is Gower’s attempt to prove his worth to the Richard II (the King of England), who commissioned Confessio Amantis; it crosses over into the popular ‘mirrors for princes’ genre, which seeks to educate rulers in the behavior proper to their station. The section on Practice is largely concerned with convincing a presumably royal audience to behave wisely and virtuously even though they are beholden to no (earthly) power. In making his case Gower alludes to ethical (‘reason is the source of virtue’) and political (‘rulers are indebted to their subjects’) ideas that, while not exactly new, would become very important in the coming centuries.

Medievalists like to say that Middle English writing is easily intelligible to contemporary readers. This is a bit generous; most words are cognates of their modern equivalents, but the effort required to decipher each line often makes it hard to focus on the content itself. For example, here is the original version of lines 1299 and 1300:

And undertake hath thilke empreſe/ To Alifeandre in his empreſe

And my version:

who undertook the task/ of instructing Alexander

This project is probably best considered a companion to the original. I wanted to help myself read what Gower had to say, and to that end this ‘translation’ is intended to communicate meaning rather than to create a Modern English poem. I feel somewhat justified in this because Gower himself was not first-rate poet. While he was beloved in his day, contemporary opinion has him as a distant runner-up to his good friend Geoffrey Chaucer. Book 7 is particularly unloved, and indeed it is in parts superficial, boring, and formulaic. Gower tosses in some variation of “as the old books say” or “so I have read” literally dozens of times, often to save an imperiled rhyme. On the other hand, there is rhetorical intent behind Gower’s directness, and some of his passages are movingly great.
In its original language, *Confessio Amantis* is written in octosyllabic rhyming couplets; I found it too difficult to preserve this style while still making it intelligible, so I dropped it. Also, I have added modern punctuation and formatting to improve readability. Also, I have rearranged a few lines where it was impossible to make the original order grammatical. Also, I can’t read Latin, so I have not included the Latin marginalia. The Latin poems introducing each subsection are retained untranslated, but I have included a summary of the gist of each. Obviously, I don’t really know what I’m doing.

Be aware that this work contains graphic depictions of violence, including sexual assault.

[Resources Used]

- *Confessio Amantis (Bell and Daldy)*
- *Confessio Amantis (University of Rochester Middle English Texts Series)*
- *The Middle English Compendium (University of Michigan)*
- *The Mediaeval Sciences in the Works of John Gower*
- *Wiktionary*
[Introduction]

Omnibus in causis sapiens doctrina salutem
Consequitur, nec habet quis nisi doctus opem.
Naturam superat doctrina, viro quod et ortus
Ingenii docilis non dedit, ipsa dabit.
Non ita discretus hominum per climata regnat,
Quin, magis vt sapiat, indiget ipse scole.

(Even the wisest man needs teaching.)

GENIUS:

1 I am Genius, the priest of love.
2 My son, since you have begged
3 I shall describe to you the School
4 of Aristotle and the education
5 of Alexander, how he was taught.
6 Truly I am somewhat concerned,
7 for this has nothing to do
8 with love, of which you came
9 to confess, and so I do Venus wrong.
10 But nonetheless, it is good
11 for your education
12 to hear of such wisdom
13 while we pass the time.
14 As best I can, I shall inform.
15 After all, wisdom is always
16 the most valuable thing to know,
17 both in love and otherwise.
18 Therefore my son,
19 though it is the doctrine
20 of Callisthenes, not Venus,
21 what Aristotle once taught
22 to Alexander, I shall teach you.
23 But since the teachings are so diverse,
24 I think we must begin with
25 the nature of Philosophy,
26 of which Aristotle was
27 the master and the expert;
28 he determined that all learning
29 comprised three points.
30 The first science
31 is Theory, which is grounded
32 on God, the foundation of the world.
33 Theory comprehends all teachings.
Looking further,
the second science
is Rhetoric, whose purpose
above all is eloquence,
to speak more persuasively
than any other.
The last science of the three
is Practice, whose place
is to separate virtue from vice,
and teach this good lesson:
flee the company of scoundrels.
Practice is at the disposal
of Man’s free will.
Practice also tells
how a good king should rule
his realm both in war and peace.
Thus Professor Aristotle
divided the three sciences
and laid out
the purpose of each.
The first, which contains
and watches over the others
is the most important
and so is chief of Philosophy;
I shall teach it
just as the Philosopher did.
Now listen, and make sure you remember…

[Theory]

Prima creatorem dat scire sciencia summum:
Qui caput agnoscit, sufficit illud ei.
Plura viros quandoque iuuat nescire, set illud
Quod videt expediens, sobrius ille sapiat.
(Only the fundamentals are essential, details come later.)

Theory’s principles
were determined
by the Philosopher;
he was enlightened and
full of wisdom and high prudence
above all other scholars.
He divided Theory in three,
the first part of which is called Philosophy (the science of Theology), another is named Physics, and the third is Mathematics.

[Theology]

Theology is that science which teaches men of incorporeal things. By it men know the high almighty Trinity, which is God in unity without end or beginning, the creator of all things, of Heaven, of Earth, and also of Hell. As old books tell, the Philosopher’s reason lead him to conclude (and so his writings say) that God was ‘the uncaused cause’, that which is good in and of itself and without which there is no goodness, that which gives everything its being and its nature. As for the nature of things there are three forms of beings: the things which began and shall end (those are called temporal), on the other hand are things which began and shall not die, spiritual things like souls (those are perpetual beings). But there is one above the Sun, who has no beginning and shall be endless forever; that is God, whose majesty all other things shall govern (He is the eternal being). To God all honor belongs, He is the creator, and all others are His creatures.
God commands obedience from all things; without Him, there is no power, all power is His. God always was and always shall be, all things are begun by his approval; all times are the present to God, and all unknown things are known to Him. Both angels and men (the chiefs of all created things) must be obedient to God's might, and stand upright forever. Knowing this, the scholars of divinity preach to the people and teach the faith of the holy Church. Sometimes faith stands more upon belief than what can be proved by logical arguments; nonetheless it is credible, and a great good to any man who wishes to save himself. Theology is full of high learning and high wisdom and stands above all others as the first branch of Theory.

[Physics]

Physics is the second part; the Philosopher invented it to teach knowledge of the natural things: of Man, of beast, of herb, of stone, of fish, of bird, and everything that has material substance. Their natures and their properties are taught by this science (alongside whether they are useful or not).
The third point of Theory, which is called Mathematics, is divided in many parts and requires a diverse education. The first part is Arithmetic, the second is Music, the third is Geometry, and the fourth is Astronomy.

Arithmetic’s purpose is to teach what is the solution to a calculation when a wise man computes using the formal properties of an algorithm’s A,B,Cs. How to multiply, and how to divide, and how to add is the purpose of this art and of this science.

The second part of Mathematics, is the science of Music, which teaches composition and the creation of melodies by voice and sound of instrument through notes and harmonies. Thus a man can play aloft some sharp notes and some soft, some high notes and some low, in all the scales that he may know (which describe the beat and arrangement of notes).

Mathematical learning has yet a third component full of wisdom and of scholarship called Geometry. Through this a man understands lengths, and breadths, and depths, and heights and knows their proportions by various calculations. In this way the wise philosophers of old, measured the whole Earth round, found the size and thickness of the ground,
and determined by observation
the circle and the circumference
of everything up to the heavens.
They set their points and measured level.
Mathematics (above the Earth)
has yet a forth science
called Astronomy
which teaches of the high stars,
beginning upward from the Moon.
But first, as was necessary,
Aristotle taught some other things
to the worthy young Alexander:
every kind of element
found under the Firmament,
their properties and how they are made.
From point to point he began to explain...

[Matter]

Quatuor omnipotens elementa creauit origo,
Quatuor et venti partibus ora dabat.
Nostraque quadruplici complexio sorte creatur.
Corpore sicque suo stat variatus homo.
(The Universe is arranged in fours.)

Before the creation
of any world,
of Heaven, of Earth, or of Hell,
the old books tell that
(as noise before the song is set)
all matter was knit together.
This was the great supply
under God’s command,
that great substance, that great matter,
from which He would
create all other things.
For as of yet formless
was that universal matter,
which was called Ylem.
Of Ylem, I have learned,
the elements were made and formed
and these elements are also named
in the School of Aristotle.
Now allow me to explain,
there are now four different elements…

[The Four Elements]

The first element men call earth,
which is the lowest of them all.
Its form is shaped round;
it is substantial, strong, steadfast, and sound
(as it needs to be
to hold up all the rest).
As a compass unerringly
points a single way, so too
earth is set and shall abide.
It shall not swerve to either side
for its center is fixed,
and to that center
every worldly thing would fall
if it was able.

Above the earth
comes water, which is the second
element, and all covers
the earth all around.
But as we know,
this subtle water is still powerful;
though it seems soft,
it often pierces through the strong earth.
As veins are full of blood
in men, likewise water flows
within the earth and carves channels
through the hills and plains.
It is plain to see
that even in the highest hills
many flowing springs may be found.
This proves that, by its nature,
water sits higher than the land.

Now understand that even higher
is air, the third element,
which gives breath
to every last creature
which lives upon the earth.
Just as the fish, if it dries,
must for lack of water die,
without the air
no man nor beast of flesh and bone
may ever thrive.
There are no exceptions.
In three layers
air is divided up:
one on the bottom, one in the middle
and the third above.
Within these divisions
there are many variations
of moisture and of dryness;
through both of these the Sun
is dragged up,
and makes clouds in the sky,
as can be seen
both day and night
and all through the year.
Many things fall from these
down to us here upon the earth.
Air’s first layer
can create mists and
dews and hoarfrosts
depending on the conditions
in which they form.
From the second, as books say,
the moist drops of rain
descend to Middle Earth,
readying the seeds and ground
to spring forth grass and flowers.
Oftentimes, as these great showers
descend from their birthplace,
they forsake the form
of rain and instead turn to snow,
and besides this
some places up above
make the rain turn to hail.
The third layer of the air
contains the heights where
dryness is often drawn up
among the high clouds
and is unable to escape.
There it is blown about so strongly
that it generates fire and lightning,
which breaks through all the clouds,
and the great noise of this crack
makes the fearful thunder.
The thunderstroke falls before the lightning,
and yet men see the fire and lightning
before they ever hear the thunder.
This goes to show
that when perceiving far off things
a man’s eye quicker to see
than his ear is to hear.
Nonetheless there is great danger
from both the noise and the fire,
and there is no saving
the spot where they strike,
except by the grace of God.

Even higher still
is the part of the air
where what appears to be fire
is often seen at night.
Sometimes it looks like a dragon
(and the commoners believe it to be so)
and sometimes it seems
just like a shooting star
but it is neither of these
according to the Philosopher.
He says that
various kinds of vapors
are the cause and the substance
of those many appearances
of fire, despite their many names.
These also explain the meteors
which are found all over
when they have fallen to the ground
having been annealed by fire
just like baked clay.
The same vapors
can kindle the same kind of fire
but in another form
which (if you can believe it)
looks just like
(so say the old scholars)
a skipping goat,
and for this appearance
it is called *capra saliens*.

Another astronomical fire which by night can be seen is called *eges*, and it burns like the electric fire that runs up a cord (as you have seen) when it is covered with powders of sulfur and other substances.

There is another fire visible to men which seems at night as though there flies a burning dragon in the sky, and it is properly named *daaly*, and when it is seen men say, “Look! it is the fire drake flying up in the air!” for so they believe.

But why these fires are seen in so many different forms the wise Philosopher told, as you have just heard.

So, my son, now you know all the properties of air and all the ways it may appear, and how under the heavens it is the third element, surrounding both the water and the land.

But beyond this is the fourth of the elements, the realm of fire which surrounds the other three and is without moisture, all dry.

But hear now what scholars say: upon the four elements the Creator set and laid the types and the humors of all the nations of men.

There are four different elements, and therefore among men there are four humors and no more.

The Philosopher teaches of them too.
Since he leaves nothing behind
he teaches all their properties,
and I shall rehearse them to you...

[The Four Humors]

He who shaped all of Nature
(the mighty God),
has given his creature, Man,
a nature divided into parts
that do not cooperate
and cause discord with each other;
this is why we fall ill
and have not an hour of certainty.

From earth, which is cold and dry,
the humor melancholy
comes, and it is the first,
the most unhealthy and the worst;
for it undoes love’s work by night
and takes away both will and might.
No wonder then
when the healthy love is lost.
A man with this humor,
is full of imagination,
of dreads, and of wrathful thoughts,
and he frets himself all to naught.

The water, which is moist and cold,
makes phlegm, which makes one
forgetful, slow, and wearisome
of everything which must be done.
This kind is capable
of loving,
but lacks the needed appetite,
to desire such delight.

The man who resembles air,
he shall be lively, he shall be fair,
for his humor is blood.
Of all humors there is none so good,
for it grants both will and might
to please and pay love its due;
if he undertakes to love
he shall not forsake it.
429 The qualities of fire
430 imbue the humor
431 of hot choler,
432 whose properties are dryness and heat.
433 It makes a man cunning
434 and swift of foot and irate.
435 Conflict and foolhardiness
436 are his business,
437 and he thinks little of love.
438 Though he may vow by day,
439 at night when he must deliver
440 he will not pay his debt.

[The Human Body]
441 Each element
442 has a corresponding man
443 according to his humors,
444 but their properties
445 (dry and moist and chill and heat)
446 each have their own place
447 designated within each man.
448 First of all,
449 melancholy is assigned
450 the spleen for his housing.
451 The moist, cold phlegm
452 has been given a proper place
453 in the lungs,
454 and dwells there as required.
455 To the humor of blood
456 wise Nature has given
457 a proper house in the liver
458 for his dwelling.
459 The dry choler with his heat
460 is properly seated
461 in the gallbladder, and there he dwells
462 (or so the Philosopher says).
463 Now know this,
464 the physicians write that
465 the liver, the lungs, the gallbladder, the spleen,
466 all these are servants to the heart
467 and each in its own way
468 attempts to aid him;
he is their chief and lord.

The liver makes him love,
the lungs gift him with speech,
the gallbladder helps him fight,
and the spleen lets him laugh and play
(so long as he is not diseased).

Each has its own purpose
and to sustain and feed them
when their work is over
Nature has created
a common cook, the stomach
(so say the old books).
The stomach cooks for the body
and prepares food for them all;
they are only mighty servants of
the heart if they do not starve.
Just as a king in his empire
is lord and sire above all others,
so is the heart in command;
he alone knows Reason
and is able to govern.
Nature’s prudence
suited Man to live on Earth,
but God, who loves the soul,
formed it for a different purpose
which no man can plainly tell.
But the scholars tell us that
God made the soul like Himself,
and through this similarity
the soul has many excellences
appropriate to her own kind.
Often though, her wits are blinded
for this single reason:
she must share her home
with the body which she fights.
One of them desires Hell,
and the other Heaven;
the two will never agree,
but if the flesh is overcome
then the soul becomes a holy
ruler (which rarely happens
while the flesh can still bewilder).

God made all earthly things
[The World]

Regardless of its subject,
a tale is liked much
better if it is told plainly;
thus I think to change themes
and tell you plainly
of the earth (which earlier
I mentioned) and of the water too.
The old scholars spoke of this
and properly set the bounds
which form the map of the world.
The dry ground is divided
into three parts,
Asia, Africa, and Europe,
and these are covered by heavens
which (as far as any ground stretches)
grip the World all around.
During the Great Punishment
water was let out of its basin
to flood over the high hills;
it killed every creature
that stood upon Middle Earth
except Noah and his family;
his three sons and three daughters
were all safe, and so was he.
The sons’ names are known to the wise:
Sem, Cam, and Japhet the brethren were called,
and when the almighty hand
withdrawn the water from the land
and made it all drain away
so the earth was fit for men again
these three sons
decided amongst themselves
to begin dividing up the World.

Asia, which lays towards the Sun
in the East,
was granted by common assent
to Sem, who was the eldest son;
for that part was the best,
and twice as large as the other two.
It was bounded thusly:

where the river Nile
departs from its course and falls
into the sea near Alexandria,
there is Asia’s border
in the West (along with
where the Tanais River
runs into the Mediterranean);
from there to the edge of the world
eastwards is entirely Asia
until you come to the gates
of Paradise, and there must stop.
To put it shortly:
the East in general
is all contained within the bounds of Asia.
And in the
West it was then decided
that the brother Cham
would take Africa for his part.
Japhet took Europe,
and thus they divided the world in three.
Yet there are many other lands,
which people have forsaken
(in the West because of the cold,
in the East because of the heat)
and left as deserted wasteland
since it is not habitable.
The waters also have many divisions
which are defined by the nearby lands.
Waters take the name of the land
whose shore they touch;
but the sea which has no boundaries
is called the Great Ocean,
all the waters and then some.
There is not one little spring,
which does not begin in the Ocean,
and the water on which men live
by natural law comes
out of the sea and eventually returns
as the books say.

All the properties of the elements
and their arrangements
I have told. Now you have heard,
my good son, all the matter
of earth, of water, air, and fire.
But since you say that you desire
to receive every part
Aristotle’s teaching,
know that his wisdom names
yet another element
above the four; it is the fifth
of high God’s gifts
and it surrounds the globe.
Of this element he says
that as the unbroken shell
surrounds and encloses
the contents of an egg,
so too this sphere holds
the elements and everything else
which I have spoken of one by one.

But keep listening
my son, for I will proceed
to speak of Mathematics,
which is grounded on Theory.
I think I will explain
the science of Astronomy,
without which, to be honest,
all other sciences are in vain
since they deal with earthly things.
As an eagle with his wings
flies above all that men know
so is Astronomy to its fellows.
All things down here on Earth,
all of their matter
(as the learned men tell us)
is controlled by things above,
which is to say the planets.
The cold and the heat
and the chances of the world
(which we call fortune
among the nations of men),
everything is in the horoscope,
how some men have good fortune,
and some men feel only distress
in love as well as other things.
The fate of realms and of kings
in time of peace, in time of war
it is determined by the stars:
thus say the scientists
who call themselves astronomers.
But the theologians say otherwise:
that if men were good and wise
and pleasing to God
they would not need to fear the stars.
For a fortunate man
means no more than any other
to Him the ruler of everything.
But yet the original laws
which He has set in Nature
must affect all creatures
without any exceptions
(unless there is a miracle
through the prayers of some holy man).
And therefore I will continue
to speak of Astronomy;
the learned scholars
tell of all the planets,
some of this I will explain,
and you, my son, will listen.
Astronomy is the science of wisdom and great skill which teaches knowledge of the stars in the Firmament; the appearance, the circle, and the movement of each of them in its own place, and the spaces between them, and how they move or stand still, all this it teaches.

Alongside Astronomy is its partner Astrology which determines the effect of every star and how they cause many wonders in the world below. To speak more plainly, the old philosophers say that the sphere I mentioned earlier is what we on Earth behold and call the Firmament. In it stand all the stars among which are the seven principal planets visible to our sight in the sky.

There are also twelve signs which they have their places in their own orbit they comprise the Zodiac.

For each of these bodies there is a larger or a smaller orbit made according to the proportions of the Earth, which is set as the foundation to hold up the Firmament. And by Astronomy men know that the lower the body, the smaller the orbit, which is why some pass overhead more quickly than others.

But now, dear brother, since you desire to learn what I have found written in the books,
I will tell of the seven planets,
how they stand in the heavens
and in what orbit.
Take heed, for I will begin
just as the Philosopher taught
Alexander and improved him
until he was fully educated
in the wisdom which he was given.

[Beneath all others is the Moon,]
which controls the seas.
High floods and low tides
are caused by its changes
and every single fish
lives in his governance
and waxes and wanes along with
the Moon (as a man may see)
and all that lives upon the ground
has its moisture governed likewise.
All the stars that men can see
shine with their own light
except for the Moon,
which is itself not bright,
but takes its light from the Sun.
And yet he does not always have
this light, for he is sometimes dark.
As for the obstacle of that light,
in *Almagest* Ptolemy says this:
the Moon’s orbit is so low,
that the Sun in his place
cannot see his full face,
since he is shadowed by the ground,
therefore the Moon is sometimes faded
and may not fully shine.
Men born under the Moon’s power
move from place to place
and see many strange lands.
This condition
of the Moon’s influence
is set upon the land of Germany
and also upon Britain
(which is now called England),
for those folk travel in every land.

The second planet
(which orbits above the Moon)
is Mercury, and his nature is
that a man born under his sign
in books shall be studious
and in writing curious,
but he shall be slow and unwilling to work
at things which might benefit him.
He shall love ease, he shall love rest,
and so is he not the worthiest,
but yet in some business
his heart will be set upon wealth.
And as for this condition,
the effect and disposition
of this planet are seen
most often in Burgundy and France.

After Mercury
stands that planet which men call
Venus, whose constellation
governs the nation of lovers,
whether they succeed or not
(and to which I trust you belong).
But whichever way things go,
this planet will triumph in the end
as it has done over many others,
some in happiness, some in woe.
Nevertheless, this planet
is most often soft and sweet,
a man born under its sign
shall desire joy and mirth,
and be refined, courteous, and debonair,
and speak words both soft and fair.
Such shall be his nature,
and wherever he finds
the satisfaction of love, his heart shall bow
and he shall woo with all his might.
He shall be so very amorous
that he shall not see the evil
that comes with love; the law
shall not restrain
one born under the venereal sign.

Because of her nature
Venus is called the goddess of love,
but also of wantonness;
the climate of her lechery
is most common in Lombardy.

Beyond the planet of love
the bright Sun stands above,
which is the enemy of the night
and bringer of daylight.
He is the World’s eye;
by him the lively company
of birds sing in the morning,
the fresh flowers spread and spring,
the high tree shades the ground,
and every man’s heart is gladdened.
He is the greatest of the planets;
how he sits in his seat,
and of his riches and his nobility,
these books tell, and thus they say…

Of glistening gold the spokes and wheels
of the Sun’s chariot are made;
in it he sits crowned
with bright gemstones all around,
which I will describe in detail.
There are, first of all,
three stones in the front of his crown
that are unknown to us
who live on Earth: the first is
called *lychnis*
and the other two are called
*astrites* and *ceraunius*.
And in the back
the old books say that
there are three worthy stones
each set in their place
upon the crown:
a quartz is one,
the second is a diamond,
the third is noble and beautiful,
and called *hydatis*.
And besides these
upon the crown’s sides
(according to the scholar)
there sit five more stones:
emerald is one,
along with jasper and heliotrope,
and agate and jacinth.
Thus the crown is bejeweled,
and shines all the better.
Thus spreading his light
and sitting with the diadem on his head
the Sun shines from his chariot.
To lead him swiftly
through all the bright day,
he and his chariot are drawn
by four horses,
the names of which I will tell.
The first is Erythreus,
who is red and shines with heat,
the second is Actaeon the bright,
Lampros is the third courser’s name,
and Philogeus is the fourth
that brings light unto this Earth.
They go so swiftly through the heavens
that in only twenty four hours
the chariot of the bright Sun
has completed its high orbit
for they have drawn and overrun
all of Middle Earth in in their haste.
And thus the Sun is
the emperor of the planets,
with three above and three beneath.
Between them he reigns
from the middle orbit
of the seven, and his face
gladdens all earthly creatures
and naturally grants them
ease and health.
His constellation
makes those born under it
good willed and generous
whatever the situation,
and makes them high in the graces
of the lords who they serve,
earning them great profits and thanks.

And besides that, the sign also causes
a man to be skilled at
working in gold, and to be wise
in everything that has value.

But to say where
on all this Earth he reigns the most,
it is in Greece, the land of wisdom,
where his sign is most prevalent.

Mars, the planet of war,
stands above the glorious Sun
and works his wonders
upon the fortunes of battles.
The conquerors of ancient days
were followers of this planet.

He whose birth
gives him the properties
of a martial disposition
by way of Mars’ constellation
shall be fierce and foolhardy
and shall desire war and strife.

And to tell
what region is most commonly
influenced by this planet,
it is said that Mars’ sign
is cast upon the Holy Land,
so that there can be no lasting peace.

Above Mars in the heavens
the sixth planet of the seven
is Jupiter the delicate,
which brings peace and not debate.

For this planet
(the softest and sweetest of all)
temps all that belongs to him.
Those taken by this planet
as part of his regiment
shall be meek and patient
and fortunate in commerce
and lovers of delicacy
in everything they do.
Jupiter is also the cause
of the science of light work,
and for this reason the scholars say
that he is the planet of delight.
In Egypt his powers
reign especially strong;
for they have extraordinary love
for all that this life has to offer;
there is no stormy weather there
which might trouble men or beasts,
and the land is so wonderful
that it is completely fruitful
with no uncultivated ground;
over such happiness
rules Jupiter.

Highest and above all others
stands that planet which men call
Saturn, whose nature
is cold, and whose sign
causes malice and cruelty
to he whose birth
sets him under it.
All his works are damaging,
his the enemy of men’s health
in everything he does.
His region is the East,
which is the most violent.

All the planets and how
they stand within the sky,
from point to point
Alexander was made to learn.
But beyond this there was more knowledge,
and more things were taught
in his school;
now hear this wisdom...

[The Zodiac]
He who separated day from night
made one dark and the other light,
made a week from seven days,
and from four weeks made a month,
He with His laws arranged
the twelve months
into the long year.
His power set
(in order to match the seven days)
seven planets in the heavens
(as you have just heard)
and to continue on this theme,
for the months He set
twelve signs in the heavens
and in His book He
assigned a month to each.
These, which I shall recite
vary the fortunes of the year,
but to simply summarize:
the signs are ordered
one after another,
their properties vary
and together they comprise
the orbit of the Zodiac.
The first sign
is called Aries,
which is embodied by a ram
and is represented by such a figure.
The Almagest says
that in this constellation twelve stars
are set, arranged like so:
the belly has two, the head has three,
the tail has seven, and these
(as you might hear me say),
make Aries, which itself is hot and dry.
As for his allegiance,
he is the refuge and the house
of mighty Mars the warlike.
And besides this, as I find,
the Creator of all
upon this sign first began
the World and made Man.
This constellation
has properties which
greatly aid if a man therein
begins a project or some work,
for then he is assured of
good speed and great success.
The twelve months of the year
are assigned to the power
of the twelve signs.
Now understand
that Aries (of the twelve)
has claimed March for himself;
then every bird shall choose his mate,
and every adder and every snake,
and every reptile which may move
tests his might and tries to prove
that he can creep out to the Sun
once Spring’s season has begun.

Taurus is the second
sign, which appears
as a bull, is dry and cold,
and (as books have told)
is the house appointed
to Venus, although they are dissimilar.
This bull is set in the stars
with his horns linked
into the tail of Aries,
so he is not starless there.
Upon his breast are eighteen stars,
and as it is seen,
two more stand upon his tail.
His assigned month
is April, whose showers
grow and nurture all the flowers.

The third sign is Gemini,
which appears
like a pair of human twins
standing naked.
They are well provided with stars:
they share the two
that shine in the bull’s tail
(so that these are part of both signs),
on Gemini’s belly
are five stars,
and two more are on the feet,
according to the old book
that wise Ptolemy wrote.
Gemini’s proper month
is the lively May,
wherein every bird
among the green leaves sings,
and love with his thorns stings
(by the law of Nature)
every youthful creature.
Cancer has his place
fourth in the list of signs.
As a crab he appears,
and has in his entourage
sixteen stars, ten of which,
as these old wise men
describe, are on his front,
two are in his middle,
and four are at his back.
Thus he goes attired with stars,
is moist and cold,
and is the proper house
assigned to the Moon,
in which he does as he wishes.
The month of June
is assigned to this sign.
The fifth sign is called Leo,
whose nature is dryness and heat,
and in whom the Sun is housed.
The appearance of his constellation
is a lion invested
with his share of stars.
The four which Cancer has
on his back are taken by Leo
upon his head, and then besides
he has four more upon his breast,
and one upon his tail behind,
(as we read in old books).
His proper month is July,
in which men play many games.
After Leo, Virgo is next;
she is the sixth sign
and has the appearance of a maiden.
The Philosopher said that
she is the wealth and the exaltation,
the vigor, the joy, and the delight
of Mercury, and truly
she is well attired with stars:
Leo has lent her one
which sits upon her head,
her stomach has five, and her feet
have five more.
In regards to her nature,
this maiden is dry and cold
despite her kindly disposition.
And to conclude,
her month comes
when every field has corn in hand
by the bending of many men’s backs
(that is to say this sign is applied to August).
After Virgo
Libra sits in the seventh place,
his sign appears to be
a man with a set of scales
held in his hand for weighing.
In books (and as may be seen)
many stars belong to him:
on his head he holds
three, and his stomach has two,
and down beneath he has eight more.
This sign is hot and moist,
properties which are not dissimilar
to Venus, so that aloft
she often rests in Libra’s house.
Saturn too often resides
in this sign and is exalted.
Libra’s proper month is September,
which gives men cause to remember
if any lingering wounds remain
from things which once caused them grief.
Among the high signs
the one numbered eighth
is Scorpio, which as a treacherous
scorpion appears.
But despite that
Scorpio is not starless;
for Libra granted him
eight stars to do with as he pleased,
which he arranged on his head,
and besides these
there are three stars upon his belly,
and eight upon his tail.
His nature is moist and cold
and disagreeable;
he harms and stymies Venus,
but Mars gladly visits his house
and they stir up war together.
His proper month, men say,
is October, which heralds
the winter following close behind.
The ninth sign,
which follows after Scorpio,
is called Sagittarius,
whose constellation
is a monster with a bow in hand.
He is made up of many stars:
the eight I spoke of before
(which are carried upon the tail
of Scorpio), these cover
the head of Sagittarius,
eight others stand
upon his stomach, and seven more
stand upon his tail behind.
He is hot and dry in nature;
Jupiter has free reign of his house,
but Mercury on the other hand
is not of the same mind
and does him great harm.
This sign has possession of
the month in which a man’s duty
(because of the changing season)
is to bring his oxen into the barn,
and a fire into his own house,
and to make the drink which makes men sing,
by fermenting his grapes to wine,
and besides this butcher up his swine.
It is November that I mean,
when all the leaves have lost their green.
The tenth sign, dry and cold,
is called Capricorn,
which resembles a goat.
With love and friendship
his house welcomes
Saturn, whom he likes well,
but the Moon he does not like,
and cannot cooperate with.
This sign has
three stars upon his head,
and two upon his belly,
and two upon his tail as well.
In December, when the year has gone
(as the books tell us),
when days are short and nights are long
this sign has its dominance.
Of those that sit in the heavens,
the signs, the eleventh
place belongs to Aquarius,
who agrees with Saturn
and welcomes him to his home,
but despises the Sun.
This sign appears
as a man holding
a water spout in each hand,
from which streams pour out.
He is by nature moist and hot,
and as for his stars
it is said that he has two
upon his head, which are the same
as those on Capricorn’s tail,
and as the old book
(which Ptolemy wrote) says,
he has twelve more upon his stomach,
and two in his lower half.
Now understand
that the frosty cold January,
when the new year has come,
and Janus the double-faced
sits upon his throne
and looks to both sides,
somewhat towards the wintertime,
somewhat towards the coming spring,
that is the month belonging
to this sign, and from his store
he gifts us the first flowers.
The twelfth and last of
the signs is called Pisces,
which, the scholars say,
is depicted as two fishes.
He cold and moist in nature,
and the stars
cover him in this way:
his two lower stars Aquarius
has lent to Pisces’ head and
there are two of his own
upon his womb, and additionally
upon his back there are
twenty bright stars,
which are a wonder to behold.
Into this sign’s house
comes Jupiter the glorious,
and Venus too abides with him
(as the books record).
The month ordained to this sign
is February, full of rains,
when the raging floodwaters
hinder passage of the rivers.
Now you have heard the properties
of the signs, but
Abu Ma'shar goes beyond this
and says that just as Earth is divided
in four, so too are
the twelve signs,
and each of them
has his own region to control.
The first group rules
the lands eastward
of Antioch, that country
is governed by three signs:
Cancer, Virgo, and Leo.
Westward from Armenia
(as I have learned)
is governed by Capricorn,
Pisces, and Aquarius.
Furthermore, I find that
south of Alexandria
the worthy signs
which govern the land
are Libra, and Sagittarius,
and together with them
stands Scorpio.
From the city of Constantinople
(as the books tell me),
the last division
extends northward,
where by decree of providence
Aries governs
along with Taurus and Gemini.
Thus are the signs properly
divided, as I have said,
through all the different lands.

[The Fixed Stars]

You see, my son,
Alexander had to learn
about the planets for his education,
but now we must look even higher,
to the other stars.
I shall teach you,
just as was young King Alexander,
when he was taught
to see the high stars in the night sky
with his own eyes.
Upon each thing
there are many influences,
some do this, some do that;
the fire is hot by nature
and burns everything he can touch,
water restrains fire,
for it is cold and moist.
This is the way it is
for us down here on Earth;
to speak of this further,
up in the heavens men have found
that there are many sorts of stars,
and they do many sorts of things
to us here below.
Among the mortals,
was Nectanebo,
an astronomer
and a great magician,
who undertook the task
of instructing Alexander
in natural magic
and teaching him
the meanings of the most influential stars,
of which, he said, there are fifteen.
For each and every one
there is a herb and a stone,
with which men may work many wonders
for better or for worse.
To begin as he did,
the first star is Aldebaran,
the clearest and the most famous,
known everywhere by its proper name.
He shares the personality
of Mars, and the substance
of Venus, and therefore has
carbuncle as his proper stone;
his herb is called spurge,
which is said to be very potent.
The second is not powerless,
Clota (or else Pleiades) he is called.
He is akin to the Moon,
but, as I have found,
he has Mars’ substance.
On account of these properties,
his stone is quartz crystal,
and his special herb
is the virtuous fennel.
The third star after this
is Algol, the clear and red.
Of Saturn, I have heard,
he takes his demeanor, and of Jove
he takes his substance.
His proper stone is diamond,
which agrees with him best;
the herb allotted to him
is the black hellebores.
As has been allotted,
the fourth star is Capella,
which as I said before
from Saturn and of Jupiter
takes his nature; therefore
the sapphire is his proper stone,
hoarhound is his herb,
and both of these suit him very well.

The Dog Star, Sirius,
is the fifth star of magic,
whose nature is venereal
(as the astronomers say).

His proper stone is beryl,
but to work and to fulfill
the magic of Sirius
there is an herb called juniper
which serves the needs of those
who wish to enhance the star’s effect.

The sixth following after this
is named Procyon;
this is a Mercurial star
by its nature, and besides this
(as is written in the treatise),
his substance is that of Mars.

His stone and herb (so says Aristotle’s School),
are agate and primrose.

The seventh star
of this science is Regulus,
which controls many earthly things.
The stone which is properly his
is called coral,
and the herb he rules
the workings of
is celandine, the fresh and green.

The star Algorab upon high
takes his place at number eight.

Of all the stars he most performs
the will of Mars and of Saturn;
his herb is burdock
(but it has no uses),
and his stone is called onyx,
through which men work great mischief.

The ninth star, lovely and fine,
is named Spica;
it takes on the properties
of both Mercury and Venus.

His stone is the green emerald,
which is lauded far and wide.
Sage is his appropriate herb
far more than any other.
The tenth star is Arcturus,
which upon both life and death
(by the powers of Jupiter and Mars)
works his magic influence.
His stone is jasper, and plantain
is his sovereign herb.
The eleventh star is Alkaid,
whose nature takes after
Venus and the Moon
(in terms of the things he influences).
Lodestone is the jewel
in which his dominance is felt;
the herb which belongs to him
is called chicory in the book.
Alphecca is numbered
the twelfth star;
from Scorpio he is controlled
and takes his nature (as I have learned).
His virtues are revealed in the stone
which is called topaz;
his proper herb is rosemary,
which best fits his personality.
Of these stars of which I speak,
Antares is thirteenth;
Mars and Jupiter
govern his nature.
His herb is pipevine,
which corresponds with his astronomy.
This star governs the stone called
sard, which bows to him.
The next-to-last star,
was named by Nature,
who called him Vega;
he is obedient
to Mercury and to Venus.
His stone is called peridot
and his herb is called savory,
as the old books say.
But now the last star of all
men call the Tail of Scorpio,
to Mercury and to Saturn
its nature derives
(according to
the proper horoscopes).
The chalcedony belongs to him
for he has claimed it as his stone;
grounded marjoram is his herb.
Thus I have declared the nature
of each star in particular,
and the herb and stone of each,
just as Thrice-great Hermes
testified in his old book.

[The Great Astronomers]
The science of Astronomy’s
purpose is to uncover
how to distinguish between harmful and helpful
among the natural things.
The astronomers had a mighty task on their hands
to reach this understanding
but eventually
their studies brought us knowledge;
they were gracious and wise
and worthy to receive our praise.
And those responsible
for developing this science:
the first who wrote on it
after Noah was Nimrod
(the disciple of Ionitus);
he wrote a book on the subject
which was entitled Megaster.
Another actor in this case
is the notable Arzachel;
his book is known as Abbategnyh.
Lord Ptolemy is not the least,
he wrote the book called Almagest;
and Alfraganus did the same
(his book is Chatemuz by name).
Gebuz and Alpetragus
described the planisphere
in their books, and besides this
there are many other worthy scholars
who have written upon this science
in books of altimetry
and planar geometry which both belong to the natural philosophy of these astronomers. Men say that Abraham was one (but whether he was or not I cannot find cited), and Moses was another, but Thrice-great Hermes above all other scientists had great wisdom. He surveyed many stars which are still found in books today. I may not know all of them who have at various times written on this science, but I do find in their judgements that on one point they all agree: of all the stars recorded which men can see in the heavens, there are exactly one thousand and twenty-two visible that are bright enough that men may see what they are, their natures, and their properties. Now you have heard the way these noble, wise philosophers informed the young king and gave him the knowledge of the first part of Philosophy which is called Theory (as I defined for you before). But now we will speak of the second, which Aristotle also invented; it teaches how to speak well, which is quite necessary to tip the balance in your favor when other proof is lacking.
Above all earthly creatures
the high Maker of Nature
gave words to Man alone
so that by his speech
(whether he may lose or win),
the thoughts of his inner heart
may be shown and expressed,
and this is seen nowhere else
in all the other beasts.
Man should be more honorable
with this great God-given gift,
and take care that he does not
shift his words to wicked uses,
for language is the teacher of virtue
(according to Philosophy).
Concerning this point,
Rhetoric is the science
dedicated to the study
of words that are reasonable.
Since this art requires
many fine words
it has Grammar and Logic,
which both aid speech.
First, Grammar teaches
how to speak correctly.
Likewise, Logic helps discern
between truth and falsehood,
to parse what is spoken,
so that no meaning is lost
and decisions are made rightly.
In this way many great debates
may be resolved to good agreement;
peace may be upheld
with soft and easy words
where strength would let it fall.
The Philosopher (among others)
praises this science
for its eloquence.
There is power in stones and herbs,
but the books say this:
that the word
is powerful above all earthly things,
for evil or for good.
For if words seem good
and are well spoken in men’s ears,
and there is no truth there,
they can do great mischief.
When the words and the mind
differ in their intent,
such Rhetoric is to be despised
and dreaded in every place.
Of Ulysses thus I read,
(which is written in the book of Troy):
his eloquence and his charm
and the fair words which he spoke,
persuaded Antenor to sell out
the city, so that by treason it was won.
Words have beguiled many a man;
with words the wild beast is daunted,
with words the serpent is enchanted,
words among the men of arms
may heal wounds with their charms
where medicine has failed;
words have under their purview
all the spells of sorcery.
Words are of many natures,
some of evil, some of good:
words make friends of foes,
and foes of friends, and peace of war,
and war of peace, and into confusion
words throw this world’s plans,
and then repair them at a whim.
Under the Firmament words
decide what things are odd or even;
with words we please high God;
with words words may be appeased,
a soft word makes a loud word still;
where goods are lacking, words fulfill,
and make amends for what went wrong;
when words combine into a song,
it pleases all the more.
Let us begin by studying
the Rhetoric composed by Cicero,
from it a man may glean
how he shall set his words,
how to loosen, how to tie them together,
and the way to speak
his argument seamlessly.
If you desire an example,
take heed to what was spoken long ago
by Caesar and by Cicero
(who were consuls of Rome),
and likewise Cato and Silanus.
Behold the words that passed between them,
when the treason of Catiline
was discovered and the conspiracy
of his faction
was known and debated in the Senate,
and it was asked how and in what way
justice should be done.
Silanus spoke first of all;
in truth his duty
was to serve the common good,
he said that traitors deserve
a cruel death, and thus argued
Cato as well,
saying that for such a crime
there may be no pain too strong.
But Caesar, with wise words
spoke otherwise,
for he wished to avoid this death.
He resolved to persuade
the judges by his eloquence,
turn aside their death sentence,
and set Pity in their hearts.
First spoke they, then spoke he;
they spoke plainly of the law,
but Caesar with words of mercy
nuanced the affair,
and thus the two sides
weighed upon this judgement,
each made their argument.
From this and other tales
a man might learn the skill
of eloquence in Rhetoric,
which is the second science
of Philosophy.
By it a man may justify
his words in debate,
and build up a conclusion
to his argument in such a way
that the plain truth is revealed
and subtle schemes dispelled;
this is the duty of every honest man.

[Practice]
Practica quemque statum pars tercia Philosophie
Ad regimen recte ducit in orbe vie:
Set quanto maior Rex est, tanto magis ipsum
Hec scola concernit, qua sua regna regat.
(A good life requires good conduct, even for kings.)

The first part, Theory,
and the second, Rhetoric,
are sciences of Philosophy;
I have divided them
just as Aristotle did
for Alexander, and now I shall
tell of the third part,
which is called Practice.
Practice has three parts
which concern the governance of kings;
the first is called Ethics,
the purpose of which
is to teach the virtuous way
in which a king should rule himself:
his moral condition,
and the orderly conduct
of personal good living;
these are worth most of his crown.
Through Practice king also learns
how to govern his own body:
how he shall wake, how he shall sleep,
how he shall keep his health,
in food, in drink, in clothing too;
there is no wisdom
concerning his own person,
which this science does not teach,
nothing is left behind.
Another point which Practice includes is Economics,
which honestly teaches the way a king shall rule and lead his wife and children,
and so on with all the people of his own household,
and his estate on every side,
so that his leadership shall not do them harm.
Practice has yet a third part,
which teaches how though his farsighted decrees a king should govern his realm, and that is Policy.
It serves royalty in times of war and times of peace to the honor and benefit of scribes, of knights, of merchants, and so on all the remnant of the common people all about, within the towns and without, including the smiths who make crafts and all who work with their hands. These people are all different, yet nonetheless there must be one set of laws to govern them all, or else they either loose or win merely by the class of their birth.
Thus the young king was fully taught of everything which might grant judgement of good rulership and good living to such a worthy prince as he. But as was also necessary, the Philosopher described five points for Alexander to remember and obey.
to ensure the worthy governance
appropriate to his rule,
according to Policy.

[Truth]
Moribus ornatus regit hic qui regna moderna,
Cercius expectat ceptra futura poli.
Et quia veridica virtus supereminet omnes,
Regis ab ore boni fabula nulla sonat.

(Good kings never lie.)

Learning benefits all men,
but none need it more
than a king; he has to lead
his people, and his rulership
may either save or slay them.
Since much depends upon his will
it suits him to be prudent,
and to have the virtues
well understood
to be appropriate to kingship.
To describe them all
I shall now endeavor.

Among the virtues one is chief,
and that is Truth, which is beloved
by God and men.
It has forever been so,
for Aristotle taught
Alexander how in his youth
he should revere Truth
and embrace it with his whole heart
so that his words would be true and plain;
thus the world could be sure
that there was no doubletalk from him.
If men look for Truth
and cannot find it within their king,
that would be a great evil.
Words are a token of what lies within,
and which them a worthy king must begin
(by minding his tongue and speaking truely)
to earn the praise of others.
He must be well advised
and well warned before he swears,
for afterwards it is too late
for him to retract his word.

Just as the king stands above all others in power, so should he likewise be the most virtuous; this will be signified and specified by his crown… The gold signifies excellence, it makes men revere their sovereign liege.

The gems, as the books say, symbolize virtue in three ways: first, they are hard and thus represent a king’s steadfastness (no variance may be found in him); furthermore, the magic inherent to the stones is a symbol that the king shall be honest and truly stand by his word in royal affairs; finally, the bright colors which shine from the stones are symbols of the list of famous deeds (which testify the king’s goodness).

The ring of the crown itself signifies the lands of the kingdom which are under his dominion and which he must protect and guide. As for Truth itself, it is the king of the virtues and rules over all of them.

This is seen in a tale of the value of Truth; for your education my son, I shall share the account of these matters….

[Darius’ Disputation]

The account goes like this: there was a sultan of Persia
whose name was Darius, and Hystaspes was his father. It was through wisdom and high prudence (more than for any fame of his ancestral lineage) that he came to rule the empire. As he himself was wise he prized wise men and sought them out from every land, to come and advise him. Among these there were three who served him best, they would sit in his chamber and hear and weigh his counsels. These three had strange names: Arpaghes was the first, and Manachaz was the second, and Zorobabel (as it is says in the tale) was the third. This sultan, no matter what, trusted them most of all, and such was the case this time: a deep thought came to Darius one night as he slept, and he resolved to put a question to them. The king’s question was this: which thing is strongest, wine, a woman, or a king? To ensure that they would be sure of their answers he gave them three full days, and gave them his word that he who answered best, would receive a worthy prize. They took up this challenge and stood in disputation, each with his own opinion and arguments to support it. Arpaghes spoke first, and said how the strength of kings is the mightiest of all things: “For kings have power over Man,
and Man’s Reason makes him
naturally
the most noble creature
of all that God has made.
That power makes it impossible
that any earthly thing
may be as mighty as a king.
A king may slay, a king may save,
a king may make lords into knaves,
and lords of knaves as well.
The power of a king is such
that he is above the law;
what he would make less, he lessens;
what he would make more, he increases.
As the noble falcon soars,
do does he, and no man may claim him
for he alone tames all others
and stands unquestionable.”
Thus a king’s might, said he,
as far as his reason could see,
is strongest and of most value.
But Manachaz said otherwise,
that wine has the greater prowess,
and he showed it this way:
“Wine often takes away
Reason from a man’s heart;
wine can make a cripple dance,
and a nimble man clumsy;
it gives a blind man sight,
and the bright-eyed darkness;
it makes simpletons into scribes,
and scribes’ learning
it takes away; cowardice
it turns into courage,
and of greed it makes generosity.
The wine makes the good blood,
in which the virtuous soul
makes her home
while she lives.”
And therefore Manachas
answered the proposal,
and said that wine by its nature
binds the heart
far more than royalty,
Zorobabel for his part
said, as he thought best,
that women are the mightiest.
The king and the winemaker
both are born from women,
and besides this he said how manhood
shall always obey
womanhood’s strength of love,
(whether he wishes to or not).
To show the mastery of women,
he told this tale
as an example:

“Apame (who was Bartacus’
daughter) sat in the king’s place
upon the high throne
even when he was enraged
at the nobility of his empire.
The tyrant king Cyrus she took,
and with only her sweet glances
she made him debonair and meek,
and by the chin and by the cheek
she dragged him this way and that;
now she teased him, now she kissed him,
and did whatever with him that she liked;
when she glowered then he sighed,
and when she was glad then he was glad;
and thus this king was mastered
by she who was his lover.

Among men there is no solace,
if there are no women,
for their absence
sends this world’s joy away.
Through them men find the way
to knighthood and worldly fame,
for they make a man dread shame,
and desire honor.

Beauty is fired
by the darts that Cupid throws,
from which grows the jolly pain
that has the whole world underfoot.
A woman is her man’s wealth,
his life, his death, his woe, his weal;
and it may be shown
that women are good and kind
in this example that I find:

"When the duke Admetus lay
sick in his bed, every day
men waited for him to die,
but his wife Alcestis went to pray,
so that she could win the favor
of Minerva with sacrifices,
and make the goddess reveal
how her lord’s sickness
(with which he was sorely besieged)
might be restored to health.
Thus she cried and thus she prayed
until at last a voice told her
that if she would for his sake
take on and suffer the illness,
and die herself, then he would live.
For this answer Alcestis gave
great thanks to Minerva,
she chose with all her heart
her death for Admetus’ life,
and thus resolved she went home.
When she came to her chamber,
she took her husband
in both her arms and kissed him,
and told him what she had chosen;
and within an instant
this good wife was overthrown
and died, while he was healed.
So as Reason shows,
next after God above,
the trust and the love of women
(in whom all grace is found),
is mightiest upon the Earth
and by far the most beneficial.”
Thus Zorobabel told
the tale of his opinion.
But in his final conclusion
on the strongest of earthly things
(the wine, the women, or the king),
he said that Truth, above them all
is mightiest, no matter what.
“Truth, howsoever it arrives
may never be overcome;
it may well suffer for a while,
but in the end it shall be known.
The proverbs say he that is true
shall never despair his fortunes.
For however the case shall go,
Truth is unashamed at the end,
but an untrue thing
may well end up ashamed,
and shame ruins every man.
So it was proved that there is no might
without Truth in some degree.”
For the truth of his argument
Zorobabel was most commended
when the disputation had finished,
amid the trials, he received his reward;
for Truth is most important overall
to the needs of Man.
Therefore Truth in particular
was the first point considered
which concerned the governance
of Alexander. It is said
that upon Truth rests the foundation
of every king’s rule,
and therefore it is needed
to properly construct a king
prepared for this world and for heaven.

[Generosity]
Absit Auaricia, ne tangat regia corda,
Eius enim spoliis excoriatur humus.
Fama colit largum volitans per secula Regem,
Dona tamen licitis sunt moderanda modis.
(greed ruins the fertile ground, and likewise the fame of kings.)

After Truth the second part
of Policy is that which
produces worldly fame
and praise for a king’s name.
This is Generosity, whose honor
greed cannot diminish.
The world’s goods were once communal,
but as fate would have it
common ownership did not last,
for when people became rich
and their families became great,
soon every man began to claim things
for his own private gain.
From these first envies arose
great arguments and wars
which lasted so long
that no man knew who was who,
nor who was friend and who was foe.
At last the people of every land
agreed amongst themselves
that it was better to have a king
who could settle everything
and give justice to families
by dividing their inheritances
and all their other goods.
And thus above them all stood
the king in his royalty,
and he protected
the worldly goods from the greedy.
Therefore it is good
for a king to decide
to set his heart on Generosity
both towards himself and
towards his people; if is not so
(that is to say if that he
spends on himself
but steals from his people)
he will not be called Generous,
but rather a miser,
which is a terrible vice in a king.
A king is also wise to flee
the vice of Prodigality;
he should moderate his expenses
so that he may be safe
from poverty, for the needy
are hindered in all they undertake.
Aristotle then spoke of Chaldea
(the perfect example
to teach King Alexander),
for those folk were enraged
at their king for his robberies.
And he set in Alexander’s heart
three considerations for
spending his money…
First, he must evaluate
and ensure his own goods
include the gifts he plans to give,
so he might live more virtuously.
Also he must take heed
if there is an important cause
which ought to be defended
before his goods are spent.
He must also
(among his other duties)
note the merits of his men,
according to their family
and standing and virtue;
he shall bountifully give
for war or for peace,
thus he shall maintain his honor
and not turn to infamy.
He that shall keep his good name
shall not be called unkind.
And I have found a tale in the chronicles
which relates to this matter,
as you shall hear…

Once, in Rome (as was his right),
a worthy but impoverished knight,
came along to plead
his case in the court
where Caesar was presiding.
And because he lacked the funds
there was no lawyer with him
to make a plea for his estate.
But though he lacked money
he had plenty of manhood;
he knew well that his purse was poor
but he yearned to recover his property.
Therefore, he openly declared his poverty
to the emperor and said:
“Oh Julius, lord of the law,
behold, my counselor is absent
for lack of gold. Do your duty
according to the laws of Justice.
Help me testify here
upon the truth of my case.”
Caesar, hearing this,
appointed him a worthy lawyer
but spoke not a word himself.
This knight was angry and took offense
to the emperor, saying this:
“Oh unkind Julius
when you fought in battle
up in Africa, and I was there,
it was my valor which rescued you
as much as any man’s.
You know how I was wounded there,
but here I find you so wicked
that you will not speak a word
from your own mouth, nor from your treasure
withdraw a coin to help me.
Why should I boast
ever again of your generosity,
when such great unkindness
I find in you now?”
Now Caesar knew
that all he said was true,
and to avoid being called unkind
he took this case on hand
as if it were sent by God;
he gave the knight enough to spend
for the rest of his life.
Thus should every worthy king
aid his knights
when he sees that they are in need,
for every service deserves a reward.
But another, who has not proven
his virtue, but instead has been unfaithful,
a king should give him nothing,
no matter how high his rank.
Every king must have
discretion when men beseech him,
so that he may give gifts wisely.
A tale is written of this
telling how Cinichus, a poor knight,
from King Antigonus.

The king answered

that such a gift exceeded

his poor estate; therefor the knight reduced his request,

and asked for just a single penny

or nothing at all.

The king now said that was too small

a gift for a regal lord

to give to any man,

and was unbecoming of a king.

By this example a king may learn

to give in a thoughtful manner,

for if a king gives away his treasure

dishonorably and thoughtlessly,

than he has been tricked;

I do not know if anyone will take his side

and help recover his rightful property.

But nonetheless, I believe

in order to help his own kingdom

every man should lend a hand

to provide the essentials;

the regality of the king

must be strengthened by all his subjects,

and supported with goods and labor

when his cause is reasonable.

And any man who is not eager

to keep his king’s name honorable

ought to be shunned.

Of Policy

the Philosopher

furthermore said,

that a ruling king is obliged

to limit and to and to plan

his generous gifts

and not to be excessive.

For if a king falls into poverty

the effects are numerous

and often disastrous.

The people will not be prudent,

if they see that prudence

has been forsaken by their king;

he who uses Prodigality

(which is the mother of poverty)
shall ruin his land.
When this vice afflicts a ruling king
he is robbed of his wealth by covetous flattery,
which deceives many worthy kings if they cannot detect the deceitful flatterers.
For those who please and cajole are nurses for the fostering of vice,
the results of which are blamed upon the king.
The Philosopher, as you shall hear,
spoke to the king of this, and told him that flatterers were guilty of three crimes.
One was towards the high gods, who are enraged to see the mischief which results from the lies the flatterer told.
Another is towards the king, when they are tricked by the falsehood of lying words that make him dream that black is white and blue is green and so confuses his situation.
For despite this extortion (and many other vices too) you will not find a man willing to grumble or speak out, for the flatterer will say that all is well whatsoever he does. And thus of falsehood they make truth, and blind the king’s eyes so he does not see the true world.
The third error is the general harm, for the people share in common of the wrongs that lies bring in. Thus a triple sin is done by those who flatter their king; there is no worse thing about kingly royalty than the vice of Flattery.
But yet it often has been used
and never once has been once refused
when spoken in a royal court,
for there it is most powerful
and may not be resisted for long.
But when this vice is born from those
who should have brought forth virtue,
truth is turned to lies,
which is, it is said, against Nature
as this old tale shows…

[Diogenes and Aristippus]

From the stories of the wise philosophers I read
how there were two men
whose education took them
out of Carthage and into Athens.
These friends, when they were of age,
were sent out and they stayed long,
until they had gained such knowledge
that they exceeded
all other men, and their names
were greatly famed.
The first philosopher
was called Diogenes;
he caused no trouble.
His friend Aristippus though,
greatly could and greatly did.
But at last
both turned home again
to Carthage and left their school.
Diogenes cared not for property
or for worldly goods
nor to profit from his long learning,
but went back just to dwell
at home, and the books tell
his house was on the riverbank
beside a bridge.
There he dwelt and took his rest,
and he thought this way the best
for studying his philosophy
for he defied
the extravagant world at every side.
But Aristippus’ laid aside
his books and went to the court;
there many tricks and many schemes
with flattery and soft words
he laid, and often planned
how best to please his prince;
in this way he easily won
vain honors and worldly goods.
The land’s rulership depended on him;
his king was wonderfully glad
and would do whatever he advised,
both in the court and elsewhere.
With flattery he changed
his business into worldly work;
shirking the duties of a scholar
he left philosophy behind
and uplifted himself to riches.
And thus Aristippus’ wish was fulfilled.

But Diogenes still dwelt
at home and studied his books.
He did not seek the world’s lures
of vain honors and riches;
all his heart’s business
was set on virtue,
and thus within his own house
he lived content
within his means. By chance,
Diogenes one day
(which was in the month of May),
when his herbs were grown
walked out to gather some
from his garden, for he wished
to make himself a soup.
When he had gathered enough,
he sat down to pare
and wash them in the river
upon which his garden stood
(near the bridge, as I said earlier).
As he sat there it happened
that Aristippus came down the street
with many horses and servants.
Straight to the bridge he rode,
when suddenly he stopped;
as he looked about
he had seen his friend Diogenes
and what he was doing.
Of this he said to him,
“Oh Diogenes! God help you,
there would be no need
to sit there and pick roots
if you could serve the prince,
as I am able.”
“Oh Aristippus!” replied he,
“No only you could pick roots
as I am able, truly
there would be little need
for your worldly schemes
and servile flattery.
You think to obtain
the prince’s gratitude, and perhaps
how to stand in his favor,
all for a few possessions.
If you would take Reason into your mind
you might reason that
groveling for a prince
is not reasonable,
but rather that it is offensive
to the School of Athens.”
Thus answered Diogenes
against the flatterer.
But yet men say the example
of Aristippus is preferable,
and that of Diogenes is to be avoided.
Rank in court and gold in coffer
is now, men say, the philosophy
which is honored above all.
Flattery surpasses all else
in court for gaining favor
is the only way
to be beloved nowadays.
I do not know if that is true,
but the common wisdom says
that wherever Flattery dwells
(in any land under the Sun)
many things occur
which would be better left undone,
as is shown time after time.

[Roman Generosity]

If a prince would rule
following the example of the Romans
(as in old times)
vice should be refused,
and princes would not be fools.
Where the plain truth is known,
a prince may understand well
and not deceive himself
concerning what he has heard,
then he need not complain
of being unwarned of forthcoming woes.
This was fully proved
when Rome ruled the world
for their most beloved oracles
were those who did not spare the truth,
but with plain and bare words
spoke their prophesies to the emperor.
The chronicles have not yet spoken of this,
but now you shall hear
a tale of this matter…
Concerning a role model
for avoiding Flattery
towards princes,
what comes to mind,
my son, I shall speak into your ear.
While worthy princes
ruled in Rome
and chance so had it
that any emperor
had victory over his foes
and came back to Rome again,
he could be certain of a triple honor
to glorify his deeds.
The first honor was
that when he arrived at the city
the chariot in which he rode
would be drawn by four white steeds,
he would be permitted
to wear Jupiter’s robe,
his prisoners would march
along the chariot on either side,
and all the nobles of the land
would ride before and behind him
to bring him into Rome
in thanks for his chivalry
(and not for Flattery).

And the truth of this was shown,
for as he sat in the royal chariot
a fool sat beside him
and pestered with words
the emperor in all his glory
saying, “Remember,
in all this pomp and all this pride
do not let Justice fall aside,
and know yourself, whatever happens.
Men have often seen things fall
which they thought would securely stand.
Though you now have victory on hand,
Fortune may not always stand with you;
the wheel, perchance, another day
may turn and overthrow you;
nothing lasts more than a moment.”

With these words
the fool, sitting there,
spoke to the emperor.
Besides this, he said whatever he wished,
no matter if it were evil or if it were good.
As plainly as the truth stood,
he spared nothing and spoke it out;
likewise every man
on the day of that triumph
spoke his mind openly to the emperor
just as the fool did.
And the purpose of this was
so that while he stood in nobility,
he should repress his vanity
by hearing such words.

And look again how things were
for such a high and worthy lord,
for this too is written
and attested in the chronicle…
When the emperor was enthroned
(on the first day of his crown
and royal throne)
he held a feast in the palace
and sat upon his high dais
with all the pleasures that he wished.
When he was most pleased,
and every minstrel had played,
and every speech had said
what was most pleasant to his ear,
then at last came
masons to ask
where he would be buried,
and from what stone his sepulcher
should be made, and what carving
they should engrave upon it.
There was no Flattery then
to deceive the worthy princes,
things were arranged according to
good counsel; besides this
princes themselves were wise
and understood well and knew
that when soft winds blew
Flattery into their ears,
they should not set their hearts on it.
When they heard false words
they distained them
and the crafty ones who spoke them.
So the flatterers gained nothing
from the prince;
and proving this is so
is another tale of deeds
from the chronicle of Rome…  
Caesar sat upon his royal throne
and was himself
highest in all esteem.
A man who thought himself wise
fell down and kneeled in his presence
and did him reverence
as if he were the high God.
Men greatly marveled
at the worship that he did.
Suddenly this man arose,
and with the same speed
went up to Caesar’s side
and sat down as if his peer,
saying, “If you sitting here
are God the almighty,
than I have done worship
appropriate to God. Otherwise,
if you are not so great,
but am a man like myself,
than I might sit beside you,
for we are both of the same kind.’
Caesar answered, “Oh blind one,
you are a fool, as we all can see.
For if you thought
I could be a god, you have done wrong
to sit where you say God is,
and if I am a man
you have done a greater folly
since to a mortal
the worship of a god
you have given unworthily.
Thus I see readily
that you are not wise.” When people heard
how wisely the king answered,
it was a marvel to them
and made them fear him even more,
and bring nothing to his ear
save for Truth and wisdom.
There are many who in such a way
feign words that seem wise,
but this is all Flattery
to those who see it clearly.
The flatterer has no love
save his own advancement;
however his master might fare,
as long as he himself is safe,
he does not care; thus often
soft words deceive
innocent kings.
To chastise these
the wise Philosopher said
that a king who gives treasure
to such folk loses money
and yet shows not Generosity,
but rather with his own hand
harms himself and his own land
in many different ways.
And so a man may see
(generally speaking)
how such things fare
if any king misrules himself.
The Philosopher’s teaching
specifically names
that which always has impeded
the governance of kings
with its mischief,
and that, he says, is Flattery.
I have partially
described this vice
so that a wise man may beware
and not believe a flatterer
if he would achieve
any good.
There are many examples
which prove this so,
but if you would know just one
it is best for you to hear
what happened in this matter…

[Ahab’s Folly]

Among the biblical kings
I find a tale (which is creditable)
of he who was called Ahab
and ruled over Israel.
Those who spoke sweetly
and flattered him were rewarded
with great power and riches,
but those who spoke words
of truth and would not keep silent,
they received nothing
and the court ignored them.
Until at last
Ben-Hadad, King of Syria
seized a large part of Israel
called Ramoth-Gilead;
for this offense
Ahab asked advice of his counselors,
but none of them were wise.

But nonetheless his ally Jehoshaphat (who was the king of Judah) was sent for; they were bonded together through friendship and alliance for Jehoshaphat’s son Jehoram had taken Ahab’s daughter in holy marriage.

Thus to Syria came King Jehoshaphat, and he met King Ahab. When they spoke together Jehoshaphat said that he wished to hear some true prophesy of their campaign, so that he might be advised to what end it would come.

At that time it happened there was a prophet in Israel who was full of Flattery, and he was named Zedekiah. Ahab sent for him, and at the king’s orders he came with a scheme; upon his head he wore two large horns of brass (as instruments of his Flattery); he raged about like a lion and waved his horns up and down to encourage the men, for as the horns pierced the air without any resistance, just as easily, he predicted, Ben-Hadad would be defeated. When Zedekiah had thus lied and flattered his king, suddenly there were many more false prophets speaking out, and all of them affirmed what he had said; therefore Ahab was very glad.
and gave them many gifts.

But Jehoshaphat was in great doubt and called these predictions fantasies;

he asked Ahab if there was any other man capable of prophesying, and if he could speak before they began.

Said Ahab, “There is one degenerate named Micaiah, but he will not come into my sight, for he has laid long in prison. He has never once said a word that I approved of. Nonetheless if you insist he may come out, and then he may speak as he always has, for he never says anything good.”

Then Josaphat became somewhat hopeful of hearing the truth, and commanded without delay that he should be brought forth. The ones who went to fetch him, when they had come to where he was, spoke to Micaiah and told him the way that Zedekiah had spoken his prophesy and they begged him to agree, for that would please the king and every other man, and would even help himself.

However, Micaiah’s heart was set upon the truth; he spoke only according to his faith and not of false things. He would tell the king as much as God gave him grace to. Thus came the prophet to that place where he heard the king’s question and spoke his answer in this way:

“My liege, for my predictions, which have always yet been true,
you have rewarded me with prison,
but despite that I shall not hide
the truth as far as I know
concerning this battle.
You shall not fail to hear the truth.
For if you hear
what I am instructed to say,
you may soon understand
what you must do.
Listen well to what I see!
I was near the throne of Heaven
with all the world below me,
and there I heard and understood
the voice of God with clear words
asking this:
‘In what way might I best thwart
King Ahab?’ And for a while
there was debate about this,
until at last a spirit said,
‘I undertake this challenge.’
God asked him, ‘In what way?’
‘I shall,’ said he, ‘deceive and lie
with flattering prophesies
from the mouths of those he believes.’
And He who achieves all things
sent him forth to do this.
And besides this I saw
the noble people of Israel
dispersed as sheep in the hills,
without a master to guide them.
And as they wandered about,
I heard a voice say to them,
‘Go home to your houses again,
till I find a better shepherd for you.’”
Then said Zedekiah, “You have
invented this tale to upset the king.”
Consumed with rage
he struck Micaiah on the cheek;
the king rebuked him,
and every man scorned him.
Thus Micaiah was shamed on every side
and sent back to prison,
as the king himself ordered.
The truth may not have been believed, but what happened afterward proved what had been said. Ahab went to battle, but despite his guards Ben-Hadad killed him, so that upon the battlefield his army was scattered away. But God, who can do all things, prevented a greater disaster; the king was dead but the people were saved, and home again they went in God’s peace and disbeliefed all that Zedekiah had said before. So it is wise for a king to love those who speak the truth; in the end it will be seen that Flattery is worth nothing. But now to other matters; to speak further of the Philosopher’s teaching I would like to specify the third part of Policy.

[Justice]

*Propter transgressos leges statuuntur in orbe,*

*Vt viuant iusti Regis honore viri.*

*Lex sine iusticia populum sub principis umbra* Deuiat, vt rectum nemo videbit iter.

(Laws punish wrongdoers, but unjust laws create wrongdoers.)

What is a kingdom without its people? What are men who are alone without a king’s governance? What is a king’s sovereignty when there are no laws in his land? Who will uphold the law if the judges are dishonest? Who will believe the evidence (of the old worlds and the new) and see the history of what a thing it is to keep the law, through which wrongs are righted, and righteousness is commented, and kingdoms are repaired?
Where the law unites
the lords with the common folk
each has their proper duty
and the king’s royalty
commands the respect of both,
because of his high worthiness
the king’s purpose
is to govern righteously;
he must guide the law.
And although in some cases
his power stands above the law,
(both to give and to withdraw
the taking of a man’s life)
things which are excessively
against the law he shall not do
for love or for hate.
A king’s might is great,
but yet a worthy king must avoid
doing wrong with all his might;
if he shall rule correctly
it behooves his reign
to first be justified
in the eyes of God.
A king’s actions are free
of responsibility to any person,
save only God alone,
who will chastise kings Himself
if no one else is able.
A king would do well to take heed
and first consider his own deeds,
the virtue and the vice,
remedy them, and then with Justice
set the balance even
towards others with his governance;
his laws shall stand alike
for the poor and the rich
exempting no person.
Since he cannot personally
do Justice everywhere
he shall use his royal power
(with wise consideration)
to appoint and deputize
educated judges,
so that the people may be governed
by those who are true and wise.
For if the power of greed
is set upon a judge’s hand,
woe to the people of that land
who cannot hide themselves from wrongs!
But else on the other side,
if the law stands on the side of right,
the people are glad and stand upright.
Wherever the law is reasonable
the common people are pleased,
and if the law turns amiss,
the people are likewise corrupted.

[Roman Justice]
For an example of this matter
a man may hear of Maximin,
who once was Emperor of Rome.
When he appointed a man
to be the governor
of a province or a region
he would first ask their name,
and have it openly proclaimed
to inquire if he were evil or good.
And depending on if that name stood
inclined to virtue or to vice,
he would set them in office
or else put them away.
Thus the law was kept rightly,
not distorted by greed.
The wise ruled the world back then,
and their examples you may read
and hold in your mind.
In the chronicles I find
written of Gaius Fabricius,
who was a Consul of Rome,
charged with making and revoking laws.
Once, the Samnites brought him
a sum of gold and asked that he
would bend the law to their favor.
To the gold he went,
and in everyone’s sight
he picked up some,
and put it to his mouth
and tasted and smelled it,
and put it to his eye and ear,
but he found no comfort there.
And then he began to mock it,
saying to them,
“Why should I want gold,
when all of my five senses
find neither savor nor delight?
It is a foolish sin
to be covetous of gold,
but a man is rich and glorious
when he has power over
the men who are
rich with gold.
For then he may, at his discretion,
whether they agree or not,
do Justice to them either way.”
Thus he said, and with that word
he threw down the gold
from his hands
and rejected their request.
And so he remained free
to deliver Justice and equity
without the temptation of riches.
There are few like him now, I guess,
but back in those times
eyery judge was refused
who was not a friend to the common good.
Those who stood upright
and truly wanted to do Justice
were preferred in that office
to weigh and judge the common law,
which now, men say, is all atrophied.
To set a law and not to keep it
does not profit the people;
above all else the law
(which makes the peace)
must be kept
to set all men at ease.
The rightful Emperor Conrad
kept the peace with laws
so that within the city
disturbing the peace was more than anyone dared.
For in his time, as you may hear,
once the law was set it could not be changed for gold,
no matter who wished it to be so.
And this created a common fear so everyone dreaded the law, for it showed no preference.

And as the old books say,
I find a Roman who was a Prefect of the Pretorians named Carmidotirus.
He set a law (to keep the peace) which said only if disarmed could anyone enter the council-house, else he should be condemned for malice and put to death.
All who read that statute agreed that it should be so, and that it was a worthy cause.

Now hear what happened though:
This Prefect was away riding in the fields where he had long lived when the lords of the council, sent for him, and he came there still armed with his sword (forgetfully) until he was in the council-house. None of them spoke a word until he noticed it himself, and so found out his own error. Then he said to the twelve wise men of the Senate, “I deserve the punishment, do it without delay!” But they all said no, for they saw that it was no crime, for he had no thoughts of malice, but only a little Sloth. And thus they decided to judge and show mercy in his case, and that he should not be slain.
When he saw that they would save him he vowed
with manly heart, saying
that Rome would never scorn
his heirs when he was dead
for having a criminal as an ancestor.
And before anyone could act,
with the same sword that he wore
he executed the sentence of the law,
and all of Rome wept for his death.

In another place I read
that when a judge will not
enforce the sentence of the law,
the king will do so personally.
A great king, Cambises
by name, found a lawless judge
and to make him an example
he took great vengeance on him.
His skin was flayed off;
and when they had killed him
and his skin was taken
and nailed to the same seat
to which his son would be appointed.
This warned that if he would bend
the law out of greed,
the son would share the same fate.
Thus when other judges fail
the king himself must judge
and uphold the proper laws.
And to speak of olden days,
and find another example,
I find a tale written about
how a worthy prince is bound
to uphold the laws of his land,
first for high God’s sake,
and also the people who rely on him.
To guide and lead them
is the purpose of his kingship.

[Lycurgus]

In a chronicle I read
of the righteous Lycurgus
(who was prince of Athens),
and how the laws
which he gave to rule his people
were set up so well
that in all this world no city
was so well ruled
and truly governed.
There was no division among them,
and every man prospered;
without wars there was peace,
without envy there was love,
for the common good
(not for individual wealth)
riches were distributed, and the poor
of the city were safe
from violence,
setting the heart
of every man at peace.
When this noble, righteous king
saw how well it went
and how the people were at ease,
he (who always wished to please
the high God and earn his thanks)
had a wonderous thought,
which would allow him to ensure
that his laws for the city
might last forevermore.
Therefore, he racked his brain
to come up with a deception
to teach his wisdom
to an audience of the great and lowly,
and there he told his tale:
“God knows, and soon will you,
what will happen in the future,
but until now my will has been
to do justice and equity
in furthering the common good.
This has been my only delight
but there is another thing
which I wish to tell you.
The law which I have given
was made entirely by God
and not by my own wit.
This is why it has endured,
and it shall continue with your help.
I will teach you how;
the god Mercury, no mortal man,
taught me all that I know
and the laws I made for you
which have brought you gladness.
It was the god, not I,
who did this, and now
he has commanded me
to go away to a place
on a faraway island,
where I must stay a while
and hear what he commands.
He tells me that there
he shall teach me things
that shall aid Athens
until the end of the world.
But first, before I go,
I must ensure that my laws
are not forgotten by you
while I am gone.
So to set doubts away
for both you and I, this I pray,
that you will promise me and say
an oath to me,
that each of you shall swear
to keep and hold my laws.”
They all agreed to this,
and right away swore an oath
that from the time he left them
until he should come back again
they should know his laws well and plain,
keeping and fulfilling every point.
Thus Lycurgus was satisfied,
took his leave, and went forth.
But see now the
righteousness he accomplished!
Once he left
he was never seen again,
therefore Athens’ oath
could never be released,
nor would the good laws cease
to work for the common profit.
Thus, once he had woven
together the good of all,
the king abandoned his own estate
to aid the city.
He exiled himself from his fortune
and left his princely office
only for love and for Justice;
by doing this he might
forever after his death
continue to guide his city.
Men should take this as an example
of good stewardship
to those governed
by the laws which they keep.
And as for those
who made the first laws long ago,
as long as their lands last
their names are still known.
If you wish to hear
some of these names and what they did,
listen well and you shall understand…

[The Great Lawgivers]

Every good deed
shall be rewarded by God Himself,
but it often happens furthermore
that the world rewards it too.
These rewards are not the same,
for God gives the Kingdom of Heaven,
while the world gives only a name
to commemorate the fame
of he who has done the good deed.
In this way a double reward
is given to those who do well here;
and if you listen
to the fame which has been spoken,
you may hear the truth
of the honest business
of those righteous ones who first
made laws for men.
Their fame will never fade from this Earth; wherever there is a tongue their names shall be read and sung and written in the chronicles so that men will know to speak well (as well they should) of they who with laws first brought forth worldly peace. Unto the Hebrews Moses came first, and Mercury to the Egyptians, and to the Trojans first was Numa Pompilius, to the Athenians Lycurgus first gave the law, and to Greeks Phoroneus had that voice, as did Romulus to the Romans. Against villainous men the law specified charges to be tried, so that as long as the judge was honest, rights should be upheld. And thus it happened that the law came to us all; God grant that it endure! Every king now is held to those kingly things, which kings must not be let flaunted. The king who does not keep the law, by the law may not keep his reign. What is a king without the law? Where are any rights if there are no laws in the land? A king must understand this (for he is sworn to the law): if the laws are forgotten and not enforced the whole land is turned upside-down and the king is shamefully disgraced. As for King Alexander, the wise Philosopher instructed that he lead himself first by law, and then to his people deliver common justice
so that the whole wide land
should be certain of his law,
and therefore be at peace.
For law is best by far
(above all earthly things),
to make a man fear his king.
But how a king shall earn the love
of the high God above,
and also of the men on Earth,
this next point (which is the fourth
of Aristotle’s wisdom) teaches.
And if you desire to learn
what policy that is
the book records it after this…

[Pity]
 Nil racionis habens vbi velle tirannica regna
 Stringit, amor populi transiet exul ibi.
 Set Pietas, regnum que conservabit in euum,
 Non tantum populo, set placet illa deo.

(Tyrants do not suspect how beloved mercy is to men and God.)

No introduction is needed
for that which is praised everywhere
(and always has been and always shall),
but to name it in particular
it is the virtue of Pity.
It moved the High Majesty
when His Son descended
with Pity to repair the world
and from a maiden became flesh and blood.
Pity was the cause of the good
that has saved us all,
therefore a man must have Pity
and hold it highly in esteem
since He Himself (who is infinitely wise)
showed that it ought to be praised.
Pity may not coexist
with even the smallest bit of tyranny;
for Pity makes a king chivalrous
both in word and deed.
As It is good for men to fear
their king and obey his commands,
but it is just as good
for a king to be piteous
towards his people and gracious
in his governance,
so that he takes no vengeance
which may be called cruelty.
Impartial justice
is dreadful, for it spares no one,
but in the land where Pity lives
the king will not fail to be loved,
for Pity, though the grace above
(as the Philosopher says),
confirms the value of his reign.
Thus said Constantine,
“An emperor willing
to be Pity’s servant,
is worthier to be a lord
than any other person.”
In old books of tales
I find this example written…
Trajan, the worthy and courteous one
who governed Rome,
once spoke
to his acquaintance.
And he said to that counselor
that as an emperor
his wish was not for vain honor,
nor even for rigor of Justice;
rather, if he could by his office
please his nobility and his people
he thought it would be easier
to draw their hearts to him in love
then with the dread of any law.
For when things are done in fear
often the outcome is worse,
but when a king is piteous,
he is the more gracious
and prosperity will come to him
that would otherwise be turned aside.
A property of Pity
is that he who is well furnished with it
will often suffer pain himself
to keep others from pain;
Charity is the mother
of Pity, and it tolerates
no wrong to remain unixed.
It is good for every living man
to be piteous, but none so much
as a king, since the Wheel of Fortune
has set him above all others.
If a king happens to have
Pity that is firm and stable,
the whole land may benefit
through the grace of only one man;
his Pity alone
may save all the realm.
And so it suits a king to have
Pity, and this Valerius told,
saying how in the days of old
Codrus (who was
King of Athens) the city
warred again with the Dorians.
To get a prediction
of what should happen in the battle,
Codrus thought to consult
with Apollo, in whom he trusted.
From Apollo Codrus learned
that were two paths he could choose:
either he could lose his body
and die in battle himself,
or else otherwise
see his people defeated.
But he (who Pity had perfected
in all his beliefs),
thought only to save the people,
and chose to die himself.
Where now could you find such a head
willing to die for the limbs?
Furthermore, in some cases
a king’s heart should be stirred
to restrain his followers.
Even on enemies
it is praiseworthy
to take Pity
instead of taking vengeance.
When a king wins a victory
but keeps in mind
Pity instead of violence,
he will be remembered
and so will arise worldly fame
to give the prince a famous name.

I read that Pompey
(whom Rome once obeyed)
once waged a difficult war
against the king of Armenia,
whom he had an old grudge against.

At last Pompey achieved
the defeat of this king,
and carried him back to Rome
as a prisoner; there for many days
he lay in sorry plight and poverty,
his head deposed of a crown
and enclosed in a prison,
but with great humility
he endured this adversity.
Pompey saw this patience
and his conscience took pity;
upon the high dais
of his palace, before all of Rome,
he said that he would spare him,
let him take back his crown,
and his estate too,
and restore his reign in full.
And he said that it is better
to make than to unmake a king
(if there is a choice).
Thus these men, long enemies,
agreed to a final peace,
and nonetheless Justice
was kept without offence;
and for this Pompey was praised.
No king is excused
from using Justice,
but if he would shun cruelty
he must use Pity too.

[Cruelty]

Cruelty is the crime
born of tyranny,
and against it stands
God Himself as champion,
whose strength no one can withstand.
Forever it has been true
that God will overthrow a tyrant,
but where Pity reigns
no evil fortune will remain
save for those at last
put right by God Himself.
Pity is the blessed virtue
which never lets its master fall;
but cruelty, though by chance
it reigns for a moment,
shall be overthrown by God.
Many examples are known
of tyrants who fell like chessmen.

Of cruelty I read thus:
when the tyrant Leontios
seized the Roman Empire
(which his strength had pried
from merciful Justinian),
since he was a cruel man
he had Justinian’s lips and nose
cut off to make him loathsome
to the people and unfit to rule.
But the all-merciful
high God, ordained it
that so within a short time
(when his wrath was at its height)
Leontios was shoved out of his empire.
Tiberius claimed the power
and laid Rome under his will;
and as for Leontios
it was ordered that justice would take
both his lips and nose,
just as he had done to another
far more worthy than himself.
Thus, cruelty fell
and Pity was set up again.
For afterwards the books say
that Tervel (King of Bulgaria)
lent his chivalry
to unimprison Justinian
and to crown him again.
I also find a chronicle
Of King Siculus, who was known
to be as cruel as the wind,
and was unmoved by any Pity.
He was the first (the books say)
to set warships upon the sea
and send them out to battle;
he was unhinged
from Pity and compassion
and did not understand goodness;
who he could slay, he slew,
and that made him glad enough.
He had many counselors,
among whom was one
named Berillus,
who thought to
gain favor with the tyrant.
By his own imagination
he forged a bull of brass,
and on the side there was
a door to fit a man inside
so he could be tortured
by a fire lit underneath.
And all this was for amusement,
for when the man cried in pain,
from the brass bull’s open mouth
would seem come
the bellowing of a bull
and not the crying of a man.
But the master of deceit,
the Devil (who is imprisoned in Hell),
destroyed the inventor Berillus.
His evil scheme
fell on himself instead,
for Berillus himself was first
to suffer that painful fate
which he had planned for others,
and no man mourned him.
By this example kings may see
(both for himself and his counselors)
that tyranny and cruelty
are loathsome to Mankind
and abominable to God.
Fitting examples
I have found of other princes too,
so you shall hear of times long past...
The great tyrant Dionysius,
who valued men as worthless,
often would give his horses
flesh instead of corn and hay,
so the horses learned to
devour men’s blood.
But at last his fortune
was to be overcome by Hercules,
who in the same way
took Justice on this tyrant.
He died the same death
which had given to other men,
for Pity never crossed his heart,
until he was devoured by his horses.
And of Lichaon I also find
how, against the law of Nature
he killed his guests, and made meat
of their bodies to devour
with the other men of his household.
But Jupiter the glorious
was enraged by this and took
vengeance upon the cruel king;
from a man’s form
Lichaon was transformed into a wolf;
and thus his cruelty was revealed,
which he long had hidden.
A wolf he was now openly,
where previously he
had been wolish in nature.
I find many examples
to support my conclusion
that tyranny is to be despised.
Especially common
are they who Fortune favored
to win their battles,
but because they began the evil
of tyranny, victory did not last.
Rather, what they did to other men
fell upon them at last,
for standing against Pity calls down
vengeance from God above.
He who has no tender love
for saving a man’s life,
he shall be found guilty
and when he craves mercy
in a time of need, he shall not have it.
In books of Nature I find,
how the fierce lion,
when he goes hunting for prey,
if he meets a man,
will slay him if he fights.
But if the man knows
to fall down at once before his face
in a sign of mercy and of grace
the lion shall naturally
restrain his violence
as though it were a tame beast,
and turn away half ashamed,
leaving the man uninjured.
How then should a prince achieve
the world’s favor if he
destroys a man who has yielded
and stands in his mercy?
But to speak specifically,
there have been and there are yet still
tyrans in whose hearts Pity
does not provoke mercy at all;
they in their tyranny
are gladdened by slaying men.
As the raging sea
is unpitying in a storm,
just so Pity cannot stop
the great outrages of cruelty,
which these tyrants
bring about. Of this
a tale now comes to my mind...
I read in old books
how there once was a duke called Cyrus
who was a warrior,
a cruel man, and a conqueror
by the strong power that he had.
And his delight,
when he had won a victory
was what he considered most glorious,

to slay and not to save.

He would not take ransom
to save another man’s life,
but sent all to the sword and knife,
so dear to him was men’s blood.

And as it happened
Fortune had it
that he was the rightful heir
of Persia, and was crowned king.
But when that glory had lessened
this new King of Persia
(as if the tyrannies he had wrought before
were not numerous enough)
began to crave
a thousand times more malice.
God planned vengeance against
this evil, which would come
when he was highest in his pride
and his rancor and his hate
against the Queen of the Massagetae,
(Tomyris was her name)
against whom he warred with all his might.
She, defending her land,
sent her own son
to undertake the defense,
but he was defeated and captured
and when Cyrus had him in hand,
he showed no mercy,
but had him slain in his presence.

When news of this outrage
came to his mother’s ear,
she summoned from far and wide
all the friends she had,
until she led a great power.
She thought of many strategies
to overcome the Persians,
but at last decided
that in a dangerous valley
(through which the tyrant had to pass)
she would surround him
with enough men to ensure
that he could not escape.
And when she had given the orders,
she disguised herself as if
she planned to flee
out of her land; when Cyrus
heard that the queen had fled,
he gave chase so quickly
that his army fell to disorder.
And soon thereafter,
when he had come to the valley,
the ambusher broke up
and surrounded him on every side
so that he could not flee away;
the dead and captured
numbered two hundred thousand
from his host.
Thus was destroyed the great pride
of Cyrus and his tyranny.
There was no use asking for mercy
which he himself never gave;
he was brought before the queen
and when she saw him,
she spoke thusly:
“Oh man, who out of Man’s nature
left Reason behind
and lived worse than a beast!
Pity could not move you
to cease the shedding and spilling of blood,
you never had your fill.
But now at last the time has come
that your malice is overthrown.
As you before did to others,
now shall be done to you.”
And the lady bade that men should
being a vessel for the instrument
of the just vengeance
which she had devised.
She took the captured princes
who had been Cyrus’ chief counselors,
and while they yet breathed
she had them bled to death
into the vessel where it stood.
When it was filled with blood,
she cast the tyrant in,
and said to him, “Thus may you sate
the lusts of your appetite!
In blood you delighted,
now you shall drink your fill.”

[Cowardice]

Thus, if against God’s will
a man makes himself a stranger
to Pity, and excuses himself from mercy,
then he is graceless and lost.
So it is shown
that cruelty has no good end;
but Pity, whatever happens,
makes God merciful
(if there is a reasonable cause
a king should be piteous).
However, if he is hesitant
to slay for righteousness’ sake,
this is not piteousness,
but rather cowardice,
which every king should avoid.
For if Pity is excessive,
kingship will be unable
to do Justice rightly;
it is proper for a knight
to fight as gladly as to rest
when he may save his people
from wars that fall upon them.
For then he might
be a lion in his knighthood
and a champion to his people
without false Pity.
If manhood is restrained,
either in peace or war,
Justice is lost
and knighthood is left behind.
In Aristotle’s teaching I find
that a king shall keep a good face,
so that all men know of his demeanor
is honor and worthiness.
For if a king shall thoughtlessly
fear without good cause,
he may be like this story;
though it is a fable
its message is good and reasonable...
A long time ago,
I read that a hill
up in the land of Arcadia
began to make a dreadful noise,
for that was the day
when he was to give birth.
When the pains came upon him
he made a noise like Doomsday,
and men were afraid
of what they could not see.
They heard the noise all about
and were cast into despair
and thought that all was lost
because of this unborn thing.
The nearer this hill was
to the time of delivery,
the more violently he cried,
and every man fled away
in dread, leaving their own houses.
But then, at last, a tiny mouse
was born and given to the nurse,
and men called themselves fools
for having feared needlessly.
Thus, if a king sets his heart
on everything that he hears
his face will often be downcast
and full of fantastic dread
when there is no cause for alarm.
Horace told his prince
that he would prefer
to follow Achilles
into war than not to fight,
as Thersites did at Troy.
Achilles’ only joy
was the fighting of armies;
Thersites sought only
to be unarmed and stand in rest,
but of the two it was better
that Achilles did his duty
and for this his knighthood
is still famed.
King Solomon said that as there is a time for peace, so too is there a time for war, in which a prince certainly must fight for the common cause and for his own honor too. It is unacceptable to war only for fame, but for the right of his lordship (which he is sworn to defend) every worthy prince must strive. Between Pity’s innocence and cruelty’s foolishness stands the essence of bravery; there must a king set his heart when it is time to take (and when it is time to forsake) deadly wars upon hand; he shall not hesitate from dread if he is righteous. For God’s mightiness will uphold every man’s cause (unless his own sloth intervenes); the king’s need especially it will not fail to aid, since the need of one then stands for all. The king’s fortunes are greater and more favorable to God when he serves the common good. To see the truth in this behold the Bible, where you may read many great examples, some of which I shall tell...

[Gideon]

Once upon a time, many kings came to Judea and Israel proposing to destroy the people of God. In those days Gideon (who would lead God’s people) sent for aid
to all of the lands nearby
until he had assembled an army
of thirty thousand to defend,
to fight, and to resist
against the attackers.
And despite this, the army
of his enemies
was twice as numerous as his,
and Gideon began to fear
that he had too few.
But He who assists wherever
men have failed
sent Gideon an angel,
who said that before he went any further
he should openly decree
that every man in his army
whose own will wished
for the sweetness
of home in any way,
for profit or for covetousness,
for love’s longing or lack of heart,
should not march
but go home in peace.
By the next morning he had lost
twenty thousand men or more
because of this decree.
Thus he had left
only a third of his army, and yet God
sent his angel again,
who said to Gideon, “If you
desire my help
you need even fewer people,
for my will is that you succeed.
Tomorrow, watch well
when you come to the river:
the men who cup the water
in their hands to drink
shall be chosen,
and those who lie
upon their bellies to drink
shall be forsaken and sent away.
For I am almighty
and I desire to show my aid
to only a few good men.”
Thus Gideon watched well
the next morning, and did everything
that God had asked him to do.
Left standing with him
were three hundred and no more,
the rest had all gone.
Gideon was terrified,
and spoke to God,
pleading as much as he dared.
God, who wished to warn him
so that he would act rightly,
bid him on that same night
to take one man and hear
what would be said
among the heathen enemies
so that he would be wiser
concerning what would happen.
Gideon took Purah
(whom he trusted above all the others)
towards the enemy host that night
as they were camped in a valley
to hear what they would say.
As he walked through the army
he heard two Saracens speaking.
One said, “Interpret this dream
that came to me as I slept:
I thought I saw a barley cake
come from the hill
and start rolling down,
in a moment
as it ran its course
the tents of the kings of Midian,
of Amalek, of Amor,
of Ammon, and of Jebus,
and many more tents too
were thrown to the ground and overcast,
with a great noise.
I was so afraid
that I awoke from pure dread.”
“"I can read this dream easily,”
said the other Saracen,
“the barley cake is Gideon.
From the hill
he shall come down with such a cry
upon us and our kings,
that we will be struck with horror.
He will bring such dread
that if we only had wings
we would despair to be on foot
and take to the air,
for nothing will withstand him.”
When Gideon heard
this tale he thanked God
and silently crept away
remaining unseen.
Now he fully understood
that he would triumph,
so the following night he readied
to attack the multitudes.
Now you shall hear a great marvel
of the cunning he performed.
The few soldiers he had left
were all given
pots in which each took
a light burning in a lantern,
and each of them had a trumpet
in his other hand besides.
That night, once it was dark,
Duke Gideon
began his work.
He divided his folk in three,
made them swear not to flee,
and taught them how to cry out
all in one voice,
and what word they should scream,
and how they should break their pots
all at once when they heard
that Gideon had broken his.
When they came to the spot
they were to do as he did.
And thus this noble duke
stalked forward when it was time,
broke his pot and cried aloud,
and the others broke their pots as well.
The trumpets were not forgotten; he blew, and so did they, with such a noise among them all that it was as if the sky was falling. The hill echoed their noise, and when the host in the valley heard it and saw the fires on the hill both their hearing and their sight gave them such a sudden fear as none had felt before. The tents were forgotten, no goods at all were taken, but only with their bare bodies they fled like wild hares. And still the soldiers blew, until such time as they saw that their foes had madly fled. When they understood their advantage, they began to pursue. Thus you see how God’s grace came to the aid of the good men, whereas at other times it failed for those less virtuous. This tale should not be skipped, for it clearly shows that to the well-intentioned God gave and granted the victory. The example of this history is good for every king to hold; firstly he must see to it that he himself lives virtuously, and that to the people he brings goodness, for then he may be glad of many merry days, whatever needs to be done. For He who sits above the Moon and decides what fails and what prospers in every case, in every need, is so well disposed to a good king that he shall repress all his foes, so that no man can harm him. Conversely, He can just as well
cause a wicked king to fall
into the hands of his enemies.

[A King’s Duty]

Now furthermore I shall return to the matter at hand and speak of Justice and Pity as they pertain to royalty. A king must understand well that knighthood must be taken in hand when the need arises; he shall have no need for fear in either war or peace if his conscience is clean. A king may find cases where it is better to slay than to save, and examples of this can be found…

The high Maker of Mankind through the prophet Samuel told Saul that he need not fear to fight against king Agag, for God promised that Agag would be overcome. After it transpired that Saul defeated Agag, God instructed that he give no respite, but should slay him at once. But Saul let the moment pass and did not do as God had asked, for Agag promised to pay him a great ransom; King Saul allowed him to live out of false pity. But He who sees and knows all, the high God, saw the deceit and complained to Samuel, sending word that if Saul would not take Agag’s life he would not only die himself, but his royalty would be lost forevermore, from himself and all his heirs, and would never come again.
See this plainly:
that for ‘too much’ and ‘too little’
the prince is too blame.
It has always been a king’s duty
to do the deeds of a knight;
for in the hands of a king
both death and life are
part of the laws of justice.
To kill is a deadly vice,
but if a man deserves death
and a king preserves his life
when he ought to die
then he disobeys the example
which the Bible teaches…

King David’s will
(when he was about to die)
demanded that his son
would slay Joab at once.
When David had passed away,
young Solomon the Wise
did as his father asked
and killed Joab in such a way
that when this justice was heard
the people feared him even more,
and God was well pleased
that Solomon would follow
the laws of Justice.
And yet he also kept
Pity (as a prince should),
he was not tyrannical
(but only desired wisdom),
and was so righteous,
that he had peace all his life;
he needed no deadly wars,
for every man feared his wisdom.
And since he himself was wise,
he found worthy, praiseworthy men
to be his counselors;
every prince ought
to make his retinue
of wise men and to dismiss
the fools. There is nothing
better for a king
than counsel, which is the substance of all the king’s governance.

In Solomon a man may see what things are most necessary and proper for a worthy king. When he took the throne, God asked him to wish and said that He would grant whatever one thing he asked. And he, the new king, prayed to God for a blessing, and this is what he said:

“Oh King by whom I shall reign! Give me wisdom so that while I rule Your people I may keep them, and save them, and honor You.”

When Solomon had made his wish, God was so well pleased that he soon granted not only what he had asked but also riches, and health, and peace, and high nobility, besides the wisdom he wanted which stands above all other things.

[A King’s Advisors]

Whatever king hopes to save his reign must certainly have (after faith in God) faith that his counselors are full of truth and righteousness. Above all else a king shall decide fairly between severity and pity and keep the balance even, so that the high God in Heaven and all the people speak well of his name. A king’s own goodness profits more than any earthly wares for otherwise (if a king falls into sin) it is often seen
that the common people are afflicted
and suffer dearly for the king’s sin
for no fault of their own.
When the king offends God
the people endure what he deserves
here in this world, but elsewhere?
I do not know how it shall be there.
In goodness a king must trust
in himself first, since he is sure
of no other help but God’s;
thus shall his rule over himself
accord with providence
and be the better conscience.
And to find an example of this,
a tale I read, and so it follows...
A chronicle says that
the Roman King Lucius
summoned to his chambers one night
the steward of his house
and his chamberlain
to take counsel with them;
standing by the fireplace
the three spoke together.
It happened that the king’s fool
sat by the fire on a stool
playing with some baubles;
although he heard all they said,
they paid him no attention.
The king asked them what news
came from the word on the street,
and they told him as best they could.
When they had spoken
the king eagerly
asked them this:
what did the people say of their king?
When folk said his name
was it with praise or with blame?
What they had heard and seen
he asked them to tell plainly,
and to leave nothing out
by their oaths of loyalty.
The steward first
gave his answer to the king
hoping to smooth over this matter.

He said that as far as he had heard
the king’s reputation was good and honorable.

Thus the steward was commended,
but he did not tell the truth.
The king then asked
the chamberlain for his recollection.

He, who was subtle and wise
(and cared somewhat for his oath),
related that the people said
that if the king’s counsel was true,
then they thought
that the king would be
more worthy in his office.

Thus he blamed the counselors
and excused the king’s behavior.

The fool, who had heard all
of this (as God had willed),
saw that they had not said enough;
he laughed at them both,
and said this to the king:
“Sire, if only
the wisdom of your own mind
were any good,
you would have not needed this report.”

The king marveled
that a fool spoke so wisely,
and realized what was lacking
within his own conscience.

And thus the fool’s testimony
(which God’s grace had inspired),
made him desire better advisors.

He dismissed the vicious
and appointed the virtuous;
he amended the unjust laws,
and distributed the land’s goods well
so that the people were not oppressed,
and everything was improved.

For when a king is properly wise
and has other wise men
as counselors, he will not fail
to succeed in every way.

The vices then disappear,
and every virtue has its way,
and high God is pleased,
and the people can rest easy.
If the common people cry out,
and the kind does not stop
to listen to their complaint,
(or if he otherwise
disdares to respect them),
it has been often seen
that great misfortunes arise;
and here is one example...

After the death of Solomon,
when that wise king was gone
and Rehoboam
was to receive the crown,
the people held a parliament
for they were all of one mind,
and they pleaded to the king
with one voice saying:
“Our lord, we beg you
to hear our humble speech
and grant our reasonable request,
either by your grace or wisdom.
When your father was alive
he both imposed and relieved
the work which is
harshly laid upon the common people.
When the temple was under construction
he created a new
and arbitrary royal tax
in order to support
the work which was underway.
But now it happens
that construction is finished,
and he was rich when he died
so the tax is no longer needed.
Please take heed
and take no more from the people
who have been long burdened!
For this we have come to you
to pray with tender hearts
that you release the debt
which your father set upon us.
If you do so
we will be loyal to you forevermore
and come and go at your bidding.”

When the king heard this request
he said that he needed advice
and could not decide for some time.
While he thought about this matter
he sought out counsel.
First, the wise old knights
whom he had asked
counseled him in this manner:
he should (with love and good cheer)
forgive and grant all that was asked
of the people whom his father taxed,
for then he would improve his reign
at little cost to himself.
The king heard and disregarded this,
and instead his mind agreed
with the young and foolish.
They despised the old men
and said, “Sire, it would forever
shame your worthy name
if you do not keep the tax
while you are young and mighty
which your old father got.
You must plainly show the people
that while your rule this land
the little finger of your hand
is stronger
than your father’s whole body was.
You must show
that if he punished them with twigs
you will smite them with scorpions,
and where your father took a little
you will take much more.
Thus you will make them sorely fear
the great heart of your courage,
and this will keep them obedient.”

This young king agreed
to do as these advisors said,
but this was his undoing.
For when he spoke
following the young counselors’ advice,
he repeated their words
to the people in attendance,
and when they heard these words
of malice and of menace,
right there to his face
they utterly rebuked him
and shamed him with great reproach,
raving that
he thought only of himself.
As the wild rage
of wind makes the sea savage
and brings waves out of calm,
so too (for lack of laws and grace)
the people stirred all at once
and abandoned his lands,
so that of the twelve tribes
only two remained
standing with him.
So forevermore
with no intention to return
they departed their rightful home.
All Israel with a common voice
chose a new king
among themselves,
forsaking their young lord.
The poor knight Jeroboam
they took, and left Rehoboam,
de spite him being the rightful heir.
Thus the young caused a great change;
as a result of bad counsel
the rightful blood and the rulership
were divided ever after.
It often proves that
the counsel of the young is too passionate;
lack of prudence causes harm.
Old age is best for giving advice,
but lively youth deserves thanks too
for it performs the work.
Truly both of these
have their own uses;
if he would retain his crown
a king will need them every day.
One understands, one does,
and the king must rule both,
or else trouble will result.

And upon the matter of the dispute between the two I have found this in a book: “Would it be better for the land if the king was himself wise and himself praiseworthy, but have bad counselors, or on the other hand, for the king to be vicious, but with virtuous counselors?” The book answered that it is better for them to be wise who shall give the advice, for they are many while the king is one. It is easier for one man with false counsel to fall from wisdom, than for he alone to change many from vice to virtue, that would be strange indeed! The land will be glad if the king has good counselors which lead him to righteousness, so that his high nobility between punishment and Pity decides mercifully and fairly. A king is most beholden overall to Pity, but in particular there are some who should receive his Pity most of all, these are the people of his land, for under his hand by God’s will they are governed. Emperor Antonius once said (or so I read), that he would rather save one of his subjects than to have a thousand of his enemies slain. This he learned (or so I read) from Scipio, who had been
Consul of Rome. And thus we have seen many examples of how in a king’s hands is the duty to govern the common people; if he wishes, he may well learn. Nothing is so pleasing to God as is good governance and all governance is bound to Pity. Thus I argue that Pity is the foundation of every king’s reign as long as Justice is mixed in. These two remove all vice, and help more than any other virtues to make a king’s reign stable. Thus the four points of governance have been presented: Truth first, and then Generosity, and Pity along with Justice. I have told them all, but beyond them is a fifth point to create the rule of Policy; by it a king may moderate the natural loves of the flesh. Now I will tell of this measure, so that all points shall be served and the law of God observed.

[Chastity]

Corporis et mentis regem decet omnis honestas, Nominis vt famam nulla libido ruat. Omne quod est hominis effeminat illa voluptas, Sit nisi magnanimi cordis, vt obstet ei.  
(A king must be virtuous in every way.)

The male is made for the female, but one desires many, exceeding all natural needs. When a man has already found a wife of his own, why should he seek elsewhere to borrow another man’s plow? He has gear enough for himself
which suits him better
than other unknown things.
Every good man should know this
and think how marriage
depends on his own true vow,
breaking which would be deceitful
and discordant to his manhood,
especially if he is great
(as the books all say).
The Philosopher taught
Alexander, who learned
how he ought to moderate
his body so that he
should have no excess of fleshy lust.
Along these lines,
the fifth point I mentioned earlier
is Chastity, which seldom
is seen nowadays.
Nonetheless, it is the grace
(alone of all the others)
that lets anyone be chaste at all.
A king’s high office
(which the bishops
have anointed and sanctified)
must be more glorified
by the dignity of his crown
than some other person
who has a lesser duty.
Therefore, a prince should take caution
before he falls into disorder,
so that he does not foolishly
relinquish to womanhood
the worthiness of his manhood.
I have read that Aristotle
told Alexander
that to gladden his heart
he could look upon the faces
of fair women.
Yet he should also exemplify
guidance and bodily reserve
lest he lose control
and betray himself.
There is no duplicity in women,
when a man is befuddled
his own wits have fooled him;
I excuse the woman entirely.
When a man dwells upon
the foolish impressions
of his imagination
he fans the fire within himself,
while the woman knows nothing,
and so she is blameless.
If a man causes himself
to drown, and does nothing to prevent it,
the water is blameless.
Is it gold’s fault that that men covet it?
If a man passionately loves
a woman who owes him nothing
and wounds his own heart
she is not responsible for his folly.
So bitterly he longs for company
that he may try anything;
a man makes first chase,
the woman flees and he pursues.
Therefore Reason says
the man is the cause of whatever happens,
and he often falls
to where he may not arise again.
Despite this, wise men
have fooled themselves before,
what happens nowadays
has happened since the beginning;
the strong one is feeble in this case.
The law of Nature suits men
to love, but it is not natural
for a man to lose his wits for love.
For if July shall freeze
and December shall be hot,
the year is disturbed (if I may say so).
To see a man’s
foolishness make him effeminate,
instead of how a man should be,
this is like a sock outside the shoe,
which none have ever heard of.
But yet the world often accuses
great princes of this deed,
for they have misled themselves with love,
and left their manhood behind,
as in old examples which I find...

[Lecherous Kings]

These old tales tell
that Sardanapalus
(who ruled over
the great kingdom of Assyria)
through his undisciplined heart
fell into that raging fire
of love which makes men fools.
He was so debauched,
and so womanish,
and so unnatural that he was
like a fish who wished to live on land.
Such a desire he found for women
that he remained in his chambers,
and cared only for
the women and what they wished;
seldom did he do otherwise
even to go outside
and see what was going on.
There he kissed and there he played,
they taught him to braid a thread,
and weave a purse, and string a pearl.
All the while, Arbaces
(the Prince of Media)
saw this king’s womanhood
and fall from chivalry,
and gathered help and warriors,
and fought so that at last
he cast this king from his reign.
The kingdom was undone forevermore,
and when men speak of him
it is only to shame him further.

Love is moderation.

King David had many loves,
but nonetheless all were secondary,
and knighthood he kept always;
no fleshy lust
to lie in a lady’s arms
parted him from his lust for battle.
For when a prince pursues desire
rather than war
(when it is time to take up arms)
his country is often harmed
and his enemies become bold
when they behold no defense.
Many lands were lost this way;
men can read the stories
of those that sought ease
but bought it dearly.
Too much ease is worthless,
it brings forth every vice
and sets virtue back,
turning abundance into deficiency.
In a chronicle I find
how Cyrus, King of Persia,
got to war
against a people he feared
from a country called Lydia.
Try as he might,
he was always bested by them
in battles and in wars.
When he saw and knew
that he could not deal with them by strength
he devised a scheme
to beguile this worthy people;
he offered them a peace treaty
which would last for all time
(so said his words
but his thoughts were otherwise).
What happened in this case
was that once this people had peace
they began seeking pleasure
and worldly ease, which (as it is told)
is the natural nurse
of every desire which leads to vice.
When they had fallen to their lusts
they forgot all about wars,
there were none who respected
arms; in idleness
they put business away
and took instead to dancing and play.
Above all other things
they took a liking
to fleshy lusts, so that Chastity
was scorned
and everyone did as they pleased.
When the Persian king heard
that they had entered into folly
his power (when they least expected)
came more suddenly than thunder
and subjugated them forever.
Thus lechery lost
that land which had before
been best of all.

In the Bible I find another
tale on this topic,
of Amalek the pagan king,
who found his might could not
defend his land and put away
the worthy people of Israel.
This idolater, as it befell,
took the advice of Balaam
and gathered a group of fair women
who were lively and young,
and sent them out
to the Hebrews. Forth they went
with grey eyes and styled brows
and all well-dressed;
when they arrived
among the Hebrews none could help
but catch whom they could,
each of them thinking of desires
which they bought dearly afterwards.
For virtue then began to fail,
and when they came to battle
afterwards in sorry plight
they were taken and defeated,
so that in a short time
their might was overthrown
though they had been strong before.
But Phineas took the case
into his own hands
and ended this punishment
by pleasing God with his deed.
When he came upon
a couple of adulterers,
he impaled them both through,
and left them there for men to see.
And when others saw them
they understood the example,
and prayed to God
to amend their old sins,
and He sent his mercy
and restored them to new grace.

Thus it is shown in many places
how the cleanliness of Chastity
is needed for the worthiness
of all fighting men,
but most of all
this virtue is needed in a king,
for upon his fortunes hang
the success or failure of his land.
If a king does not
forsake his flesh’s desires,
he sets a trap for himself
which he may fall in
when he should have done otherwise.
Every man should understand
that in every age
lust has been a sorry thing to crave,
for in the end it makes men sigh
and turns joy into sorrow.
The bright Sun shines in the morning,
not in the dark night,
and the lively youth of man’s might
(unless it remains virtuous)
will someday mis-turn the wheel.
Every worthy prince must
within himself behold himself
and see the state of his body,
and remember how no joys
of this world are made to last,
and how the flesh will someday
forsake the desires of this life.
A great example of this
was Solomon, whose appetite
was wholly set upon delight
and the pleasure of women.
This ignorance of his
still amazes the wide world,
for he, whose wit
had surpassed all other men,
was so entangled in fleshy lusts
that he, who decreed laws for
God’s people, withdrew himself
from God to such a degree
that he worshipped and sacrificed
(for various loves in various places)
unto false gods.
This was the author of Ecclesiastes,
the fame of whom shall last forever,
but he forsook the mighty God
and the law when he took
wives and concubines
from the pagans
and did idolatry for them.
And this I read of his foolishness…
She of Sidonia had him
kneel and raise his arms
to Astarte with great humility,
for she was the goddess of her land.
She who was a Moabite
so delighted him
that his lust devoured his wit,
and he honored the god Chemosh.
Another, an Amonite,
so stupefied him with love,
that with incense to her god Moloch
he sacrificed and reverenced
just as she had asked.
Thus was the wisest overcome
with the blind desire that he sought
but he rued it afterwards.
The prophet Ahijah the Shilonite
just before Solomon died
(while he was amidst his lusts),
predicted what would happen afterward.
One day he met
Jeroboam the knight, greeted him,
and asked him to stay,
and hear what would happen.
Suddenly Ahijah cast
off his cloak and in an instant
cut it into twelve pieces;
two parts for himself
he kept and the remnant
(as God had ordained)
he gave to Jeroboam
son of Nebat
and knight of the king’s court.
He said, “Such is God’s might,
that as you have seen of
my cloak, so shall it be
after the death of Solomon.
God hath commanded that
the reign shall be divided,
at which time you shall see
that when the division comes
power in proportion
to your share of my cloak
you shall receive.
Thus Solomon’s son will pay for
the lusts and lechery
of his father.”

Take heed that
a king is suited to be chaste,
for else he may foolishly waste
both himself and his reign too,
and that would make any king loathsome.
Oh what a vile sin
to destroy a king!
But vengeance on himself
was not enough,
for after he died
he ruined his heritage too
(as I described before).
Thus and therefore
the Philosopher wrote
in his advice for kings
that excess of luxury
they must tempered and moderated
to be naturally sufficient
and accordant to Reason.
Then, ignorant lust
shall not be able to misgovern
and overthrow
as it would an unreasonable man.
Unless a man’s wit swerves,
when Nature is duly served
what is reasonable suffices,
but when his wit fails him
he may sorely dread his lusts.
Thus I read of Antonius son of Severus,
that he in vulgar fashion
gave in wholly to this vice.
He was so foolish
that Nature complained
unto God, for it disdained
what Antonius’ lust had wrought.
He direly paid for it,
for God’s punishment
is still spoken of today.
But to recount
the particulars of misgovernance
both greed and injustice
along with the remaining sins
(lechery included)
I find them abundantly
within a tale, which I shall tell
as an example of this matter...

[Tarquin, Arruns, and the Gabii]

Old verses say
that the proud, tyrannous
Tarquin, King of Rome,
did many wrongful deeds.
He had many sons,
among whom Arruns was
most similar to his father;
within a few years
(by treason and tyranny)
they seized many lands
taking no heed of the justice
appropriate to their offices
and the rule of governance.
Their only pleasures
were desires of the flesh.
Eventually they undertook
a war which failed
and left them badly grieved
against a folk called
the Gabii. The night afterwards,
Arruns, when he was at home
in Rome, secretly entered
into a chamber and beat himself,
leaving ten or twelve wounds
to be seen upon his back.
With his wounds still fresh
he hastily rode away
and came the next day
to the city of the Gabii
and went inside. When he
was seen, they shut the gates,
and the lords set upon him
with drawn swords in hand.
Arruns did not fight them
but said, “I am here at your will;
it would be good if you slaughtered me,
as my own father wishes.”
To explain this
he asked them to look
and told them that
his father and his brothers
(who he said were enraged)
had beaten and reviled him
and exiled him from Rome forever.
Thus he made them believe,
and said that if he could achieve
his purpose, they would be rewarded
for helping him.
When the lords saw
how woeful he was
they took pity on his grief,
but they were pleased nonetheless
that Rome had exiled him.
The Gabii took counsel
and made him swear upon the gods
that he would tell them the truth
and support them with all his might;
likewise, they promised him
that they would help his cause.
They set about healing him;
he was bathed and anointed
until he was lively again,
and he was given his every wish
so that he had the whole city
just as he pleased.
Then he thought of the best way
to show his tyranny;
he hired a scoundrel
who went to his father
with a message
asking Tarquin
to advise him to find a way
to take over the city
which he stood so well within.
When the messenger had come
to Rome and found
the king, he was by chance
walking in a garden,
so the messenger spoke to him there.
When the messenger had finished
describing the situation
and Tarquin understood
what was going on
he took a stick in hand
and as they went through the garden
one by one the lily flowers
which were sprouting up
he struck down where they stood.
He said to the messenger,
“See what I am doing? This will
be your answer.
This is the technique
that you shall tell my son.”
The messenger stayed no longer
but took his leave and returned
to his master, telling all
that his father had done.
When Arruns herd what he said,
immediately he understood what it meant
and so directed all his efforts
until (through fraud and trickery)

the Gabii princes’ heads

had been struck off, and all was won.

Tarquin then came to his son

and entered the town with Romans

who took and massacred the citizens

without Reason or Pity;

he spared no one.

For the speed of his conquest

Tarquin organized a rich feast

and solemn sacrifice

in Phoebus’ temple.

When the Romans were assembled,

in their presence

upon the prepared altar

where the fires were burning

suddenly there appeared

a hideous serpent

who devoured up

the sacrifice and

quenched the fires;

as quickly as he came

he vanished deep into the ground again.

Every man began to say,

“Oh lord, what does this mean?”

And they prayed and cried out

to Phoebus to tell them

the cause. At that moment

all heard a ghastly voice

answering the Romans,

and saying how for the wickedness,

pride, and unrighteousness

of Tarquin and his son,

the sacrifice was wasted,

for it was unacceptable

to celebrate abominable sin.

Furthermore, he told them

that he who next kissed

his mother would avenge

the crime. This speech

made the listeners’ hearts glad,

though they were careful not to show it.
There was a knight called Brutus,
and he with all his haste
fell and kissed the ground,
though none understood why
(their thought he had stumbled
by chance and fallen down).
But Brutus was of another mind
for he knew well
that Earth is every man’s natural
mother. But the people were blind,
and did not see as shrewdly as he.
When they had left that place
and returned to Rome again,
every Roman man
hurried to his mother
and kissed her, each of them hoping
to be the first by chance
and take vengeance on Tarquin,
as Phoebus had said.

[But there is a time appointed for all things,
and they must wait until then.]

Soon after these events
Tarquin again recklessly
warred against a nearby
town with strong walls
which was called Ardea;
he set a siege around it
so no man could pass out.
Meanwhile, one night
prince Arruns had supper,
and some of the knights
were asked to eat with him.
When they had come
and sat down to eat,
among their banter
Arruns put forth the question
of who had the best wife
in Rome. There began an argument,
for Arruns said he had the best
and the others argued without rest
until at last Collatine
(a worthy knight and cousin of Arruns) said this:

“It is useless just to talk; the deed is what really counts.

We should all take our horses and ride out so we may all know what our wives do when we are away, and that will be the true test.”

Arruns agreed entirely so they leapt on horseback right away, and did not sleep until they had ridden forth and came secretly into Rome.

In hidden places they doused their lights and took a room in which they disguised themselves so that no one would recognize them.

First they crept to the palace to see the wife whom Arruns had bragged of.

They found her in a happy mood, all full of mirth and jokes, but among all her words she said nothing of her husband.

When they had seen all that they wished they went forth secretly to the gate of brass (which was called Collatia) near Collatine’s household.

At his home they found his wife Lucrece surrounded by women, all intent on work, and she worked too and bade them hurry, saying, “These will be clothes for my husband, who with his sword and spear lies at the siege in great discomfort.

If it wouldn’t trouble him, I wish to God that he were here.

Until I hear for certain
some good news from him
my heart is greatly troubled.
Of all men
he is the most daring;
he can’t restrain himself,
and that may do him harm
when they attack the walls.
If I had my wish
that city would fall into a pit!
Then the siege would be over
and I could see my husband.”
With that, her eyes teared up
and she could not stop herself;
as men see dewdrops cover
the leaves and the flowers too,
just so upon her cheeks
fell the sad salt tears.
When Collatine heard her say
the feelings of her true heart
he sprang up and ran to her
and said, “Look my dear,
he has come to you again
who you love most, just as you said.”
And she, suddenly cheerful again
embraced him in her small arms,
and her pale cheeks colored
and her beauty was restored
greater even than before.
The king’s son, who was nearby
and heard the lady
say these things
lost his reason and his wits,
for love came then
and fired his dart
and struck Arruns with such a wound,
that suddenly he felt and knew
the blind sickness
which no doctor can cure.
But nonetheless
at that time he said nothing
to reveal what he felt,
but openly with glad words
(so courteous in their manner!)
he spoke and made friendly cheer
until it was time to go.
Collatine as well
took his leave, and by night
with all their haste
they rode to the siege again.
Arruns was so woefully beset
with the thoughts which came upon him
that while it was broad daylight
he went to bed, not to rest,
but to think of the noblest
and fairest woman
that he ever saw or ever would see.
So he ruminated in his heart
and pictured her image:
first the features of her face,
which the grace of Nature
had given womanly beauty
which could not be surpassed;
and how her hair was tressed,
and how her clothing was arranged,
and how she spoke, and how she worked,
and how she wept. All this he thought,
for he had forgotten no detail,
and he liked them all so well
that amongst the living or the dead
none compared to her womanhood.
Thus this tyrannical knight
was made weak, but not good,
for he thought of nothing
but how by some trick
he could overcome her will
and fulfill the desire of his flesh.
This love disregards reason;
he whose honor is weak,
must be watched carefully.
Arruns, who always obeyed his lusts,
with mingled love and tyranny
decided on a treacherous
way to claim his prize.
He said, “Fortune favors
the plans of the bold,”
and thus boasting to himself
like a wild man
he began his treason.
Up he stood and forth he went
on horseback, but his intentions
were secret; he took
the quickest route until he came
to Collatia, the gate of Rome.
It was somewhat late
(right around sunset)
as he shaped his net
to ensnare her innocence.
Careful of discovery,
he rode as secretly as he could;
dismounted his horse
beside Collatine’s home
and was welcomed with friendliness
since he was a cousin of that family.
When the good spouse Lucrece
saw who it was
she invited him in with good cheer,
supposing it a great honor,
timidly asked him
for news of her husband.
He began to tell her
many false stories
(which he himself invented)
in order to gladden her heart
and put her in a better mood
by hearing happy news
how her husband fared.
Thus the truth was deceived
by sly treachery towards
her who had only good intentions.
Soon a feast was ready
in his honor,
but yet he had not dared
to speak of love in any way;
instead, with covert subtlety
he shaped his friendly words,
just as the tiger bides his time
and hopes to catch his prey.
When the tables had been cleared
and their meal was finished,
he said that he was tired
and asked to go to bed.
She sped with all haste
to satisfy this request,
and everything was soon ready.
She brought him to the prepared room,
took her leave, and went out
into her own chamber nearby,
but he who she thought
was her friend was her foe,
and much woe came of it.
The tyrant, though he feigned sleep,
soon arose from his bed
and crept around
until he heard that all
had gone to bed and were fast asleep.
Over his head he drew his hood,
his unsheathed sword
he took in hand, and she, still sleeping,
lay in bed. What she dreamed
God only knows, for he unlatched
the door too quietly to hear,
and softly crept up
to the bed in which she slept.
Suddenly,
he grabbed her with both his arms.
With that the worthy wife awoke;
so tender was her womanhood
that her voice left from pure dread,
and she dared not to speak a word;
besides, he warned her
that if she made a noise or cry
he had brought his sword
to slay her and all her household.
Thus her heart was quailed;
a lamb seized
in a wolf’s mouth was no more dismayed
than Lucrece, and no less naked;
she fainted away in his hands
overwhelmed.
He, always obedient to lust,
took what he wished
then went on his way and came unseen
to his own room again;
he called up the chamberlain,
and made ready to ride.
In lecherous pride
he leapt to his horse and rode away.
She remained in bed
even when she knew he had gone,
and stayed there past sunrise,
and did not stir until late in the day.
She threw away her clothes
and (as one who forsakes the world)
took up black garments.
Afterwards,
like a wellspring
her eyes filled up with woeful tears
and her hair hung down before them.
She wept, and no man knew why,
but piteously
she begged that they would hurry
and fetch her husband
and father too.
Thus they came,
and Brutus came with Collatine,
for Lucrece was his cousin.
All three went in
and in the room they saw
the most woeful sight on Earth,
for she wept as if made of water.
The chamber door was shut
before they said a word to her;
then, with her clothes in disorder
(as one who hates herself)
and with her hair unkempt and hanging,
she began to kneel
before her husband.
He, who could not comprehend
what had happened to her
asked in a soft voice,
“What happened, my good sweet?”
She, who thought herself unclean
and the most worthless of all women,
hung her woeful head
in shame, she could not bear to look up.
They saw this and were startled, and begged her that she would not keep silent but tell her friends what ailed her, why she so bewailed herself, and how they could help. But her sorrows were still fresh, and though she tried to speak tender shame stifled her words; many times she tried to start but could not come to the point. They encouraged her on to tell what had happened, until she saw that there was no choice; her tale, with shame and dread she told, and not without pain. Hoping to restrain her woe, her husband (unlucky man!) comforted her as best he could, and swore (as did her father) that he was not upset at things done against her will; they begged her to be still and said she had all their forgiveness. But she would not think of living, and would accept no forgiveness. She said that wickedness was wrought on her body that would never go away, and that ever after the world would scorn her. Quickly then, before any man could move, the sword (which was hidden within her garments) she took in her hands and pierced her heart through. She fell, but even as she fell she adjusted her clothes so that she was covered even below her knees. Thus died this wife honorably, although woefully.
They were consumed by sorrow.

Her husband and her father both fainted over the body; no man’s tongue can tell the anguish that they felt.

But Brutus (who was with them) kept his courage; he leapt to Lucrece’s body, pulled out the bloody sword, and swore to all the gods that he would have vengeance.

She seemed to change her expression, her dead eyes looked up as if grateful for his vow. He noticed this, but had to be contented with that look.

Brutus, with a manly heart, quickly roused up her husband and father too and said that they should send without delay for a bier to carry the body.

They laid Lucrece, still bleeding, on it, and with a great cry went out into the marketplace of Rome; in an instant the people were summoned to assembly, and every man’s heart trembled when he heard the truth of the case.

Therefore counsel was taken by the great and the small; Brutus told them all the tale and bade them remember the long list of sins which Arruns had done before, and even before his birth what his had father had done wrongfully in his reign.

A great clamor arose with new shame for old sins, and all the town began to cry, “Away, away with tyranny and lechery and greed!”
And at last in such a way
the father they exiled
and the son they killed,
and set up a better government.
But there is yet another tale
to show that righteousness and lechery
cannot coexist
in he who makes the laws.
If you will truly understand,
you must know this tale,
which was written long ago...

[Claudius and Livius]

When Appius of Rome
(whose other name was Claudius)
was governor of the city,
an incredible thing happened
concerning a noble maiden
who was the daughter
of Livius Virginius and his wife.
Men said that her fairness
was unequaled in all the town.
This fame went up and down
until it came to Claudius’ ear,
then his thoughts were fixed on her
and all his heart was set afire.
He desired the flower
which belonged to her maidenhood,
and he inquired if he could fulfil
the blind desires of his will.
But he could not,
for she was engaged to be married
to a worthy knight of great lineage
whose name was Ilicius,
and her father was pleased
for him to marry his daughter.
But before they could be wed,
his father (who was a Roman
of leading chivalry)
had to take command
of a war which was underway;
he went out with all his strength
and all the men of arms,
so the marriage was put aside
they agreed that it would come later).
The king, when he had heard
that this maiden had promised
to marry, thought once more.
He had a brother,
Marcus Claudius by name,
who was a man just as debased
as was the king himself.
The two of them together
took counsel and found a way;
Marcus Claudius would say
that she was promised
entirely to his service
and to no other man;
he said he would
produce witnesses for his claim
so that she could not escape.
Their plan was set
to be enforced by law
while her father was absent;
she was summoned
into the presence of the king
and stood constrained by this thing.
Her friends knew well enough
that it was entirely false;
they came to the king
and invoked the common law
for the noble, worthy knight
who was her father.
He happened to be away
(for the benefit of them all)
at arms out upon the battlefield,
and he should not be harmed
nor shamed while away;
thus they begged all around.
Despite the clamor that he heard,
the king’s lust answered
and gave her only two days
of respite, for he knew
that in so short a time
her father could not appear.
But he was deceived,
for Livius had suspected
the purpose of the king before,
and therefore back to Rome again
he came riding in all haste,
leaving his army encamped
until he would return.
Thus, this worthy captain
appeared within a day;
reasonably and legally
he made his case,
and soon his daughter
(whom Marcus had accused)
was excused by the court.
The king, seeing his plan fail,
and that no trickery would work,
became encumbered by blind lust
and perverted the nature of the law.
Halfway-wrathfully
in the presence of everyone
(he was deceived by concupiscence)
he gave orders to his brother,
bidding him to seize
the maiden for himself.
Within his own mind
he saw truly
that his brother had been rebuffed,
but his own desire was at stake.
Again this maiden was wronged,
but this time by the king,
and against him there was no appeal
(as her father knew well).
Seeing this great tyranny
and lecherous lust
claim his daughter,
and from Ilicius
falsely steal the marriage,
Livius became like a raging lion,
knowing neither fear
nor the meaning of Pity.
A naked sword he drew,
and amidst the chaos
he thrust it through his daughter’s side
and cried aloud,
“Take her now you wrongful king!
I rather choose
to be the father of a maiden,
though she be dead, than
live to be shamed
and given an evil name.”

The king ordered his men to capture Livius, but this went as well
and when the chased wild boar,
feeling pain, throws off the hounds
and goes forth as he pleases.
In just such a way
this this worthy knight, with sword in hand,
carved a path and they fled before him,
for none could withstand his slashes.
He leapt upon his horse,
and with his sword dripping the blood
of his daughter
he came to the army
of Rome and told them what had happened.
He said that he believed
concerning this matter
that it was better to address
the great unrighteousness at home,
than to war in foreign lands
and lose what was left behind.
It seemed that any man’s
wife could be in jeopardy,
and his daughters too, if they
happened to be beautiful.
They marveled to see
that the king was unjust,
but suddenly their eyes saw clearly
and all together swore
that they would stand for what was right.
Thus, in one accord
they turned back to Rome.
Not long afterwards,
news of what had happened spread
and every man spoke it openly,
so that the secret treachery
(born of the king’s lechery)
came openly to men’s ears
...and brought forth a general fear,
so that every man began to dread
he who ruled over them.
Before anything worse could happen
the common voice of the people
demanded to depose the king.
To this cause
the Senate stood in agreement
and made lawful the doom;
the king received the punishment
appropriate for his governance.
Thus the unchaste was chastised,
and always the mighty should be advised
that they should govern
by this evidence,
and know that a good king should forsake
the vice of lust and follow virtue.

[Sara]

To make an end to this part,
and our discussion of Policy,
and Chastity in particular,
my final conclusion
is that every lust shall be eschewed,
and by this great example I argue...
In Ecbatana (a town in Media)
there was a maiden
whose name was Sara, and Raguel
was her father, and it so happened
that her body and her visage
were fairer than any other
that could be found among them.
The rich men of the city
(those who were lively and could love)
were deranged for love of her
and begged to marry her.
One of these was successful at last,
but it turned out that his proposal
had more to do with lust than marriage,
as he knew within his heart
and eventually came to repent.
Upon his wedding night,
when he prepared to go to bed
(caring nothing for God
but rather his own lusts),
before he was fully warm
and would have taken her in his arms,
Asmodeus, a fiend of Hell
(who, as the books tell,
tempts men in this way)
was already there with a plan
to serve his own delight.
He punished the man
by snapping his neck in two.
The young wife was upset,
but knew not what had happened,
and so it went
not only with this first man,
but in the same way afterwards
with six other husbands;
they all fell victim to Asmodeus.
All of them died in bed
just as soon as they laid a hand on her,
not for their lawful marriage
but for their fiery sin
(which exceeded what was proper).
Any who take heed
of what happened afterwards
will hear a great truth.
For Sara then married Tobit,
who the angel Raphael
had taught to be noble.
Asmodeus won nothing in that marriage,
and yet Tobit had his will;
his well-ordered desires
obeyed both law and Nature,
and so he preserved his life
and was not punished.
This is open evidence
and an example for men to see
that if immoderate desire
leads a man to misguided marriage,
he should rather go another way
and learn to control his lust.
God created the laws
both of Reason and of Nature;
the beasts are bound
only to the laws of Nature,
but to the creature Man
God gave Reason as well,
by which his nature
may sometimes be modified,
so that he shall do no lechery,
and yet achieve what he desires.
Thus the good laws save
everything from falsehood;
and this was taught to king Alexander
by the wise Philosopher
in his first lesson.
Not only Chastity,
but all honor
must be tested in a king,
how honest, how generous, how just, how chaste
has his Reason made him?
Together with the virtue of Pity,
these may help him win the approval
of his God and thus preserve
himself and his people in well-being,
and peace, and riches, and honor, and health
in this world and the next.

[Conclusion]
My son, we started out
speaking briefly, but then
for your own comfort you begged me
to relieve your love-pains.
You asked if I would share
all of Aristotle’s wisdom.
This I have done, and beyond this
with my tales I have tried
to ease your pains
in all the ways I could think of.

AMANS:
Enough father, please, I beg you!
For what you have said
I thank you a thousand times.
These tales overwhelm my ears
but yet my heart is elsewhere.
I cannot help myself,
I am always pained by love!
No wisdom I could hear
will make me forget
unless it puts me to sleep.
There is no time when I do not
think of love and its law;
I cannot withdraw my heart.
Please dear father,
stop this and return to the matter
of love, as we began.
If anything was glossed over,
or forgotten, or left behind
which pertains to love,
and I need to confess,
ask now! While I live
I would like to fix what is amiss.

GENIUS:
Of course my dear son.
Your confession, truly
is not yet done,
there is much about love you still don’t know.
Be well advised however,
that within this confession
the next point concerning love
is the last one of all.
I will begin, and you tell me where to stop…

End of Book 7