

Extract from “The Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer

Harvard University Translation - The original is the first line and the modern English translation is on every second line

8.1 The Second Nun's Prologue and Tale

The Second Nun's Prologue

- 1 The ministre and the norice unto vices,
The minister and the nurse of vices,
2 Which that men clepe in Englissh Ydelnesse,
Which men call in English Idleness,
3 That porter of the gate is of delices,
Who is porter of the gate of pleasures
4 To eschue, and by hire contrarie hire oppresse --
To shun, and by her contrary to overcome her --
5 That is to seyn, by leueful bisynesse --
That is to say, by keeping busy in lawful good works --
6 Wel oghten we to doon al oure entente,
Well ought we to do all our diligence
7 Lest that the feend thurgh ydelnesse us hente.
Lest the fiend by means of idleness seize us.
- 8 For he that with his thousand cordes slye
For he that with his thousand sly snares
9 Continuelly us waiteth to biclappe,
Continually lies in wait to seize us suddenly,
10 Whan he may man in ydelnesse espye,
When he can espy a man in idleness,
11 He kan so lightly cache hym in his trappe,
He can catch him in his trap so quickly,
12 Til that a man be hent right by the lappe,
That until a man is seized right by the hem of his garment,
13 He nys nat war the feend hath hym in honde.
He is not aware that the fiend has him in hand.
14 Wel oghte us werche and ydelnesse withstonde.
Well ought we to work and resist idleness.
- 15 And though men dradden nevere for to dye,
And even though people never dreaded to die,
16 Yet seen men wel by resoun, doutelees,
Yet they can well see by reason, doubtless,
17 That ydelnesse is roten slogardye,
That idleness is rotten laziness,

18 Of which ther nevere comth no good n' encrees;
From which there never comes any good or profit;
19 And syn that slouthe hire holdeth in a lees
And since sloth holds her (Idleness) on a leash
20 Oonly to slepe, and for to ete and drynke,
(Allowing her) only to sleep, and to eat and drink,
21 And to devouren al that othere swynke,
And to devour all that others earn by working,
22 And for to putte us fro swich ydelnesse,
And in order to set us apart from such idleness,
23 That cause is of so greet confusioun,
Which is the cause of such great ruin,
24 I have heer doon my faithful bisynesse
I have here done my faithful efforts
25 After the legende in translacioun
In translating the legend
26 Right of thy glorious lif and passioun,
Correctly of thy glorious life and suffering,
27 Thou with thy gerland wrought with rose and lilie --
Thou with thy garland made with rose and lily --
28 Thee meene I, mayde and martyr, Seint Cecilie.
I mean thee, maid and martyr, Saint Cecilie.
Invocacio ad Mariam

(Invocation to Mary)

29 And thow that flour of virgines art alle,
And thou who art the flower of all virgins,
30 Of whom that Bernard list so wel to write,
Of whom it so well pleased Bernard to write,
31 To thee at my bigynnyng first I calle;
To thee at my beginning first I call;
32 Thou confort of us wrecches, do me endite
Thou comfort of us wretches, let me narrate
33 Thy maydens deeth, that wan thurgh hire merite
Thy maiden's death, that won by means of her merit
34 The eterneel lyf and of the feend victorie,
The eternal life and victory over the fiend,
35 As man may after reden in hire storie.
As one may hereafter read in her story.
36 Thow Mayde and Mooder, doghter of thy Sone,
Thou Maid and Mother, daughter of thy Son,
37 Thow welle of mercy, synful soules cure,
Thou well of mercy, sinful souls' cure,
38 In whom that God for bountee chees to wone,
In whom God for goodness chose to dwell,
39 Thow humble, and heigh over every creature,
Thou humble, and high over every creature,
40 Thow nobledest so ferforth oure nature,
Thou so greatly enobled our nature,

41 That no desdeyn the Makere hadde of kynde
That the Maker of humankind had no disdain
42 His Sone in blood and flesh to clothe and wynde.
To clothe and wrap His Son in blood and flesh.

43 Withinne the cloistre blisful of thy sydis
Within the blissful cloister of thy sides
44 Took mannes shap the eterneel love and pees,
The eternal love and peace took man's shape,
45 That of the tryne compas lord and gyde is,
He who is lord and guide of the threefold universe,
46 Whom erthe and see and hevене out of relees
Whom earth and sea and heaven unceasing
47 Ay heryen; and thou, Virgine wemmelees,
Ever praise; and thou, Virgin without blemish,
48 Baar of thy body -- and dweltest mayden pure --
Bore in thy body -- and remained maiden pure --
49 The Creatour of every creature.
The Creator of every creature.

50 Assembled is in thee magnificence
Magnificence is in thee combined
51 With mercy, goodnesse, and with swich pitee
With mercy, goodness, and with such pity
52 That thou, that art the sonne of excellence
That thou, who art the sun of excellence
53 Nat oonly helpest hem that preyen thee,
Not only helpest them that pray thee,
54 But often tyme of thy benygnytee
But often of thy goodness
55 Ful frely, er that men thyn help biseche,
Very willingly, before men beseech thine help,
56 Thou goost biforn and art hir lyves leche.
Thou goest before and art their lives' physician.

57 Now help, thow meeke and blisful faire mayde,
Now, thou meek and blissful fair maid help
58 Me, flemed wrecche, in this desert of galle;
Me, banished exile, in this desert of bitterness;
59 Thynk on the womman Cananee, that sayde
Think on the Cananite woman, who said
60 That whelpes eten somme of the crommes alle
That dogs eat some of all the crumbs
61 That from hir lordes table been yfalle;
That from their lord's table are fallen;
62 And though that I, unworthy sone of Eve,
And though that I, unworthy son of Eve,
63 Be synful, yet accepte my bileve.
Be sinful, yet accept my faith.

64 And, for that feith is deed withouten werkis,
And, because faith is dead without works,

65 So for to werken yif me wit and space,
Give me wit and opportunity to work so,
66 That I be quit fro thennes that most derk is!
That I may be free from that place that is most dark!
67 O thou, that art so fair and ful of grace,
O thou, that art so fair and full of grace,
68 Be myn advocat in that heighe place
Be my advocate in that high place
69 Theras withouten ende is songe "Osanne,"
Where unceasingly is sung "Hosanna,"
70 Thow Cristes mooder, doghter deere of Anne!
Thou Christ's mother, daughter dear of Anne!

71 And of thy light my soule in prison lighte,
And of thy light enlighten in prison my soul,
72 That troubled is by the contagioun
That is troubled by the contamination
73 Of my body, and also by the wighte
Of my body, and also by the weight
74 Of erthely lust and fals affecciou;
Of earthly lust and false desires;
75 O havene of refut, O salvacioun
O haven of refuge, O salvation
76 Of hem that been in sorwe and in distresse,
Of those who are in sorrow and in distress,
77 Now help, for to my werk I wol me dresse.
Now help, for to my work I will address myself.

78 Yet preye I yow that reden that I write,
Yet I pray you who read what I write,
79 Foryeve me that I do no diligence
Forgive me that I make no effort
80 This ilke storie subtilly to endite,
To narrate this same story elaborately,
81 For bothe have I the wordes and sentence
For I have both the words and the meaning
82 Of hym that at the seintes reverence
Of him who out of reverence for the saint
83 The storie wroot, and folwen hire legende,
Wrote the story, and (I) follow her legend,
84 And pray yow that ye wole my werk amende.
And pray you that you will correct (any errors in) my work.

*Interpretacio nominis Cecile quam ponit Frater
Jacobus Januensis in Legenda*

*[The interpretation of the name of Cecilia which Brother
Jacob of Genoa put in the Legend.]*

85 First wolde I yow the name of Seint Cecilie
First the name of Saint Cecilie I would to you
86 Expowne, as men may in hir storie see.
Explain, as one can see in her story.
87 It is to seye in Englissh "hevenes lilie,"
It is to say in English "heaven's lily,"
88 For pure chaastnesse of virginitee;
For pure chastity of virginity;
89 Or, for she whitnesse hadde of honestee,
Or, because she had whiteness because of chastity,
90 And grene of conscience, and of good fame
And green because of conscience and of good reputation
91 The soote savour, "lilie" was hir name.
The sweet smell, "lily" was her name.

92 Or Cecilie is to seye "the wey to blynde,"
Or Cecilie is to mean "the way for the blind,"
93 For she ensample was by good techynge;
Because she set an example by good teaching;
94 Or elles Cecile, as I writen fynde,
Or else Cecile, as I written find,
95 Is joyned, by a manere conjoynynge
Is joined, by a sort of combination
96 Of "hevene" and "Lia"; and heere, in figurynge,
Of "heaven" and "Leah"; and here, symbolically,
97 The "hevene" is set for thoght of hoolynesse,
The "heaven" is set for her holiness of thought,
98 And "Lia" for hire lastynge bisynesse.
And "Leah" for her constant business.

99 Cecile may eek be seyde in this manere,
Cecile may also be explained in this manner,
100 "Wantynge of blyndnesse," for hir grete light
"Lack of blindness," for her great light
101 Of sapience and for hire thewes cleere;
Of wisdom and for her pure morals;
102 Or elles, loo, this maydens name bright
Or else, lo, this maidens bright name
103 Of "hevene" and "leos" comth, for which by right
Comes from "heaven" and "leos," for which rightly
104 Men myghte hire wel "the hevene of peple" calle,
Men could well call her "the heaven of people,"
105 Ensamble of goode and wise werkes alle.
Exemplar of all good and wise works.

106 For "leos" "peple" in Englissh is to seye,
For "leos" in English means "people,"
107 And right as men may in the hevene see
And just as men may in the heaven see
108 The sonne and moone and sterres every weye,
The sun and moon and stars in every direction,

109 Right so men goostly in this mayden free
Just so in this maiden men spiritually
110 Seyen of feith the magnanymytee,
See the greatness of spirit of faith,
111 And eek the cleernesse hool of sapience,
And also the complete clarity of wisdom,
112 And sondry werkes, brighte of excellence.
And various works, bright because of their excellence.

113 And right so as thise philosophres write
And just as these scientists write
114 That hevene is swift and round and eek brennynge,
That heaven is swift and round and also burning,
115 Right so was faire Cecilie the white
Just so was fair Cecilie the white
116 Ful swift and bisy evere in good werkyng,
Very swift and busy ever in good works,
117 And round and hool in good perseverynge,
And round and whole in persevering in good (works),
118 And brennynge evere in charite ful brighte.
And burning ever in very bright charity.
119 Now have I yow declared what she highte.
Now have I declared to you what she was called.

Explicit
(Here ends [the Prologue])

The Second Nun's Tale

120 This mayden bright Cecilie, as hir lif seith,
This bright maiden Cecilie, as her Life says,
122 Was comen of Romayns and of noble kynde,
Was descended from Romans and of noble birth,
122 And from hir cradel up fostred in the feith
And from her cradle nurtured up in the faith
123 Of Crist, and bar his gospel in hir mynde.
Of Christ, and bore his gospel in her mind.
124 She nevere cessed, as I writen fynde,
She never ceased, as I written find,
125 Of hir preyere and God to love and drede,
Of her prayer and God to love and dread,
126 Bisekyng hym to kepe hir maydenhede.
Beseeching him to preserve her virginity.

127 And whan this mayden sholde unto a man
And when this maiden should unto a man
128 Ywedded be, that was ful yong of age,
Wedded be, who was very young of age,
129 Which that ycleped was Valerian,
Who was called Valerian,

130 And day was comen of hir marriage,
And the day of her marriage was come,
131 She, ful devout and humble in hir corage,
She, very devout and humble in her spirit,
132 Under hir robe of gold, that sat ful faire,
Under her robe of gold, that became her very well,
133 Hadde next hire flesh yclad hire in an haire.
Had next to her flesh clad herself in a hair shirt.

134 And whil the organs maden melodie,
And while the organs made melody,
135 To God allone in herte thus sang she:
To God alone in heart thus sang she:
136 "O Lord, my soule and eek my body gye
"O Lord, my soul and also my body preserve
137 Unwemmed, lest that I confounded be."
Immaculate, lest that I be damned."
138 And for his love that dyde upon a tree
And for his love who died upon the cross
139 Every seconde and thridde day she faste,
Every second and third day she fasted,
140 Ay biddyng in hire orisons ful faste.
Ever praying in her prayers very earnestly.

141 The nyght cam, and to bedde moste she gon
The night came, and to bed must she go
142 With hire housbonde, as ofte is the manere,
With her husband, as often is the manner,
143 And pryvely to hym she seyde anon,
And privately to him she said at once,
144 "O sweete and wel biloved spouse deere,
"O sweet and well beloved spouse dear,
145 Ther is a conseil, and ye wolde it heere,
There is a secret, if you want to hear it,
146 Which that right fayn I wolde unto yow seye,
Which I am very eager to say to you,
147 So that ye swere ye shul it nat biwreye."
Providing that you swear you shall not reveal it."

148 Valerian gan faste unto hire swere
Valerian did earnestly unto her swear
149 That for no cas ne thyng that myghte be,
That for no occasion nor thing that might be,
150 He sholde nevere mo biwreyen here;
He should never ever betray her;
151 And thanne at erst to hym thus seyde she:
And then for the first time to him thus said she:
152 "I have an aungel which that loveth me,
"I have an angel who loves me,
153 That with greet love, wher so I wake or sleepe,
Who with great love, whether I wake or sleep,
154 Is redy ay my body for to kepe.
Is always ready to guard my body.

155 "And if that he may feelen, out of drede,
"And if he may sense, withoutt doubt,
156 That ye me touche, or love in vileynye,
That you touch me, or love me lecherously,
157 He right anon wol sle yow with the dede,
He straightway will slay you in the act,
158 And in youre yowthe thus ye shullen dye;
And in your youth thus you shall die;
159 And if that ye in clene love me gye,
And if you preserve me in chaste love,
160 He wol yow loven as me, for youre clenness,
He will love you as (he loves) me, for your chastity,
161 And shewen yow his joye and his brightnesse."
And show you his joy and his brightness."

162 Valerian, corrected as God wolde,
Valerian, corrected as God would (have it),
163 Answerde agayn, "If I shal trusten thee,
Answered in reply, "If I must trust thee,
164 Lat me that aungel se and hym biholde;
Let me see that angel and behold him;
165 And if that it a verray angel bee,
And if it be a true angel,
166 Thanne wol I doon as thou hast prayed me;
Then will I do as thou hast prayed me;
167 And if thou love another man, for sothe
And if thou love another man, in truth
168 Right with this swerd thanne wol I sle yow bothe."
Then truly with this sword will I slay you both."

169 Cecile answerde anon-right in this wise:
Cecile answered immediately in this manner:
170 "If that yow list, the angel shul ye see,
"If you wish, you shall see the angel,
171 So that ye trowe on Crist and yow baptize.
Provided that you believe in Christ and have yourself baptized.
172 Gooth forth to Via Apia," quod shee,
Go forth to the Appian Way," said she,
173 "That fro this toun ne stant but miles three,
"That from this town stands no more than three miles,
174 And to the povre folkes that ther dwelle,
And to the poor folks that dwell there,
175 Sey hem right thus, as that I shal yow telle.
Say to them exactly thus, which I shall tell you.

176 "Telle hem that I, Cecile, yow to hem sente
"Tell them that I, Cecile, sent you to them
177 To shewen yow the goode Urban the olde,
To show you the good Urban the old,
178 For secree nedes and for good entente.
For secret needs and for a good purpose.
179 And whan that ye Seint Urban han biholde,
And when you have beheld Saint Urban,

180 Telle hym the wordes whiche I to yow tolde;
Tell him the words which I told to you;
181 And whan that he hath purged yow fro synne,
And when he has cleansed you of sin (by baptism),
182 Thanne shul ye se that angel, er ye twynne."
Then you shall see that angel, ere you depart."

183 Valerian is to the place ygon,
Valerian has gone to the place,
184 And right as hym was taught by his lernynge,
And just as he was taught by his learning (from Cecilie),
185 He foond this hooly olde Urban anon
He immediately found this holy old Urban
186 Among the seintes buryeles lotynge.
In hiding among the saints' burial places.
187 And he anon withouten tariynge
And he immediately without delay
188 Dide his message; and whan that he it tolde,
Said his message; and when he told it,
189 Urban for joye his handes gan up holde.
Urban for joy did hold up his hands.

190 The teeris from his eyen leet he falle.
He let the tears fall from his eyes.
191 "Almyghty Lord, O Jhesu Crist," quod he,
"Almighty Lord, O Jesus Christ," said he,
192 "Sower of chaast conseil, hierde of us alle,
"Sower of chaste counsel, shepherd of us all,
193 The fruyt of thilke seed of chastitee
The fruit of that same seed of chastity
194 That thou hast sowe in Cecile, taak to thee!
That thou hast sown in Cecile, take to thee!
195 Lo, lyk a bisy bee, withouten gile,
Lo, like a busy bee, without guile,
196 Thee serveth ay thyn owene thral Cecile.
Always thine own servant Cecile serves Thee.

197 "For thilke spouse that she took but now
"For that same spouse that she took just now
198 Ful lyk a fiers leoun, she sendeth heere,
Very like a fierce lion, she sends here,
199 As meke as evere was any lomb, to yow!"
As meek as ever was any lamb, to you!"
200 And with that word anon ther gan appeere
And with that word anon there did appear
201 An oold man, clad in white clothes cleere,
An old man, clad in clear white clothes,
202 That hadde a book with lettre of gold in honde,
Who had in hand a book with lettering of gold ,
203 And gan bifore Valerian to stonde.
And did stand before Valerian.

204 Valerian as deed fil doun for drede
Valerian as if dead fell down for fear
205 Whan he hym saugh, and he up hente hym tho,
When he saw him, and the old man picked him up then,
206 And on his book right thus he gan to rede:
And from his book right thus he began to read:
207 "O Lord, o feith, o God, withouten mo,
"One Lord, one faith, one God, without more,
208 O Cristendom, and Fader of alle also,
One baptism, and Father of all also,
209 Aboven alle and over alle everywhere."
Above all and over all everywhere."
210 Thise wordes al with gold ywriten were.
These words were written all with gold.

211 Whan this was rad, thanne seyde this olde man,
When this was read, then said this old man,
212 "Leevestow this thyng or no? Sey ye or nay."
"Dost thou believe this thing or not? Say yes or no."
213 "I leeve al this thyng," quod Valerian,
"I believe all this thing," said Valerian,
214 "For sother thyng than this, I dar wel say,
"For truer thing than this, I dare well say,
215 Under the hevne no wight thynke may."
No person under the heaven can imagine."
216 Tho varysshed this olde man, he nyste where,
Then vanished this old man, he knew not where,
217 And Pope Urban hym cristned right there.
And Pope Urban christened him right there.

218 Valerian gooth hoom and fynt Cecilie
Valerian goes home and finds Cecilie
219 Withinne his chambre with an angel stonde.
Within his room standing with an angel.
220 This angel hadde of roses and of lilie
This angel had of roses and of lily
221 Corones two, the which he bar in honde;
Two crowns, which he bore in hand;
222 And first to Cecile, as I understonde,
And first to Cecile, as I understand,
223 He yaf that oon, and after gan he take
He gave that one, and after he did give
224 That oother to Valerian, hir make.
That other to Valerian, her mate.

225 "With body clene and with unwemmed thought
"With body clean and with unblemished thought
226 Kepeth ay wel these corones," quod he;
Always guard well these crowns," said he;
227 "Fro paradys to yow have I hem broght,
"From paradise I have brought them to you,
228 Ne nevere mo ne shal they roten bee,
Nor never ever shall they be rotten,

229 Ne lese hir soote savour, trusteth me;
 Nor lose their sweet fragrance, trust me;
 230 Ne nevere wight shal seen hem with his ye,
 Nor never a person shall see them with his eye,
 231 But he be chaast and hate vileynye.

 Unless he be chaste and hates villainy.
 232 "And thow, Valerian, for thow so soone
 "And thou, Valerian, because thou so soon
 233 Assentedest to good conseil also,
 Assented to good counsel also,
 234 Sey what thee list, and thou shalt han thy boone."
 Say what pleases thee, and thou shalt have thy request."
 235 "I have a brother," quod Valerian tho,
 "I have a brother," said Valerian then,
 236 "That in this world I love no man so.
 "And in this world I love no man so much.
 237 I pray yow that my brother may han grace
 I pray you that my brother may have grace
 238 To knowe the trouthe, as I do in this place."
 To know the truth, as I do in this place."

 239 The angel seyde, "God liketh thy requeste,
 The angel said, "God likes thy request,
 240 And bothe with the palm of martirdom
 And both (of you) with the palm of martyrdom
 241 Ye shullen come unto his blisful feste."
 You shall come unto his blissful feast."
 242 And with that word Tiburce his brother coom.
 And with that word Tiburce his brother came.
 243 And whan that he the savour undernoom,
 And when he perceived the fragrance,
 244 Which that the roses and the lilies caste,
 Which the roses and the lilies cast forth
 245 Withinne his herte he gan to wondre faste,
 Within his heart he began to wonder intently,

 246 And seyde, "I wondre, this tyme of the yeer,
 And said, "I wonder, this time of the year,
 247 Whennes that soote savour cometh so
 Whence that sweet fragrance comes so (much)
 248 Of rose and lilies that I smelle heer.
 Of rose and lilies that I smell here.
 249 For though I hadde hem in myne handes two,
 For even if I had them in my two hands,
 250 The savour myghte in me no depper go.
 The fragrance could go in me no deeper.
 251 The sweete smel that in myn herte I fynde
 The sweet smell that in my heart I find
 252 Hath chaunged me al in another kynde."
 Has changed me all into another nature."

253 Valerian seyde: "Two corones han we,
 Valerian said: "Two crowns have we,
 254 Snow white and rose reed, that shynen cleere,
 Snow white and rose red, that shine clear,
 255 Whiche that thyne eyen han no myght to see;
 Which thine eyes have no power to see;
 256 And as thou smellest hem thurgh my preyere,
 And as thou smellest them because of my prayer,
 257 So shaltow seen hem, leeve brother deere,
 So shalt thou see them, beloved brother dear,
 258 If it so be thou wolt, withouten slouthe,
 If it so be thou will, without delaying,
 259 Bileve aright and knowen verray trouthe."
 Believe correctly and know real truth."

260 Tiburce answerde, "Seistow this to me
 Tiburce answered, "Sayest thou this to me
 261 In soothnesse, or in dreem I herkne this?"
 In actuality, or do I hear this in dream?"
 262 "In dremes," quod Valerian, "han we be
 "In dreams," said Valerian, "have we been
 263 Unto this tyme, brother myn, ywis.
 Until this time, my brother, indeed.
 264 But now at erst in trouthe oure dwellyng is."
 But now for the first time our dwelling is in truth."
 265 "How woostow this?" quod Tiburce, "and in what wyse?"
 "How knowest thou this?" said Tiburce, "and in what manner?"
 266 Quod Valerian, "That shal I thee devyse.
 Said Valerian, "That I shall tell thee.

267 "The aungel of God hath me the trouthe ytaught
 "The angel of God has taught me the truth
 268 Which thou shalt seen, if that thou wolt reneye
 Which thou shalt see, if thou wilt renounce
 269 The ydoles and be clene, and elles naught."
 The idols and be chaste, and otherwise nothing (will you see.)"
 270 And of the myracle of these corones tweye
 And of the miracle of these two crowns
 271 Seint Ambrose in his preface list to seye;
 Saint Ambrose in his preface is pleased to speak;
 272 Solempnely this noble doctour deere
 Solemnly this noble dear Doctor (of the Church)
 273 Commendeth it, and seith in this manere:
 Commends it, and says in this manner:

274 "The palm of martirdom for to receyve,
 "In order to receive the palm of martyrdom,
 275 Seinte Cecile, fulfild of Goddes yifte,
 Saint Cecile, completely filled with God's gift,
 276 The world and eek hire chambre gan she weyve;
 The world and also her bed-chamber did she give up;
 277 Witnessse Tyburces and [Valerians] shrifte,
 Witness Tyburce's and Valerian's confession,

278 To whiche God of his bountee wolde shifte
To which God of his goodness would provide
279 Corones two of floures wel smellynge,
Two crowns of flowers well smelling,
280 And made his angel hem the corones brynge.
And made his angel bring them the crowns.

281 "The mayde hath broght these men to blisse above;
"The maid has brought these men to bliss above;
282 The world hath wist what it is worth, certeyn,
The world has known what it is worth, certainly,
283 Devocioun of chastitee to love."
To love a devotion to chastity."
284 Tho shewed hym Cecile al open and pleyn
Then Cecile showed him all open and plain
285 That alle ydoles nys but a thyng in veyn,
That all idols are but meaningless things,
286 For they been dombe, and therto they been deve,
For they are dumb, and moreover they are deaf,
287 And charged hym his ydoles for to leve.
And (she) ordered him to leave his idols.

288 "Whoso that troweth nat this, a beest he is,"
"Whoever believes not this, he is a beast,"
289 Quod tho Tiburce, "if that I shal nat lye."
Tiburce then said, "if I shall not lie."
290 And she gan kisse his brest, that herde this,
And she who heard this did kiss his breast,
291 And was ful glad he koude trouthe espye.
And was very glad he could perceive truth.
292 "This day I take thee for myn allye,"
"This day I take thee for my kinsman,"
293 Seyde this blisful faire mayde deere,
Said this blissful fair maid dear,
294 And after that she seyde as ye may heere:
And after that she said as you may hear:

295 "Lo, right so as the love of Crist," quod she,
"Lo, exactly as the love of Christ," said she,
296 "Made me thy brotheres wyf, right in that wise
"Made me thy brother's wife, exactly in that manner
297 Anon for myn allye heer take I thee,
Right now here I take thee for my kinsman,
298 Syn that thou wolt thyne ydoles despise.
Since thou will despise thine idols.
299 Go with thy brother now, and thee baptise,
Go with thy brother now, and get thyself baptized,
300 And make thee clene, so that thou mowe biholde
And make thyself clean, so that thou can behold
301 The angels face of which thy brother tolde."
The angel's face of which thy brother told."

302 Tiburce answerde and seyde, "Brother deere,
Tiburce answered and said, "Brother dear,
303 First tel me whider I shal, and to what man?"
First tell me where I must go, and to what man?"
304 "To whom?" quod he, "com forth with right good cheere,
"To whom?" said he, "come forth with right good cheer,
305 I wol thee lede unto the Pope Urban."
I will lead thee unto the Pope Urban."
306 "Til Urban? Brother myn Valerian,"
"To Urban? My brother Valerian,"
307 Quod tho Tiburce, "woltow me thider lede?
Said then Tiburce, "wilt thou lead me there?
308 Me thynketh that it were a wonder dede.
It seems to me that it would be a wonderful deed.

309 "Ne menestow nat Urban," quod he tho,
"Thou meanest not Urban," said he then,
310 "That is so ofte dampned to be deed,
"That is so often condemned to be dead,
311 And woneth in halkes alwey to and fro,
And dwells in hiding places always (going) from one to another,
312 And dar nat ones putte forth his heed?
And dares not once put forth his head?
313 Men sholde hym brennen in a fyr so reed
Men should burn him in a fire so red
314 If he were founde, or that men myghte hym spye,
If he were found, or if men could catch sight of him,
315 And we also, to bere hym compaignye;
And we too (would burn), to bear him company;

316 "And whil we seken thilke divinitee
"And while we seek that same divinity
317 That is yhid in hevене pryvely,
That is hidden secretly in heaven,
318 Algate ybrend in this world shul we be!"
Nevertheless we shall be burned in this world!"
319 To whom Cecile answerde boldely,
To whom Cecile answered boldly,
320 "Men myghten dreden wel and skilfully
"Men might well and reasonably fear
321 This lyf to lese, myn owene deere brother,
To lose this life, my own dear brother,
322 If this were lyvyng oonly and noon oother.
If this were the only life and (there were) none other.

323 "But ther is bettre lif in oother place,
"But there is a better life in another place,
324 That nevere shal be lost, ne drede thee noight,
That never shall be lost, doubt thee not,
325 Which Goddes Sone us tolde thurgh his grace.
Which God's Son told us by means of his grace.
326 That Fadres Sone hath alle thyng ywroght,
That Father's Son has created all things,

327 And al that wroght is with a skilful thoght;
 And all that is created (and endowed) with the power of reason;
 328 The Goost, that fro the Fader gan procede,
 The Holy Ghost, who from the Father did proceed,
 329 Hath sowled hem, withouten any drede.
 Has given them souls, without any doubt.

330 "By word and by myracle heigh Goddes Sone,
 "By word and by miracle high God's Son,
 331 Whan he was in this world, declared heere
 When he was in this world, declared here
 332 That ther was oother lyf ther men may wone."
 That there was another life where men may dwell."
 333 To whom answerde Tiburce, "O suster deere,
 To whom answered Tiburce, "O sister dear,
 334 Ne seydestow right now in this manere,
 Said thou not just now in this manner,
 335 Ther nys but o God, lord in soothfastnesse?
 There is but one God, lord in truthfulness?
 336 And now of three how maystow bere witnessse?"
 And now of three how canst thou bear witness?"

337 "That shal I telle," quod she, "er I go.
 "That shall I tell," said she, "ere I go.
 338 Right as a man hath sapiences three --
 Exactly as a man has three mental faculties --
 339 Memorie, engyn, and intellect also --
 Memory, imagination, and judgement also --
 340 So in o beynge of divinitee,
 So in one being of divinity,
 341 Thre persones may ther right wel bee."
 Three persons may right well be there."
 342 Tho gan she hym ful bisily to preche
 Then very zealously she did preach to him
 343 Of Cristes come, and of his peynes teche,
 Of Christ's coming, and teach (him) of His pains,

344 And manye pointes of his passioun;
 And many particulars of His passion;
 345 How Goddes Sone in this world was withholde
 How God's Son was compelled to remain in this world
 346 To doon mankynde pleyn remissioun,
 To provide full forgiveness for mankind,
 347 That was ybounde in synne and cares colde;
 Which was bound in sin and painful cares;
 348 Al this thyng she unto Tiburce tolde.
 All this thing she told unto Tiburce.
 349 And after this Tiburce in good entente
 And after this Tiburce with a good will
 350 With Valerian to Pope Urban he wente,
 With Valerian he went to Pope Urban,

351 That thanked God, and with glad herte and light
Who thanked God, and with glad and happy heart
352 He cristned hym and made hym in that place
He christened him and made him in that place
353 Parfit in his lernynge, Goddes knyght.
Perfect in his learning, God's knight.
354 And after this Tiburce gat swich grace
And after this Tiburce got such grace
355 That every day he saugh in tyme and space
That every day in real time and space he saw
356 The aungel of God; and every maner boone
The angel of God; and every manner of gift
357 That he God axed, it was sped ful soone.
That he asked of God was provided immediately.

358 It were ful hard by ordre for to seyn
It would be very hard in proper sequence to say
359 How manye wondres Jhesus for hem wroghte;
How many wonders Jesus made for them;
360 But atte laste, to tellen short and pleyn,
But at the last, to tell short and plain,
361 The sergeantz of the toun of Rome hem soghte,
The officers of the law of the town of Rome sought them,
362 And hem biforn Almache, the prefect, broghte,
And brought them before Almache, the prefect,
363 Which hem apposed, and knew al hire entente,
Who questioned them, and knew all their thought,
364 And to the ymage of Juppiter hem sente,
And sent them to the image of Jupiter,

365 And seyde, "Whoso wol nat sacrificise,
And said, "Whoever will not sacrifice,
366 Swape of his heed; this my sentence heer."
Strike off his head; this is my sentence here."
367 Anon these martirs that I yow devyse,
Immediately these martyrs of whom I tell you,
368 Oon Maximus, that was an officer
One Maximus, that was an officer
369 Of the prefectes, and his corniculer,
Of the prefect's, and his chief assistant,
370 Hem hente, and whan he forth the seintes ladde,
Seized them, and when he led forth the saints,
371 Hymself he weep for pitee that he hadde.
He himself wept for pity that he had.

372 Whan Maximus had herd the seintes loore,
When Maximus had heard the saints' teaching,
373 He gat hym of the tormentoures leve,
He got himself permission of the executioners,
374 And ladde hem to his hous withoute moore,
And led them to his house without more delay,
375 And with hir prechyng, er that it were eve,
And with their preaching, ere that it was evening,

376 They gonnen fro the tormentours to reve,
They did take away from the executioners,
377 And fro Maxime, and fro his folk echone,
And from Maxime, and from his folk each one of them,
378 The false feith, to trowe in God allone.
The false faith, (and brought them) to believe in God alone.

379 Cecile cam, whan it was woxen nyght,
Cecile came, when it was grown night,
380 With preestes that hem cristned alle yfeere;
With priests who christened them all together;
381 And afterward, whan day was woxen light,
And afterward, when day was grown light,
382 Cecile hem seyde with a ful stedefast cheere,
Cecile said to them with a full steadfast countenance,
383 "Now, Cristes owene knyghtes leeve and deere,
"Now, Christ's own knights beloved and dear,
384 Cast alle away the werkes of derknesse,
Cast away all the works of darkness,
385 And armeth yow in armure of brightnesse.
And arm yourselves in armor of brightness.

386 "Ye han for sothe ydoon a greet bataille,
"You have truly done a great battle,
387 Youre cours is doon, youre feith han ye conserved.
Your race is done, your faith you have maintained.
388 Gooth to the corone of lif that may nat faille;
Go to the crown of life that can not fail;
389 The rightful Juge, which that ye han served,
The rightful Judge, whom you have served,
390 Shal yeve it yow, as ye han it deserved."
Shall give it to you, as you have deserved it."
391 And whan this thyng was seyde as I devyse,
And when this thing was said as I tell,
392 Men ledde hem forth to doon the sacrefise.
Men led them forth to do the sacrifice.

393 But whan they weren to the place broght
But when they were brought to the place
394 To tellen shortly the conclusioun,
To tell shortly the conclusion,
395 They nolde encense ne sacrificise right noght,
They would not incense nor sacrifice in any way,
396 But on hir knees they setten hem adoun
But on their knees they set themselves down
397 With humble herte and sad devocioun,
With humble heart and steadfast devotion,
398 And losten bothe hir hevedes in the place.
And lost both their heads in the place.
399 Hir soules wenten to the Kyng of grace.
Their souls went to the King of grace.

400 This Maximus, that saugh this thyng bityde,
This Maximus, who saw this thing happen,
401 With pitous teeris tolde it anonright,
With piteous tears told it right away,
402 That he hir soules saugh to hevene glyde
That he saw their souls glide to heaven
403 With aungels ful of cleernesse and of light,
With angels full of clearness and of light,
404 And with his word converted many a wight;
And with his word converted many a person;
405 For which Almachius dide hym so bete
For which Almachius had him so beaten
406 With whippe of leed til he his lif gan lete.
With whip tipped with lead that he left his life.

407 Cecile hym took and buryed hym anon
Cecile took him and buried him straightway
408 By Tiburce and Valerian softely
By Tiburce and Valerian tenderly
409 Withinne hire buriyng place, under the stoon;
Within their burying place, under the tombstone;
410 And after this, Almachius hastily
And after this, Almachius hastily
411 Bad his ministres fecchen openly
Ordered his ministers to fetch publicly
412 Cecile, so that she myghte in his presence
Cecile, so that she might in his presence
413 Doon sacrifice and Juppiter encense.
Do sacrifice and burn incense to Jupiter.

414 But they, converted at hir wise loore,
But they, converted by her wise teaching,
415 Wepten ful soore, and yaven ful credence
Wept very bitterly, and gave full credence
416 Unto hire word, and cryden moore and moore,
Unto her word, and cried more and more,
417 "Crist, Goddes Sone, withouten difference,
"Christ, God's Son, without difference [between Father and Son],
418 Is verray God -- this is al oure sentence --
Is true God -- this is the belief of us all --
419 That hath so good a servant hym to serve.
That has so good a servant to serve Him.
420 This with o voys we trowen, thogh we sterve!"
This unanimously we believe, even if we should die!"

421 Almachius, that herde of this doynge,
Almachius, that heard of this business,
422 Bad fecchen Cecile, that he myghte hire see,
Ordered (his men to) fetch Cecile, so that he might see her
423 And alderfirst, lo, this was his axynge.
And first of all, lo, this was his quesation.
424 "What maner womman artow?" tho quod he.
"What sort of woman art thou?" then said he.

425 "I am a gentil womman born," quod she.
 "I am a gentle woman born," said she.
 426 "I axe thee," quod he, "though it thee greeve,
 "I ask thee," said he, "though it may grieve thee,
 427 Of thy religioun and of thy bileeve."
 About thy religion and about thy belief."

428 "Ye han bigonne youre questioun folily,"
 "You have begun your question foolishly,"
 429 Quod she, "that wolden two answeres conclude
 Said she, "you who would include two answers
 430 In o demande; ye axed lewedly."
 In one question; you asked ignorantly."
 431 Almache answerde unto that similitude,
 Almache answered unto that refutation,
 432 "Of whennes comth thyn answeyng so rude?"
 "Of whence comes thine answering so rude?"
 433 "Of whennes?" quod she, whan that she was freyned,
 "Of whence?" said she, when she was asked,
 434 "Of conscience and of good feith unfeyned."
 "Of conscience and of sincere good faith."

435 Almachius seyde, "Ne takestow noon heede
 Almachius said, "Takest thou no heed
 436 Of my power?" And she answerde hym this:
 Of my power?" And she answered him this:
 437 "Youre myght," quod she, "ful litel is to dreede,
 "Your might," said she, "is very little to fear,
 438 For every mortal mannes power nys
 For every mortal man's power is nothing
 439 But lyk a bladdre ful of wynd, ywys.
 But only like a bladder full of wind, indeed.
 440 For with a nedles poynt, whan it is blowe,
 For with a needle's point, when it is blown up,
 441 May al the boost of it be leyd ful lowe."
 Can all the arrogance of it be laid full low."

442 "Ful wrongfully bigonne thow," quod he,
 "Full wrongfully thou began," said he,
 443 "And yet in wrong is thy perseveraunce.
 "And yet wrongful is thy perseverance.
 444 Wostow nat how oure myghty princes free
 Dost thou not know how our mighty noble princes
 445 Han thus comanded and maad ordinaunce
 Have thus commanded and made a law
 446 That every Cristen wight shal han penaunce
 That every Christian person shall be punished
 447 But if that he his Cristendom withseye,
 Unless he renounce his Christian faith,
 448 And goon al quit, if he wole it reneye?"
 And go all free, if he will deny it?"

449 "Yowre princes erren, as youre nobleye dooth,"
 "Your princes err, as your nobles do,"
 450 Quod tho Cecile, "and with a wood sentence
 Said then Cecile, "and with a crazy verdict
 451 Ye make us gilty, and it is nat sooth.
 You make us guilty, and it is not true.
 452 For ye, that knowen wel oure innocence,
 For you, who know well our innocence,
 453 For as muche as we doon a reverence
 Forasmuch as we do reverence
 454 To Crist, and for we bere a Cristen name,
 To Christ, and because we bear a Christian name,
 455 Ye putte on us a cryme and eek a blame.
 You accuse us of a crime and also (put on us) the blame for it.

456 "But we that knowen thilke name so
 "But we who know that same name
 457 For vertuous, we may it nat withseye."
 To be so virtuous, we can not deny it."
 458 Almache answerde, "Chees oon of these two:
 Almache answered, "Chose one of these two:
 459 Do sacrifice, or Cristendom reneye,
 Do sacrifice, or renounce Christendom,
 460 That thou mowe now escapen by that weye."
 So that thou can now escape by that means."
 461 At which the hooly blisful faire mayde
 At which the holy blissful fair maid
 462 Gan for to laughe, and to the juge sayde:
 Began to laugh, and to the judge said:

463 "O juge, confus in thy nycetee,
 "O judge, confused in thy folly,
 464 Woltow that I reneye innocence,
 Wilt thou that I renounce innocence,
 465 To make me a wikked wight?" quod shee.
 To make myself a wicked person?" said she.
 466 "Lo, he dissymuleth heere in audience;
 "Lo, he hides his true feelings here in open court;
 467 He stareth, and woodeth in his advertence!"
 He stares, and goes mad in his mind!"
 468 To whom Almachius, "Unsely wrecche,
 To whom Almachius, "Miserable wretch,
 469 Ne woostow nat how fer my myght may strecche?
 Knowest thou not how far my power can stretch?

470 "Han nought oure myghty princes to me yiven,
 "Have not our mighty princes to me given,
 471 Ye, bothe power and auctoritee
 Yea, both power and authority
 472 To maken folk to dyen or to lyven?
 To make folk to die or to live?
 473 Why spekestow so proudly thanne to me?"
 Why speakest thou so proudly then to me?"

474 "I speke noght but stedfastly," quod she;
 "I speak only faithfully," said she;
 475 "Nat proudly, for I seye, as for my syde,
 "Not proudly, for I say, as for my side,
 476 We haten deedly thilke vice of pryde.
 We hate that same deadly sin of pride.

477 "And if thou drede nat a sooth to heere,
 "And if thou dread not to hear a truth,
 478 Thanne wol I shewe al openly, by right,
 Then will I show all openly, according to law,
 479 That thou hast maad a ful gret lesyng heere.
 That thou hast made a very great lie here.
 480 Thou seyst thy princes han thee yeven myght
 Thou sayest thy princes have given thee power
 481 Bothe for to sleen and for to quyken a wight;
 Both to slay and to give life to a person;
 482 Thou, that ne mayst but oonly lyf bireve,
 Thou, who can only take away life,
 483 Thou hast noon oother power ne no leve.
 Thou hast no other power nor any authority.

484 "But thou mayst seyn thy princes han thee maked
 "But thou can say thy princes have made thee
 485 Ministre of deeth; for if thou speke of mo,
 Minister of death; for if thou speak of more,
 486 Thou lyst, for thy power is ful naked."
 Thou liest, for thy power is strictly limited.
 487 "Do wey thy booldnesse," seyde Almachius tho,
 "Do away thy boldness," said Almachius then,
 488 "And sacrifice to oure goddes er thou go!
 "And sacrifice to our gods ere thou go!
 489 I recche nat what wrong that thou me profre,
 I care not what wrong that thou may express to me,
 490 For I kan suffre it as a philosophre;
 For I can suffer it as a philosopher;

491 "But thilke wronges may I nat endure
 "But those same wrongs I can not endure
 492 That thou spekest of oure goddes heere," quod he.
 Which thou spekest of our gods here," said he.
 493 Cecile answerde, "O nyce creature!
 Cecile answered, "O foolish creature!
 494 Thou seydest no word syn thou spak to me
 Thou saidest no word since thou spoke to me
 495 That I ne knew therwith thy nycetee
 That I did not know therwith thy foolishness
 496 And that thou were in every maner wise
 And that thou were in every sort of way
 497 A lewed officer and a veyn justise.
 An ignorant officer and a foolish judge.

498 "Ther lakketh no thyng to thyne outter yen
"There lacks nothing to thine outer eyes
499 That thou n' art blynd; for thyng that we seen alle
Except that thou art blind; for thing that we all see
500 That it is stoon -- that men may wel espyen --
That it is stone -- that men can well see --
501 That ilke stoon a god thow wolt it calle.
That same stone a god thou wilt call it.
502 I rede thee, lat thyn hand upon it falle
I advise thee, let thine hand upon it fall
503 And taste it wel, and stoon thou shalt it fynde,
And taste it well, and stone thou shalt find it,
504 Syn that thou seest nat with thyne eyen blynde.
Since thou seest not with thy blind eyes.

505 "It is a shame that the peple shal
"It is a shame that the people shall
506 So scorne thee and laughe at thy folye,
So scorn thee and laugh at thy folly,
507 For comunly men woot it wel overal
For without exception men know it well everywhere
508 That myghty God is in his hevenes hye;
That mighty God is in his high heavens;
509 And these ymages, wel thou mayst espye,
And these images, thou canst well see,
510 To thee ne to hemself mowen nocht profite,
Can do no profit to thee nor to themselves,
511 For in effect they been nat worth a myte."
For in fact they are not worth a penny."

512 Thise wordes and swiche othere seyde she,
These words and others such said she,
513 And he weex wroth, and bad men sholde hir lede
And he grew angry, and ordered that men should lead her
514 Hom til hir hous, and "In hire hous," quod he,
Home to her house, and "In her house," said he,
515 "Brenne hire right in a bath of flambes rede."
"Burn her right in a bath of red flames."
516 And as he bad, right so was doon the dede;
And as he ordered, exactly so the deed was done;
517 For in a bath they gonne hire faste shetten,
For they did shut her fast in a cauldron,
518 And nyght and day greet fyr they under betten.
And night and day they fed great fire under it.

519 The longe nyght, and eek a day also,
The long night, and also a day as well,
520 For al the fyr and eek the bathes heete
Despite the fire and also the bath's heat
521 She sat al coold and feelede no wo.
She sat all cool and felt no pain.
522 It made hire nat a drope for to sweete.
It made her not a drop to sweat.

523 But in that bath hir lyf she moste lete,
But in that bath her life she must leave,
524 For he Almachius, with ful wikke entente,
For that Almachius, with completely wicked intent,
525 To sleen hire in the bath his sonde sente.
Sent his messenger to slay her in the bath.

526 Thre strokes in the nekke he smoot hire tho,
Three strokes in the neck he smote her then,
527 The tormentour, but for no maner chaunce
The executioner, but in no sort of way
528 He myghte noght smyte al hir nekke atwo;
He could not smite all her neck in two;
529 And for ther was that tyme an ordinaunce
And because there was that time an ordinance
530 That no man sholde doon man swich penaunce
That no man should do any one such pain
531 The ferthe strook to smyten, softe or soore,
The fourth stroke to smite, soft or sore,
532 This tormentour ne dorste do namoore,
This executioner dared not do any more,

533 But half deed, with hir nekke ycorven there,
But half dead, with her neck carved there,
534 He lefte hir lye, and on his wey he went.
He left her lie, and on his way he went.
535 The Cristen folk, which that aboute hire were,
The Christian folk, who were about her,
536 With sheetes han the blood ful faire yhent.
With sheets have very carefully taken up the blood.
537 Thre dayes lyved she in this torment,
Three days she lived in this torment,
538 And nevere cessed hem the feith to teche
And never ceased to teach them the faith
539 That she hadde fostred; hem she gan to preche,
That she had fostered; to them she did preach,

540 And hem she yaf hir moebles and hir thyng,
And she gave them her personal property and her things,
541 And to the Pope Urban bitook hem tho,
And to the Pope Urban (she) entrusted them then,
542 And seyde, "I axed this of hevene kyng,
And said, "I asked this of heaven's king,
543 To han respit thre dayes and namo
To have respite three days and no more
544 To recomende to yow, er that I go,
To commend to you, ere I go,
545 Thise soules, lo, and that I myghte do werche
These souls, lo, and that I might have made
546 Heere of myn hous perpetuely a cherche."
Here of my house perpetually a church."

547 Seint Urban with his deknes prively
 Saint Urban with his deacons secretly
548 The body fette and buryed it by nyghte
 Fetched the body and buried it by night
549 Among his othere seintes honestly.
 Among his other saints decently.
550 Hir hous the chirche of Seint Cecilie highte;
 Her house is called the church of Saint Cecilie;
551 Seint Urban halwed it, as he wel myghte;
 Saint Urban consecrated it, as he well could;
552 In which, into this day, in noble wyse,
 In which, unto this day, in noble manner,
553 Men doon to Crist and to his seint servyse.
 People do service to Christ and to his saint.

Heere is ended the Seconde Nonnes Tale

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