The bigynnyng of alle þis processe
Ryȝt knowyng of a manþym-self is
Bote sum haþ ful grete lettyng
That þei may haue no riȝt knowyng
Of hem-self þat þei furst shold knowe
That furst to mekenes shold hem drawe
Ther-of foure þingis j fynde
That makeþ a mannys witte ofte blynde
And knowyng of hym-self letteþ
Where þorouȝ he hym-self for-geteþ
Of this seint bernard bereþ wittenes
That þes four beþ write in vers

That is fauour of folk & fairenes
And brennyng of 3ouþ & ryches
Reueþ a man riȝt skele & mynde

To knowe hym-self what he is of kynde
The floure letteþ hym in his siȝt
That he may not knowe hym-self riȝt
And his hert makeþ dulle & vnbusome
To þenke in þe tyme þat is to come
Thes foure noreschen pompe and pride
And oþer vices that men shold hide
Jn whom sum haue of þe floures
Seldom is sene any meknes
Also þei letteþ a man þat he can not sese
The periles of the wordle & vanitees
Ne þenke on þe tyme þat is to come
Ne of deþe ne of þe day of dome
Ne can not vnderstond ne se .
The paynes þat after his lif shalle be
To synful men that here useþ folye
Ne the blis þat godþmen beþ wurthy
Bote in delites setteþ here hertys fast
Riþt as his lif sholde euer last
And 3yueþ hym alle to vanite
And to þying þat may his likyng be .
Siche men beþ not ledde with skille
Bote foloweþ here willes to fulfille
And no þing elles takeþ hede ;
What wonder is if þei have no drede
And alle for deaute of knowyng
Of þat . þat þei myþt hym to drede bryng
And some men wolde not vnderstonde
The þing þat myþt make hem dredonde
For þai wille not here bote þat hem payþe
Ther-for þe profete in þe sauter seieþ
He seith he haþ no wille to fele
Ne vnderstonde to do wele
Thes wordes by hem may be said here
That wille not vnderstonde & lere
To drede god and do his wille
Some vnderstondept as þei here telle
Bote wirkeþ after here owen wille
Bote no drede in hure hert wille duelle
And for deaute of trevþe may þat sel be ;
For þei trowe not bote þat þei see
Bote þe prophete seieþ in þis manere
By hym þþ groccheþ when þei of drede here
The prophete said and þei trowed nouþt
Bote grocched & were greued in þouþt
Thes be men þat trewed in þing
That men seieþ aþens here likyng
Bote grocched & weþeþ fast wroward
When men seieþ auþt þat þem þenkeþ hard
Sone can sviche thinke .[&] in bokes rede
Bote li3tnes of hert by-reueþ hem drede
So þi hit may not with hym duelle
Of whiche spekeþ crist in þe gospelle
Tille a tyme he seiþ some troweþ a þing
And passeþ þer-fro in tyme of tempyng
And also thus saiþ þe prophete Dauid
Jn a psalme þat cordeþ þer-with
He said in his wordes trowed þai
Jn praysyng loued hym as þei gan say
Bote sone þei hadde done & for3at
His werky & þou3t no more in þat
There-for sviche men beþ so vnstedfast
That no drede with hem may longe last
For þei beþ so wilde when þei be in quert
That þei kunne holde no drede in hert
Bote ho-so can not drede may lere
That þis tretys wille rede or here
Of þei wole rede or here to ende
The materys þat beþ þer-in contende
And vnder-stond and trowe
And þat shalle make here hertis lowe
To werke godes werkes and fle folie ;
Thorou3 drede þer may conceyue þerby
Ther-fore this boke is in English drawe
Of diuers maters þat beþ vnknawe
To lewede men þat beþ vnku3nyng
That beþ no latyn vnderstondyng
To make hem . hem Self to knowe ;
And fro likyng of this lif hem drawe ;
And forto stere hem to drede
When þei here clerkis þis boke rede
Bote 3itte þer is some diuers materе
That comforteþ hem þat wille hit here
As 3e mowe wel here afterwarde
This boke also bereþ wittenes
That in-to seuene parties departed is
The first partie to haue in mynde
Of the wrecchednes of mankynde
The secunde of þe wordle luþernes
Of this vnstable lif þat is
The þridde of deþ bodely
The fourþe is of payne of purgatory
The fyþe of þe day of dome
And of toknes þat shalle by-fore come
The seuene is of the Payne of helle
Ther dampned men shul in duelle
The seuene is of þe ioyes of heuene
That be more þan tonge can nemene
And of eche party fynd men may
In þis boke diuers maters beþ say
And in þe first partie , [þat] write is
Wole j speke of mannes wrecchednes
For alle þat write . [is] by-fore to loke
Js bote entre of this booke

Here bigynneþ þe first part þþ is of wrecchednes of man
First when god made alþing of nouȝt
Of a foule mater man was wrouȝt
That was erþe tvo skyles to hold
That one is for þat god wold
Of foule maters make men in despite
Of lucifer þat felle þat tide ;
<fol. 5v>For þei sholde haue þen more shensshippe
And more sorowe when þei hit kepe
That man of so foule mater sholde duelle
Jn þat place fro the whiche þei felle
That oþer skylle is thus to se
For man sholde here þe meker be
And when he seeþ & þenkiþ in þouȝt
Of howe foule mater he was wrouȝt
For-whi god þorouȝ his gret myȝt
That sette þat place in heuene bryȝt
Was made voyde þorouȝ þe synne of pride
That hit were fulfилde on eche a side
Thorouȝ þe vertu of meknes
That euene to pride contrary is
Ther-for may no man þeder come
Bote þat is meke and buxome
That proueþ þe gospel þat saiþ vs
Hov god seide to his deciples þus

Bote 3e be he saide as a childe
That is to say meke & mylde
3e shulle not entre by no way
Jn-to heuene riche þat lasteþ ay
Þan hit by-houeþ þat a+man euere by-seke
That . þat may make hym meke
Bote no þing may meke hym more ;
Than to þenke in hert as j seide ore ;
How he was made of foule matere
And is nouȝt elfys bote foule erȝe here
For þus seieþ a cleric as j ȝov say
What is man bote erȝe & clay
And poudre þat wiþ wynde brekeþ
And þer-for joibe to god þus spekeþ
He saide lorde as þu made me
Foule erȝe and clay here to se
Riȝt so þu shalt tūrne me a-gayne
To erȝe and poudre þis is certayne
Than seieþoure lord god almyȝty
Aȝens man þus shortly

<fol. 6r>He saiþ man ashe aȝ þu nov
And to asches tūrne a-ȝen shalt þu
Than is a+man not elfys to say
Bote asche and poudre erȝe & clay
Of þis sholde eche man here haue mynde
And knowe þe wrecchednes of his kynde
That is departed as j shewe can
In alle þe parties of lyf of man
Also mannyȝs life cast may be
Principally in parties thre
That béis to oure vnderstondyng~
Bygynnyng mydwarde and endyng—
Thees þre parties be þre spaces tolde
Of þe life of euery man 3ong and olde
Bygynnyng of man þat first is
Couetousnes & myche wrecchednes
Thor-for j wole now or j passe
Shewe 3ov what a man first was
Sumtyme was when a+man was nou3t
By-fore he was goten & wrou3t
He was goten as we knowe
Of vile seed of man with synne sowe
And conseyued þan synfully
With-in his owen moder body
Ther his erber wtih synne was di3t
As dawid saiþ in þe sauter boke ry3t

Lo he saide as man-kynde is
J am conseyued in wrecchednes
And my moder haþ conseyued me ;
In synne and in vnchastite
Thare . [b] duelled in a foul dongoun
And in a foule stede of corupcioun
Where j hadde none oþer fode
Bote corupcioun and foule blode
And stenche and filthe as j saide ere
With þis he was norisshede þere
After-warde whan he is out-come
Fro þe dongoun of his moder wombe

And was bore to þis wordle ry3t
He hadde noþer strengeh ne my3t
Noþer to go ne 3itte to stonde
Ne to crepe with fote ne honde
Than hath a man las þen a beste
When hit is bore & is alder leste
For whan a best is bore so may he go
Bote a man haþ no my3t þer-to
Also renne boþe to & fro
When he is bore so to do
For þan may he not stonde ne crepe
Bote sperne crye & euer wepe
For vneþe a childe is bore fully
That hit by-gynneþ wepe ne cry
And by þat crye men mowe knowe þan
Wheþer hit be man or womman
For whan hit is bore hit cryeth wa wa
Jf hit criþ hit criþ A . A
The first letter is of þe name
Of oure fore-fader Adame
And if þe child a woman be
When hit is bore hit seþ E E
That is þe furst letter take hede
Of the name of Eue þþ wrouþt oure dede
Ther-for a clerk made in þis manere
This vers of metre þþ sheweþ here
<lat></lat>
Alle þees he saith þat come of Eue
And be borne with lif here to leue
Whan þei be bore what-so þei be
Thei sey other A . ober E .
This is here þe bigynnyng
Of oure lif sorowe and gretyng
To whiche oure wrecchednes stereþ vs
As Innocent telleþ þat saiþ þus
<lat></lat>
He saiþ alle we be borne wepyng~
Wel sorowful semblaunt makyng~
For to shewe þe grete wrecchednes
Of oure kynde þat in vs is
<fol. 7r>Thus when þe tyme comeþ of oure birthe
Alle made sorowe and no mirthe
Naked we come heder & bare
And pore so shul we hennys fare
On thes to tymes we shulde þenk þan
For þus seþ Job þe ryþtful man
<lat></lat>
<lat></lat>
Naked he seith first j come
Hider out of my moder wombe  
And naked j shal hennys passe  
And as job seip so hit was  
Thus is a man atte þe first comyng  
Naked & bryngeþ with hym no þing  
And if any cloþed forþ come  
His cloþing is foule and lothsome  
That is nou3t bote a blody skynne  
That he was by-fore lapped jnne  
Whiles he in his moder wombe lay  
The whiche is a foule þing in fay  
A fouler to here saip þe booke  
And alder+foulest on to loke  
This is a man as we may se  
Jn wrecchednes & in Caytifte  
And forto lyue bote a fewe daies  
Ther-for Job þus openly sais  

He saiþ man þat is bore of womman  
Lyuyng short tyme ful+fild is þan  
Of many maner of wrecchednes  
Thus saiþ Job and sopþ hit is  
Also man is bore to nou3t ellys  
Bote to travaaille as Job telles  

He seiþ man to travaaille is born ful ry3t  
As bridde is here vtto fli3t  
For litel rest in þis lif nov is  
Bote grete travaayle and bissynes  
3it a man is when he is borne  

The fendes sone and fro god lorn  
Ay tille he þorou3 grace may come  
To bapteme and to Cristendome  
Thus may a man his bigynnyng se  
Ful of wrecchednes and caytifte  
That oþer partye of lyf men calleþ  
The mydwarde after hit falleþ  
The whicheþ fro þe bygynnyng
Of mannys lyf vnto þe last endyng
The bygynnyng of man as j haue tolde
Js foule and wrecched to by-holde
Bote hov foule is man after-warde
Telleþ openly seint Bernarde
Seint Bernard seiþ as the book telleþ
That a+man is here no þing ellys
Bote a foule slyme stynkyng to men
And a sak ful of stynkyng fen
And wormes fode þat þei wolde haue
Whan he is dede and leid in graue
Bote somme men and wyrmen fair semþ
To si3t with-out as men demþ
And sheweþ not ellys bote þe skyn
Bote ho my3t se þen with-jnne
Fouler careyne my3t neuer be
Then he shold þen on hem se
Therfor he þat hadde so sharpe a sy3t
And as clere y3en & as bryþt
As haþ a best þat þe lynx calles
That may se þorou3 stonen walles
Litel lykyng shold he haue þan
To be hold or coueyte any womman
For þen he my3t se with-out doute
As wel with-jnne as with-oute
And if he wiþ-jnne sawe hure ry3t
Che were ful losome to his si3t
Thus foule eche man with-jnne is
As þe book seþ and bereþ wittenes
Than may we say on þis manere
Hov foule þe kynde of man is here
Where-fore j holde a man not witty
That here is euer proude and joly
When he may eche day here se
What he is & what he shalle be
Bote proude+man of þis takeþ non hede
For hym fayþþ þat hym shold lede
The man þat is in grete wurchepe
What hym-self is he takeþ no kepe
For hym-self he knoweþ lest
Than he fareþ as a wode best
That stereþ a-boute in foure fete
Therfor saith Davuid þe prophete
<lat></lat>
<lat></lat>
Man when he to wurchepe is brou3t
Ri3t vnderstondyng haþ he nou3t
He may be lykned and is þan
To bestys þat no resou3n can
Where-fore ho so haþ witte in mynde
Shold þenk in þe wrecchednes of his kynde
That here is foule and wel lothesome
For he may fro his body come
Bothe fro a-boue and by-nethe
Alle maner filthe with stykyng breþe
For more filthe is non harde ne nesche
Then þ þat comeþ fro manys flesche
And þat may a man boþe se and fele
That wille by-holde hym-selue wele
Hov foule he is to manys sy3t
And þerfor seiþ seint Bernarde ry3t
<lat></lat>
<lat></lat>
The worde in a boke seiþ to the
Jf thu wilte þi-self byssyly se
What comeþ þorou3 mouþe & nose namely
And out of oþer entres of þe body
A fouler dung-heep say þu neuer none
Than is a man of flesh and bone
Alþe tyme þat men here lyueþ
<fol. 8v>His kynde non other fruy3t here 3eueþ
Wheþer he leueþ here short or longe while
3itte he is loply and wel vyle
As stykyng and no þing ellys
As Innocent in aþook thuß telllys
<lat></lat>
This clerk telleþ vs þus in a book
By-holde he seîþ redely and look
Herbys and trees he seîþ þu sest spryng
And tak gode kepe what þei forþe bryng
Herbys forth bryngeþ flourys and seed
And trees fruyte and braunches to sprede
And forþ bryngestu þorou3 þi skyn
Netes luys and moche other vermyn
Of hem he seîþ springeþ bavme ful gode
And oyle & wyn for mannys fode ;
And of the comeþ myche foule þing
As fen & vrynæ and foule spetyng
Of hem comeþ ful svete sauour
And of the comeþ stenþe ful sour
Siche as þe tre is with þe bowes
Syche is the fruyt þe þer-on growys
An yuel tre may no gode fruyt bere
And þat knoweþ eche a gardyner
Aþman is a tre in a 3erde
Of the whiche þe crop is turned dunward
And þe rote towarde the firmware
As seîþ the grete clerk Innocent

He saiþ man in shap is bote a tre
Turned vpward þat doune sholde be

Of whiche þe rote that on hit springeþ
Js the here that on mannys heuede hongeþ
The stok next the rote growyng
Js the heuede wiþ þe nekke folwyng
The body of the tre ther-by
Js the brest with bely
The bowes beþ armes wiþ þe hondes
And þe legges with the fete þat stondes
The braunches may men kyndely calle
The toos and þe fyngres alle
This is the leef þat hongþ not fast
That is blowen wiþ wyndes blast
And the body also of þe tre
That wiþ þe sonne may i-dried be
A man that is boþe 3ong and ly3t
Be he neuer so stronge and wy3t
And of face boþe fre & faire
Juelys & sikenes makeþ hym apair~
And alle his beaute & strengeþ a-bate
And makeþ hym in simple astate
And changeþ alle his colour
And makeþ hit fade as dop þe flour
A flour þat semþ fair and bry3t
Wiþ stormes hit fadeþ & febleþ þe my3t
And yuelys and great myscheues
Comeþ to a man þat heres leues
As feuers dropsesy and jaunes
Tesyk goutes and oþer maladies
That dop þym suffre gret pyne
As stormes dop þe flourys dwyne
Ther-for may a man wel y-likned be
To a flour þat fair is on to se
That when hit is for þe brou3t
Welkeþ and fadeþ til hit come to nou3t .
This shold be a ensample to us
For-why Job in a boke seiþ þus
<lat></lat>
<lat></lat>
Man he seiþ as floure bry3t
Furst comeþ forþ here to þis ly3t
<fol. 9v>And walkeþ an passeþ sone away
As a shadowe on þe somers day
And no tyme in o state duelleþ
Bote euer passyng as Job telleþ
Of this david wittenes beres
In a psalme namely þorou3 þis vers
<lat></lat>
<lat></lat>
David seiþ thus as wretan is
Man waðeþ a-wey erly as gras
Erly atte þe bygynnyng of þe day
He floressheþ and passeþ a-way
Atte euen late he is doun brouȝt
And fayleþ and dvyueþ & goþ to nouȝt
In the bygynnyng of þe lif of man
Nyne hundred wynter men leued þan
As clerkes seiþ and bereþ wittenes
Bote after þat by-come mannys lyf lasse
And so wold god þat hit shold be
For-why he saið þus to Noe ;