

The idle man is entered by the Devil and the seven deadly sins.

he fyndeth a man voyde in slowthe, he takyth vij. spyrites, werse þan hym-self, þat is, þe seuē dedly synnes, & entryth þat ydel man, for he is so empty & voyde, wyth-outen gode werkys. for 3if he were all full wyth gode vertuys, þe feend & 4 dedly synnes myȝte noȝt entryn, ne dwellyn, in hym. but for he is empty, þerfore þe feend, wyth dedly synnes, dwellyth in hym. for þe besauēt of grace is takyn fro hym þat hydeth it in slowthe, & wyth noȝt multiplien it in gode werkys. Mat. xij<sup>o</sup>.<sup>1</sup> 8

Sloth, if produced by anguish, is no sin;

3if þou in þi slowthe hast heuynesse, & no lust in goodnes in þin herte, but a manere of angwysch, 3if it be noȝt aȝens charyte to god ne to man, but lettyth þi deuocoun in þin herte, 3if it

but, if produced by excessive spiritual labour, it is venial sin. If it induces a man to neglect the means of salvation, it is deadly sin.

come of kynde, it is no synne; 3if it come of þin owyn appetyte 12 for þi gostly trauayle, þof þat appetyte be of delyberacoun, for þi consente to þat venyal synne, þi slanthe is þanne venyaft synne. 3if þin heuynes be so sluggy, þat þou leue vnsayd or vndo þat is nedefull to þe helth of þi saluacoun, þanne is it 16 dedly synne; or 3if it be nedefull to þe saluacoun of þi neȝgh-boure, it is dedly synne. 3if it be omytted for heuynes & sluggynesse, and 3if þin heuynes brynge þe in-to dyspayre, or to sle þi-self, it is dedly synne, þat heuynes. 3if þin heuynes in 20 sleuth, in consent of þi resoun and in full avysement, suffre þi slugnes of þi flesch haue his powere aboue þi soule, & omytte, or fle, or leue vnsayde or vndon, or breke, ony goodnes þat þou art bounde to, in nede of saluacoun of þi soule, as to þe 24 comaundmentys | of god & of holy cherche, it is dedly synne.

The idle one the pillow of the Devil. He is like a dismantled town open to all fiends; like a hill for shooting at, exposed to arrows of temptation.

Slowthe makyth þe þe restyng place of þe deuyll, for þou art þe feendys pylwe. slowthe makyth þe as a cyte vnwallyd, redy & esy for alle synnes & for alle feendys to entryn in-to þi soule. 28 Slouthe<sup>2</sup> makyth þe as a schetyng hyll, redy to be schett wyth þe arwe of euery temptacoun.

[*Fiends gather Overskipped Verses in a Sack, and write Idle Words on a Scroll.*]

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Example<sup>3</sup>. *Jacobus de vitriaco* tellyth þat an holy man stood in cherch in a qwere, & seyȝ a feend beryng a gret saccheff

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 43-45. <sup>2</sup> MS. *sche* crossed. <sup>3</sup> MS. in margin: 'narracio.'

full of thyng. þe feend, as þe man askyd þe feend what he bare, þe feend seyde: 'I bere in my sacche sylabyls & woordys, A fiend gathered overskipped verses in a bag, ouerskyppyd and synkopyd, & verse & psalmys þe whiche 4 þese clerkys han stolyn in þe qweere, & haue fayled in here seruyse.'

fforsothe, þanne I trowe þe feend hath a gret sacche full of zoure ydell woordys, þat ze iangelyn in cherche in slowthe.

8 ffor þis same clerk seyth þat þe deuyl in a cherche wrote þe and wrote on a scroll the idle words spoken during holy service, woordys of þe peple, whiche þei iangledyn & rownedyn in cherch, & whan his scrowe was to lytel, he drewe it out, wyth his teeth, broddere; and in his drawyng he smote his heuyd 12 azens þe walle. An holy man seyþ þis, & askyd þe feend why he dyde so. þe feend seyde: 'I wryte þise talys of þe peple in þis cherche, to recordyn hem a-fore god at þe doom for here to show them to God. dampnacyoun, and my book is to narwe to wryten on alle here 16 talys; þei say so manye. þerfore I drawe it out braddere, þat none of here talys schulde be vnwretyn.'

I drede me þanne, þe feend hath a gret book azens zou, wretyn of zoure ianglynges in cherch, & zit ze excusyn zow 20 þere-in, & seyn: 'me muste | speke to hym þat spekyth to me.' [Fol. 39 a.] beth ware, & leuyth suche talys for dreed of god & for rewthe of Avoid talking in church! zoure soule! forsakyth zoure slowthe, & takyth þe ground of gostly strengthe, to tranaylen myztely in prayerys, to duryng 24 myztely in goodnes, to wythstonden myztily temptacyoun, to sufferyn myztyly aduersite & tribulacyoun. for þis strengthe ouercomyth slowthe, & sauyth zoure soule.

[The Devil tempting the Monks of Abbot Macarius.]

☞ Exaumpel<sup>1</sup>. Ex vitis patrum. Macharye, þe Abbot, seyþ The Devil, in a man's attire, went to a monastery to poison the monks with draughts of temptation. 29 sathan, þe deuyl, in mannys wede, & his clothyng was lyeñ, & full of spayerys, & in euery spayere hyng a crewett. þe abbot seyde to hym: 'whider gost þou?' þe feend seyde, 'I go to 32 enpoyseñ þi bretheryn, þi munkys.' þe abbot seyde, 'why beryst þou so many crewettys?' þe feend answerde, 'I bere

<sup>1</sup> MS. in margin: 'narracio.'