JOHN BALE (1495-1563), BISHOP OF OSSORY AND PROTESTANT POLEMICIST. John Bale’s writings were always in the service of his Reformation political and religious commitments. Although he published many lengthy prose tracts, his plays, such as the moral history King John (c. 1538), remain his best known works. Spending time in exile on the Continent for refusing to compromise his Protestant convictions, Bale briefly served as bishop of Ossory (Ireland), and later (under Elizabeth I) took up Church office, but wrote little in his remaining years.

EDITIONS:

From A NEW COMEDY OR INTERLUDE, CONCERNING THREE LAWS OF NATURE, MOSES, AND CHRIST, CORRUPTED BY THE SODOMITES, PHARISEES, AND PAPISTS (1548?)¹

NOTE ON THE TEXT: An intensely apocalyptic play, New Comedy draws on the medieval morality play’s allegorical characters, depicting the personified virtues of Natural Law, Mosaic Law, and Evangelium (Christian Law) corrupted by vices that Bale identifies with contemporary professions and institutions: Infidelity, Idolatry (a witch and a version of the Whore of Babylon, a common symbol of Rome and the papacy), Sodomy (a monk), Avarice (a lawyer), Ambition (a bishop), False Doctrine (a Catholic theologian, Pseudodoctrina), and Hypocrisy (a friar). Act 5 features the Justice of God (Vindicta Dei) driving away Infidelity, and God the Father speaking of the three laws restored, the arrival of the Law of Christ (Christi Lex) and Christian Faith (Fides Christiani), and the coming of the new Jerusalem. The defeat of Infidelity and the marriage of Bridegroom (Christ) and his Bride (the community of Christian believers) symbolize the victory of the Protestant Reformation. Concluding with a versification of the Ten Commandments, Bale asks God to deliver the true faithful from “the popish mire” and “hell fire.” The Catholic religious rites, doctrines and practices that Bale outlines below are all represented in strident, but entirely conventional, Reformist terms as idolatrous and blasphemous.

ACT 2

[...]

NATURAE LEX.²
God hath appointed me,
Mankind to oversee,
And in his heart to sit.

To teach him for to know
In the creatures high and low,
His glorious majesty,

¹ The following selections are taken from the 2nd edition, 1562.
² Naturae Lex The Law of Nature (or Natural Law).
And on His name to call,
Or power celestial,
In his necessity;
To think Him everlasting
And wonderful in working,
And that He createth all,
Both govern and conserve
From them He never swerve
That to such faith will fall.

INFIDELITAS.
Indeed here is good sport!
But why do you resort
Unto this present place?

NATURAE LEX.
Man always to exhort
To seek all health and comfort,
Of the only God of grace.
First in the hearts rejoice,
And then with open voice,
To worship Him alone.
"Knowledging His deity"³
His power and eternity
When he shall make his moan.

INFIDELITAS.
I shall keep ye as well from that
As my granddame kept her cat
From licking of her cream.

NATURAE LEX.
What will thou keep me fro?
Tell me ere thou farther go:
Methink thou art in a dream.

INFIDELITAS.
From causing of mankind
To give to God his mind
Or his obedience.

NATURAE LEX.
What is thy name? Tell me.

INFIDELITAS.
Marry, ‘Infidelity,’
Which never will agree,
To your benevolence.

³ ‘Knowledging’ acknowledging.
NATURAE LEX.
Thou canst not keep me from man.

INFIDELITAS.
Yet will I do the best I can
To trouble ye now and than,\(^4\)
That ye shall not prevail.
I will cause idolatry
And most vile sodomy
To work so ungraciously
Ye shall of your purpose fail.

NATURAE LEX.
I defy thee, wicked fiend,\(^5\)
With thy whole venomous kind!
God putteth now in my mind
To flee thy company.

INFIDELITAS.
Ye are too blessed a saint,
And yourself so well can paint
That I must me acquaint
With you; no remedy.

NATURAE LEX.
Avoid, thou cruel enemy!\(^6\)
I will none of thee, truly,
But shun thy company\(^7\)
As I would the Devil of Hell.  
\([Exit.\]

INFIDELITAS.
And are ye gone indeed?
Small wittam be your speed!\(^8\)
Except ye take good heed,
I will be next of your council.

Now will I work such mastery,
By crafts and subtle policy,
The Law of Nature to poison
With pestilent idolatry,
And with most stinking sodomy,
That he shall have no foison.\(^9\)

\(^4\) *than* i.e., then.
\(^5\) *find* i.e., fiend (demon or devil).
\(^6\) *avoid* ‘Be off!’
\(^7\) *shurn* shun.
\(^8\) *Small wittam be your speed* ‘Little (or small) Wittam’ was proverbial for a place in which the inhabitants were stunningly stupid.  
\(^9\) *be your speed* i.e., be your success.
Where are these villain knaves,
The Devil’s own kitchen slaves,
That them I cannot see?
I conjure you both here,
And charge ye to appear,
Like two knaves as you be.

**SODOMISMUS. MONACHUS.**

Ambo is a name full clean,
Know ye not what I mean,
And are so good a clark?

**INFIDELITAS.**

By Tetragrammaton,
I charge ye, appear anon,
And come out of the dark.

**SODOMISMUS.**

Have in then at a dash,
With swash myry annet swash
Yet may I not be too rash,
For my holy order’s sake.

**IDOLATRIA. NECROMANTIC.**

Nor I soon by my troth,
Cha caute a corage of sloth,
And such a combrous couth
Ich wote not what to do.

**INFIDELITAS.**

At Christmas and at Paske,
Ye may dance the Devil a maske
Whilst his great cawdron plawe.
You such a pretty minion,

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9 *foison* abundance, plentiful crop.
10 **SODOMISMUS. MONACHUS.** Sodomy, a monk.
11 **Ambo** Latin, “both (of a pair or couple).”
12 *Tetragrammaton* the Hebrew four-letter name of God, generally transliterated as YHWH (Yahweh).
13 *Intrant simul* “They enter at the same time” (they = Sodomismus and Idolatria).
14 *swash myry annet swash* an apparently nonsensical phrase, perhaps emphasizing Sodomismus’ braggart character?
15 *holy order’s sake* i.e., for the sake of the religious order that he belongs to.
16 **IDOLATRIA. NECROMANTIC.** “Idolatry, a witch.”
17 *Cha caute a corage of sloth* i.e., I have caught a heart of sloth.
18 *And such a combrous couth* i.e., And such a troublesome reputation.
19 *Ich wote* i.e., I know.
20 **Paske** Easter.
21 *maske* often part of courtly entertainments, where courtiers would appear masked to participate in a dance before the monarch.
22 *cawdron plawe* i.e., cauldron bubbles [it is engaged in its typical activity].
And you now in religion,
Such two I never saw!
Is not thy name ‘Idolatry’?

SODOMISMUS.
Yes, an wholesome woman verily
And well seen in philosophy.24
Men’s fortunes she can tell.
She can by saying her ‘Ave Mary’25
And by other charms of sorcery
Ease men of toothache by and by,26
Yea, and fetch the Devil from Hell.

She can milk the cow and hunt the fox,
And help men of the ague and pox,27
So they bring money to the box,28
When they to her make moan.
She can fetch again all that is lost,
And draw drink out of a rotten post
Without the help of the Holy Ghost;
In working she is alone.

INFIDELITAS.
Why, sometime thou wert an ‘he’!

IDOLATRIA.
Yes, but now ych am a ‘she,’29
And a good midwife, perdie.30
Young children can I charm
With whisperings and whishings,31
With crossings and with kissings,32
With blazings and with blessings,33
That sprites do them no harm.34

INFIDELITAS.

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23 minion applied to the female ‘Idolatria’; ‘minion’ has many unsavoury connotations, often figuring a person kept to service sexually a social superior.
24 well seen knowledgeable about, well read in.
25 Ave Mary i.e., the Ave Maria or Hail Mary, a prayer particularly addressed to the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ.
26 by and by immediately.
27 ague an acute, violent fever. pox syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases.
28 money to the box i.e., money into the church donation box. ‘Box’ was also a slang term for the ‘vagina,’ although Williams’ earliest citation is 1576 (1.141).
29 ych I.
30 perdie a mild oath: ‘by God.’
31 whishings shushings; a soft sound made to quiet a baby.
32 crossings making the sign of the cross.
33 blazings Given the context, perhaps a reference to the conventional form of blessing used in Catholic services on the feast day of St. Blaise, patron saint of throat illnesses: crossed candles would be placed against a person’s throat as a blessing was said.
34 sprites spirits, ghosts.
Then art thou like to Clisthenes,
To Clodius and Euclides,
Sardinapalus and Hercules,\(^{35}\)
Which themselves oft transformed
Into a woman’s likeness,
With agility and quickness,
But they had Venus’ sickness,\(^{36}\)
As writers have declared.

SODOMISMUS.
Let her tell forth her matter.

IDOLATRIA.
With holy oil and water
I can so cloyne and clatter\(^{37}\)
That I can at the latter
Many subtleties contrive.
I can work wiles in battle;
If I do once but spattle,\(^{38}\)
I can make corn and cattle,
That they shall never thrive.

When ale is in the fat,\(^{39}\)
If the brewer shall please nat,
The cast shall fall down flat,\(^{40}\)
And never have any strength.
No man shall tonne nor bake,\(^{41}\)
If I against him take,
But lose his labour at length.

Their wells I can up dry,
Cause trees and herbs to die
And slay all pullerye,\(^{42}\)
Whereas men doth me move.
I can make stoles to dance,\(^{43}\)
And earthen pots to prance,
That none shall them enhance,
And do but cast my glove.\(^{44}\)

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\(^{35}\) _Clisthenes_ a man condemned by Aristophanes as effeminate and licentious. _Clodius_ Publius, a Roman of high rank who disguised himself in women’s clothes to gain access to Julius Caesar’s wife with the intent to seduce her. _Euclides_ a native of Megara; when the Athenian government banned his people from Athens, Euclides dressed in women’s clothes to gain access to the city and attend Socrates’ lectures. For _Sardinapalus_ and _Hercules_, see Glossary (print anthology).

\(^{36}\) _Venus’ sickness_ love sickness (erotomania), or syphilis (a sexually transmitted disease).

\(^{37}\) _cloyne and clatter_ deceive and babble idly.

\(^{38}\) _spattle_ spit.

\(^{39}\) _fat_ i.e., brewer’s vat.

\(^{40}\) _The cast shall fall down flat_ i.e., the batch of ale will spoil.

\(^{41}\) _tonne_ to fill a tunne or cask; thus, to brew.

\(^{42}\) _pullerye_ poultry.

\(^{43}\) _stoles_ robes, clothes.
I have charms for the plough
And also for the cow,
She shall give milk enow,\(^{45}\)
So long as I am pleased:
Apace the mill shall go,
So shall the credle do,\(^{46}\)
And the mustarde querne also\(^{47}\)
No man therewith diseased.

INFIDELITAS.
Then art thou fit for me.

[...] \(^{44}\)

INDOLATRIA.
I never miss but paulter,\(^{48}\)
Our Blessed Lady’s Psalter,\(^{49}\)
Before Saint Sauers altar,\(^{50}\)
With my beads once a day.\(^{51}\)
And this is my common cast,
To hear Mass first or last
And the holy Friday fast,
In good time mowt I say it.\(^{52}\)

With blessings of Saint Germyne\(^{53}\)
I will me so determine
That neither fox nor vermin,
Shall do my chickens harm.
For your geese, seek Saint Legearde;\(^{54}\)
And for your ducks, Saint Lenarde,\(^{55}\)
For horse, take Moses’ yearde.\(^{56}\)

\(^{44}\) And ... glove i.e., those who do nothing more serious than damage my glove shall find they do not prosper in the world.
\(^{45}\) enow enough.
\(^{46}\) credle i.e., cradle. Given the context, ‘credle’ may be a printer’s error for ‘tredle’ (treadle), a foot pedal used to operate a loom. It may simply be that Idolatria indicates her charms will even cause cradles to rock themselves.
\(^{47}\) mustard quern a small hand-mill for grinding mustard seed.
\(^{48}\) paulter recite indistinctly; mumble, babble.
\(^{49}\) Our Blessed Lady’s Psalter A psalter is a book containing the Psalms arranged for devotional purposes; here, Bale is using the more specific meaning of ‘the Rosary,’ a set of prayers specifically devoted to the Virgin Mary.
\(^{50}\) Saint Sauers uncertain, but perhaps St. Salvius (Sauve) of Amiens (d. c. 625 CE) or St Salvius (Sauve) of Valenciennes (d. c. 768 CE).
\(^{51}\) beads i.e., the beads of the Rosary (n49 above).
\(^{52}\) mowt might.
\(^{53}\) Saint Germyne St. Germanus (Germain), bishop of Paris (d. 576 CE).
\(^{54}\) For your geese, seek Saint Legearde i.e., for the sake of the health of your geese, invoke the aid of Saint Leger (Leodegarius), martyr and patron saint of eye problems.
\(^{55}\) And for your ducks, Saint Lenarde probably, St Leonard of Limousin (11\(^{th}\) c. CE), famous for curing the diseases of both people and animals.
\(^{56}\) Moses yearde i.e., the rod (yearde) of the patriarch, Moses.
There is no better charm.

[…]

For the cough take Judas’ ear,57
With the paring of a pear,
And drink them without fear
If ye will have remedy;
Three sips are for the hyckock58
And six more for the chyckock;59
Thus may my pretty pyckock
Recover by and by.60

[…]

SODOMISMUS.
Myself I so behave,
And am so vile a knave,
As nature doth deprave,
And utterly abhor.
I am such a vice truly,
As God in his great fury
Did punish most terribly
In Sodom and in Gomorre.62

In the flesh I am a fire,
And such a vile desire,
As bring men to the mire,
Of foul concupiscence.
We two together began,63
To spring and to grow in man,
As Thomas of Aquine scan,
In the fourth book of his sentence.64

I dwelt among the Sodomites65
The Benjamites, and Madianites66
And now the popish hypocrites
Embrace me everywhere.
I am now become all spiritual

57 Judas’ ear Jew’s Ear, another word for the Elder tree; Gerard says that the tree’s “jelly” (sap or perhaps a clinging fungus?) cures mouth inflammations (Gerard’s Herbal, 1597).
58 hyckock hiccup.
59 chyckock chincough or hooping-cough, a largely childhood illness.
60 pyckock peacock; figuratively, ‘a vain or conceited person.’
61 by and by immediately.
63 we two concupiscence and sodomy.
64 Thomas Aquinas’ Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Abelard (Bk. 4).
65 Sodomites inhabitants of Sodom (Gen. 19.1-29).
66 Benjamites Jg. 19.20-26 relates an incident similar to the Sodomites’ demand that Lot give his male visitors to them for sex. Madianites the Midianites; they led the Israelites into idolatry (Num. 25.1-5).
For the clergy at Rome and over all
For want of wives to me doth fall
To God they have no fear.

The children of God I did so move
That they the daughters of men did love, 67
Working such ways as did not behove,
'Till the flood them over went.
With Noe’s son Cham I was half joined,
When he his drunken father scorned 68
In the Gomorites I a[l]so reigned
'Till the hand of God them brent.

I was with Onan not unacquainted
When he on the ground his increase shed, 69
For me his brethren Joseph accused
As Genesis doth tell. 70
David once warned all men of us two.
Do not as mules and horses will do. 71
Confounded be they that to images go,
Those are the ways to Hell.

Both Essaye and Ezechiel, 72
Both Hieremy and Daniel 73
Of us the abominations tell,
With the prophets everychon, 74
For us two God strake with fire and water,
With battle, with plagues, and fearful matter,
With painful exile, then at the latter,
Into Egypt and Babylon.

As Paul to the Romans testify
The Gentiles after idolatry
Fell to such bestial sodomy
That God did them forsake;
Who followeth us, as he confess,
The kingdom of God shall never possess, 75
And as the Apocalypse express
Shall sink to the burning lake. 76

67 The children ... love See Gen. 6.1-2.
68 Noe’s son ... scorned See Gen. 9.20-22.
69 Onan’s coitus interruptus with his wife, his dead brother’s widow, circumvented the law that demanded he produce children with her to carry on his brother’s name (Gen. 38. 6-10). increase semen.
70 In Gen 37.2, Joseph accuses his brothers of “the most wicked crime” (Vulgate), according to Aquinas, sex with their cattle.
71 Ps. 32.9 warns people not to be like these animals that lack understanding and need to be governed by force.
72 Essaye and Ezechiel the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, in the Biblical books that bear their names.
73 Hieremy and Daniel the prophets Jeremiah and Daniel, in the Biblical books that bear their names.
74 everychon everyone.
75 As ... possess Rom. 1.24-29.
76 And ... lake Rev. 14.9-11; 20.15.
We made Thalon and Sophocles
Thamyras, Nero, Agathocles
Tiberius and Aristoteles
Themselves to use unnaturally. 77
I taught Aristo and Fulvius
Semiramis and Hortensius
Crathes, Hyliscus, and Pontius
Beasts to abuse most monstrously. 78

INFIDELITAS.
Marry, thou art the Devil himself!

IDOLATRIA.
If ye knew how he could pelf 79
Ye would say he were such an elf, 80
As none under Heaven were else.

INFIDELITAS.
The fellow is well decked
Disguised and well necked, 81
Both knave-bald and pie-pecked;
He lacketh nothing but bells. 82

SODOMISMUS.
In the first age I began
And so persevered with man,
And still will if I can
So long as he endure.
If monkish sects renew
And popish priests continue
Which are of my retinue,

77 Thalon unidentified. Sophocles ancient Greek tragedian; lover of the youth Demophon. Thamyras Thracian poet-musician; traditionally, the ancient inventor of sodomy; lover of the boy Hyacinthus. Nero See Glossary (print anthology). Agathocles (b. 361 BCE), king of Syracuse, reportedly murdered by his male slave-lover, Menon. Tiberius Roman emperor (reigned 14-37 CE); reportedly enjoyed sex with both women and men. Aristoteles Aristotle (384-322 BCE), Greek philosopher; represents homosexual desire as natural in Nichomachean Ethics (7.5.3-5 and 8.4.1-2).
78 I . . . monstrously Aristo Ephesius who “joined with a female ass” (Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy, 3.2.1.2.49). Fulvius Fulvius Stellus hated women, so he had sexual intercourse with a mare; it bore the lovely girl, Epona, goddess of horses. Semiramis See Glossary (print anthology). Quintus Hortensius Hortalus? (114-50 BCE), sensual and indolent Roman orator. Crathes a shepherd who had sex with a she-goat and was subsequently killed by the jealous buck of the flock. Hyliscus unidentified. Pontius Pontius Pilate, Roman governor of Judaea who sentenced Christ to death, is sometimes depicted as ‘inflamed with lust’ by a fresco representing the famously lovely Atalanta and Helen of Troy (Burton 3.2.1.2.51).
79 pelf steal, rob, plunder.
80 elf malicious spirit.
81 disguised fantastically or extravagantly dressed. well-necked with a sturdy neck? pie-pecked an obscure term of abuse; perhaps, given the focus on Sodomismus’ appearance, referring to his rough, pock-mocked skin?
82 The fellow ... bells i.e., Sodomismus has all the appearance of a professional fool or jester, except for the bells that were traditionally attached to the jester’s cap or staff.
To live I shall be sure.

Clean marriage they forbid,
Yet cannot their ways be hid,
Men know what hath betid\textsuperscript{83}
When they have been in parell\textsuperscript{84}
Oft have they buried quick\textsuperscript{85}
Such as were never sick;
Full many a proper trick
They have to help their quarrel.

In Rome to me they fall,
Both bishop and cardinal
Monk, friar, priest and all,
More rank they are than ants\textsuperscript{86}
Example in Pope July
Which sought to have in his fury
Two lads, and to use them beastly,
From the Cardinal of Nantes\textsuperscript{87}

\textbf{INFIDELITAS.}

Well, you two are for my mind!
Step forth and do your kind;\textsuperscript{88}
Leave never a point behind
That may corrupt in man,
The law writ in his heart.
In his flesh do thy part; \[To Sodomismus.\]
And his soul to pervart \[To Idolatria.\]
Do thou the best thou can.

Here have I pretty gins,\textsuperscript{89}
Both broaches, beads and pins,
With such as the people wins
Unto idolatry.
Take thou part of them here, \[To Idolatria.\]
Beads, rings, and other gear\textsuperscript{90}
And shortly thee bestere\textsuperscript{91}
To deceive man properly.

Take this same staff and scrip,\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{83} betid happened.
\textsuperscript{84} they the monks. parell danger [of being exposed].
\textsuperscript{85} quick alive.
\textsuperscript{86} rank numerous.
\textsuperscript{87} Pope ... Nantes Pope Julius II (d. 1513) reportedly raped two young gentlemen entrusted by Queen Anne, wife of Louis XII of France, to the cardinal of Nantes.
\textsuperscript{88} do your kind i.e., behave in accordance with your nature.
\textsuperscript{89} gins allurements, traps.
\textsuperscript{90} gear stuff, trash, fripperies.
\textsuperscript{91} bestere bestir: busy [oneself] about; make a vigorous effort to [do something].
\textsuperscript{92} staff and scrip the traditional accouterments of a wanderer or beggar: a scrip is a bag for carrying necessities.
With a God here of a chyppe,\footnote{With a God here of a chyppe ‘Chyppe’ (or ‘chip’) perhaps refers here to a fragment of bread crust, a jeering glance at the Roman Catholic belief that the bread or wafer consumed during the Eucharist was transformed during the Mass into the actual body of Christ. For Protestant reformers, this belief was the height of idolatry.}{93}
And, good beldame, forward hyppe\footnote{A beldame is an aged matron, but also a hag or vile old woman. hyppe hobble along, limp.}{94}
To set forth pilgrimage.

Set thou forth sacramentals,\footnote{sacramentals Catholic ritual practices, such as carrying palms on Palm Sunday, placing ashes on a penitent’s forehead on Ash Wednesday, or saying grace before meals.}{95}
Say dirge and sing for trentals,\footnote{dirge a hymn of mourning sung at a funeral mass. trentals thirty requiem masses, those said for the souls of the dead (and the payment required for them).}{96}
Study the Pope’s decretals,\footnote{decretals papal decrees or epistles.}{97}
And mix them with buggerage.\footnote{buggerage buggery (either sexual intercourse between members of the same sex; or between humans and animals).}{98}

[To Sodomismus.

Here is a stool for thee,\footnote{stool presumably to sit on while he hears confession. See n100.}{99}
A ghostly father to be;\footnote{ghostly father a priest in his role as an individual’s spiritual guide; also, a priest who hears a penitent’s confession and offers absolution for his or her sins.}{100}
To hear, Bene diket,\footnote{Benedicite ‘Bless you.’}{101}
A box of creams and oil,\footnote{box of creams and oil substances used for the anointing of Catholics for various reasons (baptism, extreme unction, blessings).}{102}
Here is a purse of relics,\footnote{relics revered objects (e.g., pieces of a cloak, bones, or other bodily parts) that belonged to a saint.}{103}
Rags, rotten bones, and sticks,\footnote{taper Catholic churches feature various holy objects, such as blessed candles (tapers), as aides to devotion and prayer.}{104}
A taper with other tricks,\footnote{trentals thirty requiem masses, those said for the souls of the dead (and the payment required for them).}{104}
Show them in every soil.

[To Idolatria.

SODOMISMUS.
I will corrupt God’s image,
With most unlawful usage,
And bring him into dotage,\footnote{him mankind, humanity. dotage both passionate affection or attraction to (concupiscent actions and desires), and stupid, senseless affection or attraction to.}{105}
Of all concupiscence.

IDOLATRIA.
Within the flesh thou art,
But I dwell in the heart,
And will the soul pervart,\footnote{pervart pervert.}{106}
From God’s obedience.

[...]
INFIDELITAS.
Now are these whoresons set forth. ¹⁰⁷
It will be somewhat worth,
To see how they will work,
The one to poison the heart,
The other the outward part,
Ingeniously will they lurk.

The Law of Nature they will
Infect, corrupt, and spill ¹⁰⁸
With their abomination.
Idolatry with wickedness,
And Sodomy with filthiness,
To his most utter damnation.

These two will him so use
Ich one in their abuse ¹⁰⁹
And wrap him in such evil
That by their wicked cast
He shall be at the last
A morsel for the Devil.

Now underneath her wings,
Idolatry hath kings,
With their nobility.
Both dukes, lords, knights, and earls,
Fair ladies with their pearls,
And the whole commonalty. ¹¹⁰

Within the bownes of Sodomy ¹¹¹
Doth dwell the spiritual clergy,
Pope, cardinal, and priest,
Nun, canon, monk, and friar,
With so many else as do desire
To reign under Antichrist. ¹¹²

Detesting matrimony
They live abominably
And burn in carnal lust.
Shall I tell ye farther news?
At Rome for prelates are stews

¹⁰⁷ these whoresons i.e., Sodomismus and Idolatria.
¹⁰⁸ spill ruin, destroy.
¹⁰⁹ Ich Each.
¹¹⁰ commonalty commonality (all the people of the nation).
¹¹¹ bownes boundaries; territorial borders.
¹¹² Antichrist a New Testament figure who appears largely in 1 and 2 John, as well as Revelation; often identified with Satan as the emblem of absolute opposition to Christ; Protestant polemicists like Bale represented Antichrist as the Pope or the Pope’s true spiritual ‘superior.’
Of both kinds. This is just.\textsuperscript{113}

[...]

From The Acts of the English Votaries (1546)\textsuperscript{114}

The Preface

[...]

Their\textsuperscript{115} saints in a manner were all unmarried. If any were married that would needs be saints, they were anon\textsuperscript{116} compelled by oath, or by the way of penance, to leave their makes\textsuperscript{117} to the occupying of others, the man his wife, and the woman her husband, as ye shall behold in this book by most plenteous examples. For matrimony hath ever been such a black bug in their synagogue and church that never would canonization serve yet where he was in place.\textsuperscript{118}

Notwithstanding, we are thoroughly ascertained by innumerable scriptures and arguments that matrimony is of God, and by their innumerable examples of filthiness that their vowed wifeless and husbandless chastity is altogether of the Devil. Since the glorious appearance of the Gospel have that sodomitical swarm or brood of Antichrist (that we call the ‘spirituality’) been oft times admonished of their fleshy errors by the manifest scriptures thereof, that they should [at] once repent their most horrible mischiefs, and grant unto marriage the freedom due thereunto. And what have they done, think you? Nothing else at all but laughed them to scorn, reproving them to be but fables and lies. [...]

[...]

Marriage Condemned\textsuperscript{119} of Satan.

Thus Satan erected himself against God in that wicked generation which began first in Cain,\textsuperscript{120} and hath ever since continued in the posterity. For this presumption God gave them clearly over, and left them to themselves with all their good intents and vows; whereupon they have wrought since that time filthiness unspeakable. Their chaste women, vestals, monials,\textsuperscript{121} nuns and Beguines,\textsuperscript{122} changing the natural use have wrought unnaturally.

\textsuperscript{113} prelates high-ranking Roman Catholic Church authorities (cardinals, bishops, archbishops).  
\textit{stews / Of both kinds} i.e., brothels with both male and female prostitutes.

\textsuperscript{114} The title continues: “comprehending their unchaste practices and examples by all ages, from the world’s beginning to this present year, collected out of their own legends and chronicles. Learn herein (good reader) to prove [i.e., test] all spirits, and to judge false miracles, rebuking no Christian believer but those obstinate hypocrites only, which yet live after their pope’s old rule. Read, but laugh not.”

\textsuperscript{115} Their i.e., the Roman Catholic Church’s.

\textsuperscript{116} anon immediately.

\textsuperscript{117} makes mates; spouses.

\textsuperscript{118} never ... place i.e., a person could never be canonized (be declared a saint) if he or she were married and remained married.

\textsuperscript{119} contemned despised.

\textsuperscript{120} Cain son of Adam and Eve, who murders his younger brother Abel out of jealousy that Abel’s sacrifice is more pleasing to God than his own. See Gen. 4.1-15.

\textsuperscript{121} monials nuns living in enclosed orders (i.e., ones that never left their convents).
Likewise the men in their prelacies, priesthoods, and innumerable kinds of monkery, for want of women, hath brent in their lusts, and done abominations without number, so receiving in themselves the just reward of their error. Of these most hellish and diabolical fruits, holy Saint Paul admonished the Romans in the first chapter of his epistle unto them, knowing aforehand that out of their corrupted Christianity should rise such a filthy flock as should work them everywhere. But neither of Paul nor yet of Peter have the forewarnings availed, but those brockish boors have gone freely forward without check till now of late days, wherein God hath given us a more pure sight to behold their buskelynges.

PRIESTS MARRIED AND UNMARRIED.

Now as concerning the priests of the Hebrews or Israelites for all these ages (which were the peculiar flock of God), they had all wives that were righteous among them, according to the religion that he first appointed them. Noe, Melchizedech, Abraham, Moses, Aaron and such other were all married men and had children. The Scriptures report that these men were beloved with God, and that in holiness none were ever found like unto them. But neither was that for their vows nor yet for their good intents If any were chaste vowers that time the two priests that lusted after Susanna were of them (Daniel 13), so were the wanton sons of Heli and Samuel with such other like, which were afore God very reprobates, for despising his order, as well in that as in other things. Of such chaste vowers were there some, at the very time when Christ was born, both religious priests and Levites, which were most highly taken among them. These, thinking marriage unholy, abstained from the use of women, but they spared not to work inexecrable filthiness among themselves, and one to pollute another. Zachary, a married priest and father of John [the] Baptist, is an exemplary priest.

Marginal Note: Sodomites. [Editor’s note: See Romans 1.24-28].

Beguines female lay sisters, who devoted themselves to a religious life but who were not bound by strict vows; they could leave their communities and marry.

Monastery monastic orders (derogatory, contemptuous usage).

Wanted lack.

Brent burnt.

Noe, Melchizedech, Abraham, Moses, Aaron all righteous men from the Hebrew Scriptures: Noah (Noe) and his family were the only humans saved from the Great Flood in Genesis 6.7-9.17. Melchizedech righteous “priest of the most high God” (Gen. 14.18); he becomes emblematic of the true minister. Abraham the great patriarch and founder of the nation of Israel. Moses Chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of their bondage in Egypt, Moses was succeeded as leader of the nation by his brother Aaron. They were all, indeed, married men.

In the Book of Susanna, two elders lust after the virtuous Jewish wife, Susanna; they tell her that if she does not submit sexually to them, they will have her charged, convicted and executed for adultery. Susanna refuses their advances, and is saved from execution only through the intervention of the young Daniel, who proves the elders’ guilt; they are executed in Susanna’s place.

The Lord condemns the family of his righteous priest Heli (or Eli) on account of his sinful sons (1 Samuel 3.20-21); Samuel’s sons are likewise described as not having walked in God’s ways; they are perverters of justice and takers of bribes (1 Sam. 8.3).

Most highly taken held in the greatest respect.

For Zachary, see Lk. 1.5ff. Epiphanius of Salamis (d. 403), bishop and Church Father, author of the Panarion (also known as “Against Heresies”).
Ashamed are not these prestigious papists to utter it in their stories and read it in their saints’ legends, in contempt of their Christian governors, that no king may enter the town of Oxford without a mischief, because one Algar, a prince, about this age would have had Saint Frideswide to wife. As though to be a king were a far viler or unworthier office than to be a pyled shitten nun! O blind bluddering Balaamites, without all judgements godly! Of God only is the worthy office of a king (Proverb 3), whereas your fisting nuns were of Antichrist and the Devil. […] About the same time, was Alcuinus, a doctor of England, made abbot of Turonia in France, by the gift of Charles the Great, which on a night, found all his monks dead […] by the sudden stroke of God for their sodometry, one only excepted. […] A great matter had it been in the Pope’s books, if these men had had wives, for then he could not have sent them to the Devil so fast, according to [the] general commission which he had of Satan his great master, in that vicarship of his.

From The ACTS OF THE ENGLISH VOTARIES (revised and expanded, Parts 1 and 2, 1551)

THE PREFACE to Part 2

Necessary is it, that somewhat be said here of their chaste religion also. In Rome were and are yet certain temples into whom neither honest matron nor yet chaste virgin were suffered to enter; what was permitted to common whores, oppressors of the people, and sodomitish priests in that behalf, I think all the world knoweth at this day. This mad superstition (sayeth Jacobus Zieglerus in [his] Syria) had her first original in the mount of Olympus within the isle of Cyprus, whereas a solemn temple was dedicate to Venus, into whom no woman was permitted to enter, and passed from thence to the Romans, being there admitted for a most high religion. Nevertheless the common whores had there allowed them for their lascivious occupying most fair mansions in a street called Suburrs, as both Martialis and Pamphilius

134 Philip Melanchton (1497-1560), German reformist, theologian, and friend of Luther.
135 shurned shunned.
136 Alcuinus Alcuin (c. 735-804), English scholar and author of many theological treatises.
137 prestigious deceptive, cheating.
138 no king … Algar … wife St. Frideswide refused King Algar’s offer of marriage and fled from him to Oxford; he went blind when he attempted to remove her from her hermit cell near the city. pyled miserable (perhaps with a glance at ‘shorn,’ referring to the nun’s traditional cutting of her hair upon taking her vows). shitten disgusting, contemptible.
139 bluddering blundering; blathering. Balaamites i.e., idolators (after the worshipers of Baal in the Hebrew Scriptures).
140 fisting farting.
141 sodometry i.e., sodomy.
142 in that vicarship of his i.e., through the authority the Pope derives from being Satan’s deputy (his vicar).
143 Jacobus Zieglerus (or Jacob Ziegler, c. 1470/1-1549), humanist, theologian, and cartographer. Bale refers to this writer’s most important work, Quae intus continetur Syria, Palestina, Arabia, Aeyptus, Schondia … (Strasbourg, 1532).
hath uttered.\textsuperscript{144} Neither hath any man’s doctrine since the world’s beginning been more highly accepted of the Romans and their clergy than the crafty and dark learning of bawdy Aristotle, which not only besides his sodometry kept a most filthy whore called Hermia, but also after her death, did sacrifice unto her as to a great goddess, and made hymns in her praise.\textsuperscript{145} […]

In England here sometime, might no bishop ride but upon a mare, as testifieth Bedas […] and Robert Fabyan […]\textsuperscript{146} which holy observation they had from Rome, and it is not without mystery of their buggerish beastliness. The great advouterer\textsuperscript{147} Pope Sergius\textsuperscript{148} after certain revelations and miracles of the Devil brought forth a great chest full of dead men’s bones, and caused the people both to kiss them and worship them in the head church of Rome, to double the whoredom there. […] All these uncomely histories considered, Rome, with her unchaste vows and votaries, is that blasphemous Babylon (Apo. xi),\textsuperscript{149} and that Sodom and Egypt (Apo. xi) whom all the Scriptures detesteth. Her citizens are they whom God hath given up into most prodigious lusts of uncleanness, for changing his truth to a lie.\textsuperscript{150} For they under the profession of chastity, leaving the natural use of women (sayeth Saint Paul), have brent\textsuperscript{151} in their own lusts one to another,\textsuperscript{152} that man with man, that is to say, monk with monk, nun with nun, friar with friar, and priest with priest, wrought filthiness (Rom. i), besides that they did with boys, bitches, and apes (with other beasts), yea the holiest fathers of them. If ye spell ‘Roma’ backward yet shall find it ‘love’\textsuperscript{153} in this prodigious kind, for it is the preposterous amor, a love out of order or a love against kind. I shame no more to tell this to the Pope’s remnant here in England than they shame to blaspheme marriage, which is God’s holy instruction, and to play still the whoremasters and sodomites in every corner. The eternal God once clearly deliver this Christian land from that monstrous generation. Amen.

[…]

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{144} Suburrs … Pamphlius … uttered\textsuperscript{ Martial in Epigrams 6.66 refers to a street called Suburra in Rome, a haunt of prostitutes and their clients. Pamphlius Eusebius (c. 263-339), Christian bishop, historian and theologian, author of Ecclesiastical History.}
\item \textsuperscript{145} Neither … praise\textsuperscript{ For Aristotle’s various discussions of homosexuality, see Politics, 2.12; and Nichomachean Ethics, 6.1145-1154. Accounts differ, but Aristippus says Aristotle fell in love with the concubine belonging to Hermias, a Bithynian and ex-slave; when Hermias agreed to allow Aristotle to marry the concubine, Aristotle sacrificed to her as though she were a goddess and wrote a hymn to Hermias (Diogenes Laertius, ‘Life of Aristotle,’ Lives of the Eminent Philosophers).}
\item \textsuperscript{146} Bedas\textsuperscript{ the Venerable Bede (672/73-735), early missionary to the English, and author of Ecclesiastical History of the English People. Robert Fabyan (d. 1513), early historian, author of New Chronicles of England and France (1515).}
\item \textsuperscript{147} advouterer\textsuperscript{ a person who adulterates, corrupts, or debases.}
\item \textsuperscript{148} Pope Sergius I (reigned, 687-701).}
\item \textsuperscript{149} Apo.\textsuperscript{ Apoclyse (the Book of Revelation).}
\item \textsuperscript{150} God … lie\textsuperscript{ See Romans 1.25.}
\item \textsuperscript{151} brent\textsuperscript{ burnt.}
\item \textsuperscript{152} MARGINAL NOTE: Sodomites.}
\item \textsuperscript{153} ‘Roma’ … love\textsuperscript{ Spelled backward as ‘Amor,’ ‘Roma’ is Latin for ‘love.’}
\end{footnotes}