

# Oxford Scholarly Editions Online

## Walter of Châtillon, Part I. The St-Omer Collection (1160 - 1180): 27 "Licet eger cum egrotis"

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### 27

1.

Licet eger cum egrotis  
et ignotus cum ignotis,  
fungar tamen uice cotis,<sup>214</sup>  
ius usurpans sacerdotis.  
    Flete, Syon filie,  
    presides ecclesie  
    imitantur hodie  
    Christum a remotis.

2.

Si<sup>a</sup> priuata degens uita,  
uel sacerdos uel leuita,  
sibi dari uult petita,  
hac<sup>b</sup> incedit uia trita:  
    preuia fit pactio  
    Symonis<sup>215</sup> auspicio,<sup>c</sup>  
    cui succedit datio,  
    sic fit Giezita.<sup>216</sup>

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3.

lacet ordo clericalis  
in respectu laicalis,  
sponsa<sup>217</sup> Christi fit mercalis,  
generosa generalis;  
    ueneunt altaria,  
    uenit eucharistia,

cum sit nugatoria  
gratia uenalis.

4.

Donum dei non donatur,  
nisi gratis conferatur,  
quod qui uendit uel mercatur,

lepra Syri<sup>218</sup> uulneratur.

Quem sic ambit ambitus,  
idolorum seruitus,  
templo<sup>d</sup> sancti spiritus  
non compaginatur.<sup>219</sup>

5.

<sup>e</sup>Si quis tenet<sup>e</sup> hunc tenorem,

frustra <sup>f</sup>dicit se<sup>f</sup> pastorem

<sup>g</sup>nec se regit<sup>g</sup> ut rectorem,

renum<sup>h</sup> mersus in ardorem.

Hec est enim alia  
sanguisuge filia,<sup>220</sup>  
quam uenalis curia  
duxit in uxorem.

6.

In diebus iuuentutis<sup>221</sup>

timent annos<sup>i</sup> senectutis,

ne fortuna destitutis

desit eis splendor cutis.

Et<sup>j</sup> dum querunt medium,  
uergunt in contrarium,  
fallit enim uitium  
specie uirtutis.<sup>222</sup>

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7.

Ut iam loquar inamenum,<sup>k</sup>  
sanctum crisma datur uenum,  
iuuenantur corda senum

nec refrenant motus renum.  
Senes et decrepiti  
quasi modo geniti<sup>223</sup>  
nectaris illiciti  
hauriunt uenenum.

8.

Ergo nemo<sup>l</sup> uiuit purus,  
castitatis perit murus,<sup>224</sup>  
commendatur Epicurus<sup>225</sup>  
nec spectatur<sup>m</sup> moriturus.  
Grata sunt conuiuia;  
auro uel pecunia  
cuncta facit peruia  
pontifex futurus.

## EDITOR'S NOTE EDITOR'S NOTE27

1. Though sick among the sick and a nobody among nobodies, I will nonetheless perform the role of a whetstone,<sup>214</sup> assuming the function of a priest. Weep, daughters of Zion. The leaders of the church follow Christ today from a long way off.

2. If a priest or deacon lacks a livelihood and wants to be given what he has asked for, this is the well-worn path he treads: first a deal is made under Simon's auspices;<sup>215</sup> then comes the payment; and that's how a Gehazi<sup>216</sup> is created.

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3. In the eyes of the laity the clergy lie prostrate. The bride<sup>217</sup> of Christ is on the market—once noble, now notorious. For sale are altar fees, for sale the Eucharist, though grace that is up for sale is worthless.

4. God's gift is not bestowed unless it is given freely. Whoever sells or trades it is afflicted by the Syrian's<sup>218</sup> leprosy. A man so hemmed in by greed and the worship of idols is not built to be a temple of the Holy Spirit.<sup>219</sup>

5. Anyone who hews to this path claims in vain to be a pastor. Nor does that man behave like a moral guide who is plunged in the hot throes of lust. This is the other daughter of the leech<sup>220</sup> that the venal Curia has taken to wife.

6. In the days of their youth<sup>221</sup> they fear the years of old age, anxious that fortune might abandon them and the sheen go off their skin. In seeking a middle course, they head for the opposite extreme, for vice sneaks in under the guise of virtue.<sup>222</sup>

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7. To tell you now an unpleasant truth, holy unction is up for sale. Old men's hearts are becoming young again and putting no restraints on their lustful urges. Like newborn babes, the old and decrepit<sup>223</sup> are gulping down the venom of forbidden nectar.

8. So no one is living a pure life. Gone is the wall of chastity.<sup>224</sup> Today's Epicurus<sup>225</sup> wins praise and is not viewed as doomed to die. Banquets earn favour. With gold or cash the bishop-to-be makes everything possible.

## NOTES

*Cb* 1-8; *Ar Zw* 1, 3-7; *As* 1, 3, 4, 7, 5; *Ca* 1-4, 7, 5, 6, 8; *Ch* 1, 3, 4, 7, 5, 6; *E* 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 5; *O* 1, 3, 4, 6, 7; *Om* 1, 3, 4, 7; *J* 1, 3, 4, 6, 5

<sup>a</sup> *sit Ca*

<sup>b</sup> *ac Cb*

<sup>c</sup> *officio Cb*

<sup>d</sup> *templum E As Zw*

<sup>e-e</sup> *o qui tenes Ar; tu qui tenes J; si quis tenes Ch*

<sup>f-f</sup> *dicis te Ar J Ch*

<sup>g-g</sup> *nec te regis J; sed nec regis te A; sed non regis te Ch*

<sup>h</sup> *rerum Cb C E Ar J*

<sup>i</sup> *annum Cb*

<sup>j</sup> *sed Ch Ar Om J*

<sup>k</sup> *in amenum Ch O Ca Ar*

<sup>l</sup> *nullus Ca*

<sup>m</sup> *speratur Ca*

### *Poem 27*

One of Walter's best-known satires, this poem is found in about a dozen manuscripts, in which the number and order of the stanzas varies considerably, though the text of each stanza remains remarkably consistent. Stanzas 2 and 8, found only in **Cb** and **Ca**, should be regarded with some suspicion. Stanza 2 seems intrusive, interrupting the natural flow of stanzas 1, 3, 4. Stanza 8 seems rather anti-climactic after the brilliance of stanza 7 and awkwardly introduces the topic of gluttony to a poem otherwise concerned only with the twin vices (5. 5-6) of avarice and lust. On the other hand, it does having a summing-up

quality to it that stanza 7 lacks and it can be argued that the *conuiuia* are to be seen as part of the would-be bishop's plan to advance himself and therefore connected with his *auaritia*.

<sup>214</sup> Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 304.

<sup>215</sup> Simony is named after the Simon who offered Peter money to bestow the power of the Holy Spirit on him (Acts 8: 9–19).

<sup>216</sup> 4 Kgs. (2 Kgs.) 5: 1–27. On Gehazi, see introductory notes to poem 14; see also 44, 13. 1; 46, 10. 3; 54, 23. 2; 60, 29. 4.

<sup>217</sup> The bride in the Song of Songs was allegorically identified as the Church; similarly, the bridegroom was seen as Christ.

<sup>218</sup> Gehazi; see note on stanza 2. 8 above.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 6: 19 and Eph. 2: 21–2 and 4: 16; 'templo' is a dative of purpose.

<sup>220</sup> Prov. 30: 15. The two daughters of the leech were identified as avarice and lust; see *Glossa, ad. loc.* (PL cxiii. 1113). Since the poet has been talking about avarice up to 5. 2, 'alia' (= 'altera') at 5.5 indicates that the topic of lust has just been introduced. Hence 'renum' is to be preferred to 'rerum' in 5. 4.

<sup>221</sup> Eccles. 12: 1.

<sup>222</sup> Juvenal, *Sat.* 14. 109.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. 2 Chron. 36: 17: '(non est misertus) . . . senis nec decrepiti quidem'. The introit for the Sunday after Easter opens with 'quasi modo geniti'; cf. 1 Pet. 2: 2 'sicut modo geniti'.

<sup>224</sup> For 'murus castitatis' cf. Aelred of Rievaulx, *Sermo* 17 (PL cxcv. 304C).

<sup>225</sup> Since this cannot be Epicurus himself, it must be a latter-day 'Epicurus' such as is described in the following lines; cf. for this use, 'est athletis opus duris, / non mollibus Epicuris' in Berter of Orleans, *Iuxta Threnos Ieremiae*, 26–7, in *The Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse*, ed. Raby, p. 298. Epicurus stood for gluttony and licentiousness in the Middle Ages.