

The Book of Margery Kempe

The earliest theories on madness were spiritual, assuming a possession of the mind by an alien deity. By the time of Hippocrates (460–377 B.C.), most bodily illnesses were thought to be the result of material events, of various fluidic or humoral imbalances in the body. Still, madness, abnormalities of behavior, and epilepsy, were generally regarded as the workings of the gods.

In his treatise *The Sacred Disease*, however, Hippocrates argued for the natural rather than the supernatural origin of epilepsy. “It . . . appears to me to be in no way more divine, nor more sacred than other diseases, but has a natural cause from which it originates like other afflictions,” he wrote. “If you cut open the head, you will find the brain humid, full of sweat and smelling badly. And in this way you may see that it is not a god which injures the body, but disease.”¹ Hippocrates also described other similar ailments in natural terms, identifying not only epilepsy, but also mania, melancholy, and a form of mental deterioration he called “paranoia.”

The Greeks had developed a quadripartite theory of the universe. The universe was composed of four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. All four elements, and therefore all matter, partook of four basic qualities: hot, cold, moist, and dry. Earth was cold and dry. Air was hot and moist. Fire was hot and dry. And water was cold and moist.

As a tradition of secular medicine developed, the Greeks applied the quadripartite system to their concept of the body. Hippocrates taught that the healthy body had a balance of four basic humors: black bile from the liver, yellow bile from the spleen, blood, and phlegm. Black bile, like earth, was considered to be cold and dry; its predominance was supposed to cause solitary behavior and a melancholic temperament. Yellow bile, like fire, was hot and dry; its predominance supposedly caused an angry, violent, and splenetic personality. Blood, like air, was considered hot and moist; its predominance supposedly resulted in a ruddy countenance and a cheerful, sanguine temperament. And finally, phlegm, like water, was cold

¹ Zilboorg, *A History of Medical Psychology*, pp. 43, 44.

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and moist; its predominance caused a pale appearance and a sluggish, phlegmatic temperament.

Hippocrates believed that both physical illnesses and madness were caused by some imbalance of the four humors, and therefore his treatment was to restore the natural balance of the body. For instance, in the case of severe depression, presumably caused by excesses of black bile, he would attempt to rid the body of bile by administering the herbal purgative hellebore. At the same time, he would counteract bile's cold and dry qualities by giving the patient plenty of food and drink, thus building up his supply of hot, moist blood.

Classical medicine and psychiatry reached a peak of innovation and progress in the second century A.D., with the school of the Roman court physician, Galen (130–200 A.D.). Galen taught an eclectic system of medicine which combined the humoral theories of Hippocrates and the so-called pneumatic theories with a strong interest in anatomy.² But the importance of Galen and Hippocrates has less to do with the rightness or wrongness of their theories than with their insistence on careful observation and their recognition of the inadequacies of traditional and popular lore. "Do not go to the gods," wrote Galen, "to make inquiries and thus attempt by soothsaying to discover the nature of the directing soul . . . or the principle of action of nerves; but go and take instruction on the subject from an anatomist."³

After Galen died, the classical tradition of medicine lapsed into a stagnation that lasted for more than a thousand years. Medicine during the medieval period became a discipline based not upon first-hand observation, but rather upon the simple rote memorization of the teachings of Hippocrates and Galen. Dissection of bodies was forbidden until the thirteenth century, and the teachings of classical medicine became as rigid as the pronouncements of the Church.

Alongside the somewhat enlightened view of those educated in the classical lore of Hippocrates and Galen, which taught that the origins of madness could be understood in comprehensible, natural systems, there continued the ancient view of madness as the possession of an

²Neuman, *Suggestion of the Devil*, p. 10. The *pneuma* was an invisible vital principle in the body and mind, similar to our concept of spirit. Galen believed that *pneuma* began as air, was inhaled into the lungs, and was then somehow transformed into a vital life force animating both body and brain.

³Zilboorg, *A History of Medical Psychology*, p. 87.

individual by alien, spiritual forces. In pre-Christian Rome, it had been popularly believed that the spirits of the forest, the *sylvani* and the *fauni*, caused madness. Mad people were sometimes called *larvarum plenus* or *larvatus*, meaning "full of *larvae*, or phantoms."⁴ After the death of Galen, such popular superstitions came to have greater significance. Early Christianity, instead of countering such beliefs, often appears to have absorbed them. The Christian Gnostics in particular believed that they had an essential *gnosis*, or wisdom, which, among other things, involved an awareness of large numbers of spiritual mediators between God and man. The early Christian Father, Origen (who castrated himself soon after his conversion), theorized that the body was made up of thirty-six basic parts, each one under the control of a different deity, and that sterility in women and famine were the work of evil spirits. Demonologists catalogued signs of demonic possession that became known after the second century as *stigmata diaboli*, the stigmata of the Devil. And finally, in 429 A.D., in the *Codex Theodosianus*, the Church officially denounced the practice of magic as criminal, and authorities prepared to prosecute anyone who conspired with demonic powers. Shortly thereafter a magician in Spain was executed for heresy.⁵

In short, the single most powerful institution of medieval times, the Church, gradually accepted the validity of popular superstitions about the existence of spiritual powers, and the reality of possession by them, at last recognizing those superstitions as part of its own sacred canon. Spiritual psychiatry had arrived.

Of course, not all cases of madness in medieval times were thought to be caused by possession. Theologians, lawyers, and physicians generally were careful to distinguish between madness of natural origin and demonic possession. Yet the Church and its followers had come to accept St. Augustine's vision of the world as a battleground between the forces of good and evil, the legions of God and the Devil. It is therefore not surprising that some mad people in medieval times were seen as victims of the Devil or his minions.

For the classically trained physician, then, at least some of the pathologies of the mind were thought to be of natural origin. The theologian may have agreed that some mental pathologies were of natural origin, but for him the mind was essentially equal to the soul.

⁴Ibid., p. 106.

⁵Ibid., pp. 99, 100, 110.

Regardless of theory, in practice it was the theologian—not the physician—who put forth a language and metaphor for the inner drama of the mind. And so it was that the earliest autobiographies of the inner life, the life of the mind, always described that life in spiritual or religious terms. I use the term *spiritual autobiography* to describe that kind of autobiography. Although seventeenth-century English Puritans and Quakers applied this term to a traditional narrative of the inner life, I use it more broadly to include all autobiographies of the inner life which describe that life in spiritual or religious terms.

Margery Kempe's *Book* is one such spiritual autobiography.

Margery Kempe was the daughter of the mayor of Lynn, a town in Norfolk, England. She was born around 1373, grew up illiterate, and married young. Soon after the birth of her first child, perhaps in 1393 or 1394, Kempe went "out of her mind" (her words) for about eight months, during which time she thought she saw and heard flame-tongued devils. For much of her life after that Margery Kempe experienced unusual visions or hallucinations, both visual and auditory, usually about religious or spiritual matters. In 1413 she went on a pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land, dressed in white according to what she felt to be a divine injunction. Upon arriving in Jerusalem, she began "crying and roaring though she should have died for it." That was her first attack of crying out, but the attacks quickly became chronic, often occurring several times a day, especially during times of devotion and contemplation, and often in church.

In England, her persistent eccentric behavior aroused a lot of public attention. Occasionally people assumed she was ill. We are told that at one time people thought she had "the falling evil," presumably epilepsy: "Some said she had the falling evil, for she, with the crying, wrested her body, turning from one side to the other, and waxed all blue and livid, like the colour of lead." But mostly, perhaps because so much of her behavior was focused on religious matters, people assumed that she was either possessed by the Devil or was a heretic. In 1417 she was brought to trial for heresy in the Church of All Hallows at Leicester, but on examination she appeared orthodox and was acquitted, saved from a possible death by fire.

Apparently a few people thought of Kempe as a holy woman, a prophet, or visionary. According to her account, certain "worthy and worshipful" clergy urged her to make "a book of her feelings and revelations," perhaps patterned on the book of revelations written by a contemporary, Juliana of Norwich. Since she herself was illiterate,

she dictated the original version of the long first part of her autobiography to an unknown amanuensis, possibly her son. Finished in 1432, that copy was poorly written, "nor were the letters shaped or formed as other letters." In 1436 her second amanuensis, a priest, began rewriting the original version of the first part of the *Book*, putting it into recognizable English. By 1438 the priest had begun transcribing a shorter second part as Kempe dictated it. The manuscript later disappeared—for a few centuries—at last discovered in 1934, in the home of Colonel William Erdeswick Ignatius Butler-Bowden, who soon after published it in modern English.

As a picture of medieval life, Margery Kempe's book is unparalleled. In at least two places, for instance, we are given rare descriptions of seemingly ordinary fifteenth-century treatment of persons who were recognized as mad. When Kempe was "out of her mind," we learn that she "was bound and kept with strength, day and night," to prevent her from biting and scratching herself. Later, she visited a woman who had become "alienated from her wits," after childbirth. The woman "roared and cried" and would "both smite and bite": "Then was she taken to the furthest end of town, into a chamber, so that the people should not hear her crying, and there was she bound, hand and foot, with chains of iron, so that she should smite nobody."

Margery Kempe's *Book* is of greatest interest as the first fully developed example in English of autobiographical description of inner experience—normal or abnormal. And it is from that perspective that we might best examine the work.

Perhaps the most notable quality of Kempe's inner experience is her sense of her own separation from the origins of that experience. She sees herself as a passive recipient, rather than an active originator. Thus she first loses her mind partly because the Devil placed in her mind a fear of damnation. In describing her preparations for the pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land, Kempe does mention that she "had a desire" to see those places, but almost immediately after, in the text, we learn that before the desire was followed, it was ratified by a spiritual command: "as she was in these desires, Our Lord bade her, in her mind . . . that she should go." Such a separation of the self from the origins of thought and action is consistent with the theocratic view of the psyche, and in the spiritual autobiographies to follow, we shall see this theoretical system repeated. But Kempe seems to take it to extremes. All her unusual mental experiences are described in passive form, denoting the intrusion of

spiritual forces onto the self. Even ordinary, minor mental events are likely to be described in passive form: "she was led to think" is as likely a construction as "she thought."

The following excerpts have been selected for their interest and clarity. In the first, the narrator describes Kempe's experience of being "out of her mind" (although she dictated her story, it is presented as third-person narrative). In the second excerpt, we read of her persecution in Canterbury, where she is accused of heresy and threatened with death by fire. The third excerpt presents a description of many of Kempe's visions and spiritual experiences; we might compare them with some twentieth-century accounts of madness such as Daniel Paul Schreber's *Memoirs* (1903) and the anonymous, *I Question* (1945). In the last excerpt, the Devil tempts her with foul thoughts for twelve days. We may note how passive Kempe's mind seems here. She becomes almost entirely the pawn and victim of external spiritual forces.

WHEN THIS CREATURE was twenty years of age, or some deal more, she was married to a worshipful burgess (of Lynne) and was with child within a short time, as nature would. And after she had conceived, she was belaboured with great accesses till the child was born and then, what with the labour she had in childing, and the sickness going before, she despaired of her life, weening she might not live. And then she sent for her ghostly father, for she had a thing on her conscience which she had never shewn before that time in all her life. For she was ever hindered by her enemy, the devil, evermore saying to her that whilst she was in good health she needed no confession, but to do penance by herself alone and all should be forgiven, for God is merciful enough. And therefore this creature oftentimes did great penance in fasting on bread and water, and other deeds of alms with devout prayers, save she would not shew that in confession.

And when she was at any time sick or dis-eased, the devil said in her mind that she should be damned because she was not shriven of that default. Wherefore after her child was born, she, not trusting to live, sent for her ghostly father, as is said

before, in full will to be shriven of all her lifetime, as near as she could. And when she came to the point for to say that thing which she had so long concealed, her confessor was a little too hasty and began sharply to reprove her, before she had fully said her intent, and so she would no more say for aught he might do. Anon, for the dread she had of damnation on the one side, and his sharp reproving of her on the other side, this creature went out of her mind and was wondrously vexed and laboured with spirits for half a year, eight weeks and odd days.

And in this time she saw, as she thought, devils opening their mouths all inflamed with burning waves of fire, as if they would have swallowed her in, sometimes ramping at her, sometimes threatening her, pulling her and hauling her, night and day during the aforesaid time. Also the devils cried upon her with great threatenings, and bade her that she should forsake Christendom, her faith, and deny her God, His Mother and all the Saints in Heaven, her good works and all good virtues, her father, her mother and all her friends. And so she did. She slandered her husband, her friends and her own self. She said many a wicked word, and many a cruel word; she knew no virtue nor goodness; she desired all wickedness; like as the spirits tempted her to say and do, so she said and did. She would have destroyed herself many a time at their stirrings and have been damned with them in Hell, and in witness thereof, she bit her own hand so violently, that the mark was seen all her life after.

And also she rived the skin on her body against her heart with her nails spitefully, for she had no other instruments, and worse she would have done, but that she was bound and kept with strength day and night so that she might not have her will. And when she had long been laboured in these and many other temptations, so that men weened she should never have escaped or lived, then on a time as she lay alone and her keepers were from her, Our Merciful Lord Jesus Christ, ever to be trusted, worshipped be His Name, never forsaking His servant in time of need, appeared to His creature who had forsaken Him, in the likeness of a man, most seemly, most beauteous and most amiable that ever might be seen with man's eye, clad in a

mantle of purple silk, sitting upon her bedside, looking upon her with so blessed a face that she was strengthened in all her spirit, and said to her these words:—

“Daughter, why hast thou forsaken Me, and I forsook never thee?”

And anon, as He said these words, she saw verily how the air opened as bright as any lightning. And He rose up into the air, not right hastily and quickly, but fair and easily, so that she might well behold Him in the air till it was closed again.

And anon this creature became calmed in her wits and reason, as well as ever she was before, and prayed her husband as soon as he came to her, that she might have the keys of the buttery to take her meat and drink as she had done before. Her maidens and her keepers counselled him that he should deliver her no keys, as they said she would but give away such goods as there were, for she knew not what she said, as they weened.

Nevertheless, her husband ever having tenderness and compassion for her, commanded that they should deliver to her the keys; and she took her meat and drink as her bodily strength would serve her, and knew her friends and her household and all others that came to see how Our Lord Jesus Christ had wrought His grace in her, so blessed may He be, Who ever is near in tribulation. When men think He is far from them, He is full near by His grace. Afterwards, this creature did all other occupations as fell to her to do, wisely and soberly enough, save she knew not verily the call of Our Lord.

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On a time, as this creature was at Canterbury in the church amongst the monks, she was greatly despised and reprovèd because she wept so fast, both by the monks and priests, and by secular men, nearly all day both forenoon and afternoon also, so much indeed that her husband went away from her as if he had not known her, and left her alone amongst them, choose how she might. Further comfort had she none of him that day.

So an old monk, who had been Treasurer with the Queen whilst he was in secular clothing, a rich man, and greatly dreaded by many people, took her by the hand, saying unto her:—

"What canst thou say of God?"

"Sir," she said, "I will both speak of Him, and hear of Him," repeating to the monk a story of Scripture.

The monk said:—"I would thou wert enclosed in a house of stone, so that, there, no man should speak with thee."

"Ah! Sir," she said, "ye should maintain God's servants. Ye are the first that hold against them. Our Lord amend you."

Then a young monk said to her:—"Either thou hast the Holy Ghost, or else thou hast the devil within thee, for what thou speakest to us here is Holy Writ, and that hast thou not of thyself."

Then said this creature:—"I pray you, sir, give me leave to tell you a tale."

Then the people said to the monk:—"Let her say what she will."

Then she said:—"There was once a man who had sinned greatly against God, and when he was shriven, his confessor enjoined him as part of his penance, that he should for one year hire men to chide him and reprove him for his sins, and he should give them silver for their labour. And one day he came amongst many great men, such as are now here, God save you all, and stood among them as I do now amongst you, despising him as ye do me, the man laughing and smiling and having good game at their words. The greatest master of them said to the man:—

"Why laughest thou, wretch? Thou art greatly despised!"

"Ah! Sir, I have great cause to laugh, for I have many days put silver out of my purse and hired men to chide me for remission of my sin, and this day I may keep my silver in my purse. I thank you all."

"Right so I say to you, worshipful sirs. Whilst I was at home in my own country, day by day with great weeping and mourning, I sorrowed because I had no shame, scorn or contempt, as I was worthy. I thank you all, sirs, highly for what, forenoon and afternoon, I have had in good measure this day, blessed be God for it."

Then she went out of the monastery, they following and crying upon her:—

"Thou shalt be burnt, false Lollard. Here is a cartful of thorns ready for thee, and a tun to burn thee with."

And the creature stood outside the gates of Canterbury, for it was in the evening, many people wondering at her.

Then said the people:—"Take and burn her!"

She stood still, trembling and quaking full sore in her flesh, without earthly comfort, and knew not where her husband had gone.

Then prayed she in her heart to Our Lord in this manner:—

"Here came I, Lord, for Thy love. Blessed Lord, help me and have mercy on me."

And anon, after she had made her prayer in her heart to Our Lord, there came two fair young men, who said to her:—

"Damsel, art thou neither heretic nor Lollard?"

And she said:—"No, sirs, I am neither heretic nor Lollard."

They asked her, where was her inn. She said she knew not what street; nevertheless it would be at a Dewchman's house. Then these two young men brought her home to her hostel, and made her great cheer, asking her to pray for them, and there she found her husband.

And many people in N . . . had said evil of her whilst she was out, and slandered her over many things she was said to have done whilst she was in the country.

Then, after this, she was in great rest of soul a long while, and had high contemplation day by day, and much holy speech and dalliance with Our Lord Jesus Christ, both forenoon and afternoon with many sweet tears of high devotion, so plenteously and continually, that it was a marvel that her eyes endured, or that her heart should last, without being consumed with the ardour of love, which was kindled with the holy dalliance of Our Lord, when He said to her many times:—

"Dear daughter, love thou Me with all thy heart, for I love thee with all My heart and the might of My Godhead, for thou wert a chosen soul without beginning in My sight and a pillar of Holy Church. My merciful eyes are even upon thee. It would be impossible for thee to suffer the scorn and contempt that thou shalt have, were not My grace supporting thee."

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As this creature was in the Apostles' Church in Rome on Saint Lateran's Day, the Father of Heaven said to her:—

"Daughter, I am well pleased with thee, inasmuch as thou believest in all the Sacraments of Holy Church and in all faith that belongeth thereto, and especially because thou believest in the manhood of My Son, and for the great compassion thou hast for His bitter Passion."

Also the Father said to this creature:—"Daughter, I will have thee wedded to My Godhead because I shall shew thee My secrets and My counsels, for thou shalt live with Me without end."

Then the creature kept silence in her soul and answered not thereto, for she was full sore afraid of the Godhead; and she had no knowledge of the dalliance of the Godhead, for all her love and all her affection were set in the manhood of Christ, and there-of she had knowledge, and she would not for anything be parted therefrom.

She had so much affection for the manhood of Christ, that when she saw women in Rome bearing children in their arms, if she could ascertain that any were men-children, she would then cry, roar, and weep as if she had seen Christ in His childhood.

And if she might have had her will, oftentimes she would have taken the children out of their mothers' arms and have kissed them in the stead of Christ.

If she saw a seemly man, she had great pain in looking at him, lest she might have seen Him Who was both God and man.

And therefore she cried many times and often when she saw a seemly man, and wept and sobbed full sore on the manhood of Christ, as she went in the streets of Rome, so that they that saw her wondered full much at her, for they knew not the cause.

Therefore it was no wonder if she was still and answered not the Father of Heaven when He told her that she should be wedded to His Godhead.

Then said the Second Person, Christ Jesus, Whose manhood she loved so much, to her:—

"What sayest thou, Margery, daughter, to My Father of these words He spake to thee? Art thou well pleased that it be so?"

And then she would not answer the Second Person, but wept wondrous more, desiring to have still Himself and in no wise to be parted from Him. Then the Second Person in the Trinity answered to His Father for her, and said:—

“Father, hold her excused, for she is yet but young, and not fully learned how she should answer.”

And then the Father took her by the hand, (ghostly) in her soul, before the Son and the Holy Ghost; and the Mother of Jesus and all the twelve Apostles and Saint Katherine and Saint Margaret and many other saints and holy virgins with a great multitude of angels, saying to her soul:—

“I take thee, Margery, for My wedded wife, for fairer, for fouler, for richer, for poorer, so that thou be kindly and gentle to do as I bid thee. For, daughter, there was never a child so gracious to its mother as I shall be to thee, both in weel and in woe, to help thee and comfort thee. And thereto I make thee surety.”

Then the Mother of God, and all the saints that were present in her soul, prayed that they might have much joy together. And then the creature with high devotion with great plenty of tears, thanked God for His ghostly comfort, holding herself, in her own feeling, right unworthy to any such grace as she felt, for she felt many great comforts, both ghostly comforts and bodily ones. Sometimes she felt sweet smells with her nose. They were sweeter, she thought, than ever was any sweet earthly thing that she smelt before, for could she ever tell how sweet they were, for she thought she might have lived thereby, if they had lasted.

Sometimes she heard with her bodily ears such sounds and melodies that she could not well hear what a man said to her at that time, unless he spoke the louder. These sounds and melodies had she heard nearly every day for the term of twenty-five years, when this book was written, and especially when she was in devout prayer, and also many times while she was at Rome and in England both.

She saw with her bodily eyes many white things flying all about her on every side, as thick, in a manner, as specks in a sunbeam. They were right subtle and comfortable, and the brighter the sun shone, the better might she see them. She saw them many divers times and in many divers places, both in

church and in her chamber, at her meat, and at her prayers, in the fields, and in town, both going and sitting. And many times she was afraid what they might be, for she saw them as well at night in darkness, as in daylight. Then, when she was afraid of them, Our Lord said to her:—

“By this token, daughter, believe that it is God Who speaketh in thee, for, wheresoever God is, Heaven is, and where God is, there be many angels, and God is in thee and thou art in Him. And therefore be not afraid, daughter, for these be tokens that there are many angels about thee, to keep both day and night so that no devil shall have power over thee, nor evil men to harm thee.”

Then from that time forward, she used to say, when she saw them coming:—“*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.*”

Also Our Lord gave her another token which endured about sixteen years, and it increased ever more and more, and that was a flame of fire, wondrous and hot and delectable, and right comfortable, not wasting but ever increasing, of love; for though the weather were never so cold, she felt the heat burning in her breast and at her heart, as verily as a man could feel the material fire if he put his hand or his finger therein.

When she first felt the fire of love burning in her breast, she was afraid thereof, and then Our Lord answered to her mind and said:—

“Daughter, be not afraid, for this heat is the heat of the Holy Ghost, which shall burn away all thy sins; for the fire of love quencheth all sins. And thou shalt understand by this token that the Holy Ghost is in thee, and thou knowest well that wherever the Holy Ghost is, there is the Father, and where the Father is, there is the Son, and so thou hast fully in thy soul all the Holy Trinity. Therefore thou hast great cause to love Me right well; and yet thou shalt have greater cause than ever thou hadst to love Me, for thou shalt hear what thou hast never heard, and see what thou hast never seen, and thou shalt feel what thou hast never felt.

“For daughter, thou art as secure in the love of God, as God is God. Thy soul is more certain of the love of God, than of thine own body, for thy soul shall part from thy body, but God shall never part from thy soul, for they are united together without

end. Therefore, daughter, thou hast as great cause to be merry as any lady in this world; and if thou knew, daughter, how much thou pleasest Me when thou sufferest Me wilfully to speak in thee, thou wouldst never do otherwise, for this is a holy life, and the time is right well spent. For daughter, this life pleaseth Me more than the wearing of the haburion or the hair-cloth, or fasting on bread and water; for, if thou saidst every day a thousand Pater Nosters, thou wouldst not please Me so well as thou dost when thou art in silence and sufferest Me to speak in thy soul."

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Thus, through hearing holy books and holy sermons, she ever increased in contemplation and holy meditation. It is in a manner impossible to write all the holy thoughts, holy speeches and high revelations which Our Lord shewed unto her, both of herself and other men and women, and also of many souls, some to be saved and some to be damned, and it was to her a great punishment and a sharp chastisement. To know of those that should be saved, she was full glad and joyful, for she desired, as much as she durst, all men to be saved, and when Our Lord shewed to her any that should be damned, she had great pain. She would not hear or believe that it was God who shewed her such things, and put it out of her mind as much as she might. Our Lord blamed her therefor, and bade her believe that it was His high mercy and His goodness to shew her His privy counsels, saying to her mind:—

"Daughter, thou must as well hear of the damned as of the saved."

She would give no credence to the counsel of God, but rather believed it was some evil spirit deceiving her.

Then for her frowardness and her unbelief, Our Lord withdrew from her all good thoughts and all good remembrance of holy speeches and dalliance, and the high contemplation which she had been used to before, and suffered her to have as many evil thoughts as she before had good ones.

And this vexation endured for twelve days; and just as, before, she had four hours of the forenoon in holy speeches and dalliance with Our Lord, so now she had as many hours of foul

thoughts and foul memories of lechery and all uncleanness, as though she had been common to all manner of people.

And so the devil deluded her, dallying unto her with cursed thoughts, as Our Lord dallied to her before with holy thoughts.

And, as she before had many glorious visions and high contemplation in the Manhood of Our Lord, in Our Lady and in many other holy saints, even right so had she now horrible sights and abominable, for aught she could do, of beholding men's members, and such other abominations.

She saw, as she thought verily, divers men of religion, priests and many others, both heathen and Christian, coming before her sight, so that she might not eschew them or put them out of her sight, shewing their bare members unto her.

And therewith the devil bade her, in her mind, choose whom she would have first of them all, and she must be common to them all.

And he said she liked better some one of them than all the others.

She thought that he said truth; she could not say nay; and she must needs do his bidding, and yet she would not have done it for all this world.

Yet she thought it should be done, and she thought these horrible sights and cursed memories were delectable to her, against her will.

Wherever she went, or whatever she did, these cursed memories remained with her. When she should see the Sacrament, make her prayers, or do any other good deed, ever such cursedness was put into her mind.

She was shriven, and did all that she might, but she found no release, until she was near at despair. It cannot be written what pain she felt, and what sorrow she was in.

Then she said:—"Alas! Lord, Thou hast said before that Thou shouldst never forsake me. Where now is the truth of Thy word?"

And anon, came her good angel unto her, saying:—

"Daughter, God hath not forsaken thee, and never shall forsake thee, as He hath promised thee; but, because thou believest not that it is the spirit of God that speaketh in thy soul,

and sheweth thee His privy counsels, of some that shall be saved and some that shall be damned, therefore God chastiseth thee in this wise and manner. And this chastising shall endure twelve days, until thou wilt believe that it is God Who speaketh to thee, and no devil."

Then she said to her angel:—"Ah! I pray thee, pray for me to My Lord Jesus Christ that He will vouchsafe to take from me these cursed thoughts, and speak to me as He did before time, and I shall make a promise to God that I shall believe it is God Who hath spoken to me beforetime, for I may no longer endure this great pain."

Her angel said again to her:—

"Daughter, My Lord Jesus will not take it away from thee till thou hast suffered it twelve days, for He will that thou know thereby whether it is better that God speak to thee, or the devil. And My Lord Jesus Christ is never the wrother with thee, though He suffer thee to feel this pain."

So she suffered that pain till twelve days were passed, and then had she as holy thoughts, as holy memories and as holy desires, as holy speches and dalliance with Our Lord Jesus Christ as ever she had before, Our Lord saying to her:—

"Daughter, believe now well that I am no devil."

Then she was filled with joy, for she heard Our Lord speaking to her as He was wont to do.

Therefore she said:—"I shall believe that every good thought is the speech of God, blessed may Thou, Lord, be, that Thou deign to comfort me again. I would not, Lord, for all this world, suffer such another pain as I have suffered these twelve days, for methought I was in Hell, blessed may Thou be that it is past.

"Therefore, Lord, now will I lie still and be obedient to Thy will. I pray Thee, Lord, speak in me what is most pleasing to Thee."