

“Chaucer's Retraction”

Translation by A. S. Kline¹

Here taketh the maker leave of his book

(1) Now I pray all those that hearken to this little treatise or read, that if there be anything in it that pleases them, they thank Our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom proceeds all wit and all goodness. And if there be anything that displeases them, I pray them also to blame it upon my lack of skill, who would full gladly have spoken better if I had that skill. For our Book says: ‘all that is written is written for our doctrine,’ and that is my intent. Wherefore I beseech you meekly, for the mercy of God, that you pay for me, that Christ may have mercy upon me and forgive me my sins; and namely for my translations and writing on worldly vanities, which I revoke in my retraction: as are the Book of Troilus, the Book also of Fame, The Legend of Good Women, the Book of the Duchess; the Book of Saint Valentine's Day of the Parliament of Fowls, The Tales of Canterbury, those conducive to sin, the Book of the Lion; and many another book, if they were in my remembrance, and many a song and many a lecherous lay; that Christ in his great mercy may forgive me the sin

(2) But the translation of Boethius' De Consolatione, and other books of legends of Saints, and homilies and morality and devotion, for them I thank Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Blissful Mother, and all the Saints of Heaven; beseeching them that they from henceforth unto my life's end send me grace to bewail my sins, and to study the salvation of my soul, and grant me the grace of true penitence, confession and satisfaction, to perform in this present life, through the benign grace of Him that is King of kings and Priest over all priests, who bought us with the precious blood of His heart, so that I may be one of those at the day of doom that shall be saved. Qui cum patre etc.

Here is ended the book of the Tales of Canterbury compiled by Geoffrey Chaucer, on whose soul Jesus Christ have mercy. Amen.

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