

A holy-minded man of good renown
There was, and poor, the **Parson** to a town,
Yet he was rich in holy thought and work.
He also was a learned man, a clerk,
Who truly knew Christ's gospel and would preach it
Devoutly to parishioner, and teach it.
kind and wonderfully diligent,
And patient when adversity was sent
(For so he proved in great adversity) [All these characteristics
sound like what a Parson should be.]
He much disliked collecting tithe or fee, [He didn't like having
to collect the church tax.]
Nay rather he preferred beyond a doubt
Giving to poor parishioners round about
From his own goods and Easter offerings.
He found satisfaction in little things.
Wide was his parish, with houses far apart,
Yet he neglected not in rain or thunder,
In sickness or in grief, to pay a call
On the remotest, whether great or small,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a stave.
This noble example to his sheep he gave
First following the word before he taught it,
And it was from the gospel he had caught it.
This little proverb he would add thereto
That if gold rust, what then will iron do? [He lived by this
motto.]

For if a priest be foul in whom we trust
No wonder that a common man should rust. [In other words, if a priest is corrupt, how can he expect the common man to be better?]

Holy and virtuous he was, but then
Never contemptuous of sinful men,
Never mocking, never too proud or fine,
But was discreet in teaching and benign.
His business was to show a fair behavior
And draw men thus to Heaven and their Savior,
Unless indeed a man were stubborn;
And such, whether of rich or poor,
He put to sharp rebuke; to say the least,
I think there never was a better priest.
He sought no pomp or glory in his dealings,
He showed careful regard for what was morally right.
Christ and His Twelve Apostles and their lore
He taught, but followed it himself before. [There is no irony to be found in the description of the Parson. He was the man he appeared to be.]