

GENTILESSE

Moral Balade of Chaucier

The firste stok, fader of gentilesse –
What man that desireth gentil for to be
Must folowe his trace, and alle his wittes dresse
Vertu to love and vyces for to flee.
For unto vertu longeth dignitee 5
And noght the revers, sauflly dar I deme,
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.

This firste stok was ful of rightwisnesse,
Trewe of his word, sobre, pitous, and free,
Clene of his gost, and loved besinesse, 10
Ayeinst the vyce of slouthe, in honestee;
And, but his heir love vertu as dide he,
He is noght gentil, thogh he riche seme,
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.

Vyce may wel be heir to old richesse, 15
But ther may no man, as men may wel see,
Bequethe his heir his vertuous noblesse
(That is appropred unto no degree
But to the firste fader in magestee,
That maketh hem his heyres that him queme), 20
Al were he mytre, croune, or diademe.

1 **stok** ancestor/stalk; 3 **trace** tracks; 7 **Al** although; 15 **old richesse** old money;
18 **appropred unto** appropriate to; 20 **queme** please