

## Christopher St German's, *Discourse of the Sacraments*: A Note on the Transcription

**Note from the Editor:** Michelle Johnson, who has made this transcription, published an article in (2018) 181 *Law and Justice* 189: *Christopher St. German's: Discourse of the Sacramentes Howe Many There Are*. In this article it was promised that the full transcription of the book, on which the article was based, would appear on our website and it is set out here below.

John Duddington

### **Introduction**

This transcription has been produced from the manuscript located at SP6/8/1 fols. 1-20, held at The National Archives (UK). This transcription has been prepared in conjunction with an associated article published within *Law & Justice* entitled: M.L. Johnson, 'Christopher St German's "*Discourse of the Sacramentes Howe Many There Are*": a reflection on St German's ideas in the context of Law and the Reformation' 181 (2018) *Law & Justice* pp. 189-206.

In preparing this transcription for print, I have of course endeavoured to remain as faithful to the original text as possible, so original spellings and punctuation have been retained. However, there are a few relevant notes that the reader should be aware of. The document contains many examples of what, at first glance look, to be abbreviation marks. However, sometimes these have been included within the manuscript where it is not obviously possible to expand a word further. For example, over words such as *mighte*, *thoughe*. Therefore, these have been taken as flourishes of the pen and have not been expanded or highlighted in the transcription. Indeed, to avoid working on the basis of assumptions and to stay as true to the text of the manuscript as possible, abbreviations have only ever been expanded where necessary for the word to make sense. So abbreviation marks over a vowel in the middle of a word, such as *comaundment*, where the mark hovers over the 'o' and potentially indicate that an additional 'm' should be added (i.e. *co[m]maundment*) have not been expanded, as these

marks are not used consistently, and the expansion is not needed for the reader to gather the meaning of the word. Where abbreviations have been expanded, these expansions have been identified by placing the letters added into squared brackets, i.e. *conuted* to *conu[er]ted*. The spelling of the expansion is based on the most likely spelling of the word, considering examples either from elsewhere within the current text, or elsewhere in St German's writing more broadly. Additionally, all words ending 'con' have been silently expanded to 'cion', such as *salvacion*. Similarly 'es-marks' have also be silently expanded to demonstrate pluralisation, i.e. *thinges* and *sacramentes*.

As the documents were works in progress, there are several examples of inter-linial insertions and these have been identified between carets (^). Where text has been struck from the page with the editing process, the text has been retained in the transcriptions and similarly struck-through to demonstrate St German's thought processes in editing his document. Finally, for the sake of readability, where on the rare occasion I have had to use subjective judgment on the most likely word (for example, where the word is otherwise illegible through being struck-through), this text is highlighted with braces i.e. {}.

Michelle L. Johnson

## The Manuscript

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xiimus

A discourse of the sacramentes howe many there {are}

{indecipherable text}

[paragraph mark] Also we beseche youre grace that forasmoche as some men haue of late reported that there be many of youre subgietts that denye dyvers thinges that in tyme passed haue ben vsed amonge the people and whiche in very deede ar righte necessarie to be vsed amonge theyme / and that it may therfore by comaundemente of youre highnes be thoroughlie examyned whether the trouthe be soo as they sey or not and vpon what grounde that reporte hathe risen / the thinges that <sup>it</sup> is mente of ar these : baptisme : confirmacion : consecracion of the bodie of oure lorde : ordre : pen[un]ce : matrymony : and extreme vnccione whiche be called by the clergie and also by the people by the instruccion of the clergie by the vii sacraments of the churche : and the people be so instructed that these vii muste be beleved and acceptid vndre payne of heresie by that name of the vii sacraments of the churche / and surelie we knowe non but that they beleve theeffecte of theym : and take ~~th~~ theym as speciall graces of the holy ghoste geven to the Comforte of Cristen people : but we thinke verilie that there be dyvers men that will saye they knowe no reason why they shulde be called the vii sacramentes of the churche or the vii sacrame[n]ts of

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the newe lawe / and that specially of some of them : as of matymony  
and penaunce / for they saye that in the tyme of tholde lawe  
matrymony was lawfully ordenyed by almightie god in paradice  
and was alway of that vertue that it preserved the man and  
woman in the acte of matymonye fro synne and also made  
~~make~~ their children ^to be^ lawfully begotton / And they saye ferther  
that our lorde hym self came of many suche matrymonyes  
in the olde lawe / and that yet they were not then called  
sacramentes And therefore they saye that if a man and a  
woman that were iewes were married before the passion of  
Criste and were after the passion of Criste conu[er]ted to the feith  
Cristen feith that they nedid not to be newly married for the  
marriage before sufficed to them aswell as to the mariages had  
after the passion sufficed to other / and yet their marriage was  
not then called a sacramente / And why the marriage after the  
passion shulde be called the sacramente of matrymony more  
then the other / they sey they knowe no reason in it / And we  
thinke that if it canne be sufficiently proved that aughte nowe  
in the tyme of the newe lawe to be called a sacramente / that

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they will with good will so call it : but we suppose that their meaning is that that name hath been given by the clergy vnder the special auctoritie of the bishops of Rome / which have pretended in time past that the people have been boundon vpon payne of heresy to beleve all that the bishops of Rome and the clergy have decreed And if it be said that the said ~~th~~ name hath been given by gen[er]all counsailes / it may be answered that non had voices in the ~~gen~~ gen[er]all counsailes but onely the clergy / And we thinke that as longe as that name ^of the S[eu]en sacrame[n]ts^ standith : it wilbe a greate occasion to mainteyne to powre of the bishop of Rome in this relame for his powere and ^[the] power of the clergy^ it was fyrste given / and the effecte of all . vii . may be beleved and taken as special grace and blessed giftes of god though they be not called by the name of sacramentes / And furthermore in that that they be called the sacramentes of the church many vnlearned p[er]sons thinke that they were ordeyned onely by the clergy : for by that name : church : moste of the comon people vnderstoude the clergy onely : and so will they doo continually onles it be reformed / And by that meanes : vsurped powers : on the

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oon partie : and ignoraunce of the other parte will still  
contynue oonles they be more thoroughlie put away by youre  
grace and youre parliamente then they be yet  
[paragraph mark] fferthemore pen[au]nce is called a sacrament in man[er] after the  
same groundes as matrymony is : but for the more playne  
declaracion therof it is to be vnderstaude that nothing puttith  
away synne but oonly contricion obteigned thouroughe speciall  
grace and that confession puttith away no synne but that  
it may be an occasion to bringe in contricion and we thinke  
that confession is comonly more profitable to the people then  
it is to the clergie / for to many of the people it bringith in  
mekenes thouroughe the shamefastnes of the synne / and to many  
of the clergie it bringith in pride as thoughe they had powre  
to forgyve synne / And we thinke that as longe as pride is  
in the clergie that the people cannot be p[er]fitly meke : And  
Satisfaccion as it is taken amonge the people is the pen[au]nce  
that is enioyned to the penytente by the gostly fader after  
the confession : as praiours : fasting : and almes deede / and  
the moste parte of the people wene that the pen[au]nce

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puttith away their synne for they be not plainly instructed by the clergy that contricion only puttith away synne / And on that they thinke that if they doo not their pen[au]nce that is enioyned to them that their firste synne is revyved and <sup>^</sup>[that]<sup>^</sup> they muste reiterate their firste confession / and though it be trewe that they offende in that they p[er]fourme not the pen[au]nce that they haue promised to doo and haue comytted a newe offence therby : yet the firste synne is put away by the contricion for contricion is the very pen[au]nce that puttith away synne : And satisfaccion was ordeyned only to endure the people to love good warkes so that they mighte meryte therby and the rather recouer agayne their former estate of grace and merite that they loste thorough their synne / And the good deedes that they doo thorough their owne devocion shall shue to the same effecte howe be it we thinke well that the good deedes doone by waye of pen[au]nce may be more meritorious then the other : bycause of the mekenes and obedience on the penytente in accepting of them : And therefore the confessoure dooth

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well in enioynng suche pen[au]nce : but it is not of necessitie  
for putting awaye of the firste synne as it is said before  
And if the penyente obteyne also absolucion then all the  
good deedes that he shall doo after that absolucion being  
still in state of grace whether he doo theym by waye of  
pen[au]nce or of his owne fre will shall serue by and by to thincrease  
of his merite in hevon above the merite that he was in before <sup>^he^</sup> ~~hys~~  
fell ~~laste~~ fro grace thorough dedly synne And that is a greate  
mercy of oure maister Criste that he wolde leave suche a powre  
behynde hym as the absolucion is to the comforte of his cristen  
people / for thoughe in the tyme of the tholde lawe contricion did put  
away actuell synne yet that grace of absolucion had they neu[er]  
and that is oon of the speciall causes why the newe lawe may  
conueniently be called the lawe of grace and sithe contricion in the  
tyme of the olde lawe put awaye actuell synne <sup>^as it doth now^</sup> thoughe hevon{es}  
gates bicause of the originall synne were not yet set open we  
merveile why contricion confession and satisfacion shulde nowe be  
called a sacramente of the newe lawe as thoughe contricion had



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begonne to profytte the people only in the newe lawe / And if it be said that the cause is for that in the olde lawe no man by his contricion and observaunce of the lawe mighte come to hevon bycause of thoriginall synne wherfore the contricion and fulfilling of the lawe then was nothing so meritorious as it is nowe and therefore it may nowe in the tyme of the newe lawe be conueniently said to begynne / To that it may be aunswered that the contricion in the newe lawe puttith not awaye the originall synne no more that it did in the olde lawe but baptysme oonly puttith it awaye / and the contricion in the newe lawe puttith awaye oonly the actuell synne as it did in the olde lawe and so in tholde lawe contricion beganne ^and yet it was not then called a sacramente^ and we agre also that confession aslong as it is suffred by the highe ^powers^ powre to contynue and satisfaccion also be righte expediente / ~~by~~ ^but^why the people shulde be drevon by the lawes and by decrees of the bisshops of Rome and of the clergy vpon no lesse peyne then heresie to call theym the sacramente of pen[au]nce and to beleve that that sacramente hathe the thre partes before rehersed and may no lesse haue we cannot p[er]ceyve any reason in it / ne why it shulde

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not be called a gracioux gifte of pen[au]nce or suche other as for any necessitie of salvacion aswell as the sacremente of pen[au]nce we se no reason wherfore we humbly beseche yo[ure] grace that those matiers and other like may be sette in ordre and be broughte to a good peax and quyetnes by auctoritie of yo[ure] highnes and of yo[ure] p[ar]liamente / and that it may be knowen that that name sacremente was never geven by god but by the clergye only

[paragraph mark] Also we beseche youre grace that baptisme may be vsed after suche man[er] as hath ben accustomed in tyme paste how be it : it semythe very expediente that the people be playnly instructed that they aughte not to sette any suche confidence in the Ceremonyes therof as for the amending or appeyring of the baptysme as whether ~~the~~ the water be hallowed or not hallowed / the oyle and the creame holy or not holy salte or orisons omytted or not omytted ^as they haue done in tyme paste^ for if the wanting of suche ceremonyes shuld empeyre the baptisme : then were the baptisme at whome in tyme of necessitie of small effecte / neu[er]theles we knowe well that if any mynystre necligently or of purpose omytte any of the said Cerymonyes that he offendid greatly : but yet the baptisme were good and suffised to salvacion

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And surely there hathe ben but fewe greater abusiouns then that the clergie in tyme paste haue endeoured theym self asmoche or rather more to endure the people to observe and kepe the ceremonies ordeyned by the bisshops of Rome and the clergie as they haue bene to endure theym to obserue – and kepe the ~~thinke~~ thinge self that was ordeyned by god : and wherfore the ceremonies were ordeyned : but we haue a greate truste that the bisshops that nowe be will not followe their example ~~in~~ in that behalf.

[paragraph mark] Then as to the confirmyng of theym that be baptised we knowe non but that they thinke it righte expediente to be vsed as a gacioux gifte of oure maister Criste to his cristen people to ~~strengith~~ strengthen theym agaisnste the malicioux stiringes of the ghostly enemye which <sup>^geyouse gyffte^</sup> the Iewes never had / but we suppose that there be many that thinke that every preste mighte do it aswell as bisshops and <sup>^many thynke^</sup> that if it were so ordeyned to be : that it wolde many tymes ease the people greatly of dyuers greate labours charges and losse of tyme that they susteyne by that occasion to seke the bisshop

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and of greate daungeo[ure] that also fallith therby somtyme to the children / And we thinke that thoughe it were so ordered that the people wolde haue that grace of confimacion in as highe hono[ure] and estimacion as the haue nowe : but p[er]adventure it was don to sette the bisshops in an highe estimacion of the people above the pristes : but howe almightie god is pleased therwith we knowe not neu[er]theles if it be thoughte expediente by your highnes and yo[ure] parliamente that it contynue as it doothe we are well contented : but then we beseche youre grace that it may be knowen that that yo[ure] powere frohensforthe as to the bisshops oonly ~~as to the bisshops~~ shall stande by ~~unde~~ the auctoritie and powere ^yo[ure] g[ra]ce & of^ youre parliamente and not of ^by^ the ymmediate powere ~~of god~~ and gifte of god to bisshops oonly as many haue pretendid in tyme paste it shulde be / and that hath bene an other greate abusion in tyme paste that hathe caused greate ignoraunce and disordre amonge the people that is to saye that dyu[er]s thinges that the clergy haue had by custume : by sufferaunce of princes ^or^ ~~and~~ by mannes lawe : ~~that~~ they haue claymed by the ymmediate gifte of god and ^so^ to haue theym in suche suretie that they may not by mannys powere be taken fro theym / And

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vndre this man[er] they haue claymed dyvers iurisdiccions as to holde courtes  
to do correccions specially of heresie and make visitacions : that prestes  
aughte not to be arayned before laye men / that the xth parte for  
tithes in the newe lawe is by the law of god / that satisfaccion  
is to be taken by the lawe of god as oon of the partes of pen[au]nce .  
that they may gathere generall counsailes and oonly haue the  
voices in theyme : make lawes and doo dyvers other thinges not  
here remembred and if it be said they say trewe that bisshops haue  
power of confirmacion by the lawe of god for they haue it and also  
diu[er]s other powers by generall counsailes whiche is the lawe of  
god it may be aunswered that decrees made in gen[er]all counsailes  
gathered by the hole church of Criste may and not inconuenyetly  
be called the lawe of god : but howe decrees made in counsailes  
gathered oonly by auctoritie of bisshops of rome and of the  
clergie and wherin the clergie haue oonly had the voices  
shulde be called the lawe of god : we knowe not And here we  
wolde if we ~~da~~ durste assign some defaulte in so many cristen  
princes bicause they haue suffred suche thinges in tyme paste

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to the hurte of their owne powere and also to the grieffe and vnquietnes of their people ^to contynue^ so longe tyme as they haue done : but neu[er]theles we will no farther treate of that matier at this tyme but comytte it to the highe powers as a thing moste expediente for the mainten[au]nce of hono[ure] ~~and~~ vertue and iustice in kinges and princes : and of mekenes and of good counsaile geving in the clergie / and also of trewe obedience peax and quietnes amonge the people ./

[paragraph mark] And as conc[er]nyng the grace of geving of orders for sp[irit]uell mynystracions vnto the people we desire righte effectuously that men that haue good lernynge and that be of good lif and that will gyve example of mekenes and other vertues to the people may as ferre as they that receyve hym to it canne knowe : be appoynted to it but that any man shulde be of this opynyon that eu[er]ry man is a preste so that he may ex[er]cise such sp[irit]uall mynystracions as before appereth surely we know non of that opynyon : but we thinke that there be some men of this opynyon that laye men to some intente may be called prestes

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that is to say senyours or aunciente men : that may be trewe as  
they seye : for presbiter in laten whiche nowe in these daies  
is oonly taken ^laten ^ for a preste ^was some tyme^ is also taken for a laye man that is  
for a senior or an aunciente man amonge the people / and  
vnder that man[er] a laye man may be called a preste : but  
that ^any man shuld saye [that]^ a laye man shulde be a preste to mynystre to the  
people as is aforesaid : we knowe non of that opynyon  
and if any man will reaporte that there be some of that opynyon and  
cannot proue it/ we beseche youre grace that it may be enacted that  
he shall haue lyke punyshmente as they shulde haue had that had ben  
founde of that opynyon

And then conc[er]nyng the grace of consecracion of the bodie of oure  
lorde in forme of bred and wyne / we beseche youre grace that it  
may be prohibite to all men by auctoritie aforsaide that no man  
vndre greate payne to be appoynted by youre grace and yo[ure] p[ar]liamente  
p[er]swade any man[er] of ~~people~~ p[er]son to thinke ^[that]^ these wordes of oure M[ai]ster  
Criste when he toke bred : and blessed it : breke it : and gave it ^to^ his  
disciples

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disciples and said take and eate ye : this is my bodie that shalbe betraied  
for you : oughte to be vunderstaude figuratyvely and not litterally :  
for sithe he that speke~~th~~ those wordes was and is of power to  
p[er]forme theym litterally thoughte no mannys reason may attenyne  
to knowe and serche howe that may be : yet they muste beleve it  
and surelie they that beleve that god was of power to make all  
the worlde of noughte may lightly beleve that he was of powre  
to make of brede his very bodie / and it is nothing lyke to the  
wordes that Criste speke of saint Iohn baptiste when he said  
of hym : ip[s]e est Elias : he is Elias <sup>ne</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>ne</sup> yet to the wordes <sup>^</sup>[that]<sup>^</sup> of Crist  
speke when he said : Ego sum vitis vera : that is : I am a very  
vyne tre : for saint Iohn was not the very p[er]sone of helias : ne  
Criste a vyne : ne it apperith not that the intente of Criste  
was that either saincte Iohn shulde be the very p[er]sone of  
helias ne Criste a very vyne in deede. for there coulde no  
goodnes or profite any man[er] of waye haue followed of it :  
and Criste never wroughte ne speke any thing but that greate  
grace and goodnes followed therupon : but of the wordes :  
:this is my bodie : hath followed : dothe followe : and shall followe



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greate grace and goodnes to the <sup>^ende^</sup> ~~ende~~ of the worlde / and what is  
a greter comferte to Cristen men then to knowe that Criste  
lovide them so moche that he wolde to their comferte leve w[ith]  
them his very bodie to the ende of the worlde : And surely if  
Criste had leaste with vs for a memory of his passion and of  
his love and <sup>^godenes^</sup> ~~power~~ shewed to vs in suffering of his passion :  
oonly a figure of his bodie orelles a memoriall oonly of the  
Crucifix[ion] as they sette vp in churches : then had he leaste w[ith]  
the Iewes a more highe and a more excellent memoriall of their  
delyvery owte of Egypte then he had done to Cristien men  
of his passion : for he leaste with the Iewes : manna : aungelles  
foode whiche came owte of hevon and wherof parte remayned  
with them in the arke of god many yeres as a memoriall  
of the said delyvery / and if he had leaste with Cristen  
men oonly a figure or a signe of his passion than had he  
as it semythe haue estemed the delyvery of the Iewes  
oute of egipte more highlie then he did his passion : but  
he did not so and therefore he leaste with Cristen men in memory

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of his passion his very bodie in forme of bred to the whiche the  
manna of the Iewes was but a figure / and this memoriall  
is moche more evidently knowen to many p[er]sons where then it  
hath ben in tyme paste for the wordes of <sup>^</sup>[the] sayd chryste in<sup>^</sup> the gospell be so  
playne therin when he seith : this is my bodie do ye this in  
remembraunce of me : that every man ~~th~~ that canne rede  
Englishe and belevithe the gospell cannot but beleve it / And if  
there were any cristen men that wolde endev[our] hym self to  
prove the contrary he shulde worke so moche to his owne  
hurte and to the demynysshing of his owne glory that we  
thinke and also truste that there is non suche : And furthermore  
we se no dyverstie what glory a preste aughte to haue for  
the consecracion and vsing of it <sup>^</sup>more<sup>^</sup> then a laye man for a  
devoute receyving of it : for it is certayne that is was more  
rather insitute by oure M[aister] Criste for lay men then it  
was for pristes : for he knewe there shulde be of theym the  
greter numbre / and he lovith and then lovid many a laye  
man more then he did many a priste : And if any man

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pryvely or openly wolde make any p[er]suasion to the demynysshing  
of this blessed memoriall and gracioux gifte of ~~gifte~~ of god by  
wordes or wyking or any other waies : we thinke that it  
were greatlie to be doubtid that he favoured the title of sup[re]me  
hedship for the bisshop of Rome : for nothing wolde fortyfie  
and sette furthe ~~the truth~~ his title therin more then <sup>^</sup>[that]<sup>^</sup> it  
were noised that there were in this realme many heretiques  
specially conc[er]nyng the said glorious bodie of Criste : for  
then the bisshop of rome and his adherentes shulde lightlie  
make the comon people belyve that there were many heresies  
conc[er]nyng his title aswell as there were in other thinges  
<sup>^</sup>notw[ith]standynge yf yt be thought [that] [that] name : sacrament aswell conc[er]nyng  
[that]  
seyd sacrament of baptyisme : And {the} seid sacrament of pen[au]nce as of<sup>^</sup>  
any other of the saide vii gracioux giftes / of god will not lightly  
be broken fro the people by cause they haue ben solonge accustomed  
with that name : sacramento / for ~~suche~~ truthe it is that suche  
thinges as the people haue sene and vsed they will not lightlie  
leave thoughe it were for a better thing : but either of  
wilfulnes : ignoraunce : or Dulnes : will stiflie stik to that that they

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and their auncestors haue sene and vsed : then we beseche yo[ure]  
grace that it may be comaunded by p[ar]liamente that the ~~vii~~ said  
vii gracioux giftes of god may be called the ^vii^ sacramentes of  
Cristes vniu[er]sail church / and non to call theym the vii sacram[en]tes  
of the church for if they be suffred still to call theym ~~still~~  
so : the vnlearned people will thinke that they were ordeyned  
by the clergie for by that worde : church : the comon people  
vnderstaunde the clergie as is saide before : And if that name ^vniu[er]sal chyrch^ be  
appoynted vnto them : we doubte not but that the people w[ith]in  
fewe yeres thorough the good adu[er]tisement and doctrne of the  
clergie : will knowe that they come oonly of the graciouse gifte  
of god and also more regarde the wirking and op[er]acion of the  
holy goste therin then the name of the thing

[paragraph mark] And as to extreme vnccion we beseche youre grace that it may  
be vsed hereafter as it hath ben in tymes paste and that it  
may be prohibite by p[ar]liamente that non shall saye that non  
shulde be annoyed but oons as thoughe the oyle were so holy  
that no man aughte to be twise annoyed with it : but ^[that] eu[er]y man^ ~~he be~~

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annoyed as ofte as necessitie of siknes shall requyre : And surely  
the setting of so greate holynes as hathe ben vsed to be sette in  
tyme paste in hallowing and blessing of oyle : ymages : beltes : water :  
fyre : and suche other hathe done greate hurte for it hathe  
caused so many of the mynystres to satisfie theym self w[ith] the  
holynes that the people haue esteemed in them by suche  
hallowinges when there hath bene righte litle devocion  
or holynes in their hartes / And ferthermore this abusion  
we haue harde of conc[er]nyng anyling that some curates will  
say they be not bounde to mynystre it but they be requyred to  
it : and therefore we beseche youre grace that it may be declared  
that eu[er]y curate having knowlege of the siknes : is bounde to  
move the sike man to it : and to gyve a diligence that it be not  
negligently omyttid : And also an other abusion we haue harde  
of conc[er]nyng anyling and that is this : it is well ^known^ ~~done~~ that  
lay men be anynted vpon the navell as an helpe to put  
away the rather the concupiscence or carnall desires that

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haplie hathe ben in the sik p[er]sonne before : but as we haue  
harde saye there hathe ben some curates that wolde annoynte  
a preste vpon the navell for they haue pretendid that prestes  
be so preserved by the holynes of theire ordre : that they nede  
not to be annoynted in that behalf as laye men be : and howe  
mighte that opynyon goethe to veynglorie and to a full  
settyng of vertue in owtwarde thinges as is apparaunte :  
wherfore we beseche yo[ure] grace that the said anyling may  
hereafter be mynystred to every oon of the clergie as it is  
to the lay people : ~~notwithstanding if it be thoughte that~~  
~~the name of the sacramente that is to saye aswell of the~~  
~~sacramente of matrimony as the sacramente of pen[an]ce~~

ffinis