

1 Ki Deus ad duné esciēce  
2 E de parler bone eloquence  
3 Ne s'en deit taisir ne celer  
4 Ainz se deit voluntiers mustrer.  
5 Quant uns granz biens est mult oïz,  
6 Dunc a primes est il fluriz,  
7 E quant loëz est de plusurs,  
8 Dunc ad espeandues ses flurs.  
9 Custume fu as anciens  
10 Ceo testimoine Preciens,  
11 Es livres ke jadis feseient,  
12 Assez oscurement diseient  
13 Pur ceux ki a venir esteient  
14 E ki aprendre les deveient,  
15 K'i peüssent gloser la lettre  
16 E de lur sen le surplus mettre.

17 Li philosophe le saveient,  
18 Par eux meïsmes entendeient,  
19 Cum plus trespasereit li tens,  
20 Plus serreient sutil de sens  
21 E plus se savreient garder  
22 De ceo k'i ert a trespasser.  
23 Ki de vice se voelt defendre  
24 Estudier deit e entendre  
25 A grevose ovre comencier:  
26 Par ceo s'en puet plus esloignier  
27 E de grand dolur delivrer.  
28 Pur ceo començaï a penser  
29 D'aucune bone estoire faire  
30 E de latin en romaunz traire;  
31 Mais ne me fust guaires de pris:  
32 Itant s'en sunt altre entremis.  
33 Des lais pensai, k'oïz aveie.  
34 Ne dutai pas, bien le saveie,  
35 Ke pur remembrance les firent  
36 Des aventures k'il oïrent,  
37 Cil ki primes les comencierent  
38 E ki avant les enveierent.

1 To whom God has given knowledge  
2 And the ability to speak well,  
3 He should not keep quiet about it nor hide it,  
4 Rather he should gladly put himself forward.  
5 When a great good is much heard,  
6 Then does it first flower,  
7 And when it is praised by a number,  
8 Then has it fully blossomed.  
9 The ancients had a custom  
10 (So Priscian testifies)  
11 In the books which they made back then,  
12 They spoke quite obscurely  
13 For those who were yet to come  
14 And who were to learn them,  
15 Who would be able to gloss the letter there  
16 And add to the text out of their own intelligence  
(interpretation).  
17 The (old) philosophers knew this would happen,  
18 And realized themselves,  
19 The more time would pass,  
20 The keener of wit people would be  
21 And would better know how to pay attention  
22 To what could be passed over there.  
23 He who wishes to protect himself from vice  
24 Must work hard and strive  
25 To undertake a great work:  
26 By this means he can distance himself further  
27 And deliver himself from great sorrow.  
28 For this reason I began to think  
29 Of making some good story  
30 And to draw it from Latin into French;  
31 But this would hardly be of any worth to me:  
32 So many others have undertaken as much.  
33 I thought of the lays that I had heard.  
34 I did not doubt, I knew well,  
35 That for remembrance they made them  
36 Of the adventures they had heard,  
37 Those who first began them  
38 And who sent them on ahead.

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39 Plusurs en ai oï conter,  
40 Nes voil laissier ne oblier.  
41 Rimé en ai e fait ditié,  
42 Soventes fiez en ai veillié!

39 I have heard a number related,  
40 I don't want to leave them or forget them.  
41 I have put them into rhyme and made poems out of them,  
42 I've often stayed up late over this task!