My maister Bukton, whan of Crist our kyng
Was axed what is trouthe or sothfastnesse,
He nat a word answerde to that axing,
As who saith, “No man is al trewe,” I gesse.
And therfore, though I highte to expresse 5
The sorwe and wo that is in mariaghe,
I dar not writen of it no wikkednesse,
Lest I myself falle eft in swich dotage.

I wol nat seyn how that yt is the cheyne
Of Sathanas, on which he gnaweth evere, 10
But I dar seyn, were he out of his peyne,
As by his wille he wolde be bounde nevere.
But thilke doted fool that eft hath levere
Ycheyned be than out of prison crepe,
God lete him never fro his wo dissevere,
Ne no man him bewayle, though he wepe.

But yet, lest thow do worse, take a wyf; 15
Bet ys to wedde than brenne in worse wise.
But thow shal have sorwe on thy flessh, thy lyf,
And ben thy wives thrall, as seyn these wise;
And yt that hooyle writ may nat suffyse,
Experience shal the teche, so may happe,
That the were lever to be take in Frise
Than eft to falle of weddynge in the trappe.

[Envoy]

This lytel writ, proverbes, or figure 25
I sende yow; take kepe of yt, I rede;
Unwys is he that kan no wele endure.
If thow be siker, put the nat in drede.
The Wyf of Bathe I pray yow that ye rede
Of this matere that we have on honde.
God graunte yow your lyf frely to lede
In fredam, for ful hard is to be bonde.

Explicit.

5 highte: promised
8 eft: again dotage: foolishness
10 Sathanas: Satan
12 As by: so far as it concerns
15 dissevere: part, get away from
23 take: taken prisoner Frise: Frisia
25 writ: composition proverbes: series of proverbs figure: metaphorical statement
29 Wyf of Bathe: The Wife of Bath’s Prologue