Chaucer’s Retraction

Here the maker of this book takes his leave.

Now I pray to all who read or listen to this little treatise, that if there may be anything in it that pleases them, that they may thank for it our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom all intelligence and all goodness proceeds. And if there be any thing that displeases them, I pray them also that they ascribe it to my lack of skill and not to my will, all of which I would have gladly said better if I had had the skill. For our book says, “All that is written is written for our instruction,” and that is my intent. 1083

Therefore, I beseech ye meekly, for the mercy of God, that ye pray for me that Christ may have mercy on me and forgive me my sins; and namely for my translations and compositions of worldly vanities, all of which I revoke in this retraction: namely the book of Troilus; the book also of Fame; the book of the twenty-five Ladies; the book of the Duchess; the book of Saint Valentine’s day of the Parliament of Birds; the tales of Canterbury, those that pertain to sin; the book of the Lion; and many another books, if I could remember them, and many songs and many lecherous ditties, that Christ for his great mercy may forgive me the sin. 1087

But of the translation of Boethius’ Consolation, and other books of Legends of Saints, and of Homilies and moral and devotional works, for which I thank our Lord Jesus Christ and his blessed Mother, and all the saints of heaven, beseeching them that they from this point to the end of my life may send me the grace to lament my sins and to study for the salvation of my soul, and grant me the grace of true penitence, confession and satisfaction to carry out in this present life, through the gentle grace of he who is king of kings and priest over all priests, of he who ransomed us with the precious blood of his heart, so that I may be one of those who shall be saved at the Day of Judgment. 1092

Qui cum Patre et Spiritu Sancto vivit et regnat Deus per omnia secula². Amen.

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1 For our instruction. See Romans 14.4; 2 Timothy 3:16.

2 He with the Father and Holy Spirit lives and reigns, God, without end (through all ages).