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Dramatic elements in the English sacred drama

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DRAMATIC ELEMENTS IN THE ENGLISH SACRED DRAMA.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College of the State University of Iowa in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

by

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Iowa City, Iowa.
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The English sacred drama has for its fundamental material the story of the Christian faith as it is comprehended in mediaeval English life. The principal sources are the Vulgate and the legendary traditions which pertain to the Bible story. Of the legendary sources the most important are the Apocryphal Gospels, the Legenda Aurea, and the Cur sor Mundi. These traditions were a part of the religion of the Middle Ages, and entered into their life and literature.

The mediaeval drama had its origin in the church ritual. After the church of the dark ages had begun to emphasize in its religious functions the dramatic element involved in its ritual and its faith, and to realize that the dramatic development of its ritual was an effective method of teaching its faith, the religious drama was born.

Accordingly, the original motive of its authors and players was to teach the Bible story. In the Middle Ages, the church services were conducted in Latin, which was an unknown tongue to the masses. The Bible text was not put into the hands of the laity, and, even if the Scriptures had been accessible, few were able to read. Thus it was found necessary to devise some means of explaining the significance of the ritual, and of teaching the truths of doctrine and Scripture to an unlettered and ignorant people.

Hence incidents from the Bible were selected by the mediaeval playwrights not for their dramatic value but for their homiletic value. Only certain portions of the Bible
were considered important for popular knowledge. First, the parts connected with the Easter and Christmas festivities were dramatized. These early plays existed as units, each commemorating some episode in the life of Christ or of the saints, or some important part of the Old Testament. By the running together of these separate plays with additional episodes the cycles came into being. The authors of the cycles aimed to represent the chief passages of the sacred history of the world from the creation to the Judgment Day. The central theme in this story is the coming of Christ and the subsequent saving of mankind. The dramatists concentrated their attention upon the life of Christ on earth, the redemption and resurrection, and endeavored to select those parts in the Old Testament which bore most upon the central theme and were considered prophetic of Christ's coming.

But although the writers did not sacrifice the sacred story for the sake of dramatic subjects, the dramatic spirit soon crept into the plays and developed rapidly. There is intrinsic dramatic value in the material of the sources. No theme could ever more easily lend itself to art, and, as conceived by the Middle Ages, the Christian story is forcibly dramatic. Some selections offer exceedingly good opportunity for dramatizing, and the capacity of the playwrights is made evident both by their manner of handling the dramatic qualities inherent in the sources, and by the introduction of new dramatic elements.
In the treatment of the Bible story there is often evidence of attempts to enhance the dramatic qualities by amplifying or condensing some portion of the subject matter. An illustration of this is found in the York cycle, Play VIII, The Building of the Ark. This play is based on Genesis VI 5 – VII 5. In this instance the dramatist has expanded certain parts of the Bible text in such a way as to emphasize God's solicitation and sympathy for man, and to inspire a feeling of spiritual relationship between God and man, while those passages of the text not directly related to the emphatic points are condensed. The Bible account of God's feeling toward man at this time reads:

"It repented him that he had made man on the earth. And being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, He said: I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, from man even to beasts, from the creeping thing even to the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them."

In the play God recalls the blissful state of man at the creation, and his own plans for man's power and happiness on earth, thereby making more impressive his feeling of disappointment and regret for man's present state.

Deus    Fyrst qwen I wrought his-world so wyde,
         Wode and wynde and watters wane,
         Heuyn and helle was night to hyde,
         Wyth herbys and gyrse us I be-gane,
         In endles blysse to be and byde.
         And to my liknes made I man,
         Lorde and syre on ilke-a side
         Of all medill-erthe I made hym an.
A woman also with hym wrought I, 
Alle in lawe to lede oer lyffe,
I badde fame waxe and multiplye,
To fulfille is worlde, with-owtyn striffe.
Sy n hays men wroght so wofully,
And synne is nowe reynande so ryffe,
Dat me repenteys and rews for-di
Dat n euer I made outhir man or wiffe.

When, after God has explained to Noah that he purposes to destroy all mankind except Noah and his family, the Bible simply suggests Noah's faith and devotion by saying, "And Noe did all things which God commanded him." But the playwright represents Noah as devoutly praising God for the honor, yet hesitating to undertake the task which God has assigned him, on account of his age and incapacity for the work. His loving devotion and faith, however, prompt him to act in obedience to God's command, and when he goes about his task he finds to his joy and thanksgiving that his weakness and weariness have disappeared and he is able to perform the service with pleasure. There is a real touch of spiritual relationship in this renewal of strength and power in the aged Noah as a result of his love and devotion. The author of this play has also helped to make prominent the qualities he wished to emphasize by giving briefly the parts which do not aid in their development. The verses that enumerate the different animals of all kinds, which are to be taken into the ark with Noah, are given more briefly than in the Bible, evidently, because if these parts were prolonged they would detract from the elements which the dramatist here especially desires to make emphatic.
Another attempt to heighten the dramatic value by amplification of the material in the source is in the plays of the Creation. This is especially true in the York cycle where the parts taken from the first chapter of Genesis are stretched out to a considerable extent. The dramatist has treated the story, here, with a quiet and devout gravity, and at the same time has made it dramatic. By dwelling on the attributes of God, both as to his power and his love, the author has made the awe and reverence of these scenes very impressive. He unfortunately, however, detracts from the effect which he mainly wishes to produce, in the reason God gives in the third play on the Creation for making man.

"This werke is wrought nowe at my wille,
But yitte can I here no beste see
That accordes by kyndly skylle,
And for my werke mighte worshippe me."

The next stanza expresses a much higher motive, and is more to the purpose.

"For parfite werke ne were it none
But oughte wer made that at mighte it seme,
For loue made I his worlde alone,
Therfore my loue shalle in it seme."

Very appropriate expressions, also for the exposition of divine attributes are the loving satisfaction of God after his work of creation, the blessing which he bestows upon his creatures, and the loving delight which he shows from time to time during the creative period. At the end of the first play we have these lines:
"And all his warke lykes me ryght wele,  
And baynely I gyf it my blyssyng."

At the close of the third play, after the creation of man God says,

"My werke is endid nowe at mape  
Alle likes me wele, but his bests  
My blissynge have they ever and ay."

The Remorse of Judas too furnishes good evidence of the writers ability to make use of the dramatic element in the subject matter. The origin of this story is Matthew XXVII, 3-5. The Judas of the Bible has repented, and gives evidence of remorse, but his feelings are not revealed so as to indicate any intensity of bitterness. The dramatist has amplified the text a very great deal, and has at the same time very effectively intensified the remorse of Judas. In the York play Judas enters alone, bewailing that he even was born. He gives a full view of his sin; recalls the kindness of Jesus to himself, the trust his master had put in him above any other, and feelingly admits that he has falsely betrayed the blessed Jesus. He insists upon returning the money to secure Jesus' release, in spite of all their insults and taunts. The sting and anguish of his remorse are so great that he neither heeds their threats nor fears for his own safety.

In turning to the consideration of the new elements introduced in the sacred drama, we observe that the mediaeval dramatists contributed much of artistic value both in their treatment of structure and in characterization. Realism, humor, satire, romance, allegory, pathos, and sublimity are introduced
with more or less of dramatic skill; frequently, their handling shows true artistic ability.

A study of the religious plays with reference to their structure evinces first that the authors had some instinct of dramatic unity. It is true that there is an absolute disregard of the unities of time and place. Historical incongruities also abound. Since these dramas embraced heaven, earth and hell within their limits, and included all of time, the conventions of time and place were out of the question. There is however, a sense of dramatic unity manifested by the dramatists manner of handling the plays in the cycles. First, in collecting plays for the cycles, although they were guided mainly by the Biblical narrative, they, nevertheless, seem to make a discrimination for the sake of the unity of the cycle as a whole. The Balaam pageant in the Chester cycle and the Pharoah pageant in the townley plays each has some connection with the Bible story yet no vital relation to its main divisions. Hence neither of these pageants is used in any of the other cycles, while those plays that stand in close relation to the important parts are made common matter in all the four great cycles. Again, each of these four cycles, York, Towneley, Chester, and Coventry, has its Harrowing of Hell which links the later parts with the earlier by bringing in the Devils, Adam and Eve, and other characters reminiscent of the first parts of the cycle. There is also a tendency to subordinate the scene of Christ's temptation in order to reserve his triumph over Satan for the Harrowing of Hell; likewise the significance of the Lazarus
scene is withheld so that it may not anticipate the victory of Christ over death, which is reserved for the Resurrection.

Moreover, not a little skill in the arrangement of scenes is shown. For a proof of this we may turn to play XXV in the York cycle, The Entry into Jerusalem. We find this play divided into four scenes. With each scene there is an advance in the story, and in every case the necessary facts are given to prepare us for the change. Scene I is at Bethphage at the Mount of Olives. The persons who appear here are Jesus and his disciples, Peter and Philip. After remarking that his time is drawing near and the prophecy is to be fulfilled, Jesus asks Peter and Philip to bring the ass and her foal from the castle at Jerusalem. The two disciples gladly consent. As they go out the scene closes. This beginning gives the general situation for the whole play, and definitely leads to scene II, which opens with Peter and Philip's approach to the castle. They explain to the Porter why they have come, whereupon he gives them the ass. When the disciples have gone the Porter goes to tell the citizens of Jerusalem of the coming of Jesus. After a discussion as to who Jesus is and what he has done they form the procession. Scene II, then is a further preparation for the main event by bringing out the character of Jesus and showing us the attitude of the citizens toward him. It is also a clear preparation for the following scene. This interview of the Porter and the citizens has given time for Peter and Philip to get back to Bethphage, and the passing out of the procession takes our thought, at once, back to Jesus. What
we are expecting in the third scene, therefore, is just what we have, Bethphage, and Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. Here the power of Jesus is emphasized as he meets the procession; he makes the blind to see and the halt to walk, and forgives the sins of the penitent Zaccheus. These three scenes together have led up to the entrance into the city; each has had a part in carrying forward the action and in developing the character of Jesus. The obedience of the disciples, the exultation and reverence of the citizens, and the work of Jesus himself have all helped to dignify and exalt Jesus so that the glorious worship by the chorus of burgesses, to which most of scene IV is devoted, is very fitting.

Sufficient evidence may be found in the Scriptural plays to show clearly that their authors had an appreciation of dramatic situation. The plays of the Creation furnish good examples in the fall of Lucifer. This incident is made the occasion for an impressive dramatic moment when Satan usurping God's throne and receiving the homage of one-tenth of the angels is abruptly stopped in his blasphemous boasts and is instantly smitten down to hell. In the Towneley cycle, we see him attempting to fly off the stage when he disastrously falls into hell-mouth, the bad angels falling with him. Another illustration of a dramatic moment occurs in the York play in the trial of Jesus. Here Annas falls into a passion and attempts to strike Jesus but Caiaphas interferes in time to prevent the blow. The Abraham and Isaac plays also exemplify this dramatic element. In the Towneley play the playwright proves his ability to create a highly dramatic moment. After a
point of intense feeling has been reached, Abraham lifts his sword to cut off Isaac's head, but just at that moment an angel appears to stay his hand.

A perusal of the English religious plays gives proof that dramatic movement does not always obtain. In the Old Testament portions of the Chester and the Coventry cycles, the movement is often undramatic. A considerable part of the Chester play IV does not promote the action. The receiving of tithes, and offering of bread and wine by Melchisedech have no direct bearing upon the main theme; therefore they retard the movement. The introduction of the character of Melchisedech was, nevertheless of great significance in the day of the religious drama. Both Abraham and Melchisedech were looked upon as especially favored of God and were given much attention in mediaeval times. The English of the fourteenth century held Abraham typical of God, and Melchisedech prophetic of Christ. Hence very great importance was attached to this story of Melchisedech. The prophecies in play V, also, are mainly narrative and not dramatic. Sometimes, the too great realism interferes with the movement and makes the progress slow and halting. The Crucifixion of the York cycle is an illustration. In this play the emphasis on details confuses the main conception and hinders rapidity of action so as to prevent good dramatic progression. Many of the Coventry plays are rather dull narrative and evince little intent of dramatic development.

Many examples, however, of well regulated movement can be found. The Cain and Abel pageant in the Towneley cycle leads up to a dramatic situation and moves with life and vigor. The
way in which Cain's temper, with no real provocation, is aroused
to furious anger under Abel's calm and pious admonitions, is well
set forth, and the play reaches its climax in an artistic manner.

In the Second Shepherds' Play of the Towneley collection, also, we
have successful dramatic movement throughout. The dialogue is
lively and the action advances rapidly; there are dramatic fore­
shadowings, suspenses and surprises; and on the whole the movement
is truly dramatic.

In plot-construction, too, the writer of the sacred drama
shows ability. Some original devices are found in the Chester plays.
For example, in the Slaying of the Innocents, the dramatist makes
Herod's own son to be slain; Herod falls a prey to hideous dis­
ease and is borne away by a demon, who warns the audience that any
man who deals in Herod's sins may expect to share his fate. Still
better evidence of skill in the construction of plot is seen in
the Second Shepherds' Play of the Towneley cycle. Here we find a
fully developed sub-plot within the main plot. The episode grows
out of and belongs to the conditions with which the main action
opens. This adventure of Mak is a realistic comedy with a beginning,
middle, and end. It has the motive, the devices, and the progress
of a drama in itself. The shepherds are gathered in the fields
on Christmas Eve, and begin in turn to talk of their troubles.
They grumble at the severity of the weather; complain of their
heavy taxes, of their quarrelsome wives, and of their hard work
and low wages. During the conversation, Mak the sheep-stealer
enters and stops with them. Presently they lie down to sleep.
As soon as the shepherds are all soundly sleeping Mak rises
quietly, steals a sheep, and hurries home. There, he and his wife wrap the sheep in baby clothes, and tuck it away in the cradle as a newborn baby. Mak then returns to the shepherds who, when they awake the following morning, find Mak apparently sleeping, with no evidence of his adventure of the night. When they miss one of their flock, however, they at once suspect Mak and go to search his house. Finding no trace of their sheep they are about to depart, when one of the shepherds, struck by a kindly thought, goes back to give the child a sixpence. Mak tries to prevent his going to the cradle but the shepherd persists, and, as he lifts the coverlet to kiss the child, exclaims, "What the dewall is this? he has a long snowte." After the deception is exposed, Mak and his wife, Gylle still protest their innocence. Gylle declares the child was bewitched by an elf and became thus misshapen as the clock struck twelve. The shepherds decide to bring no further punishment upon Mak than to toss him in a blanket until they are tired. As they again lie down to sleep, the scene of the sheep-stealing changes imperceptibly into that of the Nativity. In conception, construction, and effect this little comedy is a work of dramatic art, and, regularly, the plays contain good evidence of the dramatists' capacity for construction of plot.

It will be noticed that the characterization of the sacred drama is purely realistic. The characters of the Bible, in the portrayal of the mediaeval dramatist, are the English of the fourteenth century, even as the Oriental scenes in which they appear are given an English setting. The persons from the rank and file of society are vividly drawn. With the principal characters of the Scriptures, few liberties are taken; in their portrayal the
dramatist adheres rather closely to the Bible narrative. But every comic hint is eagerly improved in the development of secondary characters. Cain, Garcia, Noah's wife, and the Shepherds are perhaps the greatest dramatic successes. The characterization of Cain is notable for its reality. It is true to human nature and represents exactly the fourteenth century English rustic. Garcia, a character not found in Bible history, is a true clown of the rough and ready sort. Noah's wife, a typical yeoman's wife, is an artistically portrayed character who supplies much good fun in the York, Towneley, and Chester plays. The author of the Second Shepherd's Play has given us some really worthy specimens of characterization. The persons of the play are real and consistent throughout. Mak is depicted in an exceedingly interesting and clever manner. So, while some of the religious plays show only the rudiments of characterization, we have here a well developed realistic portrayal of characters.

The love of realism so characteristic of the Middle Ages is very eminent in their drama. In the Middle-English drama the life and manners of the day are very faithfully set forth. On every hand a realistic bent may be detected in the presentation of details in structure as well as in characterization. This quality is very notably exhibited in the York and the Towneley collections. The group of Passion plays is especially marked by the attempt at practical details in the presentation. The stress on the workmanship, the vivid portrayal of the soldiers' brutality, the minute and horrible details of their conversation, and the elaborate dramatic dialogue are
are striking examples of this realistic tendency. Many characters also, are depicted with powerful realism. This is exemplified in the swaggering and boastful Herod; in Caiaphas and Annas, with their cunning and virulence; in the portraiture of Judas, his bargaining with the Jews and his remorse later. In the Salutation of the Towneley cycle, a simple realism is attractively expressed in Mary's visit to Elizabeth. The dialogue between the two women is pleasing for its courtesy. The exchange of greetings is very intimate and loving, and during the entire conversation the influence of love and of divine reverence is apparent from their words and manner. And, likewise, in the domestic scenes of Joseph and Mary, we are delighted with the realistic portrayal where tenderness and love are so beautifully emphasized. This realistic feature, which dominates in many of the plays, gives us many pleasing pictures, and no doubt, added much to the popularity of the Scriptural drama, yet it sometimes detracts by dwelling unnecessarily on unpleasant features and is often a hindrance to artistic success. In many instances the stress on the practical and the too carefully detailed presentation, as in the York scenes of the Crucifixion, while it imparts a certain physical reality to the situation, effectually distracts the attention from the spiritual and idealistic elements.

In the course of the development of the Scriptural plays, humor came to be an important feature, both as a relief to the many serious and tragic scenes, and as a quality in the portrayal of characters. Beyond our conception, probably, was the heart-strain of the Passion plays, to the devout and credulous mediaeval audience. It is true the note of victory sounded in the background, but the foreground expressed extreme suffering,
and the responsive sympathy was painfully intense. In the drama, as in life, there was need of comedy to relieve this strain of emotion. The playwrights responded to this need, and to the laughter loving tastes of the people, by introducing certain distinctly comic episodes into the sacred story. The solemnity of the Old Testament plays is relieved by the buffoonery of Cain and his ploughboy, and by the stubbornness of Noah's wife, while to the tragedy of Christ's life and death, a foil is afforded by the fooling of the Shepherd's plays, and by certain characters who enter into the trial scene. The comic scenes should, therefore, be regarded not as interruptions to the sacred drama but as dramatic relief.

The comic element appears in the plays on Cain and Abel to a degree that is well worth our notice. In the York cycle the churlish and irreverent Cain creates a good bit of amusement, and the portrayal of his servant shows some attempts at jocularity. A better developed humor is found in Cain of the Coventry play. His character is conceived in a way that well fits his part. Cain displays a worldly philosophy and takes a view of matters very different from his brother's. His opinion of Abel is:

"Amonges alle ffolys that gon on grownd,  
I holde that thou be on of the most,  
To tythe the best that is most sownd,  
And kepe the werst that is nere lost."

And the Towneley play, while it, too, contains the tragic element, has the best comedy that appears on this subject. Here we get a glimpse of the stage clown. A mirth-provoking personage is introduced as Cain's ploughboy, Garcio. He is the
first to appear and greets the audience with a ranting speech. Presently Cain enters ploughing. The language of both Cain and the boy is notably coarse and vulgar. Along with his base language Cain displays an irritable disposition. In the very beginning his character becomes apparent from his treatment of the horses and his cursing of Garcio. He causes great fun by his manner of blaming Garcio for the contrary behavior of the horses and oxen. The boy, gloowering in his mischief, acknowledges that he has filled the feeding-racks with stones. At this Cain threatens to fight Garcio, who is quite ready to hold his own and perfectly willing to fight. The grudging fashion of Cain's sacrifice with his defiant and overbearing attitude are a source of merriment to the audience, who see the shallowness of it all. The boy's buffoonery together with the bluntness and gruffness of Cain furnish a good contrast to the tragic element in the play.

The authors of the York, the Chester, and the Towneley cycles, all made the Flood pageant an occasion for introducing more or less of the comic element. The York playwright indulges in an altercation between Noah and his wife, which he, with some skill in the handling works into an interesting episode. When the son asks Noah's wife to come to the ark, she sends Noah word that she "wol come no narre". But she wants to know what Noah means and cannot sit still till she has found out. In the third scene the strife has become somewhat exciting. Among the reasons the wife has for refusing to enter the ark, is that Noah has kept
the secret from her. He apologizes, saying it was God's will, yet that does not satisfy the wife so he "getis a clowte". The humor of the York play is surpassed in the Flood of the Chester cycle, which is one of the most spirited of the English religious plays. While in the York the amusing episode is sudden and of one sequence, in the Chester play there is dramatic progression. The character of Noah's wife is cleverly depicted. At first she is apparently amenable to reason and seems willing to give her assistance. In her agreeable mood she says:

"And we shall bring tymber to, 
for wee mon nothing els doe; 
women be weake to vnderfoe 
any great travayle."

But we soon notice that getting his wife into the ark will be something of a task for the old patriarch.

Noe. Good wife, doe now as I the bydd.

Uxor. By Christ! not or I see more neede though thou stand all the day and staries.

All in vain Noah entreats and commands her. She steadfastly refuses to enter the ark unless her gossips are taken in too. The "gossips everichon" must be allowed to enter, or she will not move, she declares, and Noah may go where he lists and get a new wife. At last the dutiful sons lift their mother into the boat. On entering she answers Noah's salute, "Welcome, wife, into this boate I", by vigorously boxing his ears. Noah now withdraws disconsolate, remarking:

"A l ha l mary; this is hote, 
it is good to be still."

The play of Noah and the Ark in the Towneley cycle sets forth this family strife in an artistic manner. Here it has developed
into something more than a comic episode; it is a comic history of the domestic scenes of Noah and his wife. This play gives evidence of keen observation of characters. Noah is not the meek and long-suffering man that we have seen in the York and the Chester plays. At the first Noah expresses a fear as to how his wife will take the news of God's purpose. A lively scuffle between the pair ensues when Noah has informed her in regard to the play. After the ark is built her disagreeableness manifests itself in almost incredible obstinacy. Even after having once consented to enter she retreats. She will not go on board the clumsy vessel.

Uxor. I was never bard ere
   As euer myght I the,
   In sich an oostre as this.
   In faith I can not fynd
   which is before, which is behynd;

Noah's wife stubbornly continues her spinning; neither threats nor persuasions can induce her to leave her work, until the waves rise over her feet. And when she bounds into the boat in terror of her life, Noah's welcome is a severe flogging. She retaliates by calling him names and defiantly refusing to ask for mercy. Finally, she strikes back, and the fight ends by Noah's calling out,

"In this hast let vs ho,
   ffor my bak is nere in two."

This rustic comedy, notwithstanding the fact that the quarrelling is somewhat coarse and the humor boisterous, demonstrates an artistic ability worthy of note. The writer shows some power
in portraying his characters; they are consistently developed, and are fitted to their setting. Here is variety and rapidity of action, vivid reproduction of human ways and local manners, and a characteristic rustic philosophy.

But the most excellent contribution of a comic nature of the sacred drama is the play dealing with the nightwatch and the adoration of the shepherds. In these plays the creative talent of the English mediaeval dramatists is best seen. Scholars agree, in respect to the Shepherd's Plays, that the Towneley cycle excels. This collection contains two different plays giving independent versions of the shepherd story. The leading characters of the First Shepherds' Play are Gyb, John Horne, and Slow-Pace, three simple-minded persons, and Jak Garcia, a rough fellow of a shrewder type. Their simple quarrelling furnishes some very amusing little scenes. Gyb, who is going to buy sheep, quarrels with Horne as to where he shall pasture them, though they are not yet bought, and shouts to his bell-wether to possess the land. When Horne will not let the imaginary wether obey, Gyb threatens to break his head. Slow-Pace comes up and ridicules their imaginary trouble. To conclude the matter he shakes his sack empty to symbolize the condition of their wits. The Second Shepherds' Play, which has been considered as to its plot in a previous paragraph, contains a real comedy inserted in the play itself. The characters of the inserted comedy are the three shepherds, Collin, Gyb, and Daw, Mak, who is the prime rogue of the play, and his wife Gylle. Mak's character is cleverly and consistently drawn from first to last.
When he makes his first appearance he slinks in by night; with his habit of disguise he tries to escape recognition. His saintly air and fine hypocrisy are very marked wherever we see him. Much amusement is created by the stealing of the sheep, and by the efforts of Mak and Gylle to conceal it in the cradle. In addition to the comic dialogue we have comic action and movement. During the search of the shepherds there are dramatic anticipations, interesting postponements and surprises. This piece of dramatic art is filled with much excellent humor.

The dramatist's power in the use of satire is displayed in the Towneley cycle. In the Judgment play some original scenes are introduced, which satirize all ranks in a grotesque and vivid style. The situation is the approaching of Judgment Day; the personages are the souls, who have been released from hell and the devils, who also are out. Whatever manner, custom, or practice comes in for the writer's condemnation, whether in high places or in low, he strikes hard and effectively, but with his contempt he minglest humor. He ridicules the absurdities of fashion, parodies the Latin of the day, and laughs impartially at Lollard, "Kyrkchaterars," and lovers of simony. Tutillivous, the infernal humorist has been tollsman and registrar for the devil, and is now "master lollard." He reports that,

"yit of thise kyrkchaterars here ar a menee
Of barganars and okerars and lufars of symonee,
Of runkers and rowners god sastys thaym out, trulee,
ffrom his temple all sich mysdoers I cach thaym
then to me ffull soyn,
ffor writen I wote it is
In the gospell, withouten mys,
Mt eam facistis
Speluncam latronum."
One devil tells his companion that he must get to the Judgment court as a peer to Parliament. Up Watling Street will be their way but they would rather make their pilgrimage to Rome. They have bags full of records containing the evidence against damned souls of all kinds of sinners.

"Of Wraggers and wregs a bag full of breves,
Of carpers and cryars of mychers and thefes,
Of lurdan and lyars that no man lefys,
Of flytars, of flyars and renderars of reffys;"

Had Doomsday been delayed, says one, then a bigger hell would have been needed.

"I tell you before had domysday oght tarid
We must haue biggid hell more the warld is so warid."

The ranting tyrants, Caesar, Herod and Pilate are painted with a burly sort of satire. Caesar after offering to behead any one who utters a word during the play, proceeds to magnify his power in an absurdly extravagant manner. Herod in the Offering to the Magi is a very prince of blusterers. He emphatically wishes all to understand that,

"of all this warld, sooth, far and nere,
The lord am I."

The writer's satiridal criticism of the church appears in Herod's promise that if he lives he will make the Councillor who suggested the massacre of the innocents, pope; meanwhile he shall have castles and lands. Pilate, in the Conspiracy, displays in addition to his tyrannical power, a political shrewdness,
"ffor I am he that may make or mar a man;
My self if I it say as men of cowrte now can;
Supporte a man to day to-morn agans hym than,
On both parties thus I play And fenys me to ordan
The right;
Bot all fals indytars,
Quest mangars and Iurers,
And all thise fals out rydars,
Ar welcom to my sight."

Another feature to be noted in the mediaeval drama
is the romantic element. This is chiefly evident in the plays
of Joseph and Mary. It is clear from the large number of
plays that center about Mary that this story had great interest
for the Middle Ages. Mary, the ideal woman, is a fit charac-
ter to refine the manners and the art of the age.

Play XIII in the York cycle shows a romantic
handling of the theme. Throughout, Joseph appears tender and
lovable. Mary, winsome, gentle, and worthy of adoration, is
the first romantic woman in English drama. In all the pageants
of Joseph and Mary a quiet and beautiful domestic spirit is
felt, but loveliest of all is the Nativity scene in the Journey
to Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph take shelter in a stable at Beth-
lehem. Joseph is anxious about the cold and the darkness, and
leaves Mary alone while he goes for light and fuel. In his
absence the Holy Child is born. Mary has commended herself to
God's protection, and is lifted above all anxiety and pain.
She worships the infant Jesus, and with reverent devotion takes
him in her arms.

"Hayle my lod God! hayle prince of pees!
Hayle my fadir, and hayle my sone!
Hayle souereyne sege all synnes to sesse!
Hayle God and man in erth to wonne!
    Hayle! throug whos myght
All dis worlde was first be-gonne,
    merknes and light.
Sone, as I am sympill sugget of thyne,
Vowschesaffe, swete sone, I pray ye,
That I myght be take in ye armys of myne
And in dis poure wade to arraise ye;
Graunte me i blisse!
As I am thy modir chosen to be
in sothfastness."

When Joseph returns, he at once sees the child and exclaims:

"O Marie! what swete thyng is that on thy kne?"

Joseph joins Mary in loving adoration, and together they lift
the little sleeper to lay him softly in the manger.

**Joseph.** Nowe welcome, floure fairest of hewe,
I shall ye menske with mayne and myght.
Hayle! my maker, hayle Crist Jesu!
Hayle! ruall kyng, rootes of all right!
Hayke! saueour.
Hayle, my lorde, lemer of light,
Hayle, blessid floure!

**Marie.** Nowe lord! at all is worlde schall wynne,
To ye my sone is at I says,
Here is no bedde to laye the inne,
Ye erfore my dere sone, I ye prays
sen it is soo,
Here in dis cribbe ye myght ye lay
betwene ye or bestis two.

The devotion of Joseph to Mary and the child was
brought to its climax in the **Journey to Bethlehem** but is developed
with happy iteration in the **Flight**. After the Angel who had
warned them to flee had departed, Joseph addresses Mary in
these words:

"Marie, my daughter dere,
On ye is all my ought."

During the preparation to go, and on the journey the comforts
and protects the young wife, taking the child on his own arm
when she is weary.
"I pray de Marie, happe hym warne,
And sette hym softe the noght syle,
And yf you will  ought ese thyh arme,
Gyff me hym, late me bere hym awhile."

In the Coventry plays the dramatic interest is enhanced to a very great extent by the infusion of the romantic legend. A striking feature of this cycle is the great emphasis on the life of the Virgin. The pageant describing the ascension of Mary is very much longer than that describing the ascension of Christ. Miracles are wrought about her bier, and her soul is crowned by Christ. About Mary's childhood and parentage so much is interesting and romantic. She is the daughter vowed "In clennes to lyven in Godys servise."

Moreover, a variety of plot revolves about her. At Mary's Bethrothment all the bachelors in the line of David, summoned by the bishop, stand in the Temple bearing peded white rods. Joseph's rod blossoms, thus designating him as Mary's husband, at which he is much discomfited. The backward behavior and apprehension of Joseph, the devotion of the damsels, the benediction of the bishop, the natural solicitude of the parents, and Joseph's preparation for the home - the hiring of the "lytyl praty house," and his departure for a"fere country;" - all these touches give this drama a tenderness blended with something of the comic element which brought it close to the hearts of the people.

The allegorical element also finds its way into some of the later religious dramas; this is noticed principally in the Coventry cycle. Here Contemplation is a conspicuous figure,
who appears in many places, as an expositor, speaking prologues and epilogues. The part of the Devil also takes on something of an allegorical nature in these plays. He enters into scenes where, in the earlier dramas, he has had no place. In the Council of the Jews he is made quite prominent by delivering a long prologue in which he satirizes the manners of the day. Personification of abstract ideas, too, enters into this cycle. At Herod's feast in the Slaughter of the Innocents, Death appears as God's messenger to slay King Herod who unaware of Death's presence urges on the revelry. In the play of the Salutation and Conception the old parable of the four daughters of God is dramatized, where Truth, Mercy, Righteousness, and Peace discuss the future destiny of man.

From the earlier to the later of the religious plays the element of pathos is present. It developed steadily so in the later pageants of the great cycles the tender phases of the sacred story attained great impressiveness.

The plays of Abraham and Isaac in the different cycles show a preponderance of the pathetic. As set forth in the Towneley cycle, this theme conveys the greatest emotion. The treatment here is brief; only the most necessary words are spoken, but the childish docility of the boy, and the useless efforts of the father in his submissiveness and bewilderment, are clearly realized. The few and simple words express depth of feeling.

Isaac. The shynyng of youre bright blayde  
It gars me quake for ferde to dee.

Abraham. Therefor groflyngis thou shall be layde  
Then when I stryke thou shall not se.
Isaac. What haue I done, fader, what haue I saide?
Abraham. Truly, no kyns ill to me.
Isaac. And thus gyltles shall be arayde.
Abraham. Now, good sone, let sich wordis be.
Isaac. I luf you ay.
Abraham. so do I the.
Isaac. ffader!
Abraham. what, sone?
Isaac. let now be seyn.
   ff for my moder luf.
Abraham. let be, let be!
   It will not help that thou wold meyn;
   Bot ly styll till I com to the,
   I mys l yltull thyng, I weyn.
   he spekis so rufully to me
   That water shotis in both myn eeyn,"

Abraham has made great efforts to suppress his emotion, but
when he turns aside from Isaac he shows us his heart.

Abraham. I were lever than all wardly wyn,
   That I had fon hym onys vnkynde,
   Bot no defawt I faund hym in:
   I wold be dede for hym, or pynde;
   To slo hym thus, I thynk grete syn,
   So rufull wordis I with hym fynd;
   I am full wo that we shuld twyn,
   ffor he will neuer oute of my mynd."
"O my sone! my sone! my derlyng dere!  
What have I defendyd the?  
Thou has spoke to alle tho that ben here,  
And not o word thou spekyst to me!  

To the Jewysthou are ful kende,  
Thou has forgewe all here mysdede;  
And the thef thou hast in mende,  
For onys haskyng mercy hsfne is his mede.

All my sovereyn Lord, why whylt thou not speke  
To me that am thi modyr in peyn for thi wrong?  
A! herd! hert! why whylt thou not breke?  
That I were out of this sorwe so stronge!

Jesus in his reply commends his mother to the beloved disciple John. But Mary with uncontrollable affection falls upon the cross, When Magdalene reminds her,

"Ah! good lady, who do ye thus?  
your dolful cher now chevit us sore.  
And for the peyne of my swete Lord Jesus  
What he seyth in you, it peyneth hym more."

she wishes to be hanged beside her son.

In the York cycle we see much tenderness with something of the pathetic. There is a tender scene in the Flight into Egypt, where Mary weeps in her anxiety for her little, son, and Joseph "to ese her arme" takes the "dare sone so swete". Likewise in the scenes of the Crucifixion pathos prevails in places, although the sentiment is never so touching and intense as it sometimes becomes in the Towneley plays.

The Towneley Passion group is wrought with much human sympathy and intensity of feeling. The lament of Mary at the Cross is a truly dramatic and poetical expression of heart-breaking grief. After a moving lament over her Son's agony she begs to know why he endures all this torture and in hopeless despair asks that God will take her life.
"Swete son, say me thi thought,
what wonders has thou wroght
To be in payn thus broght,
Thi blissed blode to blende?
A son, thynk on my wo*
whi will thou fare me fro?"

"Alas, my lam so mylde
whi will thou fare me fro
*Mang thise wulfes wylde
that wyrke on the this wo?
*for shame *ho may the shelde
*for freyndys has thou fo!
Alas, my comly childe
whi will thou fare me fro?

At last comes the futile cry of the heart that will not break.

"All that thou of blys hight me in that stede,
from myrth is faren omys and yit I trow thi red;
Thi counsell now of thi my lyfe how shalle I lede
When from me gone is he that was my hedc
In hy?
My dede now comen it is
My dere son, haue mercy!

Then we note the human tone and the infinite tenderness of the
Son's answer.

My moder mylde, thou chaunge thi chere!
Sease of thi scrow and sighyng sere,
It syttys ynto my hart full sere;
The scrow is sharp I suffre here,
Bot doyll thou drees, my moder dere,
Me marters mekill mare."

One quality in the mediaeval drama, which, indeed,
should not be overlooked, is that of sublimity. This obtains
to some extent in Abraham's sacrifice and Christ's nativity
but most in the dramas of the Passion. There is a high and
beautiful sublimity, from time to time, in the bearing of Jesus.
His attitude during the trial and the Crucifixion; the submissiveness,
the forbearance and superhuman patience, all are examples of
the highly sublime. On the road to Calvary when Christ sees his
mother and the other women weeping for him, he is even then able
to forget himself in the great work of his life, as we see from
these words:

"Doughteres of Jerusalem cytte,
Sees, and mournes no more for me,
But thynkes upon this thyng;
For youre selve mourne schall yee,
And for e sonnes at borne shal be."

Perhaps no finer instance of mingled pathos and sublimity can
be found that the words of the Savior on the Cross, Beginning,
"I pray you peyyl that passe me by,"
This thought recurs in various cycles. Jesus calls to the passers
by to see how he suffers. In the Resurrection play of the Towneley
collection there is also a strong appeal in the long monologue
uttered by Jesus after his resurrection. As he calls men to
remember what has been suffered for them, he rises to the
heights of dramatic dignity and moral grandeur.

"Worthy man, that I have wrought,
wightily wake, and sleepe thou noght!
with bytter bayll I haue the boght,
To make the fre;
Into this dongeon depe I soght
And all for luf of the.

Clene haue I mayde the, synfull man,
With wo and wandreth I the wan,
ffrom hartes and syde the blood out ran,
Sich was my pyne;
Thou must me luf that thus gaf than
My lyfe for thyne.

lo how I hold myn armes on brede,
The to saue ay redy mayde;
That I great luf ay to the had,
well may thou knaw!
Som luf agane I wold full fayn
Thou wold me shaw."
Impressive in its dignity, stern and yet beautifully tender is Christ's words to man in the closing scene of the Towneley Lazarus pageant.

"Amende the, man, Whils thou may, let neuer no myrthe fordo thi mynde; Thynke thou on the dredefull day When god shall deme all mankynde. Thynke thou farys as dothe the wynde; This warlde is wast & will away; Man, haue this in thi mynde, And amende the Whils that thou may. Amende the, man, whils thou are there, Agane thou go an othere gate; When thou are dede and laide on bere, Wyt thou well thou bees to late; ffor if all the goode that euer thou gate Were delt for the after thi day, In heuen it wolde not mende thi state, ffforthi amende the Whils thou may."

A study of the English sacred drama with reference to its dramatic elements leads to the conclusion that it contains much of dramatic value, and has contributed much in both form and spirit to the great drama of the Elizabethan Age. The sacred drama, growing as it did out of the church, embodied a spirit that was more than national. Christianity embraced all of human life. In the hands of the gilds the plays retained this broader spirit of the church and at the same time were made English. The cycles being the favorite literature of the people for about two centuries, embedded phases of thought prevalent in successive generations of men. As a result of this long popularity their influence is unquestionably great.

Because of their purely homiletic purpose, the authors of the religious drama made little or no distinction in the choice of subjects between what was suited for dramatization and
what was not. Nothing that was held essential to the teaching of the sacred narrative was omitted, and no incident was selected for its dramatic value if it bore no relation to the vital parts of the story. Yet, although thus restricted in their selection of subjects, the playwrights did have opportunities for dramatizing and frequently proved their ability, first, by developing dramatic qualities inherent in the material, and, second, by introducing new elements.

From the construction of the Scriptural drama were derived many permanent principles of dramatic structure. The nature of its theme necessitated a total disregard of the unities of time and place; unity of action was largely inherent in the material, yet the dramatists lent their aid in producing a closer unity of action by the arrangement of the plays in the cycles to give the various parts their true prominence, and by the arrangement of scenes to secure a natural progress of action. For their plots, likewise, they have the Biblical records largely to thank. The dramatists, nevertheless, demonstrate ability in the construction of plot. A number of original devices are found and some well developed plots. Dramatic situations also are taken advantage of; some highly dramatic moments are created. Progress of action is usually well secured; anticipations, suspenses, and surprises are frequent in those parts where the dramatists have deviated from their sources. All these elements of dramatic structure were appropriated by the writers of Elizabethan drama.
Not only in its sweeping scope of theme and massive structure did the religious drama set examples for its successors but also in truth do life. It has expressed the realistic, humorous, satirical, romantic, allegorical, pathetic, and sublime elements in a manner and to a degree that reflects the temper of its time. The great realistic tendency produces vividness in the representations of scenes and portrayal of character. Opportunities for comedy are well improved; much really interesting humor is brought out in characterization; comedy as a relief to tragedy, too, is tactfully employed. Comedy of real life arises here and passes into the later drama. Satire, as well, is used with a good deal of power; manners, morals, and follies of the day are held up for contempt and ridicule. The interest of the Scriptural plays is also enhanced by the infusion of the romantic element, which becomes highly developed by the Elizabethans. The allegorical element which is brought into the later religious drama is representative of the time. The treatment of the pathetic and the sublime throughout the sacred drama is very effective and furnishes many illustrations of highly developed dramatic passages.

Npr did the authors of the religious drama fail to leave an inheritance for dramatic development of character. With the minor characters only did they see fit to take liberties. Among these we find true artistic ability in character portrayal. There are examples of well individualized characters, naturally and
consistently evolved out of the progress of the action. But in the treatment of the principal Biblical characters, the playwright adhered closely to the Scriptural text. The religious spirit of the Middle Ages was too deep; their purpose too serious to allow the consideration of dramatic effect to take precedence of divine teaching.

But after all this pervading seriousness was one of the greatest elements of the Scriptural drama, and became a far-reaching inheritance of the Elizabethans. Owing to this serious purpose and the divine response of the English heart, the sacred plays as represented by the guilds, were allowed to pass essentially unaltered through the early periods of the Renaissance and the Reformation. The Scriptural drama thus became the bond between the English public of Chaucer's day and the English public of Shakespeare's, and was found by dramatists a medium of expression to which the influence of centuries had contributed. It not only gave to the Elizabethan dramatists great principles of dramatic art, but it also prepared England for their drama. From the influence of the sacred drama Shakespeare gained a sense of richness in art and an intensity of spirit without which he could not have written Lear; from the sacred plays the English people too had received a training without which they could not have appreciated Hamlet.