RICE UNIVERSITY

The Old Testament Plays of the Corpus Christi Cycles:
An Analysis of the Dramatization of Their Theological Themes

by

Klaus Karl Ernst Neuendorf

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts

Thesis Director's signature:

Houston, Texas

May 1965
ABSTRACT

The object of investigation in this paper is the group of Old Testament plays from the Corpus Christi cycles. The plays of Chester, York, Wakefield and the Ludus Coventriae are discussed in their cyclical sequence. The main point of each individual analysis is to define the relationship between the theological significance of the scriptural material (as it was understood in the Middle Ages) and the dramatization based on the same material. The group of plays is divided into two parts: plays on the events connected with the creation and before man's fall into sin and those on events that follow the original sin.

It is shown how in the first group the theological prerequisites are presented for relationship between God and man. Where this presentation develops into dramatic action, as in the scene of Lucifer's fall, its character becomes homiletic, demonstrating good and bad examples.

The second group contains plays on significant interactions between God and man in a world tainted by sin; in these plays the shift of emphasis from theology to homiletic instruction appears regularly. Analysis shows that it keeps the plays in correspondence with the traditional liturgical function of the Old Testament readings in the Middle Ages. It appears that the roots of dramatic innovations, such as Noah's wife, are to be found in the same change of emphasis.

The general theme of the Old Testament plays is closely related to the liturgical and homiletic tradition of the season of Lent and, furthermore, it is generally kept in a negative tone. For these reasons it is termed "the history of sin."
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .......................................................... 1

CHAPTER ONE: DRAMATIS PERSONAE
   I. Theology ......................................................... 4
   II. Angelology ..................................................... 9
   III. Anthropology ................................................ 20

CHAPTER TWO: THE HISTORY OF SIN
   I. Cain and Abel .................................................. 29
   II. Noah and His Wife ........................................... 35
   III. Abraham and Isaac .......................................... 39
   IV. Jacob and Moses ........................................... 45

CONCLUSION .......................................................... 50

FOOTNOTES .......................................................... 55

BIBLIOGRAPHY ....................................................... 67
INTRODUCTION

The immediate object of this investigation is that group of plays, in the cycles of medieval drama from Chester, York, Wakefield, and in the *Ludus Coventriae*, which are based on scriptural passages from the Old Testament.¹ This group is, for the most part, younger than that of the Easter and Christmas sections in the cycles. Its development from the liturgical use of the Scriptures in the canonical office points to the kind of relationship which it has with them.² The seasonal use of the Scriptural parts involved connect it with the Easter events; the traditional typological interpretation of Scripture, i.e., in the case of the Old Testament, its prefigurative significance, argues for a closer relation to the Christmas events, because it is with these that the beginning of the fulfillment is presented.³ In the cycles, however, it appears that neither of these aspects by itself can account for the structure, the meaning, and the function of the Old Testament plays.

At a very early stage of the critical concern with the Corpus Christi cycles there were already attempts to consider a cycle as a whole, a unified work.⁴ However, this approach disappeared for several decades from the foreground of investigation, until a growing interest in the so-called new criticism encouraged the search for unity, framework, and significant themes.

With medieval religious drama the first step in this direction leads to an answer quite obvious: We find here "the one great theme of the Redemption."⁵ The general character of this definition is sufficient as a basis for the definition of a significant cyclic framework: "a prologue
of pre-Christian history; the essential drama of Atonement . . . and an epilogue ending with the Judgment." Beginning, then, with this definition of theme and structure of the cycles as a working base, an attempt shall be made to analyze this group of Old Testament plays more closely with regard to their theological and religious implications.

The necessity to include the religious situation of the Middle Ages in any evaluation of their drama has led, in some cases, to an exaggeration of the importance of theology and religion, even in most recent discussions. We find attempts to unify one cycle, the *Ludus Coventriae*, thematically in one treatment and all the cycles in another. In both works a doctrine is seen as the ultimate base of the pattern of compilation. However, in the first case the doctrine appears as too specific to allow a convincing unification or, in the second, it is so general that it can hardly be considered a doctrine or distinguished from the common theme of every activity of church, priest, and preacher. It seems advisable, here, to widen the view beyond mere doctrinal aspects to the complexity of the world which produced this drama.

An investigation into medieval religion and its specific relations to the mystery plays can scarcely hope to be exhaustive within the scope of this thesis; and it is not intended here to come anywhere near it. For the present purpose it may not even be considered necessary. Yet, of the many phenomena and manifestations of religious life and thought in the Middle Ages at least some shall be mentioned here, which will serve as main areas of reference.

The first of these facets is theology. Scholasticism, mainly as it had been formulated by Thomas Aquinas, was the dominating school of
theology; we shall have to distinguish some individual representatives as well as new developments as, e.g., the great problem of the "universalia" in the controversy between nominalism and realism. We must include this aspect as an always possible intellectual background with those who worked on the creation of the plays. The influence of the Bible was, generally, modified by its traditional interpretation, mainly in the writings of the Church Fathers. And this interpretation usually reached the common Christian in sermons in the vernacular. The one major treatment of their influence on literature, although an important contribution, has been rejected in its far-reaching conclusions about a very close connection between the history of sermons and drama. From the area of religious instruction, which was greatly revived after the introduction of the regular annual confession and communion, we must include works of direct instruction (mainly for priests) in the essential points of faith, explanations of liturgical, dogmatic, and Scriptural details in vernacular poetic versions of the Bible and lyric expressions of religious character in carols, poems, prayers and the like.

In combining the findings of the different aspects of investigation of the material we shall try to use them in a more comprehensive view of the Old Testament plays as dramatic works. We cannot expect spectacular new insights, but we may gain a better starting basis for an evaluation of the plays that tries to do justice to more than one of the elements apparent in medieval drama.
CHAPTER ONE

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

I. Theology

In the plays statements about God, his essence and his qualities, are almost completely restricted to his own speeches, usually at the beginning of the cycles. Thematically, the cycle is thus put in due perspective: God stands at the top of the hierarchic order of the universe; he is the sole standard by which the action that is presented in the cycle has to be judged, and usually he pronounces this judgment himself. With respect to the action of the plays, again we find God throughout as man's counterpart: all interhuman relations, as, for instance, between Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and his wife, or Abraham and his son, have their real significance in that they present different aspects of man's attitude toward God; as purely human interactions they are, so to speak, marginal additions, theatrical illustrations.

Thus God's self-introductions begin in an appropriate way: with biblical quotations expressing his essence and qualities, taken mainly from the Book of Revelation. God is the first and last, the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega.1 Only the York cycle differs by adding a quotation from John (14,6): "via, vita, Veritas," the way, and the life, and the truth.

We find a number of points concerning God which are specifically related to medieval theology. In the first lines of the York cycle God
says about himself: "I am maker unmade" (I,2). This expression follows a formula revived by Johannes Scotus Eriugena in the ninth century, who developed an Aristotelian system of nature. This (heretical) system shows nature as a cosmological process which begins with God as "species . . . quae creat et non creatur." From Christology the same idea was familiar concerning the divine nature of Christ, and it was contained in the creed: "genitum, non factum." In the Norwich play B, the creation from nothing is pointed out in this context. God says he "made all of nothings" (I. 2). This traditional view had been amply discussed by Scholasticism with the main intention of modifying this "nothing" in relation to God who is eternal. Under the influence of Platonic thinking the divine act of creation had been modified because everything was always in God, creation therefore being rather a process of emanation. In relation to this idea we find statements in Chester, Wakefield, and the *Ludus Coventriae*, saying that everything that has being is part of God's "intellectus:" "All maner thyng is in my thoght, / Withouten me ther may be noght, / ff or all is in my sight" (Wakef. I,13-15); "The wholle foode of parente is set in my essencion" (Chester I,6); "And all pat evyr xal haue beynge / it is closyd in my mende" (*L.C.*,16,5-6).

Anselmus of Canterbury, in the eleventh century, treated these ideas in his discussions about the existence and the essence of God. He reasons that everything existed as an idea in the mind of God before it became real, and that it was thus not created from nothing with regard to the creator's mind but from nothing in the sense of factual non-existence.3

Mention of God's will appears as another element of Scholastic theology. Chester connects this with the common introductory line put
in God's mouth ("Ego sum Alpha . . "): "It is my will, yt sholde be soe, / yt is, it was, yt shall be thus" (I,3-4). Wakefield presents the relation of God's will and his creation: "hit shall be done after my will, / that I have thoghst I shall fulfill / And manteyn with my myght" (I,16-18). Especially the latter quotation reminds of the importance of the idea of God's "voluntas" in the Scholastic system.

Thomas gives the theoretical basis for this statement, for instance, in the following words: "... voluntas enim intellectum consequitur" and "... effectus determinati ab infinita ipsius [God's] perfectione procedunt, secundum determinationem voluntatis et intellectus ipsius." Intellect and will are the two basic essences in God which constitute him as creator. For the Ludus Coventriae "the use of the idea of the absolutely arbitrary power of will of God, an idea current in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries through the influence of William of Ockham (1300?-1349?), and the later Nominalists" has been claimed.

Among God's qualities, his omnipotence is expressed in rather general terms. They characterize him as a very powerful creator and sustainer of all things, but do not introduce omnipotence with any of the theological problems and subtleties that Scholasticism connected with this Absolute. We find expressions like these: "all mighte es in me" (York I,2), "most in maiestye," "most of postye" (Chester II,1 & 3), "Peareles Patron Imperial," "Prince principall" (Chester I,8 & 14), "of myght most" (Wakefield I,4), "Myyghtful god veray" (Wakef. III,1), "fadyr of myth" (Ludus Coventriae, 17,23): in the Ludus we find a more elaborate form: God says about all creation: "I may it saue, I may it shende / After my plesawns / So gret of myth is my pouste" (17,8-10). Even God's
quality as creator is expressed in such general terms: "All thyng xal be wroth be me" (L.C., 17,11), "Maker of all that is" (Wakef. III,2). Chester shows more liturgical character by using the words of the Creed: "Bothe Visible and eke Invisible, all is my Weldinge" (I,11).

The theologically systematic as well as the historical approach of the cycles manifests itself already in these opening lines in that almost all cycles include the mentioning of the Trinity. Usually the remarks are again general and simple: "Oone god in mageste," "On god in trinyte," "Oone god in persons thre," "Thre persons withouten nay / oone god in endles blis" (Wakef. I,3,6,10; III,3-4). In Chester the words on the trinity are clearly spoken by God the Father: "I am the tryall of the trynitie that neuer shall be twynninge" (I,7), "I was never but one and ever one in three, / set in substantiall sothenes within Caelestiall sapience. / These three tryalls in a Trone and true Trynitie / Be grounded in my godhead, exalted by my excellence" (I,15-18). The Ludus Coventriae elaborates circumstantially on the subject in lines 12-26 of God's opening speech. Here the three persons are distinguished as "fadyr of myth," the son who "kepyth ryth," and the spirit who "hath lyth and grace with-alle." This distinction is usually attributed to Abelard who saw, in God's perfection, the three elements of power, wisdom, and love or grace. The text is, however, well in line with later Scholasticism, according to which the son and the spirit proceed from the two elements of God's being, viz., intellect and will, the intellect finding expression in the Word and the will in the love and grace of God. 7

Before we begin to consider any action in the plays, we find thus a self-introduction of God in all cycles which consists of a number of
different elements. We do not see anything which could be compared to introductory speeches of great lords in some later plays as, for instance, Pilate, Pharaoh, and Herod. These also present and describe their power and sovereignty, but usually in ranting terms mixed with threats to the disobedient. They develop and present a "personality" in medieval terms. In God's opening words the emphasis lies on a presentation of his religious significance as the all-pervading one, the background before which all action takes place, not of his person. All the contexts out of which the statements about God are taken are religious in character. Purely Scriptural passages are limited to quotations from the Book of Revelation and John, as was mentioned above. Theological and philosophical contexts have likewise been mentioned; they are often inseparably joined with liturgical phrases or lines of devotional poetry. General attributes of God like "most of might" appear again and again in popular devotional literature, a phenomenon which had grown with the influence of the mystical lay movement in the late Middle Ages. The context of liturgical forms is touched not only in echoes of phrases from the creed; another clear example appears in the expression "Patris Sapientia" in Chester (I,8). It is found as the beginning of a Latin poem which, in the order of the church offices, presents the story of Good Friday and appears in several versions of hour services with English translations: "Patris sapiencia veritas divina, / Deus homo captus est hora matutina." As indirect influences of the creed may be counted here references to instructional, mostly sermon, literature. Thus, for instance, the non-scriptural remark that God has "no gynnyng ne non ende" (L.C., 16,4), which is also mentioned in the York (I,1) and Wakefield (I,7-8) plays,
appears in a middle English sermon. A related influence we find coming from the Lord's Prayer, when the Norwich play A begins with the lines: "Ego principium Alpha et O in altissimis habito; / In pe hevenly empery I am resydent." York has a similar remark before the beginning of play II.

The above-mentioned systematic approach at the beginning of the cycles does in no case imply that a deliberate attempt was made to give also a systematic lesson. The essential points of the first article of faith, as it was usually presented, are mingled with more sophisticated theological statements, with liturgical phrases, biblical quotations, and mere devotional formulas. The main purpose appears to be the appropriate opening of the plays, and not only of the creation, which follows imme¬diately, but of the whole cycle.

II. Angelology

In all cycles the dramatic action begins with the creation of the angels and the immediately following fall of Lucifer. This story has only indirect biblical sources; it became dogma in 1215 and was the subject of extensive speculation in Scholastic theology. The system of the angelic hierarchy which prevails in medieval religion was developed by Dionysius Areopagita. It was retained, in its basic form, by the Scholastics, especially Thomas Aquinas. From Augustine onwards the church refrained from speculation about the number and orders of angels, but such ideas continued as convenient elements of medieval science and systematization of the universe. Thus the German preacher Berthold of Regensburg, in the thirteenth century, speaks of the angelic hierarchy in his sermons. In England, we find the same tradition in
Aelfric's sermons already. Two points may be mentioned which appear in both sermons: The question whether God originally created ten or nine orders of angels was still alive, but was not answered. Both preachers speak of nine and of ten at different times. Dionysius had established three groups of angels, each consisting of three orders; the tenth order, which does not have a name attached to it, is evidently the result of the confusion about the question whether the angels falling with Lucifer constituted a complete order, to be replaced eventually by man, or just the tenth part of the total number of angels from all orders. That the church did not take an official stand in this matter is also evident in another instance: toward the end of his passage on the angels Aelfric defers the discussion of the origin of the names for the orders to "another place," which is not in that or any other sermon of his. Similarly, Berthold refrains from commenting on this question, but yet does not fail to mention it: "Unde wâ von die engel sunderlache namen hånt . . . daz gêt uns niht gar groezliche an."4

The creation of the angels is considered as a part of the creation of heaven, according to the opening words of Genesis 1: "In principio creavit Deus coelum et terram." Petrus Comestor explains: "... id est continens et contentum, id est coelum empireum et angelicam naturam."5 And the Cursor Mundi refers to Augustine for the statement that "Furste he wrouȝte aungel kynde / þe world & tyme þese þingis þre / Bifore al opere þing made he."6 And in spite of Berthold's opinion, that the details about these things were none of their business, there were enough reasons for including such details in the plays. To the common medieval mind, legend and superstition were practically as important
and legitimate as the true teaching of the church; and especially the stage, of course, profited from such personifications, distinctions, and names very much.

Thus the nine orders of angels are enumerated in the Chester play of Lucifer's fall, and it is Lucifer who gives that account first:

"Cherubyn and Seraphyn through your thoughte, / Trones and Domynacions in blisse to be, / With principatus, that order brighte, / and potestates in blisseful heighte; / also virtutes through thy great mighte, / Angeli, also Archangeli" (I,31-36). It appears that the interest in this play does not go beyond the presentation of nine orders and their names. Whereas, for instance, Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century had still applied a practical point of view by distinguishing these orders according to their functions, Scholastic theology had concentrated on highly philosophical aspects, assuming differences, but never specifying them, organizing, apparently, for systematization's sake. The presentation of the angelic hierarchy in the Chester cycle retains a popular scope, exploiting the pictorial, spectacular aspects, but not more. All the orders have a speaking part: angels and archangels in praising God for their creation, the others in repeated warnings to Lucifer before his act of disobedience. But there is no evident reason for the order in which they are enumerated (which differs from that of Dionysius), or in which they speak (which, again, is different), or, finally, for the fact that only the "Dominations" were assigned a second, the ultimate, warning speech.

None of the other cyclical plays of the creation and of Lucifer's fall is as detailed and exacting as the Chester play. The York "Creation"
is the only other play which mentions the nine orders at this point; but only seraphim and cherubim are mentioned by name and appear as speakers, whereas a chorus of "angeli" is mentioned in the stage directions as chanting liturgical parts of the mass (the "Te Deum" and the "Sanctus").

Wakefield has a short reference to the orders in the second scene, the lament in hell, that Lucifer reduced the number of orders from ten to nine. Lucifer explains this theory more elaborately when he prepares to tempt Eve. Again the question of nine or ten orders is left unsolved, both opinions are mentioned side by side: a tenth from each of the ten orders of angels fell with Lucifer, but then man is made to fill its place in order to restore nine full orders: "Ten orders in heuen were / of angels, that had offyce sere; / Of ich order, in thare degre, / the teynd parte fell downe with me; . . . God has maide man with his hend, / to haue that blis withouten end, / The neyn ordre to fulfill, / that after vs left, sich is his will" (I, 254 ff.).

As in Chester and York, the creation of the angels is explicitly mentioned in the first play of the *Ludus Coventriae*, immediately following the announcement of the creation of heaven (17,32). In the Wakefield text, angels do not appear until after the conclusion of the first five days of creation, when the Cherubim praise God's work.

In some way or other, all plays include remarks about the purpose of the creation of the angels. This is, generally, a change of aspect with regard to the theological tradition. Scholasticism had abandoned, to a great extent, the more or less legendary speculations about the functions and activities of the angels. Their existence was treated analytically only. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, goes only so far as
to explain that they, as messengers, are manifestations of God's divinity. In the plays, however, the first point of interest appears to be that God created them for some purpose, generally as a sort of retinue. Chester has God express this in the phrases: "be ever to one Attending" (I,24), "lookes lowley you be attendinge!" (I,45), and "to walk about the Trynitie" (I,44). The *Ludus Coventriae* makes this quite clear in God's words: "my servauntys to be and for my sake / with merth and melody worchepe my myth" (17,33-34 and again 17,38). Here also, we see the fusion of different aspects: the popular explanations, based of course on Scriptural authority, of what the angels "do" in heaven: they worship with praise and singing; and the anticipation of Lucifer's disobedience, where worshipping means acceptance of the position as God's obedient servant. York expresses this idea in one line: "In louing ay lastande at lowte me" (I,24), but the angels themselves later speak in such a way as if the loving praise were the result of their voluntary decision and expression of gratefulness, while the actual praise is mainly expressed in liturgical chants, interrupting the progress of the dramatic action. The shortness of the Wakefield scene may account for the fact that in it there is no allusion to the purpose of the angels; since the creation of angels is not presented at all, we find only passing remarks expressing love and praise in the Cherubim's introduction of Lucifer, and, as in York, this indicates a voluntary praise rather than the fulfilling of a duty.

As a further point of knowledge about the angels we find the belief that they live by the sight of God. In the Chester play God says: "This is your health in every case / for to behold your Creator"
in the York play the Seraphim say: "to be fede with þe fode of thi fayre face . . . To se thi fayre face es noght fastande" (I,76,30). The Scriptural basis seems to be the idea that the saints and the angels in heaven always behold the face of God, as is expressed in Matthew (18,10) and Revelation (22,4). The effect of the phrases is, of course, the pointing out of the incorporeity of the angels, which, in its traditional theological phraseology, would not be understood by the audience of the plays.

If we turn now to the bad angels, we enter the dramatic phase of the plays; and the devil appears less as an object of teaching than as an antagonist. Yet the play of Lucifer's fall is, by itself, instructive in its basic scope. Since the Gnostic tradition of the dualism of good and evil had been preserved in Manichean thinking, which was branded as heresy, the medieval doctrinal system places emphasis on the teaching that, on the one hand, everything was created by God and, on the other hand, God's perfection did not allow the creation of something evil. Therefore the existence of evil spirits had to be explained on the basis of the free will of intellectual creatures. The devil was a good angel originally, until he became disobedient and was ejected from heaven. By the time of the Scholastics an intricate theory about the fall of the bad angels had been developed. We find the main points of this doctrine in Aelfric's sermon on the beginning of creation, put in the form of a narrative: "God gesceop alle ængels gode. and lét hi hi habben ásen chire. to chlesen ȝef by bolden hare sceappinde lufie. oter hine ferleten. þa wes þes tyndes hapes alder swipe feir isceapen. swa þat heo was gehoten leocht berinde. þa be-gan hé to modienne fer
The action of the plays moves generally along these lines. God's creation of the angels as perfect beings is usually the starting point. They are presented in simple homiletic rather than theological terms. Their perfection is described as "greate bewtye" (Chester I,42), they are "formed so cleane and cleare" (Chester I,58), "mighty" (York I,44). Shining brightness seems to be the quality most effectively used on the stage. It is connected most frequently with Lucifer's pride in his special position—-and perhaps also with the bright appearance of God. In Chester, God says: "behold the beames of my bright face" (I,95); Lucifer then emphasizes: "god him selfe shynes not so cleare" (I,124). Similarly, in York, Lucifer says: "pe bemes of my brighthode ar byrnande so bryghte" (I,50), in Wakefield: "I am so fare and bright, / of me commys all this light" (I,82-83). In York the main quality which Lucifer possesses and then loses is his great might; the Ludus Coventriae stresses mirth and joy in this context.

In every case, however, it is made evident that pride is the sin of the fallen angels. This principle had become the established teaching of the church; it was proved, so to speak, by Thomas Aquinas who stated: "peccatum primum angeli non potest esse aliud quam superbia" (I,63,2-381 b); and pride is mentioned directly in all plays except York.

Lucifer's punishment is presented according to the doctrinal treatment of the subject, the main points being the loss of grace and the banishment from heaven's joy to suffering and pain. However, the
interpretation of the plays is homiletic and popular again rather than theological. Its basis is the conception of a place of pain for the devils. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, describes two locations for the devils: hell for their punishment, and the nebulous air so that they might not become completely useless in the order of nature, but help inducing men to the good by tempting them. In the plays, the place to which the devils are banished is hell only, conceived as a dungeon. This point was most important for homiletic purposes. It was in sermons particularly that the traditional ideas of hell as the place of torment for the lost souls was preserved and applied. And hell was a strong, though negative, argument for the preacher's cause. The devils in hell, by their complaints, demonstrate vividly what the medieval Christian visualized as, possibly, his own fate: torment and pain. Less prominent, but not neglected is the theological aspect: the loss of God's grace finds expression in Chester (I,212) and York (I,133), although in simplified terms as privation of joy, might, and beauty.

In accordance with theology, the plays connect Lucifer's fall with his motive for tempting Eve: envy, which is closely related to pride. Especially with regard to Lucifer, Thomas Aquinas says: "post peccatum superbiae consecutum est in angelo peccante malum invidiae, secundum quod de bono hominis doluit." The good about which the devil envies mankind is, theologically speaking, man's ultimate destination of eternal beatitude and becoming like the angels. This latter aspect was connected with the idea of man's being destined to fill the ranks of the angels after the fall of Lucifer and his followers. Thomas found it necessary to emphasize that this was not the main purpose of man's creation:
"homo non est simpliciter factus propter reparationem ruinae angelicae; sed propter fruitionem Dei et perfectionem universi, etiam si nunquam fuisset ruina angelica." Nevertheless, the plays present the simpler system which appeared as better fitted for homiletic purposes.

Thus, in the Chester scene of the demons lamenting in hell, Lucifer as "Primus Demon" adds to his lamentations: "And therefore I shall for his sake / shewe mankind great Envie" (I,233-234); he gives the reason for his envy a few lines later: "That I and my fellowes fell downe for aye, / he will ordayne mankind againe / in bliss to be with great Aray, / and we evermore in hell payne" (I,241-244).

The other plays do not mention this motivation until, after the creation of man, the story of the temptation of Eve is introduced. It seems certain that the words of Satanas at the beginning of the fifth York pageant refer to his envy of man's being chosen to replace him: "The kynde of man he thoght to take, / And theratt hadde I grete envye" (V,12-13), with the ensuing plan "to pike fro hym pat pray" (V,18). In the second play of the Ludus Coventriae, Diabolus explains his motive after Adam and Eve have eaten of the forbidden fruit: "I dede hem all his velony / ffor I am ful of gret envy / Of wreth and wyckyd hate / That man xulde leve above Jse sky / where as sum tyme dwellyd I . . ." (26,318-322). The first Wakefield play shows similar words just before it breaks off: "Bot herkyns, felows, what I say-- / the Ioy that we haue lost for ay, / God has maide man with his hend, / to haue that blis withouten end, / The neyn ordre to fulfill, / that after vs left, sich is his will. / And now ar thay in paradise; / bot thens thay shall, if we be wise" (I,260-267). The last two lines introduce a more direct motive, which forecasts what will actually be presented on the stage.
And connected with the idea of robbing man of his bliss in paradise we find an even more anthropomorphic motive of Lucifer's envy: he is envious not only because man enjoys a happy life in the Garden of Eden, but also because he was appointed master and keeper of all other creatures. This latter point is mentioned in all the cycles.23

Besides Wakefield both arguments are combined also in Chester. Their dramatical value is unquestionable: man's mastery of creation as a convincing cause of Lucifer's envy, man's life in paradise as a starting-point for counteraction. But while the use of these arguments may appear primarily as the choice of a good dramatist, yet its background is theological. The bliss of man's living in paradise is not much different from and, it appears, easily confused with the bliss of eternal life. Similarity with the angels did exist in both cases; in paradise it was restricted only to man's spiritual existence. We find this distinction expressed by Thomas Aquinas: "Dicendum quod homo in Paradiso fuisset sicut angelus per spiritualem mentem, cum tamen haberet vitam animalem quantum ad corpus. Sed post resurrectionem erit homo similis angelo, spiritualis effectus et secundum animam et secundum corpus."25

This circumstance makes it easier to understand that Lucifer, in the second Chester pageant, does not give an irrational explanation of his envy, or that he stresses the wrong thing, making it appear as if he wanted to take man's place as master of the creation, when he says:

"Ghostelie paradice I was In,

but thence I fell through my sinne;

of eartheleie paradice now, as I myn,"
a man is given mastery.
'By Belzabub! shall I never blyn
tyll I may make him by some synne
from that place for to twyn,
and trespace as did I' (II, 169-176).

From a mere human point of view this would certainly appear as a rather
vague argument, but it is quite consistent in theological terms: the
fact that man is superior to the other creatures of the earth, already
makes him half-way eligible for heaven.

We find the good and bad angels thus placed in their proper position
in the medieval system of the universe as well as in the arrangement of
the play cycle. They provide the link between God and man; the good
angels show what the Christian was to expect in eternal life and strive
for on earth, the bad angels not only demonstrate sacred myth and the
original separation of good and evil, but also function and act as bad
examples of human conduct and warning examples of the lost soul in hell.

Without any conflicting interpretations of the basic story the
dramatization remains based on the theological motive of pride, but is
presented by means of the legendary details that had been developed
mainly from Isaiah. Lucifer's pride is dramatized in his boastful
self-exaltation because of his superior fairness or brightness (Lucifer =
Greek '\( \gamma\omega\rho\gamma\delta\gamma\) -- "morning star"), and he wishes to, and eventually
does, sit in God's throne. He is supported by some and warned and
opposed by other angels. The dramatic conflict is thus shifted from the
basic opposition of good and evil, Lucifer's resistance against God, to
an "interangelic" level. This means that the theoretical basis, the presentation of the origin of evil and the basic cause of sin, is only indirectly also the basis of the dramatic scene. Here, the tropological aspects are much more significant: the characters become models of behavior for the human audience.

III. Anthropology

The creation and first sin of Adam and Eve conclude the presentation of basic material, in theological terms. With the creation man's blissful state of innocence and his potentialities appear; in the story of the original sin these are contrasted with what really happened and has been determining human life ever since. Three points were distinguished by the medieval theologian with regard to anthropology: man's nature at the time of creation, before the fall--his first sin with its constituent details, and the consequences of this sin. In purely didactic writing the discussion of man concentrates on an analysis of the relation of body and soul; the plays show a greater emphasis of the relation of practical elements in a more strictly defined frame of reference: the demonstration of the human predicament and its challenge to the Christian life. Thus, generally, the condition of man before the fall appears to be of minor importance in the plays. In the story of Lucifer this aspect was more relevant and treated more extensively, for dramatic as well as for theological purposes. Lucifer's rebellion developed from his peculiar position, so that there was convincing unity for the dramatist and logical coherence for the explanatory intentions of the theologian. With Adam and Eve the dramatic development and the theological scope are different.
One aspect of the purpose of man's creation had been mentioned above: the reparation of the angelic orders after the fall of Lucifer and his host. Another point is mentioned in the York cycle: God created man that he may worship his creator; he made him "a skylfull beeste ... the whilke shalle wirshippe to me take."\(^2\) With regard to the medieval audience this statement has of course at least two meanings: mainly the expectation of eternal life in actual likeness with the angels, but also the admonition to worship God in this life. In terms of Scholastic theology the basic idea is that men and angels only, as different from all other creatures, are intellectual creatures. Thomas Aquinas says of these: "sola creatura intellectualis ad ipsum ultimum finem universi sua operatione pertingit, scilicet cognoscendo et amando Deum."\(^3\) With a slight change of aspect Berthold of Regensburg uses the idea of the two creatures that are made to participate in heavenly bliss: "Do gedâhte er ze machen, er wolte zwo krâtûre machen, zweier hande krâtûre, daz die siner freude teilheftige wurden ... Und alß machete got zwo krâtûre. Das was der mensche und der engel."\(^4\) The purpose of worshipping as God's motive for the creation of intellectual beings is pointed out in the Cursor Mundi, where the difference between men and angels is used to explain the twofold worship: "For he wolde be ðat kyng of craft / Worshепed wiþ two maner shaft / The ton wiþ aungel ðat is goostly / And als wiþ mannès body."\(^5\)

The significance of this point about man's creation lies in its close relation to practical, and practicable, directions for the Christian life. Worship, now with the understanding of church-attendance and obedience to the commandments of God, has a cosmological dimension.
The worshipper takes his assigned place in the natural order of the universe—a conception which certainly had convincing effect upon the medieval mind.

The actual story of Adam's and Eve's creation and fall is presented by the Chester cycle in an almost literal translation of the first three chapters of Genesis, with very few non-scriptural additions, which do not introduce theological material. The other plays usually elaborate on the description of the beauty and abundance in paradise and of Adam's and Eve's happiness about their state as masters of all creation. The point of original justice and bliss is not touched. Only the York plays and, modeled after them, the Wakefield plays present an exception here: In them, at the time of their creation, God promises Adam and Eve knowledge of good and evil. In general, the mention of intellectual gifts at the time of creation is limited to these two cycles. In the Bible, the phrase "knowledge of good and evil" does not appear until the scene of Adam's and Eve's disobedience in the garden of Eden, where it is the attribute of the forbidden tree (Gen. 2,17). Otherwise only Chester uses the phrase at all, adhering closely to the biblical text. But its appearance in York and Wakefield is surprising. The most probable explanation seems to be that this is another instance of theological influence, formally based on a different element of the biblical text: Genesis 2, telling how among all the animals there was no help fit for Adam, presents this fact as the immediate reason for the creation of Eve (Gen. 2,20); the plays use this element for the relation between God and man and the idea of the intellectual character of man's being. Especially the York play makes much of this circumstance
in God's speech introducing his act of the creation of man. Of 22 lines
twelve are devoted to a discussion of his desire for a creature that will,
"by kyndly skylle" (III,15), worship him and govern the earth, and this
will be man, the "skylfull beeste" (III,22), that is, the creature
that is gifted with intellect ("skill") as part of his natural constitution
("kind"). This popular-theological tradition can be seen in an example
in the Cursor Mundi in a more elaborate discussion of man's creation.
There, man's soul is explained on this occasion, and it is said to have
three faculties, the third of which is "Wisdome ... in wille / be good
to do & leue pe ille" (Trinity MS., 11. 567-568). From the extensive
speculation about man's nature in the early Christian church two major
points have remained which become significant here: the division into
body and soul (dichotomy, as different from the original Greek distinction
of body, soul, and intellect); and the theory of creatianism, which held
that God created the soul in each individual (as different from the claims
of traducianism, that from Adam on the soul was transferred with the
semen of the man). 8 In both the York and Wakefield plays it is made
clear that the soul is implanted with the breath of life. 9 The breath
of life, in turn, is seen as "A liknesse of his [God's] hali gast, / A
spirit ful of wit and skil," in Genesis and Exodus (11. 202-203). In
simple terms we find here the idea of the immortal soul, which was
dogmatized in 1512. 10 And obviously it is used for homiletic purposes,
since not its nature but its moral faculties are mentioned.

Apparently the dramatist could not escape theology here. Yet,
the drama also profits from this non-biblical element. The idea of
the knowledge of good and evil as a motive is dramatically inferior to
the idea of being like God; therefore it plays a secondary part in the temptation, and it is not missed there if the dramatist omits it. But when it is mentioned at the creation of man, Adam's and Eve's disobedience gains in vividness as a fully intentional act of sin, and the responsibility for the first sin is placed much more heavily on man's shoulders. Dramatically the story thus obtains greater coherence: in the beginning already the author points to the central part of the scene, the act of disobedience against God and the ensuing curse on man and woman by him.11 It does not seem probable that, in this remark, God is to manifest his omniscience with regard to the later fall of man, although that would not be impossible, especially because in both plays the remark is made in the future tense.12 The line that follows in York would contradict this interpretation: "I shalle you lerne youre lyffe to leede" (III,76).

In the Chester play Lucifer gives explanations before he begins to tempt Eve: "That woman is forbyd to doe, / for any thinge therta will shooe" (II,185-186), and "women are full liccoris" (II,199). These expressions show an attitude and phraseology that remind of homiletic or even secular satire of women.13 In the cycles, Noah's wife can be recognized usually as a product of this tradition. Here, however, Lucifer's explanations also have a theological background, namely the doctrine of the inferiority of woman, derived from Aristotelian "biology" and Scholastic reasoning. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, proves with Aristotle that woman is "aliquid deficiens et occasionatum" (Summa, I, Q, XCII, Art. I), and states in another place that she is less perfect than man: "animal imperfectum" (Summa, II, pt. I, Q. CII, Art. III). Therefore she was by nature the more promising tool for Satan.
Instead of this anthropological aspect, the plays usually show the reasoning in the opposite direction: after Eve's misdeed it is clear that nobody should believe her any more, that she is rightly called "man's woe" (a pun in Chester, II,271), and that she is the mother of all traditional female defaults and vices. Moreover, in the Christian context this is often the most immediate demonstration of sin in general: Neglecting the question about the psychological basis, one emphasized here the causal relationship between Eve's first deed and the state of sin in which men have found themselves ever since.

With Adam's and Eve's act of disobedience itself the interest of the authors begins to center on the dramatic action of the play. The story of the fall was, after all, not only past history but allegorical presentation of sin itself, and that in the first place. Again, if we compare with Lucifer's fall, we see the difference in spite of all the similarities between the two cases. The story of Lucifer is more abstract, and although the dramatization necessitates an act of disobedience, Lucifer's sitting on God's throne is much less effective as a bad example than Adam's and Eve's disobeying a specifically expressed command. Furthermore, Lucifer could not, as Adam and Eve did, evoke as direct an identification of the audience with the characters of the drama. Above all, however, this was the basis of Christian teaching, the basis of man's state of damnation under the law, which constituted the need for salvation.

With this in mind, John Wycliff's version of the Lay Folks Catechism, in the discussion of the "Ave," contrasts Eve and Mary: "The furste word. bat is aue. reuersys þe name of Eua to teche vs þat oure lady contraryd Eue in leynyng. For ryght as Adam and Eue were cause of dampanyng of
man-kynde: So iesus and Marie ben cause of mannys saluacion."15 And Adam and Eve are thus the prototypes of sinful man and woman of all times, which causes Adam to state, in one place: "Alle pis worlde is wroth with mee" (York, VI, 115). Thus the dramatic emphasis is placed on theological additions that develop not so much the speculative aspects of this first sin and its anthropological implications, as the practical aspects of sin in general, the sin of everyday contemporary life.

A possible speculative detail is the addition that, after eating of the forbidden fruit Adam and Eve could hear God, but not see him (York, V, 139; Lud. Cov., 24, 276). The Bible mentions their hearing God, but does not go any further, and the inability to see him could be one of the first results of sin.16 Other examples show the general tendency mentioned above: In York, the first argument between Adam and Eve arises out of their first sin (VI, 133-144); they defend their action by accusing each other. Eve claims that man with his superior mind could have been more opposed to the temptation, and Adam scolds back. In the Lud. Cov. Eve suggests to her husband that he should kill her for her deed, but Adam desists because that would be his own undoing (Lud. Cov., 28, 389-403). In the Chester play, as was mentioned before, Adam accuses Eve of untrustworthiness (II, 351-352), lechery (II, 353), being sister to the devil (II, 354-356), and gluttony (II, 358).17

Finally the new state of fallen man is presented in practical terms. In addition to the words of punishment spoken by God (in Gen. 3, 10-19), we find not much more than laments about having lost the blissful, carefree, happy life of paradise. The main impact of these laments is that sin causes woe and misery. Chester also shows the practical
consequences: Adam and Eve demonstrate to their children how they must work now for a living (Chester, II,489-504), Adam by digging in the field, Eve by spinning to provide clothes. The *Lud. Cov.* mentions the same points in Adam's and Eve's speeches as they finish this scene (28,404-429). The character of these lines is homiletic: By presenting the beginning of man's earthly life in contemporary terms, Adam's and Eve's condition is actualized for, and applied to, the medieval audience. And the whole life of those contemporary spectators is thus placed under the bondage of original sin. John Mirk expresses this in his sermon for Septuagesima Sunday: "For that ys ye testament that Adam laft to all his ospryng: labour and sorow." 18

Only in the *Lud. Cov.* there is an attempt to alleviate this negative perspective by allusion to the prefigurative meaning of God's words about the enmity between the serpent and the woman and her offspring (Gen. 3,15). The author of the *Ludus* inserts two instances, carefully balanced, in which the allegorical interpretation is developed: God closes his judgment upon Diabolus with the announcement of the birth of a maiden, the Virgin, through whom the serpent shall be vanquished (26,345-27,347); and the Seraph states that paradise will remain closed "Tyl a chylyde of a mayd be born / and upon ye rode rent and torn" (27,374-375). This element is treated more extensively only in the Norwich play B, where dolor and misery appear as allegories and state that they will constantly remain with man now, and the Holy Ghost, appearing as the third allegory, prophesies the salvation of the world through Jesus. 19

In the creation of the world the medieval playwright had, in correspondence with the scriptural source, reversed the systematic
approach of his presentation of the universal hierarchy. The circumstance
of Adam's and Eve's being put into the garden of Eden provided the means
to connect man again with the divine part of creation. And stronger than
in the Bible, Adam's and Eve's delight about living in paradise is
pointed out in the plays. By this means the contrast between what Adam
and Eve did have and could have kept and the living conditions that they
chose themselves is pointed out very clearly. And the quantitatively
greater weight of the scene after the fall indicates a qualitative
condition. Sinful man is the first object of the presentation, the human
situation is that of Adam and Eve after God expelled them from the garden
of Eden. For this is the important aspect of the scene with regard to
the central theme, the beginning antagonism between God and man. The
Hebrew element of the Old Testament story, the personal character of this
antagonism, was very much to the point for the homiletic function these
scenes had to fulfill in the Middle Ages. The dramatic emphasis corresponds
to this purpose by actualizing the deed of the first human beings; their
sin appears very much as a "normal" sin, which could have been avoided,
because only under this aspect it was of more than historical significance.20
It is probably the popular mystical influence that brings this personal
character of the religious experience into the picture, and that to a
greater extent than systematic theological and speculative didacticism.
Nevertheless, they cannot be clearly separated.
CHAPTER TWO

THE HISTORY OF SIN

I. Cain and Abel

The group of Old Testament plays that follows now in the cycles appears in the light of the conditions for the relationship between God and man which were established in the preceding scenes. God's person and the "heavenly empery" are always the background before which everything happens, the means of putting man's actions in the proper perspective. From here it is clear what ultimate destination man was made for and should live for, and also how pitifully he fell—and falls—short of this destination, beginning with the first sin in the garden of Eden.

The account of the first murder in the Bible, which has the question of "Adam, where are you?" followed by the question "Cain, where is your brother?," shows a systematic intention quite different from that of the medieval interpretation of the story. The author of the Old Testament text is still establishing the basis of his own society and presenting its concerns in the light of the relationship of his people with God. He has just begun to present his people as God's people. This concern does not exist, in the same way, for the medieval Christian.

The central theme of the scriptural account was the murder and its consequences. However, the motivation necessary for the development of dramatic action could not well be built from the momentary motive of
envy about the different success of the offerings. It had to begin earlier, so that naturally the introductory elements of the story were emphasized more and more, and that consequently the thematic center changed. More essentially, however, than dramatic considerations, the theological aspects caused the thematic change. In the interpretation of the story the murder was a central element only for the allegorical type. Cain murdering his brother signified the Jewish people who, in Jesus, killed their own blood. The tropological view, which is usually more essential for the dramatic version, had to concentrate on the characters of the persons involved. The killing was not of major importance here, but the attitude that led a person to that extreme. Because of the typological identification of Abel with Christ, the younger brother does not receive nearly as much attention in characterization as the older, bad brother Cain. It is only in Cain that fallen man could see his image.

And the main homiletic point of interest concerned Cain's motivation. The traditional explanation of the biblical story attempted to explain God's first disapproval of Cain, comparing literally what was said about his and Abel's sacrifice. On that basis, Cain was sinful from the beginning, especially because he did not offer the first and best fruit of his fields. This interpretation is found already in St. Ambrose's explanations. What seems more remarkable is that it appears in Thomas Aquinas' work with details that are usually attributed to the vernacular homiletic tradition. Thomas points to the scriptural letter, where Cain is said to offer fruit, but Abel one of his first-born sheep, arguing that the Scriptures would not have been silent if Cain had done the same as Abel did. Then he concludes that therefore Cain evidently retained
the best and offered inferior fruit, "as many do who never offer to God anything but inferior, corrupt, or worn-out things, or things they cannot use." The main elements of this interpretation appear most clearly in the Chester play, where Cain says:

such as the fruite is fallen froe,

is good enough for him.

This corne standing, as mot I thee!

was eaten with beastes, as men may se:

God, thou gets non better of me,

......

This earles corne grew nye the waye,

of this offer I will to daye. . . . (II,531-542)

In other cycles the basic conception is the same. The *Ludus Coventriae* is most similar to Chester, although it restricts the discussion to the abstract distinction of the best and the worst fruit. In the fragmentary York play the older part shows the beginning of this argument, although limited to the question of tithing in general; but in the later farcical insert Brewbarret touches this point:

Lo! Mr. Cayne, what shares bryng I,

Evyn of the best for to bere seyd (VII,73-74)

The elaboration of this scene in the Wakefield cycle has almost buried the problem of how to offer under the counting game that Cain develops. Yet, indirectly the point of Thomas's criticism is included: in the demonstrative retention of corn to be offered, and in the one remark by
Abel: "Cayne, thou tendis wrang, and of the warst" (II,224). Tithing was a common sermon theme. And in Lent it became part of the call for giving alms, which was the last step of an inner housecleaning in preparation for the Easter communion service. It appears, then, that the basis of what is so often seen as original realism of the play is theological in character. In fact, as has been mentioned above, the theological interference preserves the dramatic significance of the theme.

This circumstance means also that the story does not develop into a sermon about tithing but presents a sinful man who, from a primitive tropological point of view, demonstrates the relation of small familiar sins with greater and more outrageous ones and the proper reward in God's swift punishment. With this in mind, probably, even the farcical Garcio of the Wakefield play is homiletic when he says to the audience: "But I trow ... Some of you are his [Cain's] men" (II,19-20). The most plausible explanation seems to be that they are Cain's men in the sense of sinners. And the sinfulness of Cain is more fully developed, then, in the three cycles that have a full play. Chester attributes selfish motives to him, when he agrees to the suggested sacrifice; he expects a reward (Chester II,513-20). In the Ludus Coventriae he presents himself as a disobedient child who resents even asking the Father about how to live. And the Wakefield play introduces him in a non-religious context first--the famous farcical scene at the beginning of the second play.

Within the scope of the cycle Cain is the son of fallen Adam and carries on the tradition of sin. Chester in particular presents the continuity of this condition. It is significant already that in this cycle the events from the creation of the world to the cursing of Cain
are presented as one play. Moreover, the dramatic structure of the Cain scene points to this theme in that its opening is merged with the common ending of the preceding scene of Adam's fall: The condition of fallen man is presented as a demonstration for Adam's sons Cain and Abel. It does so again in that, at the end, Cain returns to his parents in inform them of what happened and that they accept it expressly as a consequence of their sin.10

The Chester play is unique also in that it includes the non-scriptural element that Adam had visions while he slept and God took the rib out of his body. Scholastic theology had developed explanations of the word "sleep" in this context, and the authority of Thomas Aquinas apparently established the definition of it as a sleep in which one has divine visions.11 The popularized version of this piece of Scholastic subtlety appears in Genesis and Exodus: "God dede dat he [Adam] on sweuene cam, / And in dat sweuene he let him sen / Mikel dat after sulde ben" (11. 224-226). The Chester Adam reveals his visions as he begins to teach his sons: "Therefore now I will them leare" (1,437). He accepts the tradition of sin when he tells his sons the reason: "To make yow ware of comberous case, / and let yow for to doe trespas" (II,445-446); and his prophecies about God's incarnation, the deluge and the Day of Judgment are not aimed at comforting but at stirring the listeners by demonstrating the fact that, for the time being their lives are under the "old law" of sin. From here he continues by telling his sons what they have to do to support themselves and to please God, in other words how to live under the eyes of God in a world that is tainted by sin and all its consequences.
None of the other plays shows so much thematic unity, but the central theme is always Cain's attitude that manifests itself most extensively in his tithing. And God's curse on him appears as the punishment more for this attitude than for the murderous deed. Only thus is it understandable that the final part of the scene, where God pronounces the curse on Cain, could be reduced so much in length and weight, except in Chester where the most important aspect of the theological interpretation is Cain's damnation "without grace" (II,666). On the whole, the impact of Cain's fate is limited to a general homiletic warning against God's wrath. It is for the same reason also that the York and especially the Wakefield plays have developed Cain as the ranting, swearing, blasphemous peasant to such an extreme. Once the theological stress had been shifted according to the requirements of the circumstances, the germ of such unholiness could be taken from the biblical Cain's grudging, unrepentant answer to God's "Where is your brother?" Thus when Cain's character had central importance and he was understood, from the outset, as rebellious against God and condemned to hell anyway, the theological aim of the play was fully achieved by the presentation of a "horribly entertaining" example. Consequently it does not seem justified to deplore that here "God is the butt of monumental irreverence" or to be "sure that the laughter was not at Cain but at God."12 In fact, in a final twist one might say that particularly the seductive character of Cain's and Garcio's irreverence could lead the audience to a deeper identification with these sinners--and a more effective shock at the time of the "awakening"--than the most reverent presentation could ever achieve.
II. Noah and His Wife

More strongly than the events in paradise and between Cain and Abel does the account of the deluge demonstrate the judgment and mercy of God. Again God intervenes in the course of the world, but his motive is not one of the dramatic elements of the story; he is not the one, here, who reacts immediately to an act that affects the relationship between God and man. The reason why this event is so remarkable is the extent of the punishment, the extreme of the complete annihilation of the ordered universe and its return to chaos. The text in Genesis (chapters 6-9) thus concentrates on a statement about God's wrath and power to punish, in the account of the deluge, and his free grace, in the story of Noah's preservation. This biblical basis presents difficulties to the dramatist similar to those of the story of Cain, namely of dramatizing those traits that carried religious significance for the contemporary audience.

The religious conflict between God and man does not appear in the plot itself, though it is the basis of the events in it. It cannot be the point to present on the stage the increasing sinfulness of mankind as generally as it is stated in God's words. Nor does the Bible provide a source for any other dramatic conflict. Therefore the Ludus Coventriae play, whose author followed the biblical text closely, has no drama: it leaves out the common element of the obstinate wife who refuses to go into the ark; and, except for the Lamech-scene, there is practically no dialogue and no action in the play. Thus, as in the preceding play, the antagonism and its representatives are inserted, and the theme is
reduced from a universal to a personal scope: "Noah and his wife," as the title of the Wakefield play begins. Noah's wife is thus put in the center of the dramatic interest.

The undramatic character of the *Ludus Coventriae* scene offers a clear view of the homiletic themes involved: The members of Noah's family are used twice in a fixed order to pronounce their obedience and piety and the world's sinfulness. The only difference between this play and the text in Genesis is the particular emphasis on the attempt of the medieval author to explain God's act of grace, to show that Noah's family deserved being saved. In monotonous repetition each son and his wife state their determination to live virtuously and, in some cases, pray to God for spiritual help in this effort. The language is generally that of popular prayer. The only point in which the play goes beyond general statements is the twofold mention of the sin of "lechory" (42, 218 and 235) as cause of God's wrath. This may be an influence of the preceding verses in Genesis 6, 1-4, about the marriages between angels and men.

For the significance of the central part in the other three cycles, the conflict between Noah and his wife, typology gives a decisive clue. The ark represented, to medieval theology, an allegorical figure of the church, which for the Christian was the only way to salvation.

When one includes this aspect in the consideration of the Noah story, it is hard to see Noah's troubles with his wife any longer as mere lively comedy; the wife who is urged to enter the ark and the contrast of the gossips, who are left behind, point to the first element beneath the surface of the story: it is not so much the saving grace.
of God that is presented here as the danger of refusing or neglecting the principal means of salvation, the church, and of being annihilated along with the world. It is also indicated that the ties which hold man to the world are the main causes of such a fatal attitude. Thus, Noah's wife not only refuses to follow Noah's call to the ark because she is generally quarrelsome—"Crabbed ay" (Ch. III,105)—but also because of her friends, the gossips, whom she does not want to leave. The structure of the Chester play shows very clearly how everything is centered around Noah's final call and the entering into the ark. Immediately before this event, God advises Noah about the animals, and immediately afterwards the family introduces all the animals as they go into the ark. This core is preceded by the first expression of disobedience by Noah's wife and followed by the last argument between her and Noah; the final two "shells" are first the description of the building of the ark with the corresponding presentation of the floating and landing, and, second, God's intervention at the beginning and the end of the play.

Noah's wife as the example of a sinner who turns away from the church has another parallel in the story: the raven that is sent out and does not return to the ark. One might assume that this allegorical aspect is responsible for an otherwise unimportant detail in the Wakefield play: Noah asks his wife which bird he should send out for information, and she suggests the raven.

Theologically important is, finally, the blessing and the promise which God gives to Noah after the deluge. In the Bible this is the first time that an act of punishment by God ends with a promise of grace: the renewal of man's dominion over the creation and the promise not to
destroy the world again in this way.

The significance did not appear exactly in these terms to the medieval Christian. When the ark was understood as the church, Noah represented Christ who built the church; and salvation from the flood signified salvation through Christ, not from a temporary catastrophe but from eternal damnation. Thus the concluding promise was applicable only on the historical level of interpretation, which was not much in favor. The *Ludus Coventriae* gives the best example of the consequent disregard of this promise. In this cycle the story ends with the indication that the ark will land soon: i.e., Noah receives the olive branch from the returning dove, and the family does not even leave the ark. Evidently the author was interested only in the teaching which he included in the sermon-sections. The share which God's saving grace had in the presentation is preserved only in so far as it could not be separated from the basic events. The fact that the Wakefield play leaves this element out completely and ends with a short, commonplace prayer, is of course mainly an indication of the decreasing attachment of the author to the biblical source; but it also indicates the above-mentioned aspect. In the York play this positive *finale* was bypassed or at least diminished in its impact. York has Noah speak most of these lines (IX, 273-322). The only idea that is still in its biblical context is that of the rainbow in heaven. Another, and as it seems even more important theological point is not biblical: the admonition to live henceforth in perfect obedience to God. In this connection, and at the very end of the play, parts of God's blessing bestowed on the earth are included in the advice how to live a life that pleases God. And although the first promise
speaks out basically against further destruction, Noah emphasizes the need for a good life by reminding his family and the audience of the end of the world which still is to come, if not by water, then by fire (IX,3-1-302). Only the Chester cycle continues the story to its end (Genesis 9,17). But since here, again, the play is a line-by-line translation of the biblical text, there is no evidence of theological intentions with farther-reaching goals than presenting God's direct word in unmutilated form.

There is no doubt about the fact that the play of Noah and his wife was appreciated particularly for the elements which were developed from other than biblical sources. The figure of Noah's wife, the prominent example of such development, however, demonstrates that not only the secular desire for comic action is responsible for her creation. It is rather the definite effort to reconcile originally undramatic theology with the necessities and peculiarities of the drama, and the danger of real irreverence was hardly there at all, in social strata which were based on the still unbroken unity of physical and spiritual order. Thus again the dramatic changes do not lead away from the theological theme; the play holds a mirror to the sinful world, in which the sins of the Old Testament people merge with contemporary traits of the same kind, and in which the medieval Christian was to realize in what relation he stood to God.

III. Abraham and Isaac

The story of Abraham's sacrifice stands unique among the cyclic plays for various reasons. Even the scriptural account (Genesis 22,1-19)
is considered formally most perfect and profound in meaning. And for the medieval dramatist it commended itself by its consistency and dramatic economy, and particularly by the harmony of the literal and the allegorical, partly even the tropological meaning.

The Old Testament story is concentrated on an Abraham who endures God's hard test of his faith, in which the practical consequence of this faith is demanded: absolute obedience. Obediently Abraham walks into the depths of despair, into a future without any positive relation to God, when he begins the preparations to sacrifice Isaac. For this his only son was the "child of promise," in whom God had guaranteed all the blessings which he bestowed on Abraham. His faith is also the decisive factor as he is confronted with the question whether he really considers Isaac and the blessing in him as a gift, which cannot be secured by or entitle to any human or legal claim.

Medieval theology interpreted the significance of this story on the basis of typology mainly. Abraham offering Isaac signified God the Father who offered up his only son Christ. And in the son the allegory was further developed: he was born after his birth had been promised and announced, was offered as a sacrifice by his father, carried the wood for the sacrifice himself, was a perfect model of obedience and patience in suffering. These allegories were familiar enough to the medieval Christian, so that they were recognized in the plays even without explicit reminders and explanations. In the Abraham play they bring about a shift of emphasis, for now Isaac as the prefiguration of Christ becomes the center of the drama, and his suffering equally important as that of Abraham. While in the scriptural version all
expression of emotion is suppressed, it appears in the typological interpretation even on the theological level: the central problem of obedience is much more closely related to suffering now, in the Isaac-Christ allegory. In the Chester play, Abraham evidently establishes this relation in his last words before he raises the weapon to kill his son:

Ah sonne, my harte will breake in three
to heare thee speake such wordes to me.
Ihesu, on me thou have pittie
that I haue most in mynde! (IV,413-416)

In the other cycles we find the same situation. The problem of faith and obedience is not a practical problem, but an emotional one.

York develops it least of all the cycles; the Ludus Coventriae does so one-sidedly, in that it shows no emotion in Isaac, except for an indication of compassion for his father who is deeply saddened; in the Wakefield play emotion in Isaac is without the thematic basis of the conflict of obedience; Chester and the non-cyclical play of Brome also show this shift to the emotional still restricted, though less than the other plays, by the scriptural source or theological considerations: Isaac declares himself obedient as soon as he knows that the sacrifice is God's will, but there is a period of conflict for him, too, before he is informed of this circumstance.

Only the Dublin play represents the full step to the emotional conflict, which is not dramatized in a very lively way, but is brought to a conclusion. Isaac is obedient to his father first, without knowing a reason for his death, "Saue pat god most haue his wille" (11. 218-219);
then, when Abraham suggests an explanation for God's will, Isaac also becomes obedient to God's: "Now, fader, þen siþe it is so; / With al my herti assent þerto" (11. 252-253). Abraham, on the other hand, is unquestionably obedient, but has periods of weakness which even lead him to critical remarks about God's will: "This takeþ me ful nye, god wote, / Good lord, to do þi plesaunce" (11. 258-259). In this presentation we find a sincere religious author dealing with the problem of living with, not getting to, a decision under such circumstances. Isaac may still be considered as a type, but his emotions are those of a small child, a human being.

Typology is made explicit in the Chester cycle by the "expositor." Chester is unique in including two scenes before the actual story of the sacrifice (parts from Genesis 14,15,17). Abraham's encounter with the priest-king Melchizedek after his victory over the four kings is explained as signifying two things: Abraham gives a tenth of what he won to the priest, thus instituting the custom of tithing, and Melchizedek offers Abraham a chalice of wine and bread, which prefigure directly the sacrament of the eucharist. In the second little scene God speaks with Abraham, blessing his progeny and instituting the rite of circumcision, which "was some tyme a sacrament" (IV,195), replaced, after Christ's death, by the sacrament of baptism. With these explanations the "expositor" interrupts the presentation at the end of each scene (IV,113-144; 193-208; 461-476).

This particularly extensive theological information, in connection with the usual understanding of the main story as a type of the crucifixion, has been shown to constitute, in the Chester episodes, a series
of religious explanations suitable for catechumens. However, this would account for the major elements, the eucharist, the baptism, and the crucifixion, but not for the discussion of tithing, which appears first among the expositor's points. It is questionable, therefore, as a summarizing view of the play.

None of the other Abraham plays includes more than the story of the sacrifice; thus they are all restricted theologically to the general background of the crucifixion-type.

The tropological aspects of the story are often presented more explicitly, and they are equally significant for the dramatic aspects of the play. Prominent as a tropological topic is obedience. It appears in two connections. It is, in the first place, the medium for the test of Abraham's faith; however, with the greater concentration on the figure of Isaac, his obedience to his father is emphasized and extended to all children's obedience to their parents. In the Ludus Coventriae this is stated in a general way: "To the fadyr evyr most comly / It ovyth pe childe evyr buxom to be" (46,109-110). Chester's first expansion of the biblical text to be dramatized, the Melchizedek scene, includes, as has been mentioned, the question of tithing. The "expositor" explains:

and tythes-makinge, as you see here,
of Abraham begunnen were.
therfore he was to God full deare. . . . (IV,133-135)

This evidently is one of the elements which were presented in the play with mainly tropological intentions. Gobet on the Green, the "nuntius," had announced about Abraham:
this playe, forsooth begin shall he
In worship of the Trynitie
that yee may all here and see
that shall be done to days.10 (IV,9-12)

It is clear that here not only theological interpretations are given but
demands stated. And in this way the close relation to homiletic tendencies
gains significance in our thematic considerations. Tithing had been
mentioned in the discussion of Cain. Here again it seems to belong to
the things that are emphasized in Lenten sermons. Thus, e.g., the sermon
for Quinquagesimae Sunday in Mirk's Fesitial is based on the presentation
of three things necessary for the Christian during Lent: "full contricion
wyth schryft, full charite wythout feynyng, and stabull fayth wythout
flateryng" (p. 74,11. 26-27).11 Although Mirk discusses charity only as
"charyte to [one's] euen cristen" (p. 76,1. 15), tithing is understood
on the same basis. He does not mention Abraham or Melchizedek in this
context, but in his discussion of the creed which is limited to the
Trinity, the father, and the son, he illustrates these points with
Abraham stories. These are the visit of the three angels in the valley
of Mamre (Genesis 18,1-5), whom Abraham addresses as "my lord," as one
person, and the sacrifice of Isaac. The context of the season of Lent is,
therefore, found even in the tropological point of tithing. And Chester
shows complete thematic unity in this regard.

Theologically the play of Abraham and Isaac presents models of
obedience and faith. But the dramatization shows them in a condition of
suffering, a suffering which characterizes the disrupted harmony between
God and man, a relationship under the shadow of sin. Abraham in his
suffering by giving his only son as a sacrifice and Isaac in his agony prefigure strongly the saving act of God in Christ, but show only the sorrowful, sad aspect of it; the rest was reserved for Easter, in the liturgy as well as in the sermons. The dramatic presentation thus did not evoke joy and the awareness of being saved in the spectator, but contrition and sorrow for the human guilt demonstrated or strongly hinted at. That the test of Abraham's faith is in itself an effect of the disturbed relationship between God and man is almost directly expressed in the opening speech of the Wakefield cycle, where Abraham muses about the history of sin since Adam and sees himself on the same way toward death and hell:

Yet Adam is to hell gone,
And ther has ligen many a day,
And all our elders, euerychon,
They ar gone the same way,
Vnto god will here thare mone;
Now help, lord, adonay!
ffor, certis, I can no better wone,
And ther is none that better may. (IV, 41-48)

IV. Jacob and Moses

The remaining Old Testament plays are limited to one each in the Chester and York cycles and in the Ludus Coventriæ. Only Wakefield contains more: a fragmentary play on Jacob and Esau and an equally fragmentary "Processus Prophetarum." Between these two fragments there
is a play presenting the flight and return of Jacob. The last play of this cycle which presents the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt is an almost exact copy of the last play in the York cycle. Chester combines in one play elements of the stories concerning Moses, the prophet Balaam, and a "processus prophetarum." The *Ludus Coventriae* presents a very undramatic piece, actually a sermon for the main part of the play, on the Decalog.

In the chronological order of the scriptural text the stories of Isaac and Jacob follow the Abraham episodes. The Wakefield cycle, in which they are dramatized, thus seems to complete the three generations of the patriarchs of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who in the course of his play, receives the name of Israel. Jacob's history was significant for the medieval Christian, because his taking the right of the first born away from Esau was understood as a prefiguration of the New Testament's taking priority over the Old Testament. John Mirk explains him tropologically on the basis of the event when Jacob wrestled with "a man" (Genesis 32,24) and received his new name: in order to get God's blessing one has to fight the evil angel as Jacob did. Wakefield's sixth play, entitled "Jacob," still shows theological coherence from the tropological point of view, although it consists dramatically of a loose series of little scenes. The selection of the scenes shows a thematic organization in so far as the development of Jacob's relation to God is presented. At the beginning, while Jacob is fleeing from his brother, God blesses him greatly and promises him a peaceful return, yet Jacob reacts with a conditional promise only. He finds the fulfillment of God's promise when he returns, and the play omits the long time that he spent with his uncle.
On this return he has to wrestle God's blessing away from God. Mirk's interpretation thus corresponds well to the theological significance, especially in the context of the season of Lent; again the decisive point of Christian doctrine is suppressed, the resurrection of Christ. The predominant tone is that of struggle, among men and between men and God.

The presentation of Moses is put in its historical context only in the York play, which presents Moses' appointment and his efforts in Egypt up to the successful crossing of the Red Sea. The significance of this scene for the theologian was, of course, the allegorical prefiguration of Christ and his act of salvation. Dramatically more important as a theme, though, is probably the presentation of the plagues, the affliction that the avenging God can bring over his adversaries who finally end in complete destruction, covered by the waves of the Red Sea. The conflict between Moses and Pharaoh takes up about one half of the play. From this aspect the play parallels the deluge, to some extent; it does not, however, represent a fitting link to the New Testament plays--except on the allegorical level, which is dramatically less important here.

In Chester, Wakefield and the Ludus Coventriae the use of the figure of Moses appears closer to the theological theme of the history of sin and, at the same time, points most strongly to the homiletic aspect of the conflict between God and man. Moses appears here as the conveyer of the Decalog, the commandments of the Old Testament which are still valid, as the "expositor" in the Chester play points out (V,65-68). These commandments represent the consolidation of the Old Testament relation between God and man, which is that of the gracious,
but legally just and judging God before whom man is, since Adam, constantly in the position of the guilty deserving punishment. In the medieval Christian context, moreover, they represent the definite proof of the necessity of a savior. In Moses, both of these aspects are present, and manifested in the structural character of his introduction. The way in which he appears in the plays shows that he is derived from the "Ordo Prophetarum." There already he is traditionally called the "lawgiver." And as that figure he presents the Decalogue to the people. Theologically this means the combining of his Old Testament role in the problematic history of God's relation to man and of his medieval significance as a prophet of Christ.

All three cycles present the ten commandments almost without any accompanying circumstances. The Ludus Coventriae, with its lack in dramatic interest, limits the play almost completely to the commandments themselves. In a curious contraction it has Moses receive the tables of the law from God out of the burning bush. For the presentation of the ten commandments, however, about three fourths of the whole play are used, three times as many lines as in the Wakefield, six times as many as in the Chester play. This expansion is the effect of the author's sermonizing with each commandment. In the Chester play God himself opens the scene by pronouncing his will in the ten commandments, but Moses is introduced immediately because the people cannot stand the sight of God. And with the lines of the "expositor" the Old Testament part of the cycle really ends. The rest of the pageant presents first the most popular prophet of the "Ordo," Balaam, and his story (according to Numbers, chapters 22-24), and then a version of the processus prophetarum.
The Wakefield fragment introduced Moses as a prophet at the outset, before he presents the Decalog. As in the Abraham play of this cycle, we notice here a particular emphasis on the theological implications of the historical aspects. Of the four prophets introduced three point to the history of sin, but with the idea in the foreground that the people of the Old Testament all had to remain in hell until Christ would come to harrow it. The fourth prophet mentions the same point at the end of his speech.\(^8\)
CONCLUSION

We began the present investigation on the basis of a definition according to which the Corpus Christi plays represent the general theme of the Redemption and the Old Testament plays develop pre-Christian history within the cyclic framework. The results now lead us to a more specified statement of the character of the plays. In giving it we shall use the medieval senses of scriptural interpretation, as far as they have been used in this thesis, as guiding lines.

From the historical point of view the themes of the plays have little dramatic significance. They show the theological aspect of the medieval systematization of the universe, introduce the hierarchic order that organizes God's creation, and link the contemporary society to the beginnings of God's relationship with his chosen people, the Israelites. The most immediate effect of the dramatic presentation, emotional response, is developed out of this historical aspect, but leads away from the theme toward the realism of, e.g., Noah's wife who is "non-existent" in Old Testament history. Like the play of Noah and his wife, some other plays are historically interesting enough so that they are further developed in the particular direction of realism. But though this realism may be entertaining, it is not essential.¹

The allegorical themes are often incongruous both in the single play and in the whole cycle. Their static character, which relates them to visual art, allows only one moment or aspect of the scene to be represented in the picture. Noah's wife in the Chester play appears as a meek and obedient woman, before she comes to resemble her satirical
image. It would be missing the point, it appears, to criticize this as an inconsistency and to call it inferior—if the point is to understand the mystery play. More significant is the relation between the allegorical and the dramatic themes. We have seen that only the play of Abraham and Isaac does not have different meanings attached to the different aspects of the themes. In the other plays, the theological aspect, the allegorical theme, is too complicated or all-inclusive, since it usually includes the whole system of Christian faith. Thus the Cain story allegorizes Christ and the Jews, Noah the salvation through Christ, Jacob the people of the New Testament, and Moses Christ—all of which include New Testament conceptions.

At this point tropological considerations become relevant for the plays. They are mainly responsible for the thematic changes that have taken place, in that they often shift the emphasis to homiletic aspects of the scene. This happens for the first time, without an allegory, in the Lucifer scene where the angels appear as homiletic models instead of supernatural powers. The plays following the original sin all show such a shift, as was pointed out, in that, e.g., Cain, instead of representing the Jewish people, appears as a crude peasant, who does not like being a Christian. And the material that is thus used is mostly from sermons, especially for the Lenten season.

The seasonal use of scripture also affects the general theme of the cycles. It becomes significant in connection with the homiletic elements just mentioned. Usually the "lectiones" for the canonical hours are strictly time-oriented and do not anticipate much. Yet they introduce a movement toward a final goal, a culmination, which, for the Old
Testament, lies in the birth of Christ, for the New Testament in the last day, the day of judgment. What kind of formal expression they receive depends mainly on the allegorical-tropological treatment. For the Old Testament plays as well as for the liturgical readings the general theme thus includes an element of movement which it derives from the basic texts, but which is realized only by help of the theological themes.

A look at the structure of the cycles supports this view. Generally, we find a two-part division, the first section of plays of the creation and the fall of man setting the stage, the second developing the history of sin. History of sin is used here as a term under which actually too many aspects of the problem are combined. It does not only mean pre-Christian history, the history of God's people under the law, but also the liturgical movement, the theological teleology. The important point, however, is that this teleological character is consciously presented within the frame of the Old Testament. The traditional connection between the Old Testament as a time of disrupted relations between God and man and the season of Lent in the medieval church is indicated in one of the earliest collections of rules concerning the seasons. In the 11th century, St. Yves writes about the question which texts are to be read in church at different times and says about Lent: "In Septuagesima cantatur, In principio, et legitur Pentateuchus Moysi usque ad passionem Domini. Septuagesima enim captivitatem Babylonis significat, id est confusionis, in qua sumus, dum in mundo captivamur, de qua exeuntes debemus ad Jerusalem redire, id est ad domum pacis, unde diabolus nos captivavit; quamvis enim captivitatis nostrae semper memores esse debemus,
specialiter tamen in his diebus oportet, quibus legimus et cantamus de 
abjectione patris nostri Adam de paradiso, et de periculo Noe in diluvio, 
de Abraham qui venit de terra sua, et de huiusmodi laboribus.\textsuperscript{3} We had 
found the same understanding in the selection of the texts for the canonical 
hours; it is expanded there by the use of other Old Testament texts, 
especially the prophet Jeremiah.\textsuperscript{4}

The "labors" which St. Yves mentions provide the essential theological 
theme for the Old Testament plays, as has been shown in this analysis. 
Closely connected with them are the tropological aspects of the plays, 
which aim at making the medieval sinner aware of his condition and 
emphasize dramatically the means and standards by which he ought to 
examine himself. In no case, however, does the positive observance of 
such means and standards constitute the major theme of a play. Therefore 
the Old Testament plays cannot be correctly characterized as "one vast 
sermon on repentance."\textsuperscript{5} They present a world in which repentance usually 
arose too late or not at all. For the same reasons one can apply the 
theme of the Redemption only in an indirect or very wide sense: i.e., 
in the end the Old Testament plays are related to the events of the New 
Testament, but dramatically this relation is hardly noticeable.\textsuperscript{6} The 
"dominion of Satan over mankind" as a definition of the theme for the 
Old Testament part of the cycles seems to be the nearest approximation, 
but it is perhaps too theologically oriented and puts the responsibility 
too strictly on the powers of evil while at the same time narrowing 
the character of the presentation to a merely historical one.\textsuperscript{7} The term 
"history of sin," therefore was chosen to indicate both didactic and 
homiletic intentions in the plays; the theme remains, on the whole, in
the negative, so to speak; it tries only indirectly to prepare for the climactic solution of both Christmas and Easter, of the New Testament.
FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 The text of the cycles, which are listed in the bibliography, will be referred to by play and line number; references to the Ludus Coventriae, however, will be by page and line.

2 For the present discussion this theory of the origin of the Old Testament plays is generally adopted. It was stated first by Hardin Craig, in MP, X (1913), 473-87. Yet, while even in recent works Craig's theory and that of Sepet (discussed by Young, in Drama of the Medieval Church, II, 170-171) are considered as excluding each other (see Rosemary Woolf, 808), the approach here will not be so strict. Young has pointed out already, at the place just mentioned, that Sepet's "brilliant inferences" could be "firmly substantiated" to some extent by his own findings.

3 The Ordo Prophetarum has its main thematic significance as the preface to the Christmas story. It is because of this strong New Testament relation of the Ordo that Prophet Plays are not considered here, in so far as they belong to the Ordo tradition.


6 McNeir, p. 603.


CHAPTER ONE

I. Theology

1 Rev. 1, 8 and 17-18; 21, 6; 22, 13.


3 "Nullo namque pacto fieri potest aliquid rationabiliiter ab aliquo, nisi in faciientis ratione praeceper aliqcu rei faciendi quasi exemplum, sive (ut aptius dicitur) forma, vel similitudo, aut regula. Patet itaque quoniam quia quidam fierent universa, erat in ratione summae naturae, quid aut qualia aut quomodo futura essent: quare cum ea quae facta sunt, clarum sit nihiluisse antequam fierent, quantum ad hoc, quia non erant quod nunc sunt, nec erat ex quo fierent; non tamen nihil erant, quantum ad rationem facientiae, per quam et secundum quam fierent." *Monologium*, Cap. IX (Migne, CLVIII, 157C 4 ff.).


6 "Providence"—this seems to be the more probable reading of the last word in 1. 14.


8 The traditions of the two characters from the New Testament have been demonstrated in the investigations of R. C. Parker ("The Reputation of Herod," *Speculum*, VIII (1933), 59-67; "Pilates Voys," *Speculum*, XXV (1950), 237-244) and W. E. Tomlinson (Der Herodescharakter im englischen Drama, *Palaestra*, CXXV, Leipzig, 1934.) Thraap's part in the York/Wakefield section is certainly comparable to them, and, less strikingly, Balaak in the Chester cycle.


II. Angelology

1 In De Caesestl Hierarchia, quoted from J. Scotus Eriugena's translation, Migne, CXXII, 1035-1070.

2 See, e.g., sermon VII, in Bartholom von Regensburg, Vollstän-


4 Predigten, I, 95.

5 Historia Scholastica, X (Migne, CXXVII, 1055).


7 Cf., e.g., Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique, I, l, 1211.

8 Summa, I, Q. CVIII, Art. V.

9 Cf. also York, I, 46 and 73.

10 "we loue the, lord" (I, 69) and "we lofe the, lord" (I, 75).

11 Usually Lucifer's appearance has been taken as the beginning of the dramatic conflict of the cycle, the beginning of the conflict in which theme and action have their ultimate basis (cf., e.g., Bates, Fry, McNeir); how far this view does justice to the preceding parts shall be discussed later.

12 This explanation is found already in the writings of Irenaeus in the second century (adv. haereses, IV, 41). Cf. W. Koehler, Dogmengeschichte, Zürich, 1951, p. 224.
Old English Homilies, I, 219. Similarly: Genesis and Exodus, 11. 271 ff.; Cursor Mundi, ed. R. Morris, EETS, LVII, LIX, LXII, LXVI, LXVIII (London, 1874-1878), 11. 437 ff. It had been mentioned that this sermon is not consistent about whether one full order fell or a tenth of each order. At this point the former theory is used. In connection with the latter Lucifer is usually considered the most perfect and beautiful and foremost in rank of all angels. Cf. Thomas, Summa, I, Q. LXIII, Art. VII.

E.g., "In lyth ful clere bryth as ble" (Lud. Cov., 17, 37); "we ar all angels bright" (Wakef., I, 78).

Summa, I, Q. LXIV, Art. IV.


Summa, I, Q. LXIV, Art. II.

De Malo, Q. XVI, Art. IV.


Cf. also Mirk's Festial, ed. Th. Erbe, EETS, E. S. XCVI (London, 1905), 66. 11. 16 ff.

13 The marginal summary of L. T. Smith's edition introduces a different, rather unusual idea at this point: "Satan is troubled at God's intention to take on him the nature of man, instead of angels" (p. 22). In spite of the vagueness of the statement it seems clear that it points in the wrong direction.

Cf. in this cycle also the statements of "Cherubyn:" "... has maide man to beoure feere" (I, 209), "... angels ordir to fulfill" (I, 215); and of Noah in his review of creation when, after the account of Lucifer's fall, he continues: "Soyne after that gracious lord / to his liknes maide man, / That place to be restord ... ." (III, 28-29). Cf. also The Blickling Homilies, ed. R. Morris, EETS, LVIIL, LXXIII, LXXIII, (London, 1880), 121.

See Genesis 1, 26 and 28; 2, 3.

See Chester I, 89-96, 125-126; Wakef. I, 166-167, 171-173, 217; York III, 18, 21, 71-72; IV, 18, 43; V, 8; VIII, 7-8; Lud. Cov. 19, 99; 20, 139; 25, 299-300.
25 Summa, I, Q. SCVIII, Art. II.

26 Very similar: Genesis and Exodus, 295-297: "hu may it ben, / Adam ben king and eue quuen / Of alle de dinge de in werlde ben."

27 See Isaiah, 14, 12-14. Cf. also Ezechiel, 28, 13-14; Jude, 1, 6-7; Revelation, 12, 7-9.

III. Anthropology

1 Cf., e.g., the arrangement of topics in Thomas' Summa, I, especially Q. LXXVI and LXXVII; or in the Cursor Mundi, I, 11. 511-584.

2 III, 22-24; see also II, 13-16 and 65-66.

3 Contra Gentiles, III, ch. 111.


6 Essential additions to the biblical text are only: the introduction of visions which Adam had while he was asleep and which he announces only in this scene (11. 137-140); remarks about woman by "Demon" before and by Adam after the act of sin (11. 161-208, 257-272, 345-360); and the appearance of four angels (Cherubim) who take position as guards of the garden of Eden (11. 393-424).

7 See York, III, 75; Wakef., I, 169. The only other mention of this point appears in Chester, where God explains, after the fall, that Adam desired "over all thinge / of good and evill to have knowing" (II, 370-371); but in this instance, again, Chester seems only to paraphrase the scriptural source.

8 Cf. K. R. Hagenbach, A History of Christian Doctrines, II (Edinburgh, 1884), 239-242; Koehler, pp. 296-297. With regard to the first point, the Cursor Mundi states: "Now haue I shewed you þus hider / How two þingis holden man to gider / þe soule is goostly þing to telle / þe body hit is flesshe & felle" (Trinity MS., 11. 581-584).

9 York, III, 41-42; Wakef., I, 168-169.

10 Cf. Thomas' Summa, I, Q. LXXV, Art. VI.

11 This dramatic unity is missing only in York, where we find four scenes: creation to the fifth day, creation of man, placing of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and the temptation and fall. The circumstance does not necessarily disprove our point of view, because the York arrangement is probably the result of a later revision (see, e.g., E. K. Chambers,

12 But cf., e.g., Genesis and Exodus, 11. 171-172: "God sag bi-
fore quat after cam, / dat singen sulde firme adam."

13 Cf. G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England,
Cambridge, 1933, pp. 376-404 and passim; further examples are Chester,
II, 349-356; III, 105-108.

14 See especially Chester, II, 349-360 and York, VI, 149-150.

15 The Lay Folks Catechism, ed. Th. F. Simmons and H. E. Nolloth,
EETS, CXVIII (London, 1901), 12, 11. 184-187 (text "I").

16 Cf. Thomas, "In Genesim," Opera, XXXI, 30. In the Norwich Play
B, the "Prolocutor" refers to the idea of mankind's being under the curse
of original sin, when he says about Eve: "By whose synn over nature
is so weak no good we can" (First Prologue, 1. 25).

17 Cf., in the Cursor Mundi: "Al bigan to stire & strif / Ageyn
adam & eue his wif / Bitwene hem self roos strif also" (11. 829-831);
also York, VI, 94-98, where Adam specifically mentions the beasts that
do not live in peace together any more, but are all against him.

18 Festial, p. 66, 11. 8-9.

19 The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays, ed. O. Waterhouse, EETS, E.C. CIV

20 Fry's claim, for the Lud. Cov., that we find in the Old Testament
group "the predominant theme of the dominion of Satan over mankind"
appears to be too theological in its formulation, though basically un-
questionable. It does not do justice to the less abstract and, it seems,
more directly significant aspects of the theme and its presentation.
Thus, e.g., Satan can hardly be seen as the main antagonist in the scene
just discussed, where so clearly the antagonism is between God and man
(cf. Fry, 539-540).

CHAPTER TWO

I. Cain and Abel

1 See St. Ambrose, "De Cain et Abel" (written about 375 A.D.):
"Per Cain parricidalis populus intelligitur Judaorum, qui Domini et
auctoris sui et secundum Marie virginis partum fratris, ut ita dicam,
sanguinem persecutus est" (Lib. I, Cap. II, Migne, XIV, 318).
St. Ambrose says about Abel: "Per Abel autem intelligitur Christianus adhaerens Deo" (ibid.).


"Et nota quod oblatio Cain dicitur nomine communi. Non enim dicitur de optimis terrae frugibus: quod si fecisset ad aliorum exemplum, Scriptura non tacisset, sicut dixit de Abel quod obtulit de primogenitis et adipibus earum: unde ex hoc colligitur quod ex cupiditate et avaritia optimas fruges retinuit, et minus bonas Deo obtulit, sicut molti faciunt qui numquam Deo offerunt nisi deterius, et quod est corruptum vel consumptum, et quo non possunt uti" ("In Genesim," Opera, XXXI, 38).

Only once, l. 101, a different word,"pis vnthende sheff," is used.

Cf. Ost: "The warning to pay tithes faithfully, indeed, was itself a duty as it was a commonplace of the medieval pulpits" (Literature and Pulpit, pp. 365-366). To the examples mentioned by Ost (on p. 366) could be added: The Blickling Homilies, ed. R. Morris, EETS, LXXIII (London, 1880), 35, and, particularly, sermon IV on tithing, 39-53; The South English Legendary I, ed. Ch. D'Evelyn and A. J. Mill, EETS, CXXXV (London, 1956), 128 ("De Quadragesima"). Notice also Cain's reaction to Abel's admonition to offer to God in the Wakefield scene:

How let furth youre geyse, the fox will preche;
How long wilt thou me appech
With thi sermonyng? (II, 84-86)

Thus, e.g., one sermon begins the final paragraph: "And ban giff þou haue all þise iij, þat is to sey shrifte of mouthe, penans doyinge trewly, and almesde, þan I dowte þat þou shalt at þe fouerty dayes, þat is on Estur day, com vn-to þe paleys, þat is to þe churche, and þer ressayue þe precious body in forme of brede . . ." (Middle English Sermons, 186-187).

Cf. E. Prosser, Drama and Religion in the English Mystery Plays, Stanford, 1961, pp. 71-72, who says: "The inevitable consequences of the Fall—the chain of sin which can be broken only by Christ's ransom --unifies the action of the entire pageant." It seems essential that such breaking of the chain is--just in Chester--mentioned briefly, but has no noticeable bearing on the play, and certainly not on the thematic treatment.

Eve says: Well I wott and know, I wis, verey vengeance that it is, for to god did I so amisse, that I shall never haue gladinge. (II, 693-696)
The fact that Eve alone expresses this guilt corresponds to the harsh
judgment passed on her before by Adam. No other cycle emphasizes so
positively that Eve has more guilt than Adam.

11 "Immisit, dico, somnum, qualis immittitur Prophetis ad videndum
aliquas illustrationes divinas" ("In Genesim," Cap. II, Opera, XXXI, 24).

12 Prosser, pp. 78-79.

II. Noah and His Wife

1 Cf. G. von Rad's explanation of the Hebrew word for "deluge" (in
Das Alte Testament deutsch, Vol. II, ed. V. Herintrich and A. Weiser,
Göttingen, 1958, 105).

2 35, 1-38, 91, and 41, 198-43, 241. These lines represent two-
thirds of the scene, if one excludes the Lamech-interlude, which probably
is not part of the oldest version of the play.

3 As, e.g., in the lines of Ham's wife:
   I pray to god me grawnt pis bone
   that he me kepe in such A plyght
   mornynge hevenynge mydday and none
   I to affendyn hym day nor nyght
   lord god I þe pray
   Bothe wakynge and eke in slepe
   gracyous god þou me kepe
   þat I nevyr in daunger crepe
   On dredfull domys day.

4 Cyprianus, bishop of Carthage (+258 A.D.) was the principal
originator of this conception of the church, as he expresses it, e.g.,
in the following phrase: "Nemini salus esse nisi in Ecclesia [potest] ."
("Epistola ad Pomponium, de Virginibus," Migne, IV, 371).

5 Only in Chester are the gossips part of the argument, the wife
refusing to enter the ark without them (III, 201-202). In the York
play they are mentioned, but only after Noah's wife has accepted the
situation (IX, 141-148). The Wakefield play makes use only of the
motive of spinning, but it is evident that the same idea is involved:
the wife dresses up and leaves (to meet the other women at a common
spinning center); later, when the quarrel breaks out again, all that is
left of the motive is just her spinning, while she is sitting on a hill
near the ark (III, 238 and 336-338).

6 This is the common medieval interpretation, while modern trans-
lations of Genesis 8, 7 read "flew back and forth" instead of "did not
return."
The York play characterizes the raven not only as wise, but also as "crabbed"—a word which Chester applied to Noah's wife—and has Noah curse the bird as it does not return (IX, 211-213; 229-232). In the non-cyclical Newcastle Noah, his wife is brought even closer to the image of Eve, mother of sin, by having the devil persuade her to give Noah a potion in order to get his secret (why he is building the ark) from him (The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays, ed. O. Waterhouse, EETS, E.S. CIV, 22, 1. 97-24, 1. 163). Cf. what ST. Hilarius, of Poitiers (+367) says while speaking of the raven in "Tractatus in CXVI Psalmum," ch. 12: "is qui Ecclesiam cum numquam alibi posset consistere derelinquit, peccatoris in eo exemplum est constitutum, qui cum nullam aliam praeter quam Ecclesiae requiem habeat im saeculo, mavult tamen in inanibus saeculi demorari" (Migne, IX, 874). It is, of course, possible to explain this circumstance as simply a dramatization of the related motive in York, with an equally great—or small—claim of probability.

A similar disproportion of judgment and grace can be seen in a homiletic parallel: John Mirk closes the account of the deluge—a paraphrase of Genesis in his sermon for Sexagesimae Sunday—with the following words:

"hus, good men, ye most vndyrstond how gret vengeans God toke on pe world for vykednesse of symne, and now, more harme ys, pe pepuil ar as full of symne as pey war pat tyme; and perfor God will take vengeans, ner pe prayers of holy sayntys and specyaly of our lady. (Festial, p. 73, 11. 14-18).

III. Abraham and Isaac


3 See Genesis 17, 19, and 21; 21, 12: also the story of the promise and annunciation of Isaac's birth (Genesis, chs. 15-18).

4 See v. Rad, III, 209. Woolf (p. 805) does not distinguish clearly between the emotional and the religious aspects, so that her complete exclusion of Isaac from the center of interest appears somewhat exaggerated.

5 The fact that Abraham did not really kill Isaac apparently did not disturb this interpretation, because it had its roots in pictorial representations where, of course, only one phase was actually presented. Cf. Woolf about the relations of typology and visual representation, pp. 811-812.
6 See references concerning the details in which Isaac prefigures Christ in Migne, CCXIX, 245; also Woolf, p. 806.

7 See Woolf, pp. 809-811, where the author discusses the various media through which the people were acquainted with typology.

8 J. A. Bryant, "Chester's Sermon for Catechumens," JEGP, LIII (1954), 399-403, finds: "They form a neat and striking compendium of the Christian faith, communion and baptism being the two essential sacraments of that faith and the death and resurrection of Jesus its central mystery. . . . In addition to being, as far as it goes, a fairly faithful rendering of the Old Testament narrative, it [the play] is also a sermon, the kind of sermon one might imagine as having been devised for a group of catechumens, perhaps specifically to reinforce their understanding of the Prayers of Offering . . ." (p. 401).

9 Cf. Ludus Coventriae, 46, 105-112; 47, 147-148; 48, 175-176; 51, 253-256.
York X, 101-102; 369-370.
Chester IV, 237-240; 246-248; 251-252.
Wakefield IV, 93-95; 139-140; 183-184.
These are statements of obedience to the father Abraham; many more state the same toward God; all, of course, are modeled on Christ's being "obedient unto death" (Philippians 2,8).

10 At the beginning of the stanza from which was quoted first, the "expositor" speaks about Melchizedek's offering bread and wine:

But for this thynge used shold be
afterward as now done wee,
in signification, as leve you me,
Melchisedech did soo. (IV, 129-132)
The main point is evidently tropological, and Bryant could have included it in his interpretation of the play as a sermon aimed at catechumens. It is hard to see his point, however, when he uses the lines of Gobet on the Green mentioned above (11. 9-12) to prove that the "nuntius" is "also well aware" of what the medieval liturgical commentator Durandus had said about Abraham, viz. that "to him and through him were revealed, as through a veil, the essentials of God's plan of salvation" (Bryant, pp. 401-402).

11 Cf. Old English Homilies, I, for Palm Sunday: "be witega het þat we sculde maken his stiþes þenne make we ham rihte þef we haldet his beode and þef we beod under sod scrifis and god fructe þurh-ut of alle þingel" (p. 7). Woolf points out the preference for the use of typology in sermons connected with the season (p. 810, n. 30). This is also evident in the fact that, in addition to the "lectiones" of the canonical hours on Quinquagesimae Sunday, a sermon was read which dealt with Abraham's faith (Breviarium Ad Usum Insignis Ecclesiae Eboracensis, I, Surtees Society, LXXI, Edinburgh, 1880, 257-258).
IV. Jacob and Moses

1 Mirk interprets the "man" with whom Jacob fights as representative of evil: "his story ys yn holy chyrch yn hegh ensampull to yche Goddes servant pat desyryth to gete þe blessyng of hys Fadyr of Heuen, and þe herytage þat ys þer. He most furst be Iacob, and aftyr Israel; for by Iacob ys vndyrstood a wrasteler, and by Israel a man þat sepe God: for he þat wyll se God yn Heuen, he most wrastyll in erþe wyth þe euell angyl, þat ys þe fende, and wyth hys one flesch þus" (Festial, p. 94, 11. 26-32).

2 This discussion applies equally to the Wakefield "Ephraim," in which, curiously, the chronological as well as thematic order is reversed.

3 Cf. Mirk's explanation: "Thus was Moyses a fygur and a token of Cryst; for Moyses com before and þaf þe lawe, and Crist come aftyr and þaf grace, and mercy, and trewpe. For rytgh as Moyses fatte þe pepull out of Egypte þrogh þe to þe hull of Synay, rytgh soo Cryst, when he com, he, by prechyng and myocardles doyng, fat þe pepull out of þe darknes of synne and euell lyuyng þrogh þe watyr of folowyng to the hull of vertu" (Festial, p. 103).

4 While in Wakefield and Chester the first indication is, of course, the structure of the whole play, it is the outward appearance in the Ludus Coventriae, where he receives the tablets of the law from God (52,38) and is holding them during his sermon. He does so also in the Wakefield play as becomes evident in 11. 34-36: "his commaundementis ar ten; / Behold, ye that ar his men, / here ye may theym se." This was evidently always a part of his appearance in the "Ordo" (Cf. Young, II, 145 and 156).

5 See the source of the "Ordo," the "Sermo contra Judeos," Migne, XLII, 1124.

6 The simplest explanation might be that only in this way God could be introduced in the play organically, so to speak: for at Mount Sinai Moses only reflects the presence of God in his face when he returns from the mountain. On the other hand, we see here combined the place of Moses' appointment and his appearance as the "legislator."

7 Balaam's prophecy concerning the messiah is used effectively as a link between the Balaam play and the prophet play: it is the last of four prophetic utterances, and the only difference to the biblical text is that the king Balaak offers the prophet another chance instead of dismissing him angrily.

8 See Moses, 11. 4-6; Sybilla, 11. 169-171; Daniel, 11. 220-223; and David, 11. 152-153.
CONCLUSION

1 Cf. Prosser about comedy in this sense: "If the comedy breaks the mood, negates the theme, and destroys audience participation, sympathy, or necessary emotional response—if, in short, the comedy works against the requisite effect of the play—is it not 'bad drama'? . . .? By such a standard we can judge the Chester Shepherds and the Towneley Cain and find them wanting" (p. 82). Prosser's assumptions are questionable.

2 Chester is the only exception here in that creation, fall of man and the Cain episode are one play. The deliberateness of this combination is evident from the close dramatic unity of the play. To the author, it seems, it was most important here to demonstrate the continuity of sin, perhaps also to combine the single acts of sin up to the worst one, murder.

3 Sancti Ivonis Carnotensis Episcopi Opera Omnia, I, Migne, CLXI, 1339. Cf. also La Legende Dorée: "La septuagesime est également un signe: elle signifie la déchéance, l'exil, et la tribulation du genre humain, depuis Adam jusqu'à la fin du monde" and "Toute la vie de l'humanité se divise en quatre périodes: la période de la déviation; celle de la rénovation, ou du retour dans la droite voie; celle de la réconciliation; et celle du pèlerinage. 1° La période de la déviation a commencé avec Adam et a duré jusqu'à Moïse: c'est en effet Adam qui, le premier, s'est détourné de la voie de Dieu" (tr. Teodor de Wyzewa, Paris, 1935, pp. 120 and 1).

4 In the York breviary such "lectiones" begin with the first three nocturns of the fifth Sunday in Lent (I, 345). Another example from the breviary is the story of Joseph: only the first half is used, not the happy ending, since Joseph was presented as a prefiguration of Christ.

5 E. Prosser, Drama and Religion in the English Mystery Plays, Stanford, 1961, p. 25. In this place, repentance is suggested as the theme of "a typical Corpus Christi cycle," but the treatment of single plays shows that it is meant to apply to each single play as well.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Fry, Timothy, O.S.B. "The Unity of the Ludus Coventriae," (Studies in Medieval Culture Dedicated to G. R. Coffman), SP, XLVIII (1951), 527-570.


McNeir, Waldo F. "The Corpus Christi Passion Plays as Dramatic Art," (Studies in Medieval Culture Dedicated to George Raleigh Coffman), SP, XLVIII (1951), 601-628.


Middle English Sermons, ed. Woodburn O. Ross (EETS, CCIX). London, 1940.

Mill, Anna J. "Noah's Wife Again," PMLA, LVI (1941), 613-626.


-. "Pilates Voys," Speculum, XXV (1950), 237-244.


-. "Private Prayers in Middle English Verse," SP, XXXVI (1939), 466-475.


Taylor, George C. "The Relation of the English Corpus Christi Play to the Middle English Religious Lyric," MP, V (1907), 1-38.


Young, Karl. The Drama of the Medieval Church. 2 vols. Oxford, 1933.