FORGIVENESS AND REPENTANCE IN EARLY MODERN DRAMA

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ABSTRACT

The thesis starts with an examination of how repentance and forgiveness came into the ethical philosophy of Western Europe through mono-theistic religion and contrasts this with the thought of Plato, Aristotle and Medieval literature (the English Mystics, Chivalric Literature, early Drama). After the Reformation the controversy between Catholic and Protestant beliefs continued and restricted the discussion of repentance and forgiveness in drama until, it is argued, the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots gave greater freedom to the theatre.

The second part of the thesis deals with fifteen plays of Shakespeare and by five of his contemporaries. It considers sacrilege in the second tetralogy of history plays, and regret (as distinct from repentance) and forgiveness in texts such as *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. Chapters on the themes of mercy and justice and on ‘unforgiving men’ range across Shakespeare, Webster and Heywood. The conclusion notes how repentance and forgiveness have been largely absent from the theatre since the early modern period on which this thesis focuses.

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INTRODUCTION

When the actor Geoffrey Streatfeild came to Stratford in 2006 to play Suffolk in Michael Boyd's production of *The Histories*, he asked me if Shakespeare's Henry V, a part he was to play the following year, was anything like the historic Henry. I did not know, Shakespeare's Henry being my Henry. Having nothing better to do that summer, I did some research and, from that kernel of an idea, this thesis emerged. My dissertation should be read as a singular piece of work by an individual in her 90s, who has many decades of theatre and reading experience, and concomitant decades of thought and conversation about Shakespeare, and the ways in which his body of work engages with the religion, politics and literature of his time. All of this informs the very broad intellectual purview of this writing. My method is primarily text based: after establishing the religious and cultural context within which Shakespeare lived and worked, the thesis examines the words of selected Shakespeare plays, and other, relevant contemporary works, in order to unpack their portrayal of forgiveness and repentance. My methods and experience, along with the particular origins of this work, starting from assisting a young actor in his preparation for a role and evolving into a PhD supervised by an academic from the Shakespeare Institute, make it unique: I have not sought to negotiate with specialist contemporary Shakespeare criticism, and therefore my work stands on its own terms, rather than seeking to sit alongside theses produced by early career researchers who necessarily engage with different theoretical questions and approaches.

During that summer of initial research, I discovered that Henry, besides being a brilliant warrior, was very religious. He went to Mass every day, staying right to the end of the service, he went to sacramental Confession once a week, instead of the obligatory

once a year, and he had written some sacred music. He also endowed a Chantry Chapel in Westminster Abbey so that priests could pray for him and for the soul of Richard II. Before the battle of Agincourt, he instructed his troops to go to Confession and he, himself, heard three Masses before the battle. In a moment often considered a dramatic flourish, Shakespeare's Henry speaks a truth about his character: 'all that I can do I is nothing worth | Since that my penitence comes after ill |Imploring pardon'.[1]

The theme of repentance seemed to pursue me. In 2008, I devised and, with Geoffrey and Chuk Iwuji, performed a recital at the Stratford Poetry Festival, about John Donne, whose religious poetry often expresses the need for forgiveness. The following year, the three of us performed 'A Meditation of the Life on John Calvin' at the Swiss Protestant Church in London. For the eight hundredth anniversary of Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-Upon-Avon, I compiled an anthology of spiritual writing from the year 1210.

With all this in mind, I began to think about plays that had themes of repentance and forgiveness in them. A few hours in the Institute Library showed that there were at least twenty plays with these elements. It also revealed very little literary criticism looking at forgiveness and repentance: Hans Hunter's The *Comedy of Forgiveness* was published in 1965 and dealt with six late comedies; Sarah Beckwith's *Shakespeare and the Language of Forgiveness* focused on *Measure for Measure*, three late plays and *The Tempest*. Although both these writers had preliminary work on what repentance and forgiveness might be, their thoughts were totally different from mine. Debora Kuller Shuger's *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England* came nearer, but she concentrates on *Measure for Measure*. A search on the Internet showed a number of papers on *King Lear* and some on *The Winter's Tale.* But no one, it appeared, had looked

[1] *Henry V*, 4.1.285-87. All future references to Shakespeare's plays will be quoted from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997) and given in the text.

at repentance and forgiveness in the Histories or the Tragedies or in the works of other playwrights. Nor had they asked why, at this particular time, these ideas had been the subject of drama, or how the theological and political situation had influenced the drama.

Before embarking on the thesis, I needed to find a workable definition for the terms ‘repentance’ and ‘forgiveness’. Sacramental Confession was, indeed is, quite explicit. You must not have done anything that the Church considers wrong. You must not have broken any of the Ten Commandments. You must not have committed any of the Seven Deadly Sins, or done anything that the Church considered a sin. Secondly, you must be reconciled to anyone you have hurt or wronged, or who has wronged or hurt you. You must make amends where possible. After expressing your contrition and asking for God’s mercy, you must do your penance. Then you must put everything behind you and forgive yourself. It seemed that I could use the word ‘repentance’ for expressing your sorrow to God and ‘forgiveness’ for making up with your fellow human beings. That, I thought, was that.

But as all researchers know, that is never that. Where had these ideas come from? Were they always in Western ethical thought? Had the ideas about them changed? What did the Elizabethans believe? How had that influenced the plays? As it was compulsory in medieval and Early Modern times to go to church on Sundays (indeed, you were brought before the Bawdy Court and could be fined if you did not attend, as William Shakespeare’s father, John, and his daughter, Susannah, both were), I decided to start my exploration of the concepts with the coming of Christianity.

Jesus Christ was born of a Jewish mother into a Roman world and was so subjected to two distinct cultures, Roman (with its origins in and influences from Hellenist culture) and Jewish. Indeed the mythology of his life could be seen in the tradition of Greek and Roman legends: a human woman penetrated by a god who

produces a divine child; the idea that the king should sacrifice himself for his people; a return from the underworld. The Olympian Gods, worshipped by the Greeks and Romans, with their adulteries, revenge and quarrels, were hardly examples of good behaviour, so the Greeks looked to their philosophers to learn about living a virtuous life. Plato thought that a good man lived courageously, acted justly and respected his fellow human beings. His friend and pupil, Aristotle agreed but said that it was best to take a middle way: to be courageous meant you must be neither cowardly nor foolhardy; acting justly meant you must be neither too lenient nor too strict; the aim of life was to be happy and, to achieve happiness, you must not do anything to excess. *The Nichomachean Ethics* has a whole chapter on friendship and says that if you quarrel with a friend, or he is unkind towards you, you should cut him out of your life. The Roman philosopher, Seneca, follows the same ideas and emphasizes that one should treat everyone, even slaves, in the same, kind way.

The Greek and Roman world did not recognize one true God, though in the hauntingly beautiful *Timaeus* of Plato he does posit God as creator. Seneca also talks of God as well as the gods. But, in contrast to the Jewish God, who is very much interested in His creations and their behaviour, Seneca's god is not interested in the people he has created.

The differences are clear when we look at the stories from the Torah or the Christian Old Testament. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve lead an idyllic life. The only curb on their behaviour is that they must not eat the fruit of the Tree of Good and Evil. When they do, God expels them from the Garden. He does not forgive them and they do not express their contrition. Abraham is obedient. He is prepared to sacrifice his only son, the son of his old age, to please God. God reprieves him and says that his line will flourish because of his obedience. This is the first Covenant with the people of

Israel. The second Covenant was made when Moses, possibly an adherent of the heretic Pharaoh, Akhenaten, the first monotheist, brought down the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai. These state that there is only one God, the God of Israel, and that He, alone, is to be worshipped. The Commandments about this worship are followed by what still seem reasonable, sensible rules for life. Mankind, though, does not seem to value simplicity, and from these ten rules, a whole body of dos and don'ts, governing what you should not do sexually, what you should eat and drink, and even what you should wear. These are found in the Old Testament books of *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy*. If you did not obey these laws God would punish you, but you might alleviate the punishment if you repented. The beginning of Psalm 51 articulates this, quoted here in the translation that Shakespeare would have read or heard in church: 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin'.

Over the next centuries, according to what we read in the Gospels, the letter, rather than the spirit, of the Law seemed to have become more important. Certainly Christ seemed to think so when he told the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. He declared that he had come to give a New Covenant which was, firstly, to love God with all your soul, mind, heart and strength and, secondly, to love your neighbour as yourself. This was not a new commandment, for this sentiment is found in *Leviticus*, but Christ extended the idea of love to include forgiveness. In the Parables of the Prodigal Son and The Two Servants, he made it quite clear that one had to both repent and forgive, and one's own forgiveness depended on how one forgave. These ideas of love and forgiveness find their most poetic expressions in St Paul's Letter to the Corinthians (1

Corinthians 13:1-13), which became arguably the most important ethical command of the Christian religion.

The thesis now shifts a thousand years to 1327, when Pince Edward usurped his father's throne at the age of fourteen with the help of his mother, Queen Isabella, and her lover, Roger Mortimer. It was to be another three years before Edward III got rid of Mortimer and became king in fact as well as name. Edward III was multi-lingual, French, English, Spanish, Italian and Latin, the language of the Church and diplomacy. In his reign the-French speaking Court and aristocracy stopped speaking French and spoke English. In 1357, proceedings in the Law Courts were held in English for the first time. Edward also extended the membership of Parliament to elected merchants and knights, while the common people could bring petitions in English. It can be argued that Edward was the catalyst the that started literature in English, for lyric and religious poetry and the works of Chaucer, Hoccleve, the *Pearl*-poet and the English Mystics, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Walter Hilton and the unknown writer of *The Cloud of Unknowing,* all date from this and subsequent reigns.

During Henry IV's reign, discontent with the Roman Catholic Church started to find a voice. Followers of Wyclif, commonly known as Lollards, wanted church services to be in English, not Latin, and the Bible translated into English. Henry's Parliament passed a law against this and any dissenters would be burnt at the stake. One of the first Protestant martyrs was Sir John Oldcastle, the name first given by Shakespeare for the character now called Falstaff. It is a curious anomaly that, while it was forbidden to translate the Bible into English, the Mystery plays, which told the Life of Christ or stories from the Old Testament were allowed and performed to large audiences.

The fifteenth century saw the emergence of plays of repentance, now known as Morality plays. Their subject matter was the soul's journey towards God and Heaven.

The three extant plays, *Everyman, Mankind, The Castle of Perseverance,* have simple plots. The main character learns that earthly things and people are not to be relied upon for help in reaching Heaven; only God's Grace can do that, and His Grace is only obtained by good deeds and repentance. The characters are all emblematic, or types: Beauty. Fellowship. Mercy, Confession and so on; there are angels, good and bad. God, aHimself, may appear or His voice may be heard. The plays are very stylized and abstract, bearing very little on every-day life.

What, then, happened in the next century that caused the transformation of these plays into the plays that flourished in Elizabeth's reign? This thesis argues that two catalysts are primarily responsible: the Reformation and the Grammar Schools.

The whole history of the Reformation is told in Diarmaid MacCulloch's book *Reformation: Europe's House Divided.* The salient points to this thesis are that the church in England was still a Roman Catholic church when Henry VIII broke from Rome in 1533, that is Mass was still the main service and was said every day. Although Henry declared there were only two Sacraments – Baptism and Holy Communion – the other Sacraments were still performed and people still got married, confirmed and ordained. What is important to my argument is that it was during the early stages of the Reformation the parents of the playwrights were born and brought up. Their early religious training was Roman Catholic.

When Henry died, his son, Edward VI, succeeded and the first Book of Common Prayer, largely written by Thomas Cranmer was, by law, ordered to replace the Roman Catholic Missal. The most significant change in the worship in parish churches, such as Holy Trinity in Stratford, was that the Mass was replaced by Morning and Evening Prayer said in English. The Lord's Supper, commonly called the Mass, was to be

celebrated only four or five times a year. Edward only ruled a few years (1537-53) and was succeeded by his half-sister, Mary.

Mary was a devout Roman Catholic and she reinstated the Mass and all the Sacraments to their, as she thought, rightful place. The playwrights' parents, now adolescent had to, at least outwardly to Roman Catholic ways and faith. When Elizabeth came to the throne, on her half-sister's death, she authorized the return to the Book of Common Prayer in a slightly revised edition. It is this that I am using as the standard of what the playwrights would have understood about repentance and forgiveness.

We know that they had to attend the service every Sunday and would there have heard the Prayer Book's superb language and ideas. They would have been subjected to a homily as well, but the quality of these varied, and the playwrights might not have listened. They would have also have heard the Bible being read and, indeed, may have read it privately as well. However, the only certainty is compulsory church attendance.

The prayer book was not readily accepted. As Debra Kuller Shuger details in *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England,* it pleased neither the Protestant wing of the church, who disliked rite and ritual, and thought that long sermons should be the main focus of worship, nor the more Roman Catholic sympathisers who wanted more ritual, vestments and ceremony. The argument went on for the major part of Elizabeth's reign. It was not until the publication of Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* that the great Elizabethan compromise was reached. The Church of England is truly a Catholic church: a unique and broad combination of both Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions and ideas.

In 1586, Mary, Queen of Scots was beheaded and so the Roman Catholics had no legitimate claimant to the throne. This, then, was the situation when Shakespeare first came to London.

The other influence on drama was the Greek and Roman literature that playwrights would have studied in their time at grammar schools: Lyly and Marlowe at King's, Canterbury, Ben Jonson at Westminster: Middleton and, possibly, Webster at Merchant Taylor's, and William Shakespeare at King Edward's. The passion, suffering and, above all, articulate people in the classics exemplifies how drama does not have to be centred on God or salvation. The dramatists learned that you could put a representation of life in all its complexities on the stage of the newly built theatres.

Another essential belief in Tudor and Stuart times was the nature of the monarchy. At the coronation of the monarch, not only is he or she crowned, representing the relationship between the monarch and people, but he or she is anointed on the head, breast and hands, which represents his or her relationship with God. The Holy Spirit descends and endows the monarch with a special grace and, henceforth, the monarch has two bodies, one mortal and one spiritual and sacred. To kill a monarch is to commit sacrilege. This matter is discussed with reference to Marie Axton's *The Queen's Two Bodies* and Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* in the first part of the thesis; the second part concerns the plays. This raises the question of which plays have been chosen and why. The method of the thesis is to relate the story of the plays with an accent on the speeches about the sin and the protagonists' attitude towards it. No comments are made about this during the course of the thesis, because a conclusion will be drawn in the last chapter. The attitude taken throughout is that it is impossible to know what the actual playwrights believed themselves. Instead, I take an interest in the ways in which they illustrate common beliefs in their characters.

The first set of plays chosen is the Second Tetralogy, *Richard II, Henry VI parts 1 and 2, Henry V*, which deals with the sin of sacrilege. Richard II is only too aware of his sacred, divine status and Henry Bolingbroke is also aware of the sin he has

committed in accepting Richard's murder. He promises to do penance but is unable to do so because of the turbulent nature of his kingdom. The House of Lancaster is redeemed by his son, who honours Richard's body and is penitent. Even at the moment of his greatest glory, the victory at Agincourt, he says that it is only due to God.

The second group is called *Regret not Repentance* and the plays chosen are *Henry VI part 3, Richard III, Macbeth, Dr Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe. In these plays, the protagonists are only too aware that they have sinned but are unable to fully repent. Both Richard and Macbeth are driven by the ambition to be king and both, according to Shakespeare, kill a king: in Richard's case, Henry VI, and in Macbeth's, Duncan. Neither seems to envisage the consequences, which, for both of them, entail further murders and battles. Macbeth commits the further sin of consorting with witches. Marlowe's play can be considered a reversal of the Morality plays in that, instead of depicting a soul's journey to Heaven, it depicts Faustus' journey to Hell. It has many elements of a Morality play: a good and bad angel, and the Masque of the Seven Deadly Sins, who are emblematic characters. Faustus' debates with the devil, and with himself, define the nature of repentance and the penalties that come with not repenting.

The next chapter deals with the plays of forgiveness: *The Tempest, King Lear,As You Like it, The Yorkshire Tragedy.* Except for the mention of a hermit and the mock wedding service conducted by a priest in *As You Like It,* none of these plays are overtly Christian, but all deal with forgiveness in a Christian way. Indeed, it is argued that the two most Christian characters certainly in these plays, possibly in the whole Shakespeare cannon, are Cordelia and Edgar, who have received greatest wrongs but hold no grudges. The wife in *The Yorkshire Tragedy* is also totally forgiving.

Plays about mercy and justice follow. These are *The Merchant of Venice, Measure for Measure,* and two plays by John Webster, *The White Devil* and *The Duchess*

of Malfi. The Webster plays were written at a time of anti-Roman feeling and portray that Church in a particularly bad light. *Merchant*, of course, has Portia's great speech on mercy, but this great speech does not reflect the mercy and justice shown in the play for it is in *Measure for Measure* that we find a real expression of what mercy really is 'an attribute to God himself'.

The next chapter deals with the sin of adultery and men's reaction to it. In *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, the adultery actually happens and the husband's solution to the situation is debatable: is it really forgiving? In *Othello* and *A Winter's Tale*, the adultery is either apprehended by manipulation or instanced by jealousy. *Timon of Athens* is also included as a man who cannot forgive himself.

The conclusion will, firstly, examine how forgiveness, repentance, mercy and justice fit each character and the circumstances in which the plot places them. Secondly, it will discuss how the religious and political opinions of the day allowed these plays to be written and why plays of forgiveness and repentance were written only in this period, until T.S. Eliot's 1949 play, *The Cocktail Party*, which has never been revived. Then, looking at the bigger picture the thesis will discuss how these themes passed to poetry and the novel. As this is a subject that has not attracted much modern literary criticism, the critics quoted range from Hazlitt onwards, making for an interesting and diverse commentary.

PART ONE:

1. BC/AD

Jesus Christ was born of a Jewish mother and brought up as a Pharisee with a prescriptive moral code, where to be righteous was the aim of a good man. Nonetheless, he inhabited a Roman world, which, with its culture based in Hellenic ethics, was developed by the Stoics with a different idea of what was the good life. For the Greeks and Romans, happiness and justice were the aims.

In this chapter, Greek ethical ideas will be examines. Plato gives one example in *The Republic*, which was later developed by Aristotle in *The Nichomachean Ethics.* This chapter uses the Letters of Seneca, a contemporary of St Paul's, to describe the ethics most prevalent in the Roman world. Additionally, it will discuss the Covenant God made with his chosen people and explore the form of Judaism that Christ was taught. By his day, it seems to have become formulaic and righteousness was the prevailing virtue. I argue that the feeling of guilt endemic in Judaism leads to the repentance characteristic of Christianity.

The first writings about Christ were St Paul's. He preached a reformed Judaism to a Gentile world and did not set out to start a new religion. It is unlikely that he met Christ when he was on earth, though he did meet Peter, and Jesus's brother, James. His message stresses love more than forgiveness, though his definition of real love includes forgiveness.

Next, the chapter will look at the Gospels' accounts of Christ's words, although we must bear in mind that the Gospels are not first hand accounts of Christ's life. A connection to Jewish teaching is seen in the origins of the emphasis that Christ put on

loving your neighbour and forgiving your enemies in *Leviticus* but Christ gave preference to this teaching rather than to the more prescriptive Pharisee view, which stressed righteousness. The last section will discuss what, for the purpose of this thesis, is meant by repentance, mercy and forgiveness.

Although Plato in the *Timaeus* considers the notion of a creator of the world, the Greeks and Romans believed in all too human gods and goddesses, whose interference in the human beings was mainly sexual or malevolent. But they were interested in what made a good man or a good society. In Plato's consideration of the components of a perfect society, he also discusses the idea of what makes a good man. In the form of a dialogue, he writes:

> 'And so mean and cowardly natures can't really have any dealings with philosophy?
> 'No, they can't'
> 'And a well-balanced man, who is neither mean nor ungenerous nor boastful nor cowardly, can hardly be difficult to deal with or be unjust'.[2]

So, it can be deduced that Plato admired generosity, courage, justice and prudent behaviour.

This judgment is something that Aristotle in *The Nichomachean Ethics* develops into a whole code of behaviour in which the aim of a man's life was to be happy and to take an active part in politics.

[2] Plato, *Timaeus* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p.179. All future references will be to this edition and will be given in the text.

What did Aristotle mean by happiness? The Greek word he used was *eudemonia.* Firstly, this meant that because man was a rational animal he had to act rationally, that is moderately, for happiness is not the same as pleasure.

For it is with pleasures and pains that moral goodness is concerned. Pleasure induces us to behave badly, and pain to shrink from fine actions. Hence the importance (as Plato says) of having been trained in some way from infancy to seek joy and grief at the right things [3]

> But when it comes to saying in what happiness consists, opinions differ, and the account given by the generality of mankind is not of the wise (Aristotle, p.7)

Actions, therefore, derived from reason, but there is an ambiguity in what Aristotle says. Although he thinks that courage, prudence generosity and justice are qualities that should be encouraged and admired how are we to judge what constitutes these virtues? Who can say whether one's reason is adequate to make a decision as to what is courageous, prudent, generous or just? As he writes at the beginning of *The Ethics*, '[s]ince in every case a man judges rightly what he understands, and of this only is a good critic, it follows that while in a special field the good critic is a specialist, the good critic in general is a man with a general education' (Aristotle, p.6).

With so many different philosophical concepts of happiness, how is a man to be educated in right behaviour? Aristotle comes to the conclusion that we have to start with what is known or accepted. As later echoed by the eighteenth century Scottish

[3] Aristotle, *The Nichoachean Ethics* (London: Penguin, 2004) p.35. All future references will be to this edition and will be given in the text.

philosopher, David Hume, Aristotle thinks that what your society deems as good is good, and what your society deems evil is evil.

Good, however, is not necessarily pleasure, for excessive pleasure can lead to bad behaviour and what Aristotle considers ‘a bovine existence’. Nor should a man seek honour but goodness, only living what he calls the contemplative life will he be happy. Virtuous acts are good in themselves, and bring the right kind of pleasure: ‘What is more, they (virtuous acts) are both good and fine, and each in the highest degree, assuming that the good man is right in his judgement of them […] So happiness is the best, the finest, most pleasurable of all’ (Aristotle, p.19).

Good judgement means exercising good choice, which must be distinguished from desire, feelings, and opinions. It must be moderate and rational and a man must not wish for the impossible but proceed with deliberation, which is about means not ends. But the ends appear to each person according to his own character and idea of what is good and only a man born with a ‘good natural disposition’ will be well endowed in this way.

A man, of course, can acquire virtue if he acts courageously and without fear confronting that which is fearful for us, such as death and ignorance, and he should act with temperance.

This word, temperance, or prudence is essential in Aristotle’s moral code. A man should not act impulsively or without due thought nor with any other desire than to be virtuous. Here then is the heart of Aristotle’s thought and which, popularly, is known as the ‘golden mean’, though scholars refute that is golden!

Quite simply, Aristotle thinks that the middle way is what a man should pursue. Courage is halfway between cowardice and foolhardiness: Prudence is halfway between being mean and over-generous, while justice is the mean between over strictness and

over leniency. This rule can be applied to almost every human act and will lead to a virtuous life.

Aristotle devotes a whole section of the book to praise of the virtue of justice. While admitting that, sometimes, the terms, just and unjust, were ambiguous and subject to interpretation, he goes on to define some just and unjust actions. Certainly someone who breaks the law or one who takes unfair advantage of someone else is acting unjustly. An unjust man will also take more share of goods:

> not all goods, but with those that make up the field of good and bad fortune: things that are always good in themselves, but are not always good for the individual. These latter goods are what human beings pray for and try to obtain, but this is wrong they should pray for that which is good in itself may be good for them. (Aristotle, p.114)

Justice is always virtuous but sometimes can seem unfair particularly in distribution:

> Everyone agrees that justice in distribution must be in accordance with merit in some sense, but they do not all mean the same kind of merit: the democratic view is that the criterion is free birth; the oligarchic that is wealth or good family; the aristocratic that is excellence. (Aristotle: p.119)

If people think that they are being treated unjustly they must be able to have recourse to a judge. His job is to restore equality. Aristotle criticizes the Pythagoreans who define justice as ‘simply as having done to one what one has done to another’

(p.123) because that might cause further wrong actions. In conclusion Aristotle takes the view that to deal justly is not to be excessive:

> Injustice is a state that chooses what is unjust, such as excess and deficiency, in defiance of proportion of what is beneficial and harmful, respectively. Thus injustice consists in excess and deficiency in the sense that it is productive of these: in the case of oneself, excess of what is generally beneficial and deficiency of what is harmful…In an unjust act to have a smaller share is to be treated, and to have the larger is to act, unjustly. (Aristotle: p.124)

Again, this virtue comes about through use of reason and experience.

What of repentance and forgiveness? In the modern sense of the word repentance, that is recognition of our sinning and asking of God forgiveness there is no recognition in Aristotle. As he did not believe in a divine rule given by God to man there could be no sense of this kind of repentance. There are five mentions of repentance in *The Nichomachean Ethics* (pp. 52, 54,183,185, 237). The first two are within a discussion that Aristotle is making about voluntary and involuntary actions. Voluntary actions are those done with reason and not through ignorance. He writes that disgraceful acts done for pleasure are to be regretted. He writes '[e]very act done through ignorance is non-voluntary, but it is involuntary only when it causes the agent subsequent pain and repentance'. When writing about attitudes towards pleasure and pain he thinks that while a certain amount of pleasure is agreeable and necessary excess pleasure is not necessary. He continues:

> The case is similar with desires and pains. The man who pursues excessive pleasures or pursues necessary pleasures to excess and deliberately, for their own sake and not for any ulterior reason, is licentious, because such a person must be unrepentant, and is therefore incurable, since anyone incapable of repentance is incurable. (Aristotle, p.183)

> The licentious man is, as we have said is unrepentant because he abides by his choice but the incontinent one is also capable of repentance. Hence the facts are not as we suggested when we raised our questions; it is the licentious man that is incurable. (Aristotle; p.185)

The last passage which does not actually use the word repentance is a discussion on whether a bad man, a man whose 'soul is in conflict' (p.237) can be happy and have no regrets. The conclusion that can be drawn from these passages is that or Aristotle repentance is more a matter of social egret than a true feeling of having done something disgraceful for which deep sorrow should be expressed.

Chapter VIII, entitled *The Kinds of Friendship*, is the nearest Aristotle comes to discussing forgiveness and loving oneself. Following definitions of the kinds of friendship possible, which can be transient, when the need for the friendship ceases: the second type of friendship is one based on pleasure, but the best kind of friendship is that based on goodness (pp.203-206).

While admitting that, in friendship, loving is more important than being loved and that giving is more important than receiving, nonetheless he articulates how this can be difficult and how friends can hurt each other and fall out or outgrow each other. How should this situation be dealt with?

> Is one, then, to behave towards a former friend exactly as if he had never been a friend at all? Probably one ought to keep a memory of the former intimacy, and just as we feel bound to show more favour to friends than to strangers, so we should for old acquaintance's sake show some consideration for former friends - provided that the severance was not due to excessive wickedness on their part. (Aristotle, p.235)

Aristotle also considers loving oneself, distinguishing between this and being self-satisfied. Only a good man, he thinks, can love himself as he would love a friend, for only goodness can bring happiness and goodness can only be achieved through rational and moderate behaviour taken after contemplation.

This, then, was the Hellenist idea of a good man: a goodness that was independent of any outside spiritual guidance, one which depended on a good moral education, which was guided by what your society considered good behaviour and what you thought was moderate. This left you with a degree of choice, you were your own moral guide, and repentance, other than a feeling of regret, and forgiveness were virtually non-existent.

Aristotle's ethical stance was also one practised by the Romans, which by the time of Christ's birth had three ethical systems. The Epicureans who believed that the gods may exist, but they are far off and do not bother themselves about humans. The Academicians were conservatives, thinking that you might as well conform to the old ways, because you could not really know anything about the gods. Or you could be a Stoic, a philosophy that was formulated originally by Zeno of Citium who lived from 334 to 262BC and through Alexander the Great's conquests spread throughout the

Middle East and from there to Rome, and like Aristotle, Stoics believe that there is no higher authority than reason combined with an acknowledgment of Nature or the Divine.

Stoic philosophy was written when both Jesus Christ and St Paul were alive, and Seneca was a contemporary of theirs. His letters were written during St Paul's lifetime and can be regarded as a late development of Hellenist philosophy Seneca acknowledges one God as creator and refers to Plato, 'the end is what God had in view and that […] is goodness […] what was the cause of God's creating the universe? He is good, and whoever is good can never be grudging with anything good; so he made it as good a world as it was in his powers to make it'.[4]

The virtues that Stoics should cultivate were wisdom, which meant moral insight, justice, courage, and moderation. He should not live entirely for pleasure, though he could seek happiness, but endure all that life sends him. He must not be extravagant.

Philosophy calls for simple living, not for doing penance, and the simple way of life need not be a crude one. The standard that I accept is this: one's life should be a compromise between the ideal and the popular morality. People should admire our way of life but they should at the same time find it understandable (Seneca: Letter V pp.35-36). Seneca realizes that people have different standards: 'For a person who is not aware that he is doing anything wrong has no desire to put it right. You have to catch yourself doing it before you can reform…So to the best of your ability demonstrate your own guilt' (Seneca: Letter XXVIII, p 77).

This passage suggests that a man sets his own moral code by an inward spirit that 'must be trained to a realization and acceptance of its lot (Letter XC1, p.181). Men must not indulge in 'hope, envy, hatred, fear and contempt' (Letter C, p.195). Man can be inspired by the divine. Seneca writes, '[t]he soul that is elevated and well regulated, that

[4] Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic* (London, 2004), Letter IXV, p.120. All future references will be to this edition and will be given in the text.

passes through any experience as if it counted for comparatively little, that smiles at all things we fear or pray for is impelled by a force that is from heave' (Letter XLLI, p.87).

In an interesting passage about slavery, Seneca shows how Stoics should treat the rest of mankind like brothers:

> I don't want to involve myself in an endless topic of debate by discussing the treatment of slaves, towards whom we Romans are exceptionally arrogant, harsh and insulting. But the essence of the advice I'd like to give is this: treat your inferiors in the way in which you would like to be treated by your own superiors. And whenever it strikes you how much power you have over a slave, let it also strike you that your own master has just as much power over you.
> (Letter XLVIII, p.93)

Although Seneca recognizes guilt, he does not write about repentance towards the Creator, which he acknowledges as the divine. Nor does he speak about forgiveness. He does write about love. In Letter IX, Seneca quotes an earlier Stoic philosopher, Hecato, who wrote: 'I shall show you […] a love philtre compounded without drug or herb or witch's spell. It is this: if you wish to beloved, love' (pp.48-49). In the last letter, in a long passage, Seneca writes that we can achieve happiness when we pursue a straight course:

> and reach that destination where things that are pleasant and things that are honourable finally become, for you, the same. And we can achieve this if we realize that there are two classes of things attracting us or repelling us. We are attracted by wealth, pleasure, good looks, political advancement […] we are

repelled by exertion, death, pain, disgrace and limited means. It follows that we need to train ourselves to crave for the former and not be afraid of the latter. (Seneca, Letter CXXIII, p.230)

Unlike Aristotle's moral code, Seneca and Stoicism do accept that there is a divinity but still all depends on man himself, using his reason and experience to know what is good, and what makes for his own happiness. There is really no realization of a greater ideal than reason and for Stoics harmony with Nature. Nor does love feature much in their philosophy: excess eroticism, like excess in anything else, is regarded as undesirable, but loving and forgiving one's fellow man is not discussed, though Seneca does imply that one should treat all men kindly and as one would like to be treated oneself. The Hellenist world put man at the pinnacle of life, his aim was to be happy, but what made him happy was entirely of his own choosing.

The striking difference between the Roman/ Greek world and that of the Jewish world is a belief in, not only a Creator, but a God who has created the world for mankind. The Jewish mythology, right from the beginning, has God being demanding of man. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve live an idyllic life, except for the commandment not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. The serpent tempts Eve and she tempts Adam and they disobey a God whom they see and to whom they talk. Neither Adam nor Eve expresses any grief for what they have done and they are driven from the garden. The next strong story is that of Noah. God sees the wickedness on earth and decides to cleanse it by a flood. Noah, being righteous, is told to build the Ark, and he and his family and a pair of every animal on earth survive the flood. This, then, is when God makes a Covenant with people, and all the creatures on earth to protect them

forever, and Noah's sons will populate the whole earth. But this is not a moral code, it is a code for the safety of mankind. God still wishes them well.

The covenant is renewed and extended with Abraham. God promises Abraham fruitfulness and 'I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generation' (*Genesis*, 17. 7)

And God promises Abraham the land of Canaan forever, and demands that every male child shall be circumcised, an order which Abraham obeys. Although God had shown anger to Adam and Eve, Abraham seems to be the first person in the Bible to realize that God will be angry if mankind behaves itself badly but He will accept man's repentance. God tells Abraham that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are wicked and will be destroyed. Abraham pleads for the righteous in those cities and asks God not to be angry, and in the story of Lot's wife indicates that once sin has been acknowledged one should leave it behind and start afresh. The seeds of confession, repentance have been planted.

But God tests Abraham as to his willingness to accept the Covenant He has given. God asks Abraham to kill his own son as a sign of his willingness to serve Him. When Abraham shows his willingness to do this, God again renews the covenant with the Jewish people, that they should multiply and inherit the earth.

A sense of sin, of wrongdoing, becomes more evident in the stories and the bond between God and His people grows. For their transgressions they are led into Egypt and bondage but God sends plagues unto Egypt and under the leadership of Moses the Jews leave that land and go into the wilderness. Moses is the first historically known person in the Bible and it is thought that he was an adherent of the heretic Pharaoh, Akhenaten, the

first known monotheist. It is then that a moral code is established with the Ten Commandments, which are found in *Exodus*, Chapter 20.

The first Commandments deal with the relationship between God and Man. There is only one God who is to be worshipped and obeyed. He requires no images by which to worship Him. To those who obey His commandments He promises mercy. His name must not be taken in vain, and the Sabbath day must be kept sacred. The next six Commandments deal with man's relationship with man. Good behaviour, required by God, means honouring your parents: not killing anyone: not committing adultery: not stealing,and, lastly, not bearing false witness. Failure to do these things will acquire God's wrath.

It is all very formulaic and prescriptive, and also in Exodus is described in minute detail, what good conduct means. Furthermore the Jews are to make no covenant with the Philistines or any other unrighteous people. The following Chapters in *Exodus* deal with the ritual of worship and more intricate prescriptive commandments. God is seen by Moses as being full of wrath, though when the Tabernacle is built, God does fill it with His glory.

What is missing from this story is any mention of God loving His people. He has great expectations of them, but, seemingly, gives them little help. He is concerned with them worshipping Him, in ways which we would now consider unacceptable, animal sacrifice would be abhorred now, but then it was a token of repentance or celebration for good fortune. The priests, though, can bless those who repent by anointing them with oil. It is in Moses's time that the idea of repentance seems to be born and which finds its greatest expression in the Psalms, which recognizes not only God's loving-kindness towards man but also that repentance is necessary:

> Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in my sight […] Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. (Psalm 51)

In the minutiae of good conduct which fill both *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy* every aspect of human activity is prescribed: how you should eat and what you should eat, what you should wear, what your family relations should by because this is what God needs from you. What there is little of is a mention of love. Forgiveness or love is only mentioned in a single place in *Leviticus*:

> Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt not in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, nor suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord bearing grudges against surely means that one should forgive them the wrong they have done you. (Leviticus 18.17-18)

To sum up, then, the differences between the Hellenic moral code and the Jewish one is to say that while Hellenism relied on reason, experience and what was considered good conduct by one's fellow men and which happiness, judged by what made one happy, was the object in life, the Jews had an authoritative, though loving God, who detailed every action and thought. The demands made by Him extended to every detail in one's life but if one acknowledged and repented one's transgression He would, of His

mercy, grant one forgiveness. Increasingly, too, it was expected that one forgave those who transgressed against one, something which seems missing in Hellenism. But there was increasingly in Judaism the hope of the Messiah, the 'anointed one' who would save mankind from the results of his transgressions.

There was a prophetic prediction that the Covenant that God had made with Israel meant that a time would come when the transgressions of Israel would be overcome. The Jews would be returned from exile delivered from foreign rule: the Temple would be re-built: the people who did not believe in one God would believe, obey God's commandments and Israel would lead them. In the *Book of Daniel* it was promised that the Babylonian exile would end and the Jews would lead the world to righteousness. The Messiah would lead this revolution.

These prophesies (which are also in *Ezra* and *Zechariah*) find their most poignant expression in *Isaiah*:

> Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighted. I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles […] He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law. (Isaiah 42.1-2,4)

The Gentiles will abandon their gods, but not until the Servant has suffered and given his life for them: 'He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not' (Isaiah 53. 3); 'The Servant will bear the sins of all and made intercession with God for all sinners*:* 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone our own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the of us all' (*Isaiah* 53 6). God promises that

‘In righteousness shalt thou be established; thou shalt be far from oppression’ (*Isaiah* 53.14). The Covenant that God had made with His people would be fulfilled, the sins of Adam, Eve and Abraham would be requited, the righteous rewarded and peace would reign in the world. The Jewish people would no longer be oppressed. This was a prophecy that Paul of Tarsus firmly believed.

Paul had been brought up as a Shammaite Pharisee, an extremely strict group, who also was very nationalistic, believing that Israel should not be ruled by the Gentiles, that is the Romans. As a good Pharisee he would obey the Law and look forward to the coming of the Messiah. He was, however, in Tarsus, living in a Hellenistic city, Greek speaking, with a belief in many gods and the right of a man to choose his own moral standards, his own religious beliefs. This may have modified his Judaism and although the Jews of Tarsus were a separate community he must have mixed in a Gentile world as well. This made him someone who could tell the world about the risen Christ because he understood both the Judaic world and the Gentile world.

Paul never met Jesus when he was alive, though as an intelligent Jew he surely must have known about some of his teaching. He did have some mystical experience of Christ which convinced him the Christ was the Messiah. He did meet with the Apostle Peter, and Jesus’ brother James, so he had hearsay knowledge of Christ’s teaching. This he seems to see as a fulfilment of the prophecies. As Tom Wright says, ‘What never changed […] was [Paul’s] utter and unswerving loyalty to the God of Abraham, and Jacob, the God who made promises to Abraham, the God who gave the Law, the God who spake by the prophets […] He did not abandon Judaism for something else’ (Wright, p.39).

Paul remained a Pharisee who never broke with Judaism, believed in it implicitly while being able, as a man used to the Hellenized world, to purvey the teachings of

Christ and interpreted them in a way that was acceptable to Greek and Gnostic thought. Central to his belief was Jesus taught that it was possible for sinful man to be reconciled with a loving and righteous God and that '[t]his yawning gulf between the perfection of God and imperfection of man could never be bridged by mere religious observance to the rules' (Wilson, p.41). Mankind had to both repent of his sinful ways and ask for God's forgiveness, and also not seek vengeance, he must love his enemies. Loving your enemies was the most revolutionary idea that Jesus had.

In *Romans* 12. 19-21, Paul writes:

> Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves,but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

And again in 13.10, while reiterating the Ten Commandments as right conduct, he says 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour'. It is in *Corinthians 1*, Chapter 13 that Paul's great poem to Love or Charity occurs and though it does not repeat the Jewish Law it speaks of the spirit behind it and extends the love that should lie behind all human behaviour. If we love sufficiently we will be reconciled with god and extend our forgiveness to our fellow men: 'Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness' (Colossians 3.13)

In the Second Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, Paul again emphasizes that not only is repentance before God essential before the Messiah comes, but they must continue in

charity towards one another, underlining what he said in the First Epistle that the Thessalonians should not render evil for evil.

The letter that Paul wrote to his fellow Jews now known as the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, Paul argues for the new Covenant that Christ brought, saying that it is better than what went before. He is the ultimate High Priest and there is no need for other priests, for Christ offered himself up for our sins. The First Covenant was not faultless, and God promised to be merciful to those who were unrighteous 'and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more' (8.12), but Christ had brought a better Covenant, one that also required repentance but also forgiveness of the sins committed towards one by other people.

Paul was presenting a reformed Judaism to the Gentile world. He believed that the risen Christ was the Messiah and that he would soon return to earth. Paul wanted the Gentile world to acknowledge the one, true God: he preached that the Eucharist was the only true sacrifice given once and for all, making pagan sacrifices obsolete. Above all, Paul preached that Christ presented true spirituality, combining both repentance before God for our sins, and forgiving those who wrong us. This challenged the accepted ethical standards of the Hellenistic/Roman world with its belief that man was the arbiter of his own destiny who, through reason, created his own ethical code. Jesus, by his emphasis on love and forgiveness, had enlarged Judaism, accepting yet superseding the Torah.

But what had Christ preached? What did he say about repentance and forgiveness? Again, we come up against the difficulty that the four writers of the Gospels were unlikely to have known Jesus of Nazareth personally. What they tell us had been passed down to them by people who had heard the living Christ. Much of the Gospels belong to myth, indeed the mythology of Christ's life, a human woman impregnated by a God who has a semi or divine child, the return from the Underworld and the idea that the

king dies for his people, are the very stuff of Greek mythology. but even these myths do not destroy the actual original teaching, though sometimes different, it makes up a consistent whole and is indeed a new Covenant because it emphasizes the love that underlies the old Covenant but which had been lost in a the meticulous obeying of minute actions. Christ was brought up as Pharisee, but he was often criticized by them for his conduct, and Pharisees often tried to trip him up. Always, though, he superseded their narrow interpretation of what God required with his larger vision. There are three parables which show his attitude to repentance and forgiveness. The first is in *Luke* Chapter 18, verse 9: 'And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others'. In the parable the Pharisee goes into the Temple and tells God how righteous he is in keeping the Law, while the Publican would not even lift up his eyes to heaven 'but smote his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner'. Jesus concludes, verse 14: 'I tell you, this man went down to his house, justified rather than the other'. The Parable of the Prodigal Son takes the idea of repentance even further. In this Story, the younger son of a rich man asks his father for his inheritance and he leaves the family home to travel. He squanders his money in hedonistic living and eventually is in want. He says to himself, 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. And am no more worthy to be called thy son' (*Luke* 15.18). The young man does so and confesses his sins to his Father who has run out to greet him and who calls his servants to dress his son in rich robes and to prepare a feast for him. A man who repents and a Father who forgives.

The Parable of the Two Servants takes repentance and forgiveness a step further. It is found in *Matthew* 18.23. Peter asks Christ how many times should one forgive someone, suggesting that perhaps seven times was enough. Christ replied that seventy

times seven was the proper answer and He tells this story: a man owed his king (whom Jesus says was the kingdom of heaven) ten thousand talents. The man was unable to pay and the king ordered that he, his wife, children and all his goods should be sold in payment. The servant fell down and asked for time to pay. The king granted his request. The servant then went out and found a fellow servant who owed him a hundred pence. This servant, too, could not pay and the first man had him imprisoned. When the king heard of this he said to the first man: 'O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt […] Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?'

In these three stories, there is a progression: the first tells that repentance and asking God for forgiveness is the most important religious act: the second tells that God will forgive a repentant person and the third teaches that forgiving is an essential part of good behaviour.

There are alleged incidents in Christ's life that also illustrate his emphasis on forgiveness. He is criticized for telling the woman who anoints his feet with tears and ointment that because of her great love her sins are forgiven. When a woman is brought before him accused of adultery and who is to be stoned he says that only those who have not sinned themselves are entitled to cast a stone, He tells the woman to depart and sin no more.

The New Covenant that Jesus gave emphasized what is written in *Leviticus* about loving God and loving and forgiving one's neighbour. The New Covenant appears in all four Gospels. In Matthew 22.37-40, Jesus says: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets'.[5] The Scribe who has questioned Jesus about this agrees with him and says that these commandments are more than burnt offerings and sacrifices.

In St Luke's Gospel (Chapter 10) the two commandments are given in the context of a discussion with a lawyer who was tempting Jesus by asking him what his interpretation of then Law was. The first commandment is given in the same words as in the other Gospels but the lawyer continues the discussion by asking 'Who is my neighbour?' Jesus replies with the story of the Good Samaritan, who helps an injured man who has been set on by thieves and left to die when both a priest and a Levite had left him by the roadside.

St John's Gospel differs from the other three Gospels because it gives two examples of Christ's commandment to love. In a long passage where Jesus is explaining the loving relationship between God and himself he says that the disciples are to love one another as he has loved them. The next instance is in Chapter 15 as Jesus says similar words in the context of the Last Supper. Jesus has told Judas Iscariot to go quickly to do what he has to do and then in the middle of a discourse about God he says, 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another '(John 13.34).

In all these differing versions of the New Covenant the Scribe really seems to have understood Christ's meaning when he said that the New Commandments superseded all the ritual and scrupulous obeying of the minute details of the Torah. Loving other people as one love's oneself means treating them as one would, oneself, like to be treated.

[5] Cf. Mark 12.29-31: 'The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy to this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'.

Jesus gives examples of how to treat other people throughout the Gospels. In *Matthew* 5.25, He says that if one is filled with anger towards your brother, before one offers one's gift at the altar, one must be reconciled to him: 'Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time thine adversary deliver you to the judge.

And further on (v.44), he disagrees with the old Jewish idea of justice of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth by saying that one should never render evil for evil. He goes on further to say, 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you'.

St Luke's Gospel is the only one of the four in which Christ gives the ultimate example of forgiveness. As he was being nailed to the cross Jesus says, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (verse 34). In two Gospels, *St Matthew's (*Chapter 5) and *St Luke's* (Chapter 6), in what we now call *The Beatitudes*, Christ describes what qualities men should cultivate. The qualities differ slightly in each Gospel but ultimately the two descriptions praise meekness, those that mourn, the merciful, the peacemakers and those who are persecuted and are reviled should rejoice for theirs is the kingdom of God. These qualities are fare from the self-righteousness that the Pharisees practised.

What is now called the Lord's Prayer which millions of Christians say every day and which is included in every Christian service expresses firstly praise of God the Father and asks for help is everyday life. Among the petitions that are made is the one for forgiveness and the one to be given the grace to forgive. It is a prayer that encapsulates Christ's teaching.

This then was the ethical teaching of Christ's world. On one hand was the Hellenistic conception that man made his own decisions about ethics, he learnt by experience and education: did what was the norm for the society in which he lived. He believed in many gods, though the idea of a supreme God was gaining ground, especially in Stoicism. On the other hand was the Jewish idea of one supreme God who not only created man but was intimately concerned in his behaviour and welfare. From this basic thought had grown a way of conduct which largely ignored the underlying love and forgiveness that it originally had. Christ's teaching renewed this and offered to the pagan world a new way of thinking about existence and life. Love as a guide to living a virtuous life was an extraordinary conception, and within this all-embracing love was the concept of forgiveness.

Judaism had early on recognized that man sinned frequently against the Torah and so against God: that he should admit this, express his sorrow and make a sacrifice to show his repentance. There was also a recognition that any quarrels should be reconciled before one entered the Temple. Christ put these requirements above everything. In contrast, the Hellenistic world put Justice above everything: to act justly, that is not being too strict nor too lenient, was the ideal. Christ taught that justice should be tempered with mercy and, above all, with love.

Can any conclusions be drawn from these disparate ideas? For the sake of this thesis, some definitions have to be formed even if they are somewhat arbitrary. Repentance is the acknowledgement before God of our wrongdoing, expressing sorrow for it and making restitution to anyone we have wronged. Forgiving other people means reconciling any differences or wrongs between them and us, and then behaving towards them as if nothing had happened. Forgiving oneself means admitting one's failings, seeking to put them right and then resume one's life wiser and more loving than before.

But forgiveness is hard. It demands a ruthless assessment of ourselves and a strict judgement of what we do. An acknowledgment of wrongdoing, and an overcoming of it, can seem impossible. But Christ assured us that it was possible. Recognition of wrong and the wish to restore ourselves to a loving person is the wormewood of which John Donne wrote. Although wormewood is extremely bitter, help can be found. If the wish to repent, and the honesty to admit our faults, is within us, God will eventually give us grace to do it.

Grace is not necessarily the good feeling that Robert Browning's Pippa has in *The Ring and the Book,* 'God's in His heaven, all's right with the world'. Though unwarranted grace can feel like that. Grace is partaking in the generosity of God. He forgives us and his grace enables us to forgive others and ourselves.

2. MEDIEVAL PIETY

This section examines the religious life of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Since I am making a generalist argument about forgiveness, focused on Shakespeare, I quote from Middle English texts in translation rather than the original language. I will discuss church services and individual piety with consideration of the varying degrees of literacy among the population at the time. As the nation shifted from a trilingual nation, with separate languages for everyday life (Middle English), Court (Anglo-French) and Church Latin) towards increased use of English for state business, and the invention of the printing press allowed for greater access to the written word, there was a flowering of writing and translation, which included not only poetry and drama, but also mystical works. Many of these spoke about forgiveness and, particularly, repentance. During this time, language and religion also became contested when the followers of Wyclif translated the Bible into English for the first time. The condemnation and persecution of the Wycliffites for this contrasts markedly with the orthodox acceptance of Middle English versions of Christ's life, in verse, prose and drama, as well as in visual culture, including alabasters, stained glass windows, tiles, roof bosses and other artworks within churches.[6] As Eamon Duffy has written, 'medieval Catholicism exerted a normally strong, diverse, and vigorous hold over the imagination and loyalty of the people'.[7]

Church services were all in Latin, a language that would only have been understood by the clergy and those with higher levels of education. The Mass, said behind the Rood screen, was the principal service and it was obligatory for everyone to attend on Sundays. It included prayers of repentance, asking for God's mercy for sins

[6] See Linda Bates, *Middle English versions of Christ's Birth and Infancy* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cambridge University, 2010).
[7] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (Yale, 2005), p.4.

committed, and of forgiveness towards each other.. The Eucharist was given to lay people only at Easter, though special dispensations could be given. For example, Margery Kempe got permission to receive communion every week. The lay people in the body of the church would say their own prayers, visit the statues of the Blessed Virgin and other saints to make petitions or to adore. There was a saint to help you in almost every aspect of your life.

Although the prayers were said in Latin, the congregation would have had instruction from their parish priest. The Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary and the Apostle's Creed were explained and taught to them together with the Catechism. In 1281, the provincial Council of Lambeth, chaired by Archbishop Pecham, had issued a proclamation, *De informacione simlilicium* or *Ignorantia Sacerdorum*, which priests had to read in English to their congregations four times a year. The document expounded the Creed, the Ten Commandments and Christ's Covenant to love God and your neighbour. It also detailed the seven works of mercy, the seven deadly sins and the seven sacraments. Eamon Duffy writes:

> The *Igorantia Sacerdotum* was to prove an immensely influential and long-lived schema. Adapted and translated into verse for the Northern Province at the command of Archbishop Thoresby in 1370 as the so-called *Lay Folk's Catechism […]* it was imitated or directly used in dioceses all over *England* until the Reformation.[8]

The seven works of mercy were feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, relieving the prisoner, housing the stranger, and

[8] Eamon Duffy, *Marking Hours: English People and their Prayers* (Yale, 2011), p.3.

burying the dead. The seven deadly sins were anger, avarice, envy, gluttony, lechery, sloth and pride. The seven sacraments were baptism, penance, confirmation, communion, marriage, ordination and the last rites. To have knowledge of these would indeed be a real education in religion. Another aspect of religious life was the obligation to go to confession at least once a year, in Lent. Priests were expected to keep an eye on their flock, and if any of them were at odds, particularly in Lent, were expected to bring the quarrelling people together and exhort them to forgive each other. He could refuse them absolution at confession if they refused to be reconciled. Confession was available at all times, of course, and it was up to the individual to decide when it was necessary. So, it can be seen, that the Church had instructions for every area of a person's life. The teaching was comprehensive, reaching into every aspect of your life with an emphasis on right doing. The fear of going to Hell was very real; the Parable of the Sheep and the goats was graphically portrayed in the many frescos, stained glass windows and imagery in the churches.[9] One was urged weekly to live a godly and loving life.

Other aids to help you on your way to heaven were the Books of Hours, or Primers, which were individual prayer books. These were, of course, in Latin, though Primers have been found where prayers have been translated into English, and comments also been made in the vernacular. Much of the instruction to a pious life was in the illustrations and the decorative letters, which depicted scenes of Christ's life for contemplation and prayer. Over eight hundred of these books have been found.[10] All beautifully written and illustrated, they were the prerogative of the aristocracy. When printing arrived, Books of Hours were printed on the Continent in English though, at first, they were banned and not allowed to be imported.

[9] The Guild Chapel in Stratford Upon Avon had its doom screen whitewashed.
[10] Duffy (2011), p.3

Nonetheless, there was a desire to have religious writings in English because this had become the language spoken by everyone. Until Edward III, Parliament had largely been entirely composed of the nobility, although sometimes ordinary people were ordered to attend. Edward III held the first elections. Men with houses worth 40s were eligible to vote and/or sit as Members. For context, the average wage was £6. Business was, however, mainly conducted in French, which was the first language of the aristocracy. Gradually, however, English took over, as the commoners presented their petitions in the vernacular. Henry IV was the first king to address Parliament in English. He insisted that Laws were written in English, rather than French or Latin language, though proceedings in Court had been held in English since Edward III's day.

The idea of kingship, though, remained autocratic. At his Coronation, the king was both crowned and anointed in the context of the Mass. The Crowning was the king's contract with his people to govern them fairly and justly. The anointing was his contract with God. Some scholars believe that the king stripped to the waist to receive the anointing on his breast, as well as on his hands and head. From that moment, the king was the holy representative on earth. The doctrine of the monarch's two bodies was prevalent: his earthly body was subject to all earthly joys and sorrows, illnesses and lusts but, as well, he had a holy body and was given a special grace from God to do His will on earth and to govern righteously in God's name. The behaviour of contemporary kings suggests that they knew and honoured this. Henry V, for example, attended Mass every day and went to confession weekly: his father endowed and built monasteries; Edward III regularly went on pilgrimages. Many kings wished to go on a Crusade. All of them honoured the Saints, particularly Edward the Confessor and St George.[11] Battles were

[11] cf. The Wilton Diptych, an altar screen made for the private devotion of Richard II, which shows him alongside these saints as well as Mary: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/english-or-french-the-wilton-diptych

often preceded by the saying of Mass. Indeed, Henry V attended three before Agincourt. It was the duty of the king to be God's representative on earth.

Although the king was dependent on Parliament for taxes and, increasingly, for permission to go to war, the real ruling was done by the king in Council, and with his personal staff. From time to time, Parliament would request the removal of officers. However, there were some that they could not get rid of, including the Archbishop of Canterbury who was the Pope's representative.

The Church in England was always striving to be independent of the Pope's authority, though, of course, ultimately he had the greatest power. As in King John's reign, he could excommunicate a king, which meant that no Masses could be said, no weddings or burials take place. This period coincided with the Papal Schism, wherein internal disputes about the papacy overshadowed the Church in England's relationship with the wider Roman Catholic Church.

So Church and State were closely knit and heresy and treason were the two crimes that were certainly punishable by death. In 1401, death by burning was made the penalty for heresy whereas previously it had been reserved for women caught in adultery. For this was the time that the first stirrings of the Reformation were observed. Wyclif had already started translating the Bible into Middle English before his death in 1384. His followers presented The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards to Parliament in 1395. Using the standard mode of publication at the time, the Conclusions were additionally nailed to the doors of Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral. Written in English, The Conclusions proclaimed that: the worldly wealth and the possessions of the Church were opposed to the ideals of faith, hope and charity; celibacy promoted lust; nuns might seek to abort accidental pregnancies; arrogance was a characteristic of modern priesthood as a consequence of their hearing confession; priests no longer

followed the example given by Christ; there was no Real Presence in the consecrated Bread and Wine; all warfare was against the teaching of Christ. The Lollards also thought that the Mass should be said in English. Henry IV and his brother John of Lancaster were implacable in prosecuting Lollards and other people who wished to have English as the language of the Church. Doubtless this was because of the way that Henry had acquired the Crown in defeating the rightful king and being responsible for the death of one whom he would have ultimately considered to be God's rightful anointed.

Alongside this desire was the growing literature written in English both religious and secular. Among the religious writings were those of the four English Mystics: Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Walter Hilton and the unknown writer of *The Cloud of Unknowing.* All wrote about repentance. Prayer in medieval England was an important activity and everyone was instructed about it both as a duty and as a way of obtaining grace and knowledge of God. There were two ways of prayer from which knowledge of God could be experienced *via positiva* and *via negativa*. The *via positiva* ascribes to God virtues and characteristics such as love, majesty, power, mystery and all virtues raised to a degree of a perfection that we can hardly comprehend and are really beyond our comprehension. We can, however, find some connection between our humanity and His divinity and we can comprehend through His grace.

Via negativa says that God is not knowable and different from His creatures who depend entirely on Him though He does not depend on them. Complete in Himself and unknowable we can never understand Him for we can only describe Him in our terms, which He transcends. Our intellect is too feeble to comprehend His glory and the only way we can have any inclining of His greatness is through love. This is the subject matter of the four books of mystical writing of this period.

The most well known is Julian of Norwich (*b.*1343) an anchoret who was established in the church of St Julian. We know very little of her life, not even her real name. During a severe illness she had what she called Revelations of Divine love and visions of the Crucified Christ. These led her to dedicate her life to Him as an anchoress. She is very conscious of her and the world's sinful state. She constantly in her manuscript pleads for God's forgiveness and that we should be contrite and humiliation and pain leads us to God's grace:

> Because of the humility we acquire […] we are exalted in the sight of God by his grace, and know very deep contrition and compassion and a genuine longing for God. Then suddenly we are delivered from sin and pain, and raised to blessedness.[12]

Julian writes movingly of God's love and mercy: 'Mercy is compassionate with the tender love of motherhood […] Mercy works to sustain, to suffer, to vitalize, to heal: and all in the tenders love' (Julian, p.136). Throughout her book, Julian assures us that by our admission of and contrition for our sins God's grace and mercy are there for us, and it is through Jesus Christ that we are redeemed. Unfortunately, when we begin to hate sin and to amend our ways according to the Church by confession and penance:

> there still remains within us a dread that holds us back, because we look at ourselves and the sins we have already committed. For some of us it is because we sin every day. We do not keep our promises, or the cleansing our Lord has bestowed upon us, but fall so often into wretchedness […] It is the will of God

[12] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Clifton Walters, Penguin Classic (London, 1966), p.120.

> that of all the qualities of the blessed Trinity that we should be most sure of, and delighted with, is love. Love makes might and wisdom come forgive our sins too. (Julian, pp.192-93)

This original thought that we, too, should forgive ourselves for what we have wrongfully committed is difficult but an essential part of the repentance and cleansing process of our contrition.

Julian is certain that repentance will lead us into the fullness of the love of God. He does not wish us to dwell on our sins and be despondent and depressed about them. If we repent He will restore us His love for love is what He teaches. Julian does not specifically tell us to love our neighbour, or forgive them, but it is implicit in her writing that this is essential. For her love, universal love, centre on the love God gives us means of being a loving and contrite person.

> So it is with this gracious information we are able to view our sin positively and not despairingly. For, indeed, we must face it and by such sight be made ashamed of ourselves, and humbled for our pride and presumption […] through our contrition and his grace we shall break with everything that is not our Lord. (Julian, p.201)

Then, as Julian concludes “all shall be well”.

The Scale of Perfection by Walter Hilton (*d.*1396) is about contemplative prayer. It is in two parts, written on different occasions. The first book is addressed to an anchoress and describes the renewal or “reforming” of the image of God in man, defaced by sin, to the “likeness” of God in Christ. Despite its ostensibly limited readership, its

eminently sane and practical counsel soon ensured that it was widely read by people living in the world as well as by vowed religious.[13]

The second book takes up the points made in Book 1, but leads the reader considerably further along the path of contemplative union with God.

Hilton was a Canon of the Augustinian Priory at Thurgarton, near Nottingham, when he died, but it is thought that before entering the monastery he had been an Inceptor in Canon Law and he was the author of several works of devotion. *Scale* is widely accepted as his most profound work. It goes beyond matters of devotion to include instructions on contemplative prayer, and the longing of the soul to be unaware of anything but the presence and love of God. The first work of the soul is to 'give honour to all and set them above yourself in your heart as your superiors, throwing yourself under their feet' (*Scale*, p.152). In passage after passage, Hilton presses sorrow for sins on his readers, for man is sinful and has been since Adam. Only through humility, repentance and charity can a person put on Christ's livery and be reconciled to God.

The anchoress should withdraw her thoughts into herself away from bodily senses in order to find Jesus alone. Hilton admits that 'it is very hard to love people truly in charity' but this must be done for one should hate the sin, not the sinner. For 'Love and charity is shed and diffused in your hearts by the Holy Spirit' (*Scale*, p.90). Hilton uses the word charity as an extreme form of love that forgives through love. To be a follower of Christ means to love every one of his fellow Christians 'good and bad, friends and foes, without pretence or flattery, contempt in his heart against the man, bitterness or spiteful faultfinding' and following this passage Hilton quotes Christ's Commandment to love one another.

[13] Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. John P.H. Clark and Rosemary Dorward, Paulist Press (London, 1991) p.xi.

In Book 2, Hilton discusses the Sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Confession, which must be done with repentance and for the love of God. Section 38 states Hilton's beliefs on this subject and is titled 'How Love quietly slays all stirrings of wrath and envy, and reforms in the soul the virtues of peace, patience and perfect charity towards it fellow Christian, as he did particularly in the apostles' (*Scale*, p.141). In succeeding sections, Hilton deals with the sins that hinder man from loving God and for which he must ask for the grace to repent and ask for forgiveness, which Hilton calls the courtesy of God.

Like many composers of mystical writing, Hilton is more concerned with the withdrawal from life which enables us to live in peace and in charity with our fellow men. In an age where religion played a crucial part in everyone's life, his words were read, not only by the vowed religious to devote oneself to contemplative prayer where his accent is on the soul being pierced with the grace and bounty of God's love,but by lay people who wanted to reform their souls as well. Redemption was there for everyone, beginners in the spiritual life as well as those whose work was prayer. The forty-five extant manuscript copies of Book 1 and twenty-six of Book 2 all point to the popularity of the book. At the request of Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, it was printed in London by Wynkyn de Worde in 1494.

The serene and poetic *The Cloud of Unknowing* is the greatest work of exposition of the *via negativa* in the English language. Its authorship is unknown, though it is assumed to be a priest who was writing a book of instruction on contemplative prayer for another religious person. It assumes that God is completely unknowable without continual and concentrated prayer because He lives in the Cloud of Unknowing, which we can only penetrate slowly and with His grace. Nothing else must exist except the love between the person praying and God Himself.

> For he comes down to our level, adapting his Godhead to our power to comprehend. Our soul has some affinity to him, of course, because we have been created in his image and likeness. Only he himself is completely and utterly sufficient to fulfil the will and longing of our souls. Nothing else can.[14]

Everything other than this love must be thrown into the Cloud of Forgetting: 'there is no exception, whatever'. Everything must be sacrificed to obtain complete knowledge of God. But what of loving your neighbour? The author writes that the practiser 'will be made so virtuous and charitable through contemplation, that ever afterwards when he comes down from the heights to talk with or pray for his fellow Christians, his will be as readily directed to his foes as to his friends, to strangers as well as relatives'(*Cloud*, pp.84-5).

No one should attempt contemplative prayer unless: 'they have cleansed their conscience of all their past sins, according to the ordinary rules of Holy Church' (*Cloud*, p.87). God will always give the grace to enable us to repent our sins and will destroy 'the painful effects of your past sins [which] will irritate you but little'. But God's grace and courtesy can only work in our souls if we are willing and give Him our complete love.

Like Mary Magadalene, we must be sincerely repentant and weep over our sins, but fix our love on God and respond to His grace and love.

> But as the Bible shows her sorrow was more heartfelt, her longing more grievous, her sighing more profound, her languishing indeed nearly fatal, because she

[14]*The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. by Father John-Julian O.J.N (Paraclete Press, 2015), p.54. All future references will be to this edition and will be given in the text.

> wanted to love God more […] We need not be surprised; for it is characteristic of the true lover that the more he loves, the more he wants to love. (*Cloud*, p.74)

Thought and intellect will not let us penetrate into the Cloud of Unknowing and bring us into His presence. Sin cannot exist there and we must be passionate and fixed in our love and He will respond. It requires discipline and hardship, any distraction must be thrown into the Cloud of Forgetting and our contemplative prayer will take us further into the Cloud of Unknowing and nearer to God:

> Contemplative prayer means driving all idle thoughts from one's mind. But if you allow houseroom to this thing that you naturally like or grouse about, and make no attempt to rebuke it; ultimately it will take root in your utmost being, in your will, and with the consent of your will. Then it is deadly sin. (*Cloud*, p.67)

The author then enumerates the sins including some of the deadly sins such as Envy, Wrath and Sloth, all of which have to be repented. The only way of destroying sin and to be sure that it is destroyed is to contemplate God: 'For in this work a soul drieth up in it all the root and the ground of sin that will always live in it after confession' (*Cloud*, p.85). *Cloud* is written specifically for a religious person, someone who, perhaps has made a vow to remain in one holy place, or someone who has not the opportunity to do good works, so its emphasis is more on the soul's relationship with God as to inward and mental sins. Repentance is stressed and loving one's neighbours almost entirely neglected.

The Book of Margery Kempe is a totally different type of mystical literature that could be classed as a spiritual autobiography. Unlike the previous two books, it is not a

teaching manual for contemplatives. It is the vigorous and sometimes earthy story of Margery's own life and relationship with God. Referring to herself as "this creature" and totally obsessed with her own religious life, nonetheless she says much about what such a life requires. Margery was born in King's Lynn around 1373 and was already the mother of twelve children before she received her calling and, because she was unable to read or write, towards the end of her life she dictated her experiences to a priest. She went to confession many times, fasted and kept vigils and prayed all day long. When receiving Holy Communion she would cry and utter loud noises throughout the service and was commanded by God to go to the Holy Land, to Compostela and journey round England preaching all the time. She was several times brought before a bishop on suspicion of heresy but always managed to talk herself out of trouble. Her conversations and meditations are of three kinds: direct speech to God, like a conversation one would have with a friend, though Margery is always respectful; imaginative re-creation of being present in the life of the Holy Family, as if she were a hand-maid to the Blessed Virgin; and, thirdly, direct meditations on incidents in Christ's life, particularly His Passion. God told her to go to see Julian of Norwich:

> And so she did, and told her about the grace, that God had put into her soul, of compunction, contrition, sweetness and devotion, compassion with holy meditation and high contemplation, and very many holy speeches and converse that our Lord spoke to her soul.[15]

[15] *The Book of Margery*, ed. B.A. Windeatt, Penguin (London, 2004) p.77.

In one conversation with God He says to her, 'you have despised yourself; therefore you ery will never be despised of God […] I make worthy, and of the sinful, I make righteous'.[16]

Her language is often erotic and she imagines God in bed with her and He tells her that she can take Him in arms of her soul and in a very earthy passage she writes of God saying:

> 'Daughter, you are obedient to my will, and cleave as fast to me as the skin of the stockfish sticks to a man's hand when it is boiled, and you will not forsake me for any shame that any man can do to you'.[17]

Although concern about her own sins was uppermost in her mind and she went constantly to confession, Margery was also aware that she should be concerned for the souls of other people. She writes:

> Often during the year you say to me that you have forgiven many sins. Therefore I now ask mercy for the sins of the people, as I would do for my own, for, Lord you are all charity, and charity brought you to this wretched world and caused you to suffer hard pains for our sins. Why should I not then have charity for the people and desire forgiveness for their sins?[18]

God tells Margery that praying, fasting, doing penance and doing good deeds must be done sincerely and without hypocrisy (p.146) and all must be done for love of

[16] ibid p.85.
[17] ibid p.127.
[18] ibid p.120.

Him. At the end of the book Margery tells of her spiritual life and asks again for his mercy for her repentance and reasserts her undying love of God.

Margery was certainly an original. She made what could have been an ordinary life, extraordinary. As Stephen Medcalf writes, 'there is present a quite different kind of medieval person, strong-flavoured and stormy: one who comes nearer to us because, although she tries hard […] to transcend individuality, as is appropriate to the writer and mystic she wants to be, she cannot'.[19] Margery was mainly concerned with her own sins, but her book is remarkable in that she shows how very central God was to medieval life.

It is noticeable in all four books that the emphasis is on repentance, not on loving one's neighbours. This might be because two of the writers were writing for fellow religious whose life's work was prayer in solitude. Julian of Norwich, of course, had had an overwhelming religious experience in seeing the crucified Christ, leading her to become an anchoret. Most anchorets would be available to anyone who wanted religious advice or help as exemplified in Margery Kempe's visit to Julian, who seems to have been the most loving to her fellow creatures. Margery Kempe went round England preaching as well as exhorting her fellow travellers when she went abroad. This was not always appreciated: sometimes, she was abandoned by them and, on several occasions, she was arrested for heresy. In conclusion, the most pre-eminent concern of them is repentance and loving God is a priority.

God infused much more of the literature in this period than simply the devotional texts. A great deal of religious verse has survived. Much of it narrated events in Christ's life, especially the Nativity and the Crucifixion. There were also poems addressed to the Blessed Virgin, the supplicant between the human race and God the Father. As Brian Stone has pointed out, religion so permeated everyday life and the growing literature in

[19]*The Later Middle Ages*, ed. by Stephen Medcalf (Methuen, 1981), p.110.

English that even '[i]n the romances, mention is repeatedly made of the characters of chivalry at worship'.[20] Though the preeminent English poet of the period, Geoffrey Chaucer, did not overtly concern himself with religion *per se*, he was very critical of people who attached themselves professionally to the Church.

Among the greatest of medieval poems is *Pearl* which is the first of four poems found in the *Cotton Nero* A.x and is generally considered from internal evidence to have originated in the fourteenth century in the north-west, probably on the borders of Cheshire. The poem starts with the poet grieving at the graveside of a young girl called Pearl. He faints and in a mystical experience he finds himself beside the stream dividing him from Paradise. He sees Pearl dressed in white garments bestrewn with pearls. She approaches him and rebukes him for his sorrowing and says he must submit to God's will:

> So check your wrangling, your chiding close,
> And swiftly seek his mercy's sight;
> Plead for that mercy to interpose
> And manifest its marvellous might.
> His comfort can end your anguished plight
> With ease; and whether your agonies
> Are hidden or wailed in open light,
> Yet in every case, judgement is his.[21]

[20] *Medieval English Verse*, trans. by Brian Stone (Harmondsworth, 1971), p.16-7.
[21] *Pearl* in *Medieval English Verse*, p.155. All future references will be to this edition and will be given in the text. Verse 38.

She is now immortal and that death can reunite them, and she says that in heaven she is a queen. The poet is puzzled, because he thinks that only the Blessed Virgin is Queen of Heaven, but Pearl, by using the Parable of the Vineyard, where the workers who had waited all day for work, were paid the same as those who had worked in the Vineyard all day, explains that God's grace works that way, the reformed sinner being as valuable as the innocent. Thus Christ has many brides or queens as is explained in the Apocalypse. Pearl then lists the virtues and Sacraments needed to acquire the innocent, child-like qualities needed to attain Paradise. There follows a passage which is akin to love.

In courtesy, Saint Paul has said
We are all members of Jesus Christ,
For leg and navel, arm and head,
Are true parts of the body compromised,
Just so to each Christian soul belongs
As limb to the Lord of spiritual light
So think what rancours or hateful wrongs
Between your limbs are fastened tight.
The head feels neither resentment nor spite
At arm's or finger's flaunted rings.
So live all in love and delight
Through Courtesy to our Queen and King.
(pp.160-181, verse 56)

This is, of course, living with love towards each other and not doing anything that needs either repentance or forgiveness. The poet then asks to be taken to Paradise, but Pearl says only the pure and innocent may enter there through God's grace:

Grace enough a man may gain
If freshly falling to sin, he pray,
But he must beseech it in spiritual pain,
And the whole penalty for sin must pay.
But reason must ever true right sustain
And spare the innocent every day.
God never appointed in judgement plain
That harm should come the innocent's way.
The guilty, through contrition, may
With mercy in God's true grace abide,
But, never wandering evil's way
The innocent are saved and justified.

(p.190)

Nevertheless, she guides him to where he can see Paradise where he sees the heavenly maidens and the Elders do homage to the Lamb and the poet contemplates Christ's bleeding wounds. He sees Pearl among the maidens but cannot reach her. The dream ends and the Poet awakes, heeds Pearl's advice and accepts the Will of God and prays that he might reach Paradise.

For all its emphasis on accepting God's Will, *Pearl* never mentions forgiveness except it is implicit in the verses about Courtesy, and there is only small amount, in what

is obviously a religious poem, about repentance. But *Pearl* combines religion with Romance. We are never quite sure who Pearl herself is. The jewel pearl is a symbol of virginity and virginity also implies innocence. The poem stresses the importance of a virtuous and innocent life without really discussing Christ's teaching of love and forgiveness.

The religious poems in the Harley *2253* Manuscript, transcribed in Leominster Priory in Herefordshire, date from 1264 to 1314. In the Collection, a number of poems focus on the Crucifixion and contemplate the agonies of Hell, the lot of those who do not repent.

Even in what seems to start out as a charming lyric about winter quickly develops into despair:

Winter rouses all my grief:
Branches strip till they are bare
And sighing in sorrow, I despair
That earthly pleasure come to nothing.
Fleeting joys, now here, now gone!
True it is, as many say,
Except God's will, all fades away.
Willy-nilly, we all shall die.
Seed I planted green now withers
Jesus, your high purpose show:
Stave off hell, for when I go
From here, and where, I do not know.[22]

[22] ibid p.190

And in this poem which seems to start off as a romantic poem quickly turns to the Crucifixion:

Now fade the rose and lily-flower
That once, in summer's balmy hour
Gave sweetly out their scent.
All queens of plenitude and power
All ladies bright in palace bower,
By gliding death are pent.
If man will cast out fleshly lust,
On heavenly bliss being bent,
Then think of Jesus Christ he must,
Whose side by spear was rent.[23]

The narrative voice articulates a fear of Hell because of his sinful life. Remembering the Blessed Virgin, he asks for her prayers and the grace to do his penance, finishing with the hope that the crucified Christ will grant us all clemency.

The majority of extant medieval literature is religious, despite the predominance of Chaucer in teaching and criticism. Many secular poems may, of course, have been oral or transcribed less frequently and therefore lost to us. Nonetheless, there does seem to be a preponderance of religious poems, particularly concerned with salvation, which reflect a society riven by guilt.

[23]Ibid p.190.

Alongside their religious content, the poems do show an appreciation of nature, linking the Resurrection with spring, and winter with penance. As well as lyric poetry, drama was also thriving, having moved outside of the church walls as the adoption of Corpus Christi in 1215 led to pageants and processions becoming annual events in many cities. The mystery plays were based on Bible stories from the Old Testament, typologically linked to those taken from the New Testament depicting the life of Christ. Towns such as Coventry and York had their own cycle of plays, which they presented yearly. These plays were in the vernacular and were often earthy and full of humour. The characters were acutely observed and presented.

During the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the subject of plays seems to have diverged from the soteriological teleology presented in the Mysteries. The earliest of these so-called Morality Plays was the *Paternoster Play*, performed at York. It is referred to in Wyclif's *De Officio Pastorali* and is unfortunately lost, but four of these plays have survived: *Wisdom, Mankind, The Castle of Perseverance,* and *Everyman.*

John Gassner states that the 'morality plays reflected the important cultural interests of a period extending from the middle of the fourteenth century to the middle of the sixteenth century. They were moralistic […] *humanistic* […] and […] *politico-religious* when Britain entered upon a period of conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism'.[24] The dramatic form of these plays is a spiritual journey in which the protagonist meets a number of allegorical figures such as Lust, Greed, Pride and the rest of the Deadly Sins. He can also encounter God in characters with names including Good Deeds, Mercy, Charity and Confession, but never Forgiveness.

According to A.C. Cawley, '*Everyman* is distinguished from *Mankind* by its consistent seriousness, from *Wisdom* by its lack of interest in the contemporary scene,

[24]*Medieval and Tudor Drama* ed. by John Gassner (New York: Bantam Books, 1963), p.204.

and from *The Castle of Perseverance* by the economy of its language and construction'.[25] In *The Castle of Perseverance,* Mankind is given two angels, the Bad and the Good, who fight for his soul. His attendants are Lust, Folly Covetousness (who looks after his money) and Backbiter. Also among his attendants are Lechery, Gluttony and Sloth. His companions include Pride, Wrath and Envy: all the Seven Deadly sins. To combat these come the Seven Virtues, Meekness, Chastity, Abstinence, Charity, Industry, Generosity and Patience. Forgiveness is not one of them, but it could be construed that a mixture of Charity and Generosity would make someone Forgiving.

Confession and Penance then arrive and exhort Mankind to Repent and, when the Daughters of God, Mercy in white, Righteousness in red, Truth in 'sad green', and Peace in black, appear to him, Mankind realizes his errors and as he dies, his soul turns to the Good Angel, who takes him to God. The Daughters of God plead for him. Mercy is God's favourite daughter, so God forgives Mankind by saying: 'If thou love me and hold me in awe then | Heaven will be your reward and my Face will thou see. This is my Judgement' (*my trans)*. God then enjoins the Seven Virtues on the entire human race and promises His mercy and forgiveness.

Everyman is arguably the greatest of the four plays and has an integrity and austereness that makes its message both solemn and moving. Again, it tells the journey of a man who is summoned by Death and he has to make 'a reckoning' of his life. Everyman has lived for pleasure and acquisition of wealth and he has completely forgotten about Charity. He realizes that he has to account for his works and how he has spent his life. He applies to his Kinfolk, to his Goods and to Fellowship to accompany him on his journey. They all refuse. Knowledge tells him to go to his Good Deeds, but she is so feeble that she cannot help him until he is contrite. Confession comes to him

[25]*Everyman and Medieval Plays,* ed. by A. C. Cawley (London: J.M. Dent, 1962), xvi.

and he repents, and he scourges himself to show the contrition that ‘gutted forgiveness’. In the play, the Seven Sacraments are acknowledged as the way to get salvation and the duties of Priest are enumerated; a fear of Hell is always constant in the thought.

Everyman, like the other literary forms of the Middle Ages, stresses the penalty of going to Hell unless one repents of one’s sinful life. There is little or no recognition of the forgiveness that should have been the salient virtue of Christians. Could this be because the king himself realized how guilty he was? Having made a vow that he would make a crusade to the Holy Land, the demands of ruling a fractious people prevented him from completing his penance. Certainly, he was observant of his religious duties, founded several religious houses and was cruel in pursuing the growing wish for a more English church. One might speculate that because the English were becoming a forceful nation, with distinctive laws, and an emerging beautiful and expressive language, the desire to use that language to express one’s love of God is both natural and inevitable.

As has been said above, the Sacrament of Confession or Penance is one of the great differences between Roman Catholic and Protestant practices. In this period, Confession was obligatory for everyone during Lent. The penitent must be contrite: express his sorrow to God through a priest, promise amendment, perform a penance and then not dwell on his sins, forgiving himself as well as being forgiven. The performing of a penance is celebrated in medieval and Tudor poems and prose. The narrative poems make a bridge between the medieval plays and poems and Tudor Drama.

Le Morte d’Arthur by Sir Thomas Malory tells the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table and has several mentions of penance. Sir Lancelot, when rescuing Gwynevere from burning, kills Sir Gawain’s brothers, Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth.

Towards the end of the book. Sir Gawain says to Sir Lancelot ‘While you live and I live you cannot be forgiven for killing my two brothers, when they were unarmed.’[26] Sir Lancelot expresses his sorrow and says that he will do penance:

> I offer to make pilgrimage, on foot and wearing only my shirt, from Sandwich to Carlisle, and every ten miles to found a hermitage, complete with holy offices and appurtenances which I shall provide from my own estates, and in every one of those hermitages candles will be burned and prayers offered for Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth. (Malory, p.487)

The establishment of hermitages, or chantry chapels, was a recognized form of extreme penance: Henry IV did so for the killing of Richard II, and Lord Scope of Masham donated money to twelve anchorets before he conspired against Henry V.

Other expressions of forgiveness in this work are also quite formal. Lancelot forgives Elaine for getting into his bed with a simple ‘My Lady I forgive you’ (p.338). Elsewhere, the word ‘forgive’ is used as a expression of good manners rather than true repentance. However, one deep moment of repentance occurs in *The Tale of the Sangreal*. The Knights of the Round Table have set out to discover the Holy Grail, which was, according to legend, bought to England by Joseph of Arimathea. Although Sir Lancelot discovers where it is, he cannot see it because of his adultery with Gwynevere. He hears a voice which says to him, ‘Sir Lancelot, you are harder than stone, more bitter than wood, and more barren than a fig tree. Go hence, for you are not worthy of this holy place!’ (Malory, p.487). Lancelot is bereft and full of shame. He finds a hermit saying

[26] Malory, *Le Morte d’Arthur*, trans. Keith Barnes (London, 1963) p.487. All future quotations will be taken from this edition and given in the text.

Mass who tells him, because of his adultery that God is against him. Sir Lancelot confesses his sins and is told that he must 'forswear the Queen for ever' (Malory, p.378).

In a homily, the hermit points out to Lancelot that he is greatly gifted: he has beauty, courage and intelligence and can distinguish between good and evil. Sir Lancelot says that he will repent of his sins and is given a penance by the hermit. Again, this passage seems very formal and well mannered, and any repentance akin to that which the author of *The Cloud* of *Unknowing* gives to Mary Magdalen is missing.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Sir Gawain goes on a quest for the Green Knight and against chivalric code he wishes to commit adultery with the wife of a knight who has invited Gawain to stay in his castle. The Lady gives him a green girdle, which he conceals, again against the chivalric code. Sir Gawain is found out but the husband, who admits his part in the temptation "game", forgives him because he expresses his grief. He also says that because Gawain has repented he may keep the girdle and Sir Gawain replies that he will wear it not for its beauty or its worth:

> But as a sign of my sin I shall see it often,
> Remembering with remorse, when I am mounted in glory,
> The fault and faintheartedness of the perverse flesh,
> How vulnerable it is to vile advice and sin.
> So when pride shall prick me for my prowess in arms
> One look at this love-lace shall make me lowly again.[27]

These expressions of penitence are unlike the more vivid expressions that are found in the Morality plays but the two works cited concern chivalry and therefore are

[27] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, trans. by Brian Stone (Harmondsworth, 1964), p.121.

not direct expressions of religious belief. Though the rite of penance is acknowledged, there is no real emotion. True penance is a stripping of one's self-will and pride, and certainly, there is no such expression with Sir Lancelot. Though he mourns Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, he does not regret the pride and lust that cased their deaths. And though Sir Gawain admits his pride in his prowess, again there is no real feeling that he is trying to undo the sins that caused the original offence. In both cases there is no expression of amendment, one of the crucial elements in the Sacrament of Confession.

The last of the chivalric epic sagas that appeared before the Elizabethan theatre became the foremost expression of stories was *The Faerie Queene,* the first three books published in 1589.[28] The story of the Red Crosse Knight is, in effect, a morality play told in verse, with notable similarities in the First Book, where the Knight encounters the Seven Deadly sins. After more adventures, the Knight is brought by his true love, Una, to the House of Holinesse where *Penance, Remorse* and *Repentance* bring him to a state of Grace and he confesses and obtains absolution. He and Una are united in marriage.

If forgiveness is asking pardon of the person you have wronged, it does not occur in any of these cases. For example, Lancelot does not ask for Sir Gawain's acceptance of his repentance. Can this be because in this period at Sacramental Confession, the question of forgiveness would have been one of the sins repented? In other words, absolution at Confession was conditional on forgiving others as well as being forgiven. Certainly, in medieval literature, it would seem that forgiveness was subsumed in repentance. Perhaps the removal of obligatory Sacramental Confession in Edward's and Elizabeth's reigns made forgiveness of each other a more frequent subject for literature.

[28] Edmund Spenser, *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spencer*, ed. J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt, OUP (Oxford, 1912).

3. HERESY

This section will examine Lollard beliefs and repentance in Thomas More's *Utopia* and other work. It will also examine his work on Richard III. This will be followed by a discussion of the changes in religion during the reign of Henry VIII, including the influences of Luther and Calvin. After Henry's death, the Protestant Edward VI and his advisers wrote and published a Common Prayer Book (1549). This chapter considers its effect on ordinary people. After a return of Roman Catholicism in Mary Tudor's reign, the great Elizabethan compromise occurred, a consideration of which will the subject of the next section.

In January 1395, the Duke of York summoned Parliament in the absence of the King Henry VI who was either in Ireland or Gascony. One of the subjects to be debated was the Lollard's Twelve Conclusions. The document itself was written in English and it was highly critical of the Roman Church.[29] It was a doctrine that would divide people for the next century and a half. As Ian Mortimer explains, '[a]n early fifteenth century king could not hope to impose spiritual orthodoxy on his people and avoid controversy. Lollardy had affected the religious outlook of the Church in England too much for there to be complete unity ever again.'[30]

Throughout Henry VI's reign, Lollardy remained a constant threat to the Church in spite of his resistance to it. In 1401, Henry gave his consent to a petition put forward by the bishops and the commons, which forbade anyone without a diocesan license to preach either in public or privately. Nor was any book opposing the Roman Catholic faith to be published. This enacted a kind of state control of belief. Anyone caught

[29] See discussion above for more details of the Conclusions.
[30] Ian Mortimer, *The Perfect King: The Life of Edward III* (London: Vintage, 2008), p.198.

breaking these edicts would be arrested by diocesan officials and if found guilty and they refused to abjure their heresy they were to be burnt. As Ian Mortimer explains:

> *De heretico comburrendo* (about the burning of a heretic), as the statute became known, did indeed strike fear into the minds of others, being the most stringent and terrifying religious legislation ever enacted in England and the legal basis for Mary 1's burnings in the Sixteenth century. But why did Henry, who placed such emphasis on mercy at the outset of his reign, not only support the petition but even enlarge on it? Can this be reconciled with what we know of Henry's character and personal priorities?[31]

The Archbishop of Arundel continued the restrictions against Lollardy. Disputes about the nature of the Mass and the other sacraments, and the worship of the Cross, were forbidden as was any article of faith. Wyclif's writings were banned except if sanctioned by twelve theologians appointed by Oxford and Cambridge. At the Convocation of St Paul's, a list of heretical writings by Wyclif were proscribed. One of the theologians, Richard Fleming, protested against this and Arundel forbad the saying of Mass in the town, but was defied by the Chancellor who claimed that the university was exempt from the archbishop's jurisdiction.

In 1416, the Commons in Parliament presented a petition to disendow the Church, confiscating its wealth and pay the clergy a subsistence allowance. Furthermore, that the Lollards should no longer be persecuted, imprisoned. Henry, supported by his Archbishops, retorted that he would like to make the penalties for heresy more stringent rather than more lenient. Lollards continued to be punished and even burnt at the stake.

[31] Ibid, p.235.

This was a revolutionary affair because, up to now, English people had not been prosecuted for expressing opinions. This, however, did not stop the controversy: in fact, it gave the movement its martyrs.

Henry's strong sense of his own sins is evident in his will, which he wrote in English in 1409:

> In the name of God, Father and Son and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God. I Henry sinful wretch, by the grace, king of England and France, and lord of Ireland, being in my whole mind, make testament in the manner and form following: First I bequeath to Almighty God my sinful soul, which has never been worthy to be [a] man but through his mercy and his grace; which life I have misspent, wherefore I put myself wholly in hi grace and mercy, with all my heart. And when it pleases him of his mercy to take me to him, my body [is] to buried in the church at Canterbury, at the discretion of my cousin the archbishop of Canterbury.[32]

The will also asks pardon of all his lords and people if he had treated them badly, and endows a chantry of twenty priests at Canterbury to pray for his soul. This will is striking in its self-condemnation and is both a sign of Henry's awareness of his regicide and also an expression of extreme repentance, something that Shakespeare expressed in the Second Tetralogy. One of the Lollard martyrs was Sir John Oldcastle, the first name given by Shakespeare to the character now known as Falstaff. Although the severe penalties for Lollardy continued in the next two reigns, it continued becoming an underground movement. People met in homes, keeping the translations of the Bible

[32] Mortimer, *The Perfect King*, p.323.

secret, but reading it with their friends, and Protestant literature that was coming from the Continent sustained them in their Anti-Roman Catholic beliefs. Like all dissenters, Lollards believed that they were the one true Church, they were privileged Children of God and that the Roman Catholic Church was born of the Devil. The Gospels and the Epistles were read in English at the Lollard meetings, but it was their enthusiasm for this that led to the banning of all scripture in English. To avoid detention, many Lollards did, however, attend their parish churches and even received the Sacrament. It was a movement that was inclusive of social classes and was widespread throughout the country: the existence of Lollards has been recorded in Essex, Kent, Bristol, Coventry and the Chilterns, as well as in London.

Some prelates, notably John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's, a humanist and educationalist, acknowledged that there were priests whose lives were not as moral as they should be, but he did not accept the Lollard viewpoint that their wickedness vitiated the holiness of the Sacraments. However the necessity of reforming the clergy came to be accepted by influential laity and clergy as well as those from heterodox viewpoints. There needed some force within the Church to carry out this and humanism seemed, to some, to be the way forward.

The most prominent of the Humanists was Desiderus Erasmus whose book, *The Handbook of a Christian Soldier*, was widely read. Susan Brigden describes it as:

> a manifesto of the new Christianity. Inspired by scripture, especially the teachings of St Paul, his writings aspired to bring regeneration and collective renewal of Christian life. The ambition was to educate not only those who were educated already, but the simple and unlearned.[33]

[33] Sarah Brigden, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors* (Penguin, 2001), p.90.

Erasmus' views were welcomed in England and he became friends with Colet and Thomas More. Both he and More met the young Prince Henry, who was to become Henry VIII.

Erasmus believed that the Church had lost Christ's true teaching of loving your neighbour, that true Christians should be known by their good deeds and righteous conduct, not through attendances at empty ceremonies. This struck right at the heart of the Sacraments. Colet dangerously spoke against war at the very moment that Henry VIII was launching a campaign against France. Furthermore, he led an evangelical movement which read Scripture in English, and who adopted his translation of the Lord's Prayer into English. Lollards came to hear him preach. As Brigden states, he thought that: 'a good Roman Catholic should have hoped for renovation within the Church, have deplored its current state, and yearned for purity which had once existed in an apostolic golden age. Reform was needed, and urgently'.[34]

Literature from the fifteenth century has not been well received or remembered over the years. In Helen Gardner's words,

> The divorce between theology and devotion is one of the diseases that affected Christianity in the later Middle Ages. Theology came to seem mere barren speculation and arid late scholasticism against which the humanists rail. Devotion generated into mere superstition […] Protestants […] re-emphasised the Majesty of God.[35]

[34] Brigden, p.91.
[35] Helen Gardner, *Religious Literature* (London, 1971), p.177.

Certainly, poetry did not develop different themes, but continued to re-tell the story of the Nativity and the Crucifixion: poems to the Blessed Virgin and her life also abounded, while love lyrics were still written. Prayers of penitence were also among poems that have survived. Originality was not prized. Jerome Mitchell in his book on Thomas Hoccleve (1368-1430) states that 'religious verse seldom reveals an emotional experience peculiar to the individual poet'.[36] He also emphasises the fifteenth century's obsession with Death, as exemplified in the Morality plays, which continued to follow the same themes and were played in market places, inns and private houses.

It was during a performance of one of these plays, or a similar entertainment, that Thomas More, then a page in the household of Archbishop Morton came to prominence. According to tradition he took part in a performance. It was probable that actors would ask members of the household to take small parts if needed due to cast shortages. Theatricality was part of More's persona anyway: throughout his life, he presented himself in an ostentatiously pious role, ensuring that people would see him behaving in an extraordinary and exemplary way. The source of these tales is More himself, as often told by his son-in-law, William Roper. In his own life he was very repentant of his own sins, keeping Fridays as a day devoted to repenting them, scourging himself and praying. When he was Chancellor under Henry VIII, unlike his predecessor Wolsey, who would interview heretics sentenced to burning and persuade them to repent, More sent them all to their death.

More's Book of Hours is still extant and in the annotations that are written in the margins he speaks of repentance and how to subdue his longings for company and worldly things.[37] He meditates on the Passion and most of the Psalms that he has marked are the Penitential Psalms. He does also think that '[a] meek man […] should neither

[36] Jerome Mitchell, *Thomas Hoccleve: A Study in Early Fifteenth Century Poetics* (University of Illinois, 1968), p.34.
[37] Thomas More, ed. by Martz and Sylvester, xxxviii.

speak proudly himself nor retort to what is spoken wickedly but should bless those who speak evil of him'.[38]

Like other writers of his time, More dwells on the pains of Hell and considers that tribulation is sent to prevent rather than punish sin and for a purgation and cleansing of the soul (*A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation,* written when he was in prison). The whole tone of the book is somewhat grudging and lacks a generosity of spirit. His religious life was summed up in his idea that 'Reason is the servant of Faith' a heading to Chapter 23 in his *Dialogue concerning Heresy* and his firm belief in the accumulated teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

More's most enduring work is *Utopia,* which is still read today. How much of *Utopia* is satire, how much is serious, is for the reader to decide. It is, of course, an imaginary depiction of an island state. Much of the tale seems contrary to More's expressed ideas in his other works: Utopians have freedom of worship, allow divorce (though not for a man putting aside an older wife for younger one) and the duties of serving a sovereign are very different. Nonetheless, More insists that serving God is the prime duty of mankind. There was an Utopian religion and before attending the most important service, the Ending service,

Wives kneel down at home before their husbands, and children before their parents, to confess all their sins of omission and commission, and ask to be forgiven.[39]

More does not say what the husband should do about his sins though!

There are passages about heresy, where More declares that one's duty to God must come before one's duty to the ruler. *Utopia* shows a gentle humorous side of More which was soon to change. In spite of the draconian laws against them, Lollards still maintained a presence and retained their core beliefs as previously outlined in the

[38] ibid, xlii.
[39] More, *Utopia,* p.126.

Conclusions. Protestantism, though dormant and underground, continued to grow though it was many years before it flourished and real change occurred within the Church in England. However, the main impetus was to come from the Continent and particularly from Martin Luther who challenged the Roman Catholic Church and its beliefs. More opposed Luther's ideas, writing to condemn them as heresy in a most uncharitable and vicious way. In *The Liberty of the Christian Man* Luther stated his main belief that justification occurs *sola fide*: i.e. a sinner should trust in the merits of Jesus Christ and he will be saved by faith alone. There is no need for a priest as an interpreter or intermediary. This challenged the whole *raison d'etre* of the Roman Catholic Church.

Luther denied what the Roman Catholic Church taught, that is that the grace of God is given, through the priest, in the seven Sacraments. Luther argued that only three Sacraments, baptism, confession and Holy Communion, were authorized by God and Holy Scripture.

This controversy became a major concern of More's and the king, who, some biographers think, wrote a defence of the seven Sacraments with More that allows the kings and queens of England to title themselves Defender of the Faith. Luther replied to More's book and to his further reply, *On Free Will*. By now, Lutheran books were being imported to England and, in 1526, More organized a search through London for heretical writings. From this, four German merchants were sentenced to confess their errors at St Paul's Cross.

Among the reformers was William Tyndale. He was an admirer of Luther and thought that everyone should be able to read the Bible in their own language. This would mean that each person could interpret the Scriptures in his or her own way thus undermining the Roman Catholic prioritisation of the priest as mediator between the laity and God. In his *Dialogue concerning Heresies*, More seems to be in favour of the Bible

being in English, yet he defended the traditions of the Church which had the true doctrine and that should be sufficient and binding on people. As he indicated in *Utopia*, he was not against discussions about faith, but no one was allowed to impose his ideas on anyone else. This was a punishable offence. Private doubts are also allowed in *Utopia*, but only if the doubter allows himself to be persuaded out of them and does not express his doubts publically and upset the *status quo.* Yet since the Church had the true faith, if the sacraments and beliefs of the Church were undermined then mankind would be cutting itself from the grace of God.

It was now that religion and politics became entwined: Henry had no male heir and the Church was essential for maintaining a stable and peaceful kingdom. A threat of civil war was present with descendants of Edward III alive, poised to claim the throne. Heresy could be a rallying point for the rival claimants. In the *Dialogue Against Heresies*, More states that the burning of heretics was 'Lawful, necessary and well done'. As Jasper Ridley points out, during Wolsey's tenure (the last eight years before More became Lord Chancellor), not one heretic had been burnt in England; in the two years and seven months when More was Chancellor, six were burnt.[40]

And, as Ridley quoting from More himself, says More seemed to delight in this, calling Sir Thomas Hitton 'the Devil's stinking martyr'. Wolsey had been charged by Henry of *Praeminire* which forbade the acceptance of Papal appointments (the Pope had made Wolsey a Cardinal). Throughout its long history with the Church, the kings of England had always resented what they considered the Church's interference. They were *prima inter pares* with the Pope, a fellow sovereign, who should be consulted about appointments.

[40] Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs: The Story of England's Terror*, Robinson Books (London, 2002), p.252.

Queen Anne Boleyn owned two bibles, including a copy of Tyndale's translation and she would indulge in religious discussions with Henry, to whom she gave a copy of Tyndale's *The Obedience of a Christian Man.* In it, Tyndale argued that the Church had perverted God's promises and had no authority to usurp the sovereignty of a lawful prince. She also was involved in discussions with reforming priests, among them Thomas Cranmer and Hugh Latimer.

Thwarted in his desire to make Anne his Queen, and unable to get annulment from Catherine of Arragon, Henry declared that Luther was correct in attacking the corruption in the Church, its slack and sinful priests, but was wrong to attack the seven Sacraments. The only power that priests should have, declared Henry, was the absolution and remitting of sins.[41] In May 1532, frustrated by his inability to get his own way, Henry demanded that the Church should renounce all authority to administer any law. Two years afterwards, in November 1534, laws were passed culminating in the Act of Supremacy which divided the English Church from the Pope and gave the king the right to determine belief. This shocked even Luther and extreme protestants.

A new parliament assembled in June 1536 to discuss matters following the execution of Anne Boleyn, which had pleased the conservative elements who supported the Church. At the same time, the Convocation of bishops was also sitting. Henry requested that the Convocation should sort out the diverse religious sentiments that were now dividing the kingdom. The reformists were becoming increasingly more vocal and traditionalists were finding it increasingly difficult to delay Henry, who was now focused on controlling the religious life of the country himself. He was eager to hasten the process of the Church in England freeing itself from much of Roman Catholic belief.

[41] In conversation with the Imperial Ambassador in October 1529.

Hugh Latimer, one of Anne Boleyn's religious friends, was selected to preach the opening sermon of Convocation. In a trenchant manner, he attacked the veneration of the saints, in particular the holidays that were devoted to them, because this meant that the poor could not earn money on those days. He wanted pilgrimages, Purgatory and masses for the dead stopped, and pardons, images and religious relics to be banned, and he decried expensive vestments, thinking that the money thus spent should be used for the poor. Parliament also presented a petition to Convocation of sixty-seven abuses that it considered needed reforming.

The result of all the deliberations was the publication of the Ten Articles, which attacked many of the fundamental beliefs, customs and worship of Roman Catholicism. They were intended to resolve the diversity of opinions about the ceremonies and services of the church. Laying down what was to be the doctrine of the future Church of England, the Articles declared that there were only three (not seven) Sacraments: baptism, confession and Holy Communion. The inclusion of confession is interesting: Convocation, like Henry, thought that the repentance and forgiveness expressed in the Sacrament was an essential and driving force in Christianity. Justification by faith was accepted a part of the doctrine, as well as the veneration of saints and images, and praying for the dead. The belief in Purgatory was approved: prayers for the dead were considered an act of charity but the afterlife had no real scriptural authority, was unknown and must be left to God. Indulgences were attacked and rituals and ceremonies were to be kept but to be regarded as symbolic. For example, the sprinkling of Holy Water had no power in itself but was only a reminder of baptism. Convocation signed these Articles, but continued to discuss further reforms. However, they did not deliberate on the Mass or Holy Communion, which was still being celebrated in Latin. Nonetheless, Henry decreed that every church should have a Bible in English. For the ordinary people,

this was a great innovation. It was the first time that they could, legally, hear the sacred words in their own language. The impact must have been enormous.

Not everyone was satisfied with these arrangements: the extremists on both side felt that the current state of affairs had either gone too far, or not far enough. For the average parishioner, though, such as Shakespeare's parents who were born and brought up in this period, very little had changed. He would attend Mass on Sundays and hear almost the same service from his parish priest. The desecration of monastic life would have had significantly more impact. Throughout medieval England, the monasteries had administered to the people, being their doctors, places of refuge and hotels for travellers. The other great change was that the evangelical wing of the Protestants started to destroy paintings, images and statues in the churches on the grounds that it was idolatrous to pray to them. It was a pitiless act and one that destroyed a whole wonder of medieval art. As Susan Brigden explains, 'The reformers sought to replace a religion of seeing as believing by a religion of the Word. Tyndale had once promised a learned Roman Catholic that '"If God spare my life […] I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou does"'.[42] This aim seems far removed from widespread destruction of church art. Brigden continues:

> The desecration threatened the end of mediation, propitiation and spiritual promise, in this world and beyond, and very many were left bewildered and bereft. No one watching the destruction, powerless of prevent it, could be oblivious to doctrinal change.[43]

[42] Brigden, p.131.
[43] Brigden, p.132.

In 1539, Parliament passed the Six Articles and penal legislation against heresy. Transubstantiation (or the Real Presence) was the orthodox belief and denial would result in burning, with no hope of the penalty being rescinded on repentance. The court, however, still discussed and read the Protestant literature coming in from Europe. Printing made these books more and more available, though to possess such books was an offence. For political reasons, Henry now drew back somewhat and The Act for the Advancement of True Religion decreed that all dependents and servants, and those in the yeoman class, were forbidden to read the Bible. Gentry, both male and female, were allowed to do so.

The Protestant wing were dismayed by this but they were to get great support from Henry's last wife, Katherine Parr. She instituted Bible readings for her ladies-in-waiting and other servants, and supported the young members of the Court who wished for greater reform. She was also in charge of the Princess Elizabeth. Elizabeth was extremely well educated, her father wanting to boost the Tudor dynasty by her knowledge and learning. He had, therefore, provided her with excellent tutors. Roger Ascham of St. John's College, Cambridge, who tutored Prince Edward, became a correspondent of Elizabeth's and admired her scholarship. Among other men who influenced her education were Richard Coxe and the scholar William Grindal from whom she learnt Latin and Greek which she read, spoke and wrote easily all her life. These men, though cautious, were of a Protestant leaning. As gifts to Katherine Parr, Elizabeth translated several Protestant books, including those of the French writer John Calvin, who had sought refuge in Geneva to escape prosecution for his Protestant beliefs.[44] Although discreet about her own faith she was very much influenced by her

[44] In 1547, Elizabeth translated Calvin's *Institution de la Vie Christienne* for her stepmother.

humanist and Protestant teachers though she remained, always, essentially pragmatic. On the subject of the Real Presence she wrote:

> It was God the word that spake it,
> He took the Bread and brake it;
> And what the Word did make it;
> That I believe, and take it.[45]

Elizabeth shared some of her education with her half-brother, the future Edward VI, who became more devoutly Protestant than his sister. The growth of the printing industry meant more books were entering and being printed in the country. Despite the dangers of embracing heterodox beliefs and practices, education's growing reach into the population meant that the country was set for even more change.

[45] *The Concise Oxford Book of Quotations*, p.96.

4. THE PRAYER BOOK AND THE PLAYWRIGHTS

In 1550, at the sign of the Star in St Paul's Churchyard, Thomas Raynold and John Harrington published Sir Thomas Wyatt's translation and expansion of the Seven Penitential Psalms (numbers 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). Wyatt, a brilliant lyric poet and an associate of Anne Boleyn, lent towards Protestant ideas, completely acceptable now that the new king, Edward VI, had ascended the throne on his father's death.

In choosing to translate the Psalms from Aretino into English verse, Wyatt was in the vanguard of religious thought, chiming with concerns among the population for whom the speed and scale of changes in the church made them feel guilty before God. Psalm 51 begins:

Renew on me, Lord, thy goodness and grace
That of thy nature are so bountiful
For that goodness that in the world doth brace
Repugnant natures in quiet wonderful
And for thy mercies number without end
In heaven and earth perceived so plentiful
That over all they do themselves extend
For these mercies much more than man can sin
Do weigh my sins that so Thy grace offend.

Wyatt translates Psalm 102 thus:

Lord hear my prayer and let my cry pass
Unto the Lord without impediment
Do not from me tear thy merciful face,
Unto myself leaving my government.
In time of trouble and adversity
Incline to me thine ear and thy intent;
And when I call help my necessity
Readily grant th' effect of my desire'
This bold demand to please thy majesty
And eke my case such has thou doth desire.

Other English versions of the Psalms appeared in the new English Prayer book of 1549, which arguably stands in the canon of English Literature concerned with repentance and forgiveness. Written largely by Thomas Cranmer, with Miles Coverdale's translations of the Psalms, it is a masterpiece of poetic language. As Brian Cummings explains,

> its first incarnation in 1549 was revolutionary, a brand-new book for an age that was self-consciously overturning the past. Yet, in making this book, Cranmer also preserved the vestiges of a thousand years of tradition, since much of it was translated from the Latin liturgy. Indeed the text even preserves elements of the vernacular used in responses in the Latin rite.[46]

[46] Cummings, xvi.

The Prayer Book was to be placed in every church by Whitsun (9th June, 1549). The Book's author, Thomas Cranmer, demoted the Roman Mass from a daily celebration to a service called 'THE SUPPER of the Lorde, and the holy Communion commonly called the Masse' which was to be celebrated only four or five times a year. The main services, Morning and Evening Prayer, were constructed from Roman Books of Hours said every day in religious houses, and, of course, all the services were in demotic language which made them easy to understand. As Brian Cummings writes, 'they became the staple of unexceptional life, a verbal (and musical) rhythm repeated once a week, a back-ground to the thought processes by which a person addresses the trials of work of family'.[47] One might also add that it became the staple for feeding the imagination of the playwrights.

Many of the Saints' days previously kept were abolished: there were now only twenty-five major Festivals in the year. Furthermore, only two of the days devoted to the Blessed Virgin, the Purification and the Annunciation, were to be kept. Other festivals that were abolished included Corpus Christi and Holy Cross Days. Nonetheless, the retention of even this many Saints' days made the English Church more Roman than the Protestant churches on the continent. Cummings writes:

> Cranmer's doctrinal subtlety and literary skill combine in his masterly service for Communion. Yet to call it masterly may seem perverse, since perhaps satisfied nobody fully: for traditional Catholics it was a mockery, refusing the elevation of the host and suppressing the bodily presence of Christ in the elements of the Mass. For the Reforming party, on the other hand, it retained more of the ritual

[47] Cummings, xi.

spectacle than was comfortable. The Eucharistic prayer at least follows the form of the Canon of the Mass.[48]

In another way, too, the English Prayer Book followed Roman Catholic doctrine. Medieval priests had been instructed to bring together any of their parishioners who were at odds with each other and exhort them to make up the quarrel or hurt. This has a parallel in the Preface to the Mass in the 1549 Prayer Book, despite communicants no longer needing to attend confession before receiving Communion: *The same ordre shall the Curate use, with those betwixt whom he perceiveth malice, and hatreed to reigne, not suffering them to be partakers of the Lordes table, untill he knowe them to bee reconciled'*. [49]

The Kyrie, said in English, and the Angus Dei are said at the beginning of the service: these are prayers asking for God's mercy and forgiveness for our sins. A homily is then preached. The one actually printed in the Book is an exhortation to come to Holy Communion 'with a penitent heart and lively faith'. Then follows a list of sins that have to be repented, including malice and envy. Except for these two sins, there is no mention of forgiving other people the wrongs that they have done towards us. The second, alternative homily is similar in doctrine, although it does urge the parishioners to go to Sacramental Confession if their conscience worries them. After readings from the Bible, and before the Eucharistic Prayer, a general confession is made again asking for God's mercy for sins committed The Lord's Prayer is the only place in which a desire for the grace to forgive other people is articulated. As in literature, repentance, rather than forgiveness, is the major concern.

[48] Cummings, xxix.
[49] Cummings, p.18.

The services of Morning and Evening Prayer also follow this pattern. In the morning, the *Te Deum Laudamus* is said, which contains the phrase 'Lord have mercy upon us', and this is repeated in another prayer. At Evensong, there are no penitential prayers. At both services, psalms are said and the Penitential psalms would be said in their turn during the year. Asking God's mercy for our sins should, of course, include the sins committed against our neighbour, but no prayers are offered to ask for the Grace, the generosity to forgive.

What other differences would parishioners have seen at Holy Trinity Church?[50] The Chantry chapels would have been closed, and the beautiful vestments sold. In 1547, Holy Trinity received an injunction to remove all candles except for two on the High Altar and to destroy all images. The Bible was to be read in English. In 1553, all remaining church goods were given to the Crown except for linen, chalices and bells.

However this year also saw a reversal of everything that had happened: in 1553, Edward died and his eldest half-sister became Queen. This meant a complete reversal of church procedure. Mary, a fierce Roman Catholic, ordered the Roman Rite to be re-established and the ritual, vestments and ornaments restored. Bishop Bonner decreed that each church should have a pyx over the altar, a crucifix, rood loft, censers, vestments and Sanctus bell.[51] The churchwardens of Holy Trinity had to buy new Sanctus bells and a lamp to burn before the Altar day and night and also a censer and incense to burn in it.

In 1555, the first of the three hundred Protestant martyrs burnt in Mary's reign were executed, two of them from Warwickshire. The clergy and churchwarden at Holy Trinity were hurriedly trying to buy back the vestments, adornments and vessels that they had disposed of previously.[52] But the Catholic restoration was only to last another

[50] I am indebted to the Rt. Rev. Martin Gorick, Archdeacon of Oxford, quondam vicar of Holy Trinity, for allowing me to use his unpublished notes on the history of Holy Trinity.
[51] Martin Gorick, notes.
[52] Ibid.

three years. Mary was succeeded by her half sister, Elizabeth, after her death in 1558. This led to the 1559 Act of Uniformity, which made the use of the 1552 Prayer Book (the revised version of the 1549 Book) compulsory. This Prayer Book contained both the Morning and Evening services as the main services of what was now the Church of England, while 'the Lordes Supper, or holy Communion' was to be celebrated four or five times a year. Before parishioners partook of this celebration they were exhorted by the priest to repent of their sins and to live peaceably with their neighbours. In the Morning service itself, there was a general confession, which did not differentiate between repentance and forgiveness. The *Te Deum* contains the words:

> O Lorde have mercy upon us, have mercie upon us.
> O Lorde, let thy mercy lighten upon us: as our trust is in thee.
> O Lorde, in thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded.[53]

This is the form of the *Agnus Dei* used in the Roman rite. Towards the end of the service, God's mercy is again asked for. The last prayer seeks God's grace to keep us from sin and harm. The Lord's Prayer is not included in this rite.

In the Holy Communion service, the Ten Commandments are said by the priest. To each one, the congregation replies: 'Lorde have mercye upon us, and encline our hartes to kepe this lawe'.[54] A General Confession is said, which does not mention forgiveness in particular, but does refer to sins generally. In the *Gloria* at the end of the service, God's mercy is again sought.

In all these services, the emphasis is on personal repentance rather than forgiving each other. It can, of course, be argued that that each individual should be confessing his

[53] Cummings, p.107.
[54] Cummings, p.125.

or her own particular sins when saying the General Confession and asking pardon for a lack of forgiveness.

Returning to the 1553 position on idolatry, there was a Royal Visitation and Tour of Inspection for every church, which demanded the removal of all signs of superstition and idolatry from all places of worship, including stained glass windows, statues and wall paintings. In the year of Shakespeare's birth, 1564, his father, John, oversaw the whitewashing of the wall paintings in the Guild Chapel: St. Helena and the Finding of the Cross, St. George and the Dragon, the murder of St. Thomas a Becket and the magnificent Doom over the arch. John entered into his accounts as Chamberlain that he was paid two shillings for this.[55]

Seven years later, the stained glass windows of the Chapel were smashed. One can only imagine the excitement of the small boys of the town at this event and it is tempting to think that a seven year-old William Shakespeare might have been there! Presumably the windows in Holy Trinity suffered the same fate. It was in this year, also, that the Papal Bull excommunicating Elizabeth was issued, which absolved her Roman Catholic subjects from sin if they disobeyed or even assassinated her. Parliament passed a law that made it treason to bring any papal bull into the country or to call the Queen a heretic. It was also illegal to go abroad for ordination or to bring any devotional objects into England. The laws against Roman Catholics and Catholicism grew even more stringent and, by 1585, it was illegal, punishable by death, to be a Roman Catholic priest.

This, then, was the background to Shakespeare's childhood and adolescence. He would have attended church each Sunday as was required by law: he was married in church and his three children were baptised in Holy Trinity. He would have seen the destruction of art and artefacts in Holy Trinity church and the Guild Chapel, as well as in

[55] Gorick.

London churches. When he was growing up in Stratford during the 1560s, there was still a strong Roman Catholic belief in the town. His parents and the parents of his friends at School would have been brought up as Roman Catholics and, after the Northern Rebellion of 1569-1570, both the vicar and schoolmaster were replaced by Protestants because they were suspected of Roman Catholic sympathies. Another schoolmaster left Stratford to become a Jesuit. The Ardens, kinsfolk to Shakespeare, were Roman Catholics, as was a cousin, John Somerville, who was arrested on suspicion of joining a conspiracy to kill the Queen. Other well-known families, such as the Cloptons, were accepted as recusants who would not attend services at Holy Trinity. Despite Shakespeare's outward conforming to the status quo, it is clear that he would, at least, have had a good knowledge of Catholicism and of Catholics. It is not possible to discern Shakespeare's own beliefs from the plays, although, as we shall see, his writing displays a strong interest in forgiveness and repentance.

The Church of England is peculiarly and uniquely both Roman Catholic and Protestant. During Queen Elizabeth's reign, arguments abounded over how this fine balance should be maintained. This chapter considers how the Elizabethan compromise was reached, then examines the actual text of the services in order to speculate on their possible influence on playwrights. With weekly church attendance compulsory, these are the texts that, along with their friends and neighbours, the playwrights would have heard fifty two times a year. John Donne, poet and priest, described the Church of England thus:

> God shines upon this Island early: early in the plantation of the Gospel, (for we had not our seed-corn from *Rome*, howsoever we may have had some watering from thence) and early in the Reformation of the Church; for we had not the model of any other Foreign Church for our pattern; we stript not the Church into a nakedness, nor into rags, we divested her not of her possessions, nor of her Ceremonies, but received such a Reformation at home, by their hands whom God enlightened, as left her neither in a Dropsie nor in a Consumption...God continue to us the light of this Reformation, without re-admitting any old Clouds, any old Clouts, and we shall not need any such Re- formation, or super-Reformation, as swimming brains will need across the Seas for.[56]

Donne, of course, had personal knowledge of the conflict between the Reformers and the Catholics. Born of Roman Catholic parents, unable to take a University degree because of his faith, he saw a beloved brother die in prison for harbouring a priest. Donne, despite being an habitué of the theatre in his youth, was not a playwright. However, his experiences were not unique and along with their background knowledge of Roman Catholic rituals, sacraments and beliefs, playwrights may have known of other people whose families had faced similar troubles.

The greater emphasis on repentance than on forgiveness throughout history, and in literature, raises the question of why this is so. Why have writers shirked describing the emotions prompted by forgiveness when it seems a challenging and exciting subject? Shame is a particularly intriguing emotion. Something must have prevented a full expression of these subjects in the literature. However, the following pages will show

[56] John Stubbs, *Donne: The Reformed Soul* (London: Viking, 2006), xxiv.

that Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists did tackle these ideas, alongside the Judeo-Christian concepts of mercy and justice.

PART TWO:

1. SHAKESCENE

When Shakespeare first arrived in London, the theatre was in its first flush of excitement. Instead of plays coming to the people in the streets and inns of the towns, and private houses, people were going to hear a play in the theatre. We do not know who thought about gathering people, as the Greeks and Romans did, in one place, now in one building, and getting them to pay to be there. Unlike in the earlier Morality plays, characters portrayed in the performances were not just incarnations of particular traits such as Pride, Beauty or Mercy but everyday people in everyday situations. They may be involved in murder and adultery, and have come from a variety of social classes, but they were recognizable as human beings, not abstract characters. This could be because Greek and Roman plays with their vivid tragic and comic characters, with their agonies and joys, were taught in schools and universities, the contrast between these ancient and dramatic characters, real living beings, and the stereotype representations in the Morality plays is immense.

The literary scene in London was dominated by the University Wits, young men clustered around the Inns of Court. Stephen Greenblatt writes of:

> an impressive, widespread growth in literacy; an educational system that trained its students to be highly sensitive to rhetorical effects; a social and political taste for elaborate display; a religious culture that compelled parishioners to listen to long complex sermons and a vibrant, restless intellectual culture.[57]

[57] Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (Norton, 2004), p.199.

One of the important factors in this culture was that the Church no longer dominated the intellectual world. Although church-going remained compulsory and lip service to religion was obligatory, much more diversity was accepted and controversy about the form of religion increasingly acceptable. The aspiring nature of the Elizabethans, the explorations and development of new territories in the New World, the growth of the merchant class, even the newly vibrant fashions, show a society confident in itself and ready to enjoy itself. What better medium to do that in than to gather with your friends and neighbours in a beautiful space and watch the sorrows, or joys, of imaginary people? Theatre has always offered vicarious enjoyment or a catharsis of pain.

At our playhouses, wrote Stephen Gosson in 1579, 'you shall see such heaving and shoving, such itching and shouldering to sit by the women; such care for their garments that they not be trod on.'[58]Another element in this mix was the language and a delight in language: the Elizabethans went to *hear* a play, not to see it. A lot of learning in schools and universities was done by rote or by reading aloud: schools acted the plays of the Ancient World and these were also being translated into English. A friend of Marlowe's, Thomas Watson, boasted that he had learned 'to utter words of diverse sound' after travelling extensively in Europe. He translated and published a version of Sophocles' *Antigone* by the time he was twenty-four, and wrote other plays, unfortunately now lost.[59]

Another influential playwright was John Lyly (c.1554 to 1606), whose comedies are considered to have influenced Shakespeare's. Owing some elements that echo the Morality play, Lyly mixes the human with the divine. Instead of angels or abstract entities, such as Beauty or Good Deeds, he uses Greek gods and goddesses. Readers and

[58] Greenblatt, *Will in the World*, p.189.
[59] Ibid, p.200.

viewers of Shakespeare's work would recognise the theme of mistaken identity in Lyly's plays.

When he first came to London, Shakespeare may have seen *Arden of Faversham.* Set forty years previously, in Edward VI's reign, it dramatizes an infamous murder. Martin Wiggins notes that the play 'was written at a time when English tragedy was systematically enriching itself by incorporating elements more usually associated with the opposite genre of comedy'.[60] It can be argued, though, that comedy had always played a part in the sober Morality plays. This blend of the two genres is a typically English phenomena and *Arden of Faversham* has not entirely shaken off the tradition of past drama. Much has been made of the middle-class characters in *Arden of Faversham,* which contrast strongly with the royalty and deities that populate tragedies. However in the Morality plays, the protagonist is not slotted into any social class.

Although the original murder took place forty years earlier, Arden was a character well known to Elizabethan audiences, a man who had profited by the Reformation, receiving lands formerly held by the Church. He is an unattractive character and the audience has a certain amount of sympathy for his wife, Alice's, desire to have a more glamorous lover. However, it must be admitted that Mosby, her lover, also seems to be on the make. As Wiggins points out:

> Arden is not an atypical figure who may easily be demonized, for almost everyone in the play strives to better themselves through money-making and frantic social climbing […] the trajectory of everyone's aspirations is upwards, and that sometimes entails shoving others down, whether into destitution or

[60] *A Woman Killed with Kindness and other plays,* ed. by Martin Wiggins (Oxford World Classics, 2008), vii.

death. Arden's murder in only an extension of the kind of entrepreneurial competitiveness by which he has lived his life.[61]

The comedy element in trying to murder Arden is, as has been said, something that has been inherited from the Morality plays, but whereas, in them, the protagonist uses these episodes to help him on his journey to God, here the scenes underline the essential evil of Alice's intentions. Nor does she repent. She accepts her destiny, that of being burnt, with almost Stoical dignity, unlike her lover, Mosby, who curses her. When Bradshaw reminds her that she is going to God, she says, 'And let me meditate upon my saviour Christ, | Whose blood must save me from the blood I shed' and 'Let my death make amends for all my sins'.[62] In a previous scene, she promises to love Arden in heaven though she has not done so on earth.

Another popular play at the time, Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, is the first known example of the genre of Revenge plays, which would reach its height in the Jacobean period. Revenge is a curious emotion, which seems both natural and unnatural. Even in the Bible, it has a confused expression. On one hand we are told that an eye must be given or an eye and a tooth for a tooth,[63] but also it is said, and repeated by Saint Paul that vengeance should be left to God because he will repay. [64] In his essay, *On Revenge*, Francis Bacon writes that 'Revenge is a kind of wild justice which, the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out'.[65] This expresses the dilemma about revenge. Sometimes the slight is relatively slight or personal, not something that would be covered by law or it is something which could be covered by law but the evidence against the perpetrator is not strong enough. This is the dilemma in *The Spanish Tragedy*,

[61] *ibid*, xi.
[62] ibid, pp.17-18.
[63] Exodus 22.24.
[64] Romans 12.19.
[65] Francis Bacon, *Essays*, ed. by F.G. Selby (London, 1920), p.9.

in which one of the protagonists, who acts as a Chorus, is called Revenge. This is an imitation or development of characters in Morality plays. The main emotions in this play are dark and ruthless and there is only one character that seems to express repentance and that is Villupo who cries 'Rent with remembrance of so foull a deed, | My guilty soul submits me to my doom'.[66]

The most lasting and most produced nowadays of pre-Shakespearian plays are those of Christopher Marlowe (1564 to 1593). These can be seen as the antithesis to the Morality plays. Instead of a soul going to death and seeking redemption by repentance, Marlowe's heroes are all subversive. Stephen Greenblatt notes that:

> Marlowe's heroes fashion themselves not in loving submission to an absolute authority but in self-conscious opposition. Tamburlaine against hierarchy, Barrabas against Christianity, Faustus against God, Edward against the sanctified rites and responsibilities of kingship, marriage and manhood.[67]

Furthermore, Alan Sinfield comments that Marlowe 'takes the protestant claims for God apart and challenges us to put them together again'.[68] The Christians in *The Jew of Malta* and *Edward II* do not lead a charitable life nor express the virtues of Morality Play characters: this is a godless world.

Dr Faustus is almost a hymn against Christianity, redolent with blasphemy and un-Christian sentiment. According to Mahood:

> Theme of despair dominates the play, and… it recurs with a gloomy tolling insistence […] All through the play, he triumphs of Faustus' magic are

[66] Act 3 scene 1.
[67] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago, 1980) p.203.
[68] Alan Sinfield, *Literature in Protestant England* (Croom Helm, 1983), p.111.

accompanied by such chilling undertones: the delight he seems to enjoy serve only as drugs to alleviate the pain of loss […] He makes a virtue of his despair.[69]

Despair is the gravest of Christian sins and so Faustus is making a virtue of his sins. The play has a very blasphemous image in the scene where Faustus seals his pact with the devil by signing it with his own blood, a recollection of the blood of Christ shed for us and an echo of the Eucharist. Indeed, he seals the bond with the words of Christ on the Cross: *Consummatus est.*

Blasphemous images appear in the other plays also: Tamburlaine invites his sons to feel his wound, invoking the image of Thomas putting his hand in Christ's wounded side. He further blasphemes when he declares that earthly joys are better than heavenly ones. Tamburlaine, however, is not a Christian: he invokes the Greek Gods not the Christian one. Since Edward II was a Christian king, he blasphemes against the concept of medieval kingship, which will be discussed in a later chapter.

Marlowe's heroes are characterised by their love of excess: for power, for riches, for erotic love and for knowledge. Where a writer of a Morality play would have featured abstract and inhumanly perfect versions of Power, Riches, Eros and Knowledge, Marlowe's heroes are greatly human, suffering and delighting in the events that happen to them. It is only at the end of the plays that they have to face up to their fate and none seem to resent that. Edward does call on God, but, again, unlike the protagonists of the Morality plays, his repentance is never really expressed. Faustus has moments of repentance during the play but they seem very formal and not heartfelt. Barrabas dies cursing and Tamburlaine expresses no repentance.

[69] M. Mahood, 'Marlowe's Heroes' in *Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. by R.R. Kaufman (Oxford University Press, 1961) p.106.

A new type of play was being forged. It would deal with characters that expressed emotions felt by most human beings, characters that actors could turn into real people for the two-and-a-half hours that they were in the theatre. The vigorous men and women we find in Kyd's play, and the subversive heroes of Marlowe's, are, arguably, more living than the characters of the medieval drama.

The stage was set for deeper emotions to be written about. The Church had lost much of its power over thought, Hellenic ideas were gaining ground and language was evolving. The scene was set for William Shakespeare. The execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, and the defeat of the Armada had made the kingdom feel safer from Roman Catholicism, though concerns about heterodoxy remained. There were at least fourteen conspiracies to assassinate Elizabeth, and James's reign saw the notorious Gun Powder Plot. Priests courageously came to England to administer Mass to the faithful and recusants abroad sent pamphlets and other literature into England. In James' reign, three Bills were passed to reinstate the authority of the king, to restrict the recusants and to ban religious discussion on the stage.

Before the 1590s, it was not possible for Shakespeare to write seriously about repentance and forgiveness. The political and theological state of England would have made it too dangerous publically to be diverse about these subjects. In his earlier plays, a type of social forgiveness is apparent. In *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Valentine forgives Proteus for trying to seduce Sylvia as does Julia. In *Love's Labour's Lost,* the young men are not accepted right away by the Princess and her ladies but are sent away for a year to do something worthy which could be considered a penance for their frivolity.

The following chapters examine the portrayal of great sins in the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. *The Second Tetralogy* deals with the sin of sacrilege committed by the House of Lancaster, *Regret not Repentance* concerns Richard

of Gloucester, the Macbeths and Christopher Marlowe's Dr Faustus. The third section deals with forgiveness in *The Tempest*, *King Lear*, *As You Like* it, and Middleton's *The Yorkshire Tragedy*. Next Mercy and Justice considers *The Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure* and two plays by John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The White Devil.* The concluding section is about unforgiving men: Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* followed by Shakespeare's *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale.* The conclusion discusses how theatre always reflects the current position of politics and theology.

2. SIN AND SACRILEGE

Eight of Shakespeare's plays deal with the sin of sacrilege, the killing of a king. This chapter will examine the medieval and Tudor idea of kingship, considering the works of Kantorowicz and Axton. It will discuss the significance of the Anointing at the Coronation before looking at the plays themselves, their exploration of repentance and forgiveness, and how editors and critics have surveyed the plays in the light of this doctrine.

The most significant plays are those of the Second Tetralogy: *Richard II, Henry IV parts I and 2,* and *Henry V.* The other plays, which will be dealt with in another chapter, are *Henry IV part 3: Richard III: Macbeth.* In each case, the murder of the king is done for a different cause and the murderer reacts in a different way. Some are repentant; others are not. Other characters are often implicated and the consequences for them will also be explored. The guiding principle, however, will always be the sin that the protagonists have committed and their reaction to the consequences.

The attitude to kingship is expressed in *Sir Thomas More,* a play in which Shakespeare had some hand. The speech runs:

> For to the king God hath His office lent
> Of dread of justice, power and command,
> Hath bid him rule, and willed you to obey;
> And to add ampler majesty to this
> He hath only lent the king His figure,
> His throne and sword, but given him His own name,
> Calls him god on earth. What do you, then

Rising ‘gainst him thath God himself installs

But rise ‘gainst God? What do you do to your souls

In doing this? (Scene 6, line 112)

Richard II is the tragedy of the King’s Two Bodies: no king was more assured of his own divinity than Shakespeare’s Richard II. Henry Bolingbroke’s sin was *more* than murder, more than regicide. He was guilty of sacrilege. He transgressed the idea that a king was more than human, he had a special grace from God that made him divine. This is not an aspect of the Second Tetralogy that has received much attention since Ernst Kantorowicz’s *The King’s Two Bodies* in 1952, which analysed *Richard II* from Richard’s point of view, or John Dover Wilson’s edition of *Richard II* for Cambridge. Indeed of the eleven articles about the Tetralogy that Graham Holderness has assembled in *Shakespeare’s History Plays: Richard II to Henry V*, it is mentioned in just one chapter. The chief of these sources was, of course, Ralph Holinshed, which Shakespeare used in the 1586-7 edition. Holinshed’s History is mainly narrative, but there is always, arguably, the underlying assumption of the divinity of the king. Another potential source was *The Mirror of Magistrates*, which paints a totally opposite character of Richard than the subtle one developed by Shakespeare. Samuel Daniel’s poem, *The First Foure Bookes of the civil warres between the two houses of Lancaster and York*, entered in the Stationers’ Register in October 1595, has similarities with Shakespeare’s play and could have been read by him but, as Peter Ure suggests, Daniel could have seen the play before writing his poem.[70]

Robert Knapp writes ‘we know, of course, that Shakespeare cannot have in mind what modern authorities would consider real medieval kingship’ (p.88). This is a

[70] For detailed analysis of Daniel’s poem see Ure, Arden edition, XLIII.

dangerous assumption to make, because Tudor and medieval concepts of kingship were similar, though Knapp does go on to say that mid-century Tudor homilies (which Shakespeare would heard in church) promulgated the idea of the divine right of kings and there were laws that also assumed this Doctrine. In the litany of the 1559 Prayer Book, the prayers for the Queen contain the wish that the Queen 'may ever have affiaunce in thee' and asks God to be her defender and keeper, which would suggest that God and the Queen had a special relationship.[71]

Besides this, Elizabeth had brought a case to law, known as the Duchy of Lancaster case, to resolve the whole question in 1561. It concerned the giving of Crown Land by Edward VI, Elizabeth's half-brother, to one of his subjects when his physical body was legally under age. The Queen argued that Edward was not entitled to do this. But the judges opposed the Queen and upheld Edward's grant, insisting that the law for minors only applied to bodies *natural.*[72] The judgment ran thus:

> although the natural Body of the King is subject to infancy, yet when the Body politic is conjoined to it, and one Body is made of them both, the whole Body shall have all the Properties, Qualities and degrees of the Body politic which is the greater and more worthy, and in which there is not nor can be any Infancy.[73] […] For the King has in him two Bodies viz a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (If it considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or Old Age, and to the Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other people. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and

[71] Cummings, p.118.
[72] Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies* (London, 1977), p.17.
[73] Axton, p.17.

> Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the management of Public-weal.[74]

Elizabeth's awareness of this is obvious in some of her utterances. Even though she was wont to say that she was but a weak woman, she was also aware that she had a mystical and political aura:

> The burthen that is fallen on me maketh me amazed […] And as I am but one body naturall and considered thought by His (God's) permission a body politique to governe, so shall desyre you all [...] to bee assistant go me, that with all my Rulings and you with hour service may make a good account to Almighty God.[75]

This exemplifies an Elizabethan understanding of kingship: the Queen's body was like everyone else's, but she had been given a special Grace to enable her to rule well and wisely. This is the assumption that underlies all Shakespeare's History plays. And, of course, Elizabeth herself was guilty of sacrilege when she signed the death warrant of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Modern criticism has, by and large, concentrated on the verse and the tragic aspect of Richard. None of the editors of the standard texts (Arden, both the 1989 and the 2002 editions, Cambridge and Oxford World Classics) mention the graveness of Bolingbroke's actions or consider how they might have affected him spiritually. Stanley Wells, writing in *Shakespeare: A Dramatic Life* (p.135), typifies the romantic interpretation that has been prevalent since the nineteenth century: 'To modern audiences *Richard the Second* is a lyrical tragedy of a young, beautiful, and supremely eloquent

[74] Axton,p.17.
[75] Axton, p.38.

king betrayed by his supporters, compelled to resign the crown, humiliated, imprisoned, and ultimately murdered in degrading circumstances'. This, I submit, is to misread the play: it is as much Bolingbroke's tragedy as it is Richard's. Bolingbroke does not, of course, lose his life but is compelled to live a troubled life, with fractious subjects, a renegade son, and his own conscience.

Richard's awareness of his divinity is apparent throughout the play. He constantly refers to it. In the very first scene (line 119), he refers to his 'sacred blood' and that he is 'God's substitute […] anointed in his sight' (1.2.37) but it is not until Act Three that he expresses his belief in his sacred body so eloquently and in a grandiose manner. His royal state is emphasized by the Bishop of Carlisle who reminds him that 'That power who made you king | Hath power to keep you king in spite of all' (3.2.27). However, he does remind the king also that he must also be practical and not necessarily believe he is protected from harm. Richard proclaims that 'For every man that Bolingbroke hath pressed […] | God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay | A glorious angel' (3.2.60) and, at line 83, he rallies himself:

> I had forgot myself, am I not King?
> Awake thou coward majesty ! Thou sleepest
> Is not the king's name twenty thousand names?
> Arm, Arm, my name. A puny subject strikes
> At thy great glory.

Further on, Richard not only remembers his two bodies but identifies himself with Jesus Christ when he exclaims 'Snakes, in my heart-blood warm'd, that sting my heart | Three Judases, each one worse that Judas!' (3.2.131). As Kantorowicz points out:

> It is as though it has dawned on Richard that his vicariate of the God Christ might imply also a vicariate of the man Jesus, and that he, the royal 'deputy elected by the Lord' might have to follow his divine Master also in human humiliation and take the cross.[76]

In his great speech about the deaths of kings, Richard also seems to invoke the Hellenic idea that a king dies for his people. This idea, of course, is also ascribed to Christ. Richard here also seems to acknowledge that in spite of the divinity that has been given him his natural body will die for: 'I live by bread like you, feel want, | Taste grief, need friends - subjected thus, | How can you say to me, I am a king' (3.2.171). His acceptance of his two bodies has completely broken down, although he does retrieve some sense of it when he confronts Bolingbroke in the deposition scene. Still, Richard possesses enough of the actor to assume the divine right he has accepted as his right previously. He certainly asserts his *legal* right to kingship when he says to his rebel subjects:

> We are amazed, and thus long have we stood
> To watch the fearful bending of thy knee,
> We thought ourselves thy lawful king:
> And if we be, how dare thy joints forget
> To pay their awful duty in our presence?
>
> (3.3.73)

[76] Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton University Press, 1957), p.30.

Later on in this scene, Richard longs for a grave. As always with Richard, one wonders how much is acting, how much he is sincere. He can certainly convey self-pity. Richard also compares himself to the sun rising in the east and compel Bolingbroke to 'tremble at his sin' for

> Not all the water in the rough rude sea
> Can wash the balm off from an anointed king.
> The breath of worldly men cannot depose
> The deputy elected by the Lord;
> For every man the Bolingbroke hath pressed
> To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
> God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
> A glorious angel. Then if angels fight,
> Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right
> (3.2.54)

As we shall discover later Bolingbroke and Richard have disparate views of kingship. In this speech, Richard seems to believe that God will uphold him whatever he does, whereas Bolingbroke is only too aware of his own culpability. Even when Richard is told that his troops have fled he still maintains his belief in his own divinity:

> Am I not king?
> Awake, thou sluggard majesty, thou sleep'st
> Is not the king's name twenty thousand names?
> Arm, arm, my name! A puny subject strikes

At thy great glory. Look not to the ground,
Ye favourites of a king. Are we not high?
High be our thoughts (3.2.83-88)

He later references the betrayal of Christ by Judas, comparing himself with Christ, the God made Man. This becomes a recurring theme with him, despite it being blasphemy. Except for the first statement (about his sacred blood) these utterances of Richard are not said in the presence of Bolingbroke. When they meet, though, Richard gets even more grandiloquent.

Bolingbroke has been exiled by Richard. During his exile he hears that his father, John of Gaunt, has died and that Richard, illegally, has taken possession of Bolingbroke's inheritance. He returns to demand his lands and title. His character is totally opposed to that of Richard's. As Anthony Dawson and Paul Yachnin write:

> Bolingbroke is clearly designed as a contrast to Richard, but he is not composed only in one key. Capable, decisive, and self-contained, where Richard is weak, vacillating and histrionic, Bolingbroke may appear unemotional and even rigid, but he is capable of strong feeling […] He tends always to keep his feelings under wraps.[77]

As an earlier critic, William Hazlitt explains:

The change of tone and behavior [sic] in the two competitors for the throne according to their change of fortune, from the capricious sentence of banishment passed

[77] *Richard II*, ed. Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin, OUP (Oxford, 2011), p.72.

by Richard upon Bolingbroke, the suppliant offers and modest pretensions of the latter on his return, to the high and mighty tone with which he accepts Richard's resignation of the crown…is marked throughout with complete effect and without the slightest appearance of effort.[78]

These contrasting traits are shown in the scene where they meet at Berkeley Castle. Bolingbroke is quite clear that he has a legitimate right to break his exile and come to England to assume his title inherited on his father's death. He says to his Uncle of York:

> As I was banished, I was banished Hereford;
> But as I come, I come for Lancaster.
> And, noble uncle, I beseech your grace,
> To look on my wrongs with an indifferent eye. (2.3.112)

Later in the speech, he asserts that he is acting legally. The business-like tone of the speeches in this scene contrast greatly with Richard's self-aggrandizement.

Bolingbroke quickly shows his authority with some ruthlessness when he captures Bushy and Green. When he condemns them to death, it is clear that his conception of kingship differs entirely from Richard's:

> You have misled a prince, a royal king
> A happy gentleman in blood and lineaments,
> By you unhappied and disfigured clean.

[78] William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (Everyman, 1921), pp.137-8.

You have in manner with your sinful hours

Made divorce betwixt his queen and him,

Broke the possession of a royal bed. (3.1.7)

He further goes on the state the wrongs the pair have done to him as justification of their deaths. All is done in a fair and just way. The historic Bolingbroke had his legal right to be king ratified by Parliament and Shakespeare seems to assume this in the coming scenes.

In Act 4, Richard returns to his belief in his divinity and his association of himself with Christ encouraged by the Bishop of Carlisle:

What subject can give sentence on his king?

And who sits here that is not Richard's subject?

And shall the figure of God's majesty

His captain, steward, deputy-elect,

Anointed, crowned, planted many years,

Be judged by subject and inferior breath,

And he himself not present? O, forfend it God,

That in a Christian climate souls refined

Should show so heinous, black, and obscene a deed! (4.1.121)

When he is led into Westminster Hall to resign his kingship, Richard is at his most self-pitying. He again associates himself with Christ:

Did they not sometimes cry 'all hail' to me?

So Jesus did to Christ. For He, in twelve,

Found truth in all but one: I in twelve thousand none. (4.1.169)

As Kantorowicz writes:

The scene in which Richard 'undoes his kingship' and releases his body politic into thin air, leaves the spectator breathless. It is a scene of sacramental solemnity, since the ecclesiastical ritual of undoing the effect of consecration is no less solemn or of less weight than the ritual which has built up the sacramental dignity.[9]

Step by step, Richard follows the Coronation service and delivers himself from the sacred promises and grace he received on that occasion. Bolingbroke asks if Richard is content to resign the crown:

Now mark me how I will undo myself:

I give this heavy weight from off my head,

And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand,

The pride of kingly sway from out my heart;

With mine own tears I wash away my balm,

With my own hands I give away my crown,

With my own tongue deny my sacred state,

With my own breath release all duteous oaths. (4.1.203)

[9]Kantorowicz,,p.35.

Richard here assumes the sacredness and grace that he was given at his Coronation to undo it. Bolingbroke must ask himself, as must the audience, whether a sacrament can be taken away once it has been given.

Later in the scene, Richard again invokes the figure of Christ and accuses the nobles and priests assembled of being like Pontius Pilate. Then a realization comes upon him that he too is acting like Pilate because he is betraying his sacredness. He asks for a mirror and Bolingbroke commands one to be brought. Confronted with his own image, Richard sees not only his actual face but also the semi-divine face that he has relinquished, and to which he is now saying 'goodbye', acknowledging that he has been 'outfaced' by Bolingbroke. Ever the exhibitionist, he theatrically dashes the glass to the ground, breaking the image of his two bodies, thus shattering his divinity. Bolingbroke orders him to the Tower and, subsequently, his death. During this scene, Bolingbroke has said little, giving the stage to Richard. Richard says farewell to his Queen and when Northumberland breaks up this meeting, Richard exclaims: 'Doubly divorced! Bad men, you violate | A two-fold marriage - 'twixt my crown and me' (5.1.71). The final scenes with Richard take place in his prison and we witness his death. Though Bolingbroke wished it to happen, when it occurs, it is not commanded by him:

> They love not poison that do poison need,
> Nor do I thee. Though I did wish him dead
> I hate the murderer, love him murdered.
> The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labour
> But neither my good word nor princely favour.
> With Cain go wander thorough shades of night
> And never show thy head by day or night. (5.6.38)

Interspersed with the scenes of Richard's death is the Aumerle plot. Critics tend to ignore this and directors play it for farce. Indeed, in the theatre, this is perhaps the right way to deal with Aumerle's rebellion against a Lancastrian king after the searing scenes of Richard's abdication and death. But if the play is considered seriously in its political and religious themes, these scenes are among the most significant. The tendency of critics from Hazlitt onwards to make Richard the 'chief interest' in the play, and dismiss Bolingbroke as 'ambitious and (a) political usurper', ignores the basic assumptions in the Second Tetralogy about repentance. Bolingbroke is conscious of his own sins and is, perhaps, feeling uncertain of his religious right to the throne. Both sides of the argument are represented in the scene between Aumerle and his parents, during which Aumerle repents for his treason. York says that if Bolingbroke pardons Aumerle he will fail politically:

> If thou do pardon whosoever pray
> More sins for this forgiveness prosper may
> This festered joint cut off, the rest sound,
> This let alone will all the rest confound. (5.3.83)

The Duchess pleads for her son, saying that he is truly repentant: 'Say "pardon" King, let pity teach thee how the word is short but not so short as sweet, | No word like pardon for kings' mouths so sweet' (5.3.115). Eventually Bolingbroke utters words that echo the rhythm of forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer: 'I pardon him as God shall pardon me' (5.3.130). This whole scene is an argument about forgiveness, for and against, and shows Bolingbroke's character uneasy at the way he has acquired the sacred character

given to the king at the coronation. In the final speech of the play, after his castigation of Exton, Bolingbroke expresses his sadness and sorrow:

> Lords, I protest my soul is full of woe
> That blood should sprinkle me to make me grow
> Come mourn with me for what I do lament
> And put on sullen black incontinent.
> I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land
> To wash this blood from my guilty hand.
> March sadly after. Grace my mournings here
> In weeping after this untimely bier. (5.6.45)

He has caused the death of a sacred king and has already seen the consequences of his usurpation: the possible rebellion of his subjects. It is a theme that will colour the next two plays in the Tetralogy.

Richard II shows that even the divine nature of a king, his two bodies, one natural and one semi-divine b*y* the grace given to him at his coronation, does not preclude him from being politically a disaster nor does it make him an attractive man. Richard is vain, corrupt and unjust. Bolingbroke, in contrast, is just, politically astute, and has considerably more self-knowledge than Richard. He admits his sins and is prepared to repent them fully by performing an act of penance, like Lancelot and Gawain in the Arthurian legends. He may have been given divine grace at his coronation but he can never really assume that he is truly king. Doubt always underlines his kingship.

The next part of the Tetralogy, *Henry IV, Part One,* draws on Ralph Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587) and, to some extent, John Stow's *Chronicles of England* (1580) and

his *Annals of England (*1592) and perhaps *A Mirror of Magistrates.* These deal with the political events in Henry IV's reign but, in this play, Shakespeare invented one of his most charismatic characters: arguably Falstaff overwhelms the action. As A.C. Bradley wrote in *The Oxford Lectures* (1909), '[i]n the Falstaff Scenes he overshot his mark. He created so extraordinary a being and fixed him so firmly on his intellectual throne, that when he sought to dethrone him he could not'.[79] In the Arden Edition, Cambridge and Oxford World's Classics, the various editors all concentrate on this larger-than-life character. The part is generally given to an actor who is well known for portraying exuberant characters and who can dominate the audience. Indeed, this does make for good theatre. But the play has a sober side, and the political development of the play is, it can be argued, as compelling and vibrant as the scenes in the Boar's Head.

Bolingbroke, now Henry IV, has already faced one rebellion and will face even more as his reign continues. Furthermore, he is anguished by the behaviour of his son and heir, the Prince of Wales. As he says in *Richard II:*

> Can no one tell me of my unthrifty son?
> 'Tis full three months since I did see him last.
> If any plague hang over us, 'tis he. (5.3.1)

Later in the scene, he says that he does see some improvement in Prince Hal and he hopes that he will grow up soon. In historic times, of course, Hal was only in his teen years, a time when young men are both (in the King's words) 'dissolute' and 'desperate'.

Henry's discontent with his son is expressed at the beginning of *Henry IV Part 1* when he says to his assembled nobles, comparing him to Hotspur:

[79] Dover Wilson, p.9

Whilst I, by looking on the praise of him,

See riot and dishonour stain the brow

O that it could be proved

That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged

In cradle-clothes our children where they lay,

And called mine Percy, his Plantagenet! (1.1.83-88)

The first confrontation in the play between father and son does not occur until Act 3, scene 2, where the King berates Hal:

I know not whether God will have it so

For some displeasing service I have done,

That in his secret doom out of my blood

He'll breed refinement and a scourge for me,

But thou dost in thy passages of life

Make me believe that thou art only marked

For the hot vengeance and the rod of heaven

To punish my mistreatings. (3.2.4-11)

Henry's recognition that he has offended God underlies these lines. He knows that he deserves punishment for despite acknowledging his sin in usurping Richard, he has not given up the results of his sin and he has not yet performed the penance of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem that he imposed on himself; until he does that, he cannot be forgiven.

Henry asks his son to make him believe '[t]hat thou art only marked | For the hot vengeance and the rod of heaven' (3.2.10). According to David Bevington, the editor of the Oxford edition, this could mean either that Hal is the instrument of God's punishment or that Hal himself could be marked for vengeance himself, again punishing Henry. Either interpretation shows that Henry recognizes his state deserves punishment. Even when Hal tries to reconcile with his father, Henry still mourns his state but says that Hal can redeem his bad behaviour by fighting against the rebels, again exemplifying the idea that some sort of amendment must be made before sin can be atoned. But, at the Battle of Shrewsbury, the Prince, by his bravery, redeems himself in the King's eyes.

What angers the king most is Hal's association with the reprobate Falstaff. As some critics have pointed out, Falstaff's character has roots in the Morality Plays for he can be regarded as akin to Vice or Riot, though David Bevington suggests he could be Gluttony. Unlike the allegorical characters in, say, *Everyman*, Falstaff has many facets and there are two distinct ways of assessing his character. The conventional, masculine view is that he is a man of infinite wit and variety: a good sort, a decent chap who is fun to be with. Certainly he has wit, but it is a wit that Prince Hal brings out. Dover Wilson expresses this point of view about Falstaff when he states that we all love Falstaff because of his 'joyous and victorious pleasure in the life of the senses. There we feel but for the Grace of God […] go we.'[80]

The other point of view is that Falstaff is a thief and coward (Gadshill), a sponger (he owes Mistress Quickly money which she can ill afford), a womanizer (Doll) and an opportunist. He cheats when he enlists men in the army as is detailed both in Parts one and Two. He seems to have no conscience or understanding of his unpleasant behaviour.

[80] Dover Wilson, *The Fortunes of Falstaff*, p.9

On stage, the Gadshill incident (Act 2, scene 1) and the telling of it afterwards (Act 2, scene 4) plays as comedy, but it could be characterized as a kind of mugging: money, quite a great deal of it, was stolen from innocent people. It is to Hal's credit that the money is repaid later on. Falstaff's gluttony is revealed in the same scene, when Hal reads the bill for Falstaff's meal, his cowardice is exposed at the Battle of Shrewsbury, when he fakes death to avoid it, and his opportunism is shown when he claims that he, not Hal, has killed Hotspur. Additionally, we constantly see his self-delusion about the relationship he has with Hal. David Bevington points out that Hal is 'more culpable than Falstaff' for most critics of the play, and he castigates the Prince for 'heartlessness, ingratitude, manipulation of friendship for the sake of public image'.[81]

Hal is consistent throughout: he is fraternizing with the Boar's Head delinquents to get to know the people whom he will one day rule and lead into battle, either against English rebels or to reclaim land in France. There is much evidence of this in what he says to Falstaff, which Falstaff ignores. He is constantly rude to Falstaff calling him, among other epithets, a 'whoreson round man'; 'thou clay-brained guts'; 'greasy tallow-keech'; and 'a natural coward'. When he tells Poins about his conversation with Tom, Dick and Francis, he shows, again, that he is studying all sorts of people, people whom he will one day rule. It is something he admits to his father as well. Poins is also self-deluding about his friendship with Hal. There is a boyish romp that has something pleasing about it but Hal is furious when Poins is presumptuous in suggesting his sister as a suitable bride for the Prince. He teases Poins about his lack of money and clothes, though this could be considered boyish one upmanship.

Hal's good qualities are obvious in the plays. His sense of justice is prevalent when he says that he will give Falstaff up if he has done the robbery and he gives the

[81] *Oxford World Classics*, p.59.

stolen money back (Act 1, scene 2). This sense of justice is prevalent in all three plays as the thesis will show.

Hal's potential for repentance is shown in the scene with his father when he declares:

> So please your majesty, I would I could
> Quit all offences with as clear excuse
> As well as I am doubtless I can purge
> Myself of many I am charged withal.
> Yet such extenuation let me beg
> As, in reproof of many tales devised,
> Which oft the ear of greatness needs must hear
> By smiling pick thanks and base newsmongers,
> I may, for some things true, wherein my youth
> Hath faulty wandered and irregular,
> Find pardon on my true submission.
> (3.2.18-28)

Here, Hal is quite explicit that some of the tales that his father has heard about him are scandal-mongering but he is also truly sorry for the indiscretions that he has committed and will make amends.

As celebrities today find, glamour always attracts envy and exaggeration, and Hal has glamour. Vernon testifies that Hal and his comrades are:

> All furnished, all in arms;

All plumed like estridges that with the wind
Bating like eagles having lately bathed,
Glittering in golden coats like images
As full of spirit as the month of May
And gorgeous as the sun in midsummer;
Wanton as youthful goats, wild as young bulls.
(4.1.97-104)

A description of Hal in his armour jumping on his horse follows. The play ends with Hal redeeming himself in battle. Bolingbroke swore at the end of *King Richard* to do penance for Richard's death by going to the Holy Land, but the political situation caused by his usurpation of the throne has prevented him from so doing. As he says in his first speech in the play, he has been unable to do so '[b]ut this our purpose now is twelve months old, And bootless 'tis to tell you we will go' (1.1.28-29). Later on in the same scene, news comes that Mortimer is rebelling and again Henry exclaims that this too 'It seems then that the tidings of this broil | Brake off our business for the Holy Land' (1.1.47-48). Because he has not been able to do his self-imposed penance, he has not, of course, fulfilled the obligations of Sacramental Confession and so has not obtained complete absolution of his sin. This, combined with his disillusion about his son, becomes a theme throughout the play.

In Act 3, Scene 2, the King and Prince confront one another. The King upbraids Hal for his behaviour:

I know not whether God will have it so
For some displeasing service I have done,

That in his secret doom out of my blood
He'll breed refinement and a scourge for me;
But thou dost in my passages of life
Make me believe that thou art only marked
For the hot vengeance and the rod of heaven
To punish my misreading. (3.2.4-11)

Here, again, the King admits that his sin was probably the cause of Hal's misbehaviour. Hal generously confesses that his youth has been riotous but that gossip has made it worse than it was. He promises amendment. The King then rehearses what he considers to be the qualities of an ideal king, citing how, in his youth, he kept his 'person fresh and new' even in Richard's presence. He says:

Thus did I keep my person fresh and new,
My presence, like a robe pontifical,
Ne'er seen but wondered at; and so my state
Seldom, but sumptuous, showed like a feast
And won by rareness such solemnity.
The skipping King, he ambled up and down
With shallow jesters and rash bavin wits
Soon kindled and soon burnt; carded his state,
Mingled his royalty with cap'ring fools,
Had his great name profaned with their scorns. (3.2.55-64)

He further reproaches Hal saying that he ‘hast lost thy princely privilege’ (3.2.86). Hal promises to be ‘more myself’ (3.2.93). Henry replies with a history lesson about the rebellion in the kingdom. In response to this, the Prince asserts that he will be revenged on Hotspur, whom his Father his praised to Hal’s disadvantage, showing that if Hotspur and ‘your unthought-of Harry [have] chance to meet’:

> For every honour sitting on his helm,
> Would they were multitudes, and on my head
> My shames redoubled! For the time will come
> That I shall make this northern youth exchange
> His glorious deeds for my indignities.
> Percy is but my factor, good my lord,
> To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf.
> (4.1.141-48)

In performance, much of this scene is often cut but it is crucial, especially for the actor playing Bolingbroke, to explain the differences in his behaviour and that of his predecessor and his son. Bolingbroke is constantly justifying his actions and still, as king, defending his right to the Throne. For the actors, this scene shows how the parts can be played and the engaging contrast between the three characters: the glorious, golden, vain Richard; the self-righteous Bolingbroke; and the young man, who has served an apprenticeship among the common folk, which will, eventually, make him a national hero.

Hal, of course, redeems himself in his Father's opinion by his bravery on the field of Shrewsbury. The atmosphere in Part 2 is, however, more sombre, darker. As Stanley Wells points out,

> The king of this play is not merely melancholy but ill, and this colours the tone of the whole play. We see him first (3.1) in his nightgown meditating on the burdens of kingship, contrasting his insomnia with the peaceful sleep of his 'poorest subjects'…. 'Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown' he concludes.[82]

This scene sets the elegiac note of the whole play. The relationships between the three main protagonists, King, Prince and Falstaff, are notably different. Hal, seemingly, reverts to his pleasure-seeking ways but the meetings between him and Falstaff are fewer. Throughout the play, he shows that he is growing up from a boy in his teens to a responsible king, while Falstaff shows even more reprehensible characteristics. He, too, is sickly. At his first appearance, he asks his Page what opinion the doctor had of his urine, and throughout the play he constantly talks of his age and infirmities. As Rene Weis points out, the audience is being prepared, here, for the consequences of Falstaff's drinking and whoring: 'the pox', a venereal disease, which he mentions three times.[83] We still, though, can appreciate his comedic aspect at the beginning of the play, but that, too, seems to be diminished as the play proceeds and Falstaff gets more melancholy.

> Hal is ruder than ever to Falstaff and it is obvious that the friendship is drawing to its close: Hal is outgrowing the old rogue. He insults Falstaff, reminding him of their contrasting social stations: 'You whoreson, candlmine you, how vilely

[82] Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare: A Dramatic Life*, Sinclair-Stevenson (London, 1994), p.146.
[83] Weiss, *Henry IV*: *Part Two*, *Oxford Shakespeare*, p.40.

did youspeak of me now, before this honest, virtuous, civil gentlewoman' (2.4.297). Nonetheless, Falstaff can still loom over the lay: his is, after all, the longest part, often played by a star actor, and we see him outside of London, still acting in a venial manner, as when he takes bribes from men unwilling to go to war. Shakespeare opens out the play here: no longer in London, we see the effect of war on ordinary people, a theme Shakespeare will explore in the next play. The rural theme continues in the scenes with Mr Justice Shallow and Mr Justice Silence, where, again, we get a glimpse of a different Falstaff, through the eyes of his friends, as a young man. The soft nostalgia of these scenes offsets the poignancy of the scenes to come, but Falstaff does not see the error of his ways. This contrasts with the scenes at court: while Falstaff is in the country, the King lies dying. In the beginning of the scene, Henry details the preparations for war and tries to reconcile his younger sons to Hal, though he still laments his companions, in spite of Warwick assuring him that Hal is only studying the men he will rule. When Hal enters, he speaks with affection of his Father and shows he has no animosity against him. His behaviour demonstrates that he does not resent the bad opinion which his father has always held of him, calling him 'My gracious Lord, my Father':On futue, he says

…. nature, love, filial tenderness
Shall, o dear father, pay thee plenteously. (4.3.169-70)

But the confrontation between the two men does not end there, as the King awakes, finding that Hal has taken the crown falls into a temper and upbraids his son,

accusing him of wanting the crown even at the expense of his father's death and foretelling that he will be a disastrous king:

> Up vanity!
> Down royal state! All you sage counsellors, hence!
> And to the English court assemble now
> From every region, apes of idleness!
> Now, neighbour confines, purge you of your scum!
> Have you a ruffian that will swear, drink, dance,
> Revel the night, rob, murder, and commit
> The oldest sins the newest kind of ways?
> For the fifth Harry from curbed licence plucks
> The muzzle of restraint, and the wild dog
> Shall flesh his tooth on every innocent. (4.3.247-60)

There is no forgiveness here, in contrast to Hal, who asks forgiveness for his hasty behaviour and kneeling says:

> Let me no more from this obedience rise,
> Which my most inward true and duteous spirit
> Teacheth me this prostrate and exterior bending. (4.3.274-6)

This, it can be argued, is one of the most explicit expressions of true repentance in the Tetralogy. The King responds to this and he himself confesses his own sins:

God knows, my son

By what bypaths and indirect crook'd ways

I met this crown; and I myself know

How troublesome it sat upon my head. (4.3.311-14)

But this is not complete repentance. Throughout this long speech, Bolingbroke is equivocal. At one point, as above, he acknowledges his sin, but at others, he defends his acquiring the throne which he snatched 'with boist'rous hand' and 'purchased'. He concludes with a plea for God's forgiveness for 'How I came by the crown', but he does not relinquish it nor does he perform his penance.

Hal, at this point, seems to have no reluctance to accept the crown: '[y]ou won it, wore it, kept it, gave it me; Then plain and right must my possession be' (4.3.351). He further states that he will 'rightfully retain' it. The King is then carried away to his deathbed.

The theme of justice is explored when the Lord Chief Justice, who has had to punish Hal for his riotous living, expresses his fear of the consequences when Hal becomes king. But throughout both plays, Hal has always acted justly. As has been noted, Hal gives back the money stolen, and it is only Falstaff's self-delusion that prevents him seeing his relationship with Hal in a reasonable way. But it is the Lord Chief Justice to whom Hal, now king, states his belief in that virtue. When the Lord says that he had the law on his side when he punished Hal, the new king replies:

You are right Justice, and you weigh this well and

So shall I live to speak my father's words

'Happy am I that have a man so bold

That dares do justice on my proper son

And not less happy having such a son

That would deliver up his greatness so

Into the hands of justice’ (5.2.101-11)

Hal also reassures his brothers that he will act justly towards them.

The next time we see the new king is after his Coronation and the actor has to deliver the speech called by critics ‘The rejection of Falstaff’. Most actors and most critics take the opinion that Henry is acting with great cruelty towards Falstaff by both the rejection and the manner of the rejection. However, Shakespeare quite often gives his actors alternative ways of interpreting his speeches which, of course, is why he is so fascinating to direct and act. What are the alternatives in this case? Some actors take the obvious course and speak the speech in an accusatory and anger manner, but there is another, more subtle, interpretation, which is arguably more appropriate to the themes of the play.

As Geoffrey Streatfeild and I discussed in 2007, Hal is now Henry V, having been crowned king in a service with deep temporal, and profound spiritual, meaning. The sceptre and the orb represent his legal powers, his crown his temporal power, and his contract with his people. In the anointing, he receives his spiritual grace. As in the most recent Coronation in 1953, he received the sign of the Cross on his brow, breast and both hands. At this moment, clearly an overwhelming one for any monarch, he became God's deputy on earth and the Christ to his country. To come from that, with the oil still glistening, into the streets would be traumatic, but then to be greeted by your nickname by someone from whom you had already grown apart would provoke a dramatic

reaction. But need this be a harsh one? Could it not be one of compassion? Or of contrition? Reading it like that, it is, I believe, the better solution.

It could be argued that this interpretation is extra-textual, since Shakespeare did not write a coronation scene. However, the actor playing Hal has to move mentally through the Coronation as his character transitions from boy prince to king. Indeed, reading the speech as is suggested here makes both dramatic sense and also fits in with the repentance theme of this play. Henry enacts true repentance, turning away from the sins committed and resolving to lead a new life.

In *Henry V*, the themes of justice and repentance are continued as the new king seeks to divert his rebellious subjects from civil war to conquering the French and regaining territories lost in France. His sense of justice, however, makes him scrupulous about his legal and ethical right to invade that country: ‘May I with right and justice make this claim?’ (1.2.105). The Archbishop replies, ‘The sin upon my head’ (1.2.106).

The next time that Henry has to dispense justice is at Southampton when the traitors are discovered. Henry is inclined to be merciful but when the traitors confess their treason, he says, ‘[t]he mercy that was quick in us but late | By your own counsel is suppressed and killed’ (2.2.76-77), and the traitors go to their deaths. At Harfleur, Henry is at his most eloquent in trying to get the town to surrender rather than forcing a battle, which will devastate both the town itself, and the inhabitants. If the town surrenders he will treat it with mercy. He acts justly towards all the people he conquers, requiring his soldiers to act within the law, and pay for everything that is requisitioned, unusual at the time when soldiers were expected to live off the land, when it is discovered that Bardolph has looted a pyx he has no hesitation in having Bardolph executed. Pistol explains, ‘Fortune is Bardolph’s foe and frowns on him. | For he hath stole a pyx, And hanged must be. | A damned death’ (3.6.34-6).

Henry's insistence that justice should always prevail is consistent with his religious emotions. This is explored more deeply in the succeeding scenes when he gets into conversation with his men. It can be argued that justice, half way between cowardice and foolhardiness, is opposed to forgiveness and mercy. To us, today, hanging someone for stealing is neither merciful nor just, and modern audiences may well condemn Henry for hanging Bardolph. On the other hand, if we look at the context of the time and of the particular situation, controlling an army of conscripted troops, harsh methods were perhaps necessary. Henry evidently expects better behaviour from his men than was usual in medieval England.

Before the battle of Agincourt, Henry resolves his atavistic sense of his guilt at inheriting the throne unlawfully seized by his father. As Gary Taylor writes:

> The English night scene at Agincourt begins to repair the breach in himself (and in the sympathies of his audience) which Henry had opened by the banishment of Falstaff, so that by the end of the play he has at last harmonized his political and private selves, the king's two bodies.[84]

This is how the scene starts, with the king asserting his humanity, his actual, physical body: 'I think the King is but a man, as I am. The violet smells to him as it doth to me. All his senses have but human condition. His ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man' (4.1.99). Further on in the scene, he states his belief about the responsibility that all men have for their own actions:

> The King is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers….for they purpose not their deaths when they propose their services. Besides, there is no

[84] *Henry* V, *The Oxford Shakespeare*, p.46.

king, be his cause never so spotless, if it comes to the arbitrament of swords, can try it out with unspotted soldiers. Some, peraventure, have on them the guilt of premeditated and contrived murder; some of beguiling virgins with broken seals of perjury; some, making the wars their bulwark, that have before gored the gentle bosom of peace with pillage and robbery. Now, if these men have defeated the law and outrun native punishment, though they can outstrip men, they have no wings to fly from God […] Then if they die unprovided, no more is the King guilty of their damnation than he was before guilty of those impieties for the which they are now visited. (4.1.146-62)

Further on in the speech he proclaims his belief in the Sacrament of the Last Rites: 'Therefore should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed wash every mote out of his conscience' (4.1.170).

When the soldiers depart, leaving Henry alone, he ponders on what his men have said to him, renewing his sense of the burden of kingship.

Upon the King.

'Let us our lives, our souls, our debts, our carefull wives,
Our children, and our sins, lay on the King'
We must bear all. O hard condition. (4.1.212-15)

The only compensation for this burden is 'Ceremony, idle ceremony'. Being reminded by Sir Tomas Erpingham that his nobles are waiting for him, the king says that he will join them soon. After the meditation that he has made on his position, the king now turns to God asking for his help in the battle, and asks for reconciliation and forgiveness for his House seizing the throne:

Not today, O Lord

O not today, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown.
I Richard's body have interred new,
And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
That from it issued forced drops of blood.
Five hundred priests have I in yearly pay
Who twice a day their withered hands hold up
Towards heaven to pardon blood. And I have built
Two chantries, where sad and solemn priests
Sing still for Richard's soul. More will I do,
Though all that I can do is nothing worth,
Since that my penitence comes after ill,
Imploring pardon
(4.1.274-87)

Henry, here, is asking God to forgive his father and imploring him not to put his father's sins on him: even though he has reaped the benefits and responsibilities of those sins, he has tried to make amends for them. He realizes that penitence is the most important emotion and he is asking for God's grace, God's generosity to pardon the House of Lancaster. Grace is granted with the victory that Henry attributes entirely to God: 'Praised be God, and not our strength for it' (4.7.82). He further states 'That God fought for us' (4.8.118) and concludes the battle scenes with these words: 'Do we all holy rites: | Let there be sung *Non Nobis* and *Te Deum* | The dead with charity enclosed with clay' (4.8.116-18).

This is, of course, to give a familial interpretation of the plays, exploring the impact of a serious sin on the two protagonists, father and son, who benefited from it. As in some other of his plays, Shakespeare depicts the effect of an action on both the immediate family of the perpetrator and a political or public background. This is certainly the case in the Second Tetralogy. Earlier critics have concentrated on the political aspects of Bolingbroke's action. E.M.W. Tillyard's *Elizabethan World Picture* was the most influential interpretation of the history plays in the twentieth century. Positing a hierarchy stretching from God to Man, Tillyard's opinion is that God's retribution on Bolingbroke is his rebellious subjects. Other critics, such as Muriel Bradbrook, corroborate this view, and, further, underline the idea that Shakespeare's History plays were propaganda for the Tudor dynasty.

The opinion of a hierarchy was undermined by the cultural materialist view of history in the 1980s. The leading critic of this movement, Jonathan Dollimore, thought that the plays should promote a concern for social justice rather than simply tolerating unjust social structures. Tillyard's view, according to Dollimore, was not one that the Elizabethans themselves would recognize, because Tillyard was only interested with the elite, not the condition of ordinary men and women. But this neglects the importance of religious thought in Elizabethan times and the sense of sin that Shakespeare attributes to his main characters in the Second Tetralogy. In the histories, we have a juxtaposition of political life with the dilemma of an individual man, guilty of a heinous sin, who is unable to receive complete absolution for it because political events prevent him from fulfilling his penance. The Second Tetralogy is a personal as well as political, a play of sin and retribution.

3. REGRET NOT REPENTANCE

There is a difference between regret and repentance. The obligations of sacramental confession state that the penitent must make amends for his wrongdoing in by being contrite. In the case of theft, for example, he must return the stolen goods; in the case of lying, he must make right the consequences of his lying. In the case of murder, of course, there can be no amendment, except, perhaps, by aiding those who have been left behind and giving up what has been gained by the wrong. If you realize that you have committed a sin and do not make amends, you are regretting not repenting, as Claudius, in *Hamlet* realizes. Richard of York and Macbeth both murder their way to kingship in the plays, and, though they admit, and regret, their sin, they are not prepared to give up their gains. This chapter will deal with Richard, the Macbeths and Dr Faustus.

RICHARD OF YORK

A middle-aged man strides onto the stage, with two stalwart young men and a smaller, slighter one with a crooked back. They are in armour, swords at their sides: a warrior tribe, the House of York. The small man is Richard of York, soon to be Richard of Gloucester and, in a later play, the most nefarious king that England has ever had. This is a recurring picture in any production of the First Tetralogy.

Richard of York makes his first appearance near the end of Henry *VI Part 2* when he speaks twenty-two lines and establishes himself as a warrior, but it is not until *Henry VI Part 3* that he begins to reveal himself truly. He is, and remains, a courageous fighter, but he is also a member of the tribe of York and is determined to become its leader and, for this, he is prepared to murder brother, wife, nephews and any friends who hinder him

in his desire to be king and retain his kingdom. To get it, he also commits sacrilege. He will not let his disability prevent him from achieving his ambition. As Randall Martin points out, 'Denied normal opportunities to achieve sexual and worldly satisfaction, Richard sees himself as exceptionally burdened by fate. This exempts him, in his view, from moral constraints which govern the behaviour of ordinary people'.[85] This is obvious when Richard declares in 3 *Henry VI* that:

> Then since this earth affords no joy to me
> But to command, to check, to o'erbear such
> As are of better person than myself,
> I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown. (3.2.165-68)

In the opening scene of 3 *Henry VI,* Richard appears carrying the head of Somerset, whom, in the previous play he has killed in battle. Brought up as a warrior, and determined to prove, though disabled, he is worthy of respect, he has no regrets in killing and for this he receives his father's praise: 'Richard hath best deserved of all my sons' (1.1.17). In the next scene, he and his older brother Edward are having a 'slight contention' about the crown of England which they claim is now their father's, but York says that until Henry VI is dead he cannot claim the crown and he took an oath not to claim it until the king dies. Richard argues against this. He says:

> An oath is of no moment being not took
> Before a true and lawful magistrate
> That hath authority over him that swears.

[85]Randall Martin in the introduction to his edition of *Henry VI Part 3,* (Oxford, 2001).

Henry had none, but did usurp the place,

Then seeing ‘twas he that made you to depose,

Your oath my lord is vain and frivolous.

Therefore to arms! And father does but think

How sweet a thing it is to wear crown,

Within whose circuit is Elysium

And all that poets feign of bliss and joy

Why do we linger thus? I cannot rest

Until the white rose that I wear be dyed

Even in the lukewarm blood of Henry’s heart. (1.2.22-34)

Here is Richard as part of the House of York, wanting its success, but also feigning what he really wants for himself, the crown, and also feigning to obey the law that he will ignore once he achieves his ambition.

In Act 1 scene 4, York reports Richard’s bravery in battle, recounting how Richard has saved his life and gave him courage. But, alas, the Yorkist faction has lost the battle and York himself is mocked and executed by Queen Margaret the She-wolf of France. This, of course, leaves York’s sons, Edward and Richard, vulnerable. In the next act, Edward and Richard do not know what has happened to their father but Richard praises his bravery and says, ‘Methinks ‘tis prize enough to be his son’ (2.1.20). This is the scene where the brothers see the three suns, which Edward interprets:

That we three sons of brave Plantagenet

Each one already blazing by our meeds,

Should not withstanding join our lights together

And overshine the earth as in this world. (2.1.35-38)

Richard now shows his true feeling about the future as he jokingly tells Edward, the elder son to breed daughters only. In the world in which the Yorkists live, and the necessity of the king to be a warrior, daughters are more easily got rid of than sons. Hearing of the death of their father, he seems genuinely to mourn him and he declares that he will avenge his father's death or die in the attempt. He urges his brother to resemble his father:

Nay if thou be that princely eagle's bird,
Show thy descent by gazing gainst the sun;
For 'chair and dukedom', 'throne and kingdom' say
Either that is thine or else thou wert not his.
(2.1.91-94)

When Warwick enters and says that the second York son is returning from exile from Burgundy, the House of York is now complete, and ready to do battle once more. It is noticeable that, in this scene, it is Richard who speaks to Warwick before Edward and he seems the driving force, Edward taking second place although he is the elder. It is Richard, also, who flatters Warwick, realizing that the Yorks need his army to enable them to be victorious. Warwick and Richard have the will and energy to sustain and continue the war. They overcome Henry and Margaret.

Edward, though, in Act 2, scene 2, now takes the lead in the confrontation between the Royal party and Warwick and the House of York. Edward has assumed kingship but Richard is defending his family and the wrongs done to the House of York.

His quarrel is with Clifford, not Henry and Margaret. And, in scene 4, he singles out Clifford in the battle, but Clifford escapes until two scenes later when all the York brothers taunt, torture and kill him. The battle finishes with Edward triumphant: he is king indeed and Richard declares ‘Let me be Duke of Clarence, George of Gloucester’ (2.6.106). But Edward asserts his authority and countermands Richard making him Duke of Gloucester.

When we next see Richard, he and George are bystanders when Edward questions and obtains the hand of Lady Grey. The scene is quite satirical and Richard’s sense of humour comes through here, though it is evident that he disapproves of the match. As he has shown before he does not wish his brother to produce male children. At the end of the scene he soliloquizes about his ambition in a speech of some seventy lines:

> Would he were wasted, marrow, bones and all
> That from his loins no hopeful branch may spring
> To cross me from the golden time I look for.
>
> (3.2.125-27)

He then realizes that George and his children also stand in his way but:

> So do I wish the crown, being so far off
> And so I chide the means that keeps me from it,
> And so I say I’ll cut the causes off.
>
> (3.2.140-42)

He then has moments of self-pity at his disabilities but decides that he will continue to make his dream of the crown his heaven, though he, as yet, does not know how he will achieve the crown because so many lives stand between him and it. He resolves on murder:

> Why, I can smile and murder whiles I smile
> And cry ‘content’ to that which grieves my heart,
> And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
> And frame my face to all occasions.
>
> (3.2.182-85)

Richard finally says ‘Can I do this, and cannot get a crown? | Tut, were it farther off, I’ll pluck it down’ (3.2.194-95).

In the next act, we see Richard dissembling, pretending that he is pleased at Edward’s marriage to the Lady Grey, though previously he has disclosed that he is afraid that she will produce sons and hamper his ambitions. However, despite his dislike of the situation, his ambitions demand that he remain at court to further them: ‘I stay not for love of Edward but the crown’ (4. I.124).

Edward loses the crown and is captured, but Richard arranges and achieves his escape from prison. Even though Edward decides that his dukedom is all he needs, he is proclaimed king again after a battle in which Richard, again, proves his outstanding ability as a warrior. The House of York win the battle of Barnet and, when Margaret and her son are captured, Richard articulates a desire to kill them both, but he is prevented from killing the Queen. Not content with this, Richard departs to the Tower to commit sacrilege, the killing of an anointed king.

Then, in a long soliloquy, Richard expresses his disposition: ‘I that have neither pity, love, nor fear’ (5.6.68). He then describes his birth and disability, and states that he has no love for his brothers and he will be their death. Richard expresses no sorrow nor does his conscience prick him about his future actions: he is completely sure of himself. This lack of conscience or compassion, this extreme egotism completely ignores any decency of behaviour. There is, at this stage of his existence, no apprehension of remorse, repentance or regret. The final scenes of the play show Richard conniving at his brother Edward’s attempt to reconcile the brothers both to him, his Queen and their son. Richard, when he has done this, compares himself (in an aside) to Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ: ‘To say the truth, so Judas kissed his master | And cried ‘All hail’, when as he meant all harm’ (5.7.33-34).

The House of York may have gained the crown but, for Richard, the wrong brother is wearing it.

At the beginning of *Richard III*, some of the same thoughts are reiterated by Richard. He rejoices in the fact that the House of York has at last gained the kingdom and the throne. He stresses his own deformity and declares that:

> I am determined to prove a villain
> And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
> Plots I have laid inductions, dangerous,
> By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams
> To set my brother Clarence and the King
> In deadly hate the one against the other. (1.1.30-35)

He also defines his character as ‘subtle, false, and treacherous’ (1.1.37). This chimes with More’s life of Richard III, which was dramatized by Shakespeare to become this play. It is a gross libel on that king who was called by the chroniclers ‘good King Richard’.

The hagiographers wish to claim that it was not written by More, that the manuscript was a copy of some other person’s account of Richard’s reign and character because they feel that More was too gentle a person to write so viciously, but if looked at with the equally vicious writing about Luther, it is conceivable that More was the author. It is a good piece of propaganda for the Tudors, who had but a slender right to the throne. There was a constant fear that the so-called Wars of the Roses, between the House of Lancaster and York might break out again so the support of the Church was paramount.

As Stanley Wells points out, ‘On his way to the throne Richard is an immensely active character, bustling (his own word) from one foul deed to the next.’[86] The first scene shows that, indeed, Richard’s plot against Clarence has succeeded: Clarence enters, with a guard of men, on his way to the Tower. Richard commiserates with him and promises to intercede with the king but when alone, Richard makes it quite clear that he will send Clarence’s soul to heaven.

Hastings then enters and informs Richard that the King is sickly and that his doctors fear for him. At Hasting’s departure, Richard expresses the opinion that Edward must not die before Clarence does, so he will hasten Clarence’s death. He, Richard, will then marry Warwick’s daughter ‘though I killed her husband and her father’ (1.1.154). Then the Lady Anne enters (scene 2) with the coffin containing Henry VI. She curses Richard for killing him and her husband. She rails at Richard and exclaims that he ‘knows no law of God or man’.

[86] Wells, p.104.

In the ensuing scene, Richard out manoeuvres all Anne's accusations in a masterly way, denying the evil and blaming slanderous tongues that have spoken against him. At the accusation that he has killed Henry he declares that he has done Henry a good deed because Henry was fitter for heaven than earth. Gradually, with wit and guile, he wins Anne over and she consents to be his wife and she leaves him to take the coffin to Chertsey.

In the following soliloquy, Richard acknowledges his actions in killing both husband and king, but he expresses no repentance for these deeds but, rather, seems to delight in them.

The next scene takes place at the court where the Queen is anguished. She is worried about the King's health and what will happen to her if he dies; her sons Rivers and Grey reassure her. Richard enters and immediately picks a quarrel with the Woodville faction. Loyal always to the House of York, he reminds Rivers and Grey that they fought on the Lancastrian side and that he was always true to his House and their present scheming to put the King against him is unjust:

> In all which time you and your husband Grey
> Were factious for the House of Lancaster;
> And Rivers, so were you - Was not your husband
> In Margaret's battle at St Albans slain?
>
> (1.3.127-30)

When Margaret curses him, Richard turns on her and again shows his loyalty:

> The curse my noble father laid on thee

When thou didst crown his warlike brow with paper

And with thy scorn drew'st rivers from his eyes,

And then to dry them gav'st the Duke a clout

Steeped in the blood of pretty Rutland:

His curses then from bitterness of soul

Denounced against thee are all fall'n upon thee,

And Gods, not we, hath plagued thy bloody deed

(1.3.171-78)

Margaret replies with further curses:

Thou that wast sealed in thy nativity

The slave of nature and son of hell,

Thou slander of thy mother's heavy womb,

Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins,

Thou rag of honour.

(1.3.226-30)

The scene proceeds, and a reconciliation is effected, and at the end Richard is left, on stage alone and in this soliloquy admits his nature:

I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl,

The secret mischiefs that I set abroach

I lay unto the grievous charge of others,

Clarence, whom I indeed have cast in darkness,

I do beweep to many simple gulls-

Namely to Hastings, Derby, Buckingham –

And say it is the Queen and her allies
That stir the King against the Duke my brother.
Now they believe me, and withal whet me
To be revenged on Rivers, Vaughn, Grey.
But then I sigh, and with a piece of scripture
Tell them that God bids us do good with evil.
And thus I clothe my naked villainy
With old odd ends stol'n out of holy writ
And seem a saint when most I play the devil.
(1.3.322-36)

As a piece of self-knowledge, this speech is astounding: Richard acknowledges both his villainy and also his ability to deceive people. He seems to neither delight in, nor repent of, his scheming. Rather, he approaches his wickedness with a cool and logical attitude. When he next appears, Richard shows his hypocrisy and his ability to act a part for his own advantage. Edward, his brother and king, affects a resolution and peace among the two factions. Richard declares:

I do not know an Englishman alive
With whom my soul is any jot at odds
More than an infant that is born tonight.
I thank God for my humility. (2.1.70-3)

This speech shows him behaving as he previously said that he would and, when Clarence's death is announced further on in the scene, he expresses, cynically, a grief he

does not feel. As Hazlitt writes, 'The feigned reconciliation of Gloucester with the Queen's kinsmen is also a masterpiece. One of the finest strokes in the play, and which serves to shew (*sic*) as much as anything the deep plausible manners of Richard'.[87]

Edward dies and Richard hastens to Ludlow to meet his nephew, the new, young king, from where he will bring him to London. Following the meeting in London, the young Edward is taken to the Tower. Throughout this scene, Richard acts with courtesy and dignity towards the young king. This is, of course, hypocrisy, for in an aside he says:

> I say, 'Without characters fame lives long'
> *(Aside)* Thus like the formal Vice Iniquity,
> I moralize two meanings in one word. (3.1.81-3)

After the two Princes depart, Richard plots with his henchman, Catesby, as to whether Hastings will be an ally in his 'complots' and he says to Buckingham that, if Hastings does not comply, he will 'Cut off his head'. Richard then promises Buckingham the earldom of Hereford if Buckingham aids him. Rivers, Grey and the rest of the Woodville faction are beheaded and only the boys stand between Richard and the crown. Richard, as Lord Protector, holds a council where he is then proclaimed king. He exits and returns with this speech:

> I pray you all, what do they deserve
> That do conspire my death with devilish plots
> Of damned witchcraft, and that have prevails
> Upon my body with their hellish charms?

[87] Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, p.179.

(3.4.59-62)

He then accuses Hastings of bewitching him. He calls in his soldiers to arrest and execute Hastings, thus getting rid of opposition. Hastings was popular with the citizens of London and Richard now has to persuade the Lord Mayor that Hastings was, indeed, a traitor. He disclaims that he wanted Hastings' death saying that it was 'the longing Haste' of friends who 'somewhat against our meaning, would have prevented'. This is sheer effrontery, which Richard compounds at the end of the speech when he instructs the Lord Mayor to signify to the citizens that Hastings confessed:

> The manner and the purpose of his treason
> That you might well have signified the same
> Unto the citizens, who haply may
> Misconster us in him, and wail his death. (3.5.56-9)

At the end of the scene Richard exits planning to kill Clarence's two children, who have a better claim to the throne than he has.

It is important to Richard that he has the support of the citizens of London. Buckingham rouses the citizens to proclaim Richard king, in act 3, scene 7. Richard appears aloft with two bishops at his side, reading a pious work. It is a masterpiece of hypocritical manoeuvring. Buckingham proclaims:

> Two props of virtue for a Christian prince,
> To stay him from the fall of vanity;
> And see, a book of prayer in his hand -

True ornaments to know a holy Man. (3.7.96-9)

Richard refuses the crown, for which he has committed so many sins, but eventually allows Buckingham to, seemingly, persuade him to accept it. He declares:

Cousin of Buckingham, and you sage, grave men,
Since you will buckle fortune on my back
To bear her burden whe'er I will or no
I must have patience to endure the load,
But if black scandal or foul-faced reproach
Attend the sequel of your imposition
Your mere enforcement shall acquittance me
From all impure blots and stains thereof;
For God he knows, and you may partly see,
How far I am from the desire thereof. (3.7.217-26)

Returning to his prayer book, Richard bids farewell to Buckingham and the rest of his 'good friends'. In this masterly speech, not only does Richard lie, denying the ambition that has propelled him and governed him throughout his life he shifts the blame onto his friends if he should fail as king.

The next time we see Richard, he is a crowned and anointed king, and he expresses, to Buckingham, his doubts as to his legitimacy as king while his nephew Edward, 'a true and noble prince' lives. He says that he wishes 'the bastards dead',[88] and he tempts Buckingham: 'And would have it suddenly performed. | What sayst thou?

[88] 4.2.19. Historically, Richard had declared his nephews to be illegitimate on the grounds that Edward IV's marriage to Lady Grey was illegal because he was pre-contracted to Eleanor Butler.

Speak suddenly, be brief' (4.2.20-1). Buckingham prevaricates and Richard realizing that Buckingham will not kill the boys asks a servant if he knows anyone who will do the deed: the servant recommends Tyrell. Tyrell enters and agrees to kill the boys. The boys are killed and at the end of the scene Richard relays his future plans to secure his throne:

> The son of Clarence have I pent up close.
> His daughter meanly have I matched in marriage
> The sons of Edward sleep in Abraham's bosom,
> And Anne my wife hath bid the world goodnight. (4.3.36-43)

The scene ends with Catesby telling Richard that there is a rebellion against him. Richard refers to himself as the 'Lord's anointed' (4.4.151) then comes the curious but moving scene wherein he woos Elizabeth, the former Queen and the Princes' mother, for her daughter. Richard defends himself saying that the accusations against him are unjustified:

> As I intend to prosper and repent
> So thrive I in my dangerous attempt
> Of hostile arms. I myself confound
> Heaven and fortune bar me happy hours. (4.4.328-31)

Though this speech is hypocritical, it is the first time that Richard shows some recognition of repentance and the consequence of continuing his wrongdoing will be sleepless nights and unhappy days.

When Richard hears of Richmond's invasion he again asserts his loyalty to the House of York, and his father:

Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed?
Is the king dead? The empire unpossessed?
What heir to York is there alive but we?
And who is England's king, but great York's heir? (4.4.400-3)

True to his brave warrior background, Richard takes command of his forces and plans the forthcoming battle. He prepares to sleep so that he will be in alert to win 'wings of victory'.

When he awakens and is still half-asleep, Richard calls upon Jesus and asks for mercy. But, when fully awake he reverts to his self-confidence: 'What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by. | Richard loves Richard, that is I am I' (5.5.136-7). Then he seems to have a moment of repentance:

Is there a murderer here? No – Yes I am
Then fly – What from myself – Great reason why:
Lest I revenge – What, myself upon myself?
Alack, I love myself – Wherefore? For any good
That I myself have done unto myself –
O no, alas, I rather hate myself
For hateful deeds committed by myself.
I am a villain – Yet I lie; I am not,
Fool, of thyself speak well – Fool do not flatter

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues

(5.5.138-47)

Further on, he says that all his sins cry ‘Guilty. Guilty!’ and he realizes that no one loves him. He admits that he cannot repent even though the ghosts have struck terror in his soul. Ewan Fernie opines that here:

> the voice of moral shame previously muffled and repressed is audible and that Richard is afraid that his usurping, more moral self will wreak revenge on his previously dominant shameless self, which betrayed it to evil [...] his conscience is informing against him, his sins rising up to accuse him.[89]

This is, of course, neither repentance nor regret: it is fear of what the morrow will bring, which, indeed, brought his unrepentant death.

As Ken Jackson has discussed in his paper, ‘All the world is Nothing’, as an anointed king, Richard has received Grace from God, but he is devoid of the essential Christian and Pauline virtue of love. Although Richard evokes Saint Paul by name five times during the play, he seemingly does this to assume a piety he does not have. He certainly has no conception of Pauline love.

Richard is, first and foremost, a warrior and starts off strongly loyal to the Yorkist faction and his brothers until they, in Richard’s opinion, betray the tribe: Clarence by joining the Lancastrians and Edward by his marriage. Then he has no mercy or compassion: he sees himself as the true leader of the Yorkists with the right to kingship and he commits any crime to that end. He has regret about the situation he

[89] Ewan Fernie, *Shame in Shakespeare* (Abingdon, 2002), p.103.

eventually finds himself in, but he cannot repent because he has acted according to his nature: “Richard is Richard: that is I am I”.

Richard is not the only character in the play that regrets his wrongdoing and who pays the penalty. Though it has been argued that the House of York was a formidable warrior tribe, loyal to its cause, ‘false, fleeting, perjured’ Clarence had at one time deserted it for the Lancastrian side. His brother Richard manages to get him arrested and put into the Tower. As his murderers say:

> SECOND MURDERER: Thou didst receive the sacrament to fight in quarrel of the house of Lancaster.
> FIRST MURDERER: And, like a traitor in the name of God
> Didst break that vow, and with treacherous blade
> Unripped’st at the bowels of thy sov’reign’s son.
>
> (1.4.191-95)

Clarence has committed double sacrilege in first swearing on the Sacrament to fight with his brother’s enemies and then breaking that vow, thus twice sinning against God as well as his House of York. Clarence laments his fate, i.e. his forthcoming execution, but he never really expresses sorrow for his sins. He recounts his dream with some sense of regret at being ‘false, perjured Clarence’.

THE MACBETHS

After the Oath of Allegiance, the Bill of Profanity and the Bill of Recusants were made law, the name of God was not allowed on the stage. In *Macbeth*, we have a king interested in witches and two people complicit in the murder of an anointed king.

However, these two people then react differently to that initial act. As Nicholas Brooke writes in his Introduction to the play, '[t]o others, they are at first, patriotic hero and gracious lady, and at last, "bloody butcher and fiend-like queen¨ as we see them; neither description seems particularly appropriate, despite their deeds'.[90]

As Brooke indicates, there is more to the Thane and his Lady than appears at a casual reading. We hear of Macbeth before we see him: he is 'brave Macbeth' and a 'valiant cousin, worthy gentleman' (1.2.17; 24) establishing that he is both a warrior and related to the royal house. The King, Duncan, gives Macbeth the title of Thane of Cawdor. It is not until the next scene, the third in the play that we first see Macbeth himself when, with Banquo he meets the Weird Sisters. These three supernatural beings have opened the play and have already declared an interest in Macbeth. Here they announce what his future will be. He will be crowned king. They promise Banquo that his descendants will be kings, though he himself will not rule.

There has always been controversy as to how much Macbeth is influenced by these gnomic sayings. Further on in the play, he consults the witches again, indicating a reliance on their prophecies. However, even before his first encounter with them, he is already fired with ambition and it can be argued that the Weird Sisters underline his own desires.

When Macbeth meets with the King, he protests that he is acting as only an honourable gentleman would act:

> The service and the loyalty I owe,
> In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part
> Is to receive our duties, and our duties

[90] Nicholas Brooke, *Macbeth* (Oxford, 1990), p.23.

Are to your throne and state children and servants
Which do but what they should by doing everything
Safe toward your love and honour. (1.4.22-7)

Further on in the scene, when Duncan elevates his son Malcolm to be the Prince of Cumberland, Macbeth shows his true feelings:

The Prince of Cumberland - that is a step
On which I must fall down or else o'er-leap
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires,
Let not light see my black and deep desires;
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see. (1.4.48-53)

Here, Macbeth is already imagining the murder of Duncan, but his better self is trying to push away his deep and sinful desires. The catalyst to change his attitude, persuading him to commit sacrilege is his ambitious wife.

Lady Macbeth analyses her husband's nature accurately when she says that he would always act honourably and not succeed in attaining what he really wishes for. When she hears that Duncan is coming to spend the night with her, she resolves that Duncan's entrance shall be fatal. She then invokes magical powers to help her achieve her ambition to be Queen. As Judi Dench, a notable Lady Macbeth, said, 'she has to ask to be made cruel',[91] and when Macbeth enters, she greets him joyously and then begins

[91] In interview with present writer, 1977.

to exercise her power over him. In the next scene she greets Duncan like an honoured guest.

Macbeth gives this as a reason for not killing Duncan:

He's here in double trust
First, as I am a kinsman, and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued against
The deep damnation of his taking off,
And pity […]
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye
That tears shall drown the wind. (1.7.12-25)

Ewan Fernie argues eloquently that Duncan is not worthy to be king: 'The play thus insinuates a disturbing counter perspective: that Duncan has to be slain as a miserable, tainted, unholy thing, an affront to the sanctity of life'.[92] This argument, of course, ignores the fact that Duncan, by virtue of his anointing, is *de facto* holy.

At the end of his speech, Macbeth admits that it is his 'vaulting ambition' urges him on (1.7.27). It is this ambition that his wife works upon as well as using emotional blackmail, attacking him for lack of love and lack of courage: 'Such I account your love.

[92] Ewan Fernie, *The Demonic: Literature and Life* (Routledge, 2003), p.58.

Art thou afeared | To be the same in thine own act and valour | As thou art in desire? (1.7.39-41). She further torments him by questioning his masculinity: 'What beast was't then | That made you break this enterprise to me? | When thou durst do it, then you were a man' (1.7.47-50). She wins him over and he resolves to do the deed. But not without further doubts for when he is about to go to Duncan's chamber he sees a dagger 'a false creation' which bothers him. Nonetheless, when he hears the bell he goes to Duncan's room to kill him. Afterwards, he and Lady Macbeth talk about what they have experienced during these crucial minutes and she strengthens his quailing spirits and she, herself, takes the bloody daggers back and lays them by the corpses. At the knocking at the front door she becomes very practical and takes Macbeth to their bedroom to wash their hands. Macbeth, though, makes a perceptive remark: 'To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself' (2.2.71). As Wilbur Sanders points out, 'There is he sees no possibility (grasping the true nature of, and coming to terms with) his deed, and also knowing (living amicably with, recognizing) himself'.[93] This is exactly what is needed to repent of one's sins, the ability to 'grasp the true nature' of them and to 'come to terms' with them, something that Macbeth cannot do. He lacks self-knowledge. In Sanders'swords, 'Shakespeare does not need to demand a Christian repentance of Macbeth; he lets him have damnation on his own terms'.[94]

Macbeth continues to show his inability to deal with the reality of the situation and, in the following scene, when Duncan's body is found, it is only his wife's pretended faintness that saves him from disclosure. As Banquo says, 'Thou hast it now, King, Cawdor, Glamis, all, | As the Weird Women promised' (3.1.1-2). Macbeth now finds that although he has attained to kingship they both wanted so badly, they have no joy in it. In Lady Macbeth's words:

[93] Wilbur Sanders, in *Casebook Series: Macbeth*, ed. by John Wain, p.257.
[94] *Ibid*, p.265.

Naught's had, all's spent,

Where our desire is got without content;

'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,

Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy. (3.2.6-9)

She, as always, has an unsentimental view about the situation.

Macbeth then plots to kill Banquo because of the Weird Sisters' prophecy that Banquo's heirs will succeed him. In this his wife has no part: she is innocent of the deed. Again, at the banquet she saves him by her courage when he sees Banquo's ghost and appears disordered to his guests. His further heinous act of killing of Macduff's wife and children are entirely the responsibility of Macbeth.

How much is Macbeth motivated by the Weird Sisters? He certainly goes to them to seek approval for what he is thinking of doing. To be king is his ambition even before he meets them and in the cauldron scene (4.1), he hears again what is already in his mind and he acts on it. His Lady gives him support, but she is the first to suffer. Sigmund Freud is of the opinion that her inability to provide an heir is instrumental in her collapse. According to him she is 'gnawed by remorse' and at the end her evil is a 'transformation of callousness into penitence'.[95]

Wilbur Sanders believes that she does suffer for her evil and dies because of it. She sleepwalks and eventually dies without true repentance. Macbeth is besieged in his castle and though not repentant, he is overcome with regret:

I have lived long enough. My way of life

[95] Sigmund Freud, quoted in *Casebook Series: Macbeth*, pp.131-135.

Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf,

And that which should accompany old age,

As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends

I must not look to have, but in their stead

Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath

Which the poor heart would fain deny and dare not. (5.3.23-9)

When speaking to the doctor about Lady Macbeth, he says:

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,

Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,

Raze out the written troubles of the brain,

And with some sweet oblivious antidote

Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff

Which weigh upon the heart? (5.3.42-7)

He could be speaking of what he himself is experiencing and from which he wants to be free. Only true repentance and the giving up of his throne could accomplish that. This is the tragedy of two people who, because of their ambition and their reliance on the supernatural, commit sacrilege. Then to secure his throne, he has to commit other murders, each one more horrible than the last. Despite Lady Macbeth's lack of involvement in the later crimes, she mentally disintegrates: the first crime eats away at her and she seems unable to repent, though she does regret it. Macbeth never repents of his deeds, though he does regret that he will not live to have an enjoyable and happy old

age. Nonetheless, he fights bravely and is only overcome when he realizes that the Weird Sisters' prophecies have come true.

Shakespeare balances the ruthlessness and irreligious behaviour of the Macbeths with the integrity of Malcolm and Macduff in what are known as the English scenes. Here, both Stoicism and Christianity are shown simply and effectively. At the end of the play, the new king, Malcolm, calls upon the race of God to aid him in his reign. In performance, of course, if the actors playing these parts have less charisma than the Macbeths, the climax of the play seems unsatisfactory. The strong casting of Bob Peck and Roger Rees in Trevor Nunn's Other Place production in 1976 obviated this disappointment.

FAUSTUS

It can be argued that Christopher Marlowe's play is a morality play in reverse. Instead of a soul redeeming itself by shedding its bad deeds, repenting them and receiving the grace of God, the protagonist decides, at the beginning, to deliver his soul to the Devil in exchange for knowledge. The play retains much that is similar to a morality play, a good and bad angel and a masque of the Seven Deadly Sins. However, Faustus himself is a more rounded and more intelligent character than Mankind or Everyman. It can also be argued that the verse has a more plangent quality. While the beginning and ending have both intellectual and emotional heightened speech, the middle of the play is uninteresting and uninspired, though the speech about Helen does relieve the tedium. Faustus seems to gain but little for surrendering his immortal soul forever.

Another interesting theological point is that Marlowe does not give Faustus a scene with a real chance to repent. Faustus, though, enjoys his sin. As Ewan Fernie writes, 'Faustus sins bravely, magnifies sin and abandons himself to it and does indeed

go to Hell. But at the same time it's true that Faustus doesn't sufficiently believe in sin, and to this extent he represents the obstinate recalcitrance of the old dream of human perfection'.[96]

Faustus is first seen in his study musing over sin, whether sin leads to death: because we cannot say that we have no sin within in us, we must surely die and that, as he exclaims, leads to our death. This argument leads him to say 'Divinity, adieu!' He ignores the promise that if one repents, God, of his generosity, will forgive. In some ways, this speech reflects the problem that the intellect cannot make the leap from the empirical to the numinous that cannot be proved. Faustus is happier with evil because he can envisage it in a concrete way. His universe is divided between the logical and belief in that which cannot be proved. As Jonathan Dollimore points out, 'he is located on the axes (sic) of contradiction, which cripple and finally destroy him'.[97] And as Catherine Belsey says, 'The implied question which runs through Faustus' opening soliloquy is 'what can knowledge do. One by one he rejects the traditional disciplines on the grounds that the power inscribed to them is not absolute'.[98]

In the first scene after his soliloquy, Faustus discusses magic with Valdes and Cornelius and in the third scene, he decides to be fearless and in Luther's words 'sin bravely': 'Then fear not, Faustus, but be resolute, | And try the uttermost that magic can perform' (3.14). He makes an incantation in Latin, sprinkles Holy Water, and makes the sign of the cross. Frightened at the appearance of the Devil, Faustus charges him to come back as a Franciscan Friar. The Devil obeys and asks Faustus what he wants. A cross examination follows and Faustus swears that

[96] Fernie (2013), p.46.
[97] Jonathan Dollimore, *Dr Faustus: Subversion through transgression,* Casebook Series.
[98] Catherine Belsey, *Dr Faustus,* p.168.

[Faustus] holds this principle

There is no chief but only Beelzebub,

To whom Faustus doth dedicate himself,

This word ‘damnatio’ terrifies not him. (3.58)

He and the Devil, now called Mephistopheles in the text, discuss the fall of Lucifer and Faustus gloats on what he thinks will come:

By him I’ll be great emperor of the world,

And make a bridge through the moving air

To pass the ocean with a band of men;

I’ll join the hills that bind the Afric shore. (3.106)

After other imagining, he concludes by declaring that he has obtained what he desired. Then Faustus and Mephistopheles have an interesting talk about Hell. Mephistopheles is quite clear that Hell is not only a place but it is within:

FAUSTUS How comes it then that thou are out of hell?

MEPHISTOPHELES Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.

Think’st thou that I, who saw the face of God

And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,

Am not tormented with ten thousand hells

In being deprived of everlasting bliss? (3.7)

Scene 5 starts with a soliloquy in which Faustus debates with himself: he cannot be saved because God loves him not for Faustus only serves his own appetite; it is Beelzebub that he worships. As happens in some Morality plays, Faustus is now confronted by his Good and Evil Angels. The Good Angel pleads with him, 'Sweet Faustus, leave this execrable art' (5.15), to which Faustus replies, 'Contrition, prayer, repentance, what of them?' (5.16). The Good Angel tells Faustus to think of 'heavenly things' while the Evil Angel tempts him with wealth. This rouses Faustus to call upon Mephistopheles who then makes Faustus write 'a deed of gift' with his own blood. Mephistopheles asks for Faustus' soul, which Faustus freely gives him. When the blood congeals, Faustus has a moment of doubt, but decides for the Devil, not God. Blaspheming, by using the words of Christ on the Cross he says, '*Consummatum est.* This bill is ended, | And Faustus hath bequeathed his soul to Lucifer' (5.74). Faustus then gives Mephistopheles the conditions of the treaty between the two of them. Faustus will be able to perform magic for four-and-twenty years after which time the Devil can claim his body and take where he will.

At his next entrance (Scene 7), Faustus regrets that he will not be able to enjoy heaven, but Mephistopheles says that heaven is not 'a glorious thing' and when the Angels appear again, the Good Angel asking him to repent and the Evil Angel saying that 'God cannot pity him' Faustus realizes his position:

> My heart's so hardened I cannot repent.
> Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven,
> But fearful echoes thunders in mine ears:
> 'Faustus thou art damned!' (7.18)

He ends the speech by resolving never to repent. This becomes a theme throughout the play: Faustus debates with himself about repentance but always realises that he cannot. He rejects the doctrine that God will always accept true repentance and will always welcome the lost sheep. The Angels appear again and Faustus again speaks about repenting but the Evil Angel says that he cannot. The Good Angel again asks Faustus to repent and Faustus has one moment of repentance when he cries, 'Ah, Christ, my Saviour. | Seek to save distressed Faustus' soul!' (7.82). Immediately Lucifer appears to him and declares that it is impossible for Faustus to be saved because God is just and instead of thinking about God, Faustus should concentrate on the Devil.

Faustus expresses discontent as to what Mephistopheles has done for him and so conjures up a Masque of the Seven Deadly Sins, another echo of the Morality Plays in *Faustus*. Faustus expresses his delight in it.

Following this piece of magic, scenes of farce occur, again reminiscent of the earlier Morality Plays. Faustus goes along with them, acting rather like a mischievous schoolboy. In Scene 13, Faustus meets with an Old Man who admonishes him:

> Break heart, drop blood, and mingle it with tears
> Tears falling from repentant heaviness
> Of thy most vile and loathsome filthiness,
> The stench whereof corrupts the inward soul
> With such flagitious crimes of heinous sins,
> As no commiseration may expel
> But mercy, Faustus, of thy Saviour sweet,
> Whose blood alone must wash away thy guilt. (13.39)

Mephistopheles gives Faustus a dagger to kill himself rather than let him repent, and the Old Man again reproves him. Faustus asks to be left alone to contemplate his state, but Mephistopheles soon persuades him to renew his vow to the Devil and, as a reward, Faustus gets Helen of Troy as his paramour. In the final scene (Scene 14), Faustus is alone and in his last soliloquy, he faces death and damnation. His first thought is to ask time itself to stand still so that his hour of death will never come: '*O lente, lente currite noctis equi!'* (14.71). Seeing Christ's blood and realizing that one drop will save him, he suffers physical pain and acknowledges that Lucifer has him firmly in his grip and that there is no escape from God's wrath. He then appeals to Earth to swallow him up or he wishes he might turn into vapour. He tries to bargain with God:

> If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
> Yet for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransomed me
> Impose some end to my incessant pain,
> Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
> A hundred thousand, and at last be saved. (14.5)

He even wishes that Pythagoras' idea that souls continue though in other bodies might be true so he could go on living. But all is in vain. He curses his parents but at last realizes that he alone is responsible for his damnation. Lucifer arrives and Faustus goes to hell.

In Alan Sinfield's words:

> Elizabethan orthodoxy would make Faustus' damnation more challenging than most modern readers might expect, by denying that Faustus had a choice anyway:

it would regard Faustus not as damned because he makes a pact with the devil, but as making a pact with the devil he is already damned.[99]

Although an interesting concept, Sinfield does not recognize that Christian belief maintains that true repentance is a sorrowful, contrite acknowledgement of one's wrongdoing can always ask for God's mercy. Regretting it is not enough: not wanting to face the consequences of one's sin is not enough: heartfelt sorrow is what God asks and then He will be merciful.

We have seen three men who sin, all of them from ambition: Richard and Macbeth want the power vested in a king, while Faustus wants both power and knowledge. Richard and Macbeth get what they want, and rule a kingdom. Faustus, though, seems to get very little: no kingdom, no exceptional knowledge. At the end of the plays, the fear of God's wrath is there but even that cannot make them truly sorrowful for what they have done. As another king, Claudius, realizes to keep the rewards of one's sin means one is not truly repentant.

[99] Alan Sinfield, *Casebook Series*, p.172.

4. FORGIVENESS

Three of the plays to be looked at in this section concern exile. The fourth takes place in a single location, Yorkshire. In *The Tempest* and in *As You like It,* the protagonists are forced into a place alien from their normal dwellings; in *King Lear,* the King removes himself from his palace. In *The Yorkshire Tragedy*, the action is domestic.

The Tempest

Stephen Orgel suggests that '[t]he play is, in fact, as much concerned with tragic as with comic themes: the nature of authority and power; the conflicting claims of vengeance and forgiveness; of justice and mercy; the realities of reconciliation and the possibility of regeneration'.[100] This chapter will concentrate on the remorse, repentance and forgiveness in the play, and will consider it in the genre of Morality plays, with Prospero, the Magus/Duke, as the Messenger from God who brings about the resolution and is, himself changed by it, Ariel as the Good Angel and Caliban as the Bad Angel. There are other instances that resemble a Morality Play: the dogs that Prospero sends to torment 'the men of sin' are called Fury and Tyrant; Stephano and Trinculo are tempted to the sins of murder and usurpation, but are redeemed at the end; Gonzalo can stand for Good Sense; and, at the climax, there is a reconciliation and the coming of grace through the

[100] Stephen Orgel, introduction to his 2008 Oxford World Classics edition, p.5.

two young, innocent people, Miranda and Ferdinand. Prospero's use of magic arguably distinguishes the play from the Morality genre, but are not miracles a kind of magic also?

The play deals with not one, but three, usurpations: the first takes place before the action of the play begins; during the play, the other attempts are by Caliban and the sailors, and the plot to murder Antonio. After the opening scene, a storm conjured up by Prospero, he tells his daughter, Miranda, why they are on the island and how they came there. Prospero blames himself for neglecting his duties as the Duke of Milan and letting his brother, Antonio, govern the Dukedom. He admits that he was too often in his study with his books rather than attending to his duties, leaving them to Alonso, who banishes Prospero, putting him and Miranda in a boat, which takes them to the island on which they have since been living.

As Richard P. Wheeler writes,

> The story Prospero tells Miranda about their past, whatever its claim to historical veracity, contains a simple and important truth at the heart of its post-Milan life. Once when he gave his brother his trust he lost his inherited political power; now that he has found another source of power he will trust no one.[101]

> […] and my trust
> Like a good parent, did beget of him
> A falsehood in its contrary as great
> As my trust was, which had, indeed no limit
> A confidence sans bound. He being thus lorded,
> Not only with what my revenues yielded
> But what my power might else exact, like me
> Who, having into truth by telling it

[101] Wheeler, 'Fantasy and History in *The Tempest*' in *The Tempest: Theory in Practice*, ed. Nigel Wood, Open UP (Buckingham, 1995), p.132.

Made such a sinner of his memory

To credit his own lie, he did believe

He was indeed the duke. (1.2.93-103)

This exemplifies Prospero's inability to see how he himself has erred. One cannot retain a political office when one has abdicated, and Prospero's shortsightedness about this has led him into the sin of envy and hard-heartedness. He cannot forgive his brother. Prospero could be bitterer about his brother banishing him and putting him in a 'rotten carcase of a butt, not rigged, | Nor tackle, sail, nor mast – the very rats | Instinctively have quit it' (1.2.146-8). So an unforgiving man, Prospero, wishes to wreck revenge on a man who has taken advantage of Prospero's own remarkably stupid political nous. It is in this scene that Ariel, the Good Angel, he, though resenting his subjection to Prospero is also willing to obey him, because Prospero freed him from torture and imprisonment. But the theme is set.

The next plot discussed is in Act 2 scene 1, where Gonzalo, Alonso, Sebastian and the other shipwrecked Lords discuss their situation. Gonzalo, who stands for Good Sense, rationalizes the situation:

Beseech you, sir, be merry. You have cause –

So have we all – of joy, for our escape

Is much beyond our loss? Our hint of woe

Is common: every day some sailor's wife,

The masters of some merchant, and the merchant

Have our theme of woe: but for the miracle –

I mean our preservation – few in millions

Can speak like us. Then wisely, good sir, weigh

Our sorrow with our comfort. (2.1.1-9)

The good old Lord continues to give comfort, though scorned by Sebastian and Antonio. After much discussion, the Lords fall asleep; only Antonio, Alonso and Sebastian stay awake, though Antonio persuades Alonso to sleep also, saying that he and Sebastian will guard him. As the other men sleep, Antonio persuades Sebastian to kill his older brother and seize the kingdom of Naples for himself. Sebastian is persuaded:

> Thy case, dear friend
> Shall be my precedent: as thou got'st Milan,
> I'll come by Naples. Draw thy sword. One stroke
> Shall free thee from the tribute which thou payest,
> And I the King shall love thee. (2.1.295-9)

Ariel has entered, sings in Gonzalo's ear, awakens him and the murder is not committed. However, the incident does not go unpunished. Prospero and Ariel contrive a magic banquet for the Lords at which Ariel appears as an avenging Harpy. He castigates them as 'three men of sin', and when they pull their swords, he tells them that swords are no defence against him. The invisible Prospero commends him. Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian are terrified and, as Gonzalo comments, after they have exited to Adrian,

> All three of them are desperate: their great guilt,
> Like poison given to work a great time after,
> Now 'gins to bite the spirits. I do beseech you
> That are of suppler joints, follow them swiftly,
> And hinder them from what this ecstasy
> May now provoke them to. (3.3.104-9)

The third effort at usurpation occurs more than halfway through the play. Caliban has met up with Trinculo and Stephano before, and the three of them, getting drunk on the wine they have found, are wandering aimlessly about the Island. But Caliban, instead of being sodden with drink, becomes sharper and discloses all the anguish he has been going through. When Prospero came to the Island, Caliban showed him where the water was drinkable and what food was available. In return, Caliban was taught language, but when Miranda became mature, he wanted sex with her. This enraged Prospero and he treated Caliban as disgusting animal. As the director Peter Hall wrote in his *Diaries*, Prospero is puritanical.[102] Caliban expresses his discontent:

> I say by sorcery he got this isle;
> From me he got it. If thy greatness will
> Revenge it on him –for I know thou dar'st,
> But this thing I dare not (3.2.53-6)

Promising great things to the seamen, he inveigles them into killing Prospero. They agree to do so and Caliban gloats that he can have Miranda. Prospero thwarts the plot. He asks Ariel where the 'varlets' are. Ariel replies that they were so drunk that he could charm them where he would:

> At last I left them

[102] Peter Hall, *Diaries*, ed. by John Goodwin (Hamish Hamilton, 1983). Hall has directed the play twice. Once, with John Gielgud at the Old Vic, which transferred to the Olivier in 1975 and secondly, in 1984, with Michael Bryant at the Cottesloe, which also transferred to the Olivier.

I'th' filthy-mantled pool beyond your cell,
There dancing up to th' chins, that the foul lake
O'er-stunk their feet. (4.1.181-4)

The seamen are deluded into putting on magic clothes and then are pursued by dogs with names such as Fury and Tyrant. Prospero curses them and decrees that they will be tortured with cramps and aching joints. As Roger Warren points out, throughout the play, there is conflict between Ariel and Caliban.

[Ariel spurns Prospero] onto vengeance against Caliban, providing him with a genuine temptation to take violent revenge, and so reducing him to Caliban's level. And Prospero does not resist the temptation: his humiliation of the conspirators is a physical equivalent of his driving those other conspirators 'the men of sin' to madness.[103]

All is now set for the final scene of reconciliation, repentance and forgiveness, but not before the scenes between Miranda and Ferdinand are considered. As we have seen, Prospero is puritanical and he has guarded Miranda's virginity, and although he desires that Ferdinand shall wish to marry her and thus join Naples and Milan into one kingdom he punishes Ferdinand and forbids him Miranda's company. At the end, of course, he allows them to be together and rejoices that these two pure young people love each other. A sense of grace and reconciliation suffuses their marriage. Now Prospero is in command and condemns the conspirators and his brother for their wrongdoings:

Most cruelly

[103] Roger Warren, *Staging Shakespeare's Late Plays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.194.

Didst thou, Alonso, use me and my daughter

Thy brother was a furtherer in the act –

Thou art pinched for't now, Sebastian

(To Antonio) Flesh and blood

You, brother mine, that entertained ambition,

Expelled remorse and nature, whom, with Sebastian –

Whose inward pinches therefore are most strong –

Would have killed your king. I do forgive thee

Unnatural though thou art.

(5.1.71-8)

And further on in the scene, he claims his dukedom back from Antonio:

For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother

Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive

Thy rankest fault, all of them, and require

My dukedom of thee, which perforce I know

Thou must restore. (5.1.132-6)

At the end of the scene Prospero turns to Caliban who realizes that he has been deceived as to the status of the seaman and seems to have a change of heart as he says, 'I'll be wise hereafter, | And seek for grace' (5.1.298-9). The Lords go to Prospero's cell, intending to return home when the ship is ready, leaving Caliban as king of the island, and Ariel, when he has guided the ship to shore, free to go where he will. But the

situation is, as far as total forgiveness and reconciliation are concerned, really unresolved.

Prospero's final speech glosses over this. As Stephen Orgel explains,

> The concern with repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and regeneration is one that is voiced often throughout *The Tempest.* But a much less clear pattern is one that is acted out; repentance remains, at the play's end, a largely unachieved goal, forgiveness is ambiguous at best; the clear ideal of reconciliation grows cloudy as the play concludes.[104]

Prospero's failure is his inability to exact even a hint of repentance from his brother. The play ends inconclusively.

As You Like It

Most critics hail *As You Like It* as a pastoral play concerned with love. But as Stanley Wells writes, 'The fundamental element of the pastoral tradition is the opposition between court and country and all that is associated with each of them – power and humility, wealth and poverty, industry and leisure'.[105] It is also about being in love and self-awareness, and learning to forgive. Like *The Tempest*, a usurpation has taken place before the play begins: Duke Frederick has banished his brother, Duke Senior, who now lives in the Forest of Arden. Duke Senior's daughter, Rosalind, still lives at Court because Celia, the usurping Duke's daughter has pleaded for her. Celia loves Rosalind: 'Herein I see thou lovest not me with the full weight that I love thee. If my uncle, thy banished father, had banished thy uncle, the Duke my father, so thou hadst been still with

[104] Orgel, p.13.
[105] Wells, p.171.

me I could have taught thy love to take thy father for mine' (1.2.6-13). But Rosalind cannot accept the situation: she feels the enmity of the usurping Duke. Her situation is paralleled by the preceding scene where Orlando has discussed his situation with an old family retainer, Adam. A younger son, hated by his elder brother Oliver, he has been denied the education of a gentleman. He quarrels with his brother about it:

> My father charged you in his will to give me good education. You have trained me like a peasant, obscuring and hiding me from all gentleman-like qualities, the spirit of my father grows strong in me, and I will no longer endure it. Therefore allow me such exercises as may become a gentleman, or give me the poor allottery my father left me by testament. With that I will go buy my fortunes. (1.1.62-70)

Further on in this scene, Oliver, the elder brother is heard scheming with Charles, the court wrestler, to kill his brother in the wrestling match to be held on the next day Oliver says, 'I'd as lief thou didst break his neck as his finger' (1.1.137). When Charles departs, Oliver debates his hatred:

> for my soul – I know not why – hates nothing more than he. Yet he's gentle; never schooled, and yet learned; full of noble devices; of all sorts enchantingly beloved; and, indeed, so much in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am altogether misprized. (1.1.154-161)

So we have the real reason for Oliver's hatred of Orlando, the sin of jealousy, in contrast to Celia's love of Rosalind, because, as we learn later, Rosalind is also much loved by the people to Celia's detriment. Duke Frederick explains:

> She is too subtle for thee, and her smoothness,
> Her very silence, and her patience
> Speak to the people, and they pity her.
> Thou art a fool. She robs thee of thy name,
> And thou wilt show more bright and seem more virtuous
> When she is gone. (1.3.76-81)

Before this scene takes place, Rosalind and Orlando have met. Charles the Wrestler who has been commissioned by Oliver to murder Orlando has not succeeded, and Orlando has proved to be the better wrestler and gained the prize, and also Rosalind's love. She gives him a chain and he questions Le Beau about her. He realizes that he must escape the Dukedom, not only because of his brother's hatred, but also because Duke Frederick also dislikes him. The Duke banishes Rosalind in the next scene (1.3.38-44). Rosalind has no option but to leave and Celia decides to go with her. For safety's sake, to prevent them being attacked or raped, Rosalind decides to dress as a man, and they also take the court jester, Touchstone, with them.

Orlando and Rosalind next meet in the Forest of Arden, where Rosalind's Father, Duke Senior, lives with men of his court who have joined him.

Much criticism has been written about Orlando's seeming inability to see through Rosalind's disguise. But it is to his advantage not to acknowledge it. Whereas, nowadays, it is possible for a Prince or Princess to marry a commoner, in Elizabethan

England, where Princesses would still expect arranged marriages to the advantage of the kingdom, Orlando would not necessarily, though of good birth, be considered the right husband for her, In the forest they have equality. In Declan Donellan's all-male production, this problem was ingeniously presented. When Orlando first met Rosalind/Ganymede in the forest, Rosalind was making 'Look, it's me!' gestures and he held up his hand as though to say 'I do not want to acknowledge who you are'. This made Rosalind angry and gave her a good reason to tease Orlando.

Adrian Lester wrote to me, Tuesday, 5th May 1996:

> As I worked on the play I found that there had to be a reason why Rosalind kept her disguise with Orlando. At first it's a momentary joke but then, somehow the joke continues for the best part of two hours. Why? I found it would help Rosalind's motivation to teach her lover that if he failed at a fairly easy test of affection very early on, something as easy as recognising her. Also his failure to recognise her is very wounding to Rosalind, which helps to fuel her anger in the following scenes, which, in turn, helps me as an actor makes sense of them.[106]

So, if this interpretation is valid, then Rosalind and Orlando have much to forgive each other. The teasing and duplicity help the two protagonists to understand each other and themselves, and through a somewhat witty adversity, they realize that they are both in love and love each other deeply and forgiveness is apparent. Celia constantly tests Rosalind about the extent of her love, fearful that Rosalind in only infatuated by Orlando but even she, at last, is convinced.

[106] This letter is now in the Shakespeare Institute Library.

What, though, of the two evil men, Oliver and Duke Frederick? They meet in Act 3 scene 1. As Alan Brissenden comments:

> Thrust between the scenes in Arden, this brief confrontation between the two evildoers of the play confirms the palace as a place of violent discord, explosive with anger. I show the angry parting of the two wicked brothers immediately after the newfound`d friendship of the brothers they have driven into exile, and it provides the reason for Oliver's appearance in the forest.[107]

Oliver, when he arrives in the Forest, falls asleep under a tree where he is discovered by Orlando:

> A wretched, ragged man, o'ergrown with hair,
> Lay sleeping on his back. About his neck
> A green and gilded snake had wreathed itself,
> Who with her head, nimble in threats, approached
> The opening of his mouth. But suddenly
> Seeing Orlando, it unlinked itself,
> And with indened glides did slip away
> Into a bush, under which bush's shade
> A lioness, with udders drawn dry,
> Lay couching, head on ground, with catlike watch
> When that the sleeping man should stir. For 'tis
> The royal disposition of that beast

[107] Alan Brissenden, in his 1998 Oxford World Classics edition of the play, p.154.

To prey on nothing that doth seem as dead.
This seen, Orlando did approach the man
And found it was his brother, his elder brother. (4.3.107-121)

Oliver goes on to say that Orlando turned away twice, leaving his brother, whom he had no cause to love, to his fate:

But kindness, nobler ever than revenge
And nature, stronger than his just occasion,
Made him give battle to the lioness. (4.3.129-131)

Orlando saves his brother, thus showing forgiveness. As Brissenden points out, the snake and the lioness have Christian significance as symbols of evil from which Orlando's forgiving attitude rescues Oliver.[108] Orlando gives Oliver his redemption, enabling him to repent and fall in love with Celia. The other evil brother also comes into the forest. News of him is brought by Jacques de Boys, the second son of Oliver and Orlando's father.

Duke Frederick, hearing how that every day
Men of great worth resorted to this forest,
Addressed a mighty power, which were on foot,
In his own conduct, purposely to take
His brother here, and put him to the sword
And in the skirts of this wild wood he came

[108] Bissenden, p.203.

Where, meeting with an old religious man,
After some question with him was converted
Both from his enterprise and from the world,
His crown bequeathing to his banished brother,.
All their lands restored to them again
That were with him exiled. (5.4.150-163)

Thus Duke Frederick repents off-stage and all is set for the marriages to take place and the play to end with true love prevailing. It could be interpreted that the Forest, away from the corruption of courts, is the only place where love and forgiveness can exist and that frugality and simplicity are components which are needed for religious conversion and true repentance.

King Lear

King Lear is also concerned with love: not, this time, with romantic love, but family love. Two elderly men, one a king, one an earl, learn through humiliation and suffering to appreciate the real meaning of love and forgiveness. Unusually in Shakespeare's plays, the sub-plot is as absorbing as the main plot: as well as fatherly love, the Edgar and Edmund story also tells of a lack of brotherly love and an ambition to usurp lands and property. The play asks whether love should be measured because perfect love knows no boundaries.

The constant invocation of 'the gods' by various characters raises the question of whether *King Lear* can be judged by Christian values. Stanley Wells suggests that:

> It is as if he [Shakespeare] were trying to examine the values by which we live without the preconceptions of Christianity, yet at the same time, perhaps inevitably, the play's language is permeated with terms that must carry Christian associations for audiences conscious of the Christian tradition.[109]

A.C. Bradley also discusses this point, saying that, in *King Lear*, '[r]eferences to religious or irreligious beliefs and feelings are more frequent than is usual in Shakespeare's tragedies'.[110] Certainly the play contains the idea of Christian forgiveness attained by suffering, but it cannot be explicit because the Bill of Recusants forbad the speaking of God on Stage.[111]

When the play opens, the Earl of Kent and the Earl of Gloucester are together with Gloucester's illegitimate son Edmund. After discussing Lear's intending division of the kingdom, Kent asks Gloucester, 'Is not this your son, my Lord?' (1.1.7) and receives the answer, 'His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blushed to acknowledge him that I am now used to it' (1.1.8-10). Gloucester goes on to say that he also has a legitimate son but he recognizes his bastard and although he is now with his father he has been educated abroad and will be sent away soon.

The King and his daughters then enter and Lear demands that they make a formal speech declaring their love for him to gain the land he has already allotted to them: a trial of love which, as has been examined, can be considered a transaction rather than that of affection, and which, at the end, the sincere daughter has been exiled from her father's love.

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[109] Wells, p.266. Professor Wells also argues this point in his introduction to the play for The Oxford Edition.
[110] Bradley, p. 222.
[111] Donald Sinden, an acclaimed Lear, was unhappy in Trevor Nunn's 1976 production of the play that was set in the late nineteenth century. "I would have liked it to be more primitive," he told me in an interview in 1977.

In the next part of the sub-plot, we find out the nature of Edmund's real self in a soliloquy:

> Thou, nature, art my goddess. To thy law
> My services are bound. Wherefore should I
> Stand in the plague of custom and permit
> The curiosity of nations to deprive me
> For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
> Lag of a brother? Why 'bastard'? Wherefore ‘base’?
> When my dimensions are as well compact,
> My mind as generous, and my shape as true
> As honest madam's issue? (l.2.1-9)

As Terence Hawkes comments, when said by a competent actor, this speech can produce a bonding between Edmund and the audience in 'an anarchic fellowship': ‘Yet even as it takes place, whether as laughter, or applause, or simple sympathy for the 'underdog', the play's structure unerringly complicates and taints it, turning the slightest taste for Edmund's disarming vigour into the very factor that empowers his evil’.[112] Bradley characterizes him thus:

Edmund is an adventurer pure and simple. He acts in pursuance of a purpose, and, if he has any affections or dislikes, ignores them. He is determined to make his way, first to his brother's lands, then - as the prospect widens - the crown; and he regards men

[112] Terence Hawkes, *King Lear*, Writers and their Works (Northcote House, 1994), p.21.

and women, with their virtues and vices, together with the bonds of kingship, friendship, or allegiance, merely as hindrances or helps to his end.[113]

Ewan Fernie believes that Edmund 'is happy to be a bastard':

> for he is spiritually illegitimate: instinctively the champion of the outrageous and obscene. In this respect he differs from Richard III. For Richard deformity licenses depravity, but in Edmund's case there is a perfect coincidence between shameful circumstances and shameless essence: though we expect the bastard to be ashamed he is not.[114]

Edmund transgresses the Christian command to love one's fellow human beings: he lacks Christian virtue of humility. He treats other human beings as objects, assesses them with regard to himself and whether they will help or hinder his ambition. What does he do to further his compelling wishes?

His first strike is against his brother, the virtuous Edgar, who has done nothing against Edmund, is quiet and seemingly scholarly. His only fault, in Edmund's eyes, is to be legitimate. What happens is dramatic but hardly logical. Would Gloucester really be so willingly duped by a false letter? But he is, and readily, though it could be suggested that he might be compensating for his sin of adultery. And so Edmund's scheme against his brother is believed. This part of the plot reflects the great parable of the Prodigal Son, where the virtuous brother who stays at home is not valued.

So now the two plots are parallel: the good, true child is in exile, and while Cordelia happily marries, Edgar is cast into the wilderness. His choice to take on the

[113] A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p.250.
[114] Fernie, *Shame in Shakespeare*, p.185.

disguise of Poor Tom is mysterious. Ewan Fernie believes that he really undergoes demonic possession, a possession that is spiritual: Edgar is not only physically naked, but spiritually so. Fernie writes:

> The foul fiend leads Tom into a state of the most dreadful homelessness, marching him like an army 'through fire and through fame, through ford and whirlpool, o'erbog and quagmire'. And he also leads him into suicidal desperation, laying 'knives under his pillow and halters in his pew' and setting ratsbane in his pottage.[115]

Although Fernie's interpretation is interesting, he disregards the fact that Edgar is well aware of what he is doing. My tears begin to take his part so much | They'll mar my counterfeiting'.[116] He elaborates further in a soliloquy:

> When we our betters see bearing our woes,
> We scarcely think our miseries our foes,
> Who alone suffers, suffers most i' th' mind,
> Leaving free things and happy shows behind.
> But then the momd much sufferance doth o'erskip
> When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.
> How light and portable my pain seems now,
> When that which makes me bend, makes the King bow.
> He childed as I fathered. Tom away.

[115] Fernie (2011), p.226.
[116] 3.6.17-18, or Scene 13, line2 52-3 in the Quarto text. Further references will be to the Conflated Text as edited in the Norton Shakespeare.

Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray
When false opinion, whose wrong thoughts defile thee,
In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.
What will hap more tonight, safe scape the King. (3.6.95-107)

Edgar is well aware that he is counterfeiting the ailment from which the King is really suffering. Edgar has an actor's temperament: he is able to assume whatever character the situation needs him to be. As Bradley observes, he is the most religious character in the play. He is the one who generously helps the other characters in their afflictions, nurturing and even helping the father that had wronged him.

In contrast, Lear has been repudiated by his daughters and has become genuinely mad. The two princesses commit the sin of ingratitude and have disobeyed the commandment to honour your father and mother. The audience may well sympathise with them when Lear arrives with one hundred knights who, presumably have nothing to do and so are undisciplined. However, any sympathy dissipates when Regan assists in the blinding of Gloucester, turning him out of doors into the night. Lear is also driven most horribly into the storm and genuinely goes mad in contrast to Edgar's counterfeit madness, and is found:

As mad as the racked sea, singing aloud,
Crowned with rank fumitory and furrow-weeds,
With burdocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
In our sustaining corn. (4.4.2-6)

Edmund, however, pursues his perfidious progress. As A.C. Bradley comments,

He is determined to make his way, first to his brother's lands, then - as the prospect widens - to the crown; and he regards men and women, with their virtues and vices, together with the bonds of kinship, friendship, or allegiance, merely as hindrances or helps to his end. They are for him divest of all quality, except their relation to the end; as indifferent as mathematical quantities or mere physical agents.[117]

He promises marriage and the opportunity to become queen of the whole kingdom to both sisters. Yet this kingdom contains real evil, whichever princess becomes queen and both daughters are complicit in the evil. The Duke of Albany tries to remonstrate with his wife, Gonoril, pointing out that wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:

Filths savour but themselves. What have you done?
Tigers not daughters. What have you performed?
A father, and a gracious, aged man.
Whose reverence even the head-lugged bear would lick,
Most barbarous, most degenerate, have you madded. (4.2.40-44)

Then both Albany and Gonoril hear of Edmund's death and immediately Gonoril shows her jealousy of her sister. Cornwall, of course, being slain by a servant after the blinding of Gloucester, has no chance to repent his life, even if he had so wished. The country is now at war. As will transpire, Cordelia and the Marechal de France have

[117] A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p.250.

invaded England. Gonoril, Regan and Edmund prepare to defeat the French army. Albany joins forces with them.

The Earl of Kent, who has remained loyal to the King, extracts information about Cordelia for he has written to her about her father's plight. A Gentleman replies, ‘Ay sir. She took them, read them, in my presence,

|And now and then an ample tear trilled down
Her delicate cheek’ (Scene 17.12):

And also

Patience and sorrowstrove
Who would express her goodleir. You have seen
Sunshine and rain at once; her smiles and tears
Were like, a better way. (4.3.15-8)

When Cordelia and Lear meet, she again shows her compassion and her forgiveness, saying quite simply ‘How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?’ (4.7.44).This shows real forgiveness, a forgiveness that returns to the situation that was before the wrong was done. For Lear it is as if he has lived in a dream, but a dream that has brought him self-knowledge and a realisation of his lack of love:

Pray you do not mock me
I am a very foolish, fond old man.
Fourscore and upward, and to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind. (4.7.60-4)

He acknowledges that he has treated Cordelia badly and she has every right to poison him. She replies, showing perfect forgiveness, ‘No cause, no cause’ (4.7.76). In the ensuing battle, Lear and Cordelia are captured by Edmund and put in prison. Fully reconciled, they go quite happily and 'will sing like birds i' th’ cage' and blessing ask of each other. But, of course, Cordelia is killed there and in the final scene Lear enters lamenting her dead body before he, himself, dies.

Meanwhile, Edmund and the evil sisters meet a grim fate. Edmund thinks that his victory entitles him to the kingdom but Albany steps forward and arrests him on charge of high treason and also Regan who is suffering and proclaims herself to be sick. Gonoril in an aside reveals that she has poisoned her sister. Edgar, now in the disguise of a gentleman, comes forth to challenge Edmund and defeats him. Edmund, dying, admits ‘Whatt you have charged me with, that I have done, And much, much more. The time will bring it out’ (5.3.161-2). Further on, he says he is moved by Edgar and he shall 'perchance do good (5.3.199). News then comes of the two princesses’ deaths, presumably unrepentant. Edmund, while not exactly repentant tries to save Cordelia's life, but, of course, is not successful. In his own words, ‘The wheel is come full circle’ (5.3.173).

In this most harrowing play, there are degrees of forgiveness and repentance. Gloucester pays most grievously for his sin of adultery. The two princesses die unrepentant. Edmund acknowledges his wrongdoing, but does not express any contrition for it. Lear asks forgiveness and blessing from Cordelia, who readily gives it and treats her father with compassion. Through his many disguises, Edgar nurtures, and empathises with, the two old men. The play deals with many sins, and various types of forgiveness and repentance.

A Yorkshire Tragedy

This play is unlike the three plays already discussed in this chapter. It is not concerned with courts and kings, nor with usurpation or sacrilege but with an ordinary, though quite Well-off family. It is based on a pamphlet about real life tragedy. As the editors of the Revels Text explain,

> Elizabethan and Jacobean domestic tragedy may be defined as drama concerned with middle-class family relationships that are unhappy enough to end in disaster, the action being contained within a Christian frame of reference in which God's providence and justice are paramount.[118]

Domestic tragedies are:

> influenced by the tradition of Catholic moral drama and are directed towards penitence and the hope of salvation [...] the expected mercy of a loving God makes the disaster - whether it is the destruction of human life or the violation of the sanctity of marriage - terrestrial and finite. The earthly tragedy dissolves in the light of eternity: the soul's salvation is assured for those who truly repent, even for those who commit murder. *A Yorkshire Tragedy* […] a play of the soul's damnation.[119]

[118] *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, ed. by A.C. Cawley and Guy Gaines (Manchester University Press, 1986) p16 All future quotations will be taken from this edition and will be given in the text.
[119] Ibid, p.16.

In Scene ii, the Wife laments her husband's prodigal behaviour and that he is condemning his family to penury, which is 'ill-becoming the honour of his house and name'. Furthermore she is concerned for his moral behaviour:

> The weakness of his state so much dejected
> Not as a man repentant but half mad
> His fortune cannot answer his expense
> (ii.12)

> Walks heavily, as if his soul were earth,
> Not penitent for those his sins are past,
> But vexed his money cannot make them last -
> A fearful melancholy, ungodly sorrow!
> (ii.18)

When the Husband enters, he admits that he has just lost 'five hundred angels' and declares 'I'm damned, I'm damned, the angels have forsook me' (ii.27). The relationship between the Husband and the Wife is far from harmonious. He frequently calls her 'whore' and 'strumpet'. He 'spurns' her and 'beats' her. There is a suggestion in Scene 1 in the conversation between the servants Ralph and Sam that he was betrothed before and jilted the girl. It could be conjectured that he married the Wife because she was pregnant by him.[120] Whatever construction is put on the marriage, it is undoubtedly an unhappy one, with the Husband blaming the Wife for much of his misery. The

[120] In the 2012 production of the play by Pete Malin, for the Shakespeare Institute Players, the Betrothed became a silent, wistful character who wandered through the play holding letters and a miniature.

playwright himself makes no attempt to explain why the husband is so unkind and is so devoted to gambling:

> We have to accept him [the Husband] as he is: there is no suggestion […] that God is avenging a broken troth- plight or […] that the Husband is taking refuge from a loveless marriage and bad conscience. The author of *A Yorkshire Tragedy* is writing as the heir to a long tradition of 'prodigal' plays he has no need to justify such natural sinful behaviour. He is much more interested in trying to explain how a prodigal husband can become an unnatural monster who stabs his wife and murders two of his children.[121]

One might consider the Husband to be mad or possessed by the Devil. This theme is slowly written about throughout the play, including references to possession. The Gentleman says, ‘Thou and the devil has deceived the world’ (ii.46) But later on in this scene, the Gentleman and the Husband fight; the Gentleman spares him as an honourable man who is able to do
something to overcome his sins. He appeals to him saying:

> Y’are of a virtuous hous; show virtuous deeds.
> 'Tis not your honour; 'tis your folly bleeds.
> Much good has been expected in your life;
> Cancel not all men’s hopes. You have a wife
> Kind and obedient; heap not wrongful shame
> On her and your posterity,

[121] Cawley and Gaines, Introduction to *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, p.17.

Let only sin be sore

And by this fall, rise never to fall more

(ii.170)

The Servingman, however, has no doubts about demonic possession, saying to the Wife, ‘I should think the devil himself kept open house’ (iii.25). Further instances occur later on in the play when the Servant says to the Husband, ‘Were you the devil, I would hold you, sir’ (v.35). The Servant again accuses him of devilry, complaining that he has beaten him, after he has murdered the first Child and is murdering the second child, held in his Wife's arms. Even if he is not the subject of demonic possession, his conduct is reprehensible. When the Master arrives (Scene iv) telling the Husband that his brother, who stood surety for him has been imprisoned, he berates the husband, ‘O, you have killed the towardest hope of all our university, wherefore, without repentance and amends’ (iv.14). Further on, the Master says:

> Wise men think ill of you; others speak ill of you; no man loves you. Nay, even those whom honesty condemns, condemn you [...] never look for prosperous hour, good thoughts, quiet sleeps, contented walks, nor anything that makes man perfect, till you redeem him. What is your answer? (iv. 23)

The Husband does express some contrition: ‘Sir, you have much wrought with me; I feel you in my soul. You are your art's master. I never had sense till now; your syllables have cleft me. Both for your words and pains I thank you’ (iv.32). Further on, he comments:

> O, thou confused man, thy pleasant sins have undone thee, thy damnation has beggared thee! That heaven should say we must not sin and yet made women; gives our senses way to find pleasure, which being found confounds us. Why should we know those things so much misuse us? O, would virtue had been forbidden! We should then have proved all virtuous, for 'tis our blood to love what is forbidden. (iv.55)

He then goes on to enumerate all the sins he has committed. Yet though he admits his sins, he cannot repent and the Husband goes on to murder his children. He is arrested and acknowledges his behaviour. But is it true repentance? He does say when parting from his wife, 'Farewell, dear wife, now thou and I must part | I of thy wrongs repent me with my heart', which is ambiguous because it could be read that he is forgiving her for entrapping him into matrimony. He goes to his execution.

But what of the Wife in this? The reading that she got pregnant before matrimony is not completely explicit in the text. Otherwise, her behaviour does seem too saintly. As Cawley and Gaines say, '[t]he Wife, like the Husband, belongs to a dramatic tradition; she is the "faithful" wife who so often gets burdened with a "prodigal husband". The dramatist's problem with the Wife, no less than Chaucer's problem with Griselda, was to make her extraordinary behaviour credible'.[122] On the surface, it does seem incredible that the Wife should be so forgiving. However, more than once, she shows her love for him by supplying him with jewels and money, and she constantly beseeches him to repent. Though her love is shown throughout the play by her actions, toward the end, she expresses in words:

[122] Cawley and Gaines, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, p.19.

O my sweet husband, my dear distressed husband,

Now in the hands of unrelenting laws!

My greatest sorrow, my extremest bleeding;

Now my soul bleeds. (x.6)

When he acknowledges that he has wronged her, she replies 'Thou shouldst not, be assured, for these faults die If the law could forgive as soon as I' (x.31). Cawley and Gaines' explanation for the Wife forgiving her husband is that she is concentrating her emotions on her husband because she cannot face up to the loss of her children. But another explanation could be that she is so in love with her husband that she can forgive him everything. Viviana Comensoli thinks that:

Her attention is entirely focused on her hope for her husband's repentance and his forgiveness by the court and further on the same page [...] the Wife's forgiveness of the Husband, a virtue noted twice by the presiding justice (x.62-5; x.70-71) preserves her reputation and her lands.[123]

The Wife's love is both a physical and a spiritual love: the love that all Christians are expected to have. A forgiveness that has to be giving 'seventy times seven' as Christ said.

This chapter has explored four entirely different plays, one magical, one a light comedy, one perhaps the greatest tragedy ever written and one domestic play, that are linked by two underlying principles, forgiveness and repentance. There are other themes too. *The Tempest* and *King Lear* deal with usurpation, in one case by force, in the other,

[123] Viviana Comensoli, *Household Business: Domestic Plays of Early Modern England* (University of Toronto, 1996), p.102.

voluntary abdication, and the consequences of those acts. Prospero engineers the occasion of his forgiveness. He has had sixteen years to overcome his understandable chagrin, and the sin against him is now not deeply felt. He has come to an understanding of how much his neglect of the Dukedom, his own retiring nature and sloth contributing to it. He is ready to forgive.

Lear has a more dramatic path to self-awareness, going through a period of utter madness. His daughter, Cordelia, who has suffered from his anger is utterly forgiving, honouring her father always. She has to learn that love is more virtuous than accurate, though wounding, truth. Gloucester and Edgar also go through pain, one actually suffering permanent injury, the other suffering through the father he loves and a king he respects.

As You Like It is, of course, a romantic comedy about falling in love, but, nevertheless, the two main characters are banished from the Court to the Forest of Arden, where the Duke, whose kingdom has been taken over by his brother, is now living. The two villains, at the end, both repent offstage, in a rather arbitrary fashion, so that the comedy is not overburdened by remorse and repentance.

The world of these three plays is the world of courts and politics, with concomitant exploration of attitudes towards the less fortunate, the ordinary folk, or in the case of *The Tempest*, the monster, Caliban, and the seamen, Stephano and Trinculo. In contrast, *A Yorkshire Tragedy* focuses one family and does not concern itself with gender, class and only somewhat with status, because the Husband is constantly being reminded of the honour of his house.

The social concerns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are well portrayed in all four of these plays. However, the overriding interest in these centuries is in spiritual values, in virtuous behaviour and living a Christian life. True riches constitute

real wealth. If one is unrepentant there is no help: one is doomed to everlasting torment in Hell. That is why the Wife is so insistent; this is why Frederick and Oliver have to repent and Orlando save his brother; this is why Lear and Gloucester have to undergo horrors. Forgiveness, the unique Christian virtue, has to triumph and bring these plays, if not to a happy conclusion, to an end where the protagonists have self-knowledge and have undergone spiritual growth, and the audience has gained an emotional realisation, through the characters on stage, of the necessity of being forgiven.

5. MERCY AND JUSTICE

Mercy is what one expects when one asks for forgiveness: an understanding of why the sin was committed and a generosity in giving the forgiveness and returning to the position that existed before the wrong was perpetrated. Amendment has to be made: stolen property returned, damage repaired, and some gift to recompense for the hurt. This seems just. But should justice go beyond this? Should the sinner also be punished? These are the problems that this chapter investigates.

In two of the plays chosen, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The White Devil*, there are trial scenes before a judge. Does he really dispense mercy or is the resolution just but without mercy? In *Measure for Measure*, justice is administered summarily, while in *The Duchess of Malfi* injustice is within the family and we have an echo of the Good and Bad Angel of the Morality Plays.

The Merchant of Venice

There are two plots in this play concerning justice and mercy. One is the main plot in which Antonio makes an unwise contract with Shylock and which Shylock insists on being honoured. The second plot concerns Shylock's daughter, Jessica, who steals money and jewellery to enable her to elope with her lover Lorenzo. Both plots are resolved in the Court scene. There is also the matter of the fairness of the caskets and comedy matter of the disguise and the rings, which occasions a fairly minor point of forgiveness to conclude the play. The whole play, though, has an underlying injustice: the contemptuous behaviour of the Christians towards the Jews, particularly Shylock.[124]

[124]See James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (Columbia University Press, 1996) for an excellent discussion

Signor Antonio, many a time and oft
In the Rialto you have rated me
About my moneys and my nuisances
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug?
For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat, dog
And spat upon my Jewish gabardine,
And all for use of that which is mine own. (1.3.102-9)

Further Shylock states that, though he is a Jew, he is a human being with the same attributes as Christians. As he says to Salarino and Solanio:

Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same deceases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? (3.1.49-56)

The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction. (3.1.60-1)

Shylock considers he has a just reason for hating Antonio:

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of this topic.

I hate him for he is a Christian,

But more for that in low simplicity

He lends out money gratis and brings down

The rate of usance here with us in Venice.

(1.3.37-40)

[...] Cursed be my tribe

If I forgive him.[125]

(1.3.46-7)

This, then, is the attitude and atmosphere that permeates the entire Antonio/Shylock section of the play. But are we to regard Shylock sympathetically or as a comic figure? As Jay L. Halio points out in his preface to the Oxford Shakespeare, 'Shakespeare's initial conception of him was essentially as a comic villain, most likely adorned with a red wig and beard and a bottlenose, but not a middle-European accent'.[126] Halio offers no convincing evidence for this interpretation other than the classification of the play as a comedy. However, other comedies of Shakespeare have a sombre side. An equally valid interpretation would be to portray Shylock as a dignified Jew, astute in business but with an extraordinary sense of his race, which he finds abused. Shylock simply cannot forgive the Christians' constant affronts to his race. Henry Irving who played the part over a thousand times said that he looked upon Shylock as a representative of a persecuted race who was, crucially, the only gentleman in the play. This, too, was the interpretation that Laurence Olivier gave in Jonathan

[125]As has been explained previously, in the Jewish faith, forgiveness is only given to those who repent.
[126]Jay Halio in the introduction to his edition of *The Merchant of Venice* (Oxford, 1993), p.10.

Miller's National Theatre Production at the Old Vic in 1969. The play was set in the Edwardian era and Olivier, in top hat and morning coat, looked like a member of the Rothschild or de Lesseps family.

To make Shylock a financier is sensible because the plot hinges on the fact that the feckless gambler, Bassanio, has no money but wishes to pursue his suit to Portia, an heiress, 'richly left'. His friend, Antonio, a merchant of great wealth, is unable to satisfy him because his capital is all tied up in three cargo ships but he offers to secure the money from the moneylender, Shylock. It is then that the nefarious bargain is struck. Antonio wishes to borrow three thousand ducats, but Shylock is unable to lend all that money himself but 'Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe | Will furnish me' (1.3.52-3). This means that when the three-month duration of the loan is up and the money should be repaid, Shylock will have to pay Tubal. The debt is his as well as Antonio's. But Shylock sees an opportunity to put Antonio in danger. He proposes a 'merry' bond. If Antonio cannot pay his debt in time he will forfeit a pound of his flesh:

> Go with me to the notary, seal me there
> Your single bond, and in merry sport
> If you repay me not on such a day
> In such a place, such sum or sums as are
> Expressed in the condition, let the forfeit
> Be nominated for an equal pound
> Of your fair flesh to be cut off and taken
> In what part of your body pleaseth me.
> (1.3.140-7)

Antonio, in spite of Bassanio's protests foolishly agrees, saying that his cargos will be home before the three months have passed. Throughout this scene the acrimony between Antonio and Shylock is apparent, each insulting the other throughout. Further on in the play, Shylock again expresses his hatred of Antonio. When Salerio asks why Shylock has stipulated such a worthless forfeit, Shylock replies, 'If it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated my enemies. And what is his reason? I am a Jew' (3.1.45-49). If this is how Antonio has behaved, then he is indeed guilty of lacking the love that Christians are supposed to give their neighbours, irrespective of who they are. He is judging Shylock and showing him neither justice nor mercy.

Antonio's ships fail and the day comes when he has to pay the forfeit. The Duke of Venice, who sits in judgement, declares that the bond is legal, but before Shylock can take his pound of flesh, a new, young lawyer appears. The audience, of course, knows that it is Portia, the heiress 'richly left' that Bassanio has wooed and won, in disguise. It is she who delivers the speech on mercy:

> The quality of mercy is not strained.
> It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
> Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:
> It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.
> 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest. It becomes
> The throned monarch better than his crown,
> His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
> The attribute to awe and majesty,

Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;

But mercy is above this sceptered sway.

It is enthroned in the hearts of kings;

It is an attribute to God himself

And earthly power doth then show likest God's

When mercy seasons justice.

(4.1.179-92)

Shylock, however, demands justice: he does not want any money, even twice or three times the amount he lent. He is determined on his bond. He refuses even to have a surgeon in attendance to staunch Antonio's wound. But the disguised Portia finds a flaw: Shylock may have his pound of flesh, but must not shed any blood in taking it. He is even refused his three thousand ducats.

The laws of Venice, as Portia declares, say that if an alien attempts to seek the life of any citizen his goods are confiscated, one half going to the State, the other to the injured citizen. His life 'lies in the mercy | Of the Duke only' (4.1.350-1). The Duke then says

That thou shalt see the difference in our spirit

I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it.

For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's

The other half comes to the general state,

Which humbleness may drive into a fine.

(4.1.363-7)

Although Gratiano responds with loutish, unchristian behaviour, Antonio pleads that the fine to the state should be rescinded and his share to be left on his death to Shylock's daughter and Lorenzo, her husband. Furthermore, Shylock should become a Christian. The Duke agrees. Is this mercy or not?

As a Christian, one is supposed to convert other people to that belief, but a forced Christianity cannot possibly be what is meant. For an Orthodox Jew, a forced conversion would be a grave offence towards God and, if he were being really merciful, Antonio should not have made this condition. Neither should he have asked that Shylock leave his money to Jessica, because in Jewish belief and custom, a daughter who marries out of the faith is never seen again, is counted dead, and the Kaddish is sung for her.[127] But Jessica and Shylock's relationship is another instance of mercy and justice. Jessica is obviously unhappy at home: her father guards her and represses her, as is seen in Act 2 scene 5, when he questions her about her conversation with Lancelot Gobbo, who also complains about his treatment in Shylock's house.[128] She runs away with Lorenzo, taking with her money and jewels. Though, perhaps, one can forgive her for taking money because she would, presumably, have had a dowry, it is difficult to excuse her for taking such jewels, such as the turquoise ring, which had great sentimental value for her father.

Portia is, of course, the heroine of the play and appears as a main character in both the comedy scenes and the more serious scenes. How do mercy and justice affect her? Her father, perhaps fearing that a fortune hunter would captivate her, on his death willed that any suitor would have to choose from three caskets made of gold, silver and lead. Is this just to Portia? It means that he does not trust her judgement. Watching the suitors choose makes for good theatre. When Bassanio comes, Portia and the audience

[127]In Jonathan Miller's 1969 National theatre production, at the end of the play, Jessica was left on stage alone while the Kaddish was sung.
[128]Lancelot Gobbo's speech in which he invokes his good and bad conscience is reminiscent of the conversations with Good and Bad Angels in Morality plays.

share the knowledge that the right casket is the lead one. Indeed, Portia sings or has sung a song with words (bred, head, and nourish*ed*) to indicate which is the casket will win her. However strange it seems to modern thought, she, herself, while not altogether happy about this decree of her father, accepts that he has the right to control her life from the grave, as he would have in life.

After Antonio is freed, he and Bassanio are extremely grateful for the disguised Portia's efforts and they offer her money. She refuses, but on Bassanio's insistence she asks him for his wedding ring. He is reluctant to give it to her, but when she reproaches him, he gives in. Nerissa, following Portia's example, gets his wedding ring from Graziano. In the final scene these rings mean that the men get teased and are subject to recrimination from the women. But all ends happily with the men being forgiven. Mercy and justice have prevailed.

Measure for Measure

Like *The Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure* is concerned with mercy and justice but, as Stanley Wells writes, although these subjects are contained in the action, the play deals with sex and death along with the intense emotional reality, at least in the earlier part of the play, of its portrayal of Angelo, Isabella, and Claudio. This creates a deeper seriousness of tone, which takes it out of the world of romantic comedy into that of a tragicomedy or, as the twentieth century has it, a 'problem play'.[129]

There is, however, another dimension, which is very strong in the play: its spirituality and its complete opposition to sexuality from that held in the present day. Christian ethics has always taught that chastity is to be maintained until marriage, and that sex is only allowed in heterosexual marriage. This commandment, together with the

[129]Stanley Wells, preface to the play in *The Complete Works* (Oxford 1988).

Elizabethan code of marriage, is explored in this play, along with the Christian abhorrence of hypocrisy and deception. If justice is the fair administration of law and mercy, the pardon of the illegal action and sin, *Measure for Measure* goes further and asks what happens when the law itself is unjust and against human nature. How far should a law control the natural desires of humankind?

Shakespeare quite often gives a short back story to his characters but, in this play, we get no such biography: it is never made really clear why the Duke deceives people about himself, nor is any explanation given as to why Isabella wishes to enter a convent. This, of course, gives director and actors greater scope in interpretation.

The play starts with deception and it can be argued that this in itself is unjust, as it is false representation, the giving of false evidence. This is both against the law and against Christian ethics. Duke Vincentio gives over his Dukedom to two men, Escalus, an older man, and the younger man, Angelo who has a reputation for goodness and probity. The Duke deceives them as to what his purpose is. The population of Vienna thinks he is on a diplomatic mission but, in fact, he is disguising himself as a Friar to enable him to spy on his people. He plays the role of Friar convincingly, giving spiritual advice and even hearing Mariana's confession: 'Joy to you, Mariana. Love her, Angelo. | I have confessed her, and know her virtue' (5.1.521-2). This action is reprehensible because only ordained priests are allowed to give absolution.

At times the Duke gives good advice. For example he tells Claudio that, if death is inevitable, life is better when one is resolved to it (3.1.5-41). Yet his dishonesty is exemplified when he arranges the bed trick during which Angelo thinks he is consummating his relationship with Isabella; in reality, he is consummating his betrothal to Mariana. Does the Duke ever consider that he is acting unjustly in deceiving everyone? In the last act, which Ewan Fernie describes as 'a tremendous dramatic

experience',[130] he does not repent of his deception and manipulations while dispensing a rough justice on other people.

Unusually for this play, we do have some backstory for Angelo. Five years ago, he was formally engaged to Mariana, but when her dowry was lost in a shipwreck, he did not acknowledge this binding obligation. Nonetheless, he is regarded as an upright and sincere man. When the Duke hands over his authority to Angelo, Escalus says, 'If any in Vienna be of worth | To undergo such ample grace and honour | It is Lord Angelo' (1.1.22-4).

Invested with supreme authority, Angelo revives a law that has not been implemented for fourteen years, condemning to death any man having sex outside of marriage. To modern day conceptions, this seems utterly unjust. Indeed, Shakespeare himself committed this "sin", which indicates the probability that Elizabethans and Jacobeans understood that this was likely to happen and though it may, in the eyes of the Church, be a sin, it was not against the law. Was this Viennese law unjust? It is certainly against human nature as Angelo, himself, was to find out. The reintroducing of this law is the catalyst for the play. Claudio, who has impregnated Juliet, is arrested and faces execution. He is not in the least repentant about it, though he fears death. Juliet is the one person in the play who recognizes and repents of her sin: 'DUKE: Repent you, fair one, of the sin you carry? / JULIET: I do, and bear the shame most patiently.

Isabella goes to Angelo to plead for her brother's life. She wishes to give her life to Christ, and has just entered a convent. Angelo instantly falls in lust with her. It is the dilemma of the play and produces scenes which reverberate with tension. There are questions about their relationship that have to be answered by the players. Are these two

[130]Ewan Fernie, *Shame in Shakespeare*, p.108. I owe much to Professor Fernie's analysis of this play in both this book and in *The Demonic: Literature and Life.*

people afraid of sex or, as Juliet Stevenson suggests, does Isabella wish to enter a convent to bridle her sensuality?

> I think she recognises her own sensuality and the need to apply strict control over it. I don't think she's frightened or surprised by it; she wants to dominate it. Hence her choice of the Saint Clares. The severity of the order is, I think, commensurate with the scale of these latent passions in heart, which she feels must be harnessed and controlled.[131]

Nonetheless, whatever one thinks of Isabella's wish to become a nun, it is something that Angelo should respect. He does not. His feelings are strong but he wonders if he can blame her.

> What's this? Is this her fault, or mine?
> The tempter or the tempted, who sins most, ha?
> Not she: nor does she tempt: but it is I
> That, lying by the violet in the sun,
> Corrupt with virtuous season. Can it be
> That modesty may more betray our sense
> Than women's lightness? (2.2.167-74)

[131]Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices*: *Shakespeare's Women Today* (Women's Press, 1988), p.41. Juliet Stevenson played Isabella in the RSC's production in 1983.

Angelo unjustly blames Isabella for his own feelings, which he acknowledges to be wrong. Instead of absenting himself from an occasion of sin, he invites her to come again. As Ewan Fernie writes:

> There is some desublimation in this. And there can scarcely be a more frightening and humiliating testimony to the imperative and shattering force of repressed desire than the image of this punctilious man talking his would-be rape victim through their anticipated assignation *twice.*[132]

Angelo refuses to pardon Claudio, thus showing a lack of mercy. He is prepared to stand by this unjust law. Isabella pleads with him for mercy:

> Well, believe this
> No ceremony that to great ones 'longs,
> Not the king's crown, nor the deputed sword,
> The marshal's truncheon, nor the judge's robe,
> Become them with one half so good a grace
> As mercy does.
> If he had been as you and you as he,
> You would have slipped like him, but he, like you,
> Would not have been so stern. (2.2.60-8)

When Angelo dismisses her, refusing to listen, she urges further:

[132] Fernie, p.193.

And He that might the vantage best have took
Found not the comedy. How would you be
If He which is the top of judgement should
But judge you as you are! O think on that
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man new made. (2.2.76-81)

Here, Isabella puts forth a truly Christian idea of mercy. Like Portia, she expresses the value of the virtue above all human values, but she goes further than Portia in reminding Angelo that if you give mercy you can expect mercy in return. It is indeed, as Portia says, an 'attribute to God himself' (4.3.192). But Isabella does not succeed in her plea: Angelo, the so-called good man, lacks the grace to pardon Isabella's brother.

The Duke intervenes. Having met Mariana and pitied her plight, he suggests to Isabella that she consents to Angelo's request to have sex with him, but under such conditions that Mariana can be substituted, which, because she is Angelo's lawful fiancée, is appropriate. This might be considered just but it is, nonetheless, very manipulative. The bed trick accomplished, Angelo, instead of fulfilling his promise to release Claudio, sends a note demanding his immediate death. Another prisoner, also condemned to death, is substituted. To the end, Angelo seems to think that he has behaved honourably until he is forced into marrying Mariana.

But what of Isabella? Although she has refused to give into Angelo's desires and her common sense tells her that if she accuses him, it is only her word against his:

To whom should I complain? Did I yell this,
Who would believe me? O perilous mouths,

That bear in them one and the selfsame tongue

Either of condemnation or a proof,

Bidding the law make curtsy to their will;

Hooking both right and wrong to th' appetite

To follow as it draws! (2.4.171-7)

It could be argued that her wish to maintain her virginity is consistent with her desire to be a nun: if she lost it, the convent would be closed to her. Furthermore, she has a propensity for martyrdom and a wish for difficulties as in 'I speak not as desiring more, But rather wishing a more strict restraint | Upon the sisterhood' (1.4.3-5):

Th' impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies

And strip myself to death as to a bed

That longing have been sick for, ere I'd yield

My body up to shame. (2.4.101-4)

Nonetheless, is it credible that a lost virginity is equal to a life? It can be argued that it is neither just nor merciful to refuse to sleep with someone if a beloved brother will be killed if one refuses. But Isabella is adamant: 'Then Isabella live chaste, and brother die: | More than our brother is our chastity' (2.4.184-5).

Which in the end prevails, Mercy or Justice? The inconclusive fifth act does dispense a kind of justice but has very little real forgiveness or mercy in it. The Duke plays a cruel and unnecessary trick on Isabella, for though he knows what has happened, he directs her to put her plea to Angelo. She is courageous and ironic in her protestations:

Most strange and yet most truly will I speak,
That Angelo's foresworn, is it not strange?
That Angelo's a murderer, is it not strange?
That Angelo's is an adulterous thief,
A hypocrite, a virgin-violator,
Is it not strange, and strange? (5.1.37-42)

Isabella goes on to describe both her pleading with Angelo, saying,

In brief, to set the needless process by,
How I persuaded, how I prayed and kneeled,
How he refelled me, and how I replied-
For this was of much length – the vile conclusion
I now begin with grief and shame to utter,
He would not, but by gift of my body
To his concupiscible intemperate lust
Release my brother. (5.1.92-99)

Though she gives her supposed consent to sleep with him to save her brother, Angelo cheated on her by sending a letter ordering the instant execution of Claudio. Not being believed by the Duke, she is arrested. No mercy is shown to her request for justice. The Duke (although he has arranged the bed trick himself) seems angry at Isabella's accusations: 'Shall we thus permit | A blasting and a scandalous breath to fall | On him so near us, reunited' (5.1.121-3).

Before the play comes to its inconclusive ending, the Duke has to deal with Lucio, friend to Claudio, who played a big part in getting Isabella to plead for Claudio. A somewhat dark character, he is characterized by his supreme cheek: he exaggerated people's vices and has been particularly scurrilous about the Duke. When the Duke accuses him, he rightly points out that he did not recognize the Duke in disguise and that the Duke was being duplicitous and should not be angry at learning what people actually think about him. The Duke then remits the punishment of a whipping but still insists that Lucio marries the prostitute he has got with child.

All the problems in the play come to a conclusion in the last, long act. Although issues are resolved, the ending of the play is somewhat unsatisfactory and, it can be argued, neither mercy nor justice are entirely served. The play ends with the Duke proposing to Isabella twice, but it is up to the Director to decide whether she accepts the proposal or not. Some Isabellas do, others walk out on him, or are left standing on stage. The play's exploration of mercy and justice remains, except for Isabella's plea, inconclusive. At the end, one can feel that neither mercy nor justice has really been achieved. Perhaps that is more realistic and true to real life than if every detail had been satisfactorily tied up.

The White Devil

John Webster's play is detached from Christian teaching on mercy or justice, and it utterly rejects conventional morality. Lust, murder and duplicity are rampant. Nonetheless, the perpetrators of the horrors in the play eventually learn the truth of Francis Bacon's saying that 'Revenge is a kind of wild justice'.[133] The tone of the play is set in the first scene. Ludovico, an Italian count, meets with two friends and we learn that

[133]Francis Bacon, *The Essays of Francis Bacon*, ed. Mary Augusta Scott, Charles Scribner (New York, 1908), p.25.

he has been banished, not only for his bad social behaviour but because he is also guilty of several murders. As Rene Weiss writes, 'That the world of Ludovico, and the Rome and Padua of the play, are morally skewed is clear from Ludovico's unchallenged assumption that his murders are mere "flea-bitings"'.[134] Flamineo, the brother of the main female character in the play, is the instigator of much of the evil within it. As Jacqueline Pearson says:

> Throughout the play we have seen events largely through Flamineo's eyes. He has had a particularly intimate relationship with the audience, confiding his plans, feelings and motives, warning us when he is involved in deception or disguise, and criticising for us the rhetoric in the play.[135]

In Brian Gibbons' words, 'Flamineo adopts a pose once prurient and despising towards women and sex, stressing women's supposedly greater sexual libidinousness beneath their coyness.'[136] Even though murder is condoned in this play right from the very beginning, adultery is not. The adulterous love affair in question is between the heroine Vittoria Corombona, married to Camillo, and Duke Bracciano, married to Isabella de Medici. When they meet for the first time, Bracciano says to Flamineo that he is 'Quite lost' (1.2.3). Flamineo offers to act as pander:

> Pursue you noble wishes; I am prompt
> As lightning to your service. O my Lord!
> *(Whispers)* The fair Vittoria, my happy sister
> Shall give you present audience. (1.2.4-7)

[134]Rene Weiss, introduction to his edition of *The White Devil*, xv.
[135] Jacqueline Pearson, *Tragedy and Tragicomedy in the Plays of John Webster* (Manchester University Press, 1990), p.78.
[136] Brian Gibbons, introduction to his edition of *Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedies*, xvi.

After dismissing Vittoria and the attendant gentlemen, Bracciano and Flamineo discuss how Bracciano can be alone with Vittoria. He has, perhaps, some conscience because he does ask about her husband, but Flamineo says that Camillo is 'unable to please a woman' and so reassures Bracciano that his pursuit will be favoured. On Camillo's entrance, some bawdy talk affirms that Camillo and Vittoria have not shared a bed for some time; indeed, Camillo cannot remember the last time they did. Flamineo advises him that he should be careful how he regards Vittoria because she may stray. Here, of course, he is playing a double game, both laying the scene, but also seeming to warn against what might happen. When Vittoria enters, though, he praises her and suggests that Camillo takes her to bed. Despite the bawdy dialogue between Camilla and Flamineo, when Vittoria speaks, it is obvious that she is unwilling. Having promised Camilla that he shall enter Vittoria's chamber at midnight, on Bracciano's entrance, Flamineo sets the love affair going. Flamineo watches and is a spectator. As Pearson points out, he stands in for the audience with his potentially salacious comments when the lovers exchange jewels: 'Excellent, | His jewel for her jewel, well put in Duke' (1.2.213).[137]

When Vittoria cajoles Bracciano to imagine Isabella and Camillo being in their graves, as she has, supposedly, seen in a dream, Flamineo describes her as an '[e]xcellent devil' (1.2.244). Flamineo's and Vittoria's mother Cornelia is the one character in the play who sees the disastrous nature of her daughter's adulterous behaviour, but her indignation is not of a spiritual nature. Her objections do not stem from adultery's status as a mortal sin; rather, she is concerned with the honour of her family: 'If thou dishonour thus thy husband's bed | Be thy life short as are the funeral tears | In great men's'

[137] Pearson, p.83. In Michael Benthall's 1948 production of the play with Robert Helpman as Flamineo, the actors playing Vittoria and Bracciano did make gestures that were definitely sexual.

(1.2.287-9). The next act introduces us to the wronged wife, Isabella and her son, Giovanni. It is obvious that she has not seen Bracciano for sometime, but she pleads with her brother, Francisco de Medici, not to be too harsh with her husband:

> I do beseech you
> Entreat him mildly, let not your rough tongue
> Set us at louder variance: all my wrongs
> Are freely pardoned, and I do not doubt
> As men to try the precious unicorn's born
> Make of the powder a presertive circle
> And in it put a spider, so these arms
> Shall charm his poison, force it to obeying
> And keep him chaste from an infected straying. (2.1.9-18)

At the beginning of this speech, Isabella forgives her straying husband, but there is no real religious feeling or expression in her forgiveness. She assumes that Bracciano has been drugged and that sex will bring him back to her. Francisco orders her to depart the scene before Bracciano enters. Cardinal Monticelso, who has been standing by, then remonstrates with Bracciano and, again, though he says that Bracciano will repent of his adultery when he is sated with it, there is no religious argument against this sin. The talk is all very worldly, focusing on social disgrace rather than religious argument. Even when Isabella returns and pleads with her husband, trying to kiss him, he rejects her and is angry that she has involved her brother in their situation. At last, Isabella loses her temper and becomes vengeful:

To dig the strumpet's eyes out, let her lie
Some twenty months a-dying, to cut off
Her nose and lips, pull out her rotten teeth
Preserve her flesh like mummia, for trophies
Of my Just anger, hell in my affliction
Is mere snow-water. (2.1.245-50)

She then says that she will never lie with Bracciano again, much to the consternation of her brother and the Cardinal. Flamineo then manipulates Bracciano to murder, introducing him to a shady character, described as a quack and a conjurer, who is willing to help him murder Isabella, and Vittoria's husband, Camillo: 'You have won me by your bounty to a deed | Do not often practise' (2.2.5-6).

Then, putting a charmed cap on Bracciano, the Conjuror conjures up a Dumb Show where two villains are shown poisoning a picture of Bracciano. The Duchess enters with her son, brother and others, prays before the picture, kisses it and faints before dying (2.2). After a short conversation about the action of the Dumb Show, another one shows Flamineo killing Camillo (2.2). Bracciano expresses his thanks

Noble friend
You bind me ever to you. This shall stand
As the firm seal annexed to my hand
It shall enforce a payment. (2.2.52-5)

The lovers marry, but in the next scene, we learn that Vittoria is to stand trial. Monticello says to Francisco:

For sir, you know we have nought but circumstances
To charge her with, about her husband's death
Their approbation therefore to the proofs
Of her black lust shall make her infamous
To all our neighbouring kingdoms. (3.1.4-8)

The unfairness of this arraignment exemplifies the lack of either mercy or justice in this play. It, after all, takes two to commit adultery so why should a woman bear all the blame, especially as Bracciano is present? His presence certainly adds tension to the scene. As Rene Weiss writes,

Bracciano's entry, and his refusal as an unbidden guest to sit on a chair to witness Vittoria's trial (1.5-7) heightens the tension, as he himself stands accused, though not in open court, of the charges levelled against Vittoria. His prolonged silence contrasts with the spontaneous protests of the ambassadors at the vehemence and unfairness of the proceedings. He only speaks at l.155 to provide himself with an alibi (which incriminates him).[138]

The Ambassadors do point out the unfairness of this trial, and her lover stands bravely by her but, nonetheless, she is condemned and sentenced to a term of imprisonment in a house of Convertites. As she complains about the Cardinal. 'O poor charity, | Thou are seldom found in scarlet' (3.2.70-1). She denies that she is a whore and castigates her judges cursing them: 'That the last day of judgement may so find you | And leave you the same devil you were before' (3.2.279-80).

[138]Rene Weiss, *The Duchess of Malfi and Other Plays*, p.374.

In the ensuing scenes, we see the breakup of the relationship between Bracciano and Flamineo, and Vittoria's righteous fury at how she has been treated, and she dismisses Bracciano in a spirited speech that starts 'What have I gained by thee but infamy?' (4.2.105 ff.). Although Vittoria is undoubtedly regretting her conduct, this is no real, religious repentance. She simply expresses sorrow that she has not got away with her adultery: she has no understanding of sin and thus cannot truly repent. Hers is a social, as distinct from a religious, regret. Bracciano, urged on by Flamineo, tries to make it up with her, but in vain. He has no sense of wrongdoing, neither has Flamineo who continues to play the pander. Bracciano eventually succeeds and engineers Vittoria's escape.

Monticelso becomes Pope (4.3). He announces that Vittoria has escaped from the House of Convertites and is now in exile with Bracciano. He proclaims:

> Now, though it be the first day of our seat,
> We cannot better please the divine power
> Than to sequester from the holy church
> These cursed persons. Make it thereto known
> We do denounce excommunication
> Against them both. (4.3.65-70)

In spite of Ludovico's and Francisco's arguing against this, the most serious spiritual punishment that can be imposed by the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope remains adamant. Again, this is an act of vengeance rather than mercy. Later in the scene, Ludivico, himself, asks for absolution:

Holy Father,

I come not to you as an intelligencer,

But as a penitent sinner. What I utter

Is in confession merely, which you know

Must never be revealed. (4.3.107-11)

Thus securing what he says cannot be revealed, Ludovico confesses to lustfully pursuing Bracciano's Duchess, though she never responded. He proclaims that she was poisoned and he will avenge her murder. Monticelso counsels him to repent fully and cease to plot against Bracciano, but nonetheless sends him a thousand crowns to help him achieve his aim. In the next act, Vittoria and Bracciano are already married, and the conspirators have taken Holy Communion vowing to kill Bracciano, and they plot to poison him by anointing his helmet. Flamineo's and Vittoria's mother, Cornelia, now intervenes, and tries to prevent her wicked son from committing any more sins: 'The God of heaven forgive thee. Dost not wonder | I pray for thee?' (5.2.1-2).

Bracciano enters, wearing his poisoned beaver, which throws him into a distraction, but refuses religious comfort, but as Flamineo exclaims, Bracciano fixes his eyes on a crucifix and Ludivico and Gasparo (disguised as Friars) chant Latin phrases at him, reminding Bracciano of his prowess as a warrior, not ones preparing him for death. When the other Lords depart, they curse him and then strangle him. Flamineo and Vittoria are captured by the conspirators, and Vittoria dies bravely at their hands, declaring that 'Her greatest sin was in her blood'. Flamineo's dying speech declares:

'Tis well yet there's some goodness in my death,

My life was a black charnel: I have caught

An everlasting cold, I have lost my voice

Most irrecoverably. (5.6.168-71)

All three of the major characters die without confessing their sins, and except for Vittoria's short stay in the House of Convertites, without being punished for their wrongdoings. Perhaps the best summing up of their characters, and the people surrounding them, is expressed by Flamineo:

I do not look

Who went before, nor who shall follow me;

No, at myself I will begin and end:

While we look up to heaven we confound

Knowledge with knowledge. (5.6.255-9)

It is a bleak philosophy, reminiscent of Richard of Gloucester, and it does not admit to mercy or even justice. Even the revengers have no real satisfaction, for they too are killed or condemned to torture and death and as the final lines remind the audience, '[l]et guilty men remember their black deeds | Do lean on crutches, made of slender reeds' (5.6.300-1).

The Duchess of Malfi

As T.S. Eliot reminds us, Webster was possessed by death, lust and luxury.[139] However,

[139]T.S. Eliot, T*he Complete Poems and Plays*, p.52.

He was also observant and brilliant about sibling hatred and jealousy. In *The White Devil*, Flamineo disregards Vittoria's safety and manipulates her to her death; *The Duchess of Malfi* is persecuted by her brothers because they wish her to remain a widow so that they might inherit her Dukedom and money. To modern sensibilities, this is unjust, but to Elizabethan audiences, where aristocratic marriages were arranged and women had to obey their men in such matters, this would not have seemed unfair. What would have seemed horrific to the first audiences was the unjustness of the brothers' treatment of the Duchess when they have discovered her marriage to her steward, Antonio. As Martin Wiggins writes, 'In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the tensions and the secrecy, arise from the Duchess' brothers' opposition to her remarriage; the Duchess being told by her elder brother, the Cardinal, that 'they are most luxurious [lecherous] will wed twice' (1.1.284-5). This from a man who has not only already done this but who also murders his mistress! As Wiggins states, the male characters construe their own actions as dishonourable only when carried out by women.[140]

Although the Duchess' marriage is the catalyst of the play, the primary relationship is not her marriage to a somewhat dull man. Rather, her relationships with her twin brother, Ferdinand, and with Bosolo, the man her brother has put in her household to spy on her, are both important and the latter is more complex. Much has been written about Ferdinand's attitude towards his sister, many critics suggesting that he feels incestuous towards her. Certainly his extravagant language against the Duchess marrying seems excessive if we ignore the fact that twins, even fraternal twins, have a special relationship and often a particular mode of communication. Nonetheless, Ferdinand's words can be extreme:

> You are my sister
> This was my father's poniard: do you see?
> I'd be loth to see't look rusty,'cause 'twas his.

[140]Martin Wiggins, *The Duchess of Malfi (1613)* from the Literary Encyclopedia at http://www.liencyc.com

[...]

And women like that part, which like the lamprey,

Hath ne’er the bone in it. (1.1.321)

Whatever the cause, though, Ferdinand has an exaggerated way of treating his sister. He tortures her psychologically, including Bosola, a discontented gentleman down on his luck, in his scheme. Bosola is somewhat reluctant, though being impoverished, he needs occupation. Throughout the play, Webster uses imagery of Hell and devils to underline the viciousness of Ferdinand. For example, Bosola says:

Take your devils

Which hell calls angels. These cursed gifts would make

You a corrupter, me an impudent traitor

And should I take these they’d take me to Hell.

(1.1.254-7)

Thus the Devil

Candies all sins o’er; and what heaven terms vile

That names he complimental. (1.1.266-8)

What is most interesting about Bosola’s relationship with the Duchess, however, is his constant regret that he has to spy on her and bring her to her death. It is as if the Good and Bad Angels of the Morality plays live within him. Although generally considered to be the stock malcontent of Jacobean plays, he is a much more subtle character than most. Even while participating in evil, he tries to mitigate its effect. For example, he wants to stop her from the sin of despair: ‘O fie! Despair? Remember | You

are a Christian' (4.1.73-4). Her brother, when asked by Bosola why he is torturing the Duchess, admits he wants to bring her to despair. As D.C. Gunby writes: 'The importance of Ferdinand's admission lies in the fact that bringing men to despair was considered one of the Devil's chief aims, since despairing of God's mercy, his love, or even of his very existence, man lost all hope of salvation'.[141] Bosola is only too aware of the evil he is doing and, although he is the instrument by which Ferdinand's desires are carried out, he has pity and mercy towards her. He finally says he will not see her again. In spite of all she has had to endure, the Duchess dies nobly and is reconciled and almost accepting of her fate:

I'll tell thee a miracle;
I am not mad yet, to my cause of sorrow
Th' heaven o'er my head seems made of molten brass,
The earth of flaming sulphur, yet I am not mad.
I am acquainted with sad misery,
As the tanned galley-slave is with his oar.
Necessity makes me suffer constantly
And custom makes it easy. (4.2.23-30)

At her death, she remembers her children and dies nobly.

In the last act, Ferdinand goes mad and dies, and both Bosola and the Arragonese brothers die in their sins. Besides conniving at his sister's torture, the Cardinal has killed his mistress, although she pleads her pregnancy and that she has not been to confession for two years.

[141]D.C. Gunby, *The Duchess of Malfi: a Theological Approach* in *John Webster* Mermaid Critical commentaries, ed. by Brian Morris (London: Ernest Benn), p.180.

There is no justice in this play: the two brothers arrogantly assume that they can control their sister, and although her marriage is beneath her, they have no consideration for her happiness. The only person to show her mercy and justice is Bosola, generally considered to be an out-and-out malcontent. Throughout the play, however, he constantly shows that he knows that necessity has brought him to wrongdoing. At the end, he really regrets his actions. He is both Good and Bad Angel.

These are bleak plays. As Martin Wiggins has pointed out, they are an expression of the anti-Catholicism of the time,[142] but I would go further and argue that, not only are they anti-Catholic, they are also anti-Christian plays, entirely disregarding the Christian values of forgiveness, repentance and mercy.

[142] Martin Wiggins: *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time* (Oxford, 2002), p.109.

6. UNFORGIVING MEN

Being unable to forgive is very human. As Aristotle opined, if a friend hurt one it was better to cut him out of your life. The Christian ethic, though, says that forgiveness should be unconditional. The following plays, *The Woman killed with Kindness*, *A Winter's Tale*, and *Othello*, concern men who cannot forgive their wives for actual or supposed adultery. This does not concord with Christian teaching: Jesus Christ said to the woman caught in adultery, 'Neither do I condemn thee go and sin no more' (John 8.11). This raises the question of Elizabethan attitudes to adultery. A couple found in the act of adultery could be made to stand in church and repent, though this did not happen very often because few men like to proclaim themselves cuckolds.[143] It is impossible to know whether the playwrights had read about adultery in pamphlets or knew the Law about it, but they would have attended marriages and heard what the priest said in the ceremony, which starts with a homily, stating that marriage was ordained for three causes:

> One was the procreation of children, to be brought up in the feare and nurtoure of the Lorde, and praise of God. Secondly, it was ordained for a remedy agaynste synne and to avoide fornication, that suche persones as have not the gifte of continencie might marrye, and kepe themselves undefiled members of Christes body. Thirdly, for the mutual societie, helpe, and comfort, that one ought to have of the other, both in prosperitie, and adversitye.

[143]For a full discussions of marriage and adultery, see Jennifer Panek, 'Punishing Adultery in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*', English Studies 34 (1994), pp.357-78, p.359.

Further on in the ceremony, the man and the woman make individual vows promising to look after each other in all circumstances and to forsake all others, and, in addition, the woman promises to obey her husband.

A Woman Killed with Kindness

Thomas Heywood's play, unlike the two Shakespearian plays, *A Winter's Tale* and *Othello, A Woman Killed with Kindness* is about well-to-do people living in the country who have no political responsibilities, other than local ones. It is not concerned with political power or kings and queens: it concerns the power used by men against women. The main plot concerns the sins of adultery and jealousy, while the subplot is about murder debt and selling your sister into a kind of prostitution by expecting her to marry someone she dislikes. As Martin Wiggins points out,

The household is necessarily an inward-looking community, which makes much of its own entertainment and extends its guests the hospitality of an overnight stay, which, of course, is an important part of the plot.

Wiggins points out further the inward nature of the participants explains the heightened sexual volatility of the play. Something else to note about the play is the number of times that God is mentioned, and the quick response characters have in asking for His mercy. Frankford's reluctance to forgive stands out even more. [144]

The play opens about three hours after a marriage ceremony between Frankford and Anne, his new wife. She is praised by the other guests for her good character:

[144] *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, ed. Wiggins, xiii.

you have a wife

So qualified and with such ornaments

Both of the mind a body. First, her birth

Is noble, and her education such

As might become the daughter of a prince

Her own tongue speaks all tongues, and her own hand

Can teach all strings to speak in their own grace,

From such shrill treble to the hoarsest bass.

To end her many praises in one word,

She's Beauty and Perfection's eldest daughter

Only found by yours, though many a heart have sought her.

(1.15-25)

In his reply, Frankford shows his tendency to jealously and Anne herself disclaims such praise saying that it is too much and all she aims to do is please her husband. As Jennifer Panek states, 'Frankford fails to grasp the essential concept of companionate marriage as do the husbands in the other plays also who also lack this quality. To modern conceptions of marriage, too, it is strange that there is no mention of being in love'.[145]

The scene continues with much talk between the men and, after much male talk, Anne and Frankford depart, leaving the other men to discuss hawking. It is during this scene that Wendoll, the catalyst in the play, speaks for the first time to place a bet on Sir Francis Acton's hawk. This scene establishes the male dominance in this country society.

[145]Jennifer Panek, 'Punishing Adultery', p.357.

It is the men who expect to be pleased and who seem to have all the fun. There is no conception that a marriage is a state that should be based on love and respect, a theme that will be also explored in the subplot.

The male dominance occurs again in Scene 3, the hunt that was planned in Scene 1. Sir Charles, Sir Frances and Wendoll, together with Falconers and Huntsmen, discuss their fortune or lack of it and a quarrel starts, swords are drawn, Sir Charles gets wounded. In response, he and his men kill several of Sir Francis' men. Everyone leaves, except for Sir Charles who stands among the dead bodies. Sir Charles immediately repents:

> My God! What have I done?
> What have I done?
> My rage hath plunged into a sea of blood,
> In which my soul lies drowned. Poor innocents
> For whom we are to answer. Well 'tis done
> [...] Forgive me God, 'twas in the heat of blood
> And anger quite removes me from myself:
> It was not I, but rage, did this vile murder;
> Yet I, and not my rage must answer it. (3.42-51)

Further on in the scene, he declares, 'Call me a surgeon sister, for my soul; | The sin of murder it hath pierced my heart, | And made a wide wound there' (3.66-68). Scene 4 opens with a self-congratulatory speech by Frankford where he outlines his social position and good fortune, which could be interpreted as the sin of pride. Nicholas comes to announce Wendoll's arrival in haste. Frankford is already acquainted with Wendoll

and knows him to be of good birth though of small means. When Wendoll enters with Anne, he greets him warmly, almost ignoring Anne altogether until he commends Wendoll to Anne: ‘for I know you | Virtuous, and therefore grateful. Prithee, Nan, | Use him with all thy loving courtesy’ (4.77-79). This sets the relationship that dominates the main plot. Frankford already shows his partiality for Wendoll and his attitude to Anne: he expects her to accept Wendoll, whether she wishes him to be a permanent guest or not. Frankford makes it quite clear that she has to do what he wants.

The relationship between Wendoll and Frankford is one of passionate friendship. Today such a relationship would probably be considered homosexual, but in Elizabethan literature a loving, bur chaste, friendship is often written about in heightened language. But, nonetheless, it must disturb and fret Anne that her husband prefers Wendoll’s company to hers. Meanwhile, Sir Charles manages to buy himself out of prison by raising money on his property. But this leaves him penniless. He laments his situation:

> O me! O most unhappy gentleman!
> I am not worthy to have friends stirred up
> Whose hands may help me in this plunge of want.
> I would I were in heaven, to inherit there
> Th’immortal birthright which my saviour keeps,
> And by no unthrift can be bought and sold
> For here on earth what pleasures should we trust? (5.24-30)

This, of course, is a reference to the Atonement, the belief that Christ died so that we might be forgiven our sins.

Sir Charles then borrows, as he thinks, money from Shafton. Meanwhile, we find Wendoll musing about his passion for Anne. He realizes that he is wrong in falling in love with her because it is a sin in God's eyes:

> And when I meditate (O God forgive me!)
> It is on her divine perfections.
> I will forget her. I will arm myself
> Not to entertain a thought of love to her. (6.10-13)

> O God! O God! With what violence
> I am hurried to my own destruction
> There goest thou the most perfect'st man
> That ever England bred a gentleman';
> And shall I wrong his bed? (6.17-21)

He thus acknowledges his debt to Frankford, who has been so generous to him. Later on in the scene, he meets up with Anne and he struggles against his lust. When Anne asks him if he is unwell, he exclaims,

> And in my heart, fair angel, chaste and wise.
> I love you. Start not, speak not, answer not,
> I love you. Nay let me speak the rest
> Bid me to swear, and I will call to
> The host of Heaven. (6.104-8)

Anne replies, ‘The host of Heaven forbid | Wendoll should hatch such disloyal thought’ (6.108-9). The scene continues with Anne reminding Wendoll of all the good that Frankford has done for him. Though Wendoll agrees, he still pleads his love, telling Anne he is willing for Frankford to know about it even though he would be turned out. He then says:

> Say that I incur
> The general name of villain through the world,
> Of traitor to my friend: I care not, I
> Beggary, shame, death, scandal, and reproach;
> For you, I’ll hazard all. What care I?
> For you I’ll live, and in your love I’ll die. (6.132-7)

Anne still resists, claiming she loves her husband, but on Wendoll still pleading his cause she wavers, ‘What shall I say? | My soul is wandering and hath lost its way’. And in a further speech she debates with herself about the shame she will bring on herself but she relents and they kiss overseen by Nicholas, a servant. As the couple go off to bed, Nicholas declares his love for Frankford and his hatred of Wendoll, and says he will betray them to Frankford.

The seduction scene seems rather perfunctory. In Panek’s words, ‘Heywood presents the act of adultery in its simplest form, unobscured by either mitigating or damning circumstances, so that we may focus without distraction on the vents that follow: Anne’s repentance and Frankford’s “kindness”.’[146]

[146] Panek, p.367.

In Scene 7, the play returns to the subplot. Shafton has Sir Charles arrested for not paying back the money that Sir Charles thought was a gift, Sir Charles refuses to sell the remaining land that he has to pay the loan back. As Martin Wiggins writes,

> The irony is that he cannot rely on anyone else: he is left to rot in prison because nobody else close to him, neither friends, former tenants, nor even his uncle, will offer so much as a penny in charity; it is his enemy, Acton, who pays his debts and procures his release.[147]

In return for this, Acton now thinks that he is a good position to marry Susan, Sir Charles' sister, with whom he has fallen in love.

> Ha, Ha! I will flout her poverty,
> Deride her fortunes, scoff her base estate.
> My very soul the name of Mounford hates
> But stay, my heart,O what a look did fly
> To strike my soul through with piercing eye,
> I am enchanted, all my spirits are fled,
> And with one glance my envious spleen struck dead. (7.89-95)

Unfortunately, the chaste Susan does not reciprocate the feeling. As Acton exclaims,

> She hates my name, my face; How should I woo?

[147] *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, ed. Wiggins, xviii.

I am disgraced in everything I do.
The more she hates me and disdains my love,
The more I am wrapped in admiration
Of her divine and chaste perfection. (9.57-60)

Sir Charles then proceeds to force Susan into marrying Acton, and Acton has him released from prison (Scene 10). It is very much against Susan's wishes: 'Brother, why have you tricked me like a bride? | Brought me this gay attire, these ornaments? | Forget you our estate, our poverty?' (Scene 14.1-4). Charles is somewhat shamefaced, but reminds Susan that Acton has paid his debts and she must 'Grant him her bed' as repayment. She, of course, resists saying it is against her honour for him to prostitute her. But Acton proposes marriage and Susan has to yield, and says she will try to love Acton. As the scene ends Acton declares

All's mine is yours: we are alike in state.
Let's knit in love, what was opposed in hate.
Come, for our nuptials we will straight provide,
Blessed only in our brother and fair bride. (14.153-156)

The main plot has meanwhile developed. Nicholas, Frankford's servant, has a hatred for Wendoll and dislikes his behaviour:

I cannot eat, but had I Wendoll's heart
I would eat that. The rogue grows impudent:
O I have seen such vile, notorious tyricks,

Ready to make my eyes dart from my head.

I'll tell my master, by this air I will;

Fall what may fall, I'll tell him.

(8.14-20)

When Frankford enters, Nicholas tells him of his hatred: 'I know a villain when I see him act / Deeds of a villain. Master, Master, that base slave | Enjoys my mistress, and dishonours you' (8.52-54). Frankford, at first, cannot believe this, but after arguing with Nicholas in a soliloquy, he expresses his doubts about Anne's chastity because she appears to be virtuous and honest. He concludes the speech by saying: 'Their wonted favours in my tongue shall flow, | Till I know all, I'll nothing seem to know' (8.108-109). Here Frankford acts judicially, thinking he need more evidence, but it does not occur to him to forgive Anne for sinning.

The scene continues with a card game that is full of *double entendre* and ends acrimoniously: Frankford says, 'You have served me a bad trick, Master Wendoll!', to which Wendoll replies, 'Sir you must take your lot. To end this strife, / I know I have dealt better with your wife' (8.172-173). Frankford then resolves to leave the house under some pretext and then return secretly.

During his absence, Wendoll cajoles Anne into bed. Panek suggests that 'Heywood presents the act of adultery in its simplest form, unobscured by either mitigating or damning circumstances, so that we may focus without distraction on the events that follow – Anne's repentance and Frankford's "kindness".'[148] When Frankford returns and finds the adulterers, he chases Wendoll from the bedroom with drawn sword

[148] Panek p.367.

and is only prevented from killing him by a maid. Anne enters and immediately shows her repentance:

> O by what word, what title, or what name
> Shall I entreat your pardon? Pardon! O,
> I am as far from hoping such sweet grace,
> As Lucifer from heaven, to call you husband,
> O me most wretched, I have lost that name;
> I am no more your wife. (13.77-80)

After Anne recovers from fainting, she again repents and Frankford discuss why Anne deceived him. He sends for their children and, in front of them, Frankford reproaches her and then leaves her to contemplate what to do. Anne continues her repentance, acknowledging her sin saying that 'He cannot be so base as to forgive me, | Nor I so shameless as to accept his pardon' (13.137-138). Frankford returns and declares he will kill Anne with kindness, his "kindness" being to send her alone, without her children, to a manor house on his estate. There she will have every luxury but he also says:

> I charge thee never after this sad day
> To see me, or to meet me, or to send
> By word, or writing, gift or otherwise
> To move me, by thyself or by thy friends,
> Nor challenge any part in my two children. (13.173-177)

Wendoll also repents: ‘Pursued with horror of a guilty soul | And with sharp scourge of repentance lashe | I fly from my own shadow (Scene 16.31-33). Anne and Wendoll meet on her way to the manor house and at their parting, Anne yields her soul to her Saviour:

O for God’s sake fly
The devil doth come to tempt me ere I die!
My coach! This sin that with an angel’s face
Courted my honour till he sought my wrack
In my repentant eyes seems ugly black. (16.107-110)

In the last scene, Frankford’s friends discuss his actions, concluding he has been too lenient, but they do not condemn him. As Acton says:

My brother Frankford showed too mild a spirit
In the revenge of such a loathed crime,
Less than he did, no man of spirit could do,
I am so far from blaming his revenge
That I commend it. Had it been my case,
Their souls at once had from their breasts been freed;
Death to such deeds of shame is the due meed. (17.16-22)

Anne’s servants now enter and say that she is sick and in bed. She has starved herself and has asked Frankford to come to her. He arrives and she asks him ‘Will you vouchsafe, | Out of your grace and your humanity, | To take a spotted strumpet by the

hand?' (Scene 17.74-77). Frankford pardons her and she dies with her friends around her.

The theological argument in this scene is, of course, whether Anne's suicide, for that is what it is, though done out of repentance, is a mortal sin. But, as in *The Castle of Peserverence* Mercy is God's favourite daughter, her soul must be left to His mercy.

Frankford, in his last speech, acknowledges that it was his kindness that killed her, but does not acknowledge that it is his jealousy that has occasioned it and there the play really ends. In the Epilogue, Heywood makes no comment on the play but urges the playgoers to go to the tavern and enjoy themselves. This sums up the callousness of the play, for his actions are far from the Christian ideas of love and charity. Forgiveness must be unconditional.

Othello

Anne Frankford does commit adultery; Desdemona does not. Her husband, Othello, is manoeuvred into believing that she has. Interpretations of the play have emphasised the idea that this is a play about racism or social unease or about jealousy. All these come into the material of the play, but primarily the play is about trust and deceit. When Nicholas Hytner directed the 2013-14 National Theatre production with Adrian Lester and Rory Kinnear, his Military Advisor, Jonathan Shaw, talked to the cast and emphasised that the trust between soldiers was greater than the trust between men and women.[149] If so, Othello would more readily believe his comrade-in-arms, Iago, than his wife. It is not explained why Desdemona stole away from her father's house where he was an honoured and frequent guest. Othello says, 'Her father loved me, oft invited me | Still questioned me the story of my life' (1.3.127). Her father, Brabantio, indicates to

[149] The talk that the Military Advisor gave to the cast was included in the filmed version. I have to thank the National Theatre for allowing me to use this information.

Othello that his daughter has tendency to deceive: ‘Look to her Moor, if thou hast eyes to see | She has deceived her father, and may thee’ (1.3.292-3). This plants a seed of distrust and the situation in Cyprus is not conducive to establishing trusting relationships. Except for her maid, Emilia, the wife of Othello’s ensign, Desdemona is isolated in a world of men. She has no friend to whom she can turn. This situation is ripe for manipulation by Iago, who is aggrieved at not being given to promotion he deserves: ‘I hate the Moor | And it is thought abroad that ‘twixt my sheets | He has done my office’ (2.1.178-80). Furthermore, he resents Cassio’s position, and he vows to get it for himself. He sees an opportunity to get his revenge on them all by destroying Othello’s trust in Desdemona, already undermined. He is able to manipulate the circumstances that occur to his own evil ends.

His first target is Cassio, of whom he is already jealous. Cassio had accompanied Othello when he visited Brabantio’s house, and Desdemona and Cassio know and like each other. Knowing that Cassio has a weak head for drink, Iago encourages him to join a rowdy evening with other soldiers. Cassio gets drunk and aggressive, and Othello, roused from sleep, dismisses him: ‘Cassio, I love thee | But never more be officer of mine’ (2.1.241-2). Now Iago can work on Desdemona to plead for Cassio. He plots their meeting and ensures that Othello observes them. Meanwhile, Iago makes subtle comments about the friendship of Desdemona and Cassio:

> Look to your wife. Observe her well with Cassio
> Wear your eyes not jealous, nor secure
> I would not have your free and noble nature
> Out of self beauty be abused. (2.3.201-4)

This is a subtle speech: Iago has no proof to present to Othello, but he plays on Othello's wish to think well of himself, which he previously displayed when speaking to the Senate. Unfortunately, Desdemona makes an error in her interaction with her husband here, denying that she has her handkerchief 'about me' (3.4.55). Iago says that he has seen it in Cassio's possession, and then contrives to get Othello to hear a conversation between Cassio and his mistress, Bianca. He tells Othello that the conversation is actually between Desdemona and Cassio, and the soldiers' trust of each other becomes apparent: it is Iago, not his wife, that Othello believes. Iago works on Othello's lack of social security by saying that Othello does not understand that being unfaithful is usual with Venetian women. In the scene when the Venetian Ambassador comes to Cyprus, it is evident by Othello's behaviour towards Desdemona, particularly when he strikes her, that he has lost all faith in her: there is now nothing she can do to restore Othello's trust in her.

In the last scene, Iago's perfidy is disclosed. His failure to kill Cassio is revealed and Othello kills Desdemona who dies with a lie upon her lips when Emilia asks her 'who has done this deed?', but it is a loving lie: 'Nobody, I myself. Farewell | Commend me to my kind lord. O, farewell'. Othello then kills himself committing not only the sin of despair but of self-slaughter. *Othello* is a tragedy of deceit, lying and manipulation. There is no pity or forgiveness in it.

The Winter's Tale

Like the two previous plays, *The Winter's Tale* is about sexual jealousy. In addition, it tells of intended murder, tyranny and blasphemy though, as a late play, during an era that prohibited the Christian God being spoken of on stage, Apollo is the God who is blasphemed.

The play opens with two courtiers Camillo and Archidamus telling us that Polixenes, King of Bohemia, the boyhood friend of their King Leontes, has been visiting Sicilia for the last nine months, and they further discuss the young heir, Mamillius. This is followed by a scene which introduces us to the three main characters, the two kings and Hermione, Leontes' queen, who is heavily pregnant. Hermione and Leontes seem happy together and most critics and directors assume that it is a happy marriage. We learn that the royal couple have a son, Mamillius. The age of this son is never really disclosed, though he appears to be intelligent and aware. Leontes says that he can see, in Mamillius, himself 'unbreeched' This was a ceremony where boys were taken away from the care of women and dressed in men's clothes, rather than the skirted garments boys wore until then. This took place at around seven years of age, though in most modern productions Mamillius appears in men's clothes.

It is in this scene that Leontes shows his jealousy. No real reason is given by Shakespeare for this. However it was the duty of a queen to produce heirs and the daughters who could make marriages of alliances. It could be assumed that Leontes is sexually inadequate, because Mamillius is the only child and there is no mention of any other child who might have died. This concern about succession may account for his jealousy.

Hermione tries to persuade Polixenes to stay longer and she gives him her hand, which arouses Leontes' jealousy: 'Too hot, too hot! | To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods. | I have a *tremor cordis* on me'. As Grams Hunter points out, Leontes' jealousy is entirely his own. Unlike in *Othello*, there is no catalyst like Iago: the sin is Leontes' own sin. Leontes then questions Mamillius asking him whether he is his 'boy' and he tries to find some resemblance between them.

Camillo enters and tells Leontes that Polixenes has ‘at the Queen’s request’ decided to stay longer in Sicilia. This again arouses Leontes:

My wife’s not slippery? If thou wilt confess,
Or else be impudently negative,
To have nor eyes, nor ears, nor thought, then say
My wife’s a hobby-horse, deserves a name
As rank as any flax-wench that puts to
Before her troth-plight. (1.2.270-5)

When Camillo refuses to agree, Leontes commits yet another deadly sin, anger, in this vicious speech:

Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? Stopping the career
Of laughter with a sigh? (1.2.282-5)

Camillo tries to stop this tirade of ‘diseased opinion’ but this only makes Leontes continue his hateful suspicions. Tyrannical behaviour takes over and destroys his friendship with Polixenes, drives the sensible and well-meaning Camillo from the kingdom, and puts his chaste wife on trial for adultery. The good and sensible Camillo persuades Polixenes, who denies any wrong doing, to leave the kingdom and he accepts Polixenes’ invitation to accompany him.

In the next scene, Hermione is arrested by Leontes who takes Mamillius from mother saying, unpleasantly, that he is glad that she was unable to nurse him as a baby. He says to Hermione in explanation of his conduct: ‘You have mistook, my lady | Polixenes for Leontes. O thou thing’ (2.1.82-3). Furthermore, he insults her by calling her an adulteress and a bed-server. Hermione defends herself, denying the charges, which arouses more anger from Leontes. He tells his men to take her away to prison. When Hermione asks to take her women with her, because of her condition, he allows it. Antigonus and an unnamed Lord argue with Leontes for Hermione’s release, saying that they believe her to be innocent, but Leontes will not listen to reason. He says that Camillo’s departure is proof yet he seeks confirmation from the oracle:

> I have dispatched in post
> To sacred Delphos to Apollo’s temple
> Cleomenes and Dion, whom you know
> Of stuffed sufficiency. Now from the oracle
> They will bring all, whose spiritual counsel had
> Shall stop or spur me. (2.1.182-7)

But he reiterates that he is quite satisfied as to Hermione’s guilt, and is only consulting the oracle to demonstrate that he is right. In the following scene, Paulina visits the prison in which Hermione is lodged. On being told that she cannot visit the Queen she asks to see a lady-in-waiting and she hears that Hermione has given birth to:

> A daughter, and a goodly babe,
> Lusty, and like to live. The Queen receives

Much comfort in't, says my poor prisoner,

I am as innocent as you. (2.2.25-8)

Paulina decides to tell the king and rate him about his conduct. She is convinced that he is in the wrong, and is prepared to tell him so. She offers to take the babe and show her to Leontes.

Leontes is still convinced that adultery has taken place, and he confesses that the situation is giving him no rest:

She, th'adultress; for the harlot King

Is quite beyond my arm, out of the blank

And level of my brain, plot-proof; but she

I can hook to me- say that she were gone,

Given to the fire, a moiety of my rest

Might come to me again. (2.3.4-9)

As Stephen Orgel points out, legitimacy was a politically sensitive issue at the time because King James' own legitimacy could be questioned due to his mother's profligacy. Leontes and a servant discuss Mamillius' illness: he is pining away for his mother and on Paulina's entry with the baby, Leontes cries, 'Away with that audacious lady!' and tells Antigonus, her husband, that he stops her from coming into his presence. Paulina persists and presents the baby to Leontes, who rejects her with words that exemplify his hatred of women: 'Out! / A mankind witch! Hence with her, out o'door! / A most intelligencing bawd!' (2.3.67-9). Paulina persists and Leontes turns on her husband, Antigonus, berating him for not controlling his wife. Eventually, Leontes

declares: ‘This brat is none of mine / It is the issue of Polixenes, / Hence with it, and together with the dam / Commit them to the fire’ (2.3.92-5).

Paulina intervenes again, pointing out how like the babe is to Leontes, but Leontes refuses to accept this and, calling Paulina a ‘gross hag’, threatens her with death but she persists. Leontes then turns his attention to Antigonus and ‘on his allegiance’ orders him to burn the baby. Upon the entreaty of a Lord, Leontes modifies his command and tells Antigonus to take the child and expose it on some ‘remote and desert place’ outside of his domain. Antigonus has to obey or die himself. Leontes is, of course, guilty of murdering his child. The scene ends with Leontes arranging for Hermione’s trial and the truth from the oracle at Delphi.

Hermione’s trial opens with Leontes hypocritically stating that he is acting against his heart towards a beloved wife. He even asks to be cleared of being tyrannous. Directors have chosen to represent the appearance of Hermione in different ways. Sally Dexter, in Peter Hall’s 1988 production at the National Theatre, was in the costume she had worn in previous scenes, while in Ontario, 1986, Goldie Semple was dressed in sackcloth with Whore written on it and she was fettered. But whatever the costume, Hermione makes a moving and very dignified speech, befitting a ‘great King’s daughter’.

Leontes refuses to accept any of Hermione’s defence, her appeals to him about the way she has behaved both to Polixenes and as a wife to him. As her arguments become more persuasive, he grows angrier and then the confrontation is interrupted by the announcement that Cleomenes and Dion have returned from the Oracle at Delphi. They swear that they bring a true report back: ‘The Oracle says: “Hermione is chaste, Polixenes blameless, Camillo a true subject, Leontes a jealous tyrant, his innocent baby truly begotten, and the king shall live without an heir if that which is lost be not found”.’

Leontes then commits blasphemy by declaring that the Oracle has no truth in it and the trial will succeed. The scene ends with a servant entering and telling the assembled people that Mamillius has died. Hermione faints, Leontes then confesses his guilt in not believing the Oracle:

> Apollo, pardon
> My great profaneous 'gainst thine oracle
> I'll reconcile me to Polixenes'
> New woo my queen, recall good Camillo. (3.2.151-4)

This is, of course, an acknowledgement of wrong actions, but it is no real contrition. Leontes is still acting as a tyrannical king, organizing without making any apology for his rash actions. Paulina then enters and, actually calling him a tyrant to his face, upbraids him for his actions and announces the death of the queen. She swears it. Then she tells Leontes that no repentance can undo the tyrannical acts that he has performed. Leontes asks to see the dead bodies of Hermione and his son, and says that he will bear the shame of their deaths perpetually. As Grams Hunter says,

> On a supernatural level, the death of Mamillius is the gods' punishment for Leontes' sins, particularly for his final sin of blasphemy. Leontes, in his wrath, has tried to destroy all the manifestations of the gods' grace except one – his son. He still loves this gift of the gods, so with terrible and inhuman justice, it is the gift which they take away from him. Mamillius becomes an instrument of the gods for the punishment of Leontes. [150]

[150] Robert Grams Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Comedies of Forgiveness*, Columbia University Press (New York, 1965), p.193.

The next scene opens with Antigonus carrying the baby, accompanied by a Mariner. After dismissing the sailor, Antigonus reluctantly lays the babe down on the ground, together with a bundle. A storm rages and he exits ‘pursued by a bear’. Here some directors take an interval, leaving the audience going out of the theatre to the sound of the babe crying. Others proceed to the entry of an Old Shepherd who surveys the scene, assumes the baby is the illegitimate child of some ‘waiting gentlewoman in the scape’. His son then comes in and describes the wrecking of the ship and they depart with the child and the bundle.

The next problem in the production is how to deal with the years that have to pass before the baby grows up. Shakespeare has written a speech delivered by Time, and most directors give this speech to a member of the cast, quite often dressed as an old man with a scythe. In the 1995 RSC production, a balloon drifted down and Camillo, who was sitting there, rescued it and read the speech that was tied to it.

Camillo and Polixenes then discuss the current situation: the penitent Leontes has asked Camillo to return home after fifteen years of exile. Polixenes urges him to stay, and asks Camillo if he has seen Prince Florizel, Polixenes’ heir, who has been absent from court for three days. Polixenes replies that Florizel has been seen frequently visiting a ‘homely’ shepherd. Camillo replies that he has heard that the shepherd has a beautiful daughter. The two men decide to visit the shepherd in disguise.

The next scene, opens with Autolycus, a pedlar, singing a song, and after some chat with the Clown he goes on his way. Then Florizel enters with Perdita, and they discuss their situation. Though in love, Perdita realizes that she is not suitable to be a prince’s bride, because the difference in their social class prevents it. Florizel argues against her. The Shepherd enters and tells Perdita she is neglecting her duties as hostess

to the guests who are assembling for a feast. Camillo and Polixenes turn up in is their disguise, and ask the Shepherd the identity of the young man. He explains that he is called Doricles and is in love with Perdita, and that she has a good dowry. The feast proceeds and Autolycus enters again with his merchandise to the delight of all. Florizel (as Doricles) plights his troth to Perdita, but Polixenes intervenes, asking Doricles whether he has told his father of his intent, because a betrothal is binding. When Florizel answers negatively, Polixenes removes his disguise and, committing the sin of anger, he threatens to hang the Old Shepherd. Turning to Perdita, he screams: 'I'll have thy beauty scratched with briars and made | More homely than thy state' (4.4.422-3).

After further accusations, Polixenes leaves and Camillo persuades the young people to leave Bohemia, telling them to go to Sicilia. He will provide Perdita with the necessary garments so she can prove worthy to be his bride. He believes that Leontes will welcome Polixenes' heir, because he seems to be ready to forgive. After conversation between the Old Shepherd and Autolocus, the Clown enters and reveals that Perdita is not part of their family but had been found, abandoned, as a baby.

The scene then moves to Sicilia where Cleomenes reveals that Leontes has spent the last fifteen years repenting his sins, recognising that he did the wrong to himself, and that he, in effect, killed the innocent Hermione. The courtiers urge Leontes to marry again, but Paulina, who knows that Hermione is still alive, reminds them that the oracle said that Leontes should not have an heir until his lost child be found. In any case, Leontes refuses to marry again. A servant enters and announces that Prince Florizel and his princess have arrived. Cleomenes goes to greet them and bring them into Leontes' presence. Leontes declares that he will help the Prince and his love.

The last act opens in Paulina's house. Leontes acknowledges her help during his long time of regret. He has come to see her statue of Hermione. With him come Florizel

and Perdita, now recognized as Leontes' daughter. They examine the statue and comment on its likeness. Paulina will not allow anyone to touch it and them pretends to conjure the statue to life. It is, of course, the real Hermione. Leontes and she embrace. Leontes describes how he has 'said many a prayer upon her grave' but we do not really know how Hermione feels. She talks only to Perdita. Can she really forgive Leontes? That is something Shakespeare does not reveal.

Timon of Athens

Timon of Athens, a collaboration between Shakespeare and Middleton, is a play about a man who cannot love either other people or himself. How the Jacobeans reacted to this play is impossible to know, but it has a peculiar aptness today, with an emphasis on finance and economics worldwide, as both Trevor Nunn's production at the Young Vic with David Suchet as Timon in 1990-1, and Nicholas Hynter's National Theatre production in 2013 with Simon Russell Beale, showed. As John Jowett says, 'gold' is used more often in this play than any other of Shakespeare's.[151] Besides the economic resonances in the main part of the play, the subplot, about Alcibiades' quarrel with the Senators and his conquering of the City, adds a further dimension of forgiveness and love to the story.. In William Hazlitt's words, 'TIMON OF ATHENS (sic) always appears to us to be written with as intense a feeling of his subject as any one play of Shakespear(sic)'.

The play opens with a Poet, a Painter and a Jeweller meeting with Merchants and the theme of patronage is obvious and that Timon is a great benefactor of the Arts and luxurious goods. A cynicism is also shown, as the Poet expresses

[151] John Jowett in the introduction to his Oxford World Classics edition of *Timon*.

When Fortune in her shift and change of mood
Spurns down her late beloved, all his dependents
Which laboured after him to the mountains to
Even on their knees and hands, let him flit down
Not one accompanying his declining foot. (1.1.85-9)

Timon enters and immediately shows his excessive generosity by despatching a considerable amount of money to satisfy a friend of his who owes it. Then he gives a servant enough money to enable him to marry, Apementus then enters. Described in the First Folio as a Churlish Philosopher, he adds a note of cynicism and criticism throughout the play, and acts as a foil to Timon.

The next scene shows the magnificent banquet that Timon gives for his friends with a masque or dance as entertainment and ends with Timon giving extravagant gifts to all the guests, but after they have gone Timon's Steward enters and gives a grave warning to Timon:

What will this come too?
He commands me to provide. And give great gifts
And all out of an empty coffer:
Nor will he know his purse, or yield me this:
To show him what a beggar his heart is,
Being of no power to make his wishes good. (1.2.186-91)

This interesting criticism of Timon shows that his generosity does not arise from love or friendship because he is indeed a beggar in his heart, and buying his friendship and goodwill.

Timon's great debts are revealed in the next scene, and the Senators send to Timon to demand repayment of the money he owes them and the next scene opens with the Steward having many bills in his hand. Timon enters with Alcibiades and, on the entry of Caphis who has come to collect debts, Timon refuses to acknowledge his hopeless situation:

> How goes the world that I am thus encountered
> With clamorous demands of broken bonds
> And the detention of long-since-due debts
> Against my honour? (2.2.36-9)

Further on in the scene, Timon asks his Steward why he has not explained the situation before. The Steward replies:

> O my good Lord
> At many times I brought my accounts
> Laid them before you; you would through them off
> And say you summed them with mine honesty. (2.2.127-30)

Timon does not accept that he is to blame and chides the Steward for not warning him about his bankruptcy: there is no acknowledgment of his extravagance. Neither this early in the scene nor later on when he discovers that his land has been sold to cover his

debts. He exclaims ‘Come, sermon me no further / No villainous bounty yet hath passed my heart, / Unwisely, not ignobly, have I given’ (2.2.167-8).

As the scene continues, the Steward tells Timon that he can no longer raise credit but Timon refuses to believe this, and in the following scenes he and Timon’s servants go to Timon’s friends to ask for money to tide him over. A typical reply is that of Lucullus, who says to another friend Flaminius ‘thou know’st well enough, although thou com’st to me, that thus is no time to lend money, especially upon bare friendship without security’ (3.1.36-8).

As a variation to the refusals, there is a conversation between Strangers who gossip about Timon’s situation, how shamefully his friends are treating him by refusing to help him as he has helped them, and how uncharitable this is. As one of them says ‘Religion groans at it’ (3.2.70). In the following scene, there is another refusal. Sempronius grumbles:

> Must he needs trouble me in’t? Hmh! ‘Bove all others?
> He might have tried Lord Lucius or Lucullus
> And now Ventidius is wealthy too,
> Whom he redeemed from prison. All these
> Owe their estates to him. (3.3.1-5)

The lack of sympathy and love shown by these men serves to add to the prevailing thought behind the whole play, a lack of love and concern for other people, particularly when they are in distress.

Timon then summons his so-called friends to another dinner, but this time, instead of a lavish meal and a splendid entertainment, he offers them stones to eat and

hot water. He brushes aside his friends' excuses for not helping him and, at the end of the scene, after they have departed, he declares:

> Let no assembly of twenty men be without a score of villains. If there sit twelve women at the table, let a dozen of them be as they are. The rest of your foes, O gods – the senatory of Athens, together with the common tag of people – what is amiss in them, you gods, make suitable for destruction. For these my present friends, as they are to me nothing, so in nothing bless them; and to nothing they are welcome. (3.7.70-6)

Timon's misanthropy is, it could be argued, justified here, for he has always been overly generous to his friends, and they have been so unkind to him. He is truly in a dilemma, which is shown in the shift in his speech from verse to prose. Further on in the scene, Timon refers to his so-called friends as 'mouth-friends' and then makes a decision: 'Burn house! Sink Athens! Henceforth hated be | Of Timon man and all humanity!' (3.7.96-7). The following scene is entirely composed of a long and virulent speech of Timon's spoken outside the walls of Athens. In a series of curses and imprecations he curses the city, tears of his clothes, and ends the speech by saying:

> The gods confound – hear me you good gods all-
> Th'Athenianns, both within and out that wall;
> And grant, as Timon grows, his hate may grow
> To the whole race of mankind, high and low.
> Amen. (4.1.37-41)

The end of this speech ‘Amen’ is curious. Throughout the play, Shakespeare and Middleton have kept rigidly referring to this speech. Timon, of course, is behaving in a very unchristian way and this ‘Amen’ could be an indication of this to the audience. Gods, not the Christian God so to add the word ‘Amen’ seems to add a Christian dimension to the speech.

4.2 is one of the most sympathetic in the play. It tells of the effect of Timon’s departure on his household. Again, Timon is not acting in a merciful or kind way. He has left his dependents in the lurch, though the Steward shows more kindness and love towards Timon in his calamity.

Alas, kind lord!
He’s flung in rage from this ungrateful seat
Of monstrous friends;
Nor has he with him to supply his life,
Or that which can command it.
I’ll follow and enquire him out
I’ll serve his mind with my best will.
While I have gold I’ll be his steward still. (4.2.44-51)

Timon is living in the woods by the next scene. He is still in a misanthropic mood, cursing his previous life, saying he abjures all society, which he disdains. Digging up some gold he also says that it ‘[w]ill knit and break religions’ (4.3.35). Alcibiades, himself an exile, now comes across Timon and asks him ‘What is thy name? Is man so hateful to thee / That art thyself a man?’, to which Timon replies, ‘I am Misanthropos, and hate mankind’ (4.3.51-3).

This speech is, perhaps, justified because Timon's friendships have all been false, though his generosity has been more to gain their friendship than a real liking and respect. Finally, Timon tells Alcibiades that he would rather be alone. He offers Alcibiades gold, which Timon scorns in another tirade. Alcibiades takes the money and departs.

Apemantus then enters and sums up Timon's predicament ironically and after much discussion and analysis of Timon's predicament Apemantus says, 'The middle of humanity thou never knewest, but the extremity of both ends. When thou wast in thy gilt and thy perfume, they mocked thee for too much curiosity; in thy rags thou know'st none, but are despised for the contrary' (4.2.300-3).

After throwing a stone at Apemantus, Timon shows real despair, another sin: 'I am sick of this false world, and will love naught' (4.2.368). He decides to prepare his grave, gives away his gold to some thieves and when his Steward arrives, full of pity, Timon still complains that he never had an honest man about him. The Steward offers Timon money; he rejects it, but gives some of the gold that he found to the Steward. The Poet and the Painter then enter still seeking patronage by flattery. Timon throws stones at them calling them 'rascal dogs'. Senators enter, and are told by the Steward that Timon wishes for no company: 'he is set so only to himself | That nothing but himself which looks like man | Is friendly with him' (5.2.2-4). After Timon's final exit, a soldier finds his grave. His misanthropy has lasted to the end.

The subplot concerning the young, glamorous Captain Alcibiades is an interesting counterpoint to the main plot because it deals with justice, mercy and forgiveness. Although Alcibiades is one of the guests at Timon's first dinner, he has little to say or do until the third act. The Senators of Athens are discussing a murder that has taken place and they are adamant that the murderer should be executed: 'The fault's

bloody | ‘Tis necessary he should die. | Nothing emboldens sin so much as mercy’ (3.6.1-2). Alcibiades disagrees and puts up a bold defence of the murderer saying that he acted in self defence and that ‘he is a man […] of comely virtues’:

> Seeing his reputation touched to death,
> He did oppose his foe;
> And with such sober and unnoted passion
> He did behave his anger, ere ’twas spent
> As if he had proved an argument. (3.6.14-15; 19-23)

The First Senator refuses to accept Alcibiades’ argument because he does not think ugly deeds should be justified: ‘You cannot make gross sins look clear | To revenge is no valour, but to bear’ (3.6.38-9). Other senators are drawn into the argument: ‘He’s a sworn rioter: he has a sin | That often drowns him and takes his valour prisoner’ (3.6.66-7).

The First Senator says that the man must die but Alcibiades will not accept this and offers to stand security for his friend. Eventually the First Senator says that if Alcibiades does not contain his anger, he is banished. The Senators leave and, in a soliloquy, Alcibiades rails against the city that he has defended and he swears he will gather his troops and capture the city. He does not appear again until just after Timon has found the gold, when he enters with his troops and two whores, Phrynia and Timandra. Alcibiades offers Timon friendship to which Timon replies, ‘Promise me friendship, but perform none. If thou will promise, the gods plague thee, for thou art a man. If thou dost not perform, confound thee, for thou art a man’ (4.3.73-5).

Timon then rails against the whores and declares that he would rather be alone, but before Alcibiades and the girls depart, Timon gives them gold. Even when Alcibiades says he will visit Timon again, he is rejected.

When Alcibiades is with his troops, before the 'coward and lascivious town' of Athens, the Senators appear. They plead for the city and their arguments are in contrast to those they gave earlier. Alcibiades demands total surrender, which he gets. Before entering the city, however, he decides he will not take any revenge:

> Descend and open your uncharged ports.
> Those enemies of Timon's and mine own
> Whom you yourselves shall set out for reproof
> Fall, and no more; and, to atone your fears
> With my more noble meaning, not a man
> Shall pass his quarter or offend the stream
> Of regular justice in your city's bounds
> But shall be remedied to your public laws
> At heaviest answer. (5.5.55-63)

Alcibiades takes no revenge for the Senators' failure to be just to him earlier in the play. This is an act of justice, which is akin to, although not synonymous with, forgiveness. The play ends as soldier enters to announce Timon's death and epitaph, which still rails against mankind, showing that he died unrepentant. In this bitter play, several kinds of unforgiveness are shown, but the main thrust is hatred of mankind. This is in direct contrast to Christ's commandment to love one another as we love ourselves. Timon loved neither mankind nor himself.

CONCLUSION

Theatre has always reflected the political and the theological concerns of the day. At the time of writing on the stage and on television (most people's experience of drama) plays about the Royal Family (*King Charles III, The Crown*) Parliament (*Labour of Love*), politics (*Our House, Oslo*) and many plays about violence and rape (*Liar),* so it was with the Elizabethans, but with them theology and politics were intermingled in a way that nowadays, in a secular society, they are not. Occasionally, TV has a priest as a central character as in *Rev* (a comedy series), *Granchester* (a detective drama based on a series of novels) and, more seriously, *Broken* which dealt sympathetically with the challenges of a priest's life.

The other excitements of theatre are the revelation of narrative through character. This is what the twenty plays I have chosen do. The stories are all absorbing, the characters intriguing, but all have been restricted by the prevailing religious and political *mores* of the twenty years span of the plays chosen.

I could have chosen some other plays. *Hamlet* is an obvious omission but John Dover Wilson in *What Happens in Hamlet* (1935 MacMillan) and David Scott Kastan in *A Will to Believe* (2014 OUP) have covered the subject brilliantly, while *Cymbeline, Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Winter's Tale* have been examined by Grams Hunter and Beckwith. This thesis has chosen a wider canvas and explored a more varied range.

What has emerged is that Shakespeare has, particularly in The Histories which date from prior to the Oath of Allegiance and the Bill of Profanities, written deeply religious plays. His medieval kings are Roman Catholic in thought, as well as in action. Both Bolingbroke and Henry V acknowledge Bolingbroke's sin of sacrilege in deposing

and consenting in the murder of Richard II. He realizes the unrest in his kingdom is the result of this sin, and ironically, that unrest prevents him from carrying out his penance of crusading in the Holy Land. His son, Henry V, feels assured that he has a right to invade France and, before Agincourt, asks for forgiveness for the sins of the House of Lancaster. These plays, written in the late 1590s, were, politically speaking, only possible because the Church of England had been established for a number of years. The Babington plot had been defeated and had not much popular support and the people who wished for a Roman Catholic monarch had no legitimate candidate since the execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1587.

Richard of Gloucester also realizes how sinful he has been, but cannot ask for God's grace to allow him to repent. Macbeth is under the spell of both his wife and the witches, but he also realizes that he not only has sacrificed the pleasures of life but has also disgraced himself in the eyes of God. Faustus, of course, makes a pact with the Devil and has no possible way of escaping from it because he also has not the capacity to ask for forgiveness. Neither of these plays has any overtly Roman Catholic doctrine, because the political background would not allow it, but they can be considered Roman Catholic in the wider sense as they are and represent, perhaps, the more Roman element in the Church of England. None of these plays refers to the Roman Sacrament of Confession. Henry V's confession is made directly to God not through the a priest. The Sacrament is mentioned only in *Measure for Measure*, set in Roman Catholic Vienna, where the Duke is disguised as a Friar and says that he has heard Isabella's confession. However, even this is not orthodox because, since he is not ordained, its status as a Sacrament is invalid.

The two Webster plays, *The White Devil* and the *Duchess of Malfi*, are also set in Roman Catholic countries Here, again, there is no confession to a priest; these plays

were written after the passing of the Oath of Allegiance and the Bill of Profanities which prohibited any mention of God in the theatre. In *The White Devil,* as in *The Winter's Tale, Othello* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, the sin is actual or supposed adultery, punishable by death at the stake. Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* is the only true penitent. Othello compromises his repentance by his suicide and, though the husband and wife in *A Woman killed by Kindness* are reconciled in the end, it is only, as with the case of Leontes, after many years, as is also the Duke's repentance in *As You Like It*. Instantaneous repentance seems to have no or little place in the plays. Again there is no priest as intermediary, though the Duke's meeting with a hermit indicates some spiritual motive for the repentance. Vittoria Corombona in *The White Devil* is sentenced to expiate her sin by a term in a House of Convertites while her lover is allowed to continue his life as before.

The plays chosen have all been greatly influenced by the political background of the time, more influenced, I would argue, than by the spiritual background. Shakespeare skilfully circumnavigates the laws of the country by depicting characters who believe in more primitive gods. He portrays a true representation of how each character would react to the situation he, or she, finds themselves in. Cordelia, ever true, forgives; the Roman Catholic kings, except for Richard, repent conventionally; the supposedly wronged husbands take their time, while Othello, the impatient warrior, settles the matter dramatically; the seekers after justice take the matter to court. All these outcomes are consistent with the characters' temperaments and are theatrically exciting. Though the characters are arguably universal, in terms of repentance and forgiveness, these plays are of their time, when politics and religion were inseparable and it was dangerous to fail to comply with the religiously dominant monarch and parliament: Henry IV's parliament could prescribe death by burning for wanting the Bible translated into English.

Shakespeare had to refer to 'the gods' in his most Christian play, *King Lear*, where the scene between Cordelia and Lear is a true picture of the Christian expression of forgiveness. Cordelia's graciousness to the father who has truly wronged her is a model of charity. Yet this play does not refer to the Christian God at all because the Bill of Profanities, passed by the King in 1606, the year that *King Lear* was first performed, forbad the mention of God on stage. James Shapiro in *1606: William Shakespeare and the Year of Lear* suggests that the play was started the preceding year, but even if that is so it is more than likely that the Players knew about the legislation for it would have meant an extensive revision of all their texts. Shakespeare had family knowledge of the consequences of this Act because his daughter Susanna was one of the people who refused to take Holy Communion that year because she refused to acknowledge the King's power was above that of God. *King Lear* actually uses the word 'allegiance' when Lear puts Kent on 'his allegiance'.

Repentance is also not directed to the Christian God in *The Winter's Tale*, again written after the Oath of Allegiance was passed. Apollo is the god to whom Leontes appeals, and who punishes him with the death of his son. God is not mentioned in *The Tempest* either, but this, another play about usurpation written after the Oath, deals with forgiveness between people without reference to God and repentance. Similarly, in *As You Like It*, the usurping Duke does not appear and we only hear reports of his recantation secondhand. *Macbeth*, another post-1606 play, deals with sacrilege, the killing of an anointed king, murdering to keep himself as king, and the sin of wishing to know the future. Macbeth knows what his sins are, but he is unable to repent and, like Claudius in *Hamlet*, cannot give up what he has gained. His Lady suffers a mental breakdown as murder succeeds murder, and eventually dies from the strain. Faustus is in a similar position, unable to give up and regret what he has gained and though he

acknowledges what repentance is and that Christ's blood can redeem him, he is unable to make the act of contrition, and so goes to Hell.

The Merchant of Venice sets a problem that directors and producers must grapple with, even today: is the play anti-Semitic or does it magnify the anti-Semitism of the characters to speak out against intolerance? Although the bond that Antonio signs is, in itself, barbarous, he does not have to make such a deal. There are, surely, in Venice, other people from whom he could borrow the three thousand ducats. Having failed to repay his debt, he reneges on the bond, and consents to letting Portia supply the money. Graziano's final insult to Shylock is exceptionally nasty; Lorenzo and Jessica steal from Shylock and are quite happy to live off Portia. Although the Duke is only following what the law says, one would expect him to exercise Christian mercy, particularly since Portia has been so eloquent about it.

The Wife in *The Yorkshire Tragedy* is exemplary: she forgives her husband, even for the murder of their son, unconditionally, showing true Christian behaviour. Both Hermione, in *The Winter's Tale*, and Desdemona, in *Othello*, are innocent. It is their husbands who are guilty of the sin of jealousy. It takes sixteen years for Leontes to realize his mistake and Othello cannot face up to his jealousy, nor the murder of Desdemona, and so he kills himself, thus committing the sin of despair. Timon also commits this sin: he cannot love himself enough to forgive himself nor can he love mankind.

In our secular age, repentance and forgiveness are rarely spoken of in the theatre, for the political scene has changed beyond recognition. The theatre, of course, was closed during the Civil War and Cromwell's rule. When they reopened, the religious and political scene was entirely different. Society, especially the Court was lively, pleasure-seeking, and enjoyed comedy more than tragedy. Since that time, no play has survived

which deals with repentance and forgiveness. In the 1940s, T.S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* dealt with the subject but it has rarely been revived. There have been several plays about Saint Joan, but she is such an intriguing character and her life so extraordinary that her recantation, quickly refuted, at her trial is only a small part of it. J.B. Priestly's *An Inspector Calls,* also produced in the late 1940s, which has been revived, deals with guilt, but none of the characters really repent of their bad behaviour. Earlier, as literacy among the general population had increased, and the novel became a more widely and cheaper form of entertainment than the theatre, repentance became a theme for fiction, culminating in the great Russian novels, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina, War and Peace* and *Resurrection,* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment.*

However, the fascination of these plays, even in a secular age, remains. Formal religion is no longer a guide to good conduct; justice seems to be the prevalent force today but, as Alcibiades and Cordelia show, justice should always be administered with mercy. The act of forgiveness can be a healing process for both sinner and sinned against. These plays are as relevant today as they were when first written, because we recognize in them situations and people that we encounter ourselves.

Appendix: New Testament teaching on repentance and forgiveness

All quotations are from *The King James Bible*.

The Gospel according to St. Matthew

'In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt.3:1-2)

'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire' (Matt.3:11)

'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire' (Matt.5:21-23)

'Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison' (Matt.5:25)

'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right

cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away' (Matt.5:38-42)

'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses' (Matt.6:14-15)

'Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again' (Matt.7:1-2)

'Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother' (Matt.18:15)

'Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven' (Matt.18:21-22)

'Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Matt.22:37-39)

‘When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me’ (Matt.25:31-36)

The Gospel according to St. Mark

‘John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins’ (Mark 1:4)

‘And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses’ (Mark 11:25-26)

The Gospel according to St. Luke

‘My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.’ (Luke 7:46-47)

‘And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.’ (Luke 10:25-28)

‘And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son’ (Luke 15:20-21)

‘Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him’ (Luke 17:3-4)

‘Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots’ (Luke 23:34)

The Gospel according to St. John

‘Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.’ (John 11:47-48)

‘A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.’ (John 13:34-35)

‘This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.’ (John 15:12-14)

The Acts of the Apostles

‘Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.’ (Acts 5:31-32)

‘For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well’ (Acts 15:28-29)

‘And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*' (Acts 16:19-22)

'And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent' (Acts 17:30)

'Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication' (Acts 21:24-25)

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans

'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good' (Rom.12:18-21)

'For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy

neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law' (Rom.13:9-10)

The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians

'Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away.' (1 Cor.13:4-8)

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians

'For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Gal.5:14)

'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith' (Gal.5:22)

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians

'With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. 4:2-3)

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians

‘Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things’ (Phil. 4:8)

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians

‘Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye’ (Col. 3:13)

The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians

‘See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*’ (1 Thes.5:15)

The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy

‘Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:

Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words’ (2 Tim.4:15)

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews

‘Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people’ (Heb.8:14-15)

The First Epistle General of John

‘We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren’ (1 John 3:14-16)

‘And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment’ (1 John 3:23)

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