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DEADLY SINS IN THE CASTLE OF PERSEVERANCE AND MANKIND

DEADLY SINS  
IN  
THE CASTLE OF PERSEVERANCE  
AND  
MANKIND

by  
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## ABSTRACT

The presentation of the sins of sloth and covetise is examined in Mankind and The Castle of Perseverance with some discussion of earlier concepts of the sins and the classifications and analyses of the confession books. The study attempts to show how the structure of the plays is based on the three parts of penitence and how the didactic method changes from illustration in the Castle to the demonstration of an audience trap in Mankind.

## PREFACE

Sin is nearly as old as Satan and the development of the idea of the seven deadly sins from the Orphic religions to the thirteenth century is a vast field. I shall not attempt to discuss it in any detail, but using M.W. Bloomfield's The Seven Deadly Sins<sup>1</sup> as a guide, I shall mention in Section I a few early treatments which show the antiquity of the idea of man's struggle with evil, and explain the concept of the process of sinning which persisted in the morality plays. In the second section I shall discuss four works from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries on the three parts of penitence : contrition, confession and satisfaction. These authors' diagnoses and explanations of the sins as an aid to contrition and confession will, I hope, be seen to relate to the satirical side of the moralities, and their emphasis on the causes of contrition and the other parts of penitence to reveal the force of the positive aspects of the plays for contemporary audiences. Section III will be devoted mainly to the Vision of Piers the Plowman in which the sins are personified with lively originality. The poem is an illuminating guide to fourteenth century attitudes and seems to have much in common with the morality plays and particularly The Castle of Perseverance. The last two sections will centre on The Castle of Perseverance and Mankind. Both plays attempt to explain the nature of sin and to reproach, jolt and inspire their audiences into contrition and amendment, but the kinds of entertainment they offer as part of this process are very

different. The Castle is a beautiful monument of a lavish drama that gave way to the more economical type of Mankind, a play which looks forward to modern drama in many respects. The study will concentrate on the sins of avarice and sloth, the root sins from which the others develop in these two plays. As a distinction is sometimes made between covetousness (greed) and avarice (hoarding), I shall use the Middle English term covetise throughout the study to indicate the combination of both aspects of the sin.

On modern readers and audiences who know little about the plays they make an immediate impact and appear entertaining, moving and interesting. My aim in this paper is to check that initial impression of The Castle of Perseverance and Mankind through a study of the sins and to see in what ways the plays might have appeared enjoyable, useful and inspiring to contemporary audiences.

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Notes giving bibliographical details are indicated by Arabic numerals above the line and are on pages 113 to 116. Those which explain the text are marked with lower case letters above the line and are at the foot of the relevant pages.

The Middle English  $\rho$ ,  $\delta$  and  $\zeta$  have been transcribed as th and g or y.

## I

There have been many definitions of the morality play, but the consensus of opinion now seems to be that it has three salient characteristics which are summed up by Bernard Spivack as follows : "They all dramatize the war between vice and virtue for the possession of the human soul, their method is personification, their purpose moral instruction." The four main themes of the plays, he continues, are the summons of death, the debate of the soul and the body, the parliament of Heaven and the psychomachia.<sup>1</sup>

The early consciousness of the antipathy of the soul and the body and the danger of carnal desires is illustrated in the Corpus Hermeticum, which probably goes back to the second century B.C.<sup>2</sup> Book I tells us that man was originally a spiritual being made in the image of Mind, who is light and air. Mankind developed a body and carnal desires and passions which strive against his spiritual welfare as a result of the union between Nature and this first man. Mind comes to the holy man and bars the gates which give entrance to the base and evil workings of the senses, but the wicked and foolish man who is envious, covetous or murderous, is entered by an avenging demon and suffers the death allotted to the sensuous world. The holy man on his journey upward to Mind delivers to the seven administrators of the spheres the qualities his progenitor acquired on the way down to join Nature. At the first zone, the Moon, he gives up the forces that work increase and decrease; at the second,

Mercury, the machinations of evil cunning; at the third, Venus, lust whereby men are deceived; at the fourth, the Sun, domineering arrogance; at the fifth, Mars, unholy daring and rash audacity; at the sixth, Jupiter, evil striving after wealth; and at the seventh, Saturn, the falsehood which lies in wait to work harm. Domineering arrogance, unholy daring and rash audacity are sins later classified under the cardinal sin of pride of which the importance was evidently early recognised, but there is no mention here of the sin of sloth, which came to be regarded as highly dangerous as it could lead to suicide. The good man continues his journey to the eighth sphere as Troilus does in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde (Book V, 1808-9). Bloomfield observes in his chapter on the pagan and Jewish background that the idea of the soul journey became very widespread and has persisted in some places to the present day (p.13). In chapter II, on the origins of the sins, he refers to several works in which the guardians of the spheres seek their respective vices in the journeying soul and, if they find them, prevent its continuation and in some cases punish it.

R.H. Charles notes that the pre-Christian Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs<sup>3</sup> refers to spirits whose function is to tempt men, to accuse them when they fall and to punish them - a function jubilantly undertaken by the Bad Angel in The Castle of Perseverance.<sup>4</sup> Five of these seven "spirits of deceit" correspond to sins listed by Evagrius of Pontus (d. c.400), who is described by Bloomfield as the first Christian writer to give a list of the sins though he may not be its originator (p.45). The "Testament of Reubens" lists the spirits of deceit as fornication, gluttony, strife, vainglory, pride, lying and injustice,



the last two having no correspondence in Evagrius' list. The "Testament of Ascher" records that as the soul leaves the body it is "tormented by the evil spirit which also it served in lusts and evil works" (R.H. Charles' translation, p.345). The "Testament of Simeon" mentions a spirit of envy which is wicked and poisonous (p.302). This association, which became a commonplace, had been graphically suggested in Ovid's Metamorphoses where Envy eats snakes and green gall drips onto her breast.<sup>5</sup> Langland continues the tradition, but shows the poison turning back on the sinner as his unhappy and mockingly presented Envy complains of perpetual indigestion :

That al my body bolneth for bitter of my galle  
I mygte nougt eet many years as a man ougte  
For envy and yvel wille is yvel to defye.

(Piers Plowman, V,119-21)

A later, but dateless interpolation in the "Testament of Reubens" mentions an eighth spirit, of sleep, which is that of error and fantasy (p.297). The connection between imagination, sleep and error is explained by the theory of dreams expounded by Galen in the second century. W.C. Curry in chapter VIII of Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences notes that Galen thought the imagination created dreams by reproducing images accumulated in the mental storehouse of sense impressions called the sensus communis.<sup>6</sup> Many influences, such as worry, planetary intelligences and good and evil spirits, disturb the imagination in sleep and cause different kinds of dreams (pp.205-6). Truly prophetic dreams were thought to come only from Divine revelation and to visit only the chaste in body, clean in mind and pure in heart (p.216). The false revelations of an evil spirit are illustrated in Mankind as Titivillus

whispers calumny of Mercy and incitement to lust in the ear of the sleeping hero. Mankind later admits :

Titivillus, that goth invisible, hyng hys nett before my eye  
And by his fantastical visionys sediciously sowgt  
To New Gyse, Nowadays and Nowgt caused me to obey.

(876-8)<sup>7</sup>

The moral neutrality of the imagination in Galen's theory shades into the dangerously unpredictable and even the vicious as the faculty is allegorised in the moralities. Dame Fancy in the late play, Marriage of Wit and Wisdom (1571-78), illustrates the whole spectrum :

So likewise I, which commonly Dame Fancy have to name  
Amongst the wise am hated much, and suffer mickle blame,  
Because that, waving here and there, I never steadfast stand,  
Whereby the depth of learning's lore I cannot understand;  
But Wit, perhaps, will me embrace, as I will use the matter  
For why? I mean to counterfeit, and smoothly for to flatter.

(538-43)<sup>8</sup>

Her intention is to separate Wit from Wisdom to whom he is engaged and she shows the captivating and erroneous power of imagination when she throws him into prison, whence he is eventually rescued by Good Nurture. Ymaginacioun in Hyekescorner (1497-1512) is initially very like a Vice as he encourages Will in evil doing, though he is eventually converted to virtue.<sup>9</sup> Fancy in Skelton's Magnyfycence (1516) calls himself Largesse and undermines the hero's faith in Measure's good counsel by appealing to his sinful regard for the good opinion of others, telling him they say : "A lord a niggard, it is a shame" (p.177).<sup>10</sup> The useful aspect of imagination is shown in Piers Plowman<sup>11</sup> (c.1362-99) and Henry Medwall's Nature<sup>12</sup> (c.1486-1500). In passus XII of Piers Plowman Ymagynatyf is perceptive as he helps Will to look back with new understanding on his disputes with Scripture and Clergy. He also prompts

recollection as he has often moved Will to think of his end (XII.4).

In Nature imagination is regarded with suspicion not by the wise  
but by the Vice, Sensuality :

For a lyttel fantasy of mannys own wyll  
May quaylle thys mater and utterly yt spyll  
And if he vary agayne  
Of scrypylle ymagynacyon (3.i<sup>r</sup>)

Uncontrolled imagination is still recognised as a potential source of error but on the whole the faculty seems more highly regarded now than it was in the Middle Ages. One reason for Mediaeval suspicion is suggested by Dame Fancy, another is that imagination plays a part in individualism (singularity) and "fool" ambition which were seen as subsins of pride (p.22 below). Bloomfield suggests in his chapter on Christian theology and Latin literature that the increasing tolerance of individualism in the days of Tudor expansion considerably altered the concept of pride (p.75). It has been further eroded as the strength of authority and the expectation of obedience have diminished.

The Corpus Hermeticum and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs attest a long standing consciousness of hostile, evil forces which must be combatted and some of which correspond to cardinal sins. It is hard to judge the extent to which these spirits were seen as actual forces external to man as the Devil is by Christians, or as externalised personifications of qualities inherent in man. It is certain, however, that in Prudentius' Psychomachia, a literary work of the fourth century, the vices and virtues are presented as personifications, or allegorical

figures, fighting on a battle ground which is man himself :

vigilandum in armis pectorum fidelium  
 omnenque nostri portionem corporis  
 quae capta foedae seruiat libidini,  
 domi coactis liberandam viribus;

(Praefatio 52-55)<sup>13</sup>

Towards the end of the poem when Peace has driven out war, Faith suggests that a temple be built on the field to provide a fitting place for the Son of Man should he descend from the ethereal regions (p.335). The idea probably derives from St. Paul's "Vos estis templum Dei et spiritus Dei habitat in vobis" from the first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter iii. The temple is to have four sides representing the four ages of man and it will house the soul as well as Wisdom. Man is again allegorised as a building housing the soul in an Old English sermon, Sawles Ward, probably from the first quarter of the thirteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The house has Wit for master and Will is the "fulitohe wyf". The servants, the five wits, are apt to behave badly if not strictly ruled by Wit for Will does not control them. The four daughters of God, Prudence, Fortitude, Moderation and Righteousness, guard the house against thieves and "unsehelic gesttes" headed by the Devil, who seek to break in and murder the soul. The besieged castle as an image of assailed virtue was given "great currency", according to David Bevington, by Grosseteste's Chasteau d'Amour.<sup>15</sup> G.R. Owst in Literature and the Pulpit in Mediaeval England traces the image back to Luke X.38 - "Intrat Jesus in castellum" - where the castle is the home of Martha and Mary.<sup>16</sup> The image also appears as the Castle of Truth and the Barn Unity in Piers Plowman and as the castle in the Castle of Perseverance.

The battle in the Psychomachia prepares the site on which the temple is to be built, that is man. In classical style the vices and virtues join in single combat, much as they do in the Castle of Perseverance except that here the fighting is more bloodthirsty, even though the combatants are all women. Faith opposes Worship of the Old Gods; Charity Lust; and Patience Wrath, who stabs herself in frustration. A similar feeling is less drastically conveyed by Wrath in the Castle : "I dare neither crye nor carpe/She is so pacient" (2224-5). Humility, supported by Hope, confronts Pride. "O ridiculum vulgus!" Pride exclaims as she surveys Humility's companions who include the mighty virtues Justice and Charity (Pietas). Illustrating the well known saying from Proverbs, she then falls into a pit dug by Deceit for the Virtues and Humility cuts off her wonderfully coiffed head. (a)

In the Psychomachia Indulgence and Avaritia emerge as the most powerful sins. Indulgence is a combination of what came to be known as the sins of the flesh : gluttony, lechery and sloth. Abandoned to voluptuousness, with listless voice and belching languidly after a night of revelry, she drifts onto the field and fights not with arms but with flowers. The Virtues, beguiled, stand gazing longingly at her beautiful chariot until Soberness frightens her horses by holding up the Cross, and Indulgence perishes beneath her own chariot wheels. Desire, Allurement, Pleasure and Strife are among her band of triflers who scatter, dropping fillets and ornaments which the Virtues trample underfoot.

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(a) Proverbs 16.18 : Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty man before a fall.

Not so Avaritia! She hurries onto the field to gather them up with predatory hands and stows them wherever she can about her clothing. She is followed by a crowd of terrible consequences : care, hunger, fear, anguish, perjury, corruption, treachery, falsehood, sleeplessness, meanness and crimes such as civil war go ravaging over the field. Even some of the Priests of the Lord are grazed by Avaritia's javelins though Reason protects them with her shield. In the late Middle Ages clerical addiction to covetise was to become a subject of much bitterer comment. Pagan satirists such as Horace<sup>17</sup> and Juvenal<sup>18</sup> and Christian writers meet in their condemnation of this sin as they do in their discussions of many of the others. Dom R. Gillet in his introduction to St. Gregory's Moralia notes that Horace's list of sins in his Epistles is strikingly like St. Gregory's except that avaritia heads Horace's list and takes fifth place in the Moralia.<sup>19</sup> Prudentius' Avaritia is deceitful. Disguising herself as Thrift, she claims to be a mother doing the best she can for her children, but Good Deeds suddenly appears like a thunderbolt before her and strangles her. Similarly, though peaceably, Good Deeds in Everyman counteracts the evil effects of reliance on Goods and helps Everyman to balance his account.<sup>20</sup>

The depiction of the sins and virtues in physical battle raises a problem for the allegorist, for it seems inappropriate for the virtues to wield arms and military prowess is out of character for some of the sins. Prudentius meets the problem head on as Pride's scornful speech to the Virtues makes this very point and so underlines the spiritual nature of

the conflict :

anne Pudicitae gelidum iecur utile bello est?  
an tenerum Pietatis opus sudatur armis?

(238-9)

Prudentius also characterises the Virtues in battle to an extent. Faith fights ardently without thought of danger and Humility has to be encouraged by Hope. Characterisation is again ingeniously used to solve the incongruity of Sloth in battle as Indulgence fights with langour and desire which act like a paralysing gas. This view is supported by Chaucer's comment on the paralysing effect of Sloth in the Parson's Tale (p.28 below). One general comment on the quality of evil in the soul struggle arises from Pride's fate in Deceit's pit, which suggests that evil if resisted will destroy itself. Another is the deceitfulness of vice, which is illustrated in Avaritia's disguise as Thrift and Discord's as Concord. The sins change their names to those of related virtues in many morality plays where, as in the poem, the device seems intended to help audiences to distinguish evil from good. In Mankind, where the Vices' names associate them with fashion, they are required to distinguish between the good and the bad "new guise"(p.88 below).

Prudentius, writing in the fourth century, has worked out his allegory logically and consistently. He has dealt skilfully with the battle and has also avoided the anomaly of Man, the battle-ground, appearing as a character in the same work as his personified attributes. Spivack points out in his chapter on the psychomachia in Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil that few morality dramatists were perturbed by this incongruity.<sup>21</sup> Since man, he continues, "is not a personification, his

appearance in the allegory is actually the first in a series of literary intrusions that ultimately bring the metaphorical convention to an end" (p.94).

H.J. Thomson, the editor and translator of the Loeb Prudentius, comments in his introduction on the immense popularity of the Psychomachia in the Middle Ages, which is attested by the three hundred manuscripts still extant (p.xiii). Among other powerful influences on the concept of the sins were the works of John Cassian, who died about 435, and Gregory the Great, who died about 604.

Cassian in the twelfth book of De Institutis Coenobiorum discusses the "spiritus" of pride which he describes as "origo principalis morbis", an evil so great that it has to be opposed by God himself.<sup>22</sup> It appears at the end of his list of sins which is eight-fold : gula, luxuria, avaritia, ira, tristitia, acedia, vana gloria, superbia. In chapter X of the Conlatio Abbatis Serapionis<sup>23</sup> Cassian describes the first six sins on the list as springing from each other and advises attacking gula to rid oneself of luxuria, luxuria to avoid avaritia, and so on. He regarded envy as a secondary sin arising when the proud person finds himself less pre-eminent than he would wish.

The Institutes are partly based on Cassian's knowledge of the desert brothers, whose living conditions made them particularly susceptible to those aspects of sloth that verge on neurotic depression. He separates tristitia and acedia and allots a book to each in the Institutes although he is discussing two aspects of the same sin, as Alardus Gazaeus points out in his commentary on Cassian in the Migne edition (p.357). St. Gregory combined the two as tristitia but the



name acedia was generally adopted; probably because tristitia can have a useful function in prompting contrition.<sup>24</sup> The English term for acedia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was sloth, but Chaucer confuses the issue a little in the Parson's Tale by distinguishing between sloth and accedie (p.26 below). Sloth will denote the combined sins of tristitia and acedia in this study.

Cassian writes feelingly of both aspects of the sin. Tristitia he says, makes frequent and irregular attacks. It distracts the soul from any attention to Divine contemplation and shakes and undermines its foundations. It inhibits alacrity of heart in prayer and sacred reading and prevents mild and peaceable behaviour to others. To every work or religious office it brings impatience and bitterness. The soul in the grip of this sin, he continues, is like a garment full of grubs or wood eaten by worms - it is good only for the fire.

Tristitia can arise from anger, the preceding sin, or from the frustrated hope of gain, but sometimes it seems to have no appreciable cause and it is seldom generated by external stimuli (Chs.IV and V,p.355). Spiritual langour can be forestalled by rigorous and regular spiritual exercise and the malady as a whole can best be combatted by patience and by contemplating future joys (Chs.II,p.354, VII,p.356 and XIII,p.360). The other, most hateful aspect of tristitia is that which leads to despair of which Cain and Judas are cited as examples (Ch.IX,p.357).

Gillet notes in his introduction to St. Gregory's Moralia that Cassian's clinical description of the sin of acedia has been praised by psychologists and doctors (p.91). The ancients (senes), Cassian records, called acedia "meridianum daemonem" (Migne,p.363). Attacking at Noon

in the greatest heat, it causes a weary and troubled heart and arouses in the monk horror of the place, disgust with his cell, restlessness, irritability, inertia in any kind of work and a tendency greatly to magnify the pleasantness and spirituality of his former monastery. It brings both a longing to sleep and an urge to desert the fraternity, and the sufferer can think of little but food (Chs.V and Vi, p.370).

Cassian adds that the sufferer should not be treated with severity. He mentions in chapter IX of the Collatio Abbatis Serapionis that there are few desert monks who have not been grievously afflicted by this sin which he sees as generated within the soul and not by external causes : "Nam solitarios quoque et in heremo constitutos nullique humano conmixtos consortio frequenter atque amarissime vexare noscuntur".

Like Cassian, Gregory the Great saw superbia as the root of all sins and kept it apart, but he put vana gloria at the head of his list and gula and luxuria, the sins of the flesh, at the end. He combined tristitia and accedia as tristitia and added envy. Both authors claim to have listed the sins in the order in which one grows out of the other, but they agree only on the development of lechery from gluttony and tristitia from anger. Gillet suggests that the lists are virtually the same, explaining the seeming discrepancies by saying that Cassian has used the order of combat from lower to higher, while Gregory gives the order of importance. "Le désordre des appétits inférieurs" he continues "est causé par un désordre supérieur antécédent; main en pratique, le désordre inférieur commande et amène à l'acte le désordre supérieur qui, au fond, est cause" (p.91). The preceding higher disorder is caused by

the inroads of pride as the following comment from St. Gregory's exegesis of Job, 39 shows :

ipsa namque vitiorum regina superbia cum devictum plene cor ceperit, mox illud septem principalibus vitiis, quasi quibusdam sive ducibus devastandum tradit.

(Ch.XLV,p.620)<sup>25</sup>

St. Gregory describes the onslaughts of the sins in terms of battle suggested by the lines from Job he is expounding : "Ubi audierit buccinam, dicit : Vah, procul odoratur bellum, exhortatione, ducum et ululatum exercitus" (Job, 39.25). The sins are the army of the Devil led by Pride, he explains, and each sin has its own smaller army of sub-sins :

Singula vitia capitalia suum habet exercitum (p.620.88)

Neque enim culpaes omnes pari accessu cor occupant. Sed dum majore et paucae neglectam mentem praeveniunt, minores et innumerae ad illam se catervatim fundunt. (p.622.90).

Both Cassian and St. Gregory bring the sins dramatically to life in one other way : both describe the external signs by which pride can be recognised and these amount to a small character sketch, as Gillet observes (p.96). Much of the following description by Cassian could be read as instructions to actor or dramatist.

His igitur indiciis carnalis ista quam praefati sumus superbia declaratur. Inest primitus in loquella ejus clamor, in taciturnitate amaritudo, excelsus et effusus in laetitia risus, inrationalis in serietate tristitia, in responsione rancor, facilitas in sermone, verba passim sine ulla cordis gravitate erumpentia.

(Institutes 12,29)

By the beginning of the seventh century the complexity of the sin of sloth, the extensiveness of covetise and much of the material of the morality plays were already current. The struggle between man and the

sins, the body and the soul, and the vices and virtues appears in devotional works as well as in the Psychomachia. Prudentius fully personifies the sins and virtues and presents their conflict in a dramatic manner though in a narrative context. The accounts of Cassian and St. Gregory verge on dramatic treatment in the sketches of the external signs of the sins and in St. Gregory's use of dialogue. Yet as far as we know from extant material some six centuries passed before a dramatist exploited the theatrical potential of the sins. The most likely reason is that there was no apparent need to teach the laity about them before lay confession was made compulsory by the fourth Lateran Council of 1215-16. It is probable also that confession alerted priests to the ignorance of their congregations on this and other matters. The production of plays designed to entice the attention and understanding of congregations who were not always attentive to sermons seems a logical step and may have been encouraged by the popularity of the Miracle plays which is sourly attested by John Bromyard. Deriding the excuses of those who fail to listen to homilies, he says : "And few there are whose business keeps them from new shows as in the plays which they call miracles. Why, then are they prevented by attending the miracles of foolish clerks?" (translated by G.R. Owst)<sup>26</sup>

For whatever reason, the development of the dramatic potential of the sins seems to have begun anew in the thirteenth century, to flourish eventually as the Paternoster plays and the moralities. The extent to which the plays derive from depictions of the sins and other features of the sermons, or of other works, is a matter of differing opinion and beyond the

scope of this study. It is probable that the works on the sins to be discussed in the next section also influenced the moralities. They certainly help to explain the content of The Castle of Perseverance and Mankind and they suggest some needs of the laity which may have prompted the authors' choice of material and their methods.

## II

Many years after the fourth Lateran Council of 1215 the Lambeth Council of 1281 followed its example in prescribing a canon of lay instruction. This was to cover the fourteen articles of faith, the ten commandments, the seven spiritual and physical works of mercy, the seven principal virtues, the sacraments and the seven capital sins with their progeny. Bloomfield notes in his chapter on the origins of the sins that the cardinal or capital sins came to be called deadly mainly through the practice of confession, but they can be either mortal or venial, depending on degree and continuation (p.43).

The Council's instructions, followed by similar enjoinders from other Sees, increased the popularity of books dealing with these topics. Two of the four works to be discussed here pre-date the Lambeth Council, one is from the late fourteenth century and one from the fifteenth century.

The Ancrene Riwe<sup>1</sup> was written about 1227-8, probably by Richard Poore, Bishop of Salisbury, for three nuns at Tarrant in Dorsetshire.<sup>2</sup> Bloomfield describes it in his chapter on Continental and English literature as :

in some ways the most important monument in a long line of devotional and religious literature which culminated in the authorised version of the Bible and which has affinities reaching back through the vernacular homilists of the eleventh century to the work of religious popularisation undertaken by King Alfred. (p.148)

The Ancrene Riwe discusses the five senses, fleshly and spiritual

temptations and their remedies, confession, penitence and the reasons for loving God. The work is particularly attractive in its combination of a gentle tone with a vivid imagination and diction.

The Book of Vices and Virtues is a fourteenth century translation of Lorens d'Orleans' Somme le Roi (1279) which appeared in at least nine English versions during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> Lorens discusses the progeny of the sins in fine detail. The remedial part of the work concerns learning to die, the petitions of the pater noster, the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, the cardinal and Christian virtues, confession, mercy and giving alms.

Geoffrey Chaucer's The Parson's Tale, probably written in the 1370's, treats of the three parts of penitence : contrition, confession and satisfaction.<sup>4</sup> A discussion of the seven deadly sins and their remedies follows the second section on contrition.

Jacob's Well (m.s. about 1440) is a collection of ninety five sermons, each ending with one or two stories which illustrate the theme of the sermon and were probably introduced as memorial aids and perhaps some light relief.<sup>5</sup> The book is organised round the allegory of cleansing a well of the ooze of the seven deadly sins. When the skeet of contrition, the skavel of confession and the shovel of satisfaction have cleared the ooze the well can be strengthened with the virtues, the sacraments and good works. Finally, the Samaritan woman, the soul, will be able to refresh Christ with the waters of grace. The allegory provides a framework which connects the many parts of the instruction contained in the sermons, making them easier to remember. The Priest's instructions, reproofs and exhortations are helpful in suggesting his

congregation's difficulties and attitudes which might well have been shared by the audiences of the plays.

These works are all positive in approach. Lorens explains that the discussion of the sins is to enable people to recognise their own guilt and to shrive themselves well : "For he that jugeth hymself truly dar have no doute (fear) to be judged to dampnacioun at domes day" (p.72). After confession they must seek amendment by distinguishing not only between good and evil but between the lesser and greater good. One step towards this is to learn how to die by thinking of hell, purgatory and heaven and preparing for the best destination. Purgatory is better than hell but heaven is as much superior to that as eternal good is to the good of the world. The purpose of contemplating hell is to evoke hatred of evil as well as fear of pain : "Ther thou schalt see al that herte hateth and fleeth" (p.71). Another step is to practise the seven deeds of mercy : to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, help the needy, visit and comfort prisoners and the sick, harbour wayfarers and bury the dead. A third step is to request the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, which bring with them all the virtues, through recitation of the pater noster and other prayer. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, pity and fear of God. The same proportion between the recognition of evil and the practice of good holds in the other works which all give considerable space to the powers of the virtues, the gifts of the Holy Ghost and, very importantly, the reasons for loving God.

The second part of the Ancrene Riwe discusses "keeping the



heart" through the five senses. Eve is held up as a warning for sin first entered the world when her eyes saw the apple and told her it was desirable (p.43). She made the further mistake of failing to guard her tongue when she told the serpent all that God had taught her (p.54). The Bishop lays great emphasis on the virtue of silence and the danger of chattering, pointing out that Our Lady, the second Eve, was renowned for her silence (p.60). He quotes St. Gregory : "ase neeh as ure muth is to world ispeche as feor he is god hwenne he speketh to ward him and bideth him any bone". God, St. Gregory says, will not listen for the voice savours to him of all the world's babbling and its trifling talk (p.61). This is illustrated by a story in Jacob's Well in which the figure on the Crucifix stops its ears as prayers are said for a dead man who slothfully chattered in church (p.110).

The condemnation of idle talk and "japes" is confirmed by the other three writers. St. Gregory's comment gives one reason and Loren's list of kinds of idle words shows how incautious chatter gives scope to sins other than venial sloth and wasting time. He gives gabbing like the clap of a water mill; sly words bringing evil news; exaggeration and vain glory; filthy jokes; and sarcasm and scorn of good men. The latter are called idle, he says, but are rightly words of manslaughter for which God will thank the speaker as a king would the murderer of his son and thief of his treasure (p.51).

The author of Jacob's Well is insistent on quiet behaviour in church. One of his stories is about a fiend, who is not named but must be Titivillus of the Towneley Judgement Play and Mankind (p.93 below), and who gathers overskipped verses from the Mass in a sack and writes idle

words on a scroll. The preacher adds : "fforsothe thanne I trow the feend hath a gret sache full of youre idell wordys, that ye iangelyn in cherche in slowthe" (p.115). Chaucer's Parson calls jangling a "signe of aperte folye" and describes japers as "the devil's apes". Temperate speaking, Lorens insists, is one of the functions of reason (p.150). The Parson also notes that idle words do not belong to sloth alone but can come under the category of anger and many other sins (p.248).

Bishop Poore goes on to say that evil speech is threefold : poisonous, foul and idle and the ears should be closed to it. Foul speech is lecherous, poisonous speech includes falsehood, backbiting and flattery (p.66). The backbiter is described as "the deofles corbin of helle" and sin is compared to the Devil's privy of which Flattery conceals the hole and Backbiting points it out (p.67). Flattery is viewed very seriously in this work as in the other three, because it conceals the sin from the sinner who might otherwise repent and confess.

In speaking of sight, speech and hearing together, the Bishop again quotes St. Gregory as saying that whoever carelessly guards his outward eye will by God's righteous judgement become blind in his inward eye so that he cannot see God. Mental blindness is one of the evils St. Gregory attaches to lechery, which begins in the eye. Dressing to arouse the interest of the other sex can therefore be a sin of serious consequences. The distress in all the senses of Christ on the Cross is the subject of meditation recommended by the Bishop to combat disobedience in the senses.

In Part IV the Bishop attributes inward temptation to the devil, the world and the flesh. Outward temptations are accidents sent as a trial, such as sickness and poverty. The Bishop uses the image of the

wilderness for the world through which the anchoresses and all those who strive towards goodness are passing towards Jerusalem. Langland uses the same image in passus XVII of Piers Plowman when Piers, as the Good Samaritan or Charity, rescues the man fallen among thieves who are the Devil's henchmen. In the Ancrene Riwe those in the wilderness are assailed by the seven deadly sins in the likeness of animals : the lion of pride, the serpent of venomous envy, the unicorn of wrath, the bear of dead sloth, the fox of covetousness, the swine of greediness and the scorpion of stinking lechery. Covetise is so represented because a fox is full of guile and will worry and injure a whole herd when it needs only one animal for food. The scorpion is symbolic of lechery in having a fair face, like a woman, but a sting in its tail.

In Jacob's Well the scorpion represents backbiting which also has a fair face and stinging tail (p.147). This author uses several animal images but he aims at a more absurd effect than the Bishop. He compares a covetous man to a porcupine that gathers apples on its prickles fearing lest its livelihood fail; to an otter which fills its hole with more fish than it can eat which rot and, infecting it with their stench, kill it; or to a fox that thinks itself safe in its den until Death comes and digs it out (p.118). Flattery is compared to trapping a bear with honey and to a mermaid who beguiles men with song and then eats them. He who flatters another in his evil is like a "hounde that lycketh an-other hound, whenne he metyth him, behynde in the ers ...." (p.263). These are memorable and apt similes for the sins in which ridicule is dissuasively used. It is such ridicule which when used to discourage good deeds and habits is viewed so seriously

and it is abundantly illustrated in Mankind.

The Ancrene Riwe lists the progeny of the sins which accord in the main with those given in the Book of Vices and Virtues, though the treatment there is more exhaustive than in any of the other three works under discussion. The Parson's Tale and Jacob's Well follow Loren's organisation in most respects except that both invert the Gregorian order of envy and wrath as used by Loren. Bloomfield thinks this may be the result of confusion arising from use of the initials of the Gregorian list, siitagl, as a memorial aid (p.88).

Pride, Loren says, is the sin of Lucifer : "it is cleped the stronge wyn and myghty that the devel gyveth to men to maken hem dronke" (p.10). It is worse than any other sickness because all remedies, proudly and angrily rejected, turn to venom. Pride destroys a man's good deeds for it makes a sin of alms giving. It still assails God's knight when he has overcome all the other sins.

The branches of pride are untrewthe, despit (deprecating others), sourquyderie (presumption), coveitise "which clerks call ambition", veyn glorie, ypocrisy, wikked power. Each branch has many small twigs. The discussion of the twigs suggests that pride in some form and to at least a venial degree is virtually inescapable, which supports Cassian's theory that God alone can entirely conquer it (p.10 above).

The first branch, untrewthe, has three twigs which are : vileyne, that is ingratitude to God for his kindness and gifts; wodness, for whoever willingly dispenses the goods for which he must yield strict account at an unknown date is clearly mad; reneiying (reneging) is part

of pride, classified here as the third twig, because the proud man puts the lands he holds for his Lord in the hands of the Devil and does him homage. This could apply to any sin and in the morality plays it is applied to others. Among the seven kinds or presumption, the third branch, are singularity or individualism and prodigality. So the description continues showing a wide-spread net of related sins from which few readers can have been entirely free.

The Parson's Tale follows much of what Lorenz has given though Chaucer, like Bishop Poore, has listed many of Lorenz' "twigs" as branches. He adds "a privee spece of Pride" : demanding precedence and insisting on going first to the offering, a sin illustrated by the Wife of Bath in the General Prologue. He also mentions an outrageous display of clothing as one of the outward signs of pride, as do the Bishop and the author of Jacob's Well, and deprecates its cost, its wastefulness, strangeness, superfluity and scantiness in vigorous terms (p.240). All four writers mention the folly of pride in gifts given by God, among which are bodily strength. This aspect is illustrated in the fragmentary Pride of Life and also in Everyman where Bodily Strength leaves the hero at the grave.

Lorenz mentions two kinds of pusillanimity. One arises from pride as a twig of hypocrisy and is fear and shame that comes from an evil wish to please a "shrew" (an evil person) and is therefore daughter of pride. Attention should be given to the opinion of those in authority but regard for the good opinion of the world is the folly of yielding to the world's wit so deprecated in the Castle of Perseverance (pp.55 and 63 below). The other kind of pusillanimity arises from sloth and is fear to begin

and venture for oneself, and lack of trust in God's assistance.

Sloth is described as "weryness of goode deedes", which is the affliction of the hero of Mankind (p.95 below). Lorens mentions seven introductory causes. These are slackness in loving Our Lord; softness and indolence; idleness; heaviness (longing to sleep); lying in sin without asking God's help against temptation; pusillanimity. Sloth is highly dangerous because, like pride, the sin of its nature inhibits amendment. Lorens mentions six contributory factors. Untrewthe is the first as the Devil tells the slow man he has plenty of time, and recklessness naturally follows. The third is forgetfulness which means he does not shrive himself well. Default of heart and evil habit blind him so that he can no longer distinguish the right way. The fifth characteristic suggests a different category of sinner. It is too great zeal which can lead to langour. Lastly, the slothful man fails at his most need - at the end of his "terme day". Even more dangerous is sloth's tendency to lead the sinner to despair. Lorens diagnoses the process as follows. The slothful man is disobedient in penance and he is impatient so no-one dares speak of his sins. He grucches, that is he thinks his confessor despises him, and grows angry. Anger turns to self contempt and the sinner, hating himself, desires his own death and falls into the final snare of sloth in which the Devil encourages him.

Wenzel in an article in Anglia raises the very interesting question of what many claim to be a development in the concept of the sins of tristitia and acedia. It is said that the Latin writers' concept of heaviness and langour, lack of joy, absence of devotion and

spiritual comfort, annoyance with everything that smacks of religion and weariness of life changes to give greater emphasis to worldly faults in later vernacular treatments. Wenzel finds these changes "too insignificant to be considered as striking innovations" with the tentative exception of the depiction of Sloth in Piers Plowman. The last part of the sin's confession, he notes, heavily emphasises worldly obligations and social duties.<sup>6</sup> Bloomfield in his chapter on Christian theology and Latin literature agrees that sloth retains its "original and derived meanings to some extent in the Mediaeval period" (p.96).

The four works under discussion seem to bear out these opinions. Lorenz, as has been seen, concentrates on spiritual and psychological symptoms. He also warns against over-exertion in spiritual exercise and discipline as it can cause langour and sickness so that the sinner "hath nother wille ne savour ne devocioun to do good" (pp.28-9). Bishop Poore describes the sluggard as lying and sleeping in the Devil's bosom as his dear darling while the Devil tells him whatever he will, which suggests lack of spiritual resistance combined with physical apathy (p.158). As remedy for sloth he suggests spiritual joy and joyful hope from reading, from holy meditation or from homilies. He warns against excessive reading, however, as everything may be overdone : "best is eaver mete" (p.211).

Chaucer's Parson distinguishes between accidie and sloth. Envy and anger, he says, cause bitterness in the heart which is the mother of accidie and deprives Christ of the service that should be given him and the sinner of the love of all goodness. "Thanne is accidie the angwissh

of troubled herte" (p.249). The Parson sees sloth as a second stage following the mental state and this can be combatted with good works and, he astutely suggests, with physical labour (p.250). Sloth leads to drede, that gives way to wanhope, arising either from "outrageous sorrow" or from the sinner's belief that he has sinned so much that God cannot forgive him : "Whyche dampnable synne, if that it continue unto his ende, it is cleped synnyng in the Hooly Ghost" (p.249). Chaucer's sin of accidie seems to correspond roughly to Cassian's tristitia and his sloth to Cassian's acedia except that Chaucer combines the sins in a chain of consequences ending in despair, whereas only tristitia leads to despair in Cassian's treatment (p.11 above). The Parson's remedy for accidie is fortitudo or strength which brings with it faith and hope. Consideration of the pains of hell and joys of heaven, and trust in the Holy Ghost are also recommended (p.251). The diagnosis is highly spiritual and the Parson's tone is regretful and sympathetic here, though he is not mealy-mouthed in castigating the sillier sins such as immodesty in dress or the lechery of old men.

The author of Jacob's Well is a conscientious and careful instructor but he is less sensitive and more "despitous" to sinful men than the Parson. He follows Lorens' analysis of sloth but gives a characteristically vivid and scornful description of sufferers from pusillanimity : "thou faryst as he that dar nogt entren the cherch- yerd for the snayl that putteth his horn out ageyns hym" (p.107).

These authors all classify sloth as a spiritual sin but the plays show it as a sin of the flesh, which may indicate some erosion of



the concept of dryness of spirit. Lorens gives slackness in loving God as the first cause of sloth and indolence as the second. This and the warning that excessive zeal can cause langour and sickness suggest that two paths to sloth were recognised : excessive zeal and hardship which would be more likely to attack contemplatives; and triviality and "tenderness", the result of indifference and self indulgence.

Bloomfield observes that the sin of sloth as such had become mere laziness by 1606 when Dekker wrote The Seven Deadly Sins of London (p.96). The more complex aspects of sloth are perceptible in the drama of that time though they were no longer overtly attributed to the sin. The last scene of Marlowe's Dr. Faustus (pre 1594) corresponds in some ways to the penultimate scene of Mankind. Faustus' situation begins with intellectual pride which leads him to make a pact with the devil corresponding to the homage to the devil mentioned by Lorens under reneging. Faustus' final stage seems to illustrate Lorens' "default of heart and evil habit" in that consciousness of great sin makes Faustus feel, as Mankind does, that he has no right to mercy. On hearing that God's justice expresses itself in mercy, Mankind is able to ask for it. Faustus recognises the possibility as he sees Christ's blood stream in the firmament but he is unable to ask because Lucifer "rends his heart" (V.ii.158). So he shows the tenderness of the slothful man who is unable to endure physical pain or, if the rending of the heart is taken metaphorically, he fails at his most need to produce the necessary spurt of strength. Whether Marlowe is illustrating the strength of the Devil or the weakness of man here, he certainly seems to be depicting the advanced stage of sloth.

Chaucer's Parson says that those suffering from "accidie" are so bound that they can neither think nor do (p.250). This might relate to Hamlet's melancholia and inability to act. It anyway suggests an interesting relation with the modern idea of depression and its accompanying apathy.

Covetise is exhaustively treated in the Book of Vices and Virtues which gives a long list of different kinds of usury and theft, the latter including claims of legitimacy and inheritance for an illegitimate child. Ravine includes false executorship of wills which has some bearing on the inheritance of "I wot nevere whoo" in the Castle of Perseverance (p.69 below). Covetise in law includes many kinds of "challengyng", bribery, false witness and false judgement for gain. Sacrilege in covetise is mainly stealing from churches. "Marchandise" has many twigs covering every conceivable kind of dishonest practice in business. "Schrewdeness" is murder, destruction, oppression or apostasy for gain. "Wicked crafts" are confined to prostitution and professional fighting but the author of Jacob's Well, writing some 160 years later, has been original under this heading as his editor points out (p.8). He adds dishonest tollers and executioners and heralds at arms who wait to see who does best before crying a name for a good tip. Like Dame Study in Piers Plowman (passus X), he ranks jugglers, sham cripples and public buffoons as dishonest craftsmen and he adds begging intruders, "lacchedrawerys that undon mennys dorys" (p.134).

Evil plays for money come under the heading of covetise in the Book of Vices and Virtues and Jacob's Well. They give a bad example, merge into sloth in idle words and wasting time and cause wrath and

contention as they give rise to dispute. Jacob's Well follows Loren's discussion of covetise in the main, but the author has much to say on dishonest tithing and illustrates his strictures with the story of a virtuous knight who paid his usual tithe even when he had a bad harvest and found his vines groaning with grapes the next morning (p.47). This author insists on the futility of hoarding wealth for wife and family when the executors will have their share and he marvels that even on their death beds people worry about their inheritors (p.305).

Chaucer distinguishes between avarice and covetise, defining the former as refusal to part with what you have and the latter as grasping desire for what you have not (p.252). He writes thoughtfully about this double sin : "whan the herte of a man is confounded in itself and troubled and that the soule hath lost the confort of God, thanne seketh he ydel solas of worldly things" (p.251). He notes that the covetous man is an idolator for he makes a god of worldly goods. Loren also mentions this in his passage on the first commandment (p.4). Chaucer warns against ill treating servants and oppressing the poor (p.252).

All these authors emphasise the necessity for restitution of ill gained goods without which full satisfaction can not be made. It does not do to give away dishonest gains as alms because the contaminated money will turn to the detriment of the giver and possibly even the recipient. Every effort should be made to find the victims of cheating and, failing that, the goods are to be given to a priest to distribute in alms. If death intervenes a priest or trustworthy executor should be requested to make restitution on behalf of the sinner who will otherwise be damned.

The notorious tavern is ingeniously depicted by Lorens in his discussion of gluttony. He calls the tavern the Devil's schoolhouse and depicts it as a world upside down which accords with the Parson's remark : "in mannys synne is every manner of ordre turned up so doun" (p.243). In the tavern, which is also the Devil's chapel, people sing and serve him and there he does his miracles. God's miracles include making the blind see and the lame walk. When a glutton comes out of the tavern "he ne hath no fot that may bear him". On entering he hears, speaks and understands, on emerging he has been deprived by drunkenness of all these capacities. In his school house the Devil teaches gluttony, lechery, to swear and foreswear, to lie and misspeak, to renounce God and his saints. Evil reckoning, guile and many other sins are taught there and contentious debates and manslaughter arise. "The tavern is a theves dich and the develes stronge castel or hous for to werre with God and alle the halemen" (p.53). The author of Jacob's Well again follows Lorens' analysis in the main but refers to gluttony as "gate of synnes, be the whiche alle othere synnes entryn in-to-men" (p.145).

All these works emphasise the danger of envy which is one of the sins against the Holy Ghost. Lorens says of envy that it is hard for the man who has it to come to repentance; of sloth he says it is hard for the sinner to come to good amendment.

The Parson's Tale and Jacob's Well both call covetise as well as pride the root of all sin with no apparent consciousness of anomaly. Hugo de Sancta Victore (d.1141), in a sermon entitled in Migne "Qui sint modi

peccandi," gives two quotations : "Est enim superbia initium et radix omnium malorum" (Eccl.X) and "Cupiditas radix omnium malorum" (I.Tim.VI).<sup>7</sup> He reconciles them by saying that avaritia is part of pride because pride is love of one's own excellence and quotes St. Augustin': "Quis avarius illo cui Deus non sufficit?". He concludes "Vel potest dici superbia radix omnium malorum, id est malarum affectionum; cupiditas vero omnium malorum radix, id est actionum malorum". So he sees pride as root of all bad conditions and covetise of all bad actions.

All four works suggest remedies for the sins among which are the seven petitions of the pater noster, meditation on death and the pains of hell and the active cultivation of virtues. The seven cardinal virtues, composed of four theological and three Christian virtues, originated differently from the sins and do not correspond to them in all cases. Humility as Christ's particular virtue opposes the Devil's sin of pride; and charity, the virtue of the Holy Ghost, opposes the major sin against it, envy. Patience and meekness oppose wrath; and industry and spiritual joy, sloth. Largesse or generosity is remedy for covetise; abstinence or temperance for gluttony; and chastity for lechery.

The three things required to vanquish sin are emphasised by all four authors : repentance in heart, confession by mouth and sufficient amends for evil doing, or satisfaction. Lorens describes repentance as sorrow of heart because we have angered our maker. He explains that the sinful man is a thief, who has evilly expended the goods that God has given him. He is murderer of the king's daughter, the soul, and a traitor for he has handed over the castle of his heart to the devil (pp.171,2).

The danger of postponing confession is stressed by all four writers. Confession must be complete and this, Lorens says, entails telling over the deadly sins and their branches and considering the sinful members, the heart and the five senses. Confession must be meek and it should be frequent as the soul can become tainted with venial sin (pp.176-183). The author of Jacob's Well, downright as ever and apt, compares such a soul to a shirt that has not been washed for a year and will probably never re-attain its original whiteness.

Lorens tells his readers that amendment after confession will demand many battles: with the flesh; with good and bad fortune; against wicked men and against vain glory. Thoughts of the rewards of Paradise, the Passion of Our Lord and the benefits of tribulation bring comfort in adversity.

Bishop Poore says of confession that it confounds the devil, hacks off his head and disperses his forces (p.220). He divides confession into sixteen particulars that make it effective. It must be accusatory, bitter, complete, candid, and it should be made quickly. It should be made with shame, be hopeful, voluntary and concern the penitent alone, exposing or blaming no-one else. It must be made with a firm resolve to do penance and to amend and it should be the result of long reflection. Penance must be accepted meekly and performed joyfully.

Chaucer notes that penitence is of no avail unless accompanied by a firm resolve to amend. If the sinner falls again he may arise through further penitence if he has grace, "but certes it is greet doute. For, as seith Seint Gregorie 'unnethe ariseith he out of his synne, that is

charged with the charge of yvel usage" (p.229). The Parson gives six causes of contrition which the structure of the Castle of Perseverance seems designed to evoke and which are discussed in section IV (p.50 below).

The instructions on confession in Jacob's Well show that people had considerable difficulty with it. Mentioning those who say "I kan nogt shrive me, good syre; aske me", the author confirms that confession in answer to the Priest's questions is sufficient, but he urges his congregation to try to recollect and analyse their own sins (p.179). At the same time he gives some intriguing glimpses of eccentric penitents as he tells his congregation it is not necessary to recount their wives' and neighbours' sins in confession nor their own virtues. Furthermore, he adds, they are not to refuse their penance unbuxomly nor to despise, deprave or carp against the priest (pp.179-182).

It is clear from these works that the analysis and classification of the sins was a diagnostic first step in the process of contrition, confession, penance and/or satisfaction. It is less a matter of telling people how wicked they are than of enabling them to recognise evil and to understand and combat it. The complexity of the classifications and the copiousness of the sub-sins, however, indicate the difficulty of the exercise of confession for the uneducated and unintelligent. That the conscientious priest did his best to help them out is suggested by the exhortations of the author of Jacob's Well, but his instructions show that in spite of his thorough teaching his congregation still had problems. Devices to make the sins memorable and understandable are frequent in these works and include stories, allegory, analogy and symbols, such as the

Bishop's representation of the sins as animals. The next step, the personification of the sins, will be discussed in the next section.

The concept of the sins had changed little since Cassian and St. Gregory's classifications, except that covetise had acquired a mass of sub-sins and greater importance as it was applied to active life in the world. In two works it stands beside pride as the root of all sin. Condemnation of idle speech is unanimous, as is the implication that words are highly indicative of the spiritual state of the speaker, a theme that is developed in Mankind and will be discussed in section V. Gluttony is seen as the gate of sin in Jacob's Well and Bishop Poore also considers that it was through the apple that sin first entered the world, though he describes the first gluttony as arising through the desire of the eye. Inherent in Eve's sin was the disobedience and the ambition of pride, so we return to St. Gregory's concept of the failure of the flesh arising from the disordering of the higher reason by pride.



### III

An important stage in the dramatisation of the sins was to show them speaking for themselves. Bloomfield observes in his chapter on English literature in the fourteenth century that this step was taken in the Speculum Christiani, in which the Sins' self introductions "provide close analogues to the verses in Langland's confession scene" (pp. 186-7). The first sin, Superbia, declares himself as follows :

Whoso wyl have helle  
Do he moste as I hym telle  
I boste and bragge ay with the beste  
To maynten sinne I am ful preste  
Myn awne wys I wylle have ay  
Thow god and gud men al bidde nay.<sup>1</sup>

In Langland's dream Vision of Piers the Plowman (c.1362-99) the confessions of the sins follow four passi of scathing criticism of the state of the world in which the sub-sins of covetise play a prominent part. The corruption of civil and ecclesiastical law is allegorised as the story of Flattery and Liar's attempt to marry Falsehood to Meed (worldly reward). The parody of the Charter of Christ with which Simony and Civil Law invest the couple shows that when reward accompanies falsehood the way is open for most other sins.<sup>(a)</sup> Envy, wrath, strife,

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(a) Bloomfield notes in the Sins that Christ indicates his grants to mankind in legal terms in these charters, which were a common literary form in the Middle Ages (pp.166 and 199).

chattering out of reason, covetise, usury, avarice and theft are all part of their domain. They have rights to lechery, gluttony and despair. The witnesses of the charter are Wrong, a beadle, a reeve and a miller. The couple and their train ride to London mounted on law officials, such as the sherrif who is newly shod in eager preparation to support wrong. Wherever she goes Meed, who is depicted as a desirable heiress, sets off great surges of movement. First a crowd of members of different professions flocks after her to London. In London justices, clerks and a friar offering easy absolution hurry to advise her. These well organised moves, guided by guile, contrast with the blundering of the crowd who seek in vain for someone to direct them to Truth until Piers rescues them.

The sub-sins in the account of the attempted marriage are abstract personifications very briefly characterised, if at all, and they mingle with representatives of professions and trades. In the Sins' confessions following Reason's sermon in passus V and in the confession of Haukyn the active man in passus XIII most of the seven deadly sins appear as several representative sinners. They are first described in an emblematic way in their familiar guise. As they speak their personae fade and reform differently so that they become a series of people who practise a sin such as pride or covetise. In this way Langland applies the sins to several different classes and occupations.<sup>2</sup> In doing so he has gone further than the author of the Castle of Perseverance in dramatising individuals, though they are still representative types rather than particular people. The Mankind author followed suit some sixty years later (p.87 below).

The powerful sin of Covetise enters the confession scene in

the wretched likeness of the traditional miser :

So hungiriliche and holwe sire (Hervy) hym loked.  
 He was bitelbrowed and baberlipped also,  
 With two blered eyghen as a blynde hagge;  
 And as a lethern purs lolled his chekes,  
 Well sydder than his chyn thei chiveled for elde;  
 And as a bondman of his bacoun his berde was bidraveled.  
 With an hode on his hed a lousi hatte above,  
 And in a tauny tabarde of twelve wynter age,  
 Al totorne and baudy and ful of lys crepynge;  
 But if a lous couthe have lepen the better,  
 She sholde nougte have walked on that welche so was it  
 thredbare.

(V.187-99)

Covetise infiltrates several classes and occupations. His careers as apprentice, merchant of rotten goods by "the grace of gyle" (207) and draper have all been conducted with dishonesty for the maximum profit. In the confession of Haukyn he appears as the farmer stealing strips of his neighbour's land when plowing. He then moves into the merchant class where he has servants to assist his sharp practices abroad and at prayer time he can think of nothing but his profits and losses (XIII.356-99).

Restitution of ill-gotten gains by the originator or the heirs was an essential part of satisfaction for covetise as the confession books stress. Covetise here shows he has never heard of this necessary part of penance as he confuses restitution with rifling :

I wende riflynge were restitucion for I lerned never rede on boke  
 And I ken no ffrenssch in feith but of the ferthest end of Norfolk  
 (V.235-7)

Envy shows no better knowledge of contrition :

I am sori ..... I am but selde othr  
 And that maketh me thus megre for I ne may me venge  
 (V.127-8)

The ignorance of these representative sinners gives them a certain

pathos. Part of the blame for their condition is pointed towards the clergy in the depiction of the slothful priest in Sloth's confession and by other references in the poem to the ignorance, laziness and covetise of the clergy, notably in Anima's long reproach of their failure to fulfil the duties of Dobet in passus XV and in Clergy's impassioned diatribe in passus X.

The depiction of Sloth in the second part of his confession emphasises worldly obligations as Wenzel says (p.25 above), but attention is also given to religious duties. Sloth comes in all beslobbered, says he must sit down and falls asleep as he is making his confession. He does not know his pater noster but he does know some ballads. He gives a long list of failure in religious duties and confesses to fornication, even in Lent. He indulges in idle tales including mocking lies about his neighbours and he frequents the ale house. The persona then shifts to that of a priest, a shift that Wenzel notes is "strangely foreshadowed" in the Cursor Mundi (p.304). Sloth says :

I have be preest and person passynge thritty winter  
 Yet kan I neyther solve ne synge ne seintes lyves rede  
 But I kan fynden in a feld or in a furlang an hare  
 Better than in Beatus vir or in Beati omnes  
 Construe clause and kenne it to my parisshens.

(V.415-9)

There is a further shift of persona as Sloth goes on to say that he does not pay his servants, forgets kindnesses, fails to fulfil promises or pay his debts, and he has wasted food by letting it go bad. He changes again as he says he learnt nothing in youth and has to beg for a living. When asked if he repents, he swoons from despair and has to be revived

by Vigilante who splashes his face with water.

In the charter of passus II despair followed gluttony and in Haukyn's confession it is Glutton who, growing ill from surfeit of food and drink, fears death and falls into despair :

the whiche is sleuthe so slow that may no slithes helpe it  
Ne no mercy amenden the man that so dyeth

(XIII.408-9)

The poet then discusses the "braunches" that bring people into sloth. They are lack of sorrow for misdeed; penance ill performed; failure in alms-deeds; living against the faith and holding to no law. Every day is a holiday to the slothful man. He wants to hear only harlot's talk - speech of Christ and cleanness of soul angers him. All this corresponds closely enough to the spiritual symptoms given by earlier writers, except that the major cause of sloth, slackness in loving God, is not mentioned. Lords and ladies are then admonished for feeding "wise", that is professional fools, flatterers and liars, particularly as in feeding these they refuse the poor.

The sins are also personified in passi XIX and XX where they attack the barn Unity. Passus XX gives a brief biography of Sloth. His father, Life, laughs, dags his clothes, arms himself with harlots' words, holds Holyness a joke and Hendeness (kind courtesy) a waster, Loyalty a churl and Liar a free man. Life's mistress, Fortune, gives birth to Sloth who eventually marries a girl from the stews called Wanhope, the daughter of Thomas Two Tongue, an assessor (XX.142-61). The sin is thus vividly connected with the false values underlying levity in contemporary behaviour and indeed, the figure of Life suggests comparison with the fashionable young men in Mankind (p.88 below). Sloth joins the

battle against the Church, arming himself with a great sling from which he shoots despair for many miles around (XX.162-3). He is accompanied by more than a thousand proud priests, deserters who hold with Covetise and almost have Unity down (XX.216-26).

Langland does seem to be discussing the path of sloth to despair through triviality, the sins of the flesh and the worldly sin of covetise rather than through dryness of spirit. As the poem is very much a plea for the practice of Christianity in the world, however, the emphasis on the worldly aspects of the sin might well indicate selection of material rather than a change in concept.

It is Pride who in passus XIX musters the Sins in the assault on the Church. In the B text Pride becomes an extensive series of personae as Haukyn's filthy coat reveals more and more sins, though he is sketchily treated in the Sins' own confession scene as Peronelle Proudheart addicted to finery. Haukyn's confession includes defiant (unbuxome) speech, scorning and scoffing and bragging with oaths of what he is not. He changes to a hermit guilty of singularity, without rule or obedience and presumptuous in attacking the learned and the ignorant alike. A man who boasts of wealth, good deeds, family, his looks and fine voice appears, then changes to the boldest of beggars who "in towne and tavernes" tells wonders he has never seen and boasts of what he never did (XIII. 275-313). Nevertheless, covetise is the root sin in the poem which causes the corruption of people of authority and influence in the field full of folk. The rich are constantly begged to amend and to do their duty : "But God of thy goodness give them grace to amend" (XIV.170). Sometimes they are warned : "For meny men on this molde more sette here

hertis/In good than in god forthi hem grace failleth" (X.392-3). This remark by Will follows Scripture's comment on St. Paul's preaching about the rich man's difficulty in attaining heaven.

The loss of grace of those who set their minds on worldly goods is the theme of the Castle of Perseverance, but Langland goes further than the Castle author as he presents the positive reverse of the topic in the praise of patient poverty of passus XIV. Patience is an important virtue in Piers Plowman as it is an essential step in achieving the life of Dobet and it is exemplified in God's patient tolerance of Man's freewill (passus XI). It is also important in Mankind where the hero falls into many sins because of failure in patient perseverance in adversity (p.93 below). In poverty Langland sees the positive opportunity of an adversity that encourages the practice of all the virtues. These Patience lists as he describes how the sins fail to make headway against the poor : few poor people are proud, for example, because they have to please the rich (XIII.233-350). This opportunity is denied the rich who are all too easily tempted into denying the virtues of generosity and charity their own position offers, as the Castle demonstrates.

Alanus de Insulis, on the contrary, takes a worldly view of the adversity of poverty in his Anticlaudianus (1181-84).<sup>3</sup> Poverty appears in the train of the vices attacking divine Man and is in turn followed by pain, toil, thirst, hunger and famine (p.198). Later in the poem, however, poverty is seen as the evil result of avarice : on her death the wealth of the rich disappears, those formerly enriched by her poverty are reduced to need and her followers flee. The editor observes in a footnote that Huizinga considered Alanus' view of poverty to be that

commonly held in Europe before St. Francis emphasised its positive aspect (p.198). Langland's view seems to be Franciscan and it probably relates to Conscience's second reason for leaving the Church in passus XX : to seek provision for the Friars so that want will not encourage them to flatter. Bloomfield in his essay "Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth Century Apocalypse" suggests that Langland considered the reformation of the Friars essential to solving the world's problems, for perfection of the monastic order with the greatest Christian potential would strengthen the Church and provide the example it ought to give.<sup>4</sup> Like the Castle author Langland takes an uncompromising attitude to worldly goods, but in his discussion of poverty, of the distribution of labour at the Half Acre and his realisation that even begging orders need basic provisions he gives more attention to the Christian's problems in dealing with worldly necessities than the Castle author, who simply offers the ideal represented by Christ and religious observance as remedy for sin.

Nevil Coghill in his essay on the character of Piers the Plowman argues persuasively that Piers represents Christ in the world.<sup>5</sup> In his visionary application of Christ to contemporary life Langland has used the opportunities of the dream formula for shifting, fading and wonderful appearances to suggest a mystical concept in allegorical terms, and to produce a charismatic hero who adds much to the fascination of the poem. Piers is seen first as the plowman directing the people, knights and ladies in the active life of Dowel as they cultivate the Half Acre, and he shows them the way to Truth. He becomes the guardian of the tree of Charity, preventing the Devil's theft of souls by the Incarnation.



As the Good Samaritan he saves fallen man through charity which Hope and Faith alone can not do. As a knight he jousts with the Devil's champion on the Cross and defeats him by healing his blindness, physical as the champion is Longinus, spiritual inasmuch as he represents sinful man. Coghill observes that Piers then vanishes until Christ as God, having harrowed Hell, finally invests him in the persons of St. Peter and his successors with the spiritual authority of Dobest.<sup>6</sup> The sins attack the Church and the whole cycle begins again with Conscience's departure. The primary reason for Conscience' setting out is to seek Piers for the second time. He first accompanied Patience and Will for the same reason after the dinner with the gluttonous ecclesiastical doctor in passus XIII. It is hard to imagine a more crushing indictment of the state of the Church, but the way the poem comes full cycle also suggests the persistence of man's conscience in seeking God, the infinity of his need for Him and His constant presence if He is sought.

I shall not attempt to solve the vexed problem of Piers' tearing the pardon of Truth, as Anima's advice to Will not to try to understand everything suggests that we should read the allegory associatively and not agonise too much over details (XV.51-54). The incident of the pardon does relate to the plays, however, because it has bearing on the apparent contradiction between salvation earned by good works and that granted by pure mercy, which is the major theme of the debate of the daughters of God. It seems clear that tearing the pardon is a dramatic, allegorical gesture symbolising the purpose of Christ's life on earth : to transcend the Old Dispensation. Dispute has arisen as to whether or not the gesture implies that the pardon of Truth is no longer valid.

It reads "Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam aeternam; vero mala, in ignem aeternum" (VII.112). The inference of the plays is that it remains valid. It is quoted in the Castle and its message is repeated in Mankind (3636a and p.87 below). In spite of the mocking priest's doubts, it is a pardon in that it allows man by his endeavours and free will to earn God's forgiveness for original sin and so evade Adam's punishment, as the patient poor do. That the Jewish patriarchs and prophets remained in Hell until Christ released them confirms that man's salvation whether earned or not is dependent on mercy, a point that Mercy makes in Mankind :

All the vertu in the werld yf ye mygt comprehend  
 Yowr meritys were not premiabyll to the blysse above  
 Not to the lest joy of hevене of yowr proper effort to ascend  
 With mercy ye may.

(867~70)

The pardon of truth is probably God's Dowel, the sacrifice of Christ His Dobet and the Redemption His Dobest of perfect charity which results in mercy freely given.

The anomaly of justice and mercy gave rise to an instructional problem which G.R. Owst explains in Preaching in Mediaeval England . Some preachers were anxious lest priests beguile their congregations into presumption with honeyed words of God's mercy. He quotes Dr. John Waldeby :

If the priest dwell too much on divine mercy and says nought of punishment, he makes the people presume too greatly on the mercy of God and thus to lie and perish in their sins.<sup>7</sup>

This is also a problem confronting the morality writers, and in the Castle and Mankind man's need to work for mercy is firmly emphasised. The situation is well explained in the Parson's Tale where Chaucer

says virtually that you may be lucky enough to receive mercy wholly undeserved (as the hero of the Castle is), but it is safer to practise virtue as sin so changes the soul that it may be incapable of making the necessary move towards God at the last moment. This change is illustrated in Wisdom Who is Christ where the soul appears horribly disfigured by sin (p.83 below). Lorenz points out that the pains of purgatory are very much more intense than any pain or self denial on earth and he therefore recommends making the fullest possible satisfaction on earth (p.70).

The difficulty of reconciling justice and mercy is dramatically crystallized in the popular allegory of the debate of the four daughters of God where personification and dialogue reveal the anomaly of virtues in dispute. Langland in his lively version of the debate has depicted the Virtues very much as human sisters, who admire each others' clothes and speak scornfully of raving and tales of waltrot (XVIII). This inappropriate everyday set-to further emphasises the anomaly but paves the way to its equally homely resolution as the Virtues agree to let no-one know that they "chid".

The dramatic quality in Langland's debate arises much less from the Virtues' part in it than from the confrontation of Lucifer by Christ - a very different technique from that used in the Castle, as we shall see. Having witnessed the harrowing of hell, the sisters dance till dawn. Truth accompanies them on the trumpet and Love on the lute. This note of celebration is taken up by Will who, waking, excitedly calls his wife and daughter to honour the Resurrection (XVIII.110-427).

Will, the poet pilgrim seeking the lives of Dowel, Dobet and

Dobest, is an example of perseverance and he adds much to the positive aspect of the poem. Half crazed at times and beggared he persists in his search until so battered by age that he is bald, toothless and impotent, he staggers into the Church as one of the fools of Christ and witnesses the assault of the Vices. Even then the poet's conscience begins another pilgrimage, though Will may be too infirm to follow it. On the satiric side, he shows the difficulties in the way of salvation arising first from his own sin of intellectual pride as he contradicts Scripture and challenges the value of Clergy (X.135). Encouraged by Fortune, he abandons his quest for a time and, like the heroes of the moralities, does ill. Secondly, Will's search is made more difficult by the sins of the clergy and others which have obscured truth (passus V) and driven charity which is patient and humble out of the Church (XIV.143-252). This account enriches our understanding of the repeated claims of the hero of the Castle that he is only doing as others do. Will who is persevering resists the example, many do not.

The extent of the influence of Piers Plowman on the depiction of the sins and on other features of the morality plays is difficult to assess as common sources and ideas may be responsible for many likenesses, but it seems probable that the pater noster plays, which are no longer extant, were forerunners of the moralities.

E. Tempe Allison in an article in PMLA summarises what is known about the plays and discusses the distinction between vices and sins the information suggests.<sup>8</sup> The plays dealt with vices and sins in confrontation with virtues, were not dumb shows and consisted of a series of "ludi" or pageants, some of which bore the names of the deadly sins.

Allison cites Hugo de St. Victore's sermon in which each sin is opposed by a specific petition of the pater noster (XXX in Pat.Lat.).<sup>9</sup> The Beverley minute book of 1469 records a performance on eight wagons, including one called "Viciose". Translating viciose as vicious ones, he claims that this pageant represented vices which were not sins. Hugo in another treatise distinguishes between vices and sins, describing the former as :

corruptiones animae ex quibus si ratione non refrentur, peccata, idest actus .... oriuntur .... Itaque vitium est infirmitas spiritualis corruptionis, peccatum autem ex corruptione, oriens per consensum actus iniquitatis.<sup>10</sup>

This suggests that the pageant of viciose showed the tendencies that soften people into accepting the sins. As Allison points out, there are several vice figures as opposed to deadly sins even in the early moralities and their number increases in the later plays. Allison sees the vice as "a creature evolved from the synthesis of the traits of the Vitia rather than a summation of the seven deadly sins". The distinction is difficult to argue because the line between a tendency and a full fledged sin becomes blurred in allegorical personifications, but it may be supported by the depiction of Folly and Voluptas in the Castle (pp.55,56 below).

Piers Plowman resembles the morality plays in many respects. Like them it has both a satirical and an inspirational aim. It shares with the Castle personification of all the deadly sins, the debate between the four daughters of God, the celebration of Divine mercy and criticism of contemporary behaviour. Covetise is seen as a widespread and dangerous sin in both. Sloth in Piers Plowman is depicted from

the point of view of worldly obligations and laziness in religious observance and is associated with the sins of the flesh as it is in the Castle. Both are copious works which spare no pains to put across an urgently felt message and both have highly ordered structures, though that of Piers Plowman is also thematically intricate. Langland's aim seems to have been to shame those in authority into doing their Christian duty, to appeal to their sense of justice and their compassion and to present inspiringly to them and others the solution of the world's ills - the true practice of Christianity. The Castle is also directed towards those who have become hard hearted through covetise.

Piers Plowman is helpful in filling in what might have been in the minds of people watching the plays. Langland raises the difficulty facing those in the active or monastic lives of Dowel of finding the balance between worldly common sense and religious devotion, a difficulty that might well have been mentally opposed to the Castle author's dismissive attitude to worldly preoccupations. At the same time Langland's discussion of the positive aspects of poverty helps to explain the Castle author's attitude, for it shows that the adversity of the world's vengeance brings many blessings. Through Will's enquiries he discusses several problems that might have hindered the faith of the thinking man of his time. These concern election and free will, a subject discussed at length in the fifth book of Troilus and Criseyde; the seeming injustice of instant salvation through faith, which is closely related to mercy, and is resolved in the poem by the theory of degrees in heaven (passus XII); and the fate of the good pagan who can not achieve heaven, a deprivation poignantly urged by Dante through the character of Virgil

in the Divine Comedy. Ymagynatyf explains that there are also degrees in hell and that Trajan was easily rescued by Christ from its highest level (passus XII). The morality writers were faced with an audience who did not automatically and invariably believe everything they were told. They were worried by inconsistencies, as we are. Langland seems to have put into the poem a great deal of what he felt about Christianity and this has made it a moving work and a useful one in understanding other literature of the period.

The Castle of Perseverance has been dated between 1395 and 1425.

In his introduction to the Early English Text edition Mark Eccles records that Jacob Bennett in an unpublished dissertation concluded that the play was the work of three authors : one writing the banns, the original author lines 157-3120, and a reviser the ending. The banns promise the intercession of Our Lady for Man's soul rather than the debate which appears in the present text. Eccles agrees that they may have been written by another hand, but he argues that the play itself could well have been written by one person.<sup>1</sup>

This "grand archetype"<sup>2</sup> of the morality play includes all the common allegorical themes of the early moralities : the struggle between vices and virtues for man's soul; the summons of death; the debate between soul and body; and the parliament of heaven. The play covers the three parts of penitence : contrition, confession and satisfaction (pp.31,33 above). Its structure seems designed to move its audience to contrition by suggesting to them the six causes for penitence which are set out in Chaucer's Parson's Tale (p.230). They are shame and guilt in remembrance of sin and the sinner's thraldom to the devil; dread of the day of judgement and the horrible pains of hell; sorrowful remembrance of good left undone; remembrance of the Passion Our Lord suffered for sin; hope of forgiveness, grace and the glory of heaven. The hero's fall and allegiance to the world suggest the first two causes. Constant reminders



of death and the Bad Angel's threats and treatment of Man's soul recall the third. Good left undone is negatively implied as Man twice rejects the opportunity of good works in accepting Covetise's instructions (871-4, 2745-6) and as Truth comments that he has done none of the works of mercy and therefore deserves none (3472-5). The speeches of the remedial virtues and the four daughters of God stress the Passion; and the hope of forgiveness, grace and the glory of heaven is evoked by Shrift and by the debate and its outcome. The play is didactic both as it instructs and as it seeks to move through shame, fear, compassion, gratitude, love and hope - and honest recreation is not forgotten.

The large conflict in the Castle is between the World and God. The play closes with God's judgement of Man in which He emphasises His own mercy and the need for mercy in man himself, but He also restates the principle of reward and punishment according to desert which appears as Truth's pardon in Piers Plowman : "et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam aeternam; qui vero mala, in ignem aeternum". God's last verse reminds the audience that the play is a mirror for them :

All men example hereat may take  
To mayntein the goode and mendyn here mys (3543-4)<sup>3</sup>

and finally, the actor in his own person urges the spectators :

Evyr at the begynnyng  
Thynke on youre last endyng!  
Te Deum laudamus! (3647-9)

World, splendid on his scaffold, opens the play with an invitation to the "bolde bachelerys" and "sirys semely" to abide under his banner, immediately reminding the audience that they share the temptations of their representative in the play.<sup>4</sup> A boast of World's

wide-spread power follows with a list of exotic place names : "Babylon, Brabon, Burgoyne and Bretaine;" (171). The speech ends with the threat that whoever opposes the world will suffer. This first speech sets a major theme in the play, that the world is tyrannous and there is no compromise to be made with it. A satiric vision of the world, comparable to the field full of folk in Piers Plowman, emerges through the depiction of the sins and vices and their masters and through the characterisation of Man himself.

The plan included in the Macro manuscript shows an iconographic setting of Man's universe. The castle, symbolising his virtue, Covetise's cupboard, the symbol of his fall, and his bed are in the platea in the middle. In a surrounding circle are the scaffolds. God's is in the East, the Devil's to the North, World's is in the West and Flesh's in the South. Covetise, seen as the root sin in this play, has a scaffold to himself at the Northeast.

In The Mediaeval Theatre in the Round Richard Southern suggests that all the scaffolds had curtains which were drawn when the characters occupying them were taking no part in the action and that God's scaffold remained closed until he was called by his four daughters in the last section of the play.<sup>5</sup> Alternatively, God may have sat in an open scaffold throughout the play, a benevolent, watchful eye directly opposed to the machinations of the World and next to the scaffold of his henchman, Covetise, so illustrating World's claim that "Mine hest is holdyn and herd/Into high hevene" (194-5).

World is flanked by Lust-liking, Folly and Garcio or "I wot nevere whoo", Man's heir. Beside Belial sit Pride, Wrath and Envy who

have drawn many a "king, kaiser and kemp" into his den. World has made threatening implications, Belial the Devil is overtly terrible : "What folk that I grope, they gapyn and grenne" (200). He vigorously declares his hostility to Man and the anger and sorrow he will experience if he fails to destroy him in refrains of hate which end his three stanzas with a constant sentiment variously expressed.

The agreeable terror of Belial's speech is followed by a masterly depiction of Flesh. Although a "brod brusten gut" he seems genial and pleasant - flowers, melody and mirth appear in his first stanza. The other two forces are external to man, Flesh is part of him - he is the body. Unrepentant and reckless, he expresses his disregard for the soul with "I geve not a myth", a disregard that is echoed by Man as he vows allegiance to the World : "Of my sowle I have non rewthe" (605). This cavalier attitude is later bitterly reproached by the Soul as he addresses Man's dead body (3012-20). Growing increasingly sinister, Flesh finally reveals not only indifference but open hostility to Man as he moves into the jolly, jingle-like part of his last stanza :

Behold the Werld, the Devyl and me!  
Wyth all oure mythis, we kyngys thre,  
Nyth and day besy we be  
For to distroy Mankende

(266-9)

Following these declarations of hostile intent the quarry appears on the platea. Man is, as Southern remarks, a pathetic, bewildered figure, just born, naked, ignorant of the purpose of life (p.152). He is flanked by his two advisers, the Good and Bad Angels who represent the conflict of conscience that awaits him from the moment of birth.

Man has several functions in the play. Most importantly he is a focal point for audience involvement. His reactions are used with effective irony to convey the quality of the world ruled by his three enemies and the presence of this naif figure in the midst of the ruthless and knowing forces ranged against him intensifies the warning of the struggle with the Sins. If the allegory were perfect he would not be present for the reasons discussed above on page 9, but the play would be colder and less touching without him and it would lose much of its dry humour.

Man demonstrates mankind's natural instinct to turn to good as he prays he may follow the Good Angel. Having heard the Bad Angel's promises of wealth and luxury, however, he speaks for us all in wanting to have it both ways :

I wolde be riche in gret array  
And fain I wolde my sowle save (377-8)

He decides to play with the world "a lityl throwe", encouraged in his belief that he has plenty of time by the Bad Angel (416). Man accepts the Bad Angel's stipulation that he must be false to his neighbours and relations in order to become a lord and he immediately demonstrates his faulty values as he calls the Bad Angel "bote of bale" (443). At this point the Good Angel merely laments, but when Man has with ill judged complacency told the audience he has accepted all the sins and is hell bent, the Angel, as Southern remarks, reveals a certain bitterness at the difficulty of his assignment : "So mekyl the werse - wele-a-woo/  
That evere Good Aungyl was ordeyned thee" (1260-1). The Bad Angel demonstrates his corruption in his disputes with the Good Angel when he

appears a scoffer and jeerer and user of coarse language, but on one occasion of evil triumph he confirms what the virtuous characters so constantly repeat :

For, that schuld cunne Cristys lessoun  
 In penaunce his body he must binde  
 And forsake the werldys mende.  
 Men arn lothe on the to crye,  
 Or don penaunce for here folye;  
 Therefore have I now maistrye  
 Wel ny over al Mankinde (1279-85)

The lack of wisdom of Man's initial choice is underlined as World sends Lust-liking and Folly to the platea to seek recruits. They are not sins but tempters of the kind who might later have been called Vices or perhaps like those who appeared in the pageant of the Viciose at Beverley (p.47 above). Lust-liking seems to represent the self indulgence which is at the heart of turning to the world and in which there is some of the softness of sloth and a taste for fleshly pleasures. Folly represents the ill judgement of choosing the transitory benefits of the world instead of the eternal good of heaven :

Whoso wil with Foly rewled be,  
 He is worthy to be a servant here,  
 That draweth to sinnys sevene (Lust-liking, 484-6)

The wisdom of those who are wise in Christ is contrasted with worldly wit in Folly's own speech :

Werldly wit was nevere nowt  
 But with foly it were gawt.  
 This the wise man hath tawt  
 Abotyn in his bokes:  
 Sapientia penes Domini (513-16a)

Lorens says that the world's wit, seeking only the gratification of vanity and sensuous desires, reduces people to the status of animals or children "for here wittes ben misturned and roted" (p.81). The

themes of worldly wit and reason undermined are movingly developed later in the play. Folly seems to represent the false values which begin this overturn of reason and which Man has already shown he accepts in his conversation with the Bad Angel.

Crying the World's message, Lust-liking explains that any candidates for the World's service from the audience will be expected to be false, to have no fear of God, to "livyn in lustys, nith and day" and to "evermore be covetous" (495-503). On the reactions of the rich and successful members of the audience one can only speculate.

Man is greeted warmly by World and shows himself already a thrall to the Devil, the second cause for contrition, as he vows his allegiance :

Yis, Werlde, and therto here min honde,  
 To forsake God and his servise  
 To medys thou geve me howse and londe,  
 That I regne richely at min enprise.  
 So that I fare wel by strete and stronde  
 Whil I dwelle here in werldly wise,  
 I recke nevere of hevене wonde,  
 Nor of Jhesu, that jentyle justise.  
 Of my sowle I have non rewthe.  
 What schulde I recknen of domysday,  
 So that I be riche and of gret aray? (597-607)

This defiant speech, which must have shocked the audience and amounts to a pact with the Devil such as Faustus makes, was probably intended to show not what people consciously say or realise, but what in fact they do in turning to sin. The effect should be to inspire shame and guilt in remembrance of sin by explaining its implications in a startling way.

While Man is being symbolically dressed in the World's livery, Backbiter enters. Backbiter is usually associated with the sins of the tongue and Envy, but is here a free lance sin,

which incorporates detraction and flattery : "Fletringe and flatteringe is my lessun" (669). The characterisation of Backbiter as the World's messenger is as far as I know original, but it is the same kind of idea as Bishop Poore's description of the sins as the Devil's servants - for example, the envious man, unable to do anything but pull wry faces, is the Devil's jester (p.157). Southern in his reconstruction of a performance imagines Backbiter entering across the bridge over the ditch encircling the theatre area, "a motley figure, not unlike Autolycus trolling his wandering entrance in A Winter's Tale" who calls as he strolls along "All things I crei ageyn the peace" (647) (p.164). Backbiter's four stanza introduction of himself implicitly reproaches the audience as he explains that his great popularity has entitled him to become the World's messenger : "Everyman tellith talys/Aftyr my fals tunge". This claim is confirmed by Man as he greets Envy with glad recognition : "Thy counsel is knowyn thorwe mankinde/For ilke man callith other 'hore' and 'thefe'" (1133-4).

As a free lance Backbiter is in a much happier position than the other sins who are as much servants of tyrannical masters as the man who accepts them. He delights in his ability to stir up strife and welcomes the chance to spread the ill tidings of Man's entry into the Castle:

I go, I go, on grounde glad  
Swifter than ship with rodyr (1737-38)

he says, foreshadowing Puck, and urges backbiters in the audience to learn from him (1784-88). "Now, by God, this is good game" he exclaims as Flesh beats his servant-children and he hurries away eagerly to "make Coveitise have a knock or two" (1833). Backbiter's function of leading

the way to the deadly sins confirms the confession book writers' serious view of backbiting and flattery (p.20 above). He helps to emphasise the slightly absurd servility of the sins and illustrates the lack of camaraderie in hell. Dramatically, he is an attractive character whose energy helps to increase the pace after Man's entry into the Castle.<sup>6</sup>

The Deadly Sins themselves are depicted both as tempters and as embodying the sins, but the emphasis is on the former as they are primarily eager servants of their respective masters and keen colleagues of their senior member, Covetise. Covetise is the first of the Sins to speak. He greets Man with gracious affection and instructs him in "Werldys lay" (835) which includes a great many of the sub-sins of covetise, most of which are packed into the second stanza (841-53). They include simony, extortion, false measures, no help to others without payment, failure to pay servants, destruction of neighbours, no tithing, no alms, sleights in selling and deceit in oaths, "For that is kynde covetytise" (835). In the first verse he introduces the theme of "more and more" as he tells Man that although he will receive much he is always to covet more (839). In the third verse he tells Man : "In wynnyng be al thi werke", that is, Man is to spend no time on God's work or religious observance. There is a nice example of the author's dry humour in the second verse : "Here no beggar thou he crye;/And thanne schalt thou ful sone ryse" (847-8). Covetise is not a victim of the sin he represents, but as a keen and scheming antagonist he illustrates the guile and devious charm of the devoted covetor and he is a particularly dangerous flatterer. "Blissyd be thy trewe tonge!"



he exclaims with high irony as Man throws away his opportunity to do good works (871-2) and shows a naive trust in his instructor :

A, Avarice, wel thou spede!  
 Of werldly witte thou canst, iwis  
 Thou woldist not I hadde nede  
 And schuldist be wrothe if I ferd amis  
 I schal nevere begger bede  
 Mete nyn drinke, by hevene blis:  
 Rather or I schulde him clothe or fede  
 He schulde sterve and stinke, iwis! (867-74)

Man reveals human patterns of behaviour rather than representing a person. Here foolish self regard accompanying hard-heartedness to others is neatly conveyed while the irony is tellingly pointed by the references to "hevene blis" and "Goddys blod" (877). This scene is a good example of the author's characteristic method in which psychological acumen, irony and shock tactics are brought into play.

Covetise makes it very clear that he is root of the sins as, like some Lord Chesterfield discussing his son's future, he urbanely instructs Man :

Moo sinnys I wolde thou underfonge  
 With covetise the feffe I will,  
 And then some pride I wolde spronge,  
 Hyge in thi hert to holdyn and hyll  
 And abydyn in thi body. (884-8)

When the other Sins arrive at Covetise' scaffold, he again states the ease with which all sins follow once he is accepted :

For whanne Mankynd is kendly koveytous  
 He is proud, wrathful, and envyous;  
 Glotons, slaw, and lecherous  
 Thei arn othyrwhyle amonge.  
 Thus every synne tylllyth in othyr  
 And makyth Mankynde to ben a foole. (1028-33)

Alliteration adds energy to a series of exciting speeches from the sins of the devil as they rally and, like the hunters they declare

themselves to be, eagerly set out. They reveal few of the characteristics of the sins they represent : there is no pride in Pride's readiness "on rowthe for to run" (911) and Wrath is afraid Covetise will "schend" him if he arrives last (922). What comes vigorously across is the zeal and organisation of the forces working against Man. Belial and Flesh give their children affectionate farewells. Belial looks forward to Man's death when he will bind him in helle "as catte dothe the mows" (952) and Flesh is confident his offspring will "cachyn Mankynd to a careful clos/Fro the bryth blisse of hevене" (1004-5). In this way the audience are reminded of their last destination just before they see Man accepting the sins, which should add to the dramatic suspense of the scene and bring its message more firmly home.

As the Sins meet Man they reveal themselves by their instructions which follow the general pattern of the sub-sins in the confession books. Pride instructs Man to let no man lord it over him or misuse him and to beat anyone who tries; to be disobedient to parents and friends, to boast and indulge in extreme fashion, to undervalue others, puff himself up and shove aside everyone else. Some of Man's replies to the sins echo what are still recognisable common sayings with some world weary truth in them, such as "Whoso suffyr is over-led al day"(1072). Others reveal the state of the world as he greets the sins with eager recognition of their wide popularity. His reply to Sloth, for example, sounds very like a sardonic voice from the pulpit :

Men lofe wel now to lie stille,  
 In bed to take a morwe swot;  
 To chirche-ward is not here wille,  
 Here beddys they thinken goode and hot (1223-26)

Sloth is shown as closely associated with the other sins of the flesh, who are also interdependent as Lechery derives from Gluttony :

Ya! Whanne thy flesche is faire fed  
 Thanne schal I, lovely Lecherye,  
 Be bobbed with the in bed (1178-80)

Sloth says he will join them there and turn them both into lechers (1211). The sin is depicted as mainly laziness and failure to perform social and religious duties. It prevents Man from confessing for a time, but Sloth is eventually conquered by Penitence. As he approaches death Man is shown wholly possessed by covetise and the other sins appear to have diminished, among them the most dangerous aspect of Sloth, for Man is able to pray to be kept from despair and so he manages to achieve heaven, albeit ingloriously.

In his reconstruction of a performance Southern observes that Wrath "so intoxicates little Man with his incitements" that Man replies "drunken with power" (p.175). It is true that Man's speech to Wrath is full of bravado but he may be boasting because he is drunk with Pride which he has just accepted. Pride, Lorens remarked, is the devil's strong wine (p.22 above). This neat dramatic expression of the effect of the sin could not be followed through in all Man's replies, which are varied in technique to make different effects. In speaking to Envy, the enemy of love, Man uses particularly affectionate expressions : "Envy thou art bothe good and hende" (113) he begins absurdly, and concludes "Cum up, Envye, my dere derlinge/Thou hast mankindys love ..." (1141-2). This gives an upside down effect illustrating the perversion of the sinner. With Lechery Man is straightforwardly eager : "For ony erthly thyng/To bedde thou muste me brynge" (1207-8). His reply to Gluttony

emphasises that gluttony, like lechery, is to an extent a natural sin because it is a development of a necessary function : "I am no day wel, by sty nor strete/Til I have wel fillid my maw" (1163-4).

Southern sees Man in this scene as smilingly accepting all the sins without fully understanding what they are saying (p.174). Man's speech after the Sins have been accepted suggests, however, that he understands very well what is going on :

My prowde pouer schal I not pende  
 Til I be putte in peynys pyt,  
 To helle hent fro hens.  
 In dale of dole tyle we are downe  
 We schul be clad in a gay gowne.  
 I see no man but they use somme  
 Of these sevene dedly synnys. (1244-50)

The author seems to have taken the character out of the action at this point to ensure that the audience fully understand what has happened and he neatly dovetails the speech back into the play with the Good Angel's exasperated reply beginning : "So mekyl the worse, wele-a-woo" (1260). At the same time he is probably aiming at a deeper effect. The speech produces a certain shock, like Man's oath to the World and his acceptance of Covetise, and probably with the same intention. The Bad Angel's earlier boast that he has blinded Man since he was born (530-1) is illustrated throughout Man's acceptance of the Sins. Here it is demonstrated by the last two lines which show his reliance on safety in numbers and by the indication in the speech that with the recklessness of sloth Man has not imaginatively applied to himself what he intellectually understands. Had he done so he would not have been complacent : hell is all that "herte fleeth and hateth" Lorens says (p.18 above). Man's complacent resting in sin so uncompromisingly declared without

shame or fear might well jolt the audience into making that application to themselves.

Man's pathetic faith in the World and his own immunity continues until the moment of his death when at last recognising the World's treachery, he turns to the audience again and bids them beware. The play is full of references to death, beginning with the introductory speeches of World, Belial and Flesh. World makes it clear that Man's rewards are to be for his lifetime only : "I feffe the in all my wonys wyde/In dale of dros til thou be deth" (755-6); and some of the Sins offer their companionship till death, yet Man in this play, like the hero of Everyman, is still disconcerted when he hears his goods are to go to another.

The scene with the Sins provides a good illustration of the didactic as well as the dramatic effectiveness of personifying the sins in terms of battle. The audience would be keenly and, probably, tensely aware that Man was running into danger in accepting so many enemies into his camp, an awareness that would be less instantaneous if he were shown merely acting in, say, an envious way. There is also poignant dramatic irony in Man's admiring welcome of the world's wit which he is bitterly to tell the audience is "sorwe and wo" as he is dying (2885).

Man's sinfulness has been shown and explained. The play now moves to the second stage of penitence, confession. Southern has imaginatively described the dramatic effectiveness of the long entrance of Shrift and Penitence, the latter carrying a tall lance with which he reaches up to the scaffold and induces contrition in Man despite the efforts of Sloth to prevent it (p.174). Man's confession is necessarily

in general terms : this representational character can not give the details of circumstances and instances required for a good confession. The three stanza absolution is complete and solemn. "I the a-soile with good entente" beginning the second stanza is echoed by "I the a-soile with milde mod" in the third (1507,1520). The absolution covers the sins of heart and mind, of word, work and will, of the flesh, the world and the devil and the five senses. This is persuasive in that it shows that the Church has authority to free people entirely from sin and Man shows the relief confession brings as he exclaims "Lord, what man is in mery live/Whanne he is of his sinnys schreve" (1568-9).

Intent on amendment and satisfaction Man moves into the castle to cultivate the virtues and protect himself from the pursuit of the Sins. In the physical battle that follows the Sins continue to fight with as good a will as in their earlier attack in answer to Covetise' summons, but they are now combatted by the fifth cause of penitence, the remembrance of the Passion.

Positive teaching by the Virtues is given before the battle as they welcome Man in speeches which correspond to those of the Sins' self introductions. Charity reminds him that Christ destroyed Envy on the Cross (1602-14). Abstinence warns that "Gloton killeth withoutyn knif" (also a habit of Envy's (1124)). Charity offers the example of Our Lady, and Industry warns that sloth induces wicked thoughts, so Man should always find some occupation, though recreation is allowable : "And sumtyme play at thy delyte" (1051). Generosity urges Man to spend the goods that God sends for the common good and mentions the merry making of his "sekatourys" after his death (1654-60). A leaf is missing from the

beginning of this scene which must have contained the speeches of Meekness and Patience.

As man enters the castle, the action speeds up excitingly. Backbiter flies round, alerting Devil, Flesh and World who revile the Sins for their failure and beat them. Covetise seems to have got a bit above himself as he addresses World as "Sir Bolning Bowd", a derogatory term later used by Sloth of Business (2337). Covetise, scenting trouble, may have decided to be hanged for a sheep but whatever the reason for his insolence, he receives the beating that awaited him anyway and to bring it to an end he promises to get Man out of the Castle. World in an ecstasy of bragging pride vows vengeance on the Virtues :

I schal brynge with me the bicchys bane;  
 Ther schal no vertus dwellyn in my lond.  
 .....  
 I am the Werld! It is my wyll  
 The Castel of Vertu for to spyll (1895-6)

At the sound of World's trumpets Belial calls up his forces, using a phrase that perversely suggests the journey of the Magi :

Sprede my penon upon a prene  
 And stryke we forth now undyr sterre (1903-4)

Similarly he suggests the sacrament of baptism as he vows vengeance on the Virtues : "In woful watyrs I schal hem wasche" (1921). Flesh boasts of his fabulous appearance in the saddle,<sup>(a)</sup> and finishes the stanza with one of his sinister jingles : "I am Mans Flesch: where I go/  
 I am Mans mest fo" (1947-8). Glutton brings a firebrand, symbolising his ability to set men's blood on fire, and Belial is directed by the

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(a) Southern thinks that horses may have been used for the battle (pp.136,197).

stage plan to have pipes of gunpowder burning in his hands, ears and arse. The battle must have been attended by considerable noise and excitement which the trumpets would enhance, but it is very much a formalised, symbolic battle, in which the Virtues aloft in their castle presumably do not exchange actual blows with the Sins.

Each Sin engages in verbal single combat with his remedial virtue. The six Sins excluding Covetise then fight in threes : Pride, Wrath and Envy oppose Humility, Patience and Charity; and Gluttony, Lechery and Sloth confront Abstinence, Charity and Business. The sins of the Devil are combatted in words by examples of Christ's humility, patience and charity and fall back wounded in the fight before a fusillade of roses symbolising Christ's Passion. Flesh's forces fare no better as the Bread of the Eucharist is opposed to Gluttony, the purity of Our Lady to Lechery, and Confession and the Rosary to Sloth. The sins of the flesh creep away, Gluttony to hide in Flesh's "gong" and Sloth to bathe his "ballockys" and have a rest, in which he does present a slothful characteristic. The Bad Angel, who has greeted the efforts of the Devil's forces with "Go hens! Ye do not worth a turd! (2226), flies into frustrated and entertaining frenzy at this new failure :

I carpe, I crye, I coure, I kacke,  
 I fret, I fart, I fesle fowle!  
 I loke like an howle (2407-9)

The last line is rather lame, as if there are no more words to express his rage and mortification. This is the expected and satisfactory outcome of a battle between the Virtues and Vices, but Covetise now comes forward, suave like a Director redressing the errors of his



underlings.

Urged on by World with a promise of the gallows of Canwicke (such are the World's true rewards) he addresses Man tenderly, pleading old acquaintance. Generosity can only impotently curse him :

There is no dyses nor debate  
 Thorwe this wyde werld so rounde,  
 Tyde nor tyme, erly nor late,  
 But that Coveitise is the grounde.  
 Thou norchist Pride, Envy, and Hate,  
 Thou Coveitise, thou cursed hound. (2453-58)

Covetise produces more of the half true sayings of worldly wisdom. To Man's plea that he is old he replies : "the more nede/To have some good in thine age" (2492-3) and reminds him that those with a penny to pay are listened to and cared for (2524-5). At first Man resists but he is soon replying with a similar saying : "A-forn mele men mete schul tyle" (2537). He moves quickly from the idea of sustenance to that of having something to put away (2542). Later, absurdly and pathetically, he wants to hide some gold under the ground to keep it safe until he dies (2742-4) and then he feels the need for castle walls (2748). He is like an alcoholic who has just one drink. Man frequently reassures himself with the thought that everyone else is as sinful as he. He has done so as he accepts the Sins, in the speech following his first fall and when he talks to Shrift (1369-72). In his final burst of covetise he clings to the same idea :

'More and more' in meny a place  
 Certys that song is often songe  
 I wyte nevere man, by bonkys bace  
 So seyn in clay til he were clonge :  
 'Inow, inow' hadde nevere space;  
 That ful songe was nevere songe  
 Nor I wyl not beginne (2715-22)

One way and another, the criticism of the folly of the world and the warning against following its example are unremitting in this play.

To the Good Angel's plea for help the Virtues can only reply that Man has free will to sin if he insists and Meekness and Generosity appeal to the audience to excuse them what is not their fault (2566-9 & 2644-7). The Bad Angel rejoices and World expresses his treachery :

For I, the Werlde, am of thys entayle  
In hys moste nede I schal hym fayle (2697-9)

The Virtues comment sadly and a little scornfully on Man's defection. Chastity challenges the audience as she says she thinks men little better than beasts for none can take example from the other (2615-16). Most of the Virtues mention Man's end and Generosity renews the theme of "nevere inowe" (2636). This is taken up in Covetise' instructions as "more and more" and becomes a demented refrain until the moment of death when Man is still frenziedly repeating "more and more, thys is my stevene" (2773).

Southern imagines Man at this point as a "broken man", probably sitting with his head in his hands as Death makes his long entrance (p.191). I imagine him crazily counting his gold, but in either case the text suggests that he is in a frenzy and his unconsciousness of Death's approach will increase the tension of the scene as Death proclaims his invincibility in a five stanza speech to the audience. It also illustrates the truth of Death's remark "But now almost I am foryete;/Men of Deth holde no tale" (2817-8).

When struck by Death Man pathetically calls on World, reminding him of the old acquaintance that Covetise so successfully pleaded with

him, but World merely sends down his heir, "I wot nevere whoo". Suspense is renewed as Man falls for a further distraction of the world and worries about his inheritor instead of repenting and saying his prayers. The author of Jacob's Well records the words of the dying who worry about their estates instead of their souls in their last moments : "Allas, how schal myn lond, my corn, my beastys, myn howshold be governed! My wyf, my chyldern.." (p.305). He also notes that they fail to make restitution of ill-gotten money in their testaments. This anxiety of men who were not dying intestate is explained in two passages from Piers Plowman. Ymagynatyf speaks of :

Executoures, fals friends that fulfille nougt his wille  
That was written and they witness (XII.258-9)

and Will says :

As sysours and executours they wil give the freres  
A parcel to preye for hem and make hem-selfe myrye  
With the residue and the remnaunt that other men biswonke  
And suffre the ded in dette to the day of dome (XX.288-91)

The last line may refer to settlement with creditors or to the restitution mentioned in Jacob's Well.

After Man's death his soul creeps out from under the bed, as helpless as Man at his birth. The soul is seized by the Bad Angel, justly, as the Good Angel has to admit and becomes wholly dependent on mercy which, fortunately, "pase alle thyng" (2063,3413).

The daughters of God argue Man's case in the following debate which seems to be designed to move through both inspiration and shame, for mercy must be asked with "love and drede" (3154). It is both song of praise and reproach as it recalls the mercy of God and the Passion and recapitulates the undistinguished spiritual record of Man the hero of

the play and of mankind in general. As in the rest of the play, many years pass in the course of a few minutes' action : Man, Mercy says, has suffered for his sins in Purgatory (3336-9). This is confusing as Purgatory is usually thought of as a place distinct from Hell where Man has gone and whence he is fetched - Dante certainly sees it that way. If this section of the play was revised, the reference to Purgatory might have been added to account for Man's otherwise highly irregular ascent to heaven with all his sins upon him.

The time at which the debate takes place is fluid in the tradition of the Mystery plays where fourteenth century shepherds greet the Christ child. Langland has placed his debate logically after the Crucifixion and before the harrowing of hell. Here certain passages from Righteousness' and Truth's speeches, such as lines 3229-3312, refer to all mankind and to the general principle that universal mercy will lead to "warre and stryfe" (3171) and "synnyng in hope" (3279). The warning against presumption is important as Peace's request to Righteousness "Let no man by you be dampnyd/Nor deme ye no man to helle" (3205-7) might well be read as the honeyed words criticised by Dr. Waldeby (p.44 above). These passages and the arguing of Man's particular case suggest that the debate is roughly contemporary, but the pleas of Righteousness and Truth that God by pardoning Man will be contradicting his own words, and the kiss of the four Virtues suggest that no-one has yet been ransomed by Christ (3383-4,3231-3). Peace seems to set the Debate at the Day of Judgement which is presumably in the future (3544-7). This allegory, like the tearing of the pardon in Piers Plowman, should probably be read associatively without too literal

an application of detail. The impression here is that the trial of Man and his pardon is an eternal process like the constant search and Redemption in Piers Plowman.

As Man's case is argued the audience can see that it is not a good one, but he is well defended. Righteousness says that Man's confession was over-late, his contrition over-light and he made no satisfaction (3427-32a). The author of Jacob's Well allows that death-bed contrition will suffice provided it is true sorrow for sin and not caused merely by fear of death (p.175). Mercy confirms that Man is sorry for his sin (3356) and she pleads that Christ has made satisfaction for him and for all men (3368-9,3147-50). Truth points out that Man performed none of the deeds of mercy and can therefore expect none (3472-7). He must have performed some in the castle where he cultivated such virtues as charity and generosity, but Everyman illustrates and the Parson's Tale explains that good works become stunned and mortified by subsequent sin and can only be quickened by repentance. Good works performed in a state of sin never quicken but they do help to lessen the pains of hell and they attract illumination and softening of the heart from God (p.233). It is doubtless for the latter reason that World and Covetise are so anxious to prevent Man from helping the poor. Truth emphasises that though Man has "Techynge, prechynge in every sele" (3290) he quickly forgets God and scarcely finds the time to thank him for his goodness. These passages seem calculated to awaken sorrow in remembrance of sin, the first cause of contrition. They should also suggest some doubt as to the outcome, or at least doubt as to how Mercy and Peace could make their case.

Bennett considered that the debate was inactive and undramatic and almost certainly an addition by another hand. Eccles defends it by saying that it would not have been so popular a feature of contemporary literature if it had not appeared dramatic to people of the time (p. xviii). I would go further and say that this version, at least, has dramatic quality that is still effective, for it is a trial scene with strong counsels for the defence and prosecution in Mercy and Righteousness. The heart of the debate is in the balancing five stanza speeches before God of Mercy and Righteousness, which could be termed the summing up of the defence and prosecution. Their speeches skilfully evoke the alternating tension of hope and discouragement as well as the emotions of gratitude and shame.

The argument underlying Mercy's speech is that God's part in the history of Man has from the time of Adam moved constantly towards his salvation, that satisfaction has been made for mankind on the Cross and that mercy cannot now be denied. It is expressed in terms which give full value to the extent of the sacrifice involved which would be belittled if Man were, after all, damned. The speech begins with a prayer :

O thou Fader, of mytys most,  
 Merciful God in Trinite!  
 I am thi dowtyr, wel thou woste  
 And mercy fro heven thou browtyst fre.  
 Shew me thi grace in every coste!  
 In this cas my counforte be!  
 Let me, Lord, nevere be loste  
 At thi judgement, whouso it be,  
 Of Mankynd.  
 Ne had mans synne nevere cum in cas  
 I, Mercy, schuld nevere in erthe had plas.  
 Therfor graunte me, Lord, thi grace,  
 That Mankynd may me fynd.

(3313-26)

It moves into adoration in the third and fourth verses as Mercy recalls the Felix Culpa, the trial before Pilate and two sayings from the Cross. There is much less alliteration in the debate than in the rest of the play which is one reason for Bennett's thinking it a later revision, though some remaining alliterative passages may, he says, be the work of the original author (p.50 above). One such passage where alliteration is skilfully used for painful emphasis occurs in Mercy's third stanza :

But thrity wynter here, and more,  
Bowndyn, and betyn, and al to-schent,  
Scorned and scourgyd, sadde and sore,  
And on the rode rewly rent,  
Passus sub Pontio Pilato (3344-48)

She ends her speech with another prayer in which she says : "Lord the lest drope of thy blod/For his synne makith satysfaccioun" (3368-9). The feeling at the end of this speech would probably be a surge of devotion and perhaps some sentimentality at the reminder of God's goodness, mixed with considerable optimism. The mood is elevated.

Righteousness' equally impassioned speech brings the audience down to earth in no uncertain way. It is a formidable indictment of Man, each verse ending with a request for his damnation which logically follows the preceding lines. It is precisely Man's ingratitude for and indifference to the suffering Mercy has described that makes him worthy of damnation. Righteousness describes Man's treason in following the devil, in failing to keep his baptismal vows, forgetting God and shunning the virtues. Stanzas three and four read like a reproach :

For he hath forgetyn the that hym wrowt  
And formydyste hym like thyne owyn face  
And wyth thy precious blod him bowth,  
And in thys werld thou geve him space.

continued/.....

All thy benefetys he set at nowth,  
But took him to the Develys trase. (3405-10)

.....

In helle let him be bownd (3417)

and Man hath forsake the Kinge of Hevene  
And his Good Aungels governaunce,  
And solwyd his sowle with synnys sevene  
By his Badde Aungels comberaunce.  
Virtues he putte ful evyn away  
Whanne Covetyse gan him avaunce (3418-23)

.....

Dampne him to helle belive! (3430)

The audience should be chastened and anxious by this time.

The major problem for the dramatist of the debate remains.

Having established this logical and strongly sustained conflict the author has to find some way of resolving it without bringing the play to a lame close, and he has I think succeeded. The level of intensity descends gently in Mercy's next two stanzas as she begs her sisters to try to save Man who is their kin (as they are daughters of God). Allegory is used to advantage as Peace resolves the dispute simply by pleading the quality she represents and the virtues kiss. This is traditional, but it is nevertheless a little tame because the argument has been virtually abandoned - as it must be for there is no logical outcome to the anomaly of justice and mercy. Anticipation rises again, however, as the Virtues turn to God for His judgement for there is a peculiar fascination in hearing God speak even if it is on the stage. He says that in order to bring Man to heaven His judgement will not accord to his deserts but will :

menge with my most myth  
Alle Pes, sum Treuthe, and sum Ryth  
And most of my mercy (3570-3)



The play could come peacefully to a close on this quiet proclamation of the mystery of mercy but the author has ensured a strong dramatic lift at the end by consigning Man first to the Bad Angel and so enabling the exciting acceleration of action that follows. The Virtues cross to the scaffold of hell and wrest Man from the Bad Angel. He is then set beside God to the sound of trumpets. The last piece of action is given a triumphant up-beat and it only remains for God to conclude the play which has been exciting to the end. He does this with a reminder of the Day of Judgement which makes it very clear that the sheep will be separated from the goats and that Mercy provides no licence for sinning : "And they that evil do, they schul to helle-lake/In bitter balys to be brent: my judgement it is" (3639-40). He then urges the audience to apply the example to themselves : "All men example hereat may take/To mayntein the goode and menden here mis" (3643-4). This speech and the actor's concluding hope that the play will save the audience from sinning balance World's invitation to them at the beginning.

The careful patterning of this play has often been remarked. Scenes are balanced and there are several sequences of speeches in which a certain number of stanzas are given to two or more speakers, as in the three-stanza introductory speeches of World, Belial and Flesh. Balanced scenes help to emphasise points by contrast which is often visual, for the eye perceives more rapidly than the ear. Visual and verbal contrast in parallel actions emphasises the difference between the first and second temptations of Man. On their first encounter with Man the Sins are welcomed one by one and follow each other onto the scaffold. In the attack on the Castle, they are resisted one by one

by the Virtues and then repulsed by the power of the Passion, the Eucharist and the Incarnation, showing the provision that has been made to help man to avoid sin. The parallel scenes also emphasise the pervasiveness and resourcefulness of Covetise. At the Castle he moves in last and restores the situation; in the earlier scene he arrives first and prepares the way for the others. Some contrasts ironically point the quality of the vicious characters : the affectionate tone of Devil and Flesh at the Sins' first pursuit of Man contrasts with their tone and actions on hearing of their failure. Similarly, the Sins' boasts as they approach the Castle contrast absurdly with their lamentations as they retreat. Parallels are also effectively used : Man begins as a naked, helpless child and ends as a helpless soul dependent on mercy; the entrance of Penitence with a lance is paralleled by that of Death with a dart, the latter iconographically reminding the audience of the need for timely penitence.

Eccles finds that the long windedness of the speeches (which arises mainly from the exigencies of patterning) and the large scope of the play prevent it from achieving the concentrated intensity of Everyman and thinks that the author dared beyond his strength in presenting the whole life of Man and the judgement of his soul (p.xxvi). The first part of the statement is true, but I am not sure that it is fair. The author of the Castle seems to be presenting in dramatic form some of the information stipulated long before by the Lambeth Council (p.16 above) and we know from Piers Plowman that the laity were not always as well instructed as the Council intended (p.38 above). To make the instruction effective he seems to be inspiring contrition in

the audience by evoking its six causes and this requires time. Then, he is surely providing a kind of entertainment different from that of Everyman. The Castle is a ceremonious play in which part of the pleasure lies in the ordered procession of speeches, the slow advance of the plot and the careful adherence to the conventions of story telling. When Pride arrives with his colleagues to attack Man, for example, he and Covetise exchange three stanzas of information already given by other means, but the formal enactment of the story demands that they say something to each other and repetitious dialogue is a convention in the simpler kinds of story, such as folk tales or ballads. The patterning of the speeches is satisfactory in itself and it allows space for things to be said in the different ways prescribed by amplificatio, like variations in music, as in the three stanza endings of Flesh's first speech. The author has not demanded intense concentration from his audience and he has provided for slower intelligences. The repetition of information and moral points allows for failure to hear in an open air performance, or to understand, or for lapses of attention, and the words are further reinforced by visual effects and movement.

The information given in the play is fairly basic - what is said about the sins, for example, should have been common knowledge. The dramatisation seems designed to bring that knowledge home and make the audience apply the consequences to themselves as the hero does not. The author has memorably emphasised three major points : the conflict between the world and God; the eagerness with which all the deadly sins follow when one is entertained; and the obsessional nature of covetise. At the same time he has reminded the audience of ways in which they

might be sinning themselves and has perhaps made the rather daunting exercise of confession a little easier by helping to classify the sins.

The play seems intended to celebrate as well as to instruct. The debate before God is essential to the celebration and also as a reminder of Christ's Passion and of the hope of forgiveness, grace and the glory of heaven as stages to contrition. Furthermore the author has used the debate with psychological insight to put the audience through an emotional mill which should make them very receptive to God's admonition at the end. Perhaps the debate could have been shortened a little as its two stages entail some repetition, but again there is the pleasure of amplificatio for the quicker witted. Man's second fall is essential as he would otherwise have earned by perseverance in virtue the salvation he is granted through pure mercy. His case would then have been better and the reproaches which are necessary for moving the audience to shame would have seemed ill-natured. Finally, brevity is no recommendation to an unsophisticated audience. I do not agree that the author dared beyond his strength. He seems to have known exactly what he was doing and to have done it well.

Pains have been taken to make the play enjoyable in two other ways. There are many dramatic thrills : the terror of Belial; Man's appearance gorgeously arrayed in the World's livery; the beating of the Sins and Backbiter's amusement; the battle, with gunpowder and faggot; the presence of Death; the horrid threats of the Bad Angel; and the huge cast and the costumes. The rich array promised by Flesh at the end of his first speech has been abundantly provided. There is also a homely quality in the play. Eccles notes that many of the similes are common-

places of secular literature (p.xxvi). God is simple and kindly as He welcomes His daughters like a character in a ballad : "Welcum in fere/ Bryther thanne blossom on brere" (3245-6). Belial is "bryth of ble" (915) and Wrath pursues Man as "hounde aftyr hare" (921). It is impossible to tell whether an idiom that will appeal to the audience has been used deliberately or whether it is the author's natural style, but it is of a piece with the way he tells his story.

The careful patterning is used for dramatic and didactic effect but it also suggests that the author may have wished to make the play as perfect as possible, for it reflects the perfectly ordered world with which God has endowed man. So it becomes part of the celebration of God's goodness that is so important to the play. The thirteen-line stanzas alone, rhyming abab abab bccb or cddc often with four alliterations on the stressed syllables must have required much labour.

The main features of the Castle are its copiousness and elaborately patterned structure and speech scheme. It seems designed to expound the three parts of penitence, to evoke the six causes for contrition and to celebrate God's love for man and His spiritual provision for him. The Sins are shown primarily as ruthless tempters and are broadly characterised by their own announcements rather than by their behaviour. The main point made is that they are all determined to bring Man to destruction. Covetise, however, comes vividly to life as a smooth and specious con-man with a respectable air. The true meaning of sin is expressed on occasion in terms designed to shock the audience into realisation of what they have been doing themselves and what the consequences are likely to be. They are assured of the relief

absolution can bring and then put through an emotional mill to make them receptive to the warning contained in the play and to its inspirational quality. The excellent entertainment they have been offered in what is a holiday as well as a moral play is likely to add to their receptiveness.

There is no doubt that the author's main purpose is didactic but to that end he has skilfully used understanding of audience psychology and the opportunities offered by drama for suspense, relief, comic and tragic irony and the stimulation of different emotions. I think he has succeeded in sustaining the tension of the play after its climax at Man's death but some critics disagree. If the debate was added by a reviser he has shown good judgement in fitting it to the penitential scheme of the play. Many of the techniques used in the Castle are developed in different ways in Mankind which will be discussed in the next section.

The presentation of the sins moves away from the formula of the confession books in the plays following the Castle. Nature is the only other extant morality in the pre-1500 group fully to personify all seven, though many of them appear as mute, attendant sub-sins in Wisdom Who is Christ (c.1460-63).<sup>1</sup> Bevington<sup>2</sup> and Ramsay<sup>3</sup> see this play as focussing on worldly political activity by religious, and Bevington finds a connection with the related defection from the monasteries. Ramsay adds that for the first time the morality was devoted to giving advice for this world instead of the next and it was only a step until it ceased to give advice altogether (p.lxxi). Presumably he means that the ideal began to disappear in some of the later satires so that only criticism remained and the audience were negatively advised in a general, ethical and social rather than a strictly religious way. Eccles in his introduction insists that the main purpose of Wisdom is not political but that it is an exhortation to Christian living - and certainly the exhortation is prominent.<sup>4</sup>

Like the Castle this play attempts to shock the audience into contrition and to make them understand evil by revealing precisely what the sinner is doing. Here the effect is graphically illustrated as the soul appears hideously disfigured, whereas in the Castle realisation was effected through the defiant words of the hero (pp.56 & 62 above).

The Wisdom author seems concerned to reveal something of the

psychological process of sin. The functions of reason, sensuality and the five wits are explained by Wisdom at the beginning and the play illustrates the effects of the perversion of Mind, Will and Understanding who, with the Soul, represent Man. Rightly, Mind is the likeness of the Godhead and must act on the judgement of Reason; Understanding enables men to see God's attributes and to hallow and love him accordingly; and Will "whyche turnyt into love brennyng" is compared to the Holy Ghost "that cleped is love" (281-2).

The sole tempter in the play is Lucifer himself. He persuades the mind to sin and its corruption generates the deadly sins in the soul. This is illustrated in the tableau where six of the sins run out from under the mantle of Anima who has appeared "in most horrybull wyse, fowlere than a fende" (903). The sins are allegorised, therefore, not as external forces but as generated by man himself. That the externalised allegorisation of the sins represents the struggle within man's heart, mind and will would have been understood in any play, but the emphasis on the internal nature of the struggle here seems to be one step towards the presentation of conflict of conscience within a character found in later plays, such as Shakespeare's.

The root sin in the play is covetise but Lucifer, disguising himself as a "goodly galont" (381), tempts his victims to abandon the contemplative life by undermining their confidence in its worth and their own ability to live it. He appeals to the pusillanimity and longing for ease of sloth. As Mind, Will and Understanding hurl themselves into the pleasures of the world their names are changed to those of sins or sub-sins. Will has become a waster with the prodigality that



belongs to pride and he spends three times more than he earns. The perversion of his natural attribute of love is illustrated in his new name of Lechery. Mind serves a great lord and protects wrong doers for money instead of appreciating the rewards of God and is called Mayntenance (supporting evil). Understanding, who lives by spying, simony and perjury instead of perceiving God's attributes, is renamed Perjury. The wide social implications of this perversion are shown in the plan of Perjury to pervert the justice of the "Holborn Quest". This parallels the wholesale corruption shown in Langland's *passi on Meed* (pp.35,36 above).

The deadly sins are divided into groups roughly corresponding to the three parts of the mind. Mind (Mayntenance) is attended by two sins of the devil, wrath and envy, expressed as sub-qualities : Indignacion, Sturdiness, Malice, Hastines, Vengeance and Discord. Understanding's perjurers are called Wrong, Sleight, Doubleness, Falsehood, Ravine and Deceit which are parts of covetise, a sin of the world, though wrong also belongs to wrath and envy. Will's six lechers are called Recklesshood, Idleness, Surfeit, Greediness, Spouse-breach (adultery), and Fornication, all sins of the flesh. These three groups of attendants wear the livery of their masters and each group performs a dance of grotesques. When Mind, Will and Understanding see what they have done to Anima, they repent and are restored to grace.

Eccles observes that the author combines preaching and pageantry (p. xxxvi). Much of the visual effect of the play is achieved by the symbolic use of costume. Anima, Mind, Will and Understanding and the five wits who attend Anima are radiant in white cloth of gold

at the beginning of the play and reappear in the same costume after their repentance at the end. During their fall the three faculties adopt and delight in the highly fashionable costume which is invariably a sign of spiritual deterioration.

Here the renaming of the faculties illustrates their perversion. In many plays the process is reversed and the Sins disguise their true nature with respectable names. A note attached to the Speculum Christiani (ms. c.1360-80) describes how honest virtue is turned to vice and the contrary.<sup>5</sup> "Dissolucion in felyschipe is trowede mirth" the author says "and curiosite of clothyng and of othere temporal things is taken for honeste". Conversely, to live frugally and manage money well "is callyd nygardyse and covetyse" while covetise is called "true provysion of purchasyng".

In Henry Medwall's Nature (c.1486-1500) the Sins change their names to "blere" Man's eye (d.iv<sup>r</sup>). Pride becomes Worship; Covetise Worldly Policy; Wrath Manhood; Envy Disdain; Gluttony Good Fellowship; Sloth Ease; and Lechery Lust. In this play the major conflict is between Reason and Sensuality. Sensuality is recognised as an essential part of Man : "What coulde the sely body do/Or how sholde it lyve ne were the help of me" (a.iii<sup>v</sup>); but his urgent demand for supremacy is refused in the first scene by Nature who leaves Reason in charge. Sensuality enlists the aid of World, who is very slick and talks euphemistically of "spiced consciences" regarding light trifles, matters of insolence and merry thoughts (b.iii<sup>v</sup>). Pride makes important headway in the struggle for Man's soul as he flatters him into living by his own judgement rather than listening to wise counsellors (c.iv<sup>v</sup>). He and

Worldly Affection then persuade Man to employ the sins of the flesh as his retainers and to spend much of his time at taverns and brothels. Covetise lurks on the outskirts of this company, waiting to become the companion of Man's age (d.iv<sup>v</sup>).

The battle of the Sins against the forces of Reason is treated in a very different manner from the battle in the Castle and, indeed, it never takes place on stage. Medwall's Sins, like Langland's, appear as types who are victims of their own qualities, though they are also tempters. The absurdity of the Sins is more fully exploited than in the Castle and Medwall makes comic capital out of their reactions to battle. The terrible and pervasive sin of pride depicted by Lorenz has in Nature become a bragging fop<sup>6</sup> though he is effective enough in corrupting Man. He spends so long raising money for his war equipment that Envy, to his delight, is able to convince him - untruthfully - that he has missed the battle and lost his job (h.i<sup>v</sup>). Bodily Lust fears the hardship of war may impair his sexuality: "I will not come where strokys be/I am not so mad a man" (g.iii<sup>r</sup>). Glutton appears armed with a bottle and a cheese, foreshadowing Falstaff's appearance at the Battle of Shrewsbury (I.Henry IV.V.iii)<sup>7</sup>, though he does not pretend to be a valorous knight: "I was never wont to that gere/But I may serve to be a vyteler" (g.iv<sup>v</sup>).

In Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil Spivack refers to the "leavening element" in the morality plays. Against their moral seriousness the "unregenerate instincts of playwright and audience maintained a running quarrel" (p.113). In the Castle this aspect is muted to some indulgence of the audience's love of the sensational which is never

allowed to overstep the bounds of honest recreation. The absurdity of the Sins themselves always illustrates the slavery of evil and the comparative weakness of any force pitted against good and it is very clearly related to these two themes. In Nature there seems to be an increasing delight in the absurd effects a sin can produce in human behaviour although the treatment is unmistakeably satirical and the moral points are firmly made. In Mankind which, written about 1465-70, is earlier than Nature, the Sins are updated to reflect contemporary attitudes and the audience's unregenerate instincts have been skilfully manipulated to a moral end. The play may have been intended to supply both a last fling before Lent and a preparation for it. Man writes out the Ash Wednesday text after his first encounter with Mercy to remind himself of his situation (721). A nonsense line refers to February : "On yestern day in Fevere - the yere passith fully (691) and New Guise asks for the loan of a football (732). This game, Sister Coogan has discovered, was often played on Shrove Tuesday as recreation before Lent.<sup>8</sup>

The play is thought to have been written for a travelling company of six professionals or semi-professionals, the leading actor probably doubling the parts of Mercy and Titivillus. It gives the first overt reference in English drama to payment as New Guise threatens that Titivillus, traditionally invisible, will not appear unless the audience pay up : "Ye go thy wey, we xall gather money onto/Ellys than xall no man him se" (457-8).<sup>9</sup> The ditch or palisade round the theatre area of the Castle implies, however, that there were also admission charges for that play.<sup>10</sup> David Bevington considers Mankind a key play in the

development of English drama, so much so that he has used its characteristics of economy in casting and a production that travels easily as criteria in establishing a canon of later popular commercial plays.<sup>11</sup>

Mankind is a forward looking play in many respects and two of Man's adversaries, the World and the Flesh, are presented in it in their modern guise. Mercy says "The New Gyse, Nowadyis, Nowgth, the World we may ham call" (885), while the Flesh is Mankind's own "unclene concupissens" (887). Nowgth is sufficient indication of character, but New Guise and Nowadays are neutral terms which could confuse. Mercy himself distinguishes between the good and the vicious new guise (182-3), showing that the play is a criticism of only some aspects of modernity and not the prejudiced attack habitually made by the older generation.

Nevertheless the satirist's mirror of the times is not yet fully released from the old method of personifying the sins illustrated in the Castle. New Guise, Nowadays and Nought seem to have a double aspect. They are part representative men living in the world who practise the sins and part allegorical personifications of tempters scheming for evil. They have some history in the world. Two of them have wives : Nowadays mentions his Rachell (135) and New Guise fears he will be "schent" of his wife because Mankind's spade has damaged his "jewellys" (381). Nought has been often with the tapster at Bury, played the fool and never been worth a "potful a wortys" (270-5). Like ordinary human beings the three are subject to Divine and human punishment : "They be wanton now but then xall/thei be sade" Mercy predicts (181) and New Guise narrowly escapes the civil law penalty of hanging for stealing a horse (615-6). At the same time, they have an overtly diabolical function.

Directed by their supervisors, Mischief and Titivillus, "the Fend of Helle" (886), they tempt Mankind as industriously and as consciously as the personified sins in the Castle; the tempting of human bad influences is usually less conscious. The author is therefore revealing what "merry" or depraved behaviour means, much as Man's vow of allegiance in the Castle illustrates the true nature of sin. Here, however, the bad example is shown in action as the gay trio intitiiate Mankind into their own way of life. In the Castle Man's own words and his welcoming recognition of the sins suggested the effects of the bad behaviour of others.

These three young men resemble Langland's fashionable young man, Life, in some respects (p.39 above). Like him they are father to Sloth in that they encourage its effects and developments in Mankind even to despair. The damage New Guise receives from Mankind's spade shows how industry can prevent the generation of sloth and the sins that accompany it. They also show many marks of the slothful man including addiction to the sins of the flesh. Nowadays' struggle for mastery with his wife certainly indicates an ill-conducted marriage and that it may illustrate his own subjection to the flesh is suggested by Mankind's equation of the flesh's governance of his soul to an unbalanced marriage : "Wher the goodwyff ys master, the goodeman may be sorry" (199-200).

New Guise, Nowadays and Nought reveal signs of depravity in their first scene. They enter revelling gaily and dancing which is no sin, but they interrupt Mercy's instruction of Man and quickly show him disrespect. New Guise's complaint that he was asleep when called suggests sloth while Nowadays' drinking before eating might imply gluttony (99-101).

Mercy's admittedly rather provocative attempt to correct them ("Lady, helpe! How wrechys delight in ther sympull weys! (109)") is aggressively resented by Nowadays which is a sign of pride and sloth, and New Guise employs the euphemism of evil as he maintains that far from betraying men they "make them both fresch and gay" (119). Their addiction to foul language and desire to tempt the good are quickly illustrated as Nowadays, mocking Mercy's predilection for Latin, asks him to show the value of his knowledge by translating an obscene sentence. "Thys ydell language ye xall repente" Mercy warns them (147).

At their next entrance, holding holiness a joke like Langland's *Life*, they brazenly taunt Mercy with their own major fault of idleness (261-9) and they give an example of what they are likely to do to the hero as they inveigle the audience into joining in their obscene "Christmas song" (331-44). In turning to lewd scoffing at the good works of Mankind they meet their come-uppance, however, as by striking them with his spade he subjugates fleshly temptation by industry.

New Guise, Nowadays and Nought also manifest many of the subsins of covetise as, eschewing industry, they get money by stealing. Among the booty collected in the play are horses (622); the collection ostensibly made for Titivillus (479-89) and the sacrilegiously stolen furnishings and bread and wine from a church (673). The violence attached to covetise is also illustrated as New Guise instructs Mankind not only to rob but to kill if necessary (714-16). They are also lecherous (706-8) and their incontinence suggests gluttony (782-6). That the ale house is their headquarters implies all the sins attached to the tavern (p.30 above). Mankind is encouraged in sloth and the

sins of the flesh as his articles of apprenticeship to Mischief stipulate that he is to attend the ale house rather than Church (710-12) and he is urged into ostentatious pride and prodigality in destroying his protective side gown to make a fashionable short jacket. Again, extreme fashion in dress is symbolic of spiritual deterioration.

Mischief differs from Voluptas and Folly in the Castle in that he is the state to which the tempters seek to bring Mankind rather than a preliminary cast of mind or set of faulty values (pp.55,56 above). At the end of the play Mercy explains the meaning of Mischief and his three companions to Mankind :

These be yowr thre gostly enemies, in whom ye have put your confidens  
Thei browt yow to Myscheffe to conclude your temporall glory.

(888-9)

Titivillus, having done his work of bringing Mankind to "mischeff and to shame" (606), goes off doubtless to other business, but Mischief belongs to the world. He is an experienced convict who knows his neck verse (619) and he indulges in sin himself : having killed the gaoler he rapes his wife (643-5) which seems unlike the disciplined devotion to tempting of Titivillus. On the other hand, Mischief shows a chagrin comparable to that of World, Flesh and Devil in the Castle when his team fail to distract Mankind from his honest labour (413-20). In this he parodies Mercy's lamentations at Mankind's defection and in consoling his wounded team with idiotic remedies he parodies Mercy's two passages of consolation of Mankind.<sup>12</sup> There is much parody in the play which is used to illustrate the upside down world of evil much as Lorens uses it in his description of the Devil's miracles in the tavern (p.30 above).



The most striking feature of the presentation of the vicious characters in Mankind is their theatrical attractiveness. Squalid though they are, they have immense vitality. Every scene lifts as they appear, larking about, singing, making scurrilous but often entertaining jokes in gay swift patter for which the rhyme scheme is well adapted as Paula Neuss remarks in her essay, Active and Idle Language.<sup>13</sup> Above all, they are consistently irreverent, sending up respectable institutions such as apprenticeship, justice, clergy Latin, religion and the worthy tiller of the soil. The daring, reckless quartet in this play would certainly provide a field day of vicarious bravado for the timid and the dutiful, an outlet for the unregenerate instincts mentioned by Spivack and which Enid Welsford points out were catered for in the Feast of Fools.<sup>14</sup> Paula Neuss maintains that this author is not only providing an opportunity to let off steam but is ironically demonstrating to the audience that they too are subject to the sin of sloth with its attendant levity that they are seeing depicted on the stage (pp.45-6).

The characterisation of Titivillus bears this out, for the hero of the play is not the only person he tempts. Dr. Neuss notes that he is a particularly appropriate devil for Mankind as the Towneley Judgement Play informs us that his function is to collect in a sack "fragmina verborum" (251) of blasphemers, church chatterers, whisperers and scandal mongers and produce them at the Day of Judgement. He tells the demons in hell, who compliment him on his prowess : "I have broughte to youre hande of sawles, dar I say/Mo than ten thowsand in an howre of a day (215-6).<sup>15</sup>

The use of Titivillus as a bait to elicit payment in Mankind suggests that he was a popular character, but it may also be a device to build up his entrance, expectation being further prompted by his gay cry off-stage "I com with my leggs under me" (454). New Guise's remark that they are gathering money for "a man with a hede" (461) suggests that Titivillus wore a full head mask, and he carries a net to blind his victims which should be sufficient warning for the audience (530). Titivillus is very much a devil of the people and part of his charm is that he sends up the nobs: "Ego sum domentium dominus" (475) he begins blasphemously but magnificently - and then asks New Guise to lend him a penny. That source being unproductive as the three have no intention of giving up the collection, he sends them off to steal horses or anything they can find from local dignitaries. The names in the text would probably have been changed from place to place to those of people known to the audience and another laugh would be raised by the distinction of the tough nuts: "I shall spare Master Woode of Fullburn/ He is a. noli me tangere" (511-12).

As the horse thieves leave, Titivillus gives them not a conventional blessing like the vice organisers of the Castle, but an upside down one:

Goo your wey, a deull wey, go your wey all!  
I blysse yow with my lefte honde: foull yow befall (521-2).

Titivillus is particularly insidious because he sends up the devil, one institution to be taken seriously, and makes a joke of evil. The good humour of the vicious characters in Mankind makes them more attractive to the audience than those in the Castle. The slapstick horseplay of New

Guise, Nowadays and Nought is clowning rather than quarreling and there is no reproach for failure. Titivillus shows a spritely enjoyment of his diabolical work which invites the spectators' complicity, something he confidently takes for granted.

He takes the audience into his confidence as he tells them his plans to tempt Mankind by placing a board under his land and spoiling his seed. "I prey of counsell" he says as unsuspecting Mankind enters, respectable in his side gown, and soberly begins his work with an invocation (539).<sup>16</sup> The laughs are all on the dull figure plodding away at digging through a board as quick-witted Titivillus tiptoes off with his seed and opportunistically snatches up the spade as soon as he throws it down. "I promes yow, I have no lede on my heles" he says, returning with a new trick as Mankind is saying his rosary (555). Having been distracted from prayer by the call of nature suggested by Titivillus' whisper, Mankind returns saying he is tired of labour and prayer and falls asleep (581-88).

This scene reads a little perfunctorily but would be much enriched in performance by stage business and the acting opportunities for both players. It is nevertheless fairly short and it is a good example of this author's neat construction as he packs in a great deal during its entertaining course. Mankind demonstrates the impatience, weariness of good works and religious observance and the "heaviness" of sloth. As he digs the land hardened by Titivillus' board he recalls Adam after the Fall cultivating the hostile earth corrupted by his sin, as Bevington notes in his introduction to the play in Medieval Drama (p.96). The author has used the actual level of the allegory for comic

effect in Titivillus' business and Mankind's useless endeavour, but the spade and rosary thrown down will iconographically suggest the underlying meaning. Bevington notes further that hard earth and misplaced tools and seed are part of the everyday frustrations of farming which would be sympathetically recognised by a rural audience (p.96). At the same time the audience have been led into a trap. Titivillus threatens anyone who wakes Mankind with a fine of forty pence which suggests that some of the audience may have been inclined to shout out warnings to Mankind, but the upshot is that they have conspired in the temptation of their representative on the stage: that is they have been beguiled by irresponsible laughter into encouraging sin.

The large conflict in the Castle is between God and the World. In this play the conflict focusses on the struggle between the body and the soul in Mankind himself. This he announces in his first speech as he sorrowfully mourns his sinfulness :

My name is "Mankynde". I have my composcyon  
 Of a body and a sowl, of condycyon contrarye  
 Betwyx them tweyn ys a grett dyvisyon;  
 He that xulde be subjecte, now he hathe the victory

(194-7).

The battle between the soul and the body, Mercy tells him, is perennial :  
 "Vita hominis est militia super terram" (228). He encourages Mankind to become "cristys own knight" in order to fight his adversary with God's help and reminds him of the brevity of life :

Remember, my frende, the tyme of continuance,  
 So help me Gode, yt ys but a chery tyme.

(232-3)

Mercy advises moderation in drinking though not total abstinence :

"'Mesure is tresure'. I forbid yow not the use" (237). The attitude to worldly things is more moderate in this play than in the Castle. When Mercy distinguishes between the good and the vicious guise, he tells the audience to use their reason to "Take that is to be takyn, and leve that is to be refusyd" (185). He then compares the indulged flesh to an overfed horse which will throw its rider (241-4).

Paula Neuss has noticed that the nonsense of the vicious characters reinforces the images that are associated with the soul struggle by means of the preaching device of traductio, the sustained repetition of key words over a long passage (pp.43,44). Mercy's image of corn that is saved and chaff that is burnt (43) is nonsensically and wittily developed by Mischief in lines 53-63 and he associates it with a horse : "chaff horsybus et reliqua" (60). His apparently nonsensical reply to Mercy's invitation to leave - that he has no horse (66) - develops a threatening meaning through Mercy's use of the image to represent the flesh when he warns Mankind to ask forgiveness at once if he has displeased God : "Ellys Mischeff will be redy to brace yow in his bridyll" (306). This suggests that the horse Mischief lacked was Mankind's headstrong flesh and it lends a sinister underlying association to the horse stealing and to Titivillus' amusing roar : "Ye that have goode hors, to yow I say, caveatis" (476).

Encouraged by Mercy's consolation, Mankind writes out the Ash Wednesday text "Memento homo, quod cinis es, et in cinerem reverteris" (321). This is taken from Job XXIV and will further remind Mankind of the need for patience in adversity which has been urged on him by Mercy (281-93). He deals very well with the first attack of his enemies -

"nec in hasta ...." but "in spadibus" as Nought, capping Mankind's rather pompous Latin quotation, puts it (398). The irony of Mankind's premature triumph, "I promett yow, thes felowse will no more cum here" (401), is quickly revealed to the audience as they see Titivillus, the expert tempter, conjured by music (453). Mankind fails the test of patience and during his slothful sleep falls victim to the wiles of the whispering devil. With the inventiveness of the backbiter, Titivillus makes up a story about Mercy, beginning with the theft of a mare, adding a horse and a cow, and ending by saying he has been hanged for theft. He directs Mankind to New Guise, Nowadays and Nought and delivers as a parting shot the suggestion that he take a mistress. The Parson's Tale refers to lechery committed in sleep through villainous thoughts enclosed in the mind on going to sleep (p.258) and Titivillus' whisper seems to be an allegory of this kind of sin. Mankind, on waking, is quite transformed. "Whope! Who!" are the first unexpected words of this pillar of propriety (607). He hurries off to the "devil's schoolhouse", the tavern, to find New Guise, Nowadays and Nought and a "lemman". The flesh has conquered and produced its own vocabulary.

The author of Mankind has encapsulated much of the teaching, the celebration and the reproaches of the Castle in the character of Mercy, who is the sole representative of virtue in the play. Mercy's speeches recall many of the elements that prompt contrition. His opening speech begins with man's duty to worship and reason for loving the Creator, moves to a reminder that man was dear bought "By the pituouse deth of Jhesu" (10), and a plea for reformation : "O soverence, I besече yow yowr condicions to rectify" (13). In stanza three he introduces

himself as "the very mene for yowr restitution" (17) who "mournith for yowr offence" and finishes the stanza with a prayer. He warns the audience in the fourth stanza of their "gostly enmy" and urges perseverance. He exhorts them in the fifth stanza to turn from transitory earthly things to Christ; and in the sixth he praises the power of the Sacrament. His instructions to Mankind emphasise the need for perseverance and patience in adversity and repeat the warning in more specific terms (294-304).

After Mankind's defection Mercy expresses his sorrow and reproaches man for his incomprehensible ingratitude to God : "Why art thou so on-curtess, so inconsideratt?". The reproach moves on to Man's treason and his failure to keep promises, expressing the same indictment though with less explanation that Righteousness so eloquently puts in the Castle (p.73 above). Mercy prays to Our Lady for merciful intercession and brings the reproach back to a contemporary moral and the context of the play as he says that sensual living is to blame for present day behaviour and New Guise, Nowadays and Nought for the defection of Mankind (730-3). Mercy goes off calling for Mankind, having expressed his determination to save him in an uncharacteristically simple line : "With wepinge terys, by night and be day, I will goo and never sesse" (769). The line sums up the two Christ-like aspects of Mercy : he sorrows for Mankind's sin and he seeks out the sinner.

The play has shown Mankind with the impatience of sloth and the flesh abandoning the good works and religious practice that kept him on an even keel and turning to all the sins of the flesh and those resulting from covetise. Like Man in the Castle he makes a vow of

allegiance to the forces of evil, though here the setting is the spoof Manor Court irreverently cried by Nowadays : "Oy-yt, oy-yit, oyet! All manere of men and comun women" (667). Whereas Man in the Castle, coming presumably from a higher estate, gives his hand to World, Mankind, who has already knelt to New Guise, Nowadays and Nought, answers humbly "I will, ser" to the articles of sin (702-17). With these simple words, contrasting with his earlier pompous diction, our sympathy begins to swing. Mankind becomes pathetic and his being made a fool of a shame. The business of cutting up his good side gown, to which he reluctantly consents, has a similar effect. When Mankind, probably a strong rather than an elegant type, is inappropriately clad in a mincing jacket New Guise's shout of "Hay, doog! hay, whoppe! Go yowr wey lightly" is funny, but at the same time it seems too bad. So the author encourages in the audience the distinction between a good joke and an evil one, much as Mercy told them to distinguish between the good and the bad new guise.

When Mercy at last finds him, Mankind strongly recalls Adam after the Fall : "Alasse, I have be so bestyally dysposyde I dare not apere" (813). He then expresses the feeling illustrated by Langland in his depiction of Haukyn's unsatisfactory active life with its constant round of sin and confession : "Evyr to offend and ever to ask mercy, it is a puerilite" (820). Mankind is moving into the phase of self contempt noted by Lorens (p.24 above). He then illustrates lack of faith in God's mercy, a serious symptom of the despair of sloth : "The egall justyce of God wyll not permytte sych a sinful wrech/To be rewyved and restored ageyn; it were impossibyll" (831-2).

There must have been considerable tension in this scene as



Mercy exhorts and Mankind expresses his writhing reluctance. The feelings he shows are those that would have been shared in some degree by all those returning to confession again and again with the same list of sins. There are degrees in despair, and discouragement or pusillanimity is one of the causes of sloth that leads to it. The psychological progression of spiritual sloth seems to be well understood here and sympathetically applied to the audience - or "congrigacion" as Mankind calls them (188). As Mankind finally succeeds in asking for mercy the play confirms the constant performance of the "impossibyll" : "Lytyll ys our parte of paradyse were mercy ne were" (836).

The preachers of this period were as much concerned that penitents should not be frightened from confession by over-stern reproof as that they should not be led into presumption through over-emphasis on mercy.<sup>17</sup> This scene seems designed to offer reassurance to any victim of over-zealous reproach.

Mercy in his next speech briefly describes the debate of the four daughters of God, though he does not mention Peace.<sup>18</sup> He then warns Mankind against sinning in hope (845) and stresses the importance of asking mercy before death : "Be repentant here! Trust not the ovr of deth" (865). For the benefit of the audience he explains to Mankind the significance of the vicious characters in the play (883-90), reminds him of his own readiness to help and, in the epilogue, exhorts the audience to "Serche yowr condicions with dew examinacion" (908). He ends the play with a prayer that the audience may be "pley-ferys of the angellys above".

The part of Mercy contains a great deal of material designed

to move and the character is moving. Yet Mercy expresses himself in such pretentious diction that one is inclined to agree with New Guise's jibe : "Ey, ey, yowr body is full of Englisch Laten!/I am aferde it will brest" and with Mischief's comment that Mercy is "all to-gloryede in (his) termys" (773).

Paula Neuss's essay is helpful on this score also as she explains that not only was coarse language a sign of depravity, but the proper use of language was an essential aspect of virtuous behaviour (p.51). This is borne out by Mankind's change from diction similar to Mercy's in his periods of grace to inarticulate cries for fleshly delights after his fall : "A tapster! a tapster! Stow, statt, stow!" (729). Dr. Neuss goes on to say that Stephen Hawes' *Lady Rhetoric* explains that idle and ignorant people "will laugh at language that is beautifully aureate and uses images, because they are unable to understand it" (p.51). She feels that Mischief and his team are showing their ignorance in jeering at Mercy's style. That this kind of scornful jeering is one of the more serious aspects of idle talk is indisputable. This and the mockery of Mankind's labour are surely examples of the words of manslaughter mentioned by Lorens (p.19 above). My difficulty here is that Mischief seems to understand Mercy's language perfectly well and to play on it with some wit of a knock-about kind, but other writers on aureate diction suggest that Paula Neuss is right as regards the author's general intention at least. J.C. Medenhall in *Aureate Terms* describes the earlier repugnance to Romance terms resulting in such expressions as "Ayenbite of Inwit" for remorse of conscience. This, however, gave way to a delight in "flourished" words and in those of foreign origin

which were widely used in literature intended for educated readers, though plain people's reading was kept "pure" in diction (p.68).<sup>19</sup> The language of *Mercy and Mankind* in the play may, therefore, be an indication that the author was writing with the "soverens" in mind quite as much as the "brothern". A.W. Pollard in his introduction to Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse observes : "As the fifteenth century progressed and its successor began, it became more and more the object of the the poetaster to end his lines with sounding polysyllables, and verse not written in this style was considered uncourtly and undignified" (p.xi).<sup>20</sup>

Both writers observe that Chaucer's skill and experience allowed him to introduce a great many new words into English usage which were praised by his contemporaries. Chaucer's vocabulary even where it seems strange is not unattractive, but many of the combinations in Mankind strike unpleasingly and absurdly on the modern ear. That the taste for the aureate is not yet dead, however, is attested by the following quotation from a modern scholarly work : "The similarity of artistic response to events of supranational significance in the baroque age enhances the acceptability of baroque as a period designation".<sup>21</sup> That to me is hardly less pretentious than one of *Mankind's* more "to-gloried" stanzas :

O Mercy, my suavius solas and synguler recreatory,  
My predilecte spesyall, ye are worthy to have my lowe;  
For withowte deserte and meny supplicatorie  
Ye be compacient to my unexcusabyll reprowe.

(871-4)

Tastes vary in any age and it is possible that there were members of the contemporary audience who, as Dr. Neuss suggests, found the diction

of Mercy and Mankind regenerate "beautifully" aureate. It is clearly impossible that the author should have been mocking Mercy through his diction, for the character not only expounds Christian doctrine and represents virtue but also demonstrates Christ-like qualities. It is a tribute to the dramatist's skill that in spite of what is to me a very steep language barrier, the character of Mercy does not fail to move. It is true that J. Quincy Adams found his talk saccharine<sup>22</sup> and Eccles finds his speeches tedious (p.xiv) but the character is moving rather in his attitudes and the way his part has been related to Mankind's, particularly in the scene after Mankind's attempted suicide.

The author is skilful in other respects. His construction is neat and he uses visual images with something of the balanced and contrasting effects of those in the Castle. Mankind kneels first to Mercy, for example, then to New Guise, Nowadays and Nought and again to Mercy, symbolising grace and fall. These stage images are paralleled by the symbolic value of the spade contrasting with the grim image of the gallows.<sup>23</sup> The comic patter flows with easy vitality and the rhyme scheme given to the "japeres" is admirably adapted to cross talk. The second or third of the first three rhyming lines of a stanza can be picked up by another speaker when the continued rhyme sharpens the effect of riposte, while the echoing of tail rhymes from stanza to stanza, often by different speakers, allows a neat chain of patterning which gives the impression that the dialogue is wittier than it is, as the following passage illustrates.

Nowadays    What how, Neu Gyse!  Thou makyst moche tarynge.  
               That jactett xall not be worth a ferthyng.

N. Guise     Out of my wey, sers, for drede of fyghtyng!  
               Lo, here ys a feet tayll, lyght to leppe abowte!

Nought       Yt ys not schapyn worth a morsell of brede;  
               There ys to moche cloth, yt weys as ony lede.  
               I xall goo and mende yt, ellys I wyll lose my hede.  
               Make space, sers, lett me go owte.

(694-701)

The author's manipulation of the audience is well described in Dr. Neuss' essay, particularly in respect of the suspense generated by Mercy's entrances, his distant approach at the hanging scene being a good example. She notes that Mercy always arrives when he is needed. She sees Mercy's opening homilectic speech as deliberately designed to awaken in the audience a boredom and impatience which are given material expression when Mischief interrupts the sermon saying: "I beseche yowe hertily, leve yowr calculacyon!" (45). The audience are clearly made accomplices to Titivillus' temptation of Mankind and it is not impossible that the author is also showing them as responsible for conjuring up the other tempters. New Guise, Nowadays and Nought insist that they have been called by Mercy and this suggests that evil can very easily be made to materialise, for he clearly did not call them deliberately. He may have mentioned them in a missing leaf following line 71. If Dr. Neuss' reading is correct, the author is very subtly making the point demonstrated visually in Wisdom that sin is generated by man himself. The audience's complicity in Titivillus' temptation has a similar force.

During the play the audience are taken from enjoyment of levity and laughter at evil doing through a probable swing to sympathy with Mankind in the Court scene. There would perhaps be some anxiety as

Mankind rejects Mercy, but it would give way to laughter as he dashes out shouting for a tapster (729). Mercy's lament strikes a serious note and would probably awaken some feelings of shame in the audience, preparing them for the serious moment of Mankind's attempted suicide. The vice gang's mockery of Mercy following his lament and the scatalogical slapstick that follows that seem calculated to call for laughter almost against the audience's will, and by the time that New Guise nearly hangs himself in his attempt to escape Mercy the laugh of relief will be definitely against the vicious characters (808-10). The scene that follows is written with sympathetic understanding of the sinner and would help to soften up the audience to accept Mercy's instruction and explanation of the play more attentively than they listened to his opening speech.

In the close involvement of the audience in the sin depicted on the stage the author is extending the application of sloth and its attendant sins through the whole range of "soverens that sitt" and "brothern that stonde right uppe" (29) in something of the way that Langland extended the sins' application to different classes and professions. In luring the audience into a kind of trap as they are tricked into complicity with Titivillus and into enjoyment of the vicious characters' scurrilous behaviour, the play seems to be looking forward to the Renaissance method of "teasing" or "deceptive rhetoric", which Douglas Duncan describes in Ben Jonson and the Lucianic Tradition with particular reference to Erasmus, Sir Thomas More and Ben Jonson. He explains that the "art of teasing" was a "process of educative testing, variously playful or hostile, whereby

the moral intelligence of the audience was to be trained by being subjected to attempts to undermine or confuse it.<sup>u24</sup> In Mankind though, the trap seems to be a teaching aid intended for unconscious effect without the element of an intellectual game which Professor Duncan explains in his chapter on Erasmus (pp.32-36). In Mankind laughter seems calculated to lead to a sense of shame making way for persuasion, but the moral discrimination of the spectators should be stimulated by their own involvement in the comedy of evil. The method delivers an effective warning to look carefully at the source of laughter.

Mankind, then, looks forward to modern drama in its economy of production and casting. It uses demonstration in the audience trap both to evoke in the audience the required chain of emotions and to make them aware of sin as something very closely associated with themselves, but the moral points are also carefully explained. Moral explanation and recollection of the ideal, represented in its highest form by Christ, are entrusted to Mercy who is the sole representative of virtue. Mankind as he acts out the stages of sin, contrition and confession, illustrates the way to work towards the ideal and the disaster that can follow its abandonment. Comedy is used as a didactic tool and for enjoyment.

The play is fun, it has moments of well contrived dramatic suspense and it reassures the reluctant penitent. The inspiration it offers is presented in a different way from the copious celebration of the Castle but the heart of the message has not changed.

## CONCLUSION

The discussion has shown that by the seventh century the material for the morality dramatist was current and in some works the depictions of the sins already had dramatic features, but it was not until confession became compulsory for the laity that a new development in the depiction of the sins began and culminated eventually in the morality plays. There was little change in the concept of sinning expressed by Cassian and St. Gregory except that the emphasis shifted from pride as the root of all sins. Pride appears in the flamboyance of the mankind figures in both plays and it is a part of covetise in that the covetor feels he ought to have more than other people and of sloth as the slothful man feels he should not be afflicted by adversity, but this is not brought out in either play. In the Castle, on the contrary, covetise is shown as the root sin eagerly followed by pride.

The formal, ordered depiction of the seven deadly sins in the Castle gives way in Mankind to presentations under new names which bring them out of the confession books and into daily life. Both plays, however, use what is surely material drawn from contemporary life.

The Castle illustrates common attitudes to sin in Man's complacent acceptance of the sins because he knows other people do likewise, while his second fall illustrates the perilous trap that lies in wait for the aging. In the fall of the hero of Mankind attention is



concentrated slightly more on the tempters than the tempted as the audience are being tempted as well : one is an illustration of temptation watched by the audience, the other is a demonstration in which the audience are involved.

The "japing" in Mankind is almost certainly drawn from the kind of jokes people enjoyed. Presuming that, we can see that they liked slapstick, fooling about with words - including mock Latin, parody of august institutions and the perennial favourite, jokes about incontinence. There is only venial harm in any of these in themselves and the audience can follow Mercy's instructions and take what is good, that is the purely light hearted. The harm lies in the scoffing and denigration of good and the habitual levity which underlie the jokes. If they take Mercy's advice, the audience will reject these things in the play and thereafter.

The Castle shows how deceptive and obsessive covetise is and how it undermines the reason. In Mankind sloth is not mentioned except as idleness but it is illustrated in Mankind's impatience, his vulnerability to the other sins of the flesh and his despair; and it is strongly indicated by the use of idle language. The mental attitude of sloth, the initial weariness of good works through frustration of results, opens the way for other sins, such as lechery, much as pusillanimity does in Wisdom. Both plays seem to illustrate Gregory the Great's concept of the disorder of the higher reason being the ultimate cause of the sins of the flesh, though the root sins differ.

The large scope of the Castle seems designed to move the audience to contrition by suggesting all its causes, by the ultimate pathos of the

central figure, the pleasure of seeing a story enacted, and the celebration of Divine Providence and Mercy in the speeches of Shrift, the Virtues and the Daughters of God. The considerable amount of poetry devoted to this celebration in the Castle suggests that the author was aiming at both warning and generally inspiring his audience.

In Mankind the celebration of God's goodness is much abbreviated in that Mercy merely mentions much of the history of God's relation to man which the Castle enlarges upon poetically. Mankind seems to concentrate mainly on persuading the audience to go to confession, which is particularly appropriate if it is a play for Lent, and to distinguish between the dangerous and the enjoyable. The play therefore centres more than the Castle on common life behaviour and the spiritual aspect of sloth is brought within the range of the active life of the man in the field.

In both plays dramatic techniques are skilfully used for didactic ends and both authors seem experienced in moving their hearers in the direction they wish them to take. The author of the Castle has used a method in which nothing is hurried and in which the ritual of story telling is a major and attractive feature. He seems to have laboured step by step to make a perfect work of his depiction of the whole life and the judgement of his hero by ordering, balancing and patterning his material. Care to make instruction effective is also evident in Mankind but the author's attitude seems more modern. Skilful selection for dramatic and psychological effect is more apparent than an attempt at perfection in working the play. The author's talent seems stronger in satire than in poetic celebration, but here the fashionable diction

impedes the modern reader's appreciation. To contemporary audiences, some of whom might have been separated by as much as two generations, both plays must in their different ways have seemed enjoyable, moving and useful.

## NOTES

### Preface

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### Section I

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<sup>10</sup> Southern, p.21.

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