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SOME VERBAL PATTERNS IN *THE CASTLE OF PERSEVERANCE*

The pure fifteenth and sixteenth century 'morality play', of which *The Castle of Perseverance* is an instance, is far from being the dry ethical study this inaccurate term would suggest. Far more than dealing only with morals it sets out a complete plan of salvation for the individual. Sometimes, as with this play, it will deal with the entire life of one person, his triumphs and failures and eventual attainment to grace; occasionally it will touch upon the most dramatic event in that life, namely the approach of death. Hence the leading character is normally a figure of mankind, bearing a name such as Everyman or Humanum Genus, and he is surrounded by crowds of good and evil characters who allegorically portray the various influences on him. The intent of such plays is avowedly didactic and theological; one might term them dramatized sermons, though not with complete accuracy. In the sixteenth century the original purpose of these plays is rather lost sight of, and secularized 'moralities' appear, portraying social or political ideals such as good government.

The whole aim of the morality is that its audience should identify to at least some extent with the everyman figure; indeed, it has been suggested that the audience acted to some degree as a corporate character itself (today's 'audience participation' anticipated!). Everyman's vicissitudes would become theirs, and they would rejoice with him when he finally won through to everlasting life (the means being expressed in Roman Catholic rather than in Protestant terms, of course). It was thus essential to gain and maintain the audience's intense interest from the first words of the play, and this naturally affects key features of the play, such as its vocabulary.

The Castle of Perseverance was written in the English Midlands; we know nothing of its author save that he must have been a wellread man. Theatrically the play is most skilful, ranging the powerful Biblical trio of the World, the Flesh and the Devil, along with the seven deadly sins and assorted minions, against Mankind, his seven associated virtues and a few others: numerical superiority thus patently lies with the enemies of Mankind. To create audience suspense the final salvation of mankind comes only at the end of the play, until which time it is left in doubt, and he falls twice into severe backsliding.

The Castle was intended to be staged in a circular arena with sets at intervals round the circumference and one – the stylized 'castle' of the title –

in the centre. The ensuing movement of actors to and from these sets *may* have taken place in and among the audience if this was inside the circle (Southern, 1975), thus promoting involvement with the action. Several modern stagings have shown the power of this play to interest modern audiences, though none would approach it with the presuppositions and beliefs of the medieval playgoers.

What point is there in examining the vocabulary of a 500-year old play with theological presuppositions foreign even to a Protestant audience, never mind an unbelieving one? Clearly, the vocabulary of any play is the initial medium of communication and where significant patterns emerge, as here, they are well worth noting. And because this play is Christian in ethos, though not self-consciously, it deserves a close reading. Some of the theological details, such as the debate in heaven which finally saves man's soul (11. 3229ff), are unacceptable to Protestants, though this study does not take issue with these points; but the general principle, that of dramatizing the operation of sin and grace in a Christian's life, can hardly be gainsaid. (It is notable that the great Reformer, Beza, tried his hand at writing such plays modelled on the older ones, not without success).

This essay concentrates on some of the striking vocabulary in *The Castle of Perseverance* (c. 1425), the earliest of the so-called 'morality' plays known to us in English. I would recommend a study of these plays to Christian believers, since they have important implications for a theory of Christian drama. Together with the vast cycles of mystery plays, the morality play in its earliest form is a conscious attempt at creating a theological, Christocentric drama, full of immediate implications for the audience who watched it. Much medieval English drama attempted to present the Gospel in concrete terms, with inescapable relevance for every spectator, an 'evangelistic' aim which has rarely been attempted since, although the contemporary plays of T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry operate with strongly Christian presuppositions.

The soteriology is Catholic rather than Protestant, yet its consistent, lively and unashamed application is worthy of emulation. Consequently the *Castle* presents the life and spiritual fortunes of an 'everyman', an ordinary believer; and the vocabulary is particularly crucial because of its everyday and topical nature. A study of the playwright's word-choice is, then, also a look at his success or otherwise in presenting the Good News understandably, interestingly and relevantly, and will increase insight into a major creative work of the Middle Ages which is also an important Christian drama.

We are not concerned with establishing an intricately-developed system

of images such as might be found in Shakespeare (Williams 1961: 140) because the medieval idea of unity rested in multiple correspondences rather than in linear homogeneity, which was an Aristotelian idea. There *are* several important groups of 'images' which bear examination, but it is not proposed in what follows to derive the unity or consistency of the play from them; rather, *because* the play has a unity based on its purpose and main concerns, the major verbal patterns reflect this too. It should also be understood that this discussion does not attempt to investigate all the patterns in the play, but confines itself to the more obvious ones, understanding the term 'image' to embrace similes and metaphors as well, but using it with caution (Fowler 1974: s.v. 'image' calls attention to the dangers of using the term as a sort of vague critical factotum).

Images of locality

The play's imitation of the action of life's pilgrimage (Schell 1968:236) and its famous staging-diagram supply two important sources of images. The governing metaphor of life's journey (ibid. 237), and the fact that Humanum Genus or Mankind is so much 'a sort of floating, homeless being' (Southern 1975:10) when in the place of performance, make the movements of the actors and their destinations in the set itself thoroughly symbolic (Williams 1961:6 and Schell 1968:241) and give rise to a highly specific language of travel (Schell 1968: 242,3). The water in the ditch dug to form the playing area would serve not only as a traditional but also as a tangible symbol of spiritual cleansing, especially if, as Natalie Schmitt thinks, the diagram is of a set rather than a whole stage, with the ditch representing a moat encircling a castle, all *within* the circle of spectators (1969:138). Such a symbol would be reinforced by the many allusions to water, wetness or dryness, which will be explored below.

It is probable that most of the geographical allusions to place are simply commonplaces and the following one may serve as representative: Mundus's summoning of Humanum Genus 'Be downe, dale, and dyche' (1:733; all line references are to the edition by Eccles 1969, *th* is silently substituted for the archaic thorn and yog is also transcribed) and the Man's reply, 'Thou feffyst me wyth fen and felde / And hye hall, be holtys and hill (11. 740,1)'. Most of the formulae follow this kind of pattern, with 'in dale of dros [or dole] ' being a particular favourite, appearing at 11. 1247, 1588, 1658, 1759 (it is the sort of thing that one can imagine appearing in medieval sermons, though there are no direct sources as far as I can ascertain). Their immediate

purpose, in which they admirably succeed, is to tie the play down to a concrete, specific world, and the word 'down' is the operative one: the emphasis on 'dale' (used at least ten times) suggests that the action takes place in depths rather than heights, since the complementary word, 'hill', is but sparingly used. Perhaps we are reminded of the valley of the shadow of death; 'dethys dale' (1. 2824) then sums up the connotations of 'dale' in this play!

The actors' movements in this play are thus in three dimensions: not only backwards and forwards, but also vertically, and are also *seen* as such when Man or the others ascend the various stage scaffolds (assuming that Eccles's expansions of the stage directions and Southern's interpretations of them (1975: 108ff) are correct). The equation of height with virtue and depth with sin or struggle is not simple, however, because the enemies of Man also have scaffolds; but in their case the structures symbolize pride and vanity. Unlike the scaffold occupied by God, they are generally filled with colour, light and movement, and are brash and gaudy.

Specifically architectural verbal patterns are of some significance here. The controlling metaphor is of course that of the castle, described in terms like those applied to the Virgin Mary (Cornelius 1930: *passim)* as 'strenger thanne any in Fraunce' and 'a precyous place,/Ful of vertu and of grace', free from all sin and worldliness (11. 1546–1556). Such fulsome appellations are dubious in the light of Man's later, almost inevitable fall from its walls; but the point is perhaps that a castle, even one constructed of perseverance, is not sufficient for salvation.

The castle metaphor becomes the more important in the light of Man's homelessness and need for shelter (and this increases the ironic shock of his quitting the castle for Covetousness's doubtful aid). One of his more deeply moving cries ('In wo is dressyd myn wonnynge'. 1. 3065) is uttered when the full realization of his plight as Anima, the disembodied soul, dawns on him. Significantly, it is a sad echo of his *first* words in the play, as the newly-born infant. And, making his lack of a dwelling explicit, he asks Shrift 'where may I dwelle?' (1. 1533). The instructions he receives to remain 'still' in the castle are thus doubly important: they emphasize *his* homeless wandering and the *castle's* security; 11. 1696, 7. (Schmitt 1969: 134ff provides some information on allegorical castles as places of protection.)

The castle itself is referred to as a 'castel toun', undergoing imaginative expansion somewhat akin to that at the play's end, where the scope of God's speech suddenly widens to enclose the whole world. The picture here is of a

self-sufficient enclave, well-populated and garrisoned, which clearly is symbolic of more than just a fortress. In fact, it *is* 'heuene halle/That schal bryngyn [Mankynde] to heuene' (1. 1710): an ante-chamber of God's presence, so to speak. The word 'hall' itself suggests the secure dwelling of some great lord, as we can see from an earlier passage, where Mankind has implicitly addressed Shrift as such (as indeed this character, Confession, would be to the Middle Ages): 'Grant Mankind your wealth, and let him enter your hall' (11. 1427, 8 my paraphrase). The words 'heaven' and 'hall' are once again conjoined at 1. 2343, where 'Goddys seruyse' is said to lead to the hall of heaven. The phrase is obviously an alliterative commonplace, and there is no attempt on the playwright's part to be precise about its meaning, but the conjunction with 'castle' definitely hints at the welcome security longed for by Mankind. The Good Angel's observation, 'Mankynd is browt into this walle' (1. 2030) also suggests a massive reinforcement erected to protect Man.

Needless to say, there is another face to the building metaphor. Mundus too has his hall and walls (11. 727, 9). The Bad Angel spitefully remarks that Man 'schal be wonne fro these wonys' (1. 1717) and Belial commands his army to 'Werke wrake to this wonys' (1. 2190). 'Wonys' specifically connoting 'dwelling' (cf. Afrikaans 'woning'), we have here the idea that Man's only home is about to be undermined by his enemies. In return, they tell him mercilessly, 'In hye helle schal be thyne hous' (1. 3077) – an abrupt / and therefore effective shift both of the reference of the building metaphor and of the normal position of hell! (This also suggests the distorted view evil has of the true nature of things.) Previously, Humanum Genus has asked Covetousness for castle walls so as to protect his wealth (1. 2748), and in this has simply followed the latter's advice to lay up castles and cages (1. 2493). The latter word is significant, with its primary meaning of cage or coop for birds or animals, but also many secondary connotations of a cage for prisoners, jail or captivity (Kurath 1952: s.v. 'cage'). In the mystery cycles hell was very often presented as a combined castle, dungeon and cess-pit; Wickham 1969: 218, 9). But like the Castle of Perseverance itself, these do not supply ultimate security. Indeed, the kind of 'castel cage' Avarice has in mind (1. 2703) can turn into a trap, precipitating Man into the securest cage of all, that of 'colde clay' (1. 2874).[1] This rather grim and final use of the idea of the cage is closely linked to the last employment of the word 'hall', where Garcio is told to 'putte [Mankynde] oute of hys halle' (1. 2898). Here again there is a movement from heights to depths, from joy to misery, which, to make it worse, Mankind has chosen for himself (cf. 1. 3385).

Activities

Verbs of various kinds of movement are plentiful in the *Castle*. As one might expect, most are appropriate to the nature of the beings who perform them. Voluptas is ready 'to faryn and to fle' in the service of his lord (1. 482), the pair of verbs perhaps implying his complete willingness to go to any lengths. And Envy also 'flies' in the course of his evil employment, moving swiftly as a fox, leaping as a lion (11. 933ff) and utterly 'loth to be the laste'. These quick cunning movements portray the shifty nature of these sins, and the contrast with man, who in Envy's words 'steryste or staryste or stumble upon stonys', is marked; it demonstrates the surefootedness of the *sins* in a world which they have made dangerous for *man* to negotiate. Similarly, Avarice instructs his 'brethyryn' to set Mankind 'on a stomlynge stol' in almost the same breath as he suggests they 'chase [Maynkynd] to pynyngys stole' (11. 1034-9). It is as if Mankind is their staggering prey and they the fleet-footed wolves. It is not accidental that Detraccio, one of the most vicious characters, sees himself as a hunter, running down his quarry with light leaps (11. 673, 686–91). Nor is it fortuitous that active, powerful movements are generally associated with the sins and less sure ones with Mankind, for this simply highlights their advantage over him. Gula is particularly agile, since – as he puts it – 'I stampe and I styrte and stynt upon stounde' (1. 960), rather like a powerful beast, while Detraccio goes 'swyftyr thanne schyp wyth rodyr' (1. 1738), the rudder suggesting purposeful manoeuvring; and he reports with scorn that Mankind has begun to 'crepe' into the castle (1. 1762); the opposite, be it noted, of Detraccio's own rapid leaps. Later Caro sarcastically observes to his fellows that they will have to *help* Man to 'recover' from the castle (1. 1954); Man on his part reinforces the impression of his feebleness by suggesting hopefully to Covetousness that the latter can 'sese' him strong cities and castles, with that verb's connotation of force (1. 2751, and Stratman 1967: s.v. 'saisen').

Such correspondences between act and character as I have mentioned are not necessarily systematic. For instance, Mankind exhibits a little backbone – though for the wrong reasons – in declaring that he will 'chasyn' man's natural inclination to be greedy (1. 786), so that Detraccio is not the only one who pursues a quarry. Some instances are merely trivial (as in 11. 920 and 2519) while others are merely what one would expect, as with Accidia's dismayed fainting on suffering defeat (11. 2397ff). However, twice there are really significant actions. In the first case Chastity beats Lechery back with the words, 'Oure Lord God mad the no space/.../Fro this castel he dyd

the chase [at Calvary] ' (11. 2304, 6), thus suggesting the complete victory of Christ over Lechery who is beaten before he has begun, is hunted down before he has begun to run – a telling contrast with Mankind's defeat earlier. Secondly, in the Bad Angel's menacing words to Man: 'Now dagge we hens a dogge trot.' (1. 3099) Surely the picture here is of a gaoler marching an unwilling prisoner off at a leisurely pace; a gaoler who has all the time in the world, for his prisoner is serving an indeterminate sentence.

Animal imagery

The reference to a dog's gait in this phrase is, in its familiarity and concrete reference, generally typical of other such allusions to animals. It is remarkable that all of these verbal patterns are applied to the *evil* figures, with the single exception of Humanum Genus's declaration to Anger that he would rather be killed like a pig than be civil to anyone (1. 1108), and even that is both highly uncomplimentary (though Man doubtless intended it to convey a touch of bravery) and indicative of Mankind's generally wicked state of mind at this point. This is not to suggest that *all* the animal images are uncomplimentary. At first sight many of them are not, such as Mundus's satisfied remark, 'I dawnse doun as a doo' (1. 188– probably a proverbial phrase, to be found in *Pearl*. See Whiting and Whiting 1968: D 295). This *might* suggest agility and grace – and yet is there not a suggestion of frivolity and vapidity? Similarly too with Belial's nearby boast, 'I champe and I chafe' (1. 198); this might also evoke the image of a powerful horse (see also 1. 220), but with an undeniable note of arrogance. As a result the animal images, even where apparently favourable, quite often operate to undermine a particular character. Stulticia's calling the World worthy and white as a swan (1. 716) is another case in point, being flattering, but to the audience distinctly ironical. In like vein, Belial's view of humanity as 'Fele folke on a flokke' (1. 225) tends to call up a picture of sheep being led astray by the speaker, and of course has Biblical overtones.

Certainly there are enough references to the predatory quality of these enemies of man to indicate that this is the main view the play holds of them. Mundus describes himself, not at all inaccurately, as a hawk (1. 458 – this is also a figure of pride, Owst 1933: 202), Ira drily describes how, when Covetousness summoned him, he had to leap to attention and rush off 'as hound aftyr hare' (1. 921 – hounds are sometimes compared in medieval sermons to the unruly retainers of a lord – Owst 1933: 325), Invidia is not only as fleet as a fox, but leaps as a lion (11. 933–5). Detraccio goes one

better: he is feller than a fox (1. 668), which from time immemorial seems to have epitomized the sly predator (the Dominican preacher, John Bromyard, is quoted on this by Owst 1933: 257). The fox image is itself cleverly inverted in the Bad Angel's insult to the Good, 'Ya, whanne the fox prechyth, kepe wel yore gees!' (1. 802), and the goose image too is picked up later and applied in a distinctly derogatory and pungently humorous manner to the Virtues, where the same angel unchivalrously observes, 'Let them cackle! Where there are geese there are many turds! (11. 2648-51, my paraphrase; carvings in medieval churches quite often displayed similar touches of humour – see Anderson 1963: 82, 83).

As with the last image, many of these comparisons were common coin, and their vividly aphoristic quality would not be lost on the audience. Nor would the cumulative implications of the many allusions to animals or birds of prey which accentuate the relative helplessness of Mankind. In the play's scheme of things he *is* no more than a plaything and Belial is perfectly truthful: 'Whanne he is ded I schal hym bynde/In hell, as catte dothe the mows' (11. 951, 2). *This* all too accurate, homely and effective picture is extended near the play's end, in the pathetic scene suggested by the Bad Angel's words to Anima: 'Thou schalt lye drenkelyd as a mows' (1. 3079), an extremely moving way of vonveying Man's abject helplessness and all the more so because of the allusions indicating the Sins' great power (see also 11. 2409 – the Bad Angel like an 'howle' – and 2458 – Covetousness a cursed hound). We might observe that for didactic reasons, Law is being stressed much more than Grace.

Just occasionally, though, a touch of humour creeps in, as where Avarice solemnly advises Mankind to be blithe as any bee and Belial proceeds to apply this idea to *himself* (11. 898, 954): there is something incongruous in the bee's reputation for *useful* industry being applied to Man and his 'advisers'. On the other hand, it is quite appropriate that Caro curse the incompetent Sloth in the words 'Euele grace com on thi snowte!' (1. 1819; cf. Lechery's being termed a 'skallyd mare', (1. 1814) as this not only suggests the Sins' capacity for internecine warfare but also reminds the audience of the Sins' essential ugliness. Besides, the wish is literally true in that the Sins are *not* in God's good graces.

Water and drought

The vignette of the drowned mouse was referred to above as being particularly effective. It is only one of many allusions to water which form a major and significant group. These range from proverbial and alliterative

formulae to doctrinal commonplaces, with some at least having a bearing on the enigmatic ditch in the drawing. Several of the most important focus consistently on Mankind, who exclaims indecisively, 'As wynde in watyr I wave' (1. 379) at the beginning and more than two thousand lines later is still prone 'Wyth Coueytyse to watyr and wave', as he himself admits (1. 2662); he is literally tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, his stability as ephemeral as ripples on a pond.

Several images, in fact, suggest that Mankind's soul is in danger of being 'spilt', poured away carelessly by his own hand. The Good Angel cries that Mankind 'is in poynt to be spylt' at line 1314 (cf. 1. 450), and while Humilitas assures the last-mentioned that in the Castle 'no dedly synne [schal] the spylle' (1.1698), later on he admits the truth that man 'may hys sowle spylle' (1. 2558). 'Spill' can certainly mean destroy, as in Mundus's words about the Castle itself in 1. 1896 or in Humilitas's instructions to the Virtues to protect Man from the enemies who desire to 'spill' him (1. 2052), but is enriched with these other connotations and connections with the whole reservoir of water images.

To any medieval church-goer the word 'water' would have had associations with baptism, the washing of one's soul, and this very positive connotation is found more than once in our play, along with pictures of a more negative nature. Penitence voices the Church's view that the heart is washed more thoroughly from sin by sorrow than by anything else at 11. 1381ff, and a short while later Confession instructs Mankind: 'lete sorwe thyn synne slake' (1. 1435). Lechery later illustrates the effect such 'washing' has on the sins it wipes away in the dismayed cry, 'Out on Chastyte .../ Sche hathe me ... drenchyd' (11. 2387, 8), which might well refer to a moment in the actual staging when Chastity throws a bucket of water from the castle structure. Perhaps Accidia's succeeding shout 'ley on watyr!' (1. 2396) has a similar cause. (On the literal level it is obvious that the 'fire' of lechery would be 'quenched' by the practice of chastity and that a dose of cold water would rouse any sluggard.)

Thus far the positive associations of water. However, as with the picture of the drowned mouse, there are negative features too, one being the cleansing of line 1921 which refers to the *Virtues*. According to Belial they are due to be washed in woeful waters! More seriously, though, Confession has previously observed soberly to Humanum Genus that sin, unless confessed, will 'synke [hys] sowle to Satanas' (1. 1462. The primary intention of the verb is probably simply to suggest a downward direction (in itself appropriate enough), but one cannot help thinking of the mouse, particularly since Humilitas connects drowning with slaying one's soul at 1. 2561; and it is said of Accidia that 'he makyth this dyke drye', preparing a ready way for

sin into the Castle (11. 2352ff). Sloth probably *is* a precursor of graver sins, but surely the significance here is that he *drains the ditch* (not cleans it, as Schmitt 1969: 142 claims) of the water which is protecting Mankind, which would seem to be the gist of 11. 2328ff. And this action is ominous, for a dry ditch is useless to Mankind. Certainly such speeches would gain added force from the presence of an actual ditch full of water (or perhaps a moat, as Schmitt avers).

The 'dyche drye' of 1. 2331 and elsewhere reminds us of a few passages which connote drought and desolation, although some of these are largely trivial alliterative formulae. 'Downys drye' (11. 528, 1024 and 1126) does create a sense of great spaces, however, and is associated each time with an evil, so it may well deliberately convey a sense of barrenness or desolation; and this is clearly the force of 'dyre' in Charity's remark that without her 'Al thi doynge as dros is drye' (1. 1604).

We may finally point to three interesting comments, all economically conveying certain attitudes in their vocabulary. At the end of the climactic second temptation scene, Covetousness commands Mankind to sing the song 'More and More'; *then*, he says to Mankind, the whole world will not be able to quench the latter's greed (11. 2761ff)! This inverts the idea of sin – especially lechery – being a burning fire, and suggests the almost infinite thirst of greed. It stands in contrast to the *contemptus mundi* theme of two earlier utterances, oddly uttered by two completely different figures. At 1. 354 the Good Angel preaches – as we might expect – that the world's benefits 'Faylyth and fadyth as fysch in flode'. But *Avarice* makes just the same point when he tells Mankind, 'I schal the lere of werldlys lay/ That fadyth as a flode.' (11. 835,6) Perhaps this remark which seems so at variance with Avarice's philosophy of life is simply ironical; unless the playwright's sermonizing streak ran away with him or he liked the alliteration and metre of his (undoubtedly effective) simile so much that he re-used it without thought for context!

Bitterness

Alliteration is given its freest play, however, in the remarkable number of phrases containing 'bitter', 'brew' and 'bale' in various combinations with other words dealing with eating and sometimes drinking (see Whiting and Whiting, 1968: B18, B21, B463, B529, B566 for parallels). There is no question but that these phrases had a fascination for our author, since there are more than thirty of them. They would undoubtedly have had a mne-

monic function for actors as well as a most effective – because memorable – dramatic one for the audience, and probably reflect local catchphrases. At any rate they are immediately obvious (though not, strangely, noticed by Eccles (1969) in his Introduction).

'Brew' has its current denotation, perhaps with a suggestion of patient waiting. Along with this, though, there is an ominous undertone created by its close connections with 'bitter' and 'bale', so that the constantly reiterated theme of the play's second half, that Mankind must drink his own bitter gall, becomes cumulatively more threatening and increasingly emphasizes Mankind's bitter loneliness. To set this theme in its context, however, a look at the first half of the play is in order.

The first idea introduced is that of limitation of freedom: Detraccio declares his delight in binding the great 'In byttyr balys' (1. 650) and remarks with satisfaction: 'All abowtyn I brewe balys' (1. 683), thus anticipating Envy's remark at 1. 936. In the next occurrence, though, the scope narrows right down to one single man, at 1. 950, where Belial's command to his followers in respect of Mankind is: 'To his sowle brewyth a byttyr jous!' And in the following instance it is clear that Man has caught the fever for doing people down, and his words really just echo Backbiter's. The truth, of course, is rather different from Man's perception of it, and as usual turns the tables on him. As Confession observes of one of the sins, 'In bale he byndyth Mankynd ....' (1. 1356). Indeed, Confession himself is the remedy for such bitter troubles, as his comforting words to the Good Angel and the latter's reply show: 'May any bote thi bale brewe?' (11. 1302, 1310, 1311) Here there is certainly a suggestion of balm being prepared.

The general mood of the play is here lifting somewhat as the first conversion of Mankind approaches, and while on the one hand Penitence employs the by now well-established imagery to encourage Man ('Al thi bale schal torne the to bote', 1. 1401 – another instance of the sudden use of an image in a contrasting context), on the other hand Man himself *is* now keenly aware of the evil designs on him (11. 1539ff). And if he were not, the Good Angel's earnest warning to him that the Bad Angel 'Of cursydnesse ... kepyth the key/To bakyn the a byttyr bred' (11. 1589, 90 – a remarkably mixed metaphor – which Whiting and Whiting, 1968, list as the only one mentioning bread in their collection of proverbs, B517) would have guided him. This last passage is interesting, as it introduces a variation on the theme of drinking bitterness – i.e. of eating it – which will be taken up at the play's end, and might remind hearers of the 'great gaoler', as it were: St Peter, who carries the keys of heaven and hell.

As we still have nearly three-quarters of the verbal patterns connected with 'bitter' and the rest ahead of us, it might be well to take stock here. The association of the adjective 'bitter' with the obvious 'bale' and the less obvious 'brew' has established certain expectations in the audience as to their future use. 'Bitter' very accurately suggests Mankind's state of mind as he sees the trap he was in, it also suggests the evils' moods as they discover they have lost their prey, and it reminds us of that major theme of contemporary didactic and devotional writing, that theme which even Mankind knew at the beginning: that this life is but woe and weeping and bitterness.

But the evil forces are not exempt from frustration and regret either. As the play proceeds the Bad Angel is going to have to admit 'My galle gynnyth to grynde' (1. 1732) when he sees Mankind securely ensconced in the Castle and the tone here of scheming malice is to be a major feature of the action in the second half of the play; witness Mundus's plans for Meekness (1. 1891), where the refrain of bonds or limitations is taken up again, or Belial's equally ineffective plans for the Virtues in general (1. 1919). Mankind is uneasily aware of the plotting against him, and once again the word 'bitter' comes into play (1. 2001).

In the second half of the play there is no doubt that the evils are in the ascendancy and suggestions of their temporary bitterness are soon replaced by intimations that the boot is on the other foot. Not only do we have Accidia's threatening remark to Solicitudo (1. 2338; cf. 1. 2419), but also her angry reply, 'To the sowle he is byttyrer thanne gall' (1. 2341); it is important to notice that the virtues take no thought for themselves although they are under attack, but *are* acutely aware of the danger to man's soul. (Didactically speaking this makes good sense, because the earlier morality play deals with the salvation of a soul, not with the virtuousness of a life, as several writers seem to think; e.g., Mackenzie 1914 and Potter 1975.) The Sins' strategy seems at first to be an attempt to destroy these 'outer defences' of the soul, but soon changes to a direct assault. This strategy is abetted by Man himself, and as Patience sadly observes, 'He brewyth hymselfe a byttyr galle' (1. 2576). Quite a while later – too much later – Humanum Genus is to realize this for himself, with the additional and painful knowledge that his troubles have only just begun (1. 2983).

Shortly hereafter Anima's accusation of the body is made in identical terms (11. 3011f, 3019), 'dampnynge drynke' summing up the position neatly. And this idea of drinking the gall one has brewed for oneself is taken up with inexorable logic by Justice and Truth (11. 3162, 3274);

Truth sums up the prosecution's case in an address that recalls the baking metaphor used earlier, and which to my mind implies the thoroughness of Man's condemnation of himself:

As he hathe browne and bake,
Trewthe wyl that he drynke. (11. 3299, 3300).

Previously, however, there has been another case of the ironic inversion found quite frequently in this play, where Man pleads with the World, 'Sum bote of bale thou me brewe' (1. 2863), and we recall that these words were last used by Confession to the Good Angel (11. 1302ff). Man is, ironically, addressing these words to the last person likely to want to help and, inevitably, the curt response is the command to Garcio: 'Go brewe Mankynd a byttyr bende/ ... Forbrostyn ... be hys galle' (11. 2897ff). It seems that all Mankind has left is the utter bitterness of his own folly (see the comments of the good and bad angels at 11. 3042, 3075 and 3091). Yet at the play's end all Man's gall is washed away and that of the evil forces multiplied many-fold: 'thei that evyl do, thei schul to helle lake/ In byttyr balys to be brent' (11. 3639, 40). All the bitterness in the play adumbrates this triumphant climax.

Gladness

It might seem from the foregoing that the play is one of practically unrelieved gloom. This is not so if one views it from the Christian perspective in which it was composed – which suggests that a certain well-grounded optimism should pervade any Christian drama – nor if one remembers that he is dealing with a very self-conscious play which is always aware of its aims and drives single-mindedly at them, but which also operates within the framework of drama and reminds the reader of the fact every so often, as in what is almost the last line (1. 3645). Perhaps this has a bearing on the several references in its body to the idea of *game* or *play*. I am not, however, convinced that this concept operates at as high a level as Kolve claims for the Corpus Christi plays. In general the concept in the *Castle* is more that of light-hearted and frivolous, but occasionally cruel, sport, and the word with its cognates is largely associated with the World (numerous references) or his friends Detraccio (1. 691), Avarice (11. 838, 2438 and 2722ff) and the Bad Angel (1. 1584). Sometimes, though, as might be expected from a play of this ilk, there are more sombre warnings against thoughtless gaiety, and the Good Angel, appropriately, pronounces these (11. 454f and 1267: 'He [man] schal wepe al hys game and gle').

On four occasions, however, the game, glee, plays and joys of the *Castle* quite transcend merely mundane reference and become suggestive of the great joy when God will be all in all, and these preclude us from simply dismissing the other allusions. The first inkling of what is to come is seen in Confession's confident words to the Good Angel about Mankind: 'I schal hym stere to gamyn and gle/In joye that euere schal last.' (11. 1331, 2). There is reinforcement in Penittence's words a little later (which foreshadow the last lines of the play):

> Whanne thei schal make here endynge,
> Al here joye is to begynne.
> Thanne medelyth no mornynge
> But joye is joynyd wyth jentyl gynne. (11. 1392ff)

But this is no instruction from a killjoy to wait idly for 'pie in the sky'; joy may be found on earth too, in the service of the Lord, where the wicked 'games' of the evil characters find a profitable counterpart:

> Sumtyme rede and sumtyme wryte
> And sumtyme pleye at thi delyte.

(As Solicitudo puts it, 11. 1650ff.)

In the same way as many other verbal patterns find their climax at the play's end, however, this is not the final word. This is fittingly reserved to God, who at the close grants Mankind 'blysse wyth gamyn and gle.' (1. 3581) As a result all Mankind's bitter travail on this earth is changed into everlasting games of gladness and the fulfilment of his story is enacted before the same spectators who have seen all his struggles, so much like theirs; time is telescoped, and man, now washed clean by mercy, has reached the end of his journey.

To sum up, then: our study of some word-patterns in the *Castle of Perseverance* demonstrates the use of a down-to-earth and non-esoteric vocabulary; a single-minded, didactic and admonitory purpose which imparts an appropriateness to the choice of words; and a creative delight in their deployment. It is clear we are dealing with a man who handles art and 'doctryne' with equal facility and has produced an effective, because challenging *and* entertaining, work of art. Some have wished it shorter; but very few could wish it had never been written.

It was not the intention of this study to suggest a full-blown theory of Christian drama, but what we have said above would seem to call for a willingness to face the theological facts, that is not only man's real nature but also the importance of God's grace, without making the latter in any way a

deus ex machina or lapsing into sentimentality: also a strict abhorrence of overt moralizing, allowing the play's actions to speak for themselves. A definite purpose and meticulous attention to the possibilities of wordplay, dramatic conflict, careful structuring and so on are also indicated. Most important of all, though, is the fact that the play must speak to its audience, grip them, enthral them, challenge them with the manifold richness of Christianity.[2]

Notes

1. G.R. Owst has thoroughly examined the castle metaphor in medieval preaching: it is used of the Virgin Mary, the conscience, the Church, the World, Man himself or his soul (as in Bunyman). See Owst 1933: 77–85, 109. The last two meanings are generally found in proverbial sayings; see Whiting and Whiting 1968: B427 and C72.

2. An interesting treatment of the theme of hope in (non-Christian) modern drama is to be found in Combrink (1978), whose chapter 2 on Christian drama and dramatic criticism is well worth reading.

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