

The Influence of the “Book of Job” on the Middle English Morality Plays

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ABSTRACT

The Book of Job was extremely popular in the Middle Ages, especially in England, because of its role in liturgy as well as lay religious devotion. I argue that the Book of Job was heavily influential in the writing of the medieval morality plays *Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *Everyman*. In the plays, the dramatists mirrored many of Job’s structural and artistic elements, creating direct parallels between the Biblical text and the morality plays. The authors also relied on Job’s ideological framework to establish their own arguments, forming not only a textual but ideological linkage. Yet the most intriguing connection between Job and the morality plays is their function within the medieval religious context; the Hebrew Book of Job is used as a model for the Christian morality plays. By examining the role of Job in medieval England, I demonstrate how the figure of Job can be used as a Christian rather Jewish model. The influence of the Book of Job is central to the morality plays’ structures, artistic techniques, and ideological arguments. I argue that, as other Scriptural books acted as patterns for the medieval cycle and mystery plays, the Book of Job stood as a pattern for the medieval morality plays.

Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them.

-- Milton, "Areopagitica"

I.

All texts bear marks of the social context of their production. A text can be seen as a child of its age, often with the culture impregnating the author. This textual child, once delivered into the world, stands a permanent combination, "a violl," of the father and mother it had. Yet texts are not mere memorials, existing statically. They influence the social contexts of generations to come, fostering other authors to produce more texts. This cycle of influence and production, the literary discourse, is a means not only of examining the texts of the past but also of producing new texts in response to them. Literary discourse occurs anytime an author is influenced by a text, whether that influence is intentional or not. Thus each text contains a lineage of works that influenced it, and these influences help highlight meaning in the descended text. This lineage of influence is also dependent upon the social conditions of the time the author writes, for contemporary ideologies guide a text's role in literary discourse.

For medieval writers in England, there were numerous sources for literary discourse. However, the most prolific source of literary discussion and interpretation was

the Bible. No other text in medieval England birthed more creative and critical texts. The Bible became the parent of Scriptural commentaries, Catholic liturgy, laity devotionals, and medieval secular writings.¹ Its influence was so widespread that the Bible was arguably the most central text in medieval English life.

Therefore, it is not surprising that medieval dramatists relied heavily on the Bible in their dramas and much of the drama that emerged in the Middle Ages is either Biblical or religious. The authors of the cycle plays used Biblical narratives to structure their plots while other authors simply quoted verses or alluded to Biblical figures. But the Bible's influence on medieval drama was deeper than the superficial correlations. Authors also borrowed literary structures, rhetorical techniques, and ideological frameworks. Additionally, medieval dramatists often depended on a single Biblical book or even a single Biblical figure to base their plays on; for instance, the Wakefield Cycle uses Genesis and the Gospels to portray Adam and Eve, Noah, Mary, and Jesus. Like the authors of the cycle plays, the authors of the medieval morality plays also relied on a particular Scriptural book for their protagonists and plots; the plays contain both direct and indirect correlations with the Book of Job.

The Book of Job was heavily influential in the writing of the medieval morality plays *Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *Everyman*. In the plays, the dramatists mirrored many of Job's structural and artistic elements, creating direct parallels between the Biblical text and the morality plays. The authors also relied on Job's ideological framework to establish their own arguments, forming not only a textual

¹ See David C. Fowler's *The Bible in Middle English Literature*.

but ideological linkage. Yet the most intriguing connection between Job and the morality plays is their function within the medieval religious context; the Hebrew Book of Job is used as a model for the Christian morality plays. While the literary discourses on the Book of Job and the medieval English morality plays have produced much research on and many interpretations of the texts, the correlations between the Book of Job and the morality plays have gone virtually unnoticed in the critical arena. The influence of Job is central to the morality plays' structures, artistic techniques, and ideological arguments. As other Scriptural books acted as patterns for the medieval cycle and mystery plays, so the Book of Job stood as a pattern for the medieval morality plays.

The Book of Job was very popular in the Middle Ages, inspiring numerous commentaries, liturgical writings, and artistic works. Its ambiguous meanings and seemingly contradictory passages offer diverse interpretations of the text; thus, its literary discourse is abundant to say the least. Medieval theologians Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great, and Nicholas of Lyra all wrote volumes of commentary on Job. However, the most popular commentary was Gregory the Great's *Morals on the Book of Job*. Lawrence Besserman argues that Gregory the Great's *Morals* was "unrivaled in its influence on Christian interpretation of Job in the Middle Ages" and was "one of the most important compendia of Christian doctrine" (52, 56). Because of its popularity and thoroughness, *Morals on the Book of Job* was crucial in medieval interpretation and discourse on Job. Yet, the Book of Job inspired more than commentaries. While no cycle play on Job survives in English, a French mystery play titled *La Paciencia de Job* offers an account of Job in dramatic form. The text does not follow the plot of the Scriptural Job, but it

does establish Job as an “exemplum of patience and obedience” (Besserman 94). Moreover, the figure of Job appears in Prudentius’ *Psychomachia*; Job helps Patience off the battlefield after her defeat of Wrath and is described as “now with a smile on his stern face as he thought of his healed sores and, by the number of his scars, recounted his thousands of hard-won fights” and Patience is called his “invincible mistress” (qtd. in Besserman 70-1).

Modern criticism on the Book of Job has been much more prolific. Attempts to classify Job have been numerous, but modern scholars have focused on the book’s place in wisdom literature. Harold Bloom, in his influential book *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?*, pairs Job with Ecclesiastes though he declares “Job [is] a sphere apart” (11). Job is also often discussed in essay collections on wisdom literature and many annotated Bibles classify it as such.² Other scholars have examined the various interpretations of the Book of Job in certain time periods. Besserman discusses the medieval biblical, ecclesiastical, and apocryphal perceptions of Job in *The Legend of Job in the Middle Ages*; Jonathan Lamb, in *The Rhetoric of Suffering: Reading the Book of Job in the Eighteenth Century*, examines the relationship between the treatment of divine justice in Job with various literary treatments of justice in the eighteenth century; Bloom’s collection of essays *Modern Critical Interpretations, The Book of Job* offers contemporary scholarship on both the theology and literary quality of Job. Additionally, much work has been done connecting Job with other texts, demonstrating the text’s

² For Job as wisdom literature, see John Day and R. P. Gordon’s *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: essays in honour of J. A. Emerton*, Bruce K. Waltke, J. I. Packer, and Sven Soderlund’s *The Way of Wisdom: essays in honor of Bruce K. Waltke*, R. N. Whybray’s *In Search of True Wisdom: essays in Old Testament interpretation in honour of Ronald E. Clements*, *Jewish Study Bible*, *NIV Study Bible*, and *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*.

extensive web of influence. Steven Marx, in *Shakespeare and the Bible*, examines Job's influence on *King Lear*; Robert Pack connects the Book of Job with Frost's "A Masque of Reason" in *Belief and Uncertainty in the Poetry of Robert Frost*; Harold Fisch draws parallels between Job and *Paradise Lost* in *Milton and Scriptural Tradition: The Bible into Poetry*.

The critical history of the morality plays is less extensive than Job's. Long disregarded as either simple or vulgar, the plays have only recently received serious critical attention. Scholars have begun to unpack not only the plays' literary and rhetorical techniques but also how they engaged in the literary discourses of their time and the centuries to follow.

Early criticism of the morality plays, in the first half of the twentieth century, attempted to classify and define them in respect to other forms of medieval drama. Unlike the numerous cycle and mystery plays, the extant morality plays are few in number—four complete texts and a section of a fifth. The four complete plays discussed here are *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *Everyman*. Only a fragment of *The Pride of Life* remains, though the fragment does contain its prologue, so the plot can be loosely reconstructed. These plays are categorized together, and not lumped with the cycle and mystery plays, because of specific elements they all share. Pamela King notes some common qualities of the morality plays: "moral instruction through dramatic action," an emphasis on free will, a belief in judgment and the afterlife, and the use of allegory and personification (240-2). Mark Eccles discusses more specific features, such as the *Conflict of the Virtues and Vices*, the *Debate of the Heavenly Graces*, and the *Coming of*

Death (xxv). Robert Potter's book *The English Morality Play* emphasizes the plays' "communal call[s] to repentance" (32) and places the protagonists' moments of repentance as the "climactic theatrical event" (49). Modern scholars' attempts at defining the morality play, however, reflect the contemporary need for classification rather than the medieval desire for continuity; for the plays demonstrate that while medieval playwrights used certain motifs and elements, these were far from an established formulas.

Other twentieth century scholars examine the morality plays in respect to other medieval plays.³ Peter Happe's *English Drama Before Shakespeare* and Mark Eccles' edition of *The Macro Plays* give historical and textual notes to the sphere the morality plays occupied in medieval drama and in medieval society in general. Both authors trace various possible influences on the plays as well as develop their relationships to liturgical drama. Jerome Taylor and Alan H. Nelson's *Medieval English Drama* establishes a comparative discourse on medieval drama rather than the sequential account Potter offers. Richard Southern's influential book *Medieval Theatre in the Round* spawned numerous discussions and examinations of medieval stagecraft and technology.

Research in the last fifty years has focused on the influence of the morality plays on later dramatic texts. David Bevington traces dramatic developments between medieval and Tudor drama in *From Mankind to Marlow: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England*. Others have shown the connections between the morality plays

³ See Cox, Wyatt, Chambers, and Diller.

and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and the Vice figures in many of Shakespeare's works.⁴ Potter not only looks back to influences on the medieval morality plays, but also catalogues the progress of the genre through the modern era. Michael Kelley examines the plays as part of a flamboyant tradition, with combinations of dramatic exaggeration and realism (13).

The four complete morality plays still in existence—*The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *Everyman*—were all written between 1400 and 1520. *The Castle of Perseverance*, the earliest morality play extant, was composed between 1400-1425; *Mankind* and *Wisdom* date between 1460 and 1470. These three plays, known as the Macro Plays, were preserved on the same manuscript⁵ which reveals a history of ownership through various signatures; the earliest name signed is the monk Thomas Hyngham, who some scholars speculate was involved with writing and copying the plays.⁶ The latest play, *Everyman*, has an uncertain history and performance dates are speculative, but it was published in England between 1510 and 1519; the general consensus among scholars is that *Everyman* is a translation of the Dutch play *Elckerlijck*.

The social climate during the production of the morality plays was crucial to the structures and arguments of the texts. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were a time of social unrest and economic struggle. The Black Death wreaked havoc on England's population when the first pandemic, from 1348 to 1349, spread across English soil. Subsequent epidemics and outbreaks followed, and by the second half of the fourteenth

⁴ See Craig, Godshalk, Shimman, and Kozikowski.

⁵ Washington, D.C., Folger MS. V a.354 (V)

⁶ See Happe (44)

century, England's population had been reduced by half.⁷ The Black Death affected nearly every English household and this prevalence of death in the culture caused medieval England to be "obsessed with death and the fear of dying" (Goldberg 186).

The century following the first Black Death outbreaks was marked by attempts to rebuild English society. The English population began to grow again, but labor remained a valuable commodity. Farmers and traders were the most successful inhabitants, and the merchant class increased in economic and numerical strength. East Anglia in particular was prosperous in trade and agriculture. Guilds also became increasingly popular, both religious and craft. Most guilds had three distinct attributes: "the patron saint, the church base and the annual feast" (Farnhill 10) and were responsible "for the organisation of trades and industry, and a huge range of social and religious activity" (Happe, *English* 4).

These social and economic changes were heavily tied with the Church, which was the central institution in medieval English life. After the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, there was a marked increase in what Happe calls "demonstrative forms of piety" (5) in the Church, and these forms continued through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, during the development of Lollardy. Religious literature, such as prayer and devotional books, were circulated to the laity in vernacular English, and church members were required to attend confession once a year during Lent and then receive the host during Easter. The increase in lay devotion went hand-in-hand with the popular discussions of the afterlife in the midst of the Black Death. The clergy reinforced Christian doctrine on the afterlife through sermons and Scriptural readings and placed heavy religious focus on

⁷ Goldberg (71); Platt (9); Griffith (39);

the Sacraments, in particular penance and the Eucharist. Paul Whitefield White and Peter Happe examine the emphasis on repentance and confession in contemporary sermons and note similar discussions in the morality plays, and Potter claims “the immediate origins of the morality play...are in the tradition of sermons and penitential literature advocating repentance and preaching the forgiveness of sins” (7).

Piety and devotion also increased outside the church walls, as numerous lay devotionals were copied in the years following the Fourth Lateran Council. The Paternoster, or Lord’s Prayer, was popular amongst church devotionals and a means of penance.⁸ Paternoster beads were made by craft guilds and several Paternoster plays were put on by religious guilds (Potter 23). These plays detailed the Lord’s Prayer and were often linked with the Seven Deadly Sins. Potter claims that the “Paternoster play was in substance a repentance drama” (28). Alongside the Paternoster was the Prymer, or common prayer book, which contained several prayers for devotion at home, including the Office of the Dead, which listed Scriptural prayers for the deceased.

Like all writers, the authors of the Middle English morality plays drew from the social context in which they lived. The Black Death and the socio-economic changes it brought and the reform of devotion in and out of the Church left strong impressions on the morality plays—the concepts of death, the afterlife, and devotion are central to the morals of the texts. Yet, the plays acted not only as a product of the social condition but as an instructive force within it. As much as the social climate influenced the morality plays, the morality plays influenced the social climate. Because they were “instructional

⁸ See *Mankind* (547-73)

demonstrations of Christian doctrine” (Kelley 23), they shaped the development of Christian theology amid the presence of Lollardy and just prior to the Protestant Reformation. The doctrine within the medieval morality plays remained influential amid the religious turmoil of the century to come.

The morality plays reflect the religious social context of their production specifically through their reliance on the Book of Job. By using themes, motifs, and elements present in the Book of Job, the morality plays not only demonstrate Job’s role in the medieval religious context but also construct their own Christian arguments in response to a Jewish framework.

“The early drama of England may no longer be treated as mere literature—or as mere theatrical entertainment, for that matter. To apply methodologies appropriate to poetry or the stage alone would isolate these plays from their historical context, and severing them from the vibrant traditions in which they lived and moved and had their being only would serve to advance the deep misconceptions that have plagued them in the past.”

- Clifford Davidson, *Technology, Guilds, and Early English Drama*

II.

The theological influence of the morality plays in medieval England is closely linked with the plays’ relationship to the Book of Job. During the Middle Ages, Job was associated with death and the afterlife—central issues in the morality plays. He was a popular figure, as were the texts about him, in both clerical and lay circles. Besserman claims Job’s popularity came from three sources of literature: Biblical, apocryphal, and ecclesiastical. All three areas contributed to the Job legend, but the Biblical text and specific texts associated with it—Gregory the Great’s *Morals* and the Office of the Dead—have the most evident correlations with the morality plays. Though Besserman includes *Morals* and the Office of the Dead under ecclesiastical sources, both texts contain the Biblical Book of Job, *Morals* in full and the Office of the Dead in part.

Job’s association with death comes not from his own death but rather from his affliction with “a very grievous ulcer, from the sole of the foot to the top of his head”

(2:7)⁹ in the Biblical account; Job's skin disease was similar to the symptomatic boils of the Black Death, and medieval art often depicted Job, with his lesions, on either a pile of ashes or a dunghill.¹⁰ Thus, he became the patron saint of skin diseases, and with the onset of the Black Death, Job had plenty of intercession to perform. Since the boils of the Black Death almost always led to death, Job became not only the patron saint of skin diseases but also closely associated with death.

However, Job's affiliation with skin diseases was not the only connection he had with death; passages from the Book of Job were said in the Office of the Dead, the set of prayers said by both the clergy and the laity after a loved one's death. These prayers were recited often, since the Black Death's high mortality rate left many dead, and the passages prayed for the dead were usually said on the third, seventh, and thirtieth day after a each death. Besserman does note that it is difficult to speak of a single Office of the Dead or specifically about Job's role in it; however, he says that "Job is the principal biblical figure in the fully developed Office of the Dead of the High Middle Ages" (58). Besserman continues that most of the medieval laity would have known about Job through the Office of the Dead (59) rather than the entire Scriptural book bearing his name. The *Prymer*, or lay folks' prayer book, circulating as early as 1420 (*Prymer* vii), cites nine Job passages in the Office of the Dead:

leccio.1. Parce michi, domine! [Job vii. 16-21]

Leccio ii: Tedet animam. [Job x. 1-7.]

⁹ All Biblical quotations are from the Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate unless otherwise noted.

¹⁰ The word Hebrew word 'epher in Job 2:8 is translated as "dunghill" in the Vulgate; the more accurate translation would be "ashes."

Leccio iij: Manus tue. [Job x. 8-12]

leccio iiij: Quantas habeo. [Job xiii. 23-28]

leccio v: Homo natus de muliere. [Job xiv. 1-6]

Leccio vj: [Quis michi hoc tribuat]. [Job xiv. 13-16.]

leccio vij: Spiritus meus. [Job xvii. 1-3, 11-15]

leccio viij: pelli mee. [Job xix. 20-27]

leccio ix: [Job x. 18-22]

Closely linked with Job's association with death was his connection with the afterlife. Besserman notes "In the Middle Ages...Job's faith in a personal redeemer and his belief in an afterlife in which all of this world's injustices will be righted were considered to be his primary response to righteous suffering—even though the presence of these motifs in the biblical text is dubious at best" (27). The medieval belief in a resurrection-minded Job is primarily based on two passages, Job 14:12-4 and Job 19:25-7. The Vulgate translates 14:12-4

So man when he is fallen asleep shall not rise again; till the heavens be broken, he shall not awake, nor rise up out of his sleep. Who will grant me this, that thou mayest protect me in hell, and hide me until thy wrath pass and appoint me a time when thou wilt remember me? Shall man that is dead, thinkest thou, live again? All the days in which I am now in warfare, I expect until my change come.

Verses 19:25-7 are translated

For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again in my skin, and in my flesh I will see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another: this my hope is laid up in my bosom.

Besserman aptly demonstrates that “Job’s faith in resurrection [is] clear and incontestable” (28) in the Vulgate translation. These two crucial verses also appear in the Office of the Dead in vernacular English, bolstering their association with resurrection and the afterlife. The Prymer translates Job 14:13-4,

[13] Who mai graunte to me this, that thou defende me in helle, & hide me tilt hi greet veniaunce passa, & that thou ordeyne me a tyme in which thou haue mynde of me? [14] gessist thou not that a deed man schal lyue ayen? / Alle the daies in whiche y trauele now, y abide til my chaungyng come.

Verses 25-27 of chapter 19 are translated,

[25] ffor y wot that myn ayenbier lyueth; & in the laste dai y schal rise fro the erthe, [26] & eft y schal be cumpassid with my skyn; & in my flesch y schal se god my saueour. [27] whom y my silf schal se, & myn hope, & kept in my bosum.

The verses from chapter 19 also appear at the conclusion of Lesson 1:

I bileue that myn ayenbier lyueth; & y schal rise out of the erthe in the laste dai; & in my fleshe y schal se god, my sauour.

Whom y my silf schal se, beyng not another, & myn iyen schulen biholde him.

[Repeat] And in my fleisch, y schal see god, my saueour.

The instruction to repeat the last section not only emphasizes Job's belief in a resurrection, but also reaffirms Job's assertion that he will see God in his own flesh. Thus, the Office of the Dead depicts Job as a type for Christ because of his death and supposed resurrection. The Christianization of Job in the Middle Ages is significant in respect to the morality plays because Job's connection with death and the afterlife made him a useful model for the morality plays' doctrine and protagonists. The plays dramatize Christian doctrine through a distinctly Christian protagonist, and both of these elements, death and the afterlife, draw from the Book of Job.

The most obvious similarity between the Book of Job and the morality plays is their dramatic nature. While Job is not a drama in the proper sense, its dramatic elements closely relate it to drama.¹¹ Rabanus Marurus and other medieval commentators classified the book as of a "mixed mode," both "narrative and dramatic" (Astell 15-7). The book as a whole lends itself well to dramatic organization and interpretation and has often been read and interpreted as an ancient drama, with scholars breaking the texts into acts and scenes as a way of organizing the dialogue sections.¹² More specifically, the Book of Job utilizes several dramatic features—the prologue establishes the preliminary action, the epilogue concludes the book, and the dialogues advance the book's argument. Also, each of the characters who speak is personally developed through the poetic dialogues and the prose prologue, though action between characters (stage action in a typical drama) is

¹¹ See the Introduction to Job in the *Jewish Study Bible*, Kallen's *The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy*, and Hurwitz's *The Immortal Drama of Life (The Book of Job)*.

¹² See Kallen's *The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy* and Walls's *The Oldest Drama in the World, The Book of Job*.

minimal at best. What is truly dramatic, though, about Job is the intellectual argument the characters are engaged in. Their discussion over the meaning of divine justice acts as the progression of the plot, with the climax coming in God's response to their debate.

The medieval English morality plays are not only dramatic but are full fledged dramas. The texts are broken into acts, and sometimes scenes, and were intended for performance. While evidence is scant on the performance history of each morality play, scholars have suggested that the *Castle of Perseverance* and *Mankind* were performed by a traveling troupe,¹³ and that *Wisdom* was likely the work of a monastery. *Everyman*, published as a "moral play," appears similar to a closet drama, though its performance history prior to publication is uncertain. Though the plays have no formal prologue and epilogue, they do establish and conclude action similarly to Job. In all four plays, an opening character, such as Mankind in the *Castle of Perseverance*, Mercy in *Mankind*, Wisdom in *Wisdom*, or God in *Everyman* establishes the action of the play, as the prologue of Job does. The plays conclude similarly, with a character offering another moralistic speech: God in the *Castle of Perseverance*, Mercy in *Mankind*, Anima in *Wisdom*, and a Doctor in *Everyman*. Aside from the plays' prologue and epilogue similarities, the figures in the morality plays are individually developed, as Job and his friends are, through their own speeches about themselves. However, the drama of the morality plays is not the physical actions of the characters but rather the intellectual discussion, a discussion similar to Job's, that they are engaged in. The plays use their

¹³ Clopper speculates that in the *Castle of Perseverance*'s case, "perhaps it was the text that moved rather than the actors" (191).

universal protagonists' interaction with good and evil forces to further their plots and depict the protagonists' ultimate choice of good over evil as the climax.

Yet it is a text's ability to translate the written text mystically into a physical reality that makes it truly dramatic. White says "drama communicate[s] ideology effectively and entertainingly to the general public in concrete visual and oral terms" (135). The "visual" and "oral" terms are crucial to the task of any dramatic text because drama is not so much *read* as *seen* and *heard*, for the written text is manifested into physical action and spoken words. This concept of "dramatic manifestation" of the written word is present in the Book of Job. Job often pairs seeing and hearing together; in Job 13:1, he says "My eyes have seen all this, my ears have heard and understood it," and later, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you" (42:5). Additionally, to the medieval laity, the figure of Job was very much seen and heard, since Job was popular in church artwork and paintings, usually seen on a dunghill or ashes with his wife and Satan. Also, passages from the Book of Job were often quoted during the mass, and the Office of the Dead was read aloud by either the clergy or the literate laity. Likewise, the morality plays were equally seen and heard, since their visual and oral components, in the dialogues and action of the characters, were the primary communicators to the medieval audience.

In the cases of both the Book of Job and the morality plays, dramatic manifestation can be seen as a tool for bringing the written revelation in Scripture to the laity in the physical and oral language they understood. Since access to holy texts was limited in medieval England, drama was one of the best theological vehicles for

communicating Christian doctrine. As Potter notes, the morality plays' purpose was "to make visible the invisible truths" (8).

Job and the morality plays also share similar rhetorical structures: both are fat on dialogue and thin on physical action. In Job, the prologue and epilogue contain almost all the text's action. In the first two brief chapters, Job goes from upright, sacrificing father to boil-ridden, dejected man on ashes. In chapter 42, Job's reverse of fortune is equally quick, occurring over a total of ten verses. The intervening thirty-nine chapters, over nine-tenths of the book, contain Job and his friends' long discussion on the nature of divine justice and God's response to it. The text's climax, God's appearance in a whirlwind, is also an act of discussion. Job even asks his friends, "Shall windy words have no end?" (16:3). This lack of action and profusion of dialogue demonstrates the text's concern with intellectual discussion and abstract inquiry over physical action.

Like Job, the morality plays rely on dialogue over action to communicate their argument. The speeches of the allegorical figures of the morality plays tend to have many "windy words" (Job 16:3), and characters often announce themselves and their qualities in lengthy, descriptive speeches, which Kelley describes as containing a "static, abstract quality" (36). In the *Castle of Perseverance*, the opening speeches by World, Belial, and Flesh encompass almost three hundred lines, while the Seven Virtues and Vices' verbal attacks take over a thousand. Likewise, Mind, Will, and Understanding in *Wisdom* introduce themselves over the course of approximately a hundred lines, and Wisdom often speaks thirty or forty lines at a time. The characters in *Mankind* are generally more succinct, except Mercy, whose sermon, stretching through Scene I, composes twenty

percent of the play. In *Everyman*, God's opening speech stretches forty lines and many of Everyman's soliloquies take up twenty or thirty lines. Like Job, the morality plays are concerned with intellectual, abstract inquiry—such as the difference between justice and mercy, the meaning of righteousness, and the fallen human condition—over physical action. The “windy words” of Job and the morality plays stem from most of the plays' plot being psychological; the alterations in characters come not from catastrophic events but from the psychological temptations by a Lucifer figure, rebukes by an angelic or Christ figure, and the characters' own rationale.

The characters' internal transformations, in Job and the morality plays, are depicted through the use of specific themes and motifs. One feature in several of the texts is the personified Death figure. For example, Job says, “Death and destruction have said, ‘With our ears we have heard the fame thereof’” (28:22), and the morality plays elaborate on the figure, making him a full-fledged character. In the *Castle of Perseverance* Mors comes for Mankind, in *Mankind* Mercy speaks of “the cruell vysytacyon of deth” (736), and in *Everyman* the messenger Death is sent to retrieve Everyman. The personification of death elevates its role in not only Job but also, and more prevalently, in the morality plays. Additionally, both the Book of Job and the morality plays depict Satan as the initiator of temptation. Though God may boast of Job first in the Bible, Satan offers the wager against Job (1:9-11) and even returns to up the ante (2:4-5). The Satan figures in the morality plays bear a strong resemblance to the aggressive Satan in Job. In the *Castle of Perseverance*, Belial serves as the Satan figure, boasting in the opening lines, “No I sytte, Satanas, in my sad synne” so that “Mankynde be stroyed / Be dykys and be denne”

(207-8). He, with his entourage of Vices, goes after Mankind to bring him into sin. In *Mankind*, the Satan figure is Myscheffe, for he organizes New Guise, Nowadays, and Nought, and even Tityvillius, to tempt Mankind to sin. The development of Lucifer in *Wisdom* also relies on the depiction of Satan in the Book of Job. Lucifer says, “I xall tempte hem so sorre” and “I wyll dysvygure” (331, 353), exclamations directly connected to Satan’s actions to Job: “Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with a very grievous ulcer, from the sole of the foot to the top even to the top of his head” (2:7).

The Job poet also uses language, and in particular names, to indicate the nature of his characters. Ken Frieden examines the Hebrew significance of the names of Job, God, and *ha-satan* in the text. Job’s name is similar to the Arabic word *awab*, meaning one who turns or returns to God (91). Several names for God are used in various parts of the texts and by various speakers. The Prologue and Epilogue use Yahweh for God, but the poetic dialogues use different names. Though some attribute this shift in naming to composite authorship, Frieden argues that the difference in naming is intended by the author as a signal of the character of Job’s friends (92). Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu use less exalted names for God, like El, Elohim, and Shaddai, while the prose sections use the most sacred name for God, Yahweh (92). The name *ha-satan* also signals an aspect of Satan’s character. Unlike the modern interpretation of *ha-satan* as the single entity Satan, the name simply means “adversary” (92). The indefinite article *ha* before the term also indicates that this figure was not *the* adversary but simply *an* adversary. Frieden defines *ha-satan* as “a variety of opposing forces” (93). Thus a triad of man,

good, and evil is established through the use of emblematic names in Job. The poet distinguishes each character's interaction with Job, the central human protagonist, as either good or evil.

Gregory the Great examines this triad of God, Satan, and man in his *Morals*. Though his examination is not as in depth as Frieden's in respect to the figures' names, he does translate "Job" as "mourner" in 1:1 and frames many of his discussions of Job around his grief and in turn his dependence on God. Gregory's definition of Job as "mourner" becomes even more significant when viewed in light of the Office of the Dead, for Job's role in death and resurrection makes him a universal figure for medieval readers. Gregory also comments on the polarity between Satan and the angels when they are present before God; though Satan "did not part with a nature like to [the angels]" (1:4) and thus could be present in their assembly, his place there was obviously different from the angels because, as Gregory notes, God inquires "Whence comest thou?" (1:7, 2:2). He depicts Satan as the opposite of God and the angels, a picture similar to the Good and Bad Angels in the *Castle of Perseverance*. Thomas Aquinas also discusses the use of names in the Book of Job and the Jobean triad. Aquinas notes that "Satan" means "adversary" and the term "angels" means "messengers" (76), relying on Isidore's *Etymologiae* for his definitions. He also upholds the Jobean triad by dividing the forces at work in the text into good and evil: "each class of spirits... moves men to certain actions, the good spirits indeed to good actions but the evil spirits to evil" (76).

Similarly, the writers of the morality plays use emblematic names to define their characters. Common figures include the seven cardinal sins, known as the Vices; the

seven Virtues; a good and evil figurehead, usually in the form of God and the Devil; and a universal protagonist. Potter notes “the formulaic world of the morality plays determines this catalogue of roles, for all the persons of the drama—tempters as well as agents of repentance—are playing their parts in the necessary sequence of human life” (39-40). The names of all these figures—like Pride, Mercy, Wisdom, Devil, and Everyman—clearly place each character into one of the three categories (man, good, or evil) established in Job, and the God and Devil figures, who King calls “polarized” (240), are direct descendants of their Jobean counterparts.

The Job protagonist figure, however, is altered in the four morality plays, changed from the blameless, righteous figure of the Biblical book to an average, fallen figure. The protagonists of the plays also represent both an individual and collective figure. Everyman, Mankind, and even Anima are individual characters in that they are played by one actor and they have specific downfalls; yet they are also representative of humankind, demonstrating universal downfalls. In *Mankind*, this duality in character is seen in Mankind’s use of both singular and plural pronouns. Kelley quotes the following passage to demonstrate:

Of the erth and of the cley we haue owr propagacyon.
By the prouydens of Gode thus be we deryvatt,
To whos mercy I recomende this holl congrygacyon:
I hope onto hys blysse ye be all predestynatt.
Euery man for hys degree I trust xall be partycypatt,
Yf we wyll mortyfye owr carnall condycyon

Ande owr voluntarye dysyres, that euer be pervercyonatt,
To renunce them and yelde ws wnder Godys provcyon. (186-93)

The universal protagonist figure, be it Job representing mourners or Mankind representing humankind, plays the dual role of relating to individuals in the audience while demonstrating universal truths.

Mankind also contains the most direct link between the Book of Job and the morality plays. Not only is Job quoted four times during the play, but reference is made to Job as a model for the protagonist Mankind. In line 228, Mercy says, “For ther ys euer a batell betwyx the soull and the body” and then quotes Job 7:1 in Latin: “The life of man upon earth is a warfare, and his days are like the days of a hireling.” The spiritual warfare between Lucifer and Mankind in *Mankind* parallels the situation between Satan and Job in the Book of Job. Later in Mercy’s sermon, he instructs Mankind,

Ye may not haue yowr intent at yowr first dysyere.
Se the grett pacyence of Job in tribulacyon;
Lyke as the smyth trieth ern in the feere,
So was he triede by Godys vysytacyon.
He was of yowr nature and of yowr fragylyte;
Folow the steppys of hym, my own swete son,
Ande sey as he seyde in yowr trobyll and aduersyte:
‘Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit; sicut sibi placuit, ita factum
est; nomen Domini benedictum! (285-93)

Mercy links Job with Mankind by claiming the two are of the same “nature” and “fragylyte” (289) and instructs Mankind to “follow the steppys of hym” (290) in order to withstand the “trobyll and aduersyte” (291) to come. Even Mercy’s use of the word “aduersyte” demonstrates a link with *ha-satan*, or “adversary,” in Job. Line 287 describes Job’s adversities like the “smyth trieth ern in the feere,” a reference to Job 23:10: “But he knoweth my way, and he has tried me as gold that passeth through the fire.” This passage depicts Job’s trials as a means of purification, a motif also present in *Mankind*: Mercy says “Gode wyll proue” Mankind, and if Mankind passes, he shall enter heaven (283-4). The verse Mercy quotes at the end of his instruction is verse 1:21; “the Lord give, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord so it is done: blessed be the name of the Lord.” Job’s righteous response to his afflictions serves as a model for Mankind’s responses to his temptations to come. After Mercy’s sermon is complete, Mankind reflects on his “nobyll condycyon” (318), saying, “To haue remos and memory of mysylff thus wretyn yt ys, / To defende me from all superstycyus charmys: / ‘Memento, homo, quod cinis es et in cinerem reuerteris’” (319-21); the verse in Latin is a reference to Job 34:15: “All flesh shall perish together, and man shall return into ashes.” At this point in the play, Mankind appears to have heeded Mercy’s warning. King notes that all three Job verses Mercy’s quotes were said at mass on Ash Wednesday (250), which connects affliction with repentance, two themes that “draw centrally on the Book of Job” (King 249) in the morality plays. These two themes recur throughout *Mankind* and the other morality plays because later Mankind does not heed Mercy’s instructions about

temptation and falls into sin, unlike Job, who resisted the temptation to “curse God and die” (2:9).¹⁴

Verbal links between Job and the morality plays occur less directly in the *Castle of Perseverance*, *Wisdom*, and *Everyman*. The *Castle of Perseverance* connects Mankind to Job through the inevitability of death. The opening banns declare, “Whou Mankynde into this werld born is ful bare / And bare schal beryed be at hys last ende” (16-7), which is similar to Job’s statement, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, naked shall I return thither” (1:21). During Job’s lament, he says to God, “I know that thou wilt deliver me to death, where a house is appointed for every one that liveth” (30:23). The figure Mors, or Death, in the *Castle of Perseverance*, echoes this sentiment; “I durke and downbrynge to nowth / Lordys and ladys in euery londe” (2793-4). The broad, general statements about death that Mankind and Mors make demonstrate Job’s influence on the play’s perception of death and bolster Mankind’s role, like Job’s, as a universal protagonist.

The morality play *Wisdom* relies on the Book of Job by addressing one of its central questions: Where is wisdom to be found, and where is the place of understanding? (28:12). Anima phrases this question in a Job-like appeal: “O endless wisdom, how may I haue knowynge / Off thi Godhede incomprehensyble?” (93-4). Job describes wisdom as “hid from all eyes of the living, and the fowls of the air know it not” (28:21), while Wisdom, in his opening speech, says, “No creature knowyt full exposycyon” (26). Job

¹⁴ The Vulgate uses “bless” instead of “curse;” however, the Hebrew word *barak* used in Job 2:9 can mean either “bless” or “curse.” Both Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas note that the “bless” used in the Vulgate means “curse.”

also claims, “Gold and crystal cannot equal it, neither shall any vessels of gold be changed for it” (28:17), while *Wisdom* notes, “Wysdom ys better than all worldly precyosnes” (33). *Wisdom* clearly relies on the Jobean description of wisdom to define the term in the play. Additionally, there are two passages in *Wisdom* that can be associated with the figure of Job. *Wisdom* instructs “Lo, who suffyryth most for Gode ys most lewe, / Slandyr, reprev, ony aduersyte” (1019); though the passage makes no direct reference to Job, the description fits the medieval perception of Job as patient and suffering and, like *Mankind*, uses the term “aduersyte,” a possible reference to Job’s adversary. Also, *Anima* “hathe wyffe, chylderne, and serwantys besy” (406), as Job does.

Everyman shares both structural and verbal links to the Book of Job. The opening dialogue bears a strong resemblance to God’s opening dialogues in Job, as both sections establish the central plots of the plays, involve God, man, and adversary figures, and offer the reader a glimpse into a private council that the protagonists are not privy to.

Additionally, some passages in the play echo Job’s own words. For instance, Job, in his distress, exclaims, “Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, ‘A man child is conceived’” (3:3); *Everyman* cries a similar plea, “Alas, that ever I was bore” (348). These passages, like those in the *Castle of Perseverance*, *Wisdom*, and *Mankind*, connect Job’s sufferings with those of the protagonist. Additionally, as Job’s friends abandon him in his time of need, so *Everyman*’s companions leave him one by one. Job says of his friends, “He hath put my brethren far from me, and my acquaintance like strangers have departed from me. / My kinsmen have forsaken me and they that knew me, have forgotten me” (19:13-4). *Everyman* cries, “All hath forsaken me!” (851)

after each of his companions, including Cousin and Kinsmen as in Job's passage, depart in turn. Job even calls his friends "troublesome comforters" (16:2) while Everyman reflects despairingly, "Now may I true friends see" (855).

The similarities between the Book of Job and the morality plays demonstrate the Biblical book's influence on the later plays. Medieval perceptions of the Book of Job and its protagonist shaped the plays' structures, rhetorical devices, characters, and in particular, the implementation of the Jobean triad. Humankind's role amid good and evil forces connects every aspect of both the Book of Job and the moralities. This role, so crucial to all the texts, is depicted in each as a journey.

The motif of human life as a pilgrimage was used in literature before the Book of Job or any of the morality plays were written. Human progress, particularly intellectual progress, parallels the concept of a physical journey well; however, a pilgrimage implies not only a progression but also an ultimate destination, both of which are encompassed in the pilgrimage motif. For the Book of Job and the morality plays, the journey depicted contains both the progress and the destination, though the latter is of greater importance in all the texts.

During the Middle Ages, Job's life as depicted in the Book of Job was seen as a journey, one akin to the epic lives of Odysseus and Aeneas. Ann W. Astell notes that the Book of Job "bears no obvious formal resemblance to either the Homeric epics or the *Aeneid*" (2); yet Gregory the Great and Rabanus Maurus call Job "heroic" (Astell 2) in his combat with Satan, and "the historical witness of Bede, Rabanus Maurus, and others...cites Job as an instance of epic comparable to the classical epics" (Astell 3).

Astell also notes that heroic epics to medieval readers involved “the strong and wise hero whose particular story represents the coming-to-perfection, the true nature of a generalized humankind” (72). The particular couched in the general, as medieval readers interpreted the heroic epics, is a pattern essential to the Book of Job, and coincidentally, to the morality plays. While formal connections are difficult to find between the heroic epics and Job or the morality plays, all the texts’ portrayals of their protagonists’ lives as journeys establish a textual lineage among them.

The heroic model of the protagonist’s journey involves progress toward a specific destination. Medieval commentators saw progress toward a destination, which Astell calls “modalities of homeward journey” (14), in Job. Unlike the heroic epics, though, the Book of Job’s journey involves the progress of the text’s intellectual discussion: What is divine justice? Job’s destination is the answer to this question, and though his journey has fewer physical counterparts than the heroic epics, he does make intellectual progress and arguably reaches an answer by the conclusion of the text.

Moreover, the pilgrimage expressed in the Book of Job details specific stages through which Job must pass in order to reach his philosophical answer; this set of stages relies on the faith pattern detailed in the Pentateuch, specifically drawing on the history of the Israelites. The pattern demonstrates the path God’s salvation in the Promised Land and the fulfillment of his covenant with Abraham.

The first stage in the Hebrew faith pattern is, somewhat obviously, birth. The story of Israel, God’s chosen name for Abraham’s grandson Jacob, began with Rebecca, Jacob’s mother, being initially barren, but God cured her from this affliction and she

became pregnant with twins, Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25:21). Genesis recounts that the two boys “struggled” in her womb (Gen. 25:22). Although Jacob was the younger of the twins, he received his father Isaac’s blessing and birthright (Gen. 25:34); thus, he and his twelve sons founded the chosen Israelite tribe. This stage in the Hebrew pattern is not only the birth of the Israelite nation, but also God’s fulfillment of his covenant with Abraham, who “believed God, and it was reputed to him unto justice” (Gen. 15:6); God honors Abraham’s descendants because Abraham was righteous, or “just” (Gen. 15:16), and because “[God] promised by oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Deut. 9:5). Thus, the birth stage is correlated with righteousness in the Hebrew pattern.

A generation later, famine led the Israelites into Egypt, where their descendants were eventually enslaved many years afterward (Exodus 1). However, Moses led the Israelites out of slavery, marking their exodus with a passage through water, the Red Sea (Exod. 14:21-2). On their way to the Promised Land, God delivered the Law to the people from Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:20), solidifying the boundaries for sin and repentance, for God detailed what sin was and how to be cleansed of it. Thus the Law established the possibility of obedience or disobedience.

Once the Israelites reach the Promised Land, they did indeed transgress the Law, for they were afraid to enter the land (Numb. 14). Because of their lack of faith, God commanded them to wander forty years in the Desert of Sinai (Numb. 14:34) as a time of punishment for their transgression; yet this time offered more opportunities for temptation. In the desert, the Israelites faced starvation, thirst, and the temptation of idolatry, for food and water were scarce and the foreigners they encountered worshipped

many idols. During the Israelites' punishment in the desert, God reiterates the pattern of obedience bringing reward and disobedience bringing punishment. When the Israelites followed the Law, they were rewarded with victory in battle; however, when they turned away, they were punished with plagues, death, or defeat in battle.

The last stage of the Israelite history is death. When the unfaithful generation, who were afraid to enter the Promised Land, had died away, God permitted the faithful generation to claim the land. Since Moses died before entering, the new generation was led in by Joshua. However, death is the ultimate end for Joshua and the faithful generation as well. Though one generation received the punishment and the other received the reward, both generations ended in death.

These events in the Pentateuch form the faith pattern of the Israelites and establish the framework followed in the Book of Job. Drawing on the generic stages described in the specific events of the Israelite history, the Pentateuch establishes the faith pattern: BIRTH→TEMPTATION→OBEDIENCE/DISOBEDIENCE→REWARD/PUNISHMENT→DEATH

The Book of Job uses this pattern of faith to unify its argument and structure its plot, as the text distinctly depicts Job progressing through these stages. The text first describes him as a prosperous man with seven sons and three daughters (1:2), offering sacrifices for them in case they had sinned. Though no direct account of his birth is given, Job is represented as in a stage of righteousness like Abraham, for he is obedient to God (1:5) and called "blameless and upright" (1:1).

Job is first tempted by Satan, who destroys his possessions, kills his sons and daughters, and afflicts Job with boils. Job's wife, in light of their circumstances, tempts

Job to “curse God and die” (Job 2:9). Job’s three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar also represent temptation to Job, for they claim Job’s troubles are a result of his own sin. Eliphaz urges him to repent for his “manifold wickedness” and “infinite iniquities” (22:5); Bildad reminds Job that “God will not cast away the simple, nor reach out his hand to the evildoer” (8:20); Zophar tells him that God has, so generously, “exacteth much less of thee, than thy iniquity deserveth” (11:6).

The lengthy debate between Job and his friends is crucial to the next phases of the Hebrew pattern. Job claims that he is “just” (12:4) and has not given in to temptation. However, he also affirms that “man cannot be justified compared with God” (9:2) and mentions his own sin, speaking of the “sins of my youth” (13:26) and that God “hast numbered my steps but spare my sins. Thou hast sealed up my offenses as it were in a bag, but hast cured my iniquity” (14:16-7). Additionally, Job’s final lines in the text are, “I reprehend myself and do penance in dust and ashes” (42:6). Two interpretations can be derived from these contradictory passages; either Job is truly blameless and has not sinned at all, or he has sinned, as he claims all men have, but that his sins have been forgiven and he does not deserve his present circumstances. The latter interpretation is more likely when the whole text, instead of simply the dialogues, is considered. However, Job’s obedience or disobedience is the central concern for Job and his friends in regards to the faith pattern exhibited. The characters argue about what Besserman calls the “Deuteronomist theory” (11), or whether reward is in reaction to obedience and punishment in reaction to disobedience. Job’s friends support this theory, but they wrongly conclude that Job’ sin has brought on his afflictions; this position is what Stuart

Lasine calls “the worm’s eye view of Job,” in which Job’s friends are only thinking within the strict formula of obedience or sin, reward or punishment.

In truth, the Book of Job ultimately upholds the Deuteronomist theory, but depicts Job’s sufferings as temptations rather than punishments. Job even admits, “[God] has tried me as gold that passeth through the fire” (23:10). Additionally, the reader, unlike Job and his friends, has access to God’s council with Satan, which acknowledges that Job’s trials are temptations rather than punishments; moreover, Job is generously rewarded for his obedience during these temptations at the conclusion of the text. He receives his possessions twice over (42:10) because he spoke of God what is right (42:7), unlike his wife and friends. The Book of Job concludes with Job dying “an old man, and full of days” (42:17), with no mention of an afterlife or a reward in heaven. In this framework, with Job’s obedience during temptation, the text follows the Hebrew faith pattern. Job begins blameless, is tempted but obeys, receives his reward, and dies.

The morality plays, too, use the pilgrimage motif from a Biblical pattern to not only depict their protagonists on a journey but also to establish the route to salvation. However, they draw on the Christian faith pattern, a revision of the Hebrew one. This pattern uses almost identical elements as those in the Israelite history—birth, temptation, obedience/disobedience, repentance, reward/punishment, and death—but these elements are not in the same sequence in the Christian history.

In the story of Jesus’ birth, the elements present in Jacob’s birth story recur. Elizabeth, like Rebecca, was barren but eventually conceived a son (Luke 1:7). There were also two pregnancies, Elizabeth’s and Mary’s, and though the two sons were not

brothers, they are cousins. The Gospel of Luke even references the “struggling” mentioned in Genesis 25:22, for when Mary visited Elizabeth, John leapt in her womb (1:41). These common elements parallel Jesus’ birth to Israel’s. When Jesus was born, he was in a state of innocence, not simply because he was perfect but because he had not yet “advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men” (Luke 2:52).

Like the Israelites, Jesus was set apart by his passage through water, as his cousin John baptized him in the Jordan (Matt. 3:15-6). He then immediately entered the desert for forty days of temptation (Matt. 4:1), where the elements of bread and idolatry as temptations recur, as with Israel’s wanderings. Satan tempted Jesus to turn the stones into bread and to bow down and worship him (Matt. 4:3, 9). These temptations align Christ with the Israelites, though his obedience to God during them also demonstrates that, unlike the Israelites, he did not sin. The Gospels also record several instances of Christ engaging in self-reflection and intense prayer, usually at a mountaintop. Though Christ never sinned, these instances of self-examination and prayer are similar to times of repentance. While the elements of temptation and repentance were present in Christ’s life, they acted more so as markers for other believers than indicators of sin. Thus, the Christian faith pattern establishes a stage of temptation and repentance even though Jesus never needed to repent.

The faith pattern in the Gospels also includes a refashioning of the Law Moses received on Mount Sinai: Jesus delivered his New Covenant in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). His teachings there correlate with the Laws delivered on Sinai, as he addressed murder, adultery, oaths, acts of righteousness, prayer, fasting, worry, and

judgment. The climax of the Gospels comes at Christ's death; though unlike the Hebrew pattern, Christ's life did not end in death. Rather, his death was the vehicle for reward or punishment, and he received his reward in heaven at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19). Matthew records that many dead holy men were released from the grave and walked the streets of Jerusalem after Jesus' resurrection (Matt. 27:52-3), demonstrating the release of not only Christ but of "holy men" from the grave. By leading these souls into heaven, Jesus paralleled Joshua; coincidentally, the Greek name for Joshua is Jesus.

Thus, the life of Christ as described in the Gospels establishes the Christian pattern of faith as:

BIRTH(INNOCENCE)→TEMPTATION→OBEDIENCE/REPENTANCE→DEATH→REWARD/PUNISHMENT¹⁵

The components of the Hebrew and Christian faith patterns are necessarily similar, for Christ's pattern can be viewed as intentionally revisionary of the Old Testament one. The difference between the Hebrew stage of obedience or disobedience and the Christian obedience or repentance results from a difference in ideology. Though the Hebrew pattern places emphasis on obedience or disobedience, while the Christian pattern emphasizes obedience or repentance, the two stages are virtually synonymous, for both deal with the actions of believers and both determine punishment or reward. The primary difference between the faith patterns of Judaism and Christianity, of Job and the morality plays, is the temporal relationship between death and reward/punishment.

According to the Hebrew pattern, reward or punishment for deeds comes during a person's physical life on earth. Death, then, is the finale for the Hebrew believer. Andrew

¹⁵ Robert Lee Ramsey uses a similar pattern for the morality plays in his edition of *Magnyfycence*. See Schell (280).

Key describes Sheol (or the Hebrew place of death) as a place close to nothingness, with no moral component (241-2), and the most an Israelite could look forward to in Sheol was carrying over any earthly prestige (242). Fey does note that since God provided earthly prestige as a reward, then when that reward carried over into Sheol, the concept of God's control over the grave emerged; however this connection still emphasizes God's earthly as opposed to heavenly rewards to the Israelites. He also notes the personification of Death in many Old Testament Scriptures (245), which not only marks out a clear Scriptural space for the stage of death but also bolsters the connection between the Job and the morality plays.

By using the same stages that occur in Job but reworking them into an explicitly Christian pattern, the morality plays demonstrate the fulfilled Christian ideal only hinted at in Job. The Book of Job depicts its protagonist, the resurrection-minded Job as medieval readers saw him, in the Hebrew framework. However, Job hints at a different framework, specifically the Christian one. Job's desires for a resurrection, so emphasized in medieval religious literature, would have been seen as fulfilled in the Christian faith pattern. Therefore, medieval readers would have perceived Job, though he functions in the precursory Hebrew pattern, almost as a prophet to the Christian faith pattern exhibited in the morality plays, and the similarities between the two faith patterns, along with Job's supposed belief in a resurrection, would have linked the framework in the Book of Job to that of the morality plays. In all the texts, though, the pilgrimage of the protagonist's life is really the pilgrimage of his faith, be it Jewish or Christian. Potter calls the framework

of the morality plays the “pattern of salvation” (53), and these patterns of faith are central not only to the plots but also the theological morals of the dramas.

Potter claims that the morality play plots are not based on the pilgrimage motif or even a Scriptural pattern but credits the element of repentance as the center pin of all the texts, calling all the morality plays “repentance drama” (30). He begins his history of the English morality play with a discussion on the *Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *Everyman* (along with *Pride of Life*, *Mundus et Infans*, *Hickscorner*, and *Youth*)¹⁶ and reduces the plays to the essential pattern of “innocence, fall, and redemption” (34), a pattern other scholars use.¹⁷ While acknowledging that not all morality plays fit into this pattern, Potter does claim that the common element of repentance is the focus of all the plays.

However, Potter appears to have arrived at his explanation by reading through literary and secular glasses. He does note vital elements in the morality plays but fails to view the religious frameworks in which the plays were produced. While they may now be artifacts of a past cultural-religious era, they are not mere predecessors of better later English morality plays. During their time of production, the Middle English morality plays were *religious*; they were written by religious people to serve religious functions for a religious population, and they showed the religious life journey of their religious universal protagonists. Kelley notes the religious foundation of the plays, describing them as “instructional demonstrations of Christian doctrine” (23). The didactic tone of the texts

¹⁶ *Pride of Life* is a fragment, *Mundus et Infans* is a short production printed later in the 16th C, and *Hickscorner* and *Youth* are less moralities and more early modern comedies.

¹⁷ See Kelley and King.

supports Kelley's claim. Each play even has a character who acts as a priest and usually quotes Scripture to the protagonist. Therefore, it is logical to view the patterns within the morality plays through a lens of a known influence, the Bible, as in fact, "almost all medieval drama inevitably has to be scrutinized through the lens supplied by the Church" (Tydeman 4). The plays do not so much relate "what it means to be human" (Potter 6) as what it means to be a Christian. This distinction does not diminish other secular readings; however, it does offer deeper insight into the text's possible influences, notably the Book of Job, based on the social, ideological, and religious contexts of the plays. Thus, as Potter claims, the element of repentance is crucial to the morality plays, but only as one element among many. The plays' "demonstrations of Christian doctrine" (Kelley 23) do not rely solely on repentance, but rather on its place in a series of elements, or the Christian faith pattern.

The presence of the Christian faith pattern in the morality plays indicates some theological implications in the texts. While the Book of Job uses the Hebrew framework to relay the faith pattern to its readers, the morality plays rely on the same elements as, though in a different sequence than, the Hebrew pattern to demonstrate the Christian faith pattern to their audiences. Each morality play manifests the Christian framework shown, and though the stages take slightly different forms, all of the elements of the pattern are present.

In *The Castle of Perseverance*, the structure of the play explicitly demonstrates the pattern of Mankind's life. King claims that the "major thematic movement of the play depends on the presentation of man's life as a journey" or a "pilgrimage from birth to

death” (244). Edgar T. Schell describes Mankind’s physical movement through the playing area as allegorical for his spiritual journey, with “good and evil [as] its lateral coordinates as heaven and hell [as] its vertical coordinates” (285). The play’s structure also fits Potter’s model of “innocence, fall, and redemption” (34). However, these patterns do not account for the whole text; the play’s action does not merely range from “birth to death” but from birth to the afterlife. Likewise, the final scene is not one of redemption but rather rewards, as Mankind enters heaven. Redemption in the morality plays comes from the repentance of sin and the return to the state of righteousness, but the reward stage involves the protagonist’s entrance to heaven.

The surviving manuscript of the *Castle of Perseverance* first details the required stage setup: one center scaffold, used for the Castle of Perseverance and God’s throne, surrounded by five scaffolds occupied by World, Flesh, Belial, Covetousness, and God, and the audience around the configuration. This positioning plays an intricate role in both the plot and meaning of the text, as is apparent in the opening scenes. The play begins with Mankind’s birth, as the banns describe:

The case of oure comynge you to declare,
Euery man in himself forsothe he it may fynde:
Whou Mankind into this werld born is ful bare
And bare schal beryed be at hys last ende. (14-17)

Mankind appears as an infant in the opening scene:

Aftyr oure forme-faderys kende
This nyth I was od my modyr born

.....
I am nakyd of lym and lende

As Mankynde is schapyn and schorn (275-6, 279-80)

While Mankind speaks these lines, he is located in the center of the round, under the central scaffold (King 244). His nakedness is symbolic of his purity, as was the nakedness of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The words of the banns and his opening position under the central scaffold demonstrate Mankind's state of innocence, for he is yet uninfluenced by the Vices that exist outside the castle, and he is aligned with benevolent characters later to occupy the center scaffold, namely the Seven Virtues and God. Additionally, as the banns report, Mankind will return "ful bare" to that same spot several times as the play progresses, the bareness symbolizing one unsoiled by sin. The center scaffold then marks out the space of sinlessness for Mankind, first in his innocence and later in his repentance and redemption. During Mankind's opening scene, World, Satan, and Flesh introduce themselves and their role in the play from the exterior scaffolds, which marks their definitive position as evil characters, in contrast to Mankind, who is presented initially as in a state of innocence.

Mankind first speaks in the fourth scene, still in a stage of innocence. He explains,

To aungels bene asynyd to me:

.....
Lord Jhesu, to thou I bydde a bone

That I may folwe, be stret and stalle,

The aungyl that cam fro heuene trone. (301, 315-7)

The possibility for and inevitability of temptation is set up in this scene. Though Mankind starts out an innocent infant, he recognizes that there are two spiritual forces, his Good and Bad Angels, vying for his soul, a situation clearly similar to Job's. The *Castle of Perseverance* reinforces the Jobean triad by representing Mankind struggling with his Bad Angel and attempting to follow his Good Angel. Because the ability to choose between the two angels constitutes his temptation, Mankind's stage of innocence is marked not by a declaration of blamelessness, as in the case of Job, but in his plea to Lord Jhesu to help him. In his first speech, he has not yet chosen to follow the Bad Angel to World, Flesh, or Satan, and instead cries out to "Coryows Criste" and chooses to follow "the aungyl that cam fro heuene" (320, 317).

Yet, Mankind's innocence is short-lived, as is the case in all morality plays. Within the same scene, Mankind's Bad Angel tempts him with a catalogue of pleasures and lures him away to World, whose position on an exterior scaffold indicates that Mankind has left his state of grace. Mankind's fall is further highlighted by his vow to World,

I wyl go with the and asay.

I ne lette, for frende ner fo,

But with the Werld I wyl go play

.....

In this World is al my trust

To lyuyn in lykyng and in lust. (394-6, 398-9)

Characteristic of the morality play, Mankind continues to use the religious language from his earlier discussion with his Good Angel but directs it to his evil counterpart instead, and his previous prayers to Lord Jhesu are replaced with his vows to World.

The next scene clearly depicts Mankind's state of sinfulness. A parade of the verbose vices and their agents—World, Flesh, and Satan—ensue, each vice extolling his own evil qualities. Mankind then appears with the vices—Covetousness, Pride, Wrath, Envy, Gluttony, Lechery, and Sloth—and vows his loyalty to each individually. This lengthy section, stretching 227 lines, solidifies Mankind's sinful state to the medieval audience; the Seven Vices, which were familiar to medieval audiences through sermons and religious literature, signal that Mankind is indeed “soylyd and saggyd in synne” (1291).

Mankind falls so far into disobedience that he even rebuffs Confession initially, for when Confession threatens Mankind with Hell, Mankind replies that he can repent on Palm Sunday or Good Friday (1349, 1352) and demands Confession “go hens” (1376). His remarks demonstrate that his interest in religion is now superficial rather than genuine. In Mankind's opening scene, he “bydde[s] a bone¹⁸ / That [he] may fowle [God], be strete or stalle” (315-6), but by the time of his encounter with Confession, he wants to delay his prayers until Easter. Yet, Penance arrives with a lance, a “point of penaunce” with “a drope of mercy” (1377, 1380), and pierces Mankind's heart with it, causing the protagonist to feel “a sete of sowre” (1403). Thus, Mankind repents of his sin, “Mercy, God, forgeue me thys!” (1484), and asks for grace and forgiveness (1454). As

¹⁸ Asks in prayer

his turn to sin was marked by his vow to World, Flesh, and Satan, so his return to God is marked by a pledge to “forsake you, synnys, and fro you fle” (1447).

To further highlight Mankind’s repentance and the forgiveness of his sins, Mankind goes to the Castle of Perseverance, located at the center scaffold. Confession describes the Castle as

...a precyous place,
Ful of vertu and of grace;
Whoso leuyth there hys lyuys space
No synne schal hym schende” (1555-1559).

Mankind’s entrance into the Castle indicates a shift in his state because the Castle occupies the space of righteousness, the center scaffold. Though Mankind does not return to innocence as he was as an infant, his sins are forgiven, and he is made righteous again. Mankind, aware of the Castle’s geographical distinction, asks Confession to “putte [him] / Into sum place of surete / That thei [the Vices] may not harmyn me” (1542-4). Instead of being “ful bare” (16) and “nakyd” (279) as in the opening scenes, Mankind is put away in a secure place, the Castle of Perseverance. This distinction between innocence and awareness of sin mirrors the Adam and Eve parallel established earlier in the play; as Adam and Eve’s innocence was indicated by their nakedness, so their recognition of sin was marked by them covering themselves.

In the Castle of Perseverance, Mankind meets the Seven Virtues—Patience, Charity, Abstinence, Chastity, Business, Humility, and Thrift—who demonstrate their moral opposition to the Seven Vices of the previous scenes. As he previously pledged

himself to the Vice figures, Mankind vows himself to these virtuous characters, saying, “The seuene synnys I forsake / And to these seuene vertuis I me take” (1690-1).

At this point in the play, the typical cycle of innocence, fall, and redemption has been completed. One would expect Mankind to die soon and enter heaven. However, the author chooses to repeat Mankind’s fall and redemption before Mankind’s death in Scene 20. Though the other morality play plots use only one fall into sin and one instance of repentance, *The Castle of Perseverance* demonstrates that sin and repentance are a continuous process throughout Mankind’s life, a repetition found in the Hebrew and Christian faith patterns; the Israelites’ cycle of sin and repentance repeats during their forty years wandering, while Job’s temptations are repeated with each of his three friends’ speeches, and Satan tempts Christ not once but three times in the desert.

During Mankind’s conversion, the host of vicious characters plot to lure Mankind away from the Castle and back into sin. After much scheming, the Seven Vices attack the Castle, but are warded off by the Seven Virtues, equipped with Scripture verses. The battle scene between the Vices and Virtues at the Castle further highlights the spiritual battle described in Job. Covetousness eventually draws Mankind away from the Castle with promises of wealth and riches. Mankind falls to temptation once again, pledging to Covetousness to do “al thi byddyng” and “forsake the Castel of Perseueraunce” (2533-4). This exchange between Mankind and Covetousness parallels the protagonist’s previous fall into sin in lines 393-401.

Mankind lives out his years in sin, in league with Covetousness, until he is “a-party wele in age” (2700) and “mekyl of hys lyf he hath myspeut” (2781). When Death

arrives to retrieve him, Mankind cries out to the World for help, though he soon realizes that none of the vices “dedyst [him] neuere no maner good” (2944). Once again, Mankind repents, saying, “Now I am sory of my lyf” (2970) and concludes his speech with a warning, “Now, good men, takythe example at me. / Do for yourself whyl ye han spase” (2995-6). Mankind recognizes that his life, his pattern of faith, does not lead toward the reward of salvation, and he warns the audience to take heed of his example while they are alive. These two comments not only reinforce the presence of the Christian faith pattern but more particularly the necessity of repentance before death.

In the following scene, it is not Mankind but Anima, his soul, who speaks, marking the play’s movement from the earthly to the heavenly world. Mankind’s repentance *before* this scene is crucial to the theology of the play and the Christian faith pattern, as is discussed in the heavenly scenes that follow.

The remaining three scenes of the play depict Mankind’s afterlife. Initially, God brings Anima to his throne, located at the center scaffold, to be judged. This hearing is also attended by God’s four daughters—Justice, Truth, Mercy, and Peace, who were popular figures in medieval literature. The debate between them that ensues exemplifies the complexity of divine justice, a concept medieval writers wrestled with. Like Job and his companions, the four daughters of God attempt to dissect the ways of God. Justice argues that “eueryman that wyl fulfill / the dedly synnys and folw mysdede, / To graunte hyem mercy me thynkyth it no skyl” (3155-7) and she quotes Matthew 7:21, “Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven” (3168). Truth agrees, saying that when each man dies, she must weigh “hys goode dedys and hys syne,

/ And weydyr of hem be more or mynne / He schal it ryth sone fynde” (3187-9). But Mercy retorts that “if he dey in very contricioun, / Lord, the lest drope of thi blod / For hys synne makyth satysfaccioun” (3367-9). Peace also argues that God designed man to fill the place of the fallen angels (3496-3506) and reminds God of Christ’s forgiving blood, quoting, “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter” (3552, Acts 8:32). Since Mankind repented before his death, Mercy and Peace win the debate, a victory foreshadowed by God’s position on the center scaffold, established earlier as a space “ful of vertu and of grace” (1556), and God commands to “brynge [Mankind] to my blysse ful clere / In heuene to dwelle endelesly” (3567-8). This scene displays the complex concept of divine justice and is integral to the Christian faith pattern, for according to the pattern, repentance *must* come before death, no matter how soon before, and rewards and punishment must come after. Mankind does repent before he dies and does receive his reward after his death, even though Mankind’s repentance and death are close textually and chronologically. Thus the scope of *The Castle of Perseverance* does not stretch merely from innocence to repentance or from birth to death; the play progresses from innocence to reward and from birth to the eternal afterlife. Eccles agrees that “the final scenes in heaven are therefore essential to the Christian meaning of the play” (xxv), and they thus reinforce the Christian faith pattern set down by the Gospels.

Mankind also follows a protagonist named Mankind through his life journey. Its three scenes, clearly divided into stages of innocence, sinfulness, and repentance, align with Potter’s model for the morality plays. Yet, despite the play’s convenient scene breaks, it encompasses not just innocence, sinfulness, and repentance but the entire

Christian faith pattern. The reinforcement of this pattern comes through Mercy's sermon about how Mankind's life should be lived; thus, the sermon is the framework of the play, appearing in the first and last scene and providing the moral for the audience. King even calls the play "a sermon with illustrative dramatizations" (71), and Kelley explains that "the major organizing principle in *Mankind* is not plot but, rather, the expository sermon" (89).

Mercy's sermon opens the play, calling the audience to repentance. He reminds his hearers to "pryke not yowr felycytes in thyngys transytorye. / Beholde not the erth, but lyfte yowr ey wppe" (30-1). This opening statement establishes the spiritual dimension of the play's moral; for though the play uses "thyngys transytorye" to depict its moral, Mercy wants the audience to "lyfte [their] ey[s] wppe" to the heavenly realm for the application of it. Mercy also introduces the first of several farming references, saying, "The corn xall be sauwyde, the chaffe xall be brente" (43), a reference to Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17. While corn and chaff are earthly items, they take on a spiritual sense, establishing the play's metaphor of salvation: the good harvest shall be saved, but the chaff will be burned.

Mid-sermon, Myscheffe enters as a foil to Mercy and mocks Mercy's corn and chaff metaphor, taunting "the corn xall serue to brede at the nexte bakyng" (59). Their exchange is cut short by a break in the manuscript, but the extant text demonstrates the opposition in the two characters. Mercy and Myscheffe, with Mankind who enters later, follow the Jobean triad of good, evil, and human characters, as they are close parallels to God, Satan, and Job in Job and the Good and Bad Angel and Mankind in the *Castle of*

Perseverance. The author reinforces this triad by using three names that begin with “M,” a tactic that separates those characters from the vice figures, New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought, who are distinguished by the letter “N.” These three vice characters parallel Job’s three friends Bildad, Eliphaz, and Zophar.

After the play’s good and evil dynamics are established, Mankind enters and the exposition of the Christian faith pattern begins. His opening speech, like Mercy’s, is didactic, as he describes his “composcyon / Of a body and of a soull, of condycyon contrarye” (194-5) and establishes his allegiance to his soul rather than his body. Kelley describes Mankind’s appearance in Scene 1 as “in a state of grace” (64) because though he is not sinless, he has been granted grace because of his allegiance to Mercy. Mankind even says to Mercy, “O, yowr louely wordys to my soull are swetere then hony” (225) and Mercy replies that if Mankind remains constant, “Of hys blysse perpetuall ye xall be partener” (284). Mankind initially proves his constancy when he meets New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought. The three figures find Mankind planting his corn and each in turn attempt to persuade him that his hard work is keeping him from enjoying his life. This scenario is similar to the arrival of Job’s three friends and their ensuing discussion in which each friend tries to tempt Job to speak falsely of God or himself. Additionally, though the temptations New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought offer differ from those Satan offered Christ in the desert, the three temptations draw a parallel between Mankind and Christ. But Mankind, like Job and Christ, rebuffs the three temptations, and he remains loyal to his labor, saying, “Wyth my spade I wyll departe, my worschyppull sourence, / Ande lyue euer with labure to corecte my insolence. / I xall go fett corn for my londe; I

prey yow of pacyence” (409-11). The corn metaphor, used here in planting, also signifies Mankind’s attempt to reap the good harvest. Furthermore, his prayer for patience aligns him with Job, whom Mercy tells him is a model of patience in line 286.

Mankind’s maintenance of his “state of grace” (Kelley 64) begins to wane by the second scene. The section opens with Myscheffe meeting with New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought to plot more temptations for Mankind. Myscheffe notes that “hys spade, that was hys wepyn” (421), and the four decide to tempt Mankind by frustrating his farming. This tactic uses the previous corn metaphor to illustrate the spiritual battle present in Job. At this point in the play, Tityvillus enters to aid the three vices and “menge hys corn with drawke and with durnell...[so] yt xall not be lyke to sow nor to sell” (537-8) by placing a board under Mankind’s soil. He occupies a unique place in *Mankind*’s framework because while he “syngnyfyth the Fend of helle” (886), he is not the opposite of Mercy, as Myscheffe is, and appears part-villain and part-clown rather than solely evil.

Mankind’s first response to this temptation parallels his reaction in the previous scene; he kneels down in prayer and begins to say his Paternoster in attempts to ward off the temptation. However, this time Mankind becomes tired of his prayers and decides to “go do that must be don” (563) and returns to his physical labors. At this point, Tityvillus has frustrated Mankind’s physical and spiritual labors, causing him to fall into sin. Mankind’s sinfulness, like all morality play protagonists, is demonstrated by his disavowing of goodness with the same zeal he vowed it originally:

Ewynsong hath be in the saynge, I trow, a fayer wyll.

I am yrke of yt; yt ys to longe be on myle.

Do wey! I wyll no more so oft ouer the chyrche-style.

Be as be may, I xall do another.

Of labure and preyer, I am nere yrke of both;

I wyll no more of yt, thow Mercy be wroth. (581-586)

Tityvillus solidifies Mankind's choice of sin by whispering to him while he sleeps that Mercy died from a broken neck, either from a riding accident or in the gallows, and he adds that Mankind must now "aske mercy of Neu Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought" (602). Upon waking, Mankind obediently seeks the three figures out, and a mock salvation scene, with religious language and imagery, follows. Mankind first asks "mercy of all that [he] dyde amysse" (659) and continues, "I wyll make yow amendys" (650, 652). Myscheffe, New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought then make Mankind swear that he will commit various sins for them, including adultery, lechery, robbery, theft, killing, and breaking the Sabbath. Mankind responds to each request, "I wyll, ser" (705). The exchange parallels the scene in the *Castle of Perseverance* where Mankind swears allegiance to the parade of Vices, and though each of the sins is not personified in *Mankind*, they are present and mark Mankind's fall into sin.

Scene 3 begins with Mercy's entrance, which juxtaposes the evil activities of the previous scene. Mercy find Mankind with Myscheffe, New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought and comments on his state of sinfulness. At the sight of Mercy, Mankind cries out that he is not worthy (800) and asks for a rope to hang himself. The sequence of Mankind's words here is crucial to the moral of the play and the Christian faith pattern. As in the *Castle of Perseverance*, the recognition and repentance of sin occur prior to death, for

Mankind recognizes *first* that he is not worthy to be seen by Mercy and *then* goes to hang himself. Mankind's flaw here is not a lack of repentance but rather a lack of faith in Mercy's forgiveness. Though the resolution between Mankind and Mercy comes after Mankind's attempted suicide, Mankind's repentance begins before it, in keeping with the Christian faith pattern.

Myscheffe replies to Mankind's cry for a rope, "I haue yt here redy, / Wyth a tre also" (801-2), and New Gyse then tells Mankind to "do as I do" (804) as he demonstrates how to hang himself. Yet in the commotion of Mercy's arrival, New Gyse accidentally hangs himself instead, an incident parallel to Tityvillus' earlier remark to Mankind that Mercy died by a broken neck. The element of death, in particular by a broken neck, is clear in the text, even though only a minor character dies. While Mankind does not die in the play, he does pass through the stage of death in his near-hanging.

Mankind continues to repent, though at first, he is reluctant to accept Mercy's forgiveness, saying, "I am not worthy to haue mercy be no possibilite," and "The egall justyse of God wyll not permytte sych a synfull wrech" (822, 831). Here Mankind recognizes that his punishment or reward will be in the afterlife, but fails to see the role of mercy in that punishment or reward. But when Mercy says, "Thy obstinacy wyll exclude the fro the glorijs perpetuite" (829), he accedes, "Lytyll ys our parte of paradise were mercy ne were. / Good Mercy, excuse the ineuytabyll objection of my gostly enemy" (836-8). This discussion between Mercy and Mankind is similar to Job's discussion with his friends, for both sets of characters debate about the nature of divine justice.

Additionally, *Mankind* draws on the debate of the Four Daughters of God, as seen in the

Castle of Perseverance. Mercy obviously speaks in favor of Mercy and Peace, while Mankind tries to make sense of divine Justice and Truth. Mankind eventually accepts Mercy's instructions to repent, in accordance with the Christian faith pattern, and the discussion concludes with Mercy's words,

God wyll not make yow preuy onto hys last jugement.

Justyce and Equite xall be fortyfyid, I wyll not denye.

Trowthe may not so cruelly procede un hys streyt argument

But that Mercy schall rewle the mater wythowte contrauersye. (839-42)

Mercy's conclusion implies that Mankind's reward can only come after repentance and death, for Mercy reminds Mankind that "in this present lyfe mercy ys plente, tyll deth makyth hys dywysion" (861) and continues by quoting 2 Corinthians 6:2¹⁹. Mercy also explains, "Your merytys were not premyabyll to the blys abowe, / Not to the lest joy of hewyn, of your propyr efforte to ascend. / Wyth mercy ye may; I tell yow no fabyll, scrypture doth prove" (868-70). The play reinforces the Christian pattern that repentance must come before death, while "mercy ys plente" (861), in order for reward to come after death, when "Justyce and Equite xall be fortyfid" (840). At the conclusion, Mankind is restored to his state of grace, and Mercy asks God to "preserue hym fro all wyckyd captiuite" (905). The end of Mercy's sermon brings home this moral in the play:

Mankend ys wrechyd, he hath sufficient prowte.

Therefore God grant yow all per suam misericordiam

That ye may be pleyferys with the angellys abowe

¹⁹ "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

And hawe to your porcyon vitam eternam. Amen! (911-4)

Thus, Mercy's sermon concludes with assurance of Mankind's salvation, or reward.

Additionally, the conclusion supports the earlier corn and chaff metaphors—since Mankind proved to be part of the good harvest through his adherence to the Christian faith pattern, he will “hawe to [his] porcyon vtiam eternam” (914).

Wisdom draws on the Christian framework in a unique way, for temptation involves not just a single sin but a deviation from the overall Christian pattern. Bevington believes that the play was likely performed in a monastery by monastic boys because of the “theological sophistication, the lack of raucous humor or physical abuse, and the detailed acquaintance with legal learning” (xi),²⁰ and its didactic language further supports an instructive intention.

Like *Mankind*, *Wisdom* opens with a speech by its leading good figure, Wisdom. This beginning identifies Wisdom as Christ and the husband of “eche chose sowle” (16). Here, Wisdom's role in the Jobean triad is clear, as is Anima's role when she enters a few lines later. The evil figure Lucifer, however, does not appear until the second scene. As with *Job*, the *Castle of Perseverance*, and *Mankind*, the play begins with its protagonist in a state of innocence. Anima's innocence is defined not by her birth but by her relationship with Wisdom, as Mankind's grace in the beginning of *Mankind* depends on his relationship with Mercy. Additionally, *Wisdom* uses costumes, as a way to present meaning in visual terms, to signify the moral condition of each character (King 254). The first scene describes Anima as wearing a “wyghte clothe...[and] a mantyll of blake”

²⁰ Kelley agrees with this conjecture (4).

(114), representing her potential for both righteousness and sin. This representation of the divided self is similar to Mankind's description of himself as a "condycyon contrarye" (*Mankind* 195) between his body and soul. To demonstrate her righteousness or the prevalence of the white cloth over the black mantle, Anima appears in this scene kneeling down to Wisdom (115), and she uses marriage imagery when discussing her relationship with him, calling herself his "spowse" and "louer" (19, 20), implying that she is one of Wisdom's "chose sowle[s]." Wisdom even describes Anima as a "clean sowl" (45) and responds with more marriage imagery. Wisdom and Anima then discuss original sin, which is addressed in Anima's opening costume. Wisdom says, "For euery creature that hath ben or xall / Was in nature of the first man, Adame, / Off hym takynge the fylthe orygynall" (109-11). Yet, he continues that

Baptem clensthe synne orygynall
 And reformyt the sowll in feythe verray

 And makyt yt as fayer and as celestiyall
 As yt neuer dyffowlyde had be. (1126-7, 129-30)

Therefore, original sin can be removed through baptism, and humankind, even Anima, may exist in a state of righteousness as pure as before the Fall. Anima, in her state of righteousness, is the Christian answer to Job; for where Job was "blameless and upright," Anima is admittedly sinful, as seen in her costume and the discussion on original sin. However, Anima's purity comes not from preemptive sacrifices, like Job, but from her relationship to Wisdom, who is Christ. After this discussion with Wisdom, Anima's five

wits enter as “five vyrgynes in white” (119), further highlighting Anima’s purity, and Anima’s the mights Mind, Will, and Understanding all vow their belief in and adherence to Wisdom.

However, Anima’s three mights are soon tested by Lucifer, who appears shortly after Anima’s exchange with Wisdom. At this point in the play, the Jobean triad is complete and the interaction between the three figures propels the plot. Lucifer enters in “a dewyllys array” (125), as opposed to Anima’s white cloth, and explains his mission:

To the Mynde of the Soule I xall mak suggestyun,
Ande brynge hys Wndyrstondynge to dylectacyon,
So that hys Wyll make confyrmacyon,
Than am I sekyr inowe
That dethe xall sew of damnacyon. (365-369)

This scene clearly marks the stage of temptation in Anima’s life, and interestingly, three temptations occur. In the Book of Job, the Gospel of Matthew, and *Mankind*, the protagonists all undergo three temptations: Job is tempted by his three initial friends, Satan tempts Christ three times in the desert, and New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought all tempt Mankind. Similarly, Anima undergoes three temptations, but they are directed to her three mights Mind, Will, and Understanding. Lucifer begins these temptations by seducing the three mights through logic and reason. He claims first to Mind that though there are times for fasting and prayer, there are times for work and labor (401-411), for “Mertha plesyde Gode grettly” (413). He then makes the point that Christ did not lead a wholly contemplative life (421), to which Mind agrees that Lucifer “haue reson” (445).

To Will and Understanding, he argues that God “ordenyde to man to inclyne” (475) to things like food, wine, and sex. Will, in echo of Mind, says Lucifer’s “resons be goode” (480). Then, in parallel to Scene 1 with Wisdom, the three mights come into accord with Lucifer and vow their loyalty to their new ways (497-518); thus Anima falls into sin because Mind, Will, and Understanding could not withstand the temptations. Once the three mights exit, Lucifer boasts that

At hys deth I xall apere informable,
Schewynge hym all hys synnys abhomynable,
Prewynge hys Soule damnable,
So with dyspeyer I xall hym qwell. (1539-542)

The third scene begins with the three mights in “new array” (551), signaling the shift in their characters. This costume change is paired with the mights’ avowal to follow Lucifer’s temptations; Mind says “farwell perfeccyon!” (553), while Will finds joy in “fresche dysgysybgge to seme amiable” (590), and Understanding wants to “hurde wppe ryches” (582). The three characters direct their pledges to Lucifer instead of to Wisdom, as they did in the first scene. Each might aligns with a vice—Mind, Will, and Understanding take on the new names, Maintenance, Lechery, and Perjury respectively—and they boast, in the typical, self-announcing way of medieval allegorical figures, of their exploits and sin, solidifying Anima’s fallen state.

As in all the medieval morality plays, where temptation and sinfulness are, repentance is soon to follow. Wisdom enters again in the fourth scene and rebukes Mind, Will, and Understanding:

Turne thi weys, thou gost amyse.
Se what thi ende ys, thou might not fle:
Dethe to euery creature certen ys.
They that lyue well, they xall haue blys;
Thay that endyn yll, they goo to hell. (874-8).

Here Wisdom establishes the foundational principle of the Christian faith pattern. As with the Hebrew pattern, earthly deed are either rewarded or punished and death comes for everyone. Yet Wisdom notes that in the Christian framework, the reward or punishment for deeds occurs only after death, either in “blys” or in hell. At these words, the three mightes are initially unwilling to repent; however, Wisdom shows them how “dysvyguryde” (901) Anima is when she reenters “in the most horrybull wyse, fowlere than a fende” (143). Anima’s costume has shifted from the dual white and black clothes of earlier into an entirely foul, fiend-like costume, similar to Lucifer’s “dewyllys array.” At this sight, Mind, Will and Understanding realize their state of sinfulness and repent. Mind cries out “A, lorde! Now I brynge to mynde / My horrible synnys and myn offens” (924-5); Understanding acknowledges that “He lefte vp them that descendyde. / He ys resurreccyon and lywe; to hem, Wyll, resort” (939-940); and Will vows, “I wyll retorne to Gode and new begynne” (943). Anima also acknowledges her sin, as the collective of Mind, Will, and Understanding, and cries out for mercy. In keeping with convention, the three mightes vow allegiance to Wisdom again, marking their return to a state of righteousness. Wisdom explains Anima’s forgiveness and return to righteousness:

Fyrst ye were reformyde by baptyme of ygnorans

And clensyde from the synnys orygynall,
Ande now ye be reformyde by the sakyment of penance
Ande clensyde from the synnys actuall. (1109-1112)

The cycle of innocence, temptation, and repentance, as Potter describes, is complete. Anima has returned to her righteous state, as she began; when she enters in line 1065, she is even wearing “here first clothyng” (149).

Though less explicit, the elements of death and punishment/reward, which finish the Christian faith pattern, occur in the text. Instead of depicting death and the afterlife, the author of *Wisdom* uses the Christian faith pattern to forecast those events based on Anima’s state at the conclusion of the play. The relationship between physical death and spiritual punishment or reward is explicitly established in the play, though the actual events are never physically depicted. When Mind, Will, and Understanding fall into sin through Lucifer’s temptations, Lucifer boasts of Anima,

I xall make yt [Anima] most reprouable,
Ewyn lyke to a fende of hell.
At hys deth I xall apere informable,
Schewynge hym all hys synnys abhomyable,
.....
Ande wen yt ys in dedly synne,
Yt ys werely Deuelys place.
Thus by colours and falso gynne
Many a soule to hell I wyn. (537-540, 545-548)

When Anima is in sin, the projected ending of the play is Anima's death and punishment in Hell. At that time, Lucifer would appear and hold her accountable for all her sins, and she would go forever to the "Deuelys place." But the three might's repentance at the conclusion projects a different ending for Anima, for Wisdom reminds them, "They that lyue well, they xall haue blys; / Thay that endyn yll, they goo to hell" (877-8). Mill, Will, and Understanding's repentance assures them, and the audience, that they will receive a heavenly reward. The text concludes with Wisdom's speech to Anima:

Now ye be fayrest, Crystys own specyall;
Dysfygure yow neuer to the lyknes of the fende.
Now ye haue receyuyde the crownys victoryall
To regne in blys wythowtyn ende. (1113-1116)

Thus *Wisdom* leaves its protagonist heading toward heaven and reinforces the Christian faith pattern, in particular in regards to reward or punishment after death.

Everyman, the latest of the Middle English moralities, uses a very different plot structure to demonstrate the Christian faith pattern. While the play relies heavily on the pilgrimage or journey motif, using those terms repeatedly in the text, to depict the protagonist's progress towards death and beyond, it largely ignores many of the conventions seen in the earlier moralities. King claims that during this pilgrimage "the pattern of [Everyman's] life, arranged in terms of Youth, Manhood, Middle Age, and Old Age, passes before his eye as a series of treacherous, transient companions" (258); thus Everyman's journey is not chronological but narrative. Instead of actually depicting each stage of life, as is done in the other morality plays, *Everyman* establishes the stages of life

in the narrative exchange between Everyman and his various companions. Additionally, *Everyman* is the only morality play that does not include a clear state of innocence; nonetheless, the play still follows the Christian framework, and Everyman proceeds through the remaining stages during the course of the plot.

The opening scene in *Everyman* portrays God sending his messenger Death to retrieve the protagonist Everyman for judgment. The interaction between God and Death, in particular God's speech, parallel the prologue in *Job*, as both scenes permit an inside look into the words of God, who in both cases is in council with another character, and offer the hearer/reader of the text more information than is available to the protagonist. Both scenes also establish the plots of the two texts and introduce the Jobean triad. In *Job*, Satan acts as the adversary to Job, while in *Everyman*, Death represents the primary evil figure. The unfolding of God's summons of Everyman through Death occupies the rest of the plot.

Everyman's story begins *in medias res*, for he is never depicted as an infant, and he does not begin in league with the good figures of the play. In fact, he begins in a fallen state, with his book of accounts "all unready" when Death arrives (134). The only inklings of a previous state of innocence comes in a passage where Everyman discusses Adam and Christ during his confession:

O eternal God, O heavenly figure,
O way of righteousness, O goodly vision,
Which descended down in a virgin pure
Because he would every man redeem,

Which Adam forfeited by his disobedience. (581-5)

The passage supports the Biblical idea that humankind was once innocent when Adam was in the Garden but “forfeited” perfection and fell into sin.

Also, Everyman’s temptations are implied rather than depicted because they occurred before the time frame of the play. Since the audience meets Everyman while he is in a sinful state, it is obvious that he has succumbed to various temptations. These temptations, like those of the other morality plays, are presented as emblematic characters, particularly Fellowship, Kindred, and Goods and describe the nature of Everyman’s fallenness. Fellowship, the first companion he meets, says,

...if thou wilt eat and drink and make good cheer,

Or haunt to women the lusty company,

I would not forsake you while the day is clear,

Trust me verily! (272-5)

Everyman also remembers that “Fellowship herebefore with me would merry make” (307), implying Fellowship stands for the social over-indulgence of food, drink, and lust. He next encounters Kindred and Cousin, who both refuse to accompany him on his journey to Death, and Goods, who is “trussed and piled so high” (394), a reference to Matthew 6:19, “Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust, and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal” and possibly Job 27:16 where the wicked man “heap[s] together silver.” Everyman says, “All my life I have loved riches” (398) and the state of Goods indicates that he has fallen into the sin of covetousness.

Everyman's sinful state is apparent not only from the implied lifestyle through his encounters with his companions but also from his repeated protests that his counting book is "all unready" (134). The author further highlights Everyman's sin by contrasting Goods, who is "piled so high" with Good Deeds, who is "cold in the ground" (486) and "cannot stand" (498). The figure of Good Deeds also parallels Job's catalogue of his own good deeds in Chapter 29, which he uses as a defense against his friends, while the image of the accounting book appears in Job, as he asks to "set judgment before [God]" so that God may "propose equity against [him], and let [his] judgment come to victory" (23:4, 7). Job relies on both his good deeds and his clean "judgment" to prove his righteousness; Everyman must do the same to be ready for Death.

The text also depicts Everyman's state of repentance. This stage, like the temptations, is personified as a character, namely Confession, who is similar to its counterpart in the *Castle of Perseverance*. Knowledge advises Everyman to go "To Confession, that cleansing river...for he is in good conceit with God Almighty" (536, 544). Everyman heeds this advice and kneels before Confession to ask mercy. His repentance speech is typical of the morality play protagonist, as he acknowledges his own sin and accepts forgiveness from the godly figure. During his confession, he cries out, "O glorious fountain that all uncleanness doth clarify" (545), and continues his use of "O" in his prayer of repentance to God in lines 581-597. These exclamations are similar to his previous greetings to his companions: to Death, he says, "O Death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind" (119); to Goods, "O false Good, cursed thou be" (451); and to Good Deeds, "O Good Deeds, I stand in fear" (489). Like the other morality play

protagonists, Everyman uses religious language toward both good and evil characters, and his use thereof indicates his state of either obedience or disobedience. In this instance, Everyman returns to God, making his plea for repentance clear, “Here I cry thee mercy” (588), and Knowledge assures him of his forgiveness, “Thus I bequeath you in the hands of our Saviour: Now may you make your reckoning sure” (608-9).

After his confession, Everyman’s reckoning becomes clear and he appears ready to meet Death. As Everyman continues on his journey, he travels with Strength, Discretion, and Beauty until all three abandon him, like his previous companions, and his only faithful companion is Good Deeds. Since Good Deeds affects Everyman’s reckoning and is the basis on which Everyman’s punishment or reward is assigned, his faithfulness is crucial to the Christian faith pattern. While the play upholds the Christian doctrine of mercy and forgiveness permitting entrance into heaven, the important position of Good Deeds as Everyman’s last companion also supports the idea that Everyman’s deed determine his reward or punishment. However, in Job’s case, Job’s good deeds and clean account prepared him for God’s judgment out of the whirlwind and his life after that encounter; yet Everyman’s deeds and account must be ready for his encounter with God *after* death.

As Everyman approaches Death, he says, “Into thy hands, Lord, my soul I commend: Receive it, Lord, that it be not lost” (880-1). He and Good Deeds then descend into the grave and the events that occur in the heavenly realm are reported by Knowledge and an Angel. First Knowledge reports,

Now he hath made ending,

Methinketh that I hear angels sing
And make great joy and melody
Where Everyman's soul received shall be. (890-3)

Heaven and Everyman's afterlife are represented off stage, so the Angel speaks from within and reports Everyman's passage into heaven;

Come, excellent elect spouse to Jesu!
Here above thou shalt go
Because of thy singular virtue.
Now the soul is taken the body fro,
Thy reckoning is crystal clear:
Now shalt thou into the heavenly sphere— (894-9)

As established in the Christian faith pattern, since Everyman visited Confession and asked forgiveness prior to his death, his account is made clean and he enters heaven. A Doctor reiterates this point as the moral of the play:

For after death amends may no man make,
For then mercy and pity doth him forsake.
If his reckoning be not clear when he doth come,
God will say, "*Ite, maledicti, in ignem eternum!*"²¹
And he that hath his account whole and sound,
High in heaven he shall be crowned." (912-7)

²¹ Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire! (467)

As in Wisdom's concluding speech, the Doctor emphasizes that death is the turning point where reward or punishment is meted out. As in Job though, all the morality plays depict reward and punishment for obedience and disobedience through the life journey of their protagonists; it is only the sequence of death and those rewards or punishment that separates the Christian pattern from the Hebrew.

*“τετέλεσται.”*²² - *John 19:30*

III.

Death's crucial role in the morality plays' connection with the Book of Job highlights the social influences that shaped the plays. The Black Death's effects in the Middle Ages brought death to the forefront of medieval thought, for highly Christianized England turned to the Bible for a religious understanding about their social circumstances. Death's role in faith is paramount in the Hebrew and Christian frameworks, for Old Testament figures like Job hoped for their rewards during their earthly lives, whereas Christian figures believed in rewards after death, a concept very appealing to plague-stricken England. Thus, the function of death in all the moralities is imperative to understanding their ideological arguments because the plays use the element of death to emphasize the Christian's heavenly reward rather than earthly sorrows.

Yet the connections between Job and the morality plays involve other elements besides death. The morality plays' similarities to Job indicate more than simple literary borrowing; they point to a meaningful literary discourse used to perpetuate the moralities' arguments. In particular, the plays draw on the Book of Job's depiction of its protagonist, through the text's structure, rhetoric, and Hebrew faith pattern, to demonstrate, in a revisionary fashion, their own portrayals of a Christian protagonist. Additionally, in all four of the plays, this Christian protagonist's life is used instructionally, as a means of

²² "It is finished."

conveying the faith pattern to the audience, whereas the Book of Job gives no hint of an informative purpose. Though the Scriptural book has long been used to instruct, the text itself mainly consists of informative dialogues; the moral comes from the interpretation of the text, not from within the text itself. However, the morality plays describe *and* instruct, for as their didactic figures note, the Christian faith pattern exhibited within them is meant for the religious instruction of the audience. Thus the morality play authors refashion Job to suit the social and religious needs of medieval England.

One of the needs of medieval England, in the Church's eyes, was the reinforcement of orthodox Catholic doctrine in the midst of the emergence of Lollardy.²³ Each of the morality plays contain Catholic elements that stand in opposition to the Lollards' tenets. Biblical verses are spoken in Latin, rather than English, in both the *Castle of Perseverance* and *Mankind*, as was done in the Church. *Wisdom's* emphasis on the "sacramentys sevyn...[which] all synne wasche away" (124-5), and *Everyman's* discussion of priests, the sacraments, and St. Peter reveal their Catholic emphasis. While each universal protagonist can be viewed as a model for the lay audience, each play also contains a priest figure, who guides the protagonist to religious understanding; thus, while the plays do emphasize personal devotion, as the Lollards do, this devotion is under the guidance of a priest-like figure, as in Catholic doctrine. Additionally, while the Lollards believed confession to be an important role in the Christian life, they did not support confessions to a priest. In the morality plays, the *Castle of Perseverance* and *Everyman* both contain a Confession character, and *Wisdom* and *Mercy* take on similar

²³ For general information about Lollardy and its tenets, see "Lollards."

roles in *Wisdom* and *Mankind*; in all cases, the protagonists' confession is involves a second party, as is encouraged by the Catholic Church. Moreover, the plays' connection with the Book of Job as depends on Catholic rather than Lollard interpretations of the Biblical figure. The morality plays do address the crucial religious topics of the fifteenth century, but do so by supporting Catholic rather than Lollard ideology.

The morality plays' influence remained steady until similar religious issues resurfaced in the sixteenth century with the Protestant Reformation. These religious issues carried over into the literature of the day, and the impact of the morality plays can be easily seen in some early modern drama. The Four Daughters of God discussion found in the *Castle of Perseverance* and echoed in *Mankind* recurs in the court scene of *The Merchant of Venice*; Portia argues for mercy while Shylock demands justice, and as in the medieval dramas, mercy wins. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare uses the morality play framework; for, like many Shakespeare's protagonists, Macbeth "wanders away from the true path always under the mistakes or the deceptions of evil[, but] he eventually comes to himself through his own conscience or the forces of justice and truth" (Hardin 71). But Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* by far relies most on the Middle English morality play tradition. The Good and Bad Angels and the Seven Deadly Vices are direct descendants of the same characters in the *Castle of Perseverance*; Lucifer acts as the Satan figure found in all the moralities, and Mephostophilis and Belzebub resemble New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought in *Mankind*. Faustus's quest for knowledge and power represents two of humanity's central desires, thus making Faustus a universal protagonist. Though

early modern drama borrows from the morality plays, many of the Book of Job's influences did not carry over.

The connection between the Middle English moralities and the Book of Job also opens many new possibilities for scholarship to discover specific Biblical influence where previously only broad religious connections were thought to exist; for though the morality plays do not explicitly rely on Biblical characters or plots, upon closer examination, the impact of the Book of Job is apparent. With the widespread presence of the Church, the social context for all Middle English literature was highly religious; therefore, it is likely that that social condition, and in particular specific Biblical texts, inspired and even impregnated many medieval authors. By examining medieval literature for deeper meanings than the superficial use of Scripture, criticism can establish richer textual lineages and possibly unpack many of the moral arguments claimed in the texts.

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