CHAPTER VI

THE POPULAR THEOLOGY
That the popular theological views on the ultimate issues of life and death, the problem of evil, the conflict between good and evil, Freewill and Predestination and the belief in a fixed order of creation formed the frame of reference, the necessary 'world' picture, for the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama is an established fact.¹ "The dramatists, alike with the poets and prose writers, assumed a Christian universe. Their plays are worked out for the most part in terms of this world but the beliefs and moral values of the Christian religion are not challenged".² The culture in which the authors lived was essentially Christian and centuries of preaching made the learned as well as the unlearned to accept the common theological dogmas. The people readily discovered the operation of divine justice and mercy in the common incidents of life around them.³

The Miracles and the Moralities are religious in their

1. These ideas are implied in many studies on Tragedy and History plays. Dr. E.M.W. Tillyard in his The Elizabethan World Picture gives a brilliant account of the world picture. Prof. Dover Wilson in The Fortunes of Falstaff shows that the Prince Hal-Fastaff episode can better be understood with reference to the tradition of Prodigal Son Moralities. These ideas are constantly stated by Una Ellis Fermor in Jacobean Drama and the Frontiers of Drama; Irving Ribner in Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy and The Jacobean Tragedy.


3. "One of the notions most useful to pamphleteers, writers of homiletic treatises, and playwrights was that Divine Providence intervened in the lives of men to assure the operations of divine justice". H.H. Adams: English Domestic or Homiletic Tragedy, p.18.
origin and their chief function was to drive home the Christian
doctrines. These plays were acted until the last decade of the
sixteenth century, that is, till the advent of the regular
stage. Thus there was an unbroken tradition of dramatic presen-
tation of homiletic pattern from the Middle Ages to the
Elizabethan times and the authors as well as the audience were
the direct inheritors of it. "Even the expanded vernacular
play itself often seems to be little more than a dramatised
sermon or set of sermons. It is itself a product of the great
homiletic revival of the thirteenth and the fourteenth centu-
ries. Incessantly it derives fresh life and matter from this
wider source of supply around it. In other words, the
mediaeval pulpit is a long forgotten foster mother of our
modern stage".

The Domestic drama, more closely connected with the native
drama, absorbed the homiletic pattern of sin, discovery, repen-
tance, expectation of divine mercy and forgiveness, and effec-
tively expressed it in terms of familiar incidents of every
day life.

The general picture of human predicament depicted in the

4. " Miracle and Morality plays were acted until the last decade
of the sixteenth century, and Elizabethan audiences were
the direct inheritors of a drama which reflected the prin-
cipal ideas and values of a unified view of life". Miss H.M.V. Matthews. Character and Symbol in Shakespeare's
Plays, p.1.

Moralities like The Castle of Perseverance, Mankind and Everyman is that man ought to choose the difficult and narrow path of virtue but he is constantly lured by the attraction of bad ways and deceived by the false appearance of the evil forces in the world. He invariably sins and it is his earnest repentance which absolves him of his sins and makes him acceptable to God. Everyman repents and confesses his sins and the forces of mercy eventually triumph. He dies pure of sin and forgiven.

Another important theological concept embodied in the Morality plays is the dual aspect of the justice reserved for human sins and the heavenly mercy urgently needed for human salvation. This conflict is clearly illustrated in the popular debate among the four daughters of God finally leading to a happy reconciliation. The Castle of Perseverance gives a powerful dramatic expression to this dual aspect of Justice Versus Mercy. 'Humanum genus', long the slave of Pleasure, Folly and covetousness, takes refuge in the castle of Perseverance with the Christian virtues. Before his death, as his soul is about to be carried to Hell, he is saved by the intervention of Peace and Mercy. Thus the Moralities usually end with a judgment scene where the sins are forgiven and the sinners are saved through divine mercy. This general pattern

6. The Four daughters of God, as these four qualities are usually called, are mentioned and the final reconciliation among them is expressed in Psalm, 85, 10 "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other".
and the two concepts are adopted by the authors of the Domestic drama and these factors regulate the whole course of action.

The early plays like *Arden of Feversham* and *A Warning for Fair Women* dramatising actual domestic murders conveniently accommodated the homiletic pattern. Mrs. Alice and Mrs. Anne die repentant with a hope of divine mercy. The same scheme of sin, repentance and forgiveness runs through the more refined domestic plays of Dekker and Heywood. In addition to the moral pattern inherent in the form itself, both of them are temperamentally inclined to religious didacticism. Apart from their plain statements or implications as to the moral function of the drama, the explicit religious tone of their works reveals their tender-hearted Christianity. Even if they are not conscientious puritans, as some authorities believe

7. "Except Dekker .... none of the other dramatists had displayed so much interest in religion and edification as Heywood; he seems to us now like a man destined for the church whom the accidents of time rushed into dramatic journalism". A.M. Clark: *Thomas Heywood*, p.97.

8. "That Dekker was brought up in a Puritan section of the middle-class is evident from his range of interest, and his emphasis on puritan virtues, all set forth in writing so distinguished for its scriptural tone that one is forced to believe that he knew the Bible better than he knew any other book". K.L. Greg: *Thomas Dekker: A Study in Economic and Social Background*, p.70. Dr. Clark's view that Heywood is a puritan (*Thomas Heywood*, p.192) is contradicted by Allan Holaday in his essay *Heywood and The Puritans* J.E.G.P., Vol. 49, 1950, pp.192-203. All critics, including Holaday, emphasise on his Christianity.
they are undoubtedly Christian in their outlook and approach to life. Naturally, the popular understanding of theology, the Christian theology in which both of them have as much faith as any average citizen, forms the intellectual basis for their domestic tragedies. In many crucial dramatic situations it is the theological scheme, besides the Elizabethan psychology, which directs the action. So most of the controversial dramatic cruxes can be, in a way, explained from the theological point of view also.\(^9\)

Heywood’s variations on his favourite theme of erring wife, the unscrupulous guest and the forgiving husband in three of his plays, *Edward IV*, *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and *The English Traveller*\(^10\) posed certain problems which puzzled critics from time to time. Without tedious cataloguing, the different problems can be briefly summarised as follows.

The most common view is that his heroines fall into sin, repent and die alike without much reason.\(^11\) Their fall, repentance

\(^9\) H.D. Smith gives a vivid account of the various views expressed by critics about the fall, repentance and death of Mrs. Frankford. The fall of Mrs. Frankford, according to him, is in the Elizabethan narrative tradition of the complaints of the fallen women. *A Woman Killed with Kindness* P.M.L.A., Vol. LIII, 1938. This is already referred to in

\(^10\) From the exploration of the sources of these three plays of Heywood it is evident that in all these plays the elements of kindness and forgiveness on the part of the husbands, the exonerating penitence of the wives, the theme of friendship and betrayal and the final reconciliation are his own.

\(^11\) "Mrs. Frankford yields to her seducer with hardly a struggle and her decline and death are tribute to popular sentiment; not certainly a vindication of inexorable moral law". T.S. Eliot: *Selected Essays*, p.179.
and death are equally rapid and unconvincing. Secondly, the readiness with which their husbands forgive them fails to convince us\textsuperscript{12} and their exemplary kind-hearted treatment of their unfaithful wives stretches our credulity to the breaking point. Thirdly, the decisions of Heywood's villains to betray their friends are too sudden and they have hardly any plausible dramatic motive of the kind we find behind Iago's villainy. Finally, the sudden transformations in characters like Sir Francis Acton from vengeful lust to genuine love, are not given adequate dramatic motivation.\textsuperscript{13}

Heywood's women did not yield to their seducers without any struggle at the first whisper of temptation as it were. They are loyal and virtuous\textsuperscript{14} but essentially weak. They are

\textsuperscript{12} "His (Frankford's) exemplary Christian like conduct in dealing with his adulterous wife also offends credulity". H.H. Adams English Domestic or Homiletic Tragedy, p.156.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p.156.

\textsuperscript{14} As against many contemporary accounts, Heywood presented Jane as an ideal wife:

\begin{quote}
"When she attended like a city dame,
Was praised of matrons. So that citizens,
When they would speak of aught unto their wives,
Fetch'd their example still from mistress Shore".
\end{quote}

\textit{Edward IV}, ed., B. Field, Shakespeare Society, V, iv, p.84. cf. also Frankford's soliloquy:

\begin{quote}
but the chief

Of all the sweet felicities on earth,
I have a fair, a chaste, and loving wife;
Perfection all, all truth, all ornament;
\end{quote}


Old Wincott says about his wife:

\begin{quote}
If she misfare,
I am a man more wretched in her loss
Than had I forfeited life and estate;
She was so good a creature.
\end{quote}

trapped into sin in a state of utter helplessness and baffle-
ment, at a weak moment when they have neither scope to think
nor strength to resist. The temptations they faced are too
strong for them to overcome. And the contemporary 'ethical
tradition' allowed such a fall before strong temptation.
"This tradition makes it inevitable that Faustus, for all his
intellectual gifts, should listen rather to the Evil than to
the Good Angel .... Elizabethan audiences expected good men
and good women to fall before strong temptations; they expec-
ted them to be carried headlong into crime, and not because
Aristotle had pronounced a theory of "tragic flaw", but because
they knew that temptation to sin was the way Satan had for
encompassing the ruin of mortal man".15

Before yielding to the ruthless royal lover, whose winning
force was made clear in the opening scene itself,16 Jane has
resisted the temptations in all possible ways. As she tells
her husband she did

... endure the long'st and greatest siege
That ever batter'd on poor chastity!7

16. See the conversation between the King and his mother in
the first scene. Edward's Queen pardons Jane because
she is aware of her husband's winning force.
"What fort is so strong,
But, with besieging, he will batter it?"
Edward IV, ed., Barron Field, Shakespeare Society, Part II,
II, ii, p.133.
17. Ibid., Part I, V, iv, p.86.
Edward, who woos Jane in disguise, leads her by subtle turns of conversation to a critical position and suddenly reveals himself. She begs his pardon on her knees and tells him that all except her 'honour' is his. She is aware of her vow of marriage and knows that "virtue lives, when pomp consumes to dist". She is bold enough to tell the king:

I may not wander: He, that guides my ear
Is an immoved, constant, fixed Star.

Her plea on the consequent shame, misery and ridicule which she and her husband have to face is silenced by his assurance of royal protection. Her protest on religious grounds

How if the Host of Heav'n at this abuse
Repine? who can the prodigy excuse?

falls on a deaf ear and it does not in any measure lessen his compelling passion. Her feeble efforts afford no escape and not knowing what to say, in a desperate preparedness for the consequences of her sin she surrenders:

Well, I will in; and ere the time begin,
Learn how to be repentant for my sin.

19. Ibid., V, i, p.77.
20. Ibid., p.77.
21. Ibid., p.78.
22. Ibid.
Heywood has touched upon the various motives given in the originals in depicting her fall. But the compulsion of the overpowering royal lover, the motive which "he perhaps added himself" makes her fall inevitable.

Various stages of struggle in the seduction of Mrs. Frankford are adequately made clear. The first proposal of Wendoll moves Mrs. Frankford to a shocking surprise. His persistence drives her to an indignant reprimand reminding him of his obligation to her noble husband.

O! with what face of brass, what brow of steel,
Can you, unblushing, speak this to the face
Of the espoused wife of so dear a friend?
It is my husband that maintains your state;
Will you dishonour him that in your power
Hath left his whole affairs?

Wendoll's eloquent expression of his helplessness and the clever

23. More's account attributes Jane's fall to her love of finery and her aversion to her husband whom she was forced to marry. So, evidently "Heywood's Jane is not the Jane of Sir Thomas More". Velte, p.29. The ballad in Parcy's Reliques shows Miss Blague as the main persuading force who made her yield to the king. In Churchyard's poem Jane is 'temporarily dazzled' by the glitter of royal magnificence. For a full account of the various sources see Mowbray Velte's. The Bourgeois Element in the Dramas of Thomas Heywood, pp.20-29, and Willard Thorp's The Triumph of Realism in Elizabethan Drama, p.111 ff.


25. "The host of Heaven forbid
Wendoll should hatch such a disloyal thought!"


way in which he places himself at her mercy moves "her to passion and to pity", the beginning of her fall. Wendoll appeals:

I was not fearful
Bluntly to give my life into your hand,
And at once hazard all my earthly means.
Go, tell your husband; he will turn me off,
And I am then undone. I care not, I;
'Twas for your sake. Perchance in rage he'll kill me.
I care not, 'twas for you. Say I incur
The general name of villain through the world,
Of traitor to my friend; I care not, I.
Beggary, shame, death, scandal, and reproach,
For you I'll hazard all: why, what care I? 28
For you I'll live, and in your love I'll die.

As T.S. Eliot says this "speech is perfect for the situation the most persuasive that Wendoll could have made to Mrs. Frankford; and it persuades us into accepting her surrender". 29

Mrs. Frankford is baffled; she is thrown into an emotional situation where she fails to think precisely. She is caught in a 'maze' and despite her vague apprehensions that it "will prove the labyrinth of sin" 30 she does not have enough of "wit" 31 to acquit herself:

What shall I say?

28. Ibid.,
31. Ibid., IV, iii, p.50.

"Well you plead custom;
That which for want of wit I granted erst,
I now must yield through fear".
My soul is wandering, and hath lost her way.
Oh, Master Wendoll! Oh!

"As she yields with a sigh, 'Oh, Master Wendoll! Oh!' we have the picture of the weak but not wicked woman caught in the snare of sensuality. Thus the seduction is almost inevitable. This is indeed symbolic of the popular theological theme of the 17th century - the conflict between good and evil. It reflects the disruption of order (Elizabethan and Jacobean belief) - order in the individual, in the society and in the universe - felt especially in those last years of Elizabeth's reign. It also shows the pitiless crushing of the individual will by a superior will or Immanent Will (in Hardy's words)."

In depicting the conflict between the good and evil forces within the heart of Wendoll Heywood follows the contemporary dramatic conventions of soliloquy and aside. The problem which Heywood is facing here is the difficulty in the 'revelation of unspoken thought', something that is essential for the audience to know, but cannot be expressed in the usual dialogue. Wendoll knows the hideousness of his thoughts; he is aware that


34. "The major difficulty inherent in drama ... is 'the revelation of unspoken thought'. This a descriptive poet, or lyric poet and a novelist can give in his capacity of a commentators. "For this purpose the great ideal dramatists, the Greeks and the Jacobean, use variously the prologue, the chorus, the monologue and the soliloquy".

--- Ellis Fermor: Jacobean Drama, pp.49-50.
his evil designs are sure to damn him beyond redemption and he tries to escape from such thoughts by prayers and meditations. All his efforts to control his passion by exercising his reasoning power fail. In a refined form, this is a conflict between the good and the evil forces within a man. Wendoll succumbs to the evil forces, rather listens to his 'bad angel'. He feels as if some immanent wicked force is dragging him to his own destruction:

I will not - No! some fury pricks me on,  
The swift Fates drag me at their chariot-wheel,  
And hurry me to mischief. Speak I must;  
Injure myself, wrong her, deceive his trust.

Sudden changes of this kind are quite possible according to the

35. cf. Wendoll's soliloquy:
   "But such a thought: then to attempt the deed-
     Slave, thou art damned without redemption".  

36. "Although the old external conflict of the moralities between the virtues and the vices - the former instigated by reason as the instrument of God, and the latter prompted by the uncontrolled passions as the instrument of Satan - became in part internal and psychological and no longer so simple in its issues, the sense of evil adversary to man's good persisted". Modeleine Doran: Endeavors of Art, p.304.

contemporary 'ethical tradition' and 'psychological theory'.

Heywood omits the detailed scene of seduction in *The English Traveller*, perhaps, because he thought the emotional context in which Mrs. Wincott is living does not require one. She is a young lady, who loved Geraldine and was considered by the world as his wife, unfortunately married to Old Wincott. She is faithful to her husband, but the main hope on which she seems to be surviving is her future marriage with her lover. Delavil cleverly separates Geraldine from her company and thus cuts away her only hope and exploits the situation. That he entertained such a plan and used it is evident from his words to Mrs. Wincott,

No, on my soul,
For therein hath my brain exceeded yours:
I, studying to engross you to myself,
Of his continued absence have been cause;
Yet he of your affection no way jealous,
Or of my friendship. How the plot was cast,
You at our better leisure shall partake.

If we study the scene carefully we are inclined to think that

38. For 'ethical tradition' see pl79of this thesis. "But scenes of passion in the Elizabethan drama often have an exaggerated ex tempore quality, as if nothing had prepared for the onset of the passion ... violent passion affects ... during the time of its sway ... a man's very nature. Hence .... Wendoll's to his desire for his friend's wife, ...". *Endeavors of Art*, p.235.


"It was once voiced that we two should have matched;
The world so thought, and many tongues so spake;
But Heaven hath now disposed us otherways;

40. Ibid., IV, iv, p.224.
Mrs. Wincott turned her affection to Delavil in the absence of Geraldine. We cannot possibly hold the view that she is passionate, intriguing and wicked. She is sincerely in love with Geraldine, but his absence and the presence of Delavil with all his diabolical urges would have, it is quite understandable, made her a slave to passion.

In all these situations the conflict is essentially human. Yet, reducing everything to the basic religious issues for the moment, one can possibly see that Mrs. Jane Shore, Mrs. Frankford and Miss Wincott, like the 'Humanum genus' 'Mankind' and 'Everyman' in the Moralities, are placed in a situation where they yield to the evil forces, repent and die with the hope of salvation. The names Wendoll and Delavil are suggestive of the word Devil; in fact they are plainly associated with evil forces and are actually called devils whereas Frankford and Geraldine are referred to as good angels. Like the characters in the Moralities the heroines themselves realise that they are deluded by evil forces into sin and shun the seducers. Repentant Mrs. Frankford hates the very presence of Wendoll and bursts out:

O, for God's sake fly!
The devil doth come to tempt me ere I die. 41

Mrs. Wincott speaks in a similar vein identifying her seducer

Delavil with the devil and Geraldine with good angel.

Thou'rt then a devil, that presents before me
My horrid sins, persuades me to despair,
When he, like a good angel sent from Heaven
Besought me of repentance.42

All these problems do not arise in the case of Mrs. Generous
in The Late Lancashire Witches as she is seduced by the diabolic
forces of witchcraft not by any human lover.

In the sub-plot of A Woman Killed with Kindness Sir Francis
Acton's thoughts of lust and revenge are changed into love by
the powers of virtue latent in Susan. As in the main-plot, the
Christian virtue is shown as having power to destroy evil.
Even according to the contemporary psychological theory such
a transformation is possible. "Not only can one passion grow
quickly in a good man to criminal proportions, but another
can displace it with equal swiftness".43

The painful yet necessary repentance dawns on the sinners
when their sins are discovered. The good husbands exhort them
to 'die repentant'. The women themselves are vaguely conscious
of their sins before their fall and afterwards they have moments
of self examination and qualms of conscience. None of them

43. Madeleine Doran: Endeavors of Art, p.235.
speaks with the intoxicated gusto, like Alice,\textsuperscript{44} about her illicit pleasures, and we feel that none of them is completely lost. Public penance makes Jane repentant. Mrs. Frankford and Wincott are moved to a deep penitential grief the moment they are exposed. Moreover, according to the contemporary 'psychological theory' such transformations of character are quite possible. "Join this theory with the belief in the enormous persuasiveness of eloquent speech, especially if accompanied by expressive countenance and gesture, and it is as easy to explain the swift repentances as the swift falls of the heroes and villains of Elizabethan tragedy".\textsuperscript{45} Viewed in the light of the morality pattern and the seventeenth century psychological theory the changes in the characters of Mrs. Frankford and Mrs. Wincott, after their eye-opening encounters with the men whom they really loved, are not at all surprising.

Another important idea which involves Biblical thought is the desire of these women to be forgiven by their husbands and their belief that, as they are forgiven on earth they will

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{44} Arden of Feversham; I, p.4, 98-104. Shakespeare Apocrypha, ed., Tucker Brooke. \\
"Sweete Mosbie is the man that hath my heart: And he usurps it, having nought but this, That I am tyed to him by marriage. Loue is God, and mariage is but words; And therefore Mosbies title is the best. Tushe! whether it be or no, he shall be mine, In spight of him, of Hymen, and of rytes."
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{45} Madeleine Doran: \textit{Endeavors of Art}, p.236.
\end{flushright}
be forgiven by God in heaven. According to the conventional Christian belief of the age the husband is the spiritual head of his wife, the same idea beautifully expressed by Milton in his line:

Hee for God only, and shee for God in him

Therefore, the view that it is too naive on the part of the women to be sure that they will be forgiven in Heaven because they are forgiven on earth is superficial. It is quite understandable that the women should ask for the forgiveness of their husbands whom they have wronged. At the same time, it is interesting to note that their belief (that the forgiveness of their husbands ensures divine mercy) has a scriptural basis. This indicates the extensive influence of Christian thought even in the ordinary human relationships. The unfailing source of guidance in all these matters was the Bible. The Christian theology is popularised through a wide variety of processes than can be illustrated here. The widely read books of sermons and theology, the manuals on domestic relations, not to mention the extensive preaching and sermonising, made the

46. "Pardoned on earth, soul, thou in Heaven art free". A Woman Killed with Kindness, Mermaid Edition, V, vi, p.73. See also The English Traveller, V, ii, p.247, where Mrs. Wincott expresses the same idea. Jane and Mrs. Generous also express similar sentiments.

47. Milton: Paradise Lost, Book IV, The works of John Milton, Columbia University Press, Vol. II, p.117, 299. cf. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the saviour of the body". Ephesians 5: 23.
religion an inseparable part of daily life and common outlook. There are rare instances when some intellectuals and tragedians question the widely accepted Christian dogmas. But the popular writers as well as the reading public accepted the Christian thought and way of life. Therefore, there is a surprising uniformity of point of view in all the books on domestic relations read by the burgher of 1558 'and by his grandson in 1640'. "For one thing, the genesis of all these hand books was the unchanging Bible, and even if the reinterpretations of the old injunctions sought to reconcile the Scriptures with approved contemporary conventions in morality, these conventions remained essentially static".48

The attitude of Master Frankford as well as Geraldine to adulterous women is essentially Christian in spirit. When they first discover the guilty pair, their immediate impulses are to murder them. But the timely intervention of the maid turns the thoughts of Frankford away from revenge. Luckily Geraldine forgot his sword in his chamber. Both of them feel happy that their attempts to take revenge are thwarted by these small incidents.49 They turn away from the Senecan and feudal


49. Frankford when prevented says: I thank thee, maid; thou like the angel's hand Hast stayed me from a bloody sacrifice. A Woman Killed with Kindness, IV, vi, p.54.
Geraldine also speaks in the same vein: "I left it in my chamber, and thank Heaven That I did so! ...." The English Traveller, Mermaid Edition, IV, iii, p.223.
practice of revenge, which, despite its wide popularity and immediate appeal to the martial sense of honour, has no scriptural sanction. They rise above the immediate sense of personal injury and become the spokesmen of a higher code of justice based on Christianity. Neither of them assumes the role of a 'justicier', like Othello, for each is aware that to steep himself in blood is a sure way to damnation\(^50\) to the sinner as well as to himself. They leave the punishment to God to whom 'belongeth vengeance and repentance'.\(^51\) This treatment of an adulterous woman is, to be sure, a unique and daring innovation on the early seventeenth century stage. But it would not have been shocking and unacceptable to Heywood's audience as it has a precedence in Christ's treatment of the adulterous woman. The Biblical play \textit{The Women Taken in Adultery}\(^52\) illustrates the

50. The Christian interpretation that Othello is damned is powerfully hinted by S.L. Bethell in his essay \textit{The Diabolic Images in Othello} - Shakespeare Survey -V, pp.62-79. The particular point of Othello's damnation is worked out in much detail by Paul N. Siegel in \textit{The Damnation of Othello}. P.M.L.A. LXVIII. 1953, 1068-78. Whatever may be the limitations of the Christian interpretation as shown by Edward Hubler in his \textit{The Damnation of Othello}, some limitations on the Christian View of the play. Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol. IX, pp.295-300, the theological background reflects the common thought if not Shakespeare's personal belief. In the case of the Domestic drama, especially Heywood's plays, the dramatic use of the popular understanding of theology is unmistakable.


52. This play has been preserved in three cycles and it was performed during Heywood's youth in Lincolnshire. Hardin Craig in \textit{English Religious Drama}, pp.268-280 puts forth the theory that Ludus Coventriae belong to Lincolnshire, Heywood's native place according to K.L. Bates \textit{A Conjuncture as to Thomas Heywood's Family}, J.E.G.P. Vol. 12, 1913, pp.93-109.
dramatic possibilities of this theme at the simple level of a parable. The theme has a clear Biblical sanction and support from the sermons. There are some precedents of such treatment in the popular novels which supplied the thematic material for A Woman Killed with Kindness and many of the ancient and Renaissance moralists recommended it. In spite of the wide popularity of revenge tragedies, there are moments when, not to mention Hamlet, the dramatists seem to have doubted the

53. Interestingly enough Christ and Frankford stress on honesty:

Christ tells the woman: 'Look that thou live in honesty'
and Master Frankford: "Honest at heart upon my soul thou diest


55. "To the majority the theme of revenge was probably the most satisfactory basis for a dramatic plot ..... They were not predisposed to admire a man who sought revenge: Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord', and man must not interfere with the divine justice. They would hardly have known the specious arguments in favour of revenge put forth by continental writers such as Romu and Gentillet, which were the province of courtiers; and Hamlet, who was one of these, clearly found them difficult to accept, and would win the audience's sympathy". John Buxton: Elizabethan Taste, pp.312-313.
validity of blood revenge, that blood asks for more blood. The Shakespeare himself advocates this type of considerate treatment to a fallen woman in his Cymbeline:

You married ones,
If each of you should take this course, how many
Must murder wives much better than themselves
For wrying but a little!57

The final scenes of reconciliation in all the four tragedies of Heywood resemble the judgment scenes of the Moralities. The predominant note in these scenes is one of forgiveness and reconciliation. The repentant sinners are forgiven but not exempted from death; they readily accept the punishment and, as in the Moralities, die completely reconciled, with an implicit faith in the mercy of God. The evil forces which have worked the havoc are conquered by the Christian virtue and something good is created out of the evil. The evil forces, Wendoll and Delavil vanish from the scene. In these scenes the thought is Biblical58 and it is the sublime grandeur of Christian spirit which imparts dignity and appeal to these scenes. Shore takes his wife into his hands when the entire

56. Chapman's Clermont questions:
"Shall we revenge a villainy with a villainy?"


58. "For if ye forgiven men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you". Matthews. 6:14 and 15. This idea is repeated by Shore, Master Frankford, Old Wincott and Master Generous.
world scorns her. The brief dialogue is full of religious sentiments:

Jane: Ah, Shore! is't possible thou canst forgive me?
Shore: Yes, Jane, I do.
Jane: I cannot hope thou wilt.
My fault's so great, that I cannot expect it.
Shore: I' faith, I do, as freely from my soul,
As at God's hands I hope to be forgiven.

The final scene of reconciliation in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* stands out unique among such episodes in the entire Elizabethan drama. For, it is not solely forgiveness but reunion and complete restoration that Master Frankford proclaims:

> Even as I hope for pardon at that day
> When the great Judge of Heaven is scarlet sitts, 
> So be thou pardoned.

He grants her pardon:

> As freely, from the low depth of my soul,
> As my Redeemer hath forgiven His death,
> I pardon thee.

Old Wincott after reading the moving appeal of his wife says:

> However false to me, I'll not reveal't;
> Where Heaven forgives, I pardon.

Master Generous takes back his repentant wife with words expressing

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61. Ibid.

similar spirit of forgiveness:

Rise, and as I do, so heaven pardon me;
We all offend, but from such falling off
Defend us.63

The spirit of reconciliation in all these four incidents, as in the Moralities, is the result of the resolution of conflict between the justice meted out for human sins and the divine mercy essential for human salvation. The sincere repentance of the women qualifies them to expect divine forgiveness; it makes them acceptable to God; the immediate reward of their penance is the forgiveness granted to them by the husbands. The cheerfulness with which they accept death shows that they are really prepared for the punishment of their sins. There is no hint or hardly any possibility to feel that they are more sinned against than sinning. Their final deaths also satisfy the stern puritan sense of morality which demanded severe punishment for sin. The women have yielded to the desires of the flesh, willingly or unwillingly, and the mortification of the flesh is the apt punishment for them. This theological severity and the rigour of moral principles not only eliminate all possibilities of sentimental associations but lead to the poetical and aesthetic elevation. As Schlegel points out "the aspect of that false repentance which merely seeks exemption from punishment, is painful; repentance, as the pain arising from the irreparable forfeiture of innocence, is susceptible

of a truly tragic portrayal". 64

The final scene of reconciliation in each play, which was later to degenerate into a sentimental convention and a melodramatic cliche, is one of the most significant stages in the homiletic tragedy. It is not, therefore, the "tendency to the sentimental" 65 as Madeleine Doran felt, that leads to the happy ending. The sense of happy reconciliation is one of the most vital stages, the crowning effect, in the homiletic pattern, it is a theological procedure firmly established by the homilies and Morality plays and hence essential for the fulfilment of the theological frame-work of these plays. Without the final scene of reconciliation the whole meaning of the sequence will be lost.

This theological fabric holding the entire process in the last scenes saves them from degenerating into lachrymose appeal. The forgiveness granted by the women's husbands, the wives' expectation of divine forgiveness and their faith in divine mercy do not exempt them from mortal punishment. As Professor Bernbaum says "the pity which Master Frankford feels for his wife when her end is approaching, the forgiveness he grants her, is not sympathy for an unfortunate innocent but pardon for a

64. A.W. Schlegel: A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, p.459.

65. Madeleine Doran: Endeavors of Art, p.146. "The tendency to the sentimental leads, as one would expect, to the happy ending".
repentant sinner. It is precisely the kind of pity that passes the understanding of a sentimentalist\(^6\).\(^6\) This is equally true of the other three cases also. None of the heroes is sentimental and none of them is free from a kind of non-violent severity. Though each of them is moved by the penance of his wife and completely forgives her he never condones, never appeals or pleads for the exemption of the punishment.

However, the explanation of the dramatic problems from the point of view of the homiletic pattern does not mean that Heywood is writing theological tracts using his characters and dramatic situations to illustrate his principles. On the other hand, he has constantly subordinated the theological pattern to the demands of dramatic art. It figures only as a common religious background which serves as a frame of reference to explain some of the ordinary incidents of everyday life which would otherwise appear irrational, absurd and meaningless. All the dramatic incidents are familiar domestic situations in the middle-class life; the characters are real human beings of flesh and blood; their motives, conflicts and struggles are essentially human. Heywood, in his portrayal of these instances, mainly reacts as a dramatist and his use of the theological pattern is that of an artist. The religious frame-work is always subordinated to his artistic needs. It helped him to create highly moving pictures of human destinies.

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\(^6\). Ernest Bernbaum: The Drama of Sensibility, p.36.
out of the ordinary domestic incidents. His genius lies in
the subtle subordination of the various stages of the hypostatic
pattern to serve different dramatic purposes at different
stages of the evolution of action. In all these crucial drama-
tic situations, like the fall into sin and repentance, the
theological scheme, though plainly implied, is made subservient
to the Elizabethan psychology. Thus the rational plausibility
of changes in a character is never violated.

There is a similar theological scheme governing the varied
instances of the action and movement of the domestic plays of
Dekker. Except in The Witch of Edmonton the religious back-
ground of his plays is on the plain morality pattern. In his
plays we do not feel the operation of a higher force in human
affairs as much as we find in the domestic tragedies of Heywood.
Therefore, the domestic affairs he portrays, are not always
raised above the level of daily life. There are no illuminat-
ing glances into cosmic vision.

Unlike in the domestic tragedies of Heywood all is not
well in the opening scene of The Witch of Edmonton. Winnifride,
who had an illicit affair with her master Sir Arthur, dupes
Frank into a secret marriage to cover her social stigma; she is
already 'with child' by the time she marries Frank. Sir Arthur
feels relieved of his burden and offers Frank some portion under
the garb of kindness. He feels delighted that he can continue
his 'secret game' in a more secure way:

Dear, dear Win.
I hug this Art of thine, it shews how cleanly
Thou canst beguile in case occasion serve,
To practice. It becomes thee. Now we share
Free scope enough, without controle or fear,
To interchange our pleasures; we will surfeit
In our embraces, Wench. 67

Frank is in a perpetual state of indecision. He does not
tell his father about his marriage lest he may be disinherited.
He quietly accepts to marry Susan consoling himself with the
idea that some wise woman predicted two wives for him. In his
attempt to obey the mundane order, his father's command, he
violates the divine law of marriage.

To please a Father, I have Heaven displeas'd. 68

The result of this rotten state of affairs is the death of
innocent Susan, a virtuous and a dutiful wife. The sudden
diabolic urge of Frank to murder Susan is attributed to the
damned withdraff of Mother Sawyer, whose devil comes in the
form of a Dog and 'rubs' against Frank. He stabs Susan telling
her:

Your marriage was my theft,
For I espous'd your dowry, and I haue it: I did not propose to naue added murther;
The Devil did not prompt me: till this minute. 69

Therefore, the reason for the tragedy is not the violation of the

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68. Ibid., Vol. III, I, i, 165-172.
divine order alone as in the plays of Heywood. The evil effect of witchcraft had their share in the disturbance.

Frank pretends innocence until the truth is discovered. His diabolic act does not damn him forever. The discovery of his sin leads him to repentance - a repentance so sincere as to move even the man whose daughter he has murdered. In the final scene of judgment he accepts the corporal punishment gladly as a fitting end to his crime. Forgiven by all on earth, he dies with the hope of divine mercy. He appeals:

All help me with your prayers. On, on, 'tis just
That Law should purge the guilt of blood and lust.

The Witch of Edmonton has a specific appeal to the modern taste as a play depicting the conflict between good and evil. As Sackville West points out, to call this play 'a quaint period piece' is "surely superficial, for the problem with which the play deals - briefly that of Good and Evil - is as actual today as it was in 1623, and the symbols chosen to represent the conflict have the heart-rending poignancy of a very real humanity". 71

Dekker adopts the plain morality pattern in his Patient Grissil and The Honest Whore also. He points the true picture

of virtue vividly and attractively, while Vice, with equal vividness, is made to appear always ugly and unattractive. This presentation of plain conflict between the forces of virtue and vice necessitated the use of the morality technique of debate to depict the motives for changes in the characters. The excellent specimens of such debates in which the good forces eventually triumph are to be found between Hippolito and Bellafront. In the first part of The Honest Whore and _ debate leads to the reformation of Bellafr...on and in the second part, when Hippolito tries to seduce her with his eloquence, the debate establishes the real change in her character. In this respect - the complete reformation of the sinner and persistence in that state of reformation despite all pressures and temptations - The Honest Whore has strong affinities with the Morality play. The main defect of Dekker's use of popular theology is that he fails to make it serve, except in The Witch of Edmonton, as the ruling force controlling human actions. Therefore, the conclusion forces itself that in imbibing the religious background and in making an effective dramatic use of it Heywood surpasses Dekker, and he is in this respect, a better artist than the other.

What is relevant from the artistic point of view is to see in what way the popular theology affected the plays as works of art. In the earlier plays like The Two Lamentable Tragedies, Arden of Feversham and A Warning for Fair Women it seriously
the theological concepts and this prevents him from a poetic insight into man's relationship with the universe. There is no scope in the domestic tragedies for the mood of spiritual despair and uncertainty about the ultimate human issues and for scepticism as to the perfect order of the universe, such as we find in the plays of the Jacobean dramatists like Chapman, Ford, Webster and Tourner. Heywood is radically different from his colleagues in his Christian optimism and is nearer to Shakespeare. "Conservative like Shakespeare, he continued to espouse throughout his career a view of the universe as the harmonious creation of an ever-loving God, the parts of creation observing order and degree, with every element enjoying its proper function as part of the divine plan". 72 The real difference between these two dramatists lies in their ways of apprehension. Shakespeare's poetic mode of apprehension is not so much concerned with human salvation as with man's relationship with the universe, and he expresses his vision in terms of poetry. Heywood, more or less committed to the theological view, is mainly concerned with individual salvation. His mode of apprehension is essentially religious and he conveys his vision of life in terms of the familiar incidents in everyday life conveniently accommodating the homiletic pattern in his plays. It is in this sense that Heywood can be aptly called 'a sort of prose Shakespeare'.