

THE TOWNELEY CYCLE OF PLAYS

From Huntington Library
MS. HM1

Modernized by David Parry,
Poculi Ludique Societas,
University of Toronto



David Parry
1985

Part I

GOD: Ego sum alpha et O:
 I am the first, the last also:
 One God in majesty;
 Marvellous, of might most;
 Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost: 5
 One God in Trinity.

I am without beginning;
 My godhead hath no ending;
 I am God in throne:
 One God in persons three, 10
 Which never may divided be,
 For I am God alone.

All manner of things are in my thought;
 Without me there may be nought,
 For all is in my sight. 15
 It shall be done after my will:
 That I have thought, I shall fulfil,
 And maintain with my might.

At the beginning of this tide,
 Make we heaven and earth so wide, 20
 Also lights fair to see.
 Since it is good so to do,
 Darkness from light we part in two,
 In time to serve and be.

Darkness we call the night; 25
 The brightness call we light:
 It shall be as I say.
 After my will this is forth brought;
 Even and morn, both are they wrought --
 And thus is made a day. 30

Amidst the water, by our assent,
Be now made the firmament,
And parted, each from other:
The water above is laid.
Even and morn is this made: 35
A day -- as was the other.

Waters, that so wide be spread,
Be gathered together, into one stead:
The earth may thus seem dry.
That which is dry the earth shall be; 40
And the waters I call the sea:
This work doth please mine eye.

Out of the earth, now, herbs shall spring,
Trees shall flourish, and fruit forth bring:
Their kind thus shall you see. 45
This, after my will is done;
Made is thereunto, even and morn:
A day. Now is this three.

Sun and moon set in the heaven,
With stars now, and the planets seven, 50
To stand in their degree:
The sun to serve thus the day light;
The moon also to serve the night.
The fourth day shall this be.

The water to nourish the fish swimming; 55
The earth to nourish the beasts creeping,
That fly or go may.
Multiply in earth, and be
In my blessing: now wax ye!
This is the fifth day. 60

CHERUBIN: Our Lord God in Trinity,
 Mirth and loving be to thee:
 Mirth and loving over all thing;
 For thou has made, with thy bidding,
 Heaven and earth, and all that is, 65
 And given us joy that never shall miss.
 Lord, thou art so much of might,
 That has made Lucifer so bright.
 We love thee, Lord; bright are we,
 But none of us so bright as he. 70
 He is named well as "Luci-fere"
 For lovely light that he doth bear.
 He is so lovely, and so bright,
 It is great joy to see that sight.
 We love thee, Lord, with all our thought, 75
 That such thing can make of nought.

Here God withdraws from his throne, and Lucifer shall
 sit in that throne.

LUCIFER: Surely it is a seemly sight,
 Since that we are all angels bright,
 And ever in bliss to be:
 If that ye will behold me right, 80
 This mast'ry belongs to me.
 I am so fair and bright,
 Of me comes all this light,
 This play and pleasantry.
 Against my great might 85
 May no thing stand nor be.

If ye will me behold,
 I am a thousandfold
 Brighter than sun so bright.
 My strength may not be told; 90
 None may withstand my might.

*rougher
 in original?
 89 lines*

*

7 4 } In heaven, who is so bold
 Above me to sit on height?
 For I am Lord of Bliss;
 Over all this world that is; 95
 My mirth is most of all.
 Therefore my will is this:
 "Master" ye shall me call!

 And ye shall all see soon, anon,
 How seemly it is I sit in throne 100
 As King of Bliss.
 I am so seemly, blood and bone,
 My seat shall be there, where was his.

 Say, fellows, how suits it me
 To sit in seat of Trinity? 105
 I am so bright in every limb,
 Sure, it suits me as well as him.

 BAD ANGEL 1: Thou art so fair unto my sight,
 It suits thee well to sit on height,
 Truly, I think it does. 110

 GOOD ANGEL 1: I warn you, leave that foolish praise,
 For that seat may no angel fill
 So well as him that shall judge all.
 GOOD ANGEL 2: Cease that ye say, I warn again,
 For well I know ye carp in vain. 115
 He filled it never, nor never shall,
 So well as him that has made all.

 BAD ANGEL2: Now, as it seems to my wise wit,
 It suits him well thereon to sit.
 He is so fair, without a lie, 120
 It suits him well to sit on high.

Therefore, fellow, hold thy tale,
 And think again before you rail!
 He seems as suited to sit there
 As God himself, if he were here. 125

LUCIFER: Dear fellow, think thee not so?

BAD ANGEL 1: Yea, God knows, so do others too.

GOOD ANGEL 1: Nay, forsooth, so think not we!

LUCIFER: A fig for you! Now what think ye?
 Since I am myself so bright, 130
 Therefore will I take a flight!

Then the devils will leave, crying out, and the first says:

DEVIL 1: Alas, alas! Oh wicked woe!
 Lucifer, why fell thou so?
 We that angels were, so fair,
 And sat so high above the air, 135
 Now are we grown black as any coal,
 And ugly, tattered as a fool!
 What ailed thee, Lucifer, to fall?
 Were ye not fairest of angels all?
 Brightest and best, and most of love 140
 With God himself, that sits above?
 Thou has made nine, where there were ten;
 Thou art parted foully from thy kin.
 Thou art fallen, the tenth, that brightly gleamed;
 From an angel to a fiend. 145
 Thou hast done to us foul wrong,
 And brought thyself to sorrows strong.
 Alas! there is nought else to say --
 But we are lost eternally!

Of this that I make thy dwelling place, 180
Full of mirth and of solace,
Possession I thee give.
And yet you should not be alone
To walk here in this seemly home:
In joy as you shall live. 185

Therefore a rib from thee I take:
From it thy mate shall I make,
Who shall be to thy helping,
With you to govern all that here is,
And ever more to be in bliss; 190
Ye grow in my blessing.

Ye shall have joy and bliss therein:
Whilst ye will keep you out of sin,
You shall enjoy no less.
Rise up, mine angel Cherubin! 195
Take, and lead them both now in,
And leave them there in peace.

The the cherubin takes Adam by the hand, and the Lord says
to them:

Hear thou, Adam, and Eve thy wife;
I forbid you the tree of life;
That tree I made, I say, leave be: 200
Take which ye will; touch not that tree!
If this my rule thou break or bend,
Thou shall meet a fearful end.

CHERUBIN: Our Lord, our God, thy will be done;
I shall go with them full soon. 205
In truth, I shall not stay my tread
Till I have them thither led.

We thank thee, Lord, with all good cheer,
 That has made man to be our peer.
 Come forth, Adam: I shall thee lead. 210
 I shall instruct thee. Now pay heed.
 I tell thee, think how thou art wrought,
 And love my Lord in all thy thought,
 That has made thee through his will,
 The angels' order to fulfil. 215
 Many things to thee he gives,
 And makes thee master of all that lives.
 He has forbid thee but a tree:
 Look then that thou let it be!
 If his commandment now thou break, 220
 Destruction thou shall not escape.
 Wend herein to paradise,
 And see to it that ye be wise,
 And keep you well -- I must be gone
 Unto my Lord, that I came from. 225

ADAM: Almighty Lord, now I thank thee
 That are, and were, and shall be;
 Of thy love and of thy grace,
 For now is here a merry place:
 Eve, my fellow, how think ye this? 230

EVE: A place, methinks, of joy and bliss
 That God has given to thee and me.
 Ah, without end, blessed be he!

ADAM: Eve, fellow, now abide me here:
 I shall go visit far and near 235
 To see what trees that here there be.
 Here are far more than yet we did see:
 Grasses, and other small flowers
 That smell so sweet, of many colours.

EVE: Gladly, sir, I will remain;
When ye have seen them, come again. 240

ADAM: But look well now, Eve my wife,
Thou come not near the tree of life;
For if thou do, he is ill paid.
Then are we lost, as he has said. 245

EVE: Go forth, and play thee all about:
I shall not near it while you are out.
For be thou sure now, I am loath
To do a thing to make him wroth.

LUCIFER: Who would have thought this time to have seen? 250
That we, that in such joy have been,
Should suffer now in so much woe --
Who would ever believe it should be so?
Ten orders in heaven there were
Of angels, each with office there, 255
Of every order in their degree.
The tenth part of them fell with me,
For they held with me in that tide,
And they maintained me in my pride.
But hearken, fellows, what I say: 260
The joy that we have lost for aye,
God has made man with his hand
To have: that bliss without an end,
And the nine orders to fulfil
That we left there -- such is his will. 265
And now are they in Paradise;
But thence they shall, if we be wise!
We were so fair, so shining bright,
So seemly set before his sight,
This thought was ever in my mind: 270
He should have taken angel's kind,

take
out ? }

{ Of the degrees that he had made;
When he did not, I was dismayed.

And when man's kind he thought to take,
At that, great envy then had I! 275
But he has made for him a mate,
And fast to her I shall draw nigh
That ready way.

To try and put his purpose by,
And strive to pick from him that prey. 280
My work will be well-wrought,
If I him thus betray --
His pleasure bring to nought! --
Soon shall I try this way.

In a worm's likeness will I wend, 285
And there shall try a lie cunning:
Eve! Eve!

EVE: Who is there?

LUCIFER: I, a friend --
And for thy good is my coming
Here, that I sought.
Of all the fruits that ye see hang 290
In Paradise, why eat ye not?

EVE: We may of them, each one,
All we think good freely take,
Save for one tree alone:
To near that, great harm would make. 295

LUCIFER: And why that tree -- that would I know --
More than all others here by?

LUCIFER: There is no danger -- be at ease!
 Eat it safely ye may.
 No prick of peril therein lies,
 But worship and a great winning. 330
 For just as God shall ye be wise,
 And peers to him in every thing.
 Aye, Gods shall ye be!
 Of good and ill to have knowing --
 Thus to be as wise as he. 335

EVE: Do you speak truth in this?

LUCIFER: Aye -- why trust ye not me?
 For I would never, as have I bliss,
 Tell anything but truth to thee!

EVE: Then I will to thy teaching trust, 340
 And fetch this fruit to be our food.

And then she must take the apple.

LUCIFER; Bite on boldly: be the first!
 Then take it to Adam, amend his mood --
 Aye, and his bliss!

Then Lucifer withdraws.

EVE: Adam, have here this fruit so good. 345

ADAM: Alas, woman! Why took ye this?
 Our Lord commanded us both
 To tend this tree of his.
 Thy work will make him wroth --
 Alas, thou hast done amiss! 350

EVE: Nay, Adam, now let thy grief be --
 And I'll tell thee the reason why:

A snake assured me solemnly
We shall be as gods, thou and I,
If we but eat 355
Here of this tree. Adam, now try:
Give all, that greatness for to get!
For we shall be as wise
As God that is so great,
And as mighty of praise -- 360
Therefore, eat of this meat!

ADAM: To eat it would I never rue,
Might I be sure of thy saying.

EVE: Bite on boldly, for it is true:
We shall be Gods! -- know everything! 365

ADAM: To win that name,
I shall taste it at thy teaching.

And he takes it and eats it.

Alas! What have I done, for shame?
I'll counsel, woe be with thee!
Ah, Eve, thou art to blame: 370
To this enticed thou me.
Of my body I have great shame,
For I am naked, as I think.

EVE: Alas, Adam! And so am I.

ADAM: And for sorrow sore now should we sink, 375
For we have grieved our God almighty
That made me man;
Broken his bidding utterly --
Alas, that ever we this began!

ANGEL: Adam, you brought yourself this blight:
To the tree thou went, against all right,
And boldly on that fruit did bite
My Lord forbade. 465

ADAM: Yea, alas! My wife may I indict --
She made me mad!

ANGEL: Adam, since you trusted her tale,
He sends you word that never shall
Pain ever cease thee, 470
Where ye abide in bitter bale
Till he release thee.

ADAM: Alas, wretches! What have we wrought?
To bounteous bliss we both were brought.
While we were there 475
We had enough -- now have we nought!
Alas, for care!

EVE: Our cares are come, both keen and cold,
With fierce misfortunes manifold.
Those tales that tyrant to me told 480
With guileful power --
That pleasures peerless we should hold --
Oh curse that hour!

ANGEL: That hour ye did so unwisely,
Thus to grieve great God almighty; 485
That now must ye buy most dearly
Before ye go,
And live, as ye are most worthy,
in grief and woe!

Adam, have this, and on it think 490
How ye shall till for meat and drink
For evermore.

ADAM:	Alas, for sorrow might I sink: This shames me sore!	
EVE:	Sore shames us both, and will for ever: This perilous plight pains us together. Alas for woe! Would we had never Come near that tree! With dread now must we buy most dear Our deeds guilty.	495 500
ANGEL:	If thus ye betrayed him so, Hard labour for that shall ye know: Thy bairns to bear with mighty woe, This warn I thee. Obedient ever to man shalt thou And all maids be.	 505
EVE:	Alas! For grief where may I go? Now never may I rest, I know.	
ADAM:	Nay, now our king commands us so To labour long, Both breached and broken are we two -- Such is our song!	510
	Alas, for sighing and sorrow sad, This mourning makes me mazed and mad To ponder in heart what help I had, And now have none! On ground may I never go glad -- My games are gone!	515
	Gone are my games; gone is my glee. Alas! In bliss could we not be? Pleased we were with great plenty At prime of day;	520

But by the noon, all lost had we --
Oh welaway!

For wailful woe now have we found. 525
All beasts were to my bidding bound:
Fish and fowl dwelt all around
With me in mirth;
Against me now are all things turned
In all the earth. 530

The earth uneasy I walk upon,
To suffer sorely pains so strong,
All for this thing I have done wrong
Through wicked guile.
This life, methinks, I live too long -- 535
Alas the while!

Ah, Lord! A dreadful doom indeed
Thou hast ordained for my misdeed!
If I do wrong, who shall me heed
In any way? 540
How best in this I may proceed,
I shall assay.

This bitter bondage, what may it be?
In world unwisely wrought have we!
All earth now trembles for this free, 545
And rings my knell:
Angered is all this world with me,
This know I well!

Oh, well I know my wealth is fled:
Earth, elements, all are led 550
To sorrow for my sinful deed,
This well I see.
Never was wretch so sadly sped
As now are we.

For certainly I rue it sore
That ever I listened to thy lore:
Thy counsel has cast me in care
Without an end. 585

EVE: Be still, Adam: speak it no more;
It may not mend. 588

For well I know I have done wrong:
Therefore my mournful grief is strong --
Alas the while I live so long!
Dead would I be! 590

ADAM: Glad shall I go never these glades among:
Gone is my glee! 593

Joyless I go, and ache;
This grief my heart will break;
This tree unto me will I take,
That he to me doth send.
He keep us from woe, that did us make,
Wherever we wend. 600