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***: “BRITISH AND
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TOPIC

***: MIRACLE & MORALITY
PLAYS***

KEYWORDS

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INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Very early in the Christian centuries were the beginning of religious plays in France . They appeared in England soon after the Norman Conquest, and their implied form these sacred dramas were known as *Miracle plays or Mysteries*. These plays represented the lives of the saints and scenes from the life of Christ or stories from the Old Testament.
- ❖ *Miracle Plays* are also known as Saint's plays. These plays were founded on important events of sacred history ; as the creation, the Temptation in the Garden of Eden, the Flood, the Coming of the Wise Men, and like. The name ' Miracle Play', or representation of a miraculous or wonderful thing, is most frequently employed , and a modern survival is the Passion Play presented every ten years at Overammergan in Bavaria.


- ❖ Such plays were given on a stage or scaffolding erected in the cathedral or in a wooden construction outside. They grew to belong and elaborate representations, no doubt addressed to the eye as much as to the ear, and although the dialogue, in those that have come down to us, seems an uncouth and incongruous compound of the sacred and the trivial, there is sometimes abroad impressiveness and simplicity in the conception, and can not doubt that they were in their day effective and powerful.
- ❖ That the Miracle Plays were popular, we are assured when we read that at Coventry they lasted three days and were witnessed by a great concourse of people. The text of three 'cycles' of Miracles, known as those of Widkirck, Chester, and Coventry, from the places where they were performed, have come down to us.

- ❖ The Coventry manuscript is dated 1468. That of Widkirck is supposed by those competent to form an opinion to date from the reign of Henry VI. That of the Chester plays is more recent, but all bear traces of descent from older originals. The secular drama can hardly be said to have descended from the Miracle plays, but the popularity of later bears unquestionable evidence to the general love for and familiarity with scenic representations and illustrative dialogue among the Englishmen of the fifteenth and sixteenth century.



THE MORALITIES

- ❖ The Moralities were crude plays generally presented by the guilds or companies of the trades or professions which played so important a part in the society of the day. The morality play is genre of medieval and early Tudor theatrical entertainment. In their own time, these plays were known as interludes, a broader term given to dramas with or without a moral theme. These plays were frequently presented in Guild Hall on the festival day of the patron saint of the guild.
- ❖ Morality plays are a type of an allegory in which the protagonist is met by personification of various moral attributes who try to prompt him to choose a Godly life over one of evil. The plays gained immense popularity in Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries.

- ❖ Having grown out of the religiously based plays of the Middle Ages, they represented a shift towards a more secular base for European Theatre.
 - ❖ The morality play developed during the Medieval period. They attempted to educate via entertainment. It is thought that the Dominican and Franciscan orders of Christian Friars developed. The morality play in the 13th century by adding actors and theatrical elements to their sermons. By doing so mainly illiterate people could more easily learn the basics of Christianity through dramatic spoken words.
 - ❖ They made complex topics such as original of sin and atonement more easily understood. By personifying voices, virtues, the devil and the good angel, stories of temptation were made accessible to those who were unable to read them, themselves.
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- ❖ The importance of Morality in the development of the regular or legitimate drama will now be manifest. In the first place, the Morality proper laid to the creation of, and very largely gave way before, plays which mark a distinct advance in the direction of true drama, and which may be divided into Morality - comedies, Morality-tragedies , and Morality- histories. Secondly Interlude developed from the Morality.



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Question 1.

- ❖ What do you understand by Miracle plays?

Question 2.

- ❖ What do you understand by Morality plays?

Question 3.

- ❖ What is the importance of miracle and morality plays in the development of English Drama?



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THANK
YOU

