



The Harrowing of Hell

A Tonneley Mystery Play

1300

Translated from Old English to Elizabethan

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Speaking Parts

Iesus
Adam
Eve
Isaiah
Simeon
John the Baptist
Moses
Ribald, a devil
David
Beelzebub, a devil
Satan

Here begins the extraction of souls, etc.

IESUS

My Father me from bliss hath sent
Till earth for mankind's sake,
Adam must amend his miss;
My death needs must I take.

I dwelt there thirty years and two
And somewhat more, the truth to say;
In anger, pain, and great woe
I died upon the cross this day.

Therefore to hell now will I go
To challenge that is mine;
Adam, Eve, and others more,
They shall no longer dwell in pain.

The fiend them won with train
Through fraud of earthly food;
I have them bought again
With shedding of my blood.

And now I will that stead restore
Which the fiend fell from for sin.
Some token will I send before
With mirth to cause their games begin.

A light I will they have,
To know I will come soon;
My body shall abide in grave
Till all this deed be done.

ADAM

My brethren, hark unto me here:
More hope of health never we had.

Four thousand and six hundred years
Have we been here in darkness stad;
Now see I tokens of solace sere,
A glorious gleam to make us glad,
Wherethrough I hope that help is near
That soon shall slake our sorrows sad.

EVE

Adam, my husband dear,
This means solace certain;
Such light can on us lean
In paradise full plain.

ISAIAH

Adam, through this sin
Here were we put to dwell
This wicked place within:
The name of it is hell;
Here pains shall never cease
That wicked are and fell.
Love that Lord with wine
His life for us would sell. 2

And let all sing "Saviour of the world," the first verse.

Adam, thou well understand,
I am Isaías, so Christ me know.
I spake of folk in darkness walking;
I said a light should on them lend.
This light is all from Christ commanded
That he unto us hath hither sent;
Thus is my point proved in hand,
As I before unfolded it known.

SIMEON

So may I tell of Pharisees fell,

For in the temple his friends me found.
Me thought delighteth with him to dwell,
I hailed him homely with my hand.
I said "Lord, let thy servants dwell
Pass in peace to life lasting;
Now that mine eyes hath seen thy health
No longer list I live in land."
This light thou hast purveyed
For them that live in lead;
That I before of thee have said
I see it is fulfilled indeed.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

As a voice crying I knew
The ways of Christ as I well can.
I baptized him with both mine hands
In the water of flood Jordan;
The Holy Ghost from heaven descended
As a white dove down on me then;
The Father's voice, our mirth to amend,
Was made to me like as a man:
"Yond is my Son," he said,
"And whom me pleaseth full well."
His light is on us laid
And comes our cares to quell.

MOSES

Now this same night learning have I.
To me, Moses, he showed his might
And also to another one, Eli,
Where we stood on a hill in height.
As white as snow was his body;
His face was like the sun for bright.
No man on mould was so mighty
Boldly durst look against that light,
And that same light here see I now
Shining on us certain,

Wherethrough truly I know
That we shall soon pass from this pain.

RIBALD

Since first that hell was made
And I was put therein,
Such sorrow never ere I had,
Nor heard I such a din.
My heart begins to brade,
My wit waxes thin;
I dread we cannot be glad,
These souls must from us twin.

How, Beelzebub, bind these boys;
Such harrow was never heard in hell.

BEELZEBUB

Out, ribald, thou roist!
What is betid, canst thou aught tell?

RIBALD

Why, hearest thou not this ugly noise?
These lourds that in limbo dwell
They make moaning of many joys
And muster mirths them amell.

BEELZEBUB

Mirth? Nay, nay, that point is past.
More hope of health shall they never have.

RIBALD

They cry on Christ full fast,
And say he shall them save.

BEELZEBUB

Yea, though he do not, I shall,
For they are spared in special space;
Whilst I am prince and principal
They shall never pass out of this place.
Call up Astaroth and Anabel
To give us counsel in this case,
Belberith and Belial
To mar them that such mastery makes.
Say to Sir Satan, our sire,
And bid him bring also
Sir Lucifer, lovely of lyre.
All ready, lord, I go.

*Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye raised,
ye eternal doors, and the King of glory shall enter in.*

RIBALD

Out, harro! Out, what devil is he
That calleth himself king over us all?
Hark, Belzebub, come ne,
For hideously I heard him call.

BEELZEBUB

Go spare the gates, ill mote thou thee,
And set the watches on the wall.
If that brothel come ne,
With us aye won he shall;
And if he more call or cry
To make us more debate,
Lay on him hardly
And make him go his gate.

DAVID

Nay, with him may ye not fight,

For he is king and conqueror,
And of so much might
And stiff in every stour;
Of him cometh all this light
That shineth in this bower.
He is full fierce in fight,
Worthy to win honour.

BEELZEBUB

Honour? Harsto, harlot, for what deed?
All earthly men to me are thrall;
That lad that thou callest lord in lead
He had never harbour, house, nor hall.

How, Sir Sathanas, come near
And hark this cursed rout.

SATAN

The devil you all to-har!
What ails thee so to shout?
And me if I come near
Thy brain but I burst out.

BEELZEBUB

Thou must come help to spare;
We are besieged about.

SATAN

Besieged about? Why, who durst be so bold
For dread to make on us a fray?

BEELZEBUB

It is the Jew that Judas sold

For to be dead this other day.

SATAN

How, in time that tale was told;
That traitor travails us always.
He shall be here full hard in hold,
But look he pass not, I thee pray.

BEELZEBUB

Pass? Nay, nay, he will not wend
From hence ere it be war;
He shapeth him for to shend
All hell ere he go far.

SATAN

Fie, fathers, thereof shall he fail.
For all his fare I him defy;
I know his trances from top to tail.
He liveth by gods and glory;
Thereby he brought forth of our bale
The last Lazare of Betany.
But to the Jews I gave counsel
That they should cause him die;
I entered there into Judas
That forward to fulfill.
Therefore his heir he has
Always to won here still.

RIBALD

Sir Satan, since we here thee say
Thou and the Jews were at assent,
And wot he won thee Lazare away
That unto us was taken to tent
Hopedst thou that thou mayst mar him
To muster the malice that he hath meant?

For and he refuse us now our prey
We will ye wit ere he is went.

SATAN

I bid thee naught abate
But boldly make thee bound
With toils that thou intrust,
And ding that dastard down.

IESUS

Lift up your gates, O ye princes.

RIBALD

Out, harrow! What harlot is he
That saith his kingdom shall be cried?

DAVID

That mayst thou in psalter see,
For of this prince thus ere I said:

I said that he should break
Your bars and bands by name,
And of your works take wreak;
Now shalt thou see the same.

IESUS

Ye princes of hell, open your gate
And let my folk forth gone;
A prince of peace shall enter thereat
Whether ye will or none.

RIBALD

What art thou that speakest so?

IESUS

A king of bliss is named, Iesus.

RIBALD

Yea, hence fast I rede thou go
And meddle thee not with us.

BEELZEBUB

Our gates I know will last,
They are so strong I ween;
But if our bars burst
For thee they shall not twain.

IESUS

This stead shall stand no longer stoken;
Open up and let my people pass.

RIBALD

Out, harrow, our bail is broken,
And brusten are all our bands of brass!

BEELZEBUB

Harrow, our gates begin to crack;
In sunder I know they go,
And hell I know will all to-shake!
Alas, what I am woe.

RIBALD

Lymbo is lost, alas!
Sir Sathanas, come up;
This work is worse than it was.

SATAN

Yea, hangèd be thou on a crook!

Thieves, I bade ye should be bound,
If he made mistress more,
To ding that dastard down,
Set him both sad and sore.

BEELZEBUB

To set him sore that is soon said;
Come thou thyself and serve him so.
We may not abide his bitter braid;
He would us mar and we were more.

SATAN

Fie, fathers, wherefore were ye fled?
Have ye no force to flight him fro?
Look in haste my gear be graced;
Myself shall to that gadling go.
How, thou belamy, abide
With all thy boast and bear
And tell me in this tide
What mistress thou makest here.

IESUS

I make no mastery but for mine.
I will them save, that shall thee sow.
Thou hast no power them to pine,
But in my prison for their prow.
Here have they sojourned, naught as thine
But in this ward, thou wottest how.

SATAN

Why, where hast thou been aye since
That never would nigh them near or now?

IESUS

Now is the time, certain,
My Father ordained herefor
That they should pass from pain
In bliss to dwell forevermore.

SATAN

Thy father knew I well by sight:
He was a wright his meat to win.
Marry me, my mind is thy mother hight,
The utmost end of all thy kin.
Say who made thee so much of might?

IESUS

Thou wicked fiend, let be thy din.
My Father dwelleth in heaven on height
In bliss that never more shall blind;
I am his only Son,
His forward to fulfill.
Together will we won,
And sunder when we will.

SATAN

God's son? Nay, then might thou be glad,
For no cattle hurt thee crave;
Thou hast lived aye like a lad
In sorrow and as a simple knave.

IESUS

That was for the hearty love I had
Unto man's soul, it for to save,

And for to make thee mad and mad,
And for that reason ruefully to rave.
My godhead here I hid
In Mary, mother mine,
Where it shall never be known
To thee nor none of thine.

SATAN

How now? This would I were told in town.
Thou sayest God is thy sire;
I shall thee prove by good reason
Thou movest as man doth into mire.
To break thy bidding they were full bound
And soon they wrought at my desire;
From paradise thou putttest them down
In hell here to have their hire.
And thou thyself by day and night
Taught ever all men among
Ever to do reason and right,
And here thou workest all wrong.

IESUS

I work no wrong that shall thou wit
If I my men from woe will win;
My prophets plainly preached it,
All the notes that I begin.
They said that I should be that ilk,
In hell where I should enter in,
To save my servants from that pit
Where damned souls shall sit for sin,
And each true prophet's tale
Shall be fulfilled in me.
I have them bought from bail;
In bliss now shall they be.

SATAN

Now since thou list to lay the laws,
Thou shalt be tamed ere we twain,
For those that thou to witness draws
Full even against thee shall begin.
As Solomon said in his saws
Who that once cometh hell within
He shall never out, as clerks know;
Therefore, belike, let be thy din.
Job, thy servant, also
In his time can tell
That neither friend nor foe
Shall find release in hell.

IESUS

He spake full sooth, that shalt thou see,
In hell shall be no release,
But of that place then meant he
Where sinful care shall ever increase.
In that bale aye shalt thou be,
Where sorrows sere shall never cease,
And my folk that were most free
Shall pass unto the place of peace;
For they were here with my will
And so they shall forth wend.
Thou shalt thyself fulfill
Ever woe without end.

SATAN

Why, and wilt thou take them all from me?
Then think me thou art unkind.
Nay, I pray thee do not so;
Unthink thee better in thy mind,
Or else let me with thee go.
I pray thee, leave me not behind.

IESUS

Nay, traitor, thou shalt dwell in woe,
And to a stake I shall thee bind.

SATAN

Now here I how thou meanest among
With measure and malice for to meddle,
But since thou sayest it shall be long
Yet some let always with us dwell.

IESUS

Yea, wit thou well, else were great wrong:
Thou shalt have Cain that slew Abel,
And all that hasten themselves to hang
As did Judas and Architophel,
And Dathan and Abiron,
And all of their assent,
Cursed tyrannies everilk one
That me and mine torment.

And all that will not learn my law
That I have left in land anew,
That maketh my coming known
And all my sacraments pursue,
My death, my rising, read by raw —
Who trust them not, they are untrue —
Unto my doom I shall them draw,
And judge them worse than any Jew.
And they that list to learn
My law and live thereby
Shall never have harms here,
But wealth, as is worthy.

SATAN

Now here my hand, I hold me wealth;

These points are plainly for my prow.
If this be true that thou hast said,
We shall have more than we have now.
These laws that thou hast late here laid
I shall them learn not to allow;
If they mine take, they are betrayed,
And I shall turn them tight, I know.
I shall walk east, I shall walk west,
And gar them work well war.

IESUS

Nay, fiend, thou shalt be fast,
That thou shalt flit no far.

SATAN

Fast? Fie, that were a wicked treason!
Belamy, thou shalt be smitten.

IESUS

Devil, I command thee to go down
Into thy seat where thou shalt sit.

SATAN

Alas, for dole and care
I sink into hell pit.

RIBALD

Sir Satan, so said I ere;
Now shalt thou have a fit.

IESUS

Come now forth, my children all.
I forgive you your miss;

With me now go ye shall
To joy and endless bliss.

ADAM

Lord, thou art full much of might
That makest thyself on this manner,
To help us all as thou hadst us hight
When both forfeit, I and my fear.
Here have we dwelt withouten light
Four thousand and six hundred year.
Now see we by this solemn sight,
How that thy mercy maketh us dear.

EVE

Lord we were worthy
More tournaments to taste.
Thou help us, Lord, with thy mercy
As thou of might art most.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Lord, I love thee inwardly
That me would make thy messenger,
To cry your coming to earth,
And teach they faith to people in fear,
Then to die before thee
To bring thy tidings that are here,
How they should have they help in hurry;
Now see I all those points appear.

MOSES

David, thy prophet true,
Oft-times told unto us
Of thy coming he knew,
And said it should be thus.

DAVID

As I said before, yet say I so

Forsake not, O Lord,

My soul in hell:

Leave never my soul, Lord, after thee

In deep hell, where damned shall go;

Suffer thou never thy saints to see

The sorrow of them that dwell in woe

Ever full of filth, and may not flee

MOSES

Make mirth, both more and less,

And love our Lord we may ,

That has brought us from bitterness

In bliss to bide, forever.

ISAIAH

Therefore, now let us sing

To love our Lord Iesus;

Unto his bliss he will us bring.

Thee, O God, we praise.