

## THE BROME PLAY OF ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

ca. 1400–1425

The story of Abraham and Isaac as told in Genesis xxii is a very spare account of an incident that appealed greatly to the medieval imagination, which was always stimulated by a situation in which an ideal is upheld at the expense of all normal human values. This all-or-nothing attitude may also be seen in Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, where Arveragus delivers his wife to an adulterer in order that she should not be guilty of breaking her word, one's pledged word being, according to him, the most demanding of human contracts. In the story of Abraham and Isaac, it is obedience to God's command that a father sacrifice his son that must be carried out. The audience is, of course, aware that the awful consequences of upholding the ideal will at the last minute be canceled. Meanwhile, however, the mind luxuriates in a realistic depiction of the people involved in the threatening action. Medieval sentimentality appears in the play at its most intense as Abraham discusses, first with himself and then with his beloved son, the consequences of obeying God, and as Isaac expresses at once his natural desire not to die and his willingness to do so through obedience to his father—whom, indeed, he rebukes for delaying, which only increases the agony of them both. The play, like *Everyman*, closes with the explanation of a Doctor (a learned man) of the moral the audience should draw from the play; but the play itself not only makes its moral point about the importance of obeying the divine will, but also prefigures the sacrifice in later Biblical history of Jesus, the Lamb of God, for whom there could be no last-minute substitute of the kind that saves Isaac.

The Brome play of *Abraham and Isaac* is one of six English mystery plays on this subject that have survived. It is preserved in a single manuscript of the late 15th century (Brome is the name of its 19th-century owner), a miscellany containing items of Middle English verse, legal deeds, accounts, etc. It is not known how the original compiler of the manuscript received a copy of the play. Presumably it was derived from an otherwise lost mystery cycle, and part of it closely resembles the play of *Abraham and Isaac* in the Chester cycle, though whether the Brome play draws on the Chester play or the Chester play on it is not clear. Nor is it possible to assign a firmer date to it than the first quarter of the 15th century.

The present text, based on the manuscript in the Beinecke Library of Yale University, has been modernized. The edition of the play in Norman Davis, *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments* (1970), has provided the editor with much help.

## The Brome Play of Abraham and Isaac

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ABRAHAM	ISAAC
GOD	DOCTOR
ANGEL	

[A *Field*.]

ABR. Father of heaven omnipotent,  
With all my heart to thee I call.

Thou hast give me both land and rent,<sup>o</sup> *money*  
 And my lifelode<sup>o</sup> thou hast me sent: *livelihood*  
 5 I thank thee highly evermore of<sup>o</sup> all. *for*

First of the earth thou madest Adam,  
 And Eve also to be his wife:  
 All other creatures of them two cam;  
 And now thou hast granted me, Abraham,  
 10 Here in this land to lead my life.

In my age thou has granted me this,  
 That this young child with me shall won.<sup>o</sup> *dwell*  
 I love no thing so much, ywis,<sup>o</sup> *indeed*  
 Except thine own self, dear Father of bliss,  
 15 As Isaac here, my own sweet son.

I have divers<sup>o</sup> children mo<sup>o</sup> *various / more*  
 The which I love not half so weel.<sup>o</sup> *well*  
 This fair sweet child, he cheers me so  
 In every place where that I go  
 20 That no disease<sup>o</sup> here may I feel. *disquiet*

And therefore, Father of heaven, I pray  
 For his health and for his grace:  
 Now, Lord, keep him both night and day  
 That never no disease nor fray<sup>o</sup> *terror*  
 25 Come to my child in no place.

Now come on, Isaac, my own sweet child,  
 Go we home and take our rest.  
 ISA. Abraham, my father so mild,  
 To follow you I am full prest,<sup>o</sup> *ready*  
 30 Both early and late.  
 ABR. Come, on, sweet child, I love thee best  
 Of all the children that ever I begate.

[Heaven.]

GOD. Mine angel, fast hie<sup>o</sup> thee thy way,  
 And unto middle-earth anon<sup>o</sup> thou go. *hasten*  
 35 Abraham's heart now will I assay<sup>o</sup> *straightaway*  
 Whether that he be steadfast or no. *test*

Say I command him for to take  
 Isaac his son that he loveth so weel,<sup>o</sup> *well*  
 And sacrifice with his blood he make  
 40 If of<sup>o</sup> my friendship he will feel. *any part of*

Show him the way unto the hill  
 Where that his sacrifice shall be.

I shall assay now his good will,  
 Whether he loveth better his child or me.  
 45 All men shall take example him be° by  
 My commandements how they shall fulfill.

[*The Field.*]

ABR. Now, Father of heaven that formed all thing,  
 My prayers I make to thee again.  
 For this day my tender offering  
 50 Here I must give to thee, certain.  
 A, Lord God, almighty king,  
 What manner beast will make thee most fain?° glad  
 If I had thereof very° knowing true  
 It should be done with all my main  
 55 Full soon anon.  
 To do thy pleasing on an hill  
 Verily it is my will,  
 Dear Father, God alone.

[*Enter ANGEL.*]

ANG. Abraham, Abraham, will thou rest?  
 60 Our Lord commandeth thee to take  
 Isaac thy young son that thou lovest best,  
 And sacrifice with his blood thou make.

Into the land of Moriah thou go  
 And offer thy child unto thy lord:  
 65 I shall thee lead and show also.  
 Unto God's heast,° Abraham, accord,° command / obey  
 And follow me upon this green.° ground

ABR. Welcome to me be my Lordes sand,° message  
 And I will not his heast withstand.  
 70 Yet Isaac my young son in land  
 A full dear child to me hath been.

I had liefer,° if God had be pleased, rather  
 For to 'a° forbore° all the good I have have / forgone  
 Than Isaac my son should 'a be deceased,° dead  
 75 So God in heaven my soul moot° save. may

I loved never thing so much in eard,° earth  
 And now I must the child go kill.  
 A, Lord God, my conscience is strongly steard,° moved  
 And yet, my dear Lord, I am sore afeard  
 80 To grouch° anything against your will. grudge

I love my child as I do my life,  
 But yet I love my God much more,  
 For though my heart would make any strife,  
 Yet will I not spare for child nor wife,  
 85 But do after my Lordes lore.° teaching

Though I love my son never so weel,  
 Yet smite off his head soon I shall.  
 A, Father of heaven, to thee I kneel:  
 An hard death my son shall feel  
 90 For to honour thee, Lord, withal.

ANG. Abraham, Abraham, this is well said,  
 And all these commandements look thou save.° *keep*  
 But in thy heart be nothing dismayed.  
 ABR. Nay, nay, forsooth, I hold me well paid,° *pleased*  
 95 To please my God with the best I have.

For though my heart be heavily set  
 To see the blood of my own dear son,  
 Yet for all this I will not let,° *refrain*  
 But Isaac my son I will go fet,° *fetch*  
 100 And come as fast as ever we con.° *can*

Now, Isaac, my own dear son,  
 Where art thou, child? Speak to me.  
 [*Enter ISAAC.*]

ISA. My fair sweet father, I am here,  
 And make my prayers to the Trinity.

105 ABR. Rise up, my child, and fast come hither,  
 My gentle barn° that art so wise, *child*  
 For we two, child, must go together,  
 And unto my Lord make sacrifice.

ISA. I am full ready, my father, lo!  
 110 Even at your hands I stand right here.  
 And whatsoever ye bid me do,  
 It shall be done with glad cheer,  
 Full well and fine.

ABR. A, Isaac, my own son so dear,  
 115 God's blessing I give thee, and mine.

Hold this faggot upon thy back,  
 And here myself shall fire bring.

ISA. Father, all this gear will I pack:  
 I am full fain° to do your bidding. *glad*

120 ABR. A, Lord of heaven, my hands I wring;  
 This childës words my heart all wrack.° *ruin*

Now, Isaac son, go we our way  
 Unto yon mount with all our main.° *strength*

ISA. Go we, father, as fast as we may:  
 125 To follow you I am full fain,  
 Although I be slender.  
 [*They climb a hill.*]

- ABR. A, Lord, my heart it breaketh on twain,<sup>o</sup> *in two*  
 This childës words, they be so tender.
- 130 A, Isaac, my son, anon lay it down:  
 No longer upon thy back it bear.  
 For I must make me ready boun<sup>o</sup> *quickly*  
 To honor my Lord God so dear.
- ISA. Lo,<sup>o</sup> my father, where it is: *look*  
 To cheer you alway I draw me near.  
 135 But father, I marvel sore of this,  
 Why that ye make this heavy<sup>o</sup> cheer,<sup>o</sup> *gloomy / face*  
 And also, father, evermore dread I:  
 Where is your quick<sup>o</sup> beast that ye should kill? *living*  
 140 Both fire and wood we have ready,  
 But quick beast have we none on this hill.
- A quick beast, I woot<sup>o</sup> well, must be dead *know*  
 Your sacrifice that ye should make.
- ABR. Dread thee not, my child, I thee read, <sup>o</sup> *advise*  
 Our Lord will send me unto this stead<sup>o</sup> *place*  
 145 Some manner of beast for me to take,  
 Through his sweet sand.<sup>o</sup> *message*
- ISA. Ye, father, by my heart ginneth<sup>o</sup> quake *begins*  
 To see that sharp sword in your hand.
- Why bear ye your sword drawn so?  
 150 Of your countenance I have much wonder.
- ABR. A, Father of heaven, as I am woe!  
 This child here breaketh my heart asunder.
- ISA. Tell me, dear father, ere that ye cease,  
 Bear ye your sword drawn for me?
- 155 ABR. A, Isaac, my sweet son, peace, peace!  
 For ywis<sup>o</sup> thou break my heart on three. *indeed*
- ISA. Now truly, somewhat, father, methink  
 That ye mourn thus more and more.
- ABR. A, Lord of heaven, thy grace let sink,<sup>o</sup> *descend*  
 160 For my heart was never half so sore.
- ISA. I pray you, father, let me wit<sup>o</sup> *know*  
 Whether I shall have any harm or no?
- ABR. Ywis, sweet son. I may not tell thee yit<sup>o</sup> *yet*  
 My heart is now so full of woe.
- 165 ISA. Dear father, I pray, hideth nought from me  
 But some of your thought that he tell on.<sup>o</sup> *forth*
- ABR. A, Isaac, I must kill thee.
- ISA. Kill me, father? Alas, what have I done?

- 170 If I have trespassed against you ought  
 With a yard<sup>o</sup> ye make me full mild. *rod*  
 And with your sharp sword kill me nought,  
 For ywis, father, I am but a child.
- ABR. I am full sorry, son, thy blood to spill,  
 But truly my child I may not chees.<sup>o</sup> *choose*
- 175 ISA. Now I would my mother were here on this hill:  
 She would kneel for me on both her knees  
 To save my life.  
 And sithen<sup>o</sup> my mother is not here *since*  
 I pray you, father, change your cheer,<sup>1</sup>  
 180 And kill me not with your knife.
- ABR. Forsooth, son, but if<sup>o</sup> I thee kill, *unless*  
 I should grieve God right sore, I dread.  
 It is his commandment and also his will  
 That I should do this same deed.
- 185 He commanded me, son, certain,  
 To make my sacrifice with thy blood.
- ISA. And is it God's will that I should be slain?  
 ABR. Yea, truly, Isaac my son so good,
- 190 ISA. And therefore my hands I wring.  
 Now, father, against my Lordës will  
 I will never grouch,<sup>o</sup> loud or still: *complain*  
 He might 'a sent me a better ending  
 If it had 'a been his will.
- ABR. Forsooth, son, but<sup>o</sup> I did this deed, *unless*  
 195 Grievously displeased our Lord will be.
- ISA. Nay, nay, father, God forbede  
 That ever ye should grieve him for me.
- 200 Ye have other children, one or two,  
 The which ye should love well by kind.<sup>o</sup> *nature*  
 I pray you, father, make ye no woe,  
 For be I once dead and fro you go,  
 I shall be so on out of your mind.
- 205 Therefore do our Lord's bidding,  
 And when I am dead, pray for me.  
 But, father, tell ye my mother no thing:  
 Say I am in another country dwelling.
- ABR. A, Isaac, Isaac, blessed may thou be.
- My heart beginneth strongly to rise  
 To see the blood of thy blessed body.

1. I.e., mind.

210 ISA. Father,<sup>o</sup> sin it may be no other wise *since*  
 Let it pass over as well as I.

But, father, ere I go unto my death  
 I pray ye bless me with your hand.

ABR. Now, Isaac, with all my breath  
 215 My blessing I give thee upon this land.  
 And God's also thereto, ywis.  
 A, Isaac, Isaac, son, up thou stand,  
 Thy fair sweet mouth that I may kiss.

ISA. Now farewell, my own father so fine,  
 220 And greet well my mother in eard.<sup>2</sup>  
 But I pray you, father, to hide mine eyn<sup>o</sup>  
 That I see not the stroke of your sharp sword<sup>o</sup> *eyes*  
 That my flesh shall defile. *sword*

ABR. Son, thy words make me weep full sore.

225 Now, dear son Isaac, speak no more.  
 ISA. A, my own dear father, wherefore?  
 We shall speak together here but a while.

And sithen<sup>o</sup> that I must needs be dead, *since*  
 Yet, my dear father, to you I pray:  
 230 Smite but few strokes at my head,  
 And make an end as soon as ye may,  
 And tarry not too long.  
 ABR. Thy meek words, child, make me affray<sup>o</sup> *fear*  
 So "wailaway"<sup>o</sup> may be my song, *alas*

235 Except all-only Goddës will.  
 A, Isaac, mine own sweet child,  
 Yet kiss me again upon this hill.  
 In all this world is none so mild.

ISA. Now truly, father, all this tarrying  
 240 It nought doth but my heart harm.  
 I pray you, father, make an ending.  
 ABR. Come up, sweet son, into my arm.

I must bind thy handës two,  
 Although thou be never so mild.  
 245 ISA. A, mercy, father, why should ye so do?  
 ABR. That thou shouldest not let<sup>o</sup> me, child. *hinder*

ISA. Nay, ywis, father, I will not let you:  
 Do on, for me, all your will,  
 And on the purpose that ye have set you,

2. On earth.

- 250 For Goddës love, keep it forth still.  
 I am full sorry this day to die,  
 But yet I keep° not my God to grieve. *care*  
 Do on your list,° for me, hardily,° *pleasure / confidently*  
 My fair sweet father, I give you leave.
- 255 But, father, I pray you evermore  
 Tell ye my mother of this no deal:° *bit*  
 If she wist° it, she would weep full sore. *knew*  
 For father, she loveth me full weel:° *well*  
 Goddës blessing have mote° she. *may*
- 260 Now farewell, my mother so sweet:  
 We two be like° no more to meet. *likely*  
 ABR. A, Isaac, son, thou makest me greet° *weep*  
 And with thy words distemperest° me. *distress*
- ISA. Ywis, sweet father, I am sorry to grieve you:  
 265 I cry you mercy of that° I have done. *what*  
 And of all trespass that ever I did meve° you, *cause*  
 Now, father, forgive me ere ye have done.  
 God of heaven be with me!
- ABR. A, dear child, leave off thy moans.  
 270 In all thy life thou grieved me never ones.° *once*  
 Now blessed be thou, body and, bones,  
 That thou were bred and born to me.
- Thou hast be to me child full good;  
 But child, though I mourn never so fast,  
 275 Yet must I needs here at the last  
 In this place shed all thy blood.
- Therefore, my son, here shall thou lie:  
 Unto my work I must me stede.° *set*  
 Ywis, I had as lief myself to die,  
 280 If God will be pleased with my dead,° *death*  
 And mine own body for to offer.
- ISA. A, mercy, father, mourn ye no more.  
 Your weeping maketh my heart sore  
 As my own death that I shall suffer.
- 285 Your kerch,° father, about my eyes ye wind. *handkerchief*  
 ABR. So I shall, my sweetest child in eard.° *earth*  
 ISA. Now yet, good father, have this in mind,  
 And smite me not often with your sharp swerd,° *sword*  
 But hastily that it be sped.
- 290 ABR. Now farewell, my child so full of grace.  
 ISA. A, father, father, turn downward my face  
 For of your sword I am ever adread.
- ABR. To do this deed I am full sorry,  
 But, Lord, thine heast° I will not withstand. *command*

295 ISA. A, Father of heaven, to thee I cry:  
 Lord, receive me into thy hand.

ABR. Lo, now the time come, certain,  
 That my sword in his neck shall bite.  
 A, Lord, my heart riseth thereagain:  
 300 I find it not in my heart to smite.  
 My heart will now thereto.  
 Yet fain I would work my Lordës will.  
 But this young innocent lies so still  
 I find it not in my heart him to kill.  
 305 O Father of heaven, what shall I do?

ISA. A, mercy, father, why tarry ye so?  
 And let me lie thus long on this heath?  
 Now I would to God the stroke were do.  
 Father, I pray you, short<sup>o</sup> my woe, *shorten*  
 310 And let me not look<sup>3</sup> thus after my death.

ABR. Now, heart, why wouldest thou not break on three?  
 Yet shall thou not make me to God unmild.<sup>o</sup> *disobedient*  
 I will no longer let<sup>o</sup> for thee, *delay*  
 For that my God aggrieved would be.  
 315 Now hold<sup>o</sup> the stroke, my own dear child. *receive*  
 [As ABRAHAM raises the sword, enter the ANGEL, who  
 snatches it from him.]

ANG. I am an angel, thou mayst be blithe,  
 That from heaven to thee is sent.  
 Our Lord thanketh thee an hundred sithe<sup>o</sup> *times*  
 For the keeping of his commandement.

320 He knoweth thy will and also thy heart,  
 That thou drestest him above all thing,  
 And some of thy heaviness for to depart,<sup>o</sup> *remove*  
 A fair ram yonder I gan<sup>o</sup> bring. *did*

He standeth tied, lo, among the breris.<sup>o</sup> *briers*  
 325 Now, Abraham, amend thy mood,  
 For Isaac thy young son that here is  
 This day shall not shed his blood.

Go make thy sacrifice with yon ram,  
 For unto heaven I go now home.  
 330 Now farewell, blessed Abraham,  
 The way is full gain<sup>o</sup> that I must gone. *straight*  
 Take up thy son so free.<sup>o</sup> *gentle*

ABR. A, Lord, I thank thee of thy great pity  
 Now I am eathed<sup>o</sup> in divers wise. *comforted*  
 335 Arise up, Isaac, my dear son, arise,  
 Arise up, sweet child, and come to me.

3. I.e., wait for.

- ISA. A, mercy, father, why smite ye nought?  
 A, smite on, father, once with your knife.
- 340 ABR. Peace, my sweet son, and take no thought,  
 For our Lord of heaven hath granted thy life,  
 By his angel now, that thou shalt nought
- Die this day, son, truëly.
- ISA. A, father, full glad then were I—  
 Ywis,<sup>o</sup> father, I say ywis— *yes*
- 345 Full glad were I if this tale were true.
- ABR. An hundred times, my son fair of hue.  
 For joy thy mouth now will I kiss.
- ISA. A, my dear father Abraham,  
 Will not God be wroth<sup>o</sup> that we do thus? *angry*
- 350 No, no, hardily,<sup>o</sup> my sweet son,  
 For he hath sent us yon same ram *assuredly*  
 Hither down on this hill to us.
- Yon beast shall die here in thy stead  
 In the worship of our Lord alone.
- 355 Go fet<sup>o</sup> him hither, my child, indeed, *fetch*
- ISA. Father, I will go hent<sup>o</sup> him by the head. *seize*  
 And bring yon beast with me anon.  
 [ISAAC *brings him the sheep.*]
- A, sheep, sheep, blessed mote<sup>o</sup> thou be *may*  
 That ever thou were sent down hither.<sup>o</sup>
- 360 Thou shall this day die for me  
 In the worship of the Holy Trinity:  
 Now come fast and go we together  
 To my father in hie.<sup>o</sup> *haste*
- 365 Though thou be never so gentle and good,  
 Yet had I liefer thou sheddest thy blood,  
 Ywis,<sup>o</sup> sheep, than I. *indeed*
- Lo, father, I have brought here full smart  
 This gentle sheep, and him you I give.  
 But Lord, I thank thee with all my heart;
- 370 For I am glad that I shall live  
 And kiss once my dear mother.
- ABR. Now be right merry, my sweet child,  
 For this quick beast that is so mild  
 Here I shall present before all other.
- 375 ISA. And I shall fast begin to blow:  
 This fire shall burn a full good speed.  
 But father, while I stoop down low,  
 Ye will not kill me with thy sword, I trow?<sup>o</sup> *trust*
- ABR. No, hardily,<sup>o</sup> sweet son, have no dread: *assuredly*  
 380 My mourning is past.

- ISA. Yea, but I would that sword were sheathed.  
 For father, it maketh me full ill aghast.  
 [ABRAHAM *makes his offering, kneeling.*]
- ABR. Now Lord God of heaven in Trinity,  
 Almighty God omnipotent,  
 385 Mine offering I make in the worship of thee,  
 And with this quick beast I thee present.  
 Lord, receive thou mine intent,  
 As thou art God and ground of our gree.<sup>o</sup> *favor*  
 [Enter GOD.]
- GOD. Abraham, Abraham, well mote<sup>o</sup> thou speed,<sup>o</sup> *may / prosper*  
 390 And Isaac thy young son thee by,  
 Truly, Abraham, for this deed  
 I shall multiply your bothers<sup>o</sup> seed *of you both*  
 As thick as stars be in the sky,  
 Both more and less;  
 395 And as thick as gravel<sup>o</sup> in the sea *pebbles*  
 So thick multiplied your seed shall be:  
 This grant I you for your goodness.  
 Of you shall come fruit great won<sup>o</sup> *supply*  
 And ever be in bliss without end;
- 400 For ye dread me as God alone  
 And keep my commandements every one,  
 My blessing I give wheresoever ye wend.  
 [Exit.]
- ABR. Lo, Isaac my son, how thinketh ye  
 By this work that we have wrought?  
 405 Full glad and blithe may we be  
 Against God's will that we grouched<sup>o</sup> nought, *resisted*  
 Upon this fair heath.
- ISA. A, father, I thank our Lord every deal<sup>o</sup> *bit*  
 That my wit served me so weel  
 410 For to dread God more than my death.
- ABR. Why, dearworthy son,<sup>o</sup> were thou adread?  
 Hardily,<sup>o</sup> child, tell me thy lore.<sup>o</sup> *beloved*  
*confidently / mind*
- ISA. Yea, by my faith, father, now have I read,<sup>4</sup>  
 I was never so afraid before  
 415 As I have been at yon hill.  
 But by my faith, father, I swear  
 I will nevermore come there  
 But<sup>o</sup> it be against my will. *unless*
- ABR. Yea, come on with me, my own sweet son,  
 420 And homeward fast now let us gone.
- ISA. By my faith, father, thereto I un;<sup>o</sup> *consent*  
 I had never so good will to go home,  
 And to speak with my good mother.
- ABR. A, Lord of heaven, I thank thee,

4. I.e., that I think.

- 425 For now I may lead home with me  
 Isaac my young son so free,<sup>o</sup> *gentle*  
 The gentlest child above all other.
- Now go we forth, my blessed son.  
 ISA. I grant, father, and let us gone,  
 430 For by my truth, were I at home  
 I would never go out under that form,<sup>5</sup>  
 This may I well avow.  
 I pray God give us grace evermo,<sup>o</sup> *evermore*  
 And all tho<sup>o</sup> that we be holding<sup>o</sup> to. *those / obliged*  
 [Exit. Enter DOCTOR.]
- 435 DOC. Lo, sovereigns and sirs, now have we shewed  
 This solemn story to great and small,  
 It is good learning to learned and lewd,<sup>o</sup> *ignorant*  
 And to the wisest of us all,  
 Withouten any barring,<sup>o</sup> *denial*  
 440 For this story showeth you here  
 How we should keep, to our powére,<sup>o</sup> *ability*  
 God's commandments without gouching.<sup>o</sup> *complaint*  
 Trow<sup>o</sup> ye, sirs, and<sup>o</sup> God sent an angel *think / if*  
 And commanded you your child to slain,<sup>o</sup> *slay*  
 445 By your truth, is there any of you  
 That either would grouch or strive theragain?
- How think ye now, sirs, thereby?  
 I trow there be three or four or mo,<sup>o</sup> *more*  
 And these women that weep so sorrowfully  
 450 When that their children die them for.<sup>o</sup> *from*  
 As nature will, and kind.<sup>o</sup> *nature*  
 It is but folly, I may well avow,  
 To grouch against God or to grieve yow,<sup>o</sup> *yourselves*  
 For ye shall never see him mischieved,<sup>o</sup> well I know, *discomforted*  
 455 By land nor water, have this in mind.
- And grouch not against our Lord God,  
 In wealth or woe, whether<sup>o</sup> that he you send, *whichever*  
 Though ye be never so hard bestead,<sup>o</sup> *put*  
 For when he will he may it amend.
- 460 His commandments truly if ye keep with good heart,  
 As this story hath now showed you beforn,  
 And faithfully serve him while ye be quart,<sup>o</sup> *healthy*  
 Than<sup>o</sup> ye may please God both even and morn. *then*  
 Now Jesu that weareth the crown of thorn,  
 465 Bring us all to heaven-bliss.

5. Guise, i.e., as the victim of a blood-sacrifice (?).