



'KING LEAR' AS A CHRISTIAN PLAY / THEME OF REDEMPTION / KING LEAR IS MORE SINNED AGAINST <sup>THAN</sup> SINNING

In contrast with 'Hamlet' which Elton characterizes as 'a christianized version of the pre-christian Amleth story', 'King Lear' becomes a paganized version of a christian play. For J.C. Maxwell "King Lear" is a christian play about a pagan world. In the very opening of the play we are introduced into the world where Lear emerges as an all-powerful father and king. Here he is ~~not~~ not surely more sinned against than sinning. A long life of absolute power, in which he has been flattered to the top of his bent, has produced in him that blindness to human limitations and that pre-sumptuous self will which in greek tragedy so often wrecks against the altar of Nemesis. He forces his daughters to compete in a public expression of filial love. Goneril plays the game according to Lear's plan: "I love you more than words can wield the matter." Regan endorses everything Goneril says and goes even further. She professes herself an enemy to all other joys. She finds she is alone felicitate in her father's love. The witch in 'Snow White' gazes into the looking glass and repeats, "Mirror, mirror on the wall / Who's the fairest one of all?" Lear goes through a similar narcissistic ritual, and turning to Cordelia for what he thinks will be the climatic outpouring