

Therefore, Jew,  
 Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
 That, in the course of justice, none of us  
 Should see salvation; we do pray for mercy;  
 And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
 The deeds of mercy.

This conclusion, as we have seen, is directly Biblical.

I fear that the quality of Christian mercy is very much strained when it is forced into a Senecan mould, and if the reader will not take my word for it, he can see for himself that it fits no better into the Ovidian statement. Shakspeare is here writing a moral theme *De Clementia*, such as may well have been assigned him in grammar school shortly after he had turned *Ecclesiasticus*, the chief source of his theme, into Latins. Whether he turned to the *sententiae* on *clementia* and *iustitia* in the various collections including the Bible, to a formal collection of his own, or merely to the accumulated stores in his brain, the process is the same. And the process is the regular grammar school routine for writing moral themes, whether Shakspeare ever even heard of a grammar school or not. Also, all Shakspeare's sentiments here are typical of the Christian view of his age; no one of them is original with him.<sup>84</sup> The phraseology rings true to pattern, but it is not clear so far as I can see, that he has borrowed specifically from any former phrasing of these sentiments, though he has been strongly influenced by the Biblical phrasing.

It is clear, then, that Shakspeare had access to the common stock of pious platitudes of his day, and could upon occasion bestow immortal phrasing upon them. He knew how to weave them into moral themes as he should have learned to do in grammar school. He has at least the technical ability which a "learned grammarian" should have acquired in grammar school, whether in fact he acquired that ability there or not.

<sup>84</sup> If the reader has "small Latine" and plentiful time, he may find it amusing to parallel Shakspeare's *sententiae* with those to be found in the *Polyanthes* and other collections. The process is somewhat like exploring the proverbial oyster soup at a church festival, but with patient persistence he might even find an oyster.