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neither from Maastricht nor a play: claims that it was an early example of religious drama from the Netherlands were already discredited in the nineteenth century. Its language places it very much at the edge of the Low Countries, in the area around Cologne, and it has most recently been judged, by Carla Dauven-van Knippenberg, not to be a dramatic but a devotional reading text.⁴

Old Testament Plays

The Old Testament plays do not readily fall into clear cut groups with particular foci and this is a first attempt at describing them in order to discover what variety of topics caught the attention of playwrights and how they used their material for different purposes.⁵ The lack of cycle plays in the Low Countries means that a number of episodes which feature regularly in the English Mystery Cycles, French *Passions* or German *Passionsspiele*, are not dramatised. For instance, the story of the Fall of Adam and the Expulsion from Paradise has only one play 'to itself', and that was performed after a procession in Oudenaarde.⁶

Amongst the subjects chosen for Old Testament plays there are quite a few which occur prominently in other European Countries: Abraham, Joseph, Judith, are just a few examples, but there are others which seem to have stirred up interest in the Low Countries but not much elsewhere. Thus there are two plays about the Maccabees in Dutch and two procession plays in French in Lille; the only other full scale treatment of the matter is the French *La Machabée* by Jean Virey de Gravier.⁷

Some biblical figures which feature much in visual and processional material do not appear in dramatised form.⁸

In general, it can be said that these plays portray the conflict between Good and Evil with reference to a redeemer (a pre-figuration of Christ) who enables an elect people to have an insight into their sins and can thus be liberated from the clutches of evil.⁹

Naturally, the biblical stories are suitable vehicles for the illustration of moral lessons and truths, such as the two (anonymous) plays about Susanna.¹⁰

Other plays, while stressing moral lessons to be learned, connect their narratives with events in the New Testament and particularly with the Coming of Christ. Their precursor function does not prevent the development of the Old Testament material in elaborate, often allegorical, plots within which several themes are intertwined. This is the case, for instance, with the anonymous *Naaman prinche of Syrien*, based on 2 Kings