CLIMB TO CALVARY, CRUCIFIXION, AND BURIAL EPISODES IN THE CHESTER, LUDUS COVENTRIAE, YORK, AND TOWNELEY ENGLISH MYSTERY CYCLES

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PREFACE

The English Mystery cycles of the Chester, Ludus Coventriae, York, and Towneley are the only extant representative, processional, cyclic dramas in a complete form. Their plays have been examined, both individually and comparatively; however, scholars have not actually considered them both separately and comparatively at the same time. The plays from these cycles taken individually reveal certain differentiating characteristics. Their expansions and growth patterns have created traits unique to particular periods or locales because of their differences in intent. But as the plays are stripped of their various individual traits, a common core is to be discerned, that which, in actuality, merges all of the cycles into one. Each has individual identifications, but deprived of these, the cycles become essentially the same. Thus, one wishes to observe these plays at their inception, striving ultimately to derive their purpose and reason for existence. A comparison between the cycles, then, for these matters should be revelatory in determining a common origin.

Chambers believed that the growth of the Nativity and the Resurrection plays began within the Roman Catholic liturgy. He suggested that the Passion plays were, perhaps, taken from the same source and that these plays were attached

to the Resurrection. He believed that those plays which came after the Passion were legendary and apochryphal and linked the Passion with the Nativity plays, filling in, and completing the cycle. Therefore, the Passion plays should represent the link between the plays based upon the liturgy and those which were strictly vernacular. Assuming that the Passion plays (which include Christ's ministry and the events from the trial through the burial) were derived from the Church liturgy, one finds that their origin is founded in the three celebrations in the Mass which suggest actions represented in the scenes of the procession to Calvary, the Crucifixion, and the burial. Therefore, one concludes that these are the scenes which need to be examined from the point of view of their liturgical characteristics and their expansive growth.

The growth patterns of these plays can only be determined by a study of the nature and the number of expansions. The times at which these individualities occurred is most important in determining how the extension in time has influenced the natures of the plays. In addition, the time in which development ceased is also significant. The present dating of a play is based upon its form at the point at which it contains no further sign of expansive growth. However, to base a date upon the time at which the play was written down in a certain manuscript with a given

date is not accurate. Thus, by considering the characters of the separate scenes from the time of their earliest existence, through periods of change and amplifications, to final stages, one may recognize a pattern of developing growth that is significant.

Deep appreciation is expressed to Dr. Charles E. Walton for his suggestion of the topic used in the present study and for his critical comments offered in a context of encouragement. Gratitude is expressed also to Dr. June J. Morgan for her reading of the manuscript and for her criticism.

The writer is indebted to those who offered invaluable assistance in translating tropes and plays: Mrs. Jerri Sears of Herington, Kansas; Sister M. Veronica of Wichita, Kansas; and Mrs. Edna Froning of Lyons, Kansas. Also, Miss Leslie Edwards of Kansas University was extremely kind in helping the author to obtain necessary materials.

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CHAPTER I

THE EVOLUTION OF THE LITURGICAL PLAY

The development of the observance of the passio within the Roman Catholic Church took place over a period extending from the third or fourth centuries to the twelfth century. During the later stages, the celebration of the passio became the extra-liturgical passion play written in Latin first, and then in the vernacular. From the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, the play developed into true dramatic art as it underwent expansive growth at the hands of the clergy and laymen alike. The vernacularized play obscured the early liturgical form, but not beyond recognition. The similar liturgical actions, impersonations, dialogue, characterizations, motives, and dramatic technique (or lack of it) existent in the early plays, is to be witnessed in the expanded forms. Since knowledge of the evolvement of these characteristics aid one in detecting their presence in the developed crucifixion scenes of the passion, it is necessary to survey the major steps involved in the telescopic expansion of the liturgical drama.

The first known traces of dramatic action occur in the ceremony of the Adoratio Crucis. In its embryonic state, this ancient practice, still performed today in the Catholic Mass on Good Friday, was performed in Jerusalem in the third

or fourth century.[1] Services were held in the Chapel of the Cross at the Church of Martyrium of Golgotha and at Holy Sepulchre.[2] The reverential ceremony took place as the Bishop stood with his deacons and held the Cross while they, with the worshippers, made obeisance to it.[3] Together, the clergymen and worshippers retraced the steps of His passio in commemoration of the events leading to His death. Eventually, each major event was celebrated on a separate day, and the result was preserved in the liturgical calendar.[4] The Adoration of the Cross was not introduced into the West until the seventh or eighth century when it was accepted as a fixed part of the Mass.[5] A reënactment of the procession held in Jerusalem took place in Europe from the eighth century onwards, before and after Mass on Good Friday. It began at the Chapel of St. Lawrence, where the Cross was taken from a chest under the altar. From there, the Pope proceeded to the Church of the Lateran to obtain the Host;

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[1]E. K. Chambers, The Medieval Stage, II, 17; Karl Young, "Home of the Easter Play," Speculum, I, 84; The Catholic Encyclopedia, IV, 536.

[2]Young, Drama of the Medieval Church, I, 87.

[3]Loc. cit.

[4]Loc. cit.

[5]Ibid., p. 102.

he, then, moved to the Church of the Holy Cross for Mass. After Mass and Vespers, the procession was again retraced, now in reverse order, and the Cross deposited under the altar.[6]

The dramatic import through action is easily discernible in the papal procession endorsed by Rome; however, such a procession was representative only of what was done within the individual church. This ceremony just described was a part of the service of Holy Week on Maundy Thursday, marking the celebration of the Last Supper.[7] The Thursday service began with the two lessons or _lectiones_, followed by a tract, a prayer, and a tract.[8] For each day of the Holy Week, the passion was read from one of the four Gospels. On this day, the story was taken from St. John.[9] Following the reading on Thursday was the _Adoratio Crucis_.[10] The _Adoratio_ was, in turn, logically followed by the extra-liturgical _Despositio_ and the _Elevatio_, representing the burial of Christ and His Resurrection, respectively. Chambers dates the inception of these two ceremonies into Western Europe at sometime during

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[6] _Ibid._, p. 120.

[7] _Ibid._, p. 22.

[8] Hardin Craig, _English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages_, p. 44.

[9] Charles Mills Gayley, _Plays of Our Forefathers_, p. 15.

[10] _Ibid._, p. 16.

the eleventh century.[11] The Depositio or commemoration of the burial occurred after the Mass and before Vespers on Friday, as the Consecrated Host was buried. The Elevatio or the removal of the Host from the sepulchrum on Easter morning represented the Resurrection.[12]

The important matter for consideration, here, is the action within the ceremony as it developed. The raising of the Cross, the adoring of it, and the burial were significant, symbolically. The same tendency toward action, which characterized the various parts of the service, also existed in the singing of the passio, but in the form of impersonation rather than as symbolism. It is not known how the parts were distributed, but Young explains that characters were represented by either two choruses, or a chorus and a cantor, or two cantors, or a group of cantors.[13] Later, he set forth the conversion of the singing of the passio into the passion play itself.[14] First, he explains that the singing of the passio was highly moving and that the very added effect of

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[11] Chambers, op. cit., II, 18.

[12] Ibid., p. 114.

[13] Young, op. cit., I, 202.

[14] "Observations on the Origin of the Medieval Passion Play," PMLA, XXV (1910), 309-354.

impersonation caused a change in vocal intonation. Eventually, different pitched voices were assigned to different characters, and as emotionalism was more freely expressed, the passio was converted into the passion play.[15] The alternative singing of these several roles in different tones of voice took place before the thirteenth century.[16]

Another part of the service which was also sung was the planctus Mariae, or the lamentations of Mary.[17] This ceremony was sung in Church after Matins on Good Friday, creating dialogue as the number of characters increased to include not only the Virgin, but, also, Christ, and John.[18] The planctus of the thirteenth century was part of the service of Good Friday and part of the Tenebrae held after Matins on each of the three days at the end of the week.[19] In the service, candles representing the grief of the twelve apostles for their own sins were extinguished;[20] however, one remained

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[15]Craig, op. cit., p. 20.

[16]Samuel B. Hemingway (ed.), English Nativity Plays, p. vii.

[17]Chambers, op. cit., II, 9.

[18]Loc. cit.

[19]Craig, op. cit., p. 25.

[20]Chambers, op. cit., II, 6.

burning to symbolize the unwavering faithfulness of the Virgin to Jesus.[21] Quite logically, the planctus was attached to the Adoratio Crucis. Thereafter, the action and the symbolism in the Adoratio and the Despositio, the impersonation in the singing of the passio and the emotionalism in the planctus eventually were to combine into an expressive dramatic form. Chambers believes that the actual play was created by the addition of materials around the highly dramatic and emotional planctus.[22] However, since a lament hardly offers more than an expression of emotion and no possibility of action or interaction between characters, it does not seem probable that liturgical drama began in this manner. Rather, the action provided in the story of the passion itself as the various parts were being sung, afforded at least the opportunity for acting. When the possibility was realized and the narratives were written for actual performance, the planctus were added for the purpose of expansion and to enlarge upon the part of Mary, the Mother, as she became increasingly important within the Church.[23]

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[21]Craig, op. cit., p. 20.

[22]Chambers, op. cit., II, 20.

[23]G. C. Taylor, "The English Planctus Mariae," MP, (April, 1907), 636.

Although all of these services and parts to these services contain elements evident in the passion plays, the only immediate source for the action is the story from the Gospel. It cannot be said that one or the other of the four Gospels serve directly for one play, however, for each play is a combination of the four Gospels, thus, being derived from the celebrations of the entire Holy Week, during which time, the Passion of the Lord is to be read four times. On Palm Sunday or the Second Passion Sunday, the reading is from Matthew 26: 36-75; 27: 1-60. Tuesday bases the reading on Mark 14:32-72; 15: 1-46; Wednesday on Luke 22: 39-71; 23: 1-53. On Good Friday, the singing parts are taken from John 18: 1-40; 19: 1-42.

One of the earliests examples of the result of combining these readings is the Ludus Breviter De Passione from Carmina Burana.[24] Although not dated, it serves as an example of the liturgical play in its simple form using only the Planctus ante nescia with no other planctus. It, also, affords a point of comparison with an expanded play which is based on it, called the Ludus De Passione.[25] Young relates that "Meyer assigns the writing of the MSS. to about the year 1225; Schumann infers that they were

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[24]Text taken from Young, op. cit., I, 514-516.

[25]Ibid., pp. 518-533.

produced toward the end of the thirteenth century."[26] He further states that Schumann attributes the possible origin to Bavaria, at the monastery of Benedikbeurer. Schumann cannot prove his contention; however, it is more than coincidence that this play and Das Benedikbeurer Passionsspiel are almost identical, the latter being expanded only slightly beyond the Ludus De Passione. The extant Benedikbeurer is partially in German and contains more elaborate planctus.[27]

Of a nature similar to the Benedikbeurer is the vernacular play, the St. Gall Passionsspiel, the date for which is uncertain.[28] This play is further expanded, utilizing more planctus of a more elaborate nature, written entirely in German with the mere exception of the planctus. Its stage directions and name tags are in Latin. To state definitely that this play is of a later date on the basis of these facts is not a sound practice, since it is known that many plays in all stages of development existed side by side.[29] Suffice it to say, however, that it is one which shows the most development in comparison to the other liturgical

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[26] Ibid., p. 686.

[27] Eduard Hartl (ed.), Ludus paschalis sive de passione Domini, pp. 36-44.

[28] Ibid., pp. 111-131.

[29] G. R. Kernodle, From Art To Theatre, p. 66.

plays available for study in the present investigation.

Each of these liturgical plays has a distinct pattern in the arrangement of events. Further, each of the cycle plays of the Crucifixion, although now expanded, reveals a similarity in the order of events to one of the two vernacular plays, the Benedikbeurer or the St. Gall. Thus, the cycle plays are merely an expanded form of the pattern set forth in one or the other of these two early plays.

CHAPTER II

THE LITURGICAL NATURE OF THE CHESTER CRUCIFIXION SCENES

In the four great English cycles, the Chester Crucifixion scenes are most reminiscent of the early liturgical plays, showing the least amplifications. They are amazingly free of coarse humor, political satire, and the influence of the homilitic sermonizing characteristic of the period after 1318.[30] At this time in England, the establishment of the Corpus Christi celebration underwent vast revision at the hands of the clergy and the various guilds. For some unknown reason, the Chester plays remained free of many of the influences of change from within and without the Church. In spite of the simple nature of these plays, certain dates seem to contradict the apparent youthfulness of the cycle. The last record of the Chester performance occurs in 1575, the date of the Late Banns.[31] However, it is entirely possible that the performances extended beyond this period, since the dates of the manuscripts

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[30] Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages: 1300-1660, I, 122.

[31] Salter, Medieval Drama in Chester, p. 48.

are later. Five separate manuscripts are extant, each one described by Greg.[32] The D. (1591) is the oldest full manuscript in existence. The W. (1592) of the British Museum Add. MS. 10305 is a small manuscript written by George Bellin. B. (1604) of the Bodleian MS. S. C. 175 is perfect and signed "Guleilmem Bedford." H. (1607) in the British Museum MS. Harley 2124, is complete, and is the one which Deimling has used as the basis of the text from which this study was made. The 1607 text is believed by Deimling to be the earliest in spite of the fact that it was written last.[33]

Acceptance of Deimling's conclusion creates confusion unless considering Greg's theory that there must have been some type of register as that in York in which all the copies of these plays were kept and drawn from for purposes of copying.[34] Also, the history of the cycle reveals that the plays were kept by the Church until 1531.[35] Thus, it is possible to see how an early copy of the play in the case of the Crucifixion and its auxiliary plays were confined in

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[32]W. W. Greg, Bibliographical and Textual Problems of the English Miracle Plays, p. 26.

[33]Deimling, The Chester Cycle, II.

[34]Greg, op. cit., p. 26.

[35]Salter, op. cit., p. 95.

their simple form over the centuries. At the same time, Greg's theory provides the basis for an examination of the plays as being close to the original source.

It is typical of the early plays from the Church to show a lack of smooth transition between events.[36] The incidents taken directly from the Bible are only the highlights of the happenings at the time of the Crucifixion. Thus, when depicted literally in the play, the action is not always complete. The same characteristic is evident in the plays translated from the Latin.[37] The expansion of action is the result of the attempt to fill the gaps in time between events, but the process is not immediate. Only after several revisions do the vernacularized plays show continuity. The Chester cycle shows a definite line of demarcation in time between the events, since the action is completed, apparently, with little attempt made to relate one event to the next. The connecting link, in this case, is the chronological order of the events. This order in the Chester play is almost identical to that in the Benedikbeurer Passionsspiel.[38]

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[36] Craig, op. cit., p. 191.

[37] "Medieval English Acting," Theatre Notebook, p. 83.

[38] Eduard Hartl (ed.), Ludus paschalis sive de passione Domini, pp. 36-44.

the possibility that this liturgical play is the source of The Chester Passion is suggested by Craig.[39] His suspicions are valid because comparison of the two works cannot be made on the basis of phrasing since the Benedikbeurer play is primarily in Latin with some German passages. The only possible similarities occur in the Latin stage directions in both plays. These Latin directions definitely show a repetition of words and phrases and a continuity of thought, the only difference being the result of the expanded form of the Chester play. That which firmly ties the two plays together is their structure. A comparison of the incidents and the order of events discloses a common pattern, serving, therefore, not only to validate this similarity, but, also, to provide a basis from which to examine the expansions of the Chester plays. The following collation is based upon the events of the Benedikbeurer play, since it is the earlier text.

The procession to Calvary is not included in the action of the liturgical play. Therefore, the scene at the Cross begins as Jesus addresses the weeping women of Jerusalem. In the following stage direction, Christ is on the Cross: "Tunc Iesus suspendatur in cruce, et titulus fiat 'Iesus

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[39]Craig, op. cit., p. 38.

Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum.'"[40] An insertion in the Chester play, at this point, includes the actual event of the nailing of Christ to the Cross. The inscription having been placed on the Cross by Pilate, the commending of Mary unto the care of John, the giving of the vinegar to Christ, and Christ's relinquishing the Ghost, each succeed in the same order in both plays. The planctus of Mary joined by John shows variation, mainly in the liturgical laments sung by John. A stage direction, here, indicates that an hour should be allowed for the completion of his part.[41] At this point, the Chester cycle substitutes a lyric based on the idea of the planctus. A second deviation occurs, the result of expansion. For example, in the Benedikbeurer play, Mary's lament implies the presence of the other Maries when she asks them to share in her grief. The Chester play includes the characters of Mary Magdalene and Mary Solome who respond to Mary in one stanza each. Common to both plays is the cry of Jesus, "Ely, ely! lama sabactany!" and the response of the Jews.[42] The response in the Benedikbeurer play appears, however, after Pilate has placed the inscription on the Cross.

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[40] Loc. cit.

[41] Ibid., p. 41.

[42] Deimling, op. cit., ll. 745-748; Hartl, op. cit., p. 43.

In the Chester sequence, the same incident is used, but presented in a different order and with the part of the Jew assigned, more specifically, to the chief priest, Caiaphas. In the form of a taunt, the Jew paraphrases the Bible, saying, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the Cross."[43] Expansions of these words are used in jeering at Christ throughout the later plays.

The episode of Longeus's thrusting a spear into Christ's side is common to both plays. However, the part in the Chester version is in a distinct rhyme scheme from that used by the scribe composing from the Benedikbeurer model. In the earlier play, the words of Longeus are in German, except for "Vere filius dei erat iste!"[44] Also, in German is the scene including the burial which consists briefly of two speeches, one by Joseph of Arimathea, the other by Pilate. However, these lines, too, appear in a second rhyme pattern and, apparently, are not a part of the original Chester interpretation of the liturgical play. Perhaps, the translator for the Chester version did not understand German, since he omitted both scenes couched in that language.

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[43] Matthew 27; 40; Mark 15: 30; Luke 23: 37.

[44] Hartl, op. cit., p. 43.

Those events in the Chester play stemming from the Benedikbeurer Passionsspiel grow beyond the bounds of the earlier version into eschatological scenes. To prove that these scenes are later additions and not supplemented at the time the first copy of the play was made, one must analyze a certain pattern clearly revealed in the construction of the text. The rhyme scheme of the Chester Crucifixion is primarily preserved in two forms. The aaabaaab form is predominant, supplemented with a rhyme of aaabcccb. Craig has defined both forms as early examples of the Chester cycle which were carried into the sixteenth century.[45] It has been suggested, furthermore, that the two were used interchangeably, because the aaabaaab rhyme pattern was too difficult to sustain, causing the composer to resort to the aaabcccb pattern whenever he ran out of rhymes.[46] One would be inclined to accept this explanation were it not for the fact that the two different rhymes, independent of one another, comprise two separate parts to the play. It is interesting to note that all of the incidents discussed in relation to the Benedikbeurer Passionsspiel are written in the aaabaaab rhyme scheme except for those including Longeus

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[45] Craig, op. cit., p. 160.

[46] A. W. Pollard, English Miracle Plays, p. xxxvi.

and the events of the burial. Significantly, the same rhyme pattern is carried throughout the play in the roles of the four Jews who are instrumental characters in torturing and nailing Christ to the Cross. One must recall that the action in the Benedikbeurer play moved from Jesus's speaking to the weeping women to the scene of His hanging on the Cross. This lapse in time is accounted for in the Chester play by the scene of the four Jews. Since the action displayed in the scene at the Cross in singular, one assumes that the author of the aaabaaab rhyme pattern had used another play which he inserted into the framework of the liturgical play. Since the Benedikbeurer Passionsspiel was in German, or more specifically, of a Bavarian origin, it is convenient to believe that the Jews' scene has its source probably in the same background. Such a tendency is reinforced by a knowledge that the Germans enjoyed utilizing Jewish dramatis personae "to sing gibberish, exploit cunning, and perform obscenities."[47] This information is certainly little enough to base an assumption upon, but it does reveal a German characteristic.

All other matter beyond the aaabaaab rhyme scheme occurs in varying rhyme patterns which are dispensible to the

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[47] C. M. Gayley, Representative English Comedies, VI, xxxvi.

play. Consideration of these additions begins with the rhyme schemes attached to the parts given to the original characters in the earlier play. In the case of the four Jews, the rhyme scheme is consistently aaabaaab until one Jew may share a verse with an intruder. When he does, the rhyme becomes aaabcccb. Characters who share dialogue with the Jews are Caiaphas and Pilate. In each case, the words link the thought from one scene to the next, in an apparent attempt to create a smooth transition lacking in the earlier liturgical play.

The remaining expansions in the aaabcccb rhyme pattern fulfill a didactic and eschatological purpose. Here, either parts of dialogue from the original characters have been expanded or new characters have been inserted. For example, the lament of the Virgin Mary is expanded beyond the original lyrical planctus; Secundus Latro has one additional stanza beyond the original in the second rhyme pattern. Fresh characters are Annas and Mary Jocobi whose speeches use only the aaabcccb rhyme scheme. Although mentioned previously, Longeus does not become a part of the play until the appearance of these characters. These changes taken together, then, suggest what appears to be a major revision in the section of the Crucifixion scenes based upon the earlier Benedikbeurer text. Since the characters of Longeus and Jesus have had their parts enlarged beyond the aaabcccb

rhyme pattern by stanzas which are confused, each one unique, it is logical to assume that there must have been at least one lesser revision made beyond that indicated above.

The way to Calvary is a short scene. All of its lines follow the aaabcccb rhyme pattern with the exception of one stanza in which Simon of Cyrene says,

> To bear no cross is my intent,
> For it is not with my assent
> That this Prophet has such judgment,
> Who is full of the Holy Ghost!

Caiaphas answers:

> Simon, if thou be impudent
> Thou shalt have harsh punishment.
> To bear this cross thou had best consent
> And cease from this vain boast.[48]

Although these lines cannot stem from the Benedikbeurer play, the aaabaaab pattern of this stanza would indicate that it was written at the same time as those composed from the original source. None of this action is seen in the liturgical play. Even though the lines above hardly seem expansive enough to comprise a scene of action, they are sufficient if considered in the context of a dumb-show performance. The cause of its brevity, then, may be explained by the fact that much of the pantomimic action in the early Church plays

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[48] Deimling, op. cit., ll. 409-416.

was often described in the rubric-like stage directions.[49] Even with the addition of four stanzas in the aaabcccb pattern, the nature of the play remains the same. These lines apparently may have been added as they were deemed necessary to expand the thought. The characters are Jesus surrounded by Jews in addition to the two thieves farther up the road carrying their crosses, this event described in the stage direction. None of these characters, however, is assigned any dialogue. Caiaphas and Annas are the two Jewish priests who speak as they mock Jesus.

The same type of expansion from pantomimic action is evident in the burial scene. In total, the roles are those of Joseph of Arimathea, Nichodemus, and Pilatus. It has been stated earlier that the parts of Joseph and Pilatus included in the Passionsspiel do not resemble those in the Chester play. The scene is, possibly, from the Biblical version in a combined form from the Gospels. The lines in the aaabaaab rhyme pattern, apart from the stanzas of mixed rhymes, form a complete play with the allusions to the main events of the burial as contained in the Bible. Pilate is omitted from the dialogue, considering only the

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[49]George R. Kernodle, Room Art to Theatre, p. 66; V. M. Roberts, On Stage, I, 96; Young, op. cit., I, 517.

early segment. The simple play, thus extracted, may be observed in its compact form:

Ioseph of Aramathea
To Pilate, Brother, will we gone,
you and I togeather alone,
to ask his body of our fone,
if that it be thy read.
A Sepulchre I wott ther is one,
well graved in a stonne;
he shall be buryed, flesh and bone,
his body that is dead.

A! swet Iesu! Iesu! swet Iesu!
that thou must dye, full well thou knewe!
lord, thou graunt vs grace and vertue,
to serve the in our lyfe!
That they to thy Blisse renew
All that ever to thee be true!
for Emperour, kinge, knight ne lew,
with thee they dare not stryve.

Nichodemus
Sir Iosephe, Brother, as well I se,
this holy prophett is geuen to thee;
some worship he shall have of me,
that is of might most.
ffor as I leev, by my luteye!
very godes sonne is he;
for very sightes men may se,
when that he yeeld the ghost:

ffor the sonne lost his light,
Earthquake made men afright,
the Roch that never had cleft
did cleve then, as men might know.
Sepulchers opened in mens sight,
dead men rysen ther by night;
I may say he is god Almight,
such Signes that can show.

Therfor brought here have I
an hundreth pound of Spicery:
mirhe, Aloes, and many mo, therby
to honour him will I bringe;
ffor to Balme his swete body,

in Sepulchre for to lye,
that he may have on me mercy,
when he in heaven is kinge
Amen.[50]

The action of this embryonic play is completed in one scene rather than two, since the dialogue omits the scene at Pilate's throne, merely implying the action that will take place. The only locale in the scene is at the grave. Joseph laments, and Nichodemas explains the events which have preceded, but which have not been depicted on the stage in the previous Crucifixion scene. Such events include the miracles and the earthquake following Christ's death, events that were most popular in later Italian dramatizations.[51] Various mixed rhyme schemes mark the points of expansions. The first two stanzas of the play are in the aaacbaac pattern and are, undoubtedly, a remnant of some religious lament, beginning "A, Lord God!" and "Alas!"[52] In a stanza marked aaababab, the only one of its kind in the play, Joseph creates a need for a new sede, as he approaches the throne of Pilate. Pilate and the

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[50]Deimling, op. cit., ll. 829-836, 861-892.

[51]Allardyce Nicoll, The Development of the Theatre, p. 74.

[52]George C. Taylor, "The English Planctus Mariae," MP, IV (April, 1907), 611.

Centurion converse in the course of one stanza of aaabcccb rhyme scheme, deciding that Joseph can have the body of Christ if He is dead. Since this part is in the rhyme scheme found in the revision of the previous procession and Crucifixion scenes one assumes that it must be of the same period and perhaps, even by the same hand. The stanza above is, then, necessary for a complete thought and must represent a corrupt version of the aaabaaab scheme. In the next stanza, the idea shows expansion from another Gospel source when Pilate expresses fear that Christ might rise on the third day. Joseph assures him that none of his actions can stop such an event. Here, another rhyme is used in the form of aabcbabc. Another verse of aaabaaaa is then added, expanding the part of Nichodemus and suggesting that Joseph be the one to approach Pilate to ask for the body of Christ. Thus, the play is complete. The simple four-stanza play indicated by the aaabaaab pattern has added only one stanza of the aaabcccb rhyme scheme to introduce the characters of Pilate and the Centurion into the dialogue. The manner in which the various succeeding stanzas were incorporated cannot be determined. Suffice it to say that the text was highly amended and revised, whether during several periods of composition or during three different times (as in the case of the Crucifixion). If the latter be the case,

several individual sources and poor amenders were necessarily used. However, to know which explanation is correct is impossible.

As previously stated, the liturgical nature of these plays suggests an effort made to maintain original didactic intent. Because of their preservation, these early remnants continue to reflect an element of unspoken action, a characteristic of the early Church plays. A reconstructed staging of these plays reveals the proportions to which the drama had attained in Chester at the time when these plays were written down in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.[53]

It is known that the Chester plays were processional as revealed by the often quoted words of David Rogers in a Breviarye, written around 1609.[54] According to this account, the plays were performed on Whitsun Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday:

> They were divided into 24 pagiente which was the cariage or place which they played in: . . . these pageantes or cariage was a highe place made like ahowse with ij rownes beinge open on the tope the lower rowme they apparrelled & dressed them selues, and in the higher rowme they, played, and they stoode vpon 6 whelles And

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[53] Greg, op. cit., p. 26.

[54] Chambers, op. cit., II, 136.

> when they had done with one cariage in one place they wheeled the same from one streete to an other . . . . "[55]

Salter thinks this account is inaccurate because of the poor accoustics undoubtedly associated with a pageant wagon "open on the tope."[56] He also suggests that the lower room was not really used for a dressing room, but for a place in which to keep costumes and properties.[57] His statements, however, do not seem well-founded, since there is no proof to show that these wagons should have been anything other than what Rogers has described; therefore, accepting Roger's description, one assumes that these plays were portrayed on a six-wheeled wagon with two rooms, one for acting and one for the use of actors behind the scenes. The upper room, or acting area, had no roof.

Since the performance was on a processional wagon rather than a stationary stage, it is probable that, because of lack of room on the wagon, the actors used the open area in front of the pageant wagon for the scenes of the procession on the way to Calvary. By so doing, they would achieve more realism especially since the stage directions also indicate that the procession was actually moving along the road. As

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[55] Loc. cit.

[56] Salter, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

[57] Ibid., p. 70.

the actors locate themselves on the stage, Annas shouts instructions to have the thieves placed on either side of Christ. Since the Cross is the central property on the stage, it is logical that it be located in the center of the stage, as it would have been placed in the nave of a Church setting.[58] The crosses for the two thieves are located on either side of the Cross of Christ and are set forward in the same plan.

The tools needed for the Crucifixion, described by the Jews in their dialogue, are minimal. They include a "hammer," "Neiles," and a "rope." The raising of the Cross is not described, but that it was achieved without the aid of ropes and pulleys seems probable because of the evident moans and groans assigned to the Jews laboring under great strain. The lack of any reference in stage directions or dialogue to this action leads one to believe that the raising of the Cross was accomplished without the aid of any especially constructed devices. The hole was probably already in the stage, so that tools for digging were unnecessary. The only other piece of equipment on the stage was a ladder needed by the character who was to nail the "table" on the "Tree" and, later, to lower the body of Jesus from the Cross.

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[58]Chambers, op. cit., II, 83-84.

As previously pointed out, this burial scene was expanded to include a sede for the throne of Pilate. There is further evidence to show that the sede of royalty was often set above the others.[59] Such must have been the case in this play, since a reference is made to "Sei Pilate in hye! / as you sitt in you Sea."[60] The burial, also, required the presence of a sepulchre large enough for at least three people; the Body of Christ, Joseph, and Nichodemus, assuming that the actual entombment took place on stage. The stage directions are sparse, at this point. Nichodemus only mentions that he has brought "Spicery, mirhe, Aloes, and many mo . . . ffor to Balme his swete body, / in Sepulchre for to lye."[61] Then, it is assumed that the Body of Christ is placed in the sepulchre and that Nichodemus must next enter the tomb in order to "balme his body." The direction in which the tomb was arranged on the stage is not discussed in extant records of the later period. In the Church, however, the sepulchre was located to the left of the Cross near the altar.[62] More specifically, it was set to the east

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[59]Craig, op. cit., pp. 126-127.

[60]Deimling, op. cit., ll. 832-838.

[61]Ibid., ll. 886-890.

[62]Chambers, op. cit., II, 83.

or north.[63] Since the positions on the stage were derived from the ones used in the Church, they appear to remain somewhat traditional, and there is no reason to believe that the pageant wagon stage was arranged in any different order.

How the stage tomb was constructed is conjecture. However, until the time of the twelfth century, it was constructed, apparently, out of two arches.[64] In shape, it resembled a mound. A later development was the sarcophagus shown with the lid either half of wholly open, thus permitting Christ to rise.[65] Salter thinks that the tomb might have been of the same structure as the hill used in the Shepherd's Play.[66] He also mentions that this mount was located beside the wagon, because of the lack of space on the wagon. One readily sees that to have located, on the wagon, all of the action present from the procession through the Crucifixion to the burial would have been quite a feat. Sedes were needed for Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, Mary, John, and the three Maries, Joseph and Nichodemus, and Longeus. The area at the foot of the Cross was the space in which

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[63] Nicoll, op. cit., p. 65.

[64] Ibid., p. 64.

[65] Loc. cit.

[66] Salter, op. cit., p. 67.

much of the action took place. The torturing sequence was probably accomplished in the platea in front of the Cross.[67] In such a case, the Jews would have had no need for a separate sede. Hence, the inclusion, on the stage, of a burial mount of the proportions needed would have presented quite a staging problem.

The records show that the plays of the Flagellation and the Crucifixion were combined, since the Stringers and Ironmongers guilds, respectively, could not meet the expense of production. This amalgamation, one of the last changes to affect the cycle as a whole, took place between 1540-1575, the dates of the Early and Late Banns.[68] In the first, the Flagellation and the Crucifixion are separate plays; in the version of the Late Banns of 1575, they are combined into one. This condition presents the possibility that two pageant wagons could have been used in performance. That two stages were used at times is verified in the production of the preceding trial as the actors went from one pageant wagon to the next between Pilate and Herod.[69] Also, Cheney mentions

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[67]Nicoll, op. cit., p. 68.

[68]Salter, op. cit., p. 48.

[69]Pollard, op. cit., p. xxvi.

that two wagons often appeared together.[70] If two separate stages were used in this case, the second might have carried the burial mount. A second possibility is suggested by Salter's theory concerning the hill beside the pageant wagon in the Shepherd's Play. It is possible that the burial mount, here, might have been similarly arranged.

The information derived from an examination of the production of the Chester Crucifixion scenes reveals a development contradictory to that indicated in the text. The liturgical qualities of the plays suggest early composition. The staging practices, however, present greater complexity. At the same time, the plays are dated much later in history than the nature of their composition would indicate. Such a circumstance creates a problem in dating. Some have attempted to date the earliest formation of the cycle on the basis of information derived from the proclamation of 1543, which places the date between 1268-1277.[71] Pollard dates the composition around 1340-50, close to the time of the original York plays.[72] It is not far wrong, however, to consider the possibility of an even earlier date of

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[70] The Theatre, p. 165.

[71] Gayley, Plays of Our Forefathers, pp. 128-129.

[72] Pollard, op. cit., p. viii.

composition for the Crucifixion scenes in this case. The individual styles, methods of composition, and varying stages in developing dramatic technique observed in all cycle plays indicate origins that are distinct and of separate times. Also, Chambers has shown the formation of the cycles to have begun with, first, the Nativity and Resurrection.[73] The rest were added separately to form the complete panorama. This theory necessarily places the inception of the Crucifixion at a time earlier than that assigned to the rest of the cycle plays. Thus, one proposes an early date of composition.

The aaabaaab rhyme scheme included throughout the sequence from the procession to the burial indicates the liturgical qualities which reflect the characteristics of the Benedikbeurer Passionsspiel. Since its composition is assigned to approximately 1225, the Chester Crucifixion could have been written any time between this date and 1268, the earliest time in which it might have been incorporated into the cycle.

The first major revision is indicated by the aaabcccb pattern which, again, is evident in all of the Crucifixion scenes. It creates new roles and expands the dialogue

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[73]Chambers, op. cit., II, 77.

producing a dominant air of didacticism. This rhyme pattern further creates a greater fluctuation in the action between the scenes. The apparent attempt toward expansion and better drama must have presented many staging problems, since in 1375 Sir Henry Francis records the first outdoor performance.[74] It is possible that the first major revision was made sometime before this date. According to Salter, it suggests stationary performance,[75] in no way lessening the possibility of a revision's having been accomplished at this time. Rather, a stationary stage or acting area would have been the simpler solution to the problems presented by the pageant wagon as previously discussed.

The remaining changes in the play are merely remnants of religious lyric verse attached to existing stanzas. They could have been added during separate periods of time or simultaneously by a poor amender making use of several sources. Records after 1375 are lacking until 1422 when there occurred a quarrel between the Ironmongers and the Carpenters concerning who should gain the assistance of some of the other various guilds. The jury decided that the Ironmongers alone should perform in the Crucifixion and the

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[74] Ibid., II, 132.

[75] Salter, op. cit., p. 47.

others should play in the Flagellation of Christ.[76] The 1467-1468 records of the city of Chester show that the Ironmongers, Bowyers, Fletchers, and others had joined in a performance of the combined plays of the Flagellation and Crucifixion.[77] Certainly, this event would have presented the prime opportunity to execute changes in the text, since the amalgamation also created a necessity for transition between the plays. Internal evidence showing any tampering at the point where the two plays met is, however, lacking. Consequently, one can only be certain that the text contains later revisions of an eschatological nature and that the opportunity for change was present in 1468.

The contradiction between the uncomplicated appearance of the plays and their more complicated nature indicated by staging serves to support the contention that they are early and are highly preserved through several centuries of performance. Because they lack any of the timely earmarks of convention, the possibility of exact dating is limited. The earliest period of composition is, certainly, between 1225-1268; a reasonable time, since the first major revision was likely accomplished before 1375. The text was, then,

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[76] F. M. Salter, Chester Play Studies, p. 8.

[77] Loc. cit.

complete except for minor alterations which could have been the result of tampering in 1468; however, that premise is uncertain.

CHAPTER III

THE LUDUS COVENTRIAE CRUCIFIXION SCENES: A COMPOSITE OF ECCLESIASTICAL PRECEPTS

The Ludus Coventriae procession, Crucifixion, and burial scenes are quite similar in nature to the same scenes of the Chester cycle. Similarly, they depict a reverential attitude with no reference to social or political events. The only non-reverential attitude in any of these plays is that shown by the soldiers (who are referred to as Jews), the enemies of Christ according to the Church. The Jews are necessarily cruel during the act of the Crucifixion, but certainly not to the degree of cruelty represented by the soldiers in the York or Towneley. Many of the gruesome details are omitted in comparison to these plays, and the scene is considerably shorter. Pilate is the Biblical Pilate, not a tyrant as in later productions. His part is expanded only by the Biblical narrative when he once taunts Christ, telling Him to come down from the Cross if He is the Son of God, thus, still maintaining the tone of the story as it is told in the pulpit. Such is the tone of the entire sequence of plays. More specifically, to read the plays is like reading the Roman Catholic Missal. The thought is identical in each and is perfectly preserved in the plays,

even though the sources, revisions, and expansions are numerous.

In the case of the Ludus Coventriae, an unusual situation exists. The major incidents, as such, follow the same order of events as those in the St. Gall Passionsspiel.[78] However, only the order of events is followed; the text of these three scenes derives material for the common incidents from several different sources. That the St. Gall version is used as a basis is certain. The similarity is too much of a coincidence when one considers the many passions written during the Middle Ages, each of which treats the subject in a different manner, using the events in various orders. However, the highly expanded trope is used merely as a pattern, not as a direct source. With this information, it is possible for one to examine the texts of the three scenes more knowledgeably.

The rhyme in the procession scene is consistently of the abab pattern. It appears first in the tumbling meter. The succeeding material is in the simple quatrains. The first incident in this second verse form involves Simon, who, although he is imposed upon, agrees under duress to carry the Cross of Christ. Veronica, then, turns to chastize

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[78]Eduard Hartl, op. cit., pp. 36-44.

the people and to plead in sympathy for Jesus, Who cannot see for the blood and sweat in His eyes. The same incident occurs in the Legenda Aurea of Jacobus de Varagine (1260-1270) translated from Latin in the Smaller Vernon Collection between 1350-1375.[79] One cannot be certain that this was the source directly used, however, since Veronica is a saint in the Catholic Church, and a clergyman might have used the incident without reliance on a particular reference.[80] Nevertheless, Chambers suggests the possibility of the Legenda as the source of the incident and dates the availability of the text as 1275.[81] Gayley, also, admits the strong possibility of a direct relationship.[82] With the combining of the two parts, the text of the short procession scene is complete.

The Crucifixion scene is an extension of the previous procession scene, the two being presented as one continuous play. The rhyme maintains the abab pattern until l. 853, when it is replaced by the aaabcccb pattern. The meters are irregular, and little accurate information can be derived

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[79] Carl Horstmann (ed.), The Early South English Legendary, pp. 3-97.

[80] Gayley, op. cit., p. 326.

[81] Chambers, op. cit., II, 126.

[82] Gayley, op. cit., p. 326.

from them without first learning something about the sources from which they come.

The similarity between the St. Gall Passionsspiel and the Ludus Coventriae in their orders of events was at first obscured by the fact that, in the later play, there is a constant repetition of the Jew's taunt to Jesus, who say, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from that tree."[83] Closer scrutiny reveals a pattern, however. After Christ is nailed to the Cross (the first incident in the St. Gall trope), there follows a taunt. The thieves are hanged, and the dice are cast in the second common incident, succeeded by the lament of Mary and a prayer by Jesus. Next, there occurs a taunt by Annas in the Coventry version which follows the same incident in the St. Gall play. Repeated is the familiar taunt given by a Jew in both plays. A scene ensues common to both works, concerning the conversation between Christ and the thieves beside Him; thereafter, there is a lament by the Virgin Mary. Thus, in this brief span of events, the incidents are arranged to include action, taunt, action, lament; action, taunt, action lament, and so on. The effect is to play upon the emotions to create the greatest degree of sympathy for the Lord's plight. The expanded taunt was used, thus, to heighten dramatic effect.

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[83] James O. Halliwell (ed.), Ludus Coventriae, A Collection of Mysteries, ll. 764, 791, 851.

The described pattern would indicate that the author had a conscious plan and that the play as it now exists was written at one composition time--at least, insofar as judgment to the present is based on the abab rhyme pattern. However, it is, perhaps, more accurate to refer to the "author" as the "compiler," since the verse forms indicate a use of different source materials. On the other hand, since the verse forms are varied, to use them as a test of style is invalid. The tumbling meter ranges from lines of twelve or more syllables to some of eight, showing a wide variation even within the same core of material, and indicating, possibly, that one man combined the material from two sources. The same double quatrains used for the material based on the Legenda Aurea in the last scene are utilized again for the short sequence involving the conversation between Christ and the thieves. Thus, it appears that the material of the double quatrains is taken from that early work to fit into the pattern of the St. Gall play, along with certain interpolations for increased dramatic effect.

After the conversation with the thieves, the sorrowing mother expounds upon Christ's kind acts of asking forgiveness for the Jews who crucified Him, and of His showing mercy to the thief. At the same time, she asks why He has ignored her, a question which serves to fulfill two purposes: first, her inquiry opens the way for a conversation with Christ; secondly,

its points to the silent grief borne by Mary, indicated, also, in the Missal. Following, then, is a series of laments based upon the Mass of September 15, called the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary.[84] This service is also sometimes used on Passion Friday in place of the ferial Mass.[85] The words in the play are in no way the same, but in reading the Missal, one is impressed by the exact sequence in the thought pattern. For example, each stanza, no matter who the speaker, duplicates the thought pattern of the service, beginning with the Entrance Hymn and continuing to the Alleluia Hymn. The thought is so exact and similar, here, that the relationship is unmistakable. In comparing the incidents of the St. Gall trope with the incidents in the play, one notes that there was one event misplaced, that being the commending of Mary to the care of John. The reason is apparent when one observes that the Mass uses, as its Gospel text, John 19:25-27, in which the persons around the Cross are enumerated and wherein occurs the incident in question. The only deviation in the Ludus Coventriae from the Biblical passage in the Missal is the omission of Mary, the wife of Clopas.

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[84] Mary Knoll Missal, pp. 1069-1073.

[85] Ibid., p. 841.

The material based on the Missal is characteristic of the late drama. Its incorporation into the play creates pity in direct contrast to the tragic element. It becomes an integral part of the formerly described taunt-lament pattern. The suspicion that the technique is of a late period is confirmed by the information provided by two prominent scholars. Foster has noted certain scholastic and theological amplifications throughout the cycle which she ascribes to an addition made in 1468, the date of the composition of the manuscript.[86] Dodds suggests not an addition, but rather an amalgamation of five distinct cycles in honor of the Virgin in 1468.[87] Each suggestion has supportive value for the contention that the play is from a relatively late period.

The predominating abab rhyme scheme is replaced after l. 853 with the aaabcccb pattern encountered in the Chester plays. However, the common occurrence does not necessarily suggest a relationship between the two cycles since the rhyme pattern was used widely.[88] Nevertheless, one cannot deny the possibility of kinship. Beginning at line 854, the first

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[86] John E. Wells, A Manual of Writings in Middle English, 1050-1400, p. 564.

[87] Loc. cit.

[88] Craig, op. cit., p. 160.

three stanzas are of confused rhyme patterns showing an attempt made to join the two sections. The conversations of Cayphas, Annas, and Pylat lead from the abab pattern into the confused rhyme schemes and, thus, serve as a link into the aaabcccb pattern. The stanzas which are a part of this latter pattern derive from at least two sources. The first are marked by the presence of a wheel and the bob and conclude with the words of Christ: "Nunc consummatum est."[89] The material which then follows is based on the first eight stanzas of the Sequence Hymn, again, from the Mass of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary.[90]

The Latin stage directions in the fragment of the second rhyme scheme possibly indicate an older work. In addition, Foster thinks that the aaabaaab rhyme scheme in the cycle is a remnant of an earlier form of the cycle.[91] One can only say that the aaabcccb is similar. However, the original age makes little difference, since the play in its present form is not the result of an original work now amplified, but, rather, a composite of materials. The sequence must, therefore, be considered in its entirety.

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[89] Halliwell, op. cit., 1. 808.

[90] Missal, p. 1071.

[91] Wells, op. cit., p. 564.

All of the materials drawn from seem to find direction especially in the greater glorification of God. Such a purpose combined with an instructive intent is strong in the burial scene. Again, in this section the core of the material is from a developed play in the abab rhyme scheme. The action stemming from this familar rhyme pattern is complete until the opening of the episode with Longinus. Jesus is buried by Joseph and Nichodemus as Mary stands by, which action occurs in a fragment predominantly in the ababbcbc rhyme scheme. Here, the stanza forms are corrupt and the names of the characters are in older Latin spellings. The section, therefore, represents an older rendition of the play. Both sources, although conceived by apparently different hands and of different periods, are so similar in nature as to convince one that each must have been written for the same instructive purposes.

Matters of staging are particularly important to this drama, since the plays were designed to communicate to the people on sacred matters. In writing the script, someone obviously took care to expand the explanations for the benefit of the actors and property men. It has been suggested that, because of its unusual completeness, the text was written to be read rather than acted.[92] In addition

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[92]W. W. Greg, Bibliographical and Textual Problems of the English Miracle Cycles, p. 143.

to an advanced, close attention to detail, the plays have been expanded in pantomime beyond the meager proportions of the undeveloped liturgical drama. The technique is creatively developed to achieve a heightened dramatic effect. Action founded upon Biblical narrative is often described in stage directions and performed without dialogue. For example, the following stage direction describes three simultaneous scenes:

> . . . here þe sympyl men xul settyn up þese ij crossys and hangyn up þe thevys be þe Armys and þer whylys sal þe jewys cast dyce for his clothis and fytyn and stryvyn and in þe mene tyme xal oure lady come with iij maryes with here and sen Johan with heme settyng hem down A-syde A-fore þe cros. oure lady swuonyng and mornyng and leysere seyng[93]

One notes that this implied pantomimic action serves as a background for the central event projected in dialogue, a technique used in later Elizabethan drama. There is no evidence with which to explain the method used in staging this action, however. Although the three-leveled stage was used in France, records do not indicate its use in England.[94] Any split stages were of an upper and lower deck only.[95] The single comment concerning the conditions in Coventry

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[93]Halliwell, op. cit., l. 769.

[94]Kernodle, op. cit., p. 92.

[95]Ibid., p. 93.

suggests that the plays were performed on a stationary setting.[96] It is evident that the stage was arranged with sedes for its various characters, since a stage direction indicates that Pilate must descend from his scaffold. The sedes were many, and the stage was obviously crowded, facts revealed, first, upon consideration of the cast needed for the procession to Calvary: the mocking Jews who follow from the trial; the weeping women of Jerusalem walking alongside Jesus with His Cross; Veronica; the two thieves with their crosses; the four soldiers; Simon; and some "sympyl men" who must hang the thieves. In the background are Pilate, Annas, and Cayphas. Mary and Joseph must also be present in the crowd, although they are not specifically mentioned until the Crucifixion scene. Furthermore, a large section of the stage is taken up by a set piece representing the temple which Joseph and Mary enter.

The tendency for attention to detail was undoubtedly reflected in elaborate costuming since, throughout the Middle Ages, a particular delight was taken in the apparel of the actors.[97] For example, one stage direction refers to the robe of Christ, first, as a "cloth of sylk" and, then, as

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[96] Chambers, op. cit., II, 126.

[97] Sheldon Cheney, The Theatre, p. 166.

"pe purpyl cloth."[98] This "owyn clothis" indicates a change of costume from the extravagant robe to something less pretentious, and when "xul pei pulle ihesu out of his clothis," He will need a suit of white skins.[99] Also, Play XXXIII refers to the Jews as "knightes," indicating the need for a contemporary costume designed for warfare, i. e., a suit of armor, or perhaps more appropriately, a suit of mail.[100]

Play XXXIV includes the burial and the guarding of the sepulchre within one continuous action. The stage in the burial scene is divided into two areas, one being the throne room of Pilate, the other the setting for the tomb. The area for the sepulchre is necessarily large enough for both Joseph and Nichodemus to enter in order to annoint the Body. A huge stone is also rolled to the entrance, a detail not mentioned in any of the other cycle plays. The Cross is still nearby, however, since the scene is defined as Calvary and the two men must climb ladders in order to lower the Body between them.

In the burial scene, the marvels and wonders after the death of Christ are discussed in retrospect. Thus, that

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[98] Halliwell, op. cit., l. 677.

[99] V. M. Roberts, On Stage, p. 99; Nicoll, op. cit., p. 75.

[100] Ibid., p. 76.

these events were actually depicted is doubtful. Such a moving episode would probably have been described in a stage direction, at least. The devices were available, however. The prologue warns against the terrible earthquake and thunder for the Play of Doomsday.[101] Perhaps the desire to maintain a reverential atmosphere at the time of the death of Christ prevented the staging of such fearful happenings.

Much effort has been expended in an attempt to assign forms of the abab rhyme pattern, each to a particular period. However, the result has not been entirely successful. Too many contradictions arise. For example, the simple quatrains have been identified as older verses, which are amplified by tumbling meter.[102] Nevertheless, Patch has pointed out that the prologue (written partially in quatrains and representing the older writing period) does not include the Simon and Veronica incidents written into the play in single quatrains.[103] The double quatrains (ababbcbc), also, create confusion, since they do not appear consistently with a particular form.[104] The Latin and English stage directions

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[101] H. C. Schweikert (ed.), Early English Plays, p. 70.

[102] Howard R. Patch, "The Ludus Coventriae and the Digby Massacre," PMLA, XXXV (1920), 335.

[103] Ibid., p. 334.

[104] Ibid., p. 335.

appear variously in the double quatrain sections, and there is inconsistency between subject matter and verse forms.[105] With such confusion, verse forms can act only as a device for identifying the fragments, not for dating them.

It has been stated earlier that the plays in their present form are a compilation of several sources. Each segment defined by a particular rhyme scheme is dependent upon the next. The plays, altogether, are comprised of five parts represented in the two forms of the abab rhyme scheme, the double quatrains, and the two forms of the aaabcccb pattern. Dodds has defined five segments of the entire cycle which she considers to represent parts of whole cycles.[106] Block agrees that the plays are composite in nature.[107] Her contention is, however, that two series of passion plays with particular emphasis on Mary were combined. It has been proved that the two Mary series exist in the plays presently in question. The first is represented in the abab pattern, the second in the aaabcccb rhyme scheme. To reconcile these theories is possible if one considers that the two cycles combined were, in turn, composites themselves at the time of

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[105] Ibid., p. 330.

[106] Wells, op. cit., p. 564.

[107] Loc. cit.

their fusion. An explanation begins to emerge as one considers the description of the plays of the Crucifixion and the Burial in the prologue:

Primus vexillator.

In the xxx. pagent thei bete out Crystes blood,
And nayle hum al nakyd upon a rode tre,
Betwen ij. thevys, i-wys they were to wood,
They hyng Cryst Jhesu, gret shame it is to se.
Vij. wurdys Cryst spekyth hangyng upon the rode,
The weche ze xal here alle tho that wyl ther be,
Than doth he dye ffor oure allether good;
His modyr doth se that syth, gret mornyng makyth she,
ffor sorwe she gynnyth to swowne.
Seynt John evyn ther as I zow plythe,
Doth chere oure lady with al his mythe,
And to the temple anon forth rythe,
He ledyth here in that stownde.

Secundus vexillator.

We purpose to shewe in oure pleyn place,
In the xxxj. pagent, thorwe Godys mythe,
How to Crystes herte a spere gan pace,
And rent oure lordys bryst in ruly plyth.
ffor Longeus that olde knyth, blynd as he was,
A ryth sharpe spere to Crystes herte xal pythe,
The blod of his wounde to his oyn xal trax,
And thorwe gret meracle ther hath he syth.
Than in that morn,
Crystes soule goth downe to helle,
And ther ovyrcomyth the fend so felle,
Comfortyth the soulys that therin dwelle,
And savyth that was fforlorn.[108]

The description of the burial considers only portions of subject matter in the abab rhyme scheme. The Crucifixion, here represented, includes only the first of the sections.

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[108]Halliwell, op. cit., p. 14.

with Mary and her long lament composed in the abab patte
it, then, omits much of the material of the aaabcccb pattern, including only Mary and John departing to the temple. The omitted part contains the characters of the four Jews and Jesus, along with the second lament of Mary based on the Seven Sorrows. If the play at the time in which the prologue was written had been composed of two parts, certainly all of the second part of the aaabcccb pattern would have been used. An explanation seems possible if one is to consider the suggestion, based on the prologue, that the plays were performed by strolling players.[109] For example, being the property of nomadic actors, it is entirely possible that some of the leaves of the manuscript could have been lost. Thereafter, in an effort to restore the play, similar parts were borrowed from other cycles to form a complete text. Mary and John at the temple might originally have been part of the abab rhyme scheme of the play which was lost and then replaced with a borrowed section written in the aaabcccb pattern. The replacement might well have been expanded, then, to include Jesus and the four Jews and the lament of Mary before the time in

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[109]Gayley, op. cit., p. 136.

which the second portion was incorporated into the present play. The theories of both Dodds and Block fit this pattern, then, if one assumes that strolling players possessed a text of a composite nature, lost much of it, and supplemented it with another composite text. Thus, the first cycle described in the prologue consisted of the two forms of the abab rhyme scheme. The second cycle, used as a supplement, was comprised of the abab pattern with its variances, the double quatrains, and the aaabcccb rhyme pattern.

The existence of two parts to the cycle is again supported by information derived in an effort to discover the origin of the Ludus Coventriae cycle. All scholars agree with, or do not refute, the contention of Brink, who assigns the origin to the Northeast, of the middle region of England.[110] Kramer agrees with Brink, but also, reveals later additions of material taken from the Southeast Midland region.[111]

Coventry records do not help, since they offer no information concerning the composition of these plays. It is generally agreed, however, that the cycle with its theological characteristics represents a late period of

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[110] History of English Literature, II, 2950.

[111] Sprache und heimat das sogen Ludus Coventriae, p. 6.

composition. Both segments have characteristics of well developed cycles. The judgment is not based necessarily on the subject matter, but in the evidence of the advanced type of dramatic composition and the methods of representation. The contrasting themes of tragic and pity, the advanced use of pantomime, the carefully defined instructions in the stage directions, the developed use of costume, and the complex stage settings, all seem to point to a more conscious form of drama. Thus, it is not far wrong to date the combining of the two cycles during the first half of the fifteenth century. Gayley sets the date of composition at the turn of the century.[112] Pollard agrees wholly.[113] It has been stated that the date attributed to the final additions to the text is one for the writing of the manuscript in 1468. Although in its present form, the text may have been reworked, it is not likely that any new materials were added since, as it has been pointed out, the incidents are not separable. Therefore, one concludes that the play was composed in its present form at one composition time, and so inserted into the manuscript.

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[112]Gayley, op. cit., p. 91.

[113]A. W. Pollard (ed.), English Miracle Plays, Moralities and Interludes, p. xxxviii.

The fragments of various cycles represented in the Ludus Coventriae were, apparently, of similar design, content, and purpose. One recalls the remarkable likeness of the entire sequence (especially the episode of the Crucifixion) to the pattern established in the St. Gall trope. Furthermore, it has been shown that both of the laments form two separate cycles and are based each on a section of the same Mass. Therefore, the writers of the cycles were dependent upon a similar outline for composition. Certainly, the plays were written by ecclesiastical minds. The control came from within the Church. Each of the segments has a common purpose which transcends the intent to honor the Virgin Mary. All of the materials drawn from seem to find a purpose in the greater glorification of God through praise of Christ for His endured suffering, the marvels of His greatness shown through the terrible events following His death, and the humble fear that each man may please Him in some way. Thus, the instruction of the laity in the message of the Missal was the guiding factor in the formation of a vigorous, highly organized drama.

CHAPTER IV

THE EXPANSIVE SECULARIZATION IN THE YORK CRUCIFIXION SCENES

The composition of the episode concerned with the Passion of Christ in the events after His trial in the York cycle must be considered within the individual play, since each has its own history, independent of the other. In each of the three plays, Christ Led up to Calvary (XXXIV), The Crucifixio Cristi (XXXV), and Mortificacio Cristi (and burial of Jesus) (XXXVI), the versification is unique. However, in each case, it is consistent throughout the respective play, so that one may not rely on a test of these variations in considering possible revisions. Instead, it is the expansions within the areas of characters and subject matter that must be considered in the context of external evidence.

In her dissertation, Lyle has based the cycle upon the Northern Passion written during the fourteenth century.[114] However, to claim that every play was definitely based upon the same source is doubtful, since each is the result of

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[114] The Original Identity of the York and Towneley Cycles, pp. 3-37.

many influences. In testing the assumption that the Crucifixion sequence is so based, one discovers that the play of Christ Led up to Calvary is the result of the Passion, in part at least. But the influence is apparent only in Scene ii in which one finds evidence of many changes. Since the Northern Passion may be identified as the basis of the major events in the order in which they occur, it is assumed that this part is the beginning of the play and that everything else has been added after the fourteenth century.

In the case of the York plays, it is fortunate that there is evidence provided by the records of the York Memorandum to aid in the dating of the textual history of these revisions. In 1415, Roger Burton compiled his famous list of the plays to be performed.[115] Afterwards, he made a second list, which, although undated, is supposed by Frampton to have been composed at least before January 31, 1422, or possibly in 1420.[116] In reference to the present play, Burton's first list includes the following information:

> To (undours). Jesus, sanguine cruentatus, portans crucem uersus Caluariam. Simon Sereneus, Judei

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[115] Lucy T. Smith (ed.), York Mystery Plays, p. xix.

[116] Frampton, "The York Play of Christ Led up to Calvary," PMLA, LIII (July, 1941), 109.

> angariantes eum vt tolleret crucem, Maria mater Jesu, Johannes apostolus intimans tunc proxime dampnacionem et transitum filii sui ad caluariam. Veronica tergens sanfuinem et sudorem de facie Jesu cum flammeolo in quo imprimitur facies Jesu; et alie mulieres lamentantes Jesum.[117]

In his second list, Burton includes "Sherman. Ductio Christi et ostensio Veronice."[118] Frampton indicates the difference in the reference to Veronica reveals a revision accomplished after the appearance of the 1415 list and before 1420.[119] The play, in its present form, the one which occurs in the Register, uses Mary in place of Veronica, indicating even further revision. Smith has reason enabling her to date the Register between 1430 and 1440.[120] Therefore, the last revision may have been made sometime between 1420 and 1430.

In a further consideration of the play, one notes that the scene division is significant. Several scholars have shown that the Towneley Passion plays have been derived,

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[117] Smith, op. cit., p. xxv.

[118] M. G. Frampton, "The Date of the 'Wakefield Master,'" PMLA, LIII (March, 1938), 103.

[119] Frampton, "The York Play of Christ Led up to Calvary," p. 109.

[120] Smith, op. cit., pp. xviii, xxviii.

in many instances, from the York cycle.[121] Such is the case with the Towneley play, The Road to Calvary, which, in the York cycle, occupies the position of the second scene in Play XXXIV. Since the Towneley play omits the first scene, Frampton concludes that Towneley borrowed from York before the York play had been expanded.[122] Furthermore, because the Veronica incident is present in the Towneley play, he is sure that it must have been borrowed between 1415 and 1420, Burton's dates which suggest a change in the handling of the incident.[123] The important point is that the York play was changed after 1415 by the addition of the first scene. With this new material, an alteration in the character of i Miles occurs, timely in its significance. This character assumes the attitude of a tyrant who calls

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[121] Frampton, "The York Play of Christ Led up to Calvary," pp. 198-204; Gayley, op. cit., p. 164; F. A. Foster, "Was Gilbert Pilkington Author of 'Secunda Postorum'?" PMLA, XLIII (1928), 133; M. C. Lyle, "The Original Identity of the York and Towneley Cycles--A rejoinder," PMLA, XLIV (1929), 325; J. H. Smith, "The Date of Some Wakefield Borrowings From York," PMLA, LIII (1938), 595-600; F. W. Cady, "Towneley, York, and True-Coventry," SP, XXVI (July, 1929), 386-400; G. Frank, "On the Relation Between the York and Towneley Plays," PMLA, XLIV (1929), 313-319; F. H. Miller, "The Northern Passion and the Mysteries," MLN, XXXIV (February, 1919), 88-92.

[122] Frampton, "The York Play of Christ Led up to Calvary," p. 200.

[123] Loc. cit.

for peace, yet rants and raves before the common man.[124] The play commences with the words of this soldier couched in alliterative verse which Davidson has defined as a late composition:[125]

i Miles. Pees, barnes and bachillers þat beldis here aboute,
Stirre, noȝt ones in þis stede bur stonde stone still,
Or be ȝe lorde þat I leue on, I schall gar you lowte,
But ȝe spare when I speke youre speche shall I spille
Smertly and sone.[126]

This tirade is one usually accorded to Pilate, who, in the Towneley cycle, is greatly enlarged to represent the ruling class in an era of political tyranny. However, it is characteristic of the writer of this play and of the Crucifixio to maintain the character of the personae in the stereotype established by the Church. Pilate is, therefore, depicted as having a mild-mannered temperment as the Church would have him represented.[127] Only the soldier has no identity in the Biblical narrative, and so he is freely presented as a cruel, heartless protagonist. His part, as such, apparently has been inserted into the text, since the verse assigned to him is also unique, nor is it numbered

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[124] Chambers, op. cit., I, 139.

[125] English Mystery Plays, p. 229.

[126] Smith, op. cit., Play XXXIV, ll. 1-5.

[127] G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England, p. 26.

with the stanzas of the play. Since Scene i had been added by 1420, this addition must have been made sometime after that date and before the date of the Register (1430), at the same time in which the Veronica incident had also reached its final proportions.

An extension of the unfeeling quality of the soldiers is further manifest in their attitudes toward the three lamenting Maries. After making a series of laments, the weeping women are ordered by these soldiers: "Go, hye þe hense with alle, / Or ille hayle come þou here."[128] When the women do not heed this warning, the soldiers, then, respond with the following words:

> ii Miles. Ther quenes vs comeres with þer clakke,
> He schall be seued for þer sake,
> With sorrowe and with sore;
> iii Miles. And þei come more such noyse to make,
> We schall gare lygge þame in þe lake,
> Yf þei were halfe a skore.[129]

Following this proclamation, the women flee. The coarse nature of such humor is not representative of any earlier play, but, in fact, stems from a period which Gayley refers to as a middle period of writing; in addition, this same type

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[128] Smith, op. cit., ll. 195-200.

[129] Ibid., ll. 211-216.

of humor extends forward eventually to be included in the late period represented by the tyrannical figure.[130] The scene also reflects that same irreverent kind of joking to which Owst refers in his discussion of the jocular tales used in sermons around 1440 or 1450.[131] The irreverance is manifest, again, in the repeated allusion to Christ's "sawes." But the derogation is never so strong as in the jeering comment of the soldier in his reference to the "fole kyng."[132] Comparing Christ to a fool reduces Him to an object of condemnation for "sawes" which, according to the OED, are foolish untruths of a harmful nature. Owst is further helpful in revealing that the attitude of the medieval preacher toward the fool was one of bitter sarcasm.[133] The complaint of the preacher concerns "their shameful words and oaths, their indecent stories and comments that provoke laughter at the banquet table."[134] Furthermore, the character of the fool in the sermon may be found, again, in the works of Chaucer and in Piers Plowman, demonstrating

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[130] Gayley, op. cit., p. 154.

[131] Owst, op. cit., p. 166.

[132] Smith, op. cit., l. 28.

[133] Owst, op. cit., p. 12.

[134] Loc. cit.

that his type was a prevalent topic in the literature written during the second half of the fourteenth century.

Not to be overlooked, also, is John's reference to Pilate as a "busshoppe."[135] That which one assumes to be a term of respect, is, in actuality, a reference to the clergymen of the fourteenth century held in disrepute by many because of corruption within the Church.[136] In fact, one learns that the attacks of the clergy upon its own members were unrestrained, even in the medieval sermons.[137] Therefore, it is not unique, perhaps, for John to refer to Pilate (now representative of the corrupt state) as a bishop. Several expansions of a secular nature which allude to a contemporary unrest within the Church and state, are commented upon by Gayley:

> The subjects [he names several plays which are highly vernacularized] are such as might reasonably have been used for an expansion of the cycle to accomodate the increasing number of guilds in York, at a time after the more important and obvious religious events had been dramatized.[138]

Gayley does not mention, however, Play XXXIV in his discussion;

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[135] Smith, op. cit., l. 107.

[136] Collier, The History of English Dramatic Poetry and Annals of the Stage, I, 187.

[137] Owst, op. cit., p. 218.

[138] Gayley, op. cit., p. 154.

nevertheless, this play contains the same alliterative quality typical of these plays written in the same period. Thus, the conclusion is that all of the defined characteristics of the late period may be dated no earlier than 1415-1422, the time in which Scene i was probably incorporated into the text. The addition of the character of i Miles indicates an even later revision after 1422, and before 1430.

Expansions occurring in the Crucifixio are not so pronounced. Hence, one thinks that this play very possibly may have been written and acted during the early or middle 1300's, since it reflects the simplicity which characterizes the style of that period. It is certain that the date of composition was before 1378, in which period occurs the first record of a Corpus Christi performance at York.[139] Thus, the play was probably originally written much earlier in the century, basing one's judgment on Chamber's explanation of the growth of the cycles.[140] He places the inclusion of the Crucifixion scene in a third position, next to that of the Resurrection. Smith shows that the plays had already been in progress for many years previously.[141]

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[139]Wickam, op. cit., I, 122-123.

[140]Chambers, op. cit., II, 77.

[141]Smith, op. cit., p. xxxii.

Although the play is simple in its form, it contains evidence indicative of various periods of development. One of these is its apparent emphasis upon time. Synonyms for "quickly" are numerous, to the point of being distractions. The emphasis on time in this sequence is more prevalent than in any other place in the entire cycle, stemming, perhaps, from the convenient fact that Christ was nailed to the Cross at noon in the Biblical account and died there three hours later. For this reason, it would appear that the noon hour was designated for the completion of the Crucifixion scene, about which the actors are constantly being reminded. An important consideration, here, concerns a record associated with a problem of insufficient time for the plays to be performed in 1399, resulting, perhaps, in a limiting of the number of stations to twelve.[142] An emphasis upon time during this period must have been written into these plays and incorporated into the texts as a part of the plays. For the next one-hundred and fifty years, records indicate a vigorous activity.[143] York later boasted sixteen stations, all of the plays being performed there in one day, beginning

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[142] Loc. cit.

[143] Chambers, op. cit., I, 168.

at 4:30 a.m.[144] A premium must have been placed upon time, therefore, throughout the remainder of the history of the York performances, for one is constantly reminded that the performers "must be done by noon."

The York Crucifixio play is a unified whole, an expansion of a unit of action which, in other cycle plays concerned with the Crucifixion, is a short scene within a play. The expansion, here, retains a reference to men of position and rank, but does not enlarge upon the obvious social implications. It contains a dramatic realism, but is naive in its depiction of detail. The play is, therefore, one which partakes of the nature of an early play which, obviously, had been reworked.

The rhyme scheme is of the Northern septenar, one of the early verse forms employed in putting Latin verse into English.[145] Davidson, in his study of this form, reveals that it was used during the time of King John, (1167-1216),[146] especially in political poems.[147] Suffice it to say tha

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[144] Ibid., p. 138.

[145] Davidson, op. cit., p. 163.

[146] "King John," The Universal Standard Encyclopedia XIV, 4939.

[147] Ibid., p. 227.

this unique verse form represents an earlier period of composition. One must recognize, also, the outstanding bard-like quality of this verse, which demands an oral reading for its premium effect. On this point, Davidson comments:

> We may believe that, harp in hand, the bard still recited the warlike deeds of the fathers in the alliterative measures of the Old English, until the church poets furnished him with ballads and pious songs, formed, . . . upon the Latin septenar. These were sung with the accompaniment of the harp in a recitative delivary, imitated, it may be, in part from the rhythmic intonation of the church service.[148]

The author of the York Crucifixio using the early Northern septenar, thus, relied upon previous models in designing this representation for his own audience, in order that it might achieve a maximum benefit in oral performance. The rhythmic quality of the verse is, in part, that which constitutes the simple, uncomplicated style. One cannot assume that the play is undeveloped, however, but that its embryonic qualities have been retained in spite of its revisions. Its simplicity was probably retained purposely and enjoyed, not only for its recitative qualities, but, also, for its religious implications. One recalls, for

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[148]Davidson, op. cit., p. 228.

example, the Coventry effort to retain Pilate in the characterization established by the Biblical narrative. Although expansions occur within the York play, a deeply religious tone is always present. Such a tendency is natural, since York was a prominent and influential religious center during the Middle Ages.[149]

Scholars usually think that the York Crucifixio is a coarse and grotesquely realistic depiction, crudely simple in its dramatic form.[150] However, this supposition is not entirely correct, because the play is advanced in its dramatic form and impressive in its simplicity. Its purpose, in reality, dictates its form, as the full impact of the salvation of humanity is achieved through the representation of a grotesquely tortured Christ.[151] The principle involved is the same as the one later to be defined by Wordsworth in reference to Gothicism; i. e., it is by means of horror and shock that one's imagination is awakened and transported into the realm of the supernatural. Although Gothic implies much more, its basic principle is used in the developing

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[149]Craig, op. cit., p. 159.

[150]Nicoll, op. cit., pp. 27, 78; Cheney, op. cit., p. 144.

[151]Prosser, Drama and Religion in the English Mystery Plays, p. 251, 31.

concepts of realism in the late writing displayed at York.[152] It is not accurate to say that such detailed realism was original in York, however, for it was more highly developed there especially for the purpose of dramatic presentation. A comparison of lines from York with those in the Northern Passion is revelatory, showing at once that the Passion is merely descriptive of horror:

> To þe bores a leiden is armes swere,
> To lok yef þei wer þer to mete.
> Als þei lokeden of him þo,
> His armes mith noth3 com þer to;
> Bi a fot with oute lesing
> Ne mitht his honde come to þe boring.
> þe Ieues seith3 þat ilke þing,
> Anon þei werin in discordig,
> Ham was loth othir bores to make.
> Ropes þei gonnen take,
> A didin a rope on ocuche honde,
> þe blod barst out for streite bonde;
> On cuche half þe bodi þei gon drawe,
> Til a mitht is hondes to þe hide also,
> Lithe fro lithe didin also.[153]

The similar lines from the York are as follows:

> iii Mil. It failis a foote and more,
> þe senous are so gone ynne.
> iv Mil. I hope þat marke a-misse be bored.
> ii Mil. þan muste he bide in bitter bale.
> iii Mil. In faith, it was ouere skantely scored;
> þat makis it fouly for to faile.
> i Mil. Why carpe 3e so? faste on a corde,
> And tugge hym to, by toppe and taile.

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[152] Nicoll, op. cit., p. 80.

[153] Frances A. Foster (ed.), The Northern Passion, ll. 1501-1516.

iv Mil. Owe! þis werke is all vnmeete,
This boring muste all be amende.
i Mil. A! pees man, for mahounde,
Latte noman wotte þat wondir,
A roope schall rugge hym doune,
Yf all his synnous go a-soundre.
ii Mil. þat corde full kyndely can I knytte,
þe comforte of þis karle to kele.
i Mil. Feste on þanne faste þat all þe fytte,
It is no force howe felle he feele.[154]

The lack of pity shown by the soldiers of York heightens the emotional impact and creates a vigorous depiction in its shocking reality. This characteristic is representative of late writing, the author of which is commonly referred to as the "York Realist."[155] His hand has been recognized, but it has not been identified. However, one learns that a petition was made to the Mayor and the Council of York to allow the combining of the two plays (Nailing to the Cross and Raising of the Cross) into one single play called the Crucifixio Cristi, a request which was granted after January 31, 1422.[156] Thus, it is certain that the play was reworked in 1422 and, at that time, reached its present form, since it does not reveal any further signs of later

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[154]Smith, op. cit., Play XXXV, ll. 107-114, 127-136.

[155]J. W. Robinson, "Art of the York Realist," MP, LX (May, 1963), 241.

[156]Frampton, op. cit., p. 198.

revision. Obviously, the year 1422 marks the time when the "York Realist" was at work.

The realism typical of the York cycle occurs during a period characterized by amalgamations of plays, additions of scenes, and expansions of themes. The culmination of one-hundred and fifty years of vigorous activity in the Corpus Christi productions had not yet appeared.[157] Because the city was particularly active in this festival, the plays were variously rearranged to permit greater participation. As a result, the transformation of scenes into full plays became a unique practice in the York cycle. For example, in each of the other English cycles, the scenes of the nailing of Christ to the Cross and the mortificacio (that episode which includes all of the events following the hanging of Christ) are a part of the same play; yet, the burial scene is a separate play. However, in York, the nailing of Christ to the Cross appears as a separate play; in York, the Mortificacio is, combined with scenes of the burial. Even so, the events do not vary from those traditionally presented. All of the incidents of the York Mortificacio (and burial) are also to be found in the St. Gall trope. For example, the St. Gall Passion has for a character

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[157] Chambers, op. cit. I, 168.

a "puer" upon whom Longeus calls for a sword. The York has for a character a "Garcon" whose part is to offer Christ the vinegar. The roles are different, but the personnages and their positions in the two plays are similar. Furthermore, these are the only two plays of the burial in which a boy is included in the personae. The French nametag, garçon, is probably not a remnant from a French play. Rather, the influence of the French courts was often evident in the titles assigned to the characters in medieval plays, especially in those of an early period.[158] Smith's identification of the Gospel of Nichodemus with the passion group and with Play XXXVI in particular has been generally accepted. She bases her conclusions on the evidence that Longeus appears in both works. However, in the space of four lines, the Gospel mentions only that Longeus was a blind knight who thrust a spear into the heart of Christ.[159] No mention is made of his ever having regained his sight. However, in the St. Gall version, Longeus is allowed more space in the action when he does regain his sight, for he realizes that he has killed his Lord and, then, begs forgiveness, all in one stanza. This same action occurs in

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[158]Gustav Franson, Middle English Surnames of Occupation: 1100-1350, p. 24.

[159]William Henry Hulme (ed.), The Middle English Harrowing of Hell and the Gospel of Nichodemus, ll. 625-628.

the York play.

One character of the Gospel of Nichodemus who does not appear in the St. Gall trope is Nichodemus. However, his presence is clearly evident in the Northern Passion and in all of the English cycle plays. This character was a common one, and references to him might have derived from several sources. Also, in the Northern Passion one finds that both Longeus and Nichodemus are characters. Even so, this work is not close to the York play, since only ten of York's twenty-one incidents are to be found in the Passion. Again, it is evident that the source of this York cycle play is a combination of common subject materials, the basic unit of which is an older liturgical play.

In the same Play XXXVI, the major expansion beyond the St. Gall version occurs in Scene i. In the Burton list of 1415, one notes the omission of this scene from Burton's description of the play:

> Crux, due latrones crucifixi, Jesus suspensus in cruce inter eos, Maria mater Jesu, Johannes, Maria, Jacobus, et Solome. Longeus cum lancea, servus cum spongea, Pilatus, Anna, Cayphas, Centurio, Josep (ab Armathia) et Nichodemus, deponentes eum in sepulcro.[160]

The burial scene was probably performed, therefore, separately before this date. In Burton's described play, the crucifixion

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[160] Smith, op. cit., p. xii.

of the thieves is the logical event, chronologically, with which to open a play follows the Crucifixio. However, the addition of Scene i creates a change in time in Scene ii. Pilate and the priests, Cayphas and Annas, are discussing the reasons for Christ's sentencing and, in so doing, are reviewing the trial for the benefit of the spectator. Christ is already upon the Cross, and the men refer to Him. To hang the thieves at the beginning of Scene ii is not out of place; therefore, in the York play, they are already on the stage, hanging when the second scene begins.

From Burton's first description, it is clear that this first scene was not a part of the York cycle before 1415. After this time, however, during preparation for its incorporation into Play XXXVI, it must have been derived from two plays. But the continuity, realism, and instruction to " . . . devoyde all þis dynne here þis day,"[161] are indicative of the hand of the "York Realist." Thus, one feels safe in surmising that the play was combined from two scenes sometime around the year 1422; the play shows no evidence of having been revised after this date.

Since the York events of the procession, crucifixion, and burial are separate plays, the stage settings are,

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[161] Ibid., Play XXXVI, l. 3.

perhaps, more complete than those of the Chester and the Ludus Coventriae. The depiction is, certainly, more vivid. The first scene of Christ Led up to Calvary would have needed two sedes, one occupied by Christ, and the other used by the four soldiers preparing the Cross. The platea was probably the area occupied by the people to whom i Miles is shouting. The necessary materials for these preparations are identified by Miles as hammers, nails (various types of specialized nails, such as brads and strong steels), ropes, and steps or posts. No equipment is needed for the boring of the holes in the Cross, since one of the soldiers reveals that he has already taken care of this detail. That Christ is standing by is made clear in the references to "pis lad" or "pis carle." Before the opening of Scene ii, the stage is cleared, because it is clear that the characters who occupy it in the first scene must now enter from the side in a procession up the hill to the site of the Crucifixion. One's attention is first focused upon the lamenting John and Mary, located on a sede to the side. The entering Jesus addresses then the Daughters of Jerusalem, who are probably watching Him as He bears the Cross across the platea toward the sede of Calvary. Then, Simon must come in from across the stage, since he must show the inconvenience of having to change his route in order to carry the Cross. The

costuming was probably elaborately designed and contemporary;[162] i. e., the soldiers were probably dressed as medieval English soldiers. The three Maries were, in actuality, three men with kerchiefs on their heads.[163] Christ wore a white skin to represent His nudity, since He is later stripped in the play.[164]

The staging of the Crucifixion requires an area for the nailing Christ to the Cross, in addition to one Mount of Calvary. The soldiers make great moans as they heave the Cross, suggesting that some type of hill or incline was actually present for them to climb, no matter how short a distance away. Roberts has concluded that these scenes of the Crucifixion were "frighteningly real" and that "it was not unusual (for the actors) to faint from strain."[165] At Metz in 1437, the realism involved in this scene is demonstrated when " . . . both the crucified Christ and the hanged Judas were cut down just in time to escape death."[166] If such were the case at Metz, probably, it can be safely

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[162] Cheney, op. cit., p. 166.

[163] Roberts, op. cit., p. 101.

[164] Nicoll, op. cit., p. 97.

[165] Roberts, op. cit., p. 97.

[166] Nicoll, op. cit., p. 80.

assumed that with the York stress on realism and the continual textual references to pain, the English performance was not to be outdone on this point. The contrast between the York Christ and the Towneley Christ, also, indicates the strong possibility that the former was the greater sufferer. In Towneley, Christ talks to the thieves, to the people passing by, to the Heavenly Father, to Mary and John, and laments in a series of stanzas. A man in real pain would not have been so inclined to converse. The York Christ, on the other hand, utters two short speeches. Thus, he was probably allowed to endure some pain in actuality. Furthermore, that the York soldiers suffered in bearing Christ's Cross up the Hill is evident in their remarks.

The Mortificacio, divided into two scenes with fifteen characters, is the most complicated of the three plays. On an elevated sede stands Pilate commanding peace.[167] Cayphas and Annas must, also, have their place. It is evident that at the side is the Hill of Calvary with Jesus on the Cross, since a reference is made to the inscription on the Cross. Scene ii is located on Calvary. Now, Jesus laments, as does the Towneley Christ, but he is a "fresh" actor from a different guild who has not undergone the rigors of the Crucifixion. Provision also must be made for the crosses of the two thieves

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[167] Craig, op. cit., p. 126.

who are located when the scene opens. The three Maries and John must occupy a sede. At the foot of the Cross are the Garçon and Longeus. Joseph and Nichodemus climb a ladder to the Cross to lower the Body of Christ. A burial mount is needed, at this time. If it were possible to have it so, a structure attached to the side of the wagon would have been more meaningful, since the focus of the pageant so far has been upon the area of Calvary. With the extreme stress on realism, to have the sepulchre immediately next to the Cross on the stage would seem to be ludicrous, even for one who considered space to be relative.

The representation on the stage, assuredly, reveals the same intent toward a vivid and vigorous portrayal of the Crucifixion sequence. It is remarkable that, even with the additions beyond what Gayley considers to be the religious writing, the interpretations required by the Church are still maintained with little variation. Perhaps, the following rubric for the Good Friday Mass is the foundation upon which this sequence was based.

> Today our worship is directed, not to the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass, but to the bloody but triumphant sacrifice of Calvary.[168]

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[168] Missal, p. 307.

If so, the "sacrifice" was now represented with greater force because of the realism therein than would have been possible during an earlier period. A debt of gratitude is, therefore, owed to the "York Realist." He has been shown to be the creator of each of the plays in their present form during the year, 1422, with the exception of the play, Christ Led up to Calvary, which reveals a revision omitting Veronica after 1422. Smith indicates some minor alterations in words after the manuscript was written (1430-1440), but these are insignificant. Thus, one concludes that the entire York Crucifixion sequence was complete in its present form by 1430.

CHAPTER V

THE HOMILETIC SATIRIZATION OF THE TOWNELEY CRUCIFIXION SCENES

The history of the Towneley cycle, as a whole, is shrouded in confusion. Scholars often disagree with one another concerning the dates of the inception of the cycle and of its many various revisions. The cycle is a composite of two fragments of cycles, if one depends upon the judgments of Pollard and Brink.[169] Brink assigns their origin to the East Midland region.[170] Pollard maintains that the Towneley cycle has evolved through three periods of composition. The first of these he calls the religious phase and places it at the beginning of the cyclic drama written in a meter of the fourteenth century.[171] The second period is that in which there was borrowing from York by an author who composed other plays in the same style. Finally, the characteristics of the late period are the result of the work of a man who either wrote in the nine-line stanza or who exemplified a

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[169] A. W. Pollard, The Towneley Plays, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

[170] Loc. cit.

[171] Ibid., p. xxvii.

vigorous dramatic power and a lack of conventionality.[172] Pollard recognizes evidence of the "Wakefield Master" through parts of the drama marked by a " . . . sympathy with the poor, a dislike of 'gentlery men' who oppressed, satire which is grim and free, and daring phrases."[173] Wells' description of his work is based on the Shepherd's Play, generally considered to represent the height of the "Master's" attainment. He explains that this play " . . . exposes vice and selfishness and meanness, the follies of fashion, and the weaknesses of religionists, while it pities the distressed poor and scores the vicious rich oppressors."[174] Gayley accepts Pollard's three stages of development in toto.[175] These three stages have also been used as a basis for the studies made by Cady[176] and by Frampton.[177] It is, also, customary to accept the dates offered by Pollard for the cyclic growth which he attributes to a time span of 1380-1410.[178] However, these dates are

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[172] Ibid., p. xxviii.

[173] Ibid., p. xxx.

[174] Wells, op. cit., p. 560.

[175] Gayley, op. cit., pp. 133-134.

[176] Cady, op. cit., pp. 386-400.

[177] Frampton, "Date of the Wakefield Master," pp. 86-117.

[178] Pollard, op. cit., p. xxviii; Wells, op. cit., p. 557.

probably not accurate, particularly if one considers the Curcifixion sequence, the rhyme scheme, and external evidence. In order to recognize the marks of development, all of the considerations mentioned above must be taken into account at the same time, since each bears an influence upon the others.

The Crucifixion sequence is a part of two plays, Incipit Fflagellacio (XXII) and Sequitur Processus crucis (XXIII). The procession scene is a segment of Play XXII, beginning with stanza twenty-eight and continuing to the end. Stanza twenty-eight, also, marks the beginning of a new rhyme scheme ($\underline{aabaab}\frac{cc}{\underline{bb}}$), suggesting that the procession has been added to the scourging episode. One is not surprised, having demonstrated that the Towneley play was borrowed from York after 1415 and before 1422.[179] These dates contradict Pollard's ultimate date of 1410 for the cycle.

Furthermore, all of Play XXII is that which Pollard has assigned to the hand of the "Wakefield Master," basing his decision upon the presence of the nine-line stanza and upon the attributable characteristics of the writer. Certainly, one cannot discount such an assumption, nor can he deny the York borrowing. Frampton has identified the

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[179] Infra, p. 57.

work of the "Master" as having begun in 1420.[180] Since the evidence clearly supports Frampton's conclusion, one accepts 1420 as the beginning of the late writing, assuming that the period of composition probably extended forward in time. Thus, the second and third stages of development are, in actuality, the same.

The use of the nine-line stanza as a partial basis for the identification of the hand of the "Master" creates confusion. For example, together the sections of the scourging and the procession utilize the nine-line stanza interspersed with many stanzas of varying lengths, ranging from four-line stanzas to twelve-line stanzas, all of which exemplify the characteristics of the later writer. It is apparent that several sources of materials, including the York Christ Led up to Calvary, have been reworked into one continuous play by one hand. Support comes from the lines which are lengthened, consistently, a tendency of the "Master."[181] This consideration, coupled with an unmistakable lack of conventionality, suggests a revision of several materials at the same time. Thus, one cannot justify the possibility of revisions in different stanzic forms after

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[180] Frampton, "Date of the Wakefield Master," p. 117.

[181] Wells, op. cit., p. 559.

the work of the "Master" had been completed in nine-line stanzas. The borrowed York procession scene was combined with the Fflagellacio shortly after 1415. It was either added and, then, reworked in 1420, or new material was added and revised in 1420 or thereafter.

Although the long line is characteristic of Play XXII, it cannot always represent the hand of the "Master." Certainly, the "Master's" influence is present in Play XXIII which is written primarily in the six-line stanza. Pollard places this same play of the Crucifixion in the first period,[182] because of the presence of the rime couee ($aa^4b^3cc^4b^3$), a criterion previously shown to be untrustworthy. Gayley also uses the nine-line stanza in identifying the hand of the "Master." Even so, he allows the possibility of exception in Play XXIII and attributes its writing to the "Master" on the basis of content.[183] One must test the possibility of the influence of late writing in the Crucifixion, therefore, on the only identifying feature upon which all scholars agree--the personality of its author. He has been characterized as a vicious satirist in areas of decadent religion and political oppression, and as one who had pity

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[182] Pollard, op. cit., pp. xxiii-xxv.

[183] Gayley, op. cit., p. 165.

for the poor. His attacks lack restraint. His genius is evident in the vigorous, dramatic representations of that which is felt most deeply in the hearts of his audience. His daring phrases are timely and representative of the favorite topics in contemporary literature and in the homiletics of the period. These traits are descriptive of the "Master's" dramatic power, which, in order for one to ascertain the extent of his influence in the Crucifixion, must be extracted from the play. A consideration of the causes of the bitterness, which prompted the author and his contemporaries to castigate unmercilessly, is also valuable as a means of measuring the length of time during which the "Master" worked. On the other hand, one notes that characteristics emerge revealing periods of composition before the date of the late writing.

The single incident in the plot of the Crucifixion, which is not only cruel, but, also, sacrilegious, is unique in this play. Here, one witnesses the "playing" of the tortors as they pretend that Christ is participating in a joust or tournament. There may have been significance in this incident, however, for the medieval audience accustomed to the bombastic vernacular preacher and the satiric literature of the day. The joust and tournament, at one time, was a sport to be looked upon as symbolic of the strength and Christian intent of the Order of Knighthood. However, after

the Peasant's Revolt of 1381, there was a general rebellion in the land against the corruption in the clergy, the Order of Knights, and any political personnages of rank.[184] The Order of Knighthood became a primary target for the reformer because of its connection with the corruption in the King's court and the Christian chivalry order for which it stood.[185] The following words of a contemporary preacher are most expressive of the opinion commonly heard by medieval man:

> "Forsooth, the order of Knighthood now is to observe an Order. For, his mouth is polluted with great foulness of words who swears the more detestably and fears God the less, who vilifies God's ministers and has no respect of the Church." These are the things which are reputed braver and more distinguished in knightly circles, today, says our preacher. Those who do them would seem to belong to the Order of Knights who crucified Christ, he adds, mocking Him and spoiling Him of His garments, slaying and losing Him afresh.[186]

This reprimand is so entirely representative of that which occurs in the Towneley Crucifixion that one might wonder if the scene, were not written immediately after its author had heard the sermon. Unfortunately, this preacher's words are dated. However, the thought is also similar to that contained in Pier's Plowman in the last quarter of the fourteenth century.[187]

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[185] Loc. cit.

[186] Ibid., p. 336.

[187] A text, pass. iv, l. 105.

A timely and important addition to the play is the Character of Pilate. There appear to be two characterizantions of Pilate: one in the rime couée, who is somewhat ineffectual, and one of a highly dramatic nature depicted in varying patterns of rhyme. His purpose in the rime couée section seems to have been merely to fulfill the necessary obligation of the Biblical source character, since little of his dialogue is developed beyond the words found in the Good Friday reading of St. John. His nature is apparent in the burial incident where his quiet authority is taken for granted by Joseph of Arimathea and Nichodemus. Their conversation is completely amiable:

> Ioseph. Syr pylate, god the saue---
> Graunte me that I craue,
> If that be thi will.
> pilatus. Welcom, Ioseph, myght thou be!
> What so thou askys I graunte it the,
> So that it be skyll.
>
> Ioseph. ffor my long seruyce I the pray
> Graunte me the body---say me not nay---
> Of ihesu, dede on rud.
> pilatus. I graunte well if he ded be,
> Good leyfe shall thou have of me,
> Do with hym what thou thynk gud.[188]

Evident are the submissiveness of Joseph before Pilate and his references to him as "sir pylate" and knyght." The name-tags indicating rank link the burial scene with the theme

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[188] Pollard, op. cit., Play XXIII, ll. 631-642.

initiated in the joust sequence. Such title was also popular during the Middle Ages in general. Characters of the past were cast in contemporary roles in an effort to create the illusion of the present, an effort expressive of a striving for realism. Thus, the medieval author assigned contemporary titles to his figures. This practice was an outgrowth of the homilists' striving to illustrate by means of allegory by using such names for characters as "Cleanness" or "Patience."[189] In the same way, the author of Cursor Mundi, written in the beginning of the fourteenth century, depicts "Sir Caiphas" and "Sir Pilatus." However, this mild-mannered Pilate is suddenly offered in contrast as his words become somewhat colored by anger in stanza eighty-five:

> Boys, I say, what mell ye you?
> As it is writen shall it be now,
> I say certane;
> Quod scriptum scripsi,
> That same wrote I,
> What gadlyng ruches ther agane?[190]

In other words, "Mind your own business!" is the advice now given to the soldiers, who in the Biblical account and in the play, question the verity of what is written in the inscription

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[189] Chambers, op. cit., II, 153; Owst, op. cit., p. 114.

[190] Pollard, op. cit., ll. 552-557.

placed by Pilate on the Cross. These lines are composed in the rime couée, the same rhyme in which the earlier Pilate was depicted, yet they produce an antithetical characterization. One concludes, therefore, that in revamping an earlier version of the play, the author has assumed greater liberty with the character of Pilate. In order to understand fully the second Pilate, one observes the reactions of the tortors to Pilate's dictum. In the stanza immediately following that which was quoted above, the fourth tortor agrees that, since Pilate is a man of law, he must necessarily have his way. This attitude is indicative of a period in which the governing class in vernacular literature was depicted as tyrannical and capable of brutality. Such characterizations occurred after the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 during a period of oppression and absolute power when, " . . . of all the classes obnoxious to the insurgents, the legal profession was the most hated."[191]

> There was law in the land, and only by the manipulation of the law could the great enforce their will---or at least most of them did obtain legal sanction for their acts. The common people therefore generally saw the face of oppression masked by the dignity of the law. The corrupt justice of the assize, the bribed jurors, the learned men of law who could prove black white for a price, the powerful who used the machinery of

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[191] Oman, The Great Revolt of 1381, p. 58

> the courts like a whip---these are the tyrants whom the poor and powerless hated and feared.[192]

The following lines illustrate the contrast between a detested "man of law" in the characters of Pilate and Christ, creating the dramatic ebb and flow of the more sophisticated drama of the Middle Ages:

> primus tortor. yee, let it hyng aboue his hede,
> It shall not saue hym [Christ] fro the dede,
> Noght that he can write.[193]

The reference to Christ, as a man who cannot write, places Him on the level of the innocent, common man, and identifies Him as the victim of the brutal tyrant. Also, one notes the almost apologetic tone of submissiveness in the speech of the tortor after his commrade has criticized Pilate. These lines might be representative of a period of composition quite close to the time of the Revolt when men were not free to express themselves. If so, the speech is a remnant of a composition from the early period, probably just before 1381.

The literature after the period of the Revolt was not so reserved in its criticism as that represented in the

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[192]Arnold Williams, The Characterization of Pilate in the Towneley Plays, p. 39.

[193]Pollard, op. cit., ll. 560-563.

lines of the tortor above. For example, one may note the contrast in such a common work as Piers Plowman in the marriage of Mede:

> Man of lawe lest pardoun hadde ·
> that pleteden for mede,
> For the sauter saueth hem nour3te ·
> such as taketh 3iftes,
> And namelich of innocent .
> that none yuell ne kunneth . . . .[194]

Also, from the fifteenth century, is a collection of sermons which speak out against the ravenous leaders as "Som þei take with maistery, som by plee and fals questes."[195] Jacob's Well is another piece of literature which is a compilation of sermons that list twelve abuses of the law.[196] The literature after 1381 and throughout the fifteenth century is filled with lampoonings. Therefore, it is not surprising that the role of "Sir Pilate" was expanded into a timely, tyrannical figure, instilling fear and terror in the people.

The addition of Pilate to the beginning of the Crucifixion in a stanza of a unique rhyme scheme, depicts him as calling for silence, threateningly. In the second stanza of a different rhyme pattern, he becomes even more

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[194] B Text, vii, 39-40.

[195] Woodburn O. Ross (ed.), Middle English Sermons, p. 238.

[196] Arthur Brandeis (ed.), Jacob's Well, Part I, 130-131.

forceful, and, thus, his tirade continues through the third stanza. It appears that these stanzas were added, either at three different times to lend more interest or to emphasize the character of Pilate, or that a compiler may have drawn from three source materials. The evidence is not sufficient, however, to allow judgment, here.

In considering additional amplifications contained in varying rhyme schemes, one notes that, in the rime couée passage, Longeus speaks only three lines; however, a stanza has been inserted, didactic in nature. Further expansions of a religious nature appear in a series of laments assigned to Mary, John, and Jesus. They are similar in their rhyme patterns and thought content to the hundreds of religious lyrics written during the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries. In fact, Taylor has suggested that the dramatic lyric planctus were taken from religious lyrics and inserted into these plays.[197] The several unique rhyme patterns and verse forms in the parts of the three characters clearly imply that these lyrics were inserted. Ideally, the location of the lyric used as the direct source for the play would be an aid to dating. However, because many of these verses

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[197] George C. Taylor, "The English 'Planctus Mariae,'" MP, IV, 637.

are no longer extant, the task is difficult. The similarities in theme found in the existing lyrics, in addition to the changes made by playwrights in the course of their adaptations, also, create a dilemma. Therefore, one can only allude to comparative pieces reminiscent in form and content to stanzas in the play. For example, "Bides a While and Haldes 3oure Pais" and "Man, þus on Rode I Hing For þe" are both works of the early fifteenth century, closely related to Christ's appeal in the Towneley play to the people who are passing by to behold Him on the Cross.[198] "Here Begynnus the Passion of Ihesus" (1370-1400) is another work of Southern origin, and, as its title indicates, is a story of the passion; it is also in the form of a planctus, as each verse begins with "Swete Ihesu."[199] "The Debate Between Mary and the Cross" and "The Dispute Between Mary and the Cross" (1370-1380) are very similar in nature; these contain a large number of laments by Mary, and the stanzaic patterns (ababababcdddc) are close to some of those to be found in the play.[200] Christ is speaking from the Cross and Mary is replying in "The Dialogue between the Virgin and Christ on the Cross"

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[198] Wells, op. cit., p. 416.

[199] Ibid., p. 326.

[200] Ibid., p. 416.

(1272-1283); this poem is from the Southeast Midland region and is composed in the aabccb rhyme scheme, again a similar form, but not exactly the same, as any used in the play.[201] However, it is established, at least, that those religious lyrics closest in nature to the Towneley play were in existence throughout the entire span allotted for composition and, thus, could have been inserted at any time during any of the periods.

For dialogue in Mary's lament, the author has utilized portions of three different poems, separating them and staggering the stanzas so that the original verse is divorced from its sister stanzas, a fact revealed through the rhyme schemes and the thought content. In so arranging his stanzas, he has omitted accented syllables, thus, creating the long line of the same type used in the Flagellation. It is significant that he did not choose to use the long line in all of the stanzas which apparently, stem originally from the same verse. The long line is interspersed among stanzas in all of the rhyme patterns, but it is not consistently used in any of the forms. Thus, one can be certain that all of the lyrics were inserted at the same time. The evidence presented indicates that the play and the additions,

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[201] Ibid., p. 415.

emphasized through the rhyme scheme, were influenced by the "Wakefield Master." His characteristic use of satire, plus the familiar long line, establishes his identity in the Flagellation. These same two features also occur in the Crucifixion, and, although they do not appear in the same context within the play, they, nevertheless, point to the "Master's" influence.

Mixed stanza forms have been noted in both plays, leading one to suspect that the author chose to write in several different forms. This supposition is confirmed in the observation that, in the mixed stanzaic forms of Mary's laments, the "Master" used the long line intermittently without attempting to establish a standard. Since the same man wrote the play and inserted the religious lyrics, he is probably also responsible for the amplifications found in the roles of Pilate and Longeus. Reveletory is the fact that he added materials of a religious nature in the form of the planctus lyrics and the didactic verse of Longeus. At the same time, the bombast of Pilate, so popular in the last half of the fifteenth century, is also characteristic of the "Master" as a satirist. One assumes that he was a clergyman and a reformer, perhaps, a homiletic preacher, and certainly, a poignant satirist. Assuredly, he was a man of genius.

Although a date for the "Wakefield Master" has been extablished by Frampton as 1422, it is not unlikely that the "Master" wrote after that date, since his influence is apparent in one-fourth of the thirty-two plays in the cycle.[202] Therefore, for him to have accomplished all of the revisions and adaptations in one year would have been a great task. Thus, one assumes that he worked beyond 1422. In fact, the possibility is strong that he may have begun even before that date, if one assumes that he both inserted and revised materials, since the York play was borrowed between 1415-1420. The York plays which were borrowed, however, are not the same as those which have been revised by the "Master" in each case. The possibility is present, therefore, that there were, in actuality, two men working at the same time. On the basis of a recognition of two personalities at work in these plays, one assumes that there was more than one writer. Thus, the writers of Pollard's second stage of borrowing and his third stage of rewriting are immediate contemporaries around 1422. The cycle must have been undergoing vast revision if borrowings, compilations, and rewritings were occurring within the same short span of years.

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[202]Pollard, op. cit., p. xxi.

Pollard dates the cycle around 1380. The only elusive piece of evidence of an early form of the play is that which concerns the Biblical character of Pilate, placing the composition date sometime before the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. Assuming, then, that Pollard's date is accurate, one dates composition of the Crucifixion sequence as 1380-1422.

CHAPTER VI

THE TELESCOPIC GROWTH OF THE CYCLES

The assumption that the Crucifixion sequence in each of the English Mystery cycles is of liturgical origin is a certainty. Each play reveals traces of a design in the order of its incidents, founded upon the pattern of an early vernacularized play in the form of the Benedikbeurer or St. Gall versions. The patterns of these two plays do not follow one or the other of the Gospel readings for a particular Mass during Holy Week. Rather a composite of events from all four Gospels comprises the arrangement. Foster[203] and Young[204] refer to this characteristic as "Gospel Harmony." Even though the cycle plays were cut and revised and fragments were borrowed and inserted, the basic patterns of the early liturgical plays have been altered very little. The Chester, Ludus Coventriae, and York scenes maintain a close identity with their originals. The Towneley plays are the farthest removed from their original source patterns because of the use of two fragments and, more particularly, the changes made by the "Wakefield Master." However, a pattern is still

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[203] Foster, The Northern Passion, p. 47.

[204] Young, op. cit., I, 516, 539.

discernible and it is based on the St. Gall play. The Ludus Coventriae play, also based on the St. Gall trope, is a composite of five cycles. One concludes, therefore, that fragments of five distinct cycles from a particular region must have been based on the same early vernacularization. Otherwise, the pattern should have been broken.

Certain common characteristics of the plays are evident in spite of the extent of their individual growth patterns. Each contains an attitude of reverence toward the Virgin. Also, the increased number of amplifications in a play is always accompanied by the insertions of laments in order to increase the pathos. These laments were easily expanded, since the original planctus of the Church play were replaced by religious lyrics in the cycle plays. Perhaps, the planctus represented a sacred segment of the Mass and was, therefore, removed when the play left the Church. Whatever the cause for replacing the part with another, the laments of Mary, John, and Jesus are always added to when expansions occur within a play. The Towneley, the most heavily expanded of all the cycles, contains lyrics derived from at least eight different sources.

The Crucifixion scene itself, involving the incident of Christ's being nailed to the Cross, is presented in the same manner in each of the plays. In each case, Christ is pulled and stretched, the hole is bored too short on the

Cross, His sinews are torn, and torture is the general emphasis. The scene, as such, is unique when compared to the other medieval passions with the exception of the Northern Passion which is identical in content. Although the Passion is believed to be the basis of the York cycle and, thus, for the Towneley scenes borrowed from York, it does not serve as a source for the Chester and the Coventry plays. The Passion is, therefore, in content another parallel version of the plays, but it is not the source responsible for the incident of Christ's being nailed to the Cross. Indeed, the Crucifixion scene is not developed in the early Church plays. The St. Gall vernacularization includes two soldiers at the foot of the Cross as they cast lots; otherwise, soldiers do not appear. The incident must have had an early origin, however, since it is fully developed, even in the least expanded Chester play.

These expansions lend individual character to the respective plays. Each was, in its earliest form, didactic, a trait retained throughout most of the fourteenth century. The Chester cycle plays maintained this characteristic, expanding only by means of eschatological scenes. However, the character of the Ludus Coventriae Crucifixion sequence was altered in its expansions by means of borrowings from the five cycles of which it is a composite. Two of these cycles venerate the Virgin Mary and contain laments in the

Crucifixion scene which are based on the Catholic Mass, The Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The expansions in both the Chester and the Ludus Coventriae find direction in their intent to instruct in matters of liturgical significance. Thus, they are the two cycles which have maintained a close identity with the original purpose of the passion plays. The Ludus Coventriae plays were written down in 1468, and the Chester cycle was put into manuscript form early in the sixteenth century. Still, the Chester plays retained a relatively simple form of the drama, while the Coventry plays far surpassed them in dramatic development.

The York and Towneley cycle plays are products of the same period of vigorous growth and expansion from around 1415-1422. The York plays began in their history much earlier than did the Towneley plays, but the Towneley surpassed the York in its development insofar as a growth away from the original source is concerned. In York, drama was popularized by the use of coarse humor and Gothic realism. However, Wakefield borrowed these elements from York and added the bitter satiric lampoonings of the enraged sympathizers of the common man or peasant.

Although all of the plays stem from liturgical forerunners of the thirteenth century, the time of the cyclic origin for each varies. Both the least developed Chester

cycle and the highly developed York cycle have their foundations in the late thirteenth century. The Ludus Coventriae and the Towneley cycles, each of separate intent, but advanced in dramatic form, are composites of fragments and do not begin their cyclic history until the following century. Therefore, the growth of these cycles was not dependent upon the time in which they existed. Rather, each achieved its present status in dramatic form according to the necessity for reworking the materials in order to meet the individual demands of their audiences. The productions were expansive and enthusiastically received in all of the cities, so that one was probably not more popular than another. Differences were founded in a significant design.

Because of the widely differing natures of these same plays, one is curious about the original didactic intent so well preserved in each. This early purpose is that which links the passions of the Middle Ages and, also, serves, in part, to maintain the similar identity of the four cycle groups. It is worthwhile, therefore, to consider that which prompted the existence of the passions. Several passions are extant, but two bear the closest resemblances to these drama. The Northern Passion is strikingly similar to each of the cycle passions. It was written into English from the French during the same period that the cycles were

beginning to form toward the end of the thirteenth century.[205] During this period, an attempt was made to instruct the common man in sacred subjects. At the same time, the Cursor Mundi was written to meet this same demand.[206] The lives of the saints were translated into the English verse from the French,[207] and many other French sources were used in translation for instructive purposes.[208] The theory that many of the cycles have their origin in French and that all of the cycles stem originally from French has been suggested because of the availability of these French sources. Although the French influence may be possible, no proof has yet been found to substantiate the supposition.

One might consider, however, another possibility. Rome was the center from which came all the dictates in the matters of religion.[209] This religious center served all of Western Europe. Therefore, is it not possible that Rome should have sent orders to all of the churches in Western Europe at the same time, or at least to the major centers,

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[205] Foster, The Northern Passion, p. 1.

[206] Richard Morris, (ed.), Cursor Mundi, p. 3.

[207] Horstmann, op. cit., p. iii.

[208] Foster, The Northern Passion, p. 1.

[209] Craig, op. cit., p. 154.

to instruct the laity in the events of the passion? if so, a list of instructions and an inclusion of the materials to be used in the construction of a drama may have accompanied the dictum. Since instructions and aids for the church services were commonly sent from Rome during the Middle Ages, the materials may have been provided, thus, for all of the parrishes.[210] The consideration of this possibility might explain why the earliest incidents, identified in each cycle, are the same, although they exist in a different order. Certainly, each play, from its earliest inception, would include the same characters, whether Biblical, legendary, or apochryphal. Also, the similarity in theme, existing everywhere on the Continent, would assure later borrowing from many different sources without altering the context.

The same spirit which prompted the writing of the plays originally lasted through the centuries. The York cycle was kept by the City and was amazingly preserved in this way in the mood of the Church.[211] Similarly, the Ludus Coventriae plays were kept and acted by the clergy.[212]

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[210] Wells, op. cit., p.338.

[211] Chambers, op. cit., II, 114.

[212] Loc. cit.

Chester is known to have kept an original.[213] Wakefield attempted no preservation, but rather amplified the didactic with the satiric. Perhaps, then, one is not misled by considering the possibility of an arrangement within the Church to instruct the people in matters of religion, and to attempt to preserve that intention.

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