

## Eschatological Themes in English Medieval Drama

by

Hazel Dean McClure\*

Eschatology emerged from pagan belief into Christian philosophy to become one of the chief concerns of the medieval mind and, eventually, one of the principal themes of medieval drama. It is the doctrine of "last things," including the important theological subjects of man's salvation and life beyond the grave.<sup>1</sup> It is present in the imagery and details of a life hereafter in the great poems of antiquity, and in early Christian literature it is manifest in such terms as ". . . righteousness and sin, salvation and damnation, virtue and vice, happiness and misery."<sup>2</sup> Theologians soon had carefully outlined its individual and universal characteristics: at the end of human life come death and consignment to heaven or hell; at the end of collective life come judgment and cosmic regeneration.<sup>3</sup> Thus, individual eschatology, sought to determine the final state of individual souls;<sup>4</sup> and cosmic eschatology, the final order of all creation, with specific concern for the moral and physical conditions preceding or accompanying the end of all things.<sup>5</sup> Early Hebraic eschatology followed this same thought division, encompassing, primarily, the final disposition of the Jewish race and of the world itself; and secondarily, the final state of the individual soul.<sup>6</sup> As the philosophy developed, the Hebrews explained evil as a consequence of Adam's sin and predicted the ultimate destruction of the world, an event to be prefigured in a series of plagues, famines, earthquakes, and fires.<sup>7</sup> Thus, they echoed the age-old theory of the progressive decline of the world (the ages of gold, silver, brass, and iron).<sup>8</sup>

In its early stages, then, eschatology rested mainly upon these traditional concepts of individual and universal destiny, its Christian features embodying four "last things:" (1) death; (2) judgment; (3) heaven; and (4) hell. Death marked the end of man's allotted time upon earth, a period in which he was to have shaped the record that would later determine his place in eternity. After individual judgment,

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\* Miss McClure is an Instructor in English at Osawatomie High School, Osawatomie, Kansas. Portions of this study originated in a master's thesis under the direction of Professor Charles E. Walton, Department of English, Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia.

<sup>1</sup>Hardin Craig, *English Religious Drama in the Middle Ages*, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>W. Peterson, "The Rediscovery of Eschatology," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, LXXXIV (April, 1932), 225.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, II, 361; also, W. Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, pp. 264-276. Peterson, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>4</sup>*Loc. cit.*; Craig, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Peterson, *op. cit.*, p. 225; *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, V, 528.

<sup>6</sup>*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, V, 209.

<sup>7</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 211.

all souls were to enter immediately into heaven or hell.<sup>9</sup> Traditionally, heaven was the kingdom inherited by the blessed; hell, located in the deep recesses of the earth, was a domain shared by angels and men who had provoked God's wrath and were eternally forbidden to partake of His Grace.<sup>10</sup> At a later time, purgatory was proposed as a middle state of no specified length of time in which imperfect (but repentant) souls might be purified and eventually permitted to enter into heaven. On the other hand, in the Christian view, universal eschatology took into account (1) the end of the world; (2) the resurrection; (3) the general judgment; and (4) the destruction of all creation.<sup>11</sup> Concerning the end of the world, it maintained that nine signs would herald the act of universal judgment:

1. a general preaching of the Christian doctrines
2. a conversion of the Jews
3. the return of Elias and Henoch
4. a great Apostasy
5. the reign of Antichrist
6. eruptions in the order of nature
7. universal conflagration
8. trumpets sounding the Resurrection
9. the Advent of Christ<sup>12</sup>

There is, as well, much evidence to show that early Christian poets were well informed about the essential features of eschatology. Of particular interest to this subject is Cynewulf's *Last Judgment*, an eighth-century verse statement of this religious doctrine, often assigned to the third section of the OE poem, *Christ*.<sup>13</sup> For example, it predicts that the end of the world will come unexpectedly to "carefree man bound in slumber," the dire event to be announced by angels who, sounding their trumpets, will summon mankind to final judgment:

Ʒonne from feowerum      foldan sceatum,  
 þam ytemestum      eorþan rices,  
 englas aelbeorhte      on efen blawað  
 byman on brehtme.

(878-881)<sup>14</sup>

It describes the lamentations of the sinful men when angels and devils meet in combat, and alludes to the unnatural conditions which, according to eschatology, will presage the end of the world and the Second Advent of Christ:

Dyneð deop gesceaft,      ond fore dryhtne faereð  
 waelfyra maest      ofer widne grund.  
 Hlemmeð hata leg,      heofonas berstað . . . .<sup>15</sup>  
 (930-932)

<sup>9</sup>*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, V, 533.

<sup>10</sup>J. H. Fichter, *Christianity*, pp. 236-241.

<sup>11</sup>*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, V, 533.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, VIII, 552-553; Young, *op. cit.*, II, 361.

<sup>13</sup>C. W. Kennedy, *Early Christian Poetry*, p. 254.

<sup>14</sup>All quotations to *Christ* are from *The Exeter Book* (edited by George P. Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie for EETS).

<sup>15</sup>This section of the poem, describing the signs which herald the approach of Doomsday, closely parallels the source in Isaiah XIII:9-11.

It contains an account of the risen who, in newly acquired youth, tremble as they wait the Judgment of God:

. . . þonne Crist siteð on his cynestole,  
 on heahsetle, heofonmaegna god,  
 faeder aelmihtig. Folca gehwylcum  
 scyppend scienende scrifeþ bi gewyrhtum,  
 eall aefter rhyte rodera waldend.

(1216-1220)

As usually depicted in early doctrine, Christ in the poem then proceeds to judge individually the souls, calling each by name to bear evil or good deeds before Him (even the musings of the heart), and decrees that those bringing good deeds will be called to the right hand of God, there to receive joy as their reward; but the sinful man with troublesome heart will be called to the left hand of God where he will behold the greatest of sorrows:

Þonne beoð gesomnad on þa swiþran hond  
 þa claenan folc, Criste sylfum  
 gecorene bi cystum, þa aer sinne cwide georne  
 lustum laestun on hyra lifdagum,  
 ond þær womsceaþan on þone wyrsan dæl  
 fore scyppende scyrede weorpað,  
 hateð him gewitan on þa winstran hond,  
 sigora soðcýning, synfulra weorud.  
 Þær hy arasade reotað ond beofiað  
 fore frean forhte, swa fule swa gaet,  
 unsýfre folc, arna ne wenað.

(1221-1231)

Then, as in the Scriptures, the poem lists the requirements for man's entry into a state of bliss where the chosen ones will dwell eternally in heavenly joy:

Ge þæs earnedon þa ge earne men,  
 woruldbearfende, willum onfengun  
 on mildum sefan. Þonne hy him þurh minne noman  
 eaðmode to eow arna baedun,  
 þonne ge hyra hulpon on him hleoð gefon,  
 hingrendum hlaf ond hraegl nacedum;  
 ond þa þe on sare seoce lagun,  
 aefdon unsofte, adle gebundne,  
 to þam ge holdlice hyge stapeladon  
 mid modes myne. Eall ge þæt me dydon,  
 ðonne ge hy mid sibbum sohtun, ond hyra sefan trymedon  
 forð on frofre. Þæs ge faegre sceolon  
 lean mid leofum lange brucan.

(1349-1361)

Next, Christ admonishes the wicked and rehearses the events of His own life, including His sacrifice for mankind, in words similar to those which occur at the beginnings of the later medieval Judgment plays:

Ic þæt sar for ðe  
 þurh eaðmedu eall geþolade,  
 hosp ond heardcwide. Ða hi hwaesne beag  
 ymb min heafod heardne gebygdon,

þream biþrycton,      se waes of þornum geworht.  
 Ða ic waes ahongen      on heanne beame,  
 rode gefaestnad,      ða hi ricene mid spere  
 of minre sidan      swat ut guton,  
 dreor to foldan,      þaet þu of deofles þurh þaet  
 nydgewalde      genered wurde.  
 Ða ic, womma leas,      wite þolade,  
 yfel earfeþu,      oþþaet ic anne forlet  
 of minum lichoman      lifgendne gaest.  
 Geseoð nu þa feorhdolg      þe ge gefremedun aer  
 of minum folmum      ond on fotum swa some,  
 þurh þa ic hongade      hearde gefaestnad;  
 meahht her eac geseon      orgete nu gen  
 on minre sidan      swatge wunde.  
 Hu þaer waes unefen racu      unc gemaene!  
 Ic onfeng þin sar      þaet þu moste gesaelig  
 mines eþelrices      eadig neotan,  
 ond þe mine deaðe      deore gebohte  
 þaet longe lif      þaet þu on leohte siþþan,  
 wlitig, womma leas,      wunian mostes.

(1441-1464)

Christ, however, angered to see man continuing to indulge in sinful practices, casts the wicked into Hell:

Farað nu, awyrde,      willum biscryede  
 engla dreames,      on ece fir  
 þaet waes Satane      on his gesiþum mid,  
 deofle gegearwad      ond þaere deorcan scole,  
 hat ond heorogrim.      On þaet ge hreosan sceolan!

(1519-1523)

Then, Hell is described as a bottomless pit of darkness, fire, and chilling terror, filled with serpents and the souls of the wicked. Heaven is depicted as a never-ending land of bliss, free of sin, surrounded by light, devoid of sorrows, and made joyous by the Lord. Thus, the poem takes into account the main principles of early Christian eschatology, extracted as follows: (1) the unexpected end of the world, accompanied by terrifying physical disturbances; (2) the Advent of Christ and the Resurrection; (3) the Judgment and sentencing; and (4) the localizing of Heaven and Hell. These are the themes of eschatology which later occur in the medieval dramas concerned with Judgment Day.

Since Latin, of course, was the language of the learned class in the medieval period, the Church (perhaps, as a compensative measure in lieu of a vernacular Holy Writ) eventually approved for dramatization a selection of certain stories (*lectiones*) from the Scripture and from the lives of the saints.<sup>10</sup> The history of this subject is too well known for a detailed accounting, here, but the main point to be remembered at all times is that these stories were those which had been made a part of the liturgy (especially of the *Temporale* in the Breviary) and which constituted the prescribed daily study for the cursus of the liturgical year; hence, the great importance attached to one's knowing the exact time of the year when these *lectiones* were to be used, since the liturgy, in many

<sup>10</sup>Allardyce Nicoll, *British Drama*, p. 20.

ways, became the controlling force in the selection of narrative for this religious drama.<sup>17</sup> For example, in the time of Advent, the lessons were those treating the episodic Fall and Redemption of Man, a magnificent theme embodying all of the essential features of eschatology and one which is evident in three of the earliest eschatological plays—*Sponsus*, *Antichristus*, and *Judicium*.<sup>18</sup>

Shortly in the history of these religious dramas there was a tendency to introduce the vernacular into the texts of the popular Latin plays, initially not so much in the manner of a direct translation as in the fashion of an explanatory chorus.<sup>19</sup> The presence of the vernacular is, indeed, a prominent characteristic of the bilingual *Sponsus* (eleventh or twelfth century). Although there is sufficient evidence to show that *Antichristus* and *Judicium* were Advent plays, scholars have expressed doubt concerning the season of the year when *Sponsus* may have been performed, some pointing to the Easter season because of references within the text to *passion* and *resurrection*.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, those who have assigned the play to Advent have done so on the strength of its theme of the Coming of the Bridegroom (Matthew XXV:1-13), one of the *lectiones* cited for meditation in this season. Chambers is convinced that it is an Advent play, and textual evidence clearly supports his decision.<sup>21</sup>

The text of *Sponsus* is a mixture of Low Latin and Old French (or *roman*) and is, among the three plays cited, unique as a transitional document.<sup>22</sup> Because of its position in the development of eschatological drama, it is included, here, in translation, based upon Young's text. In no way is it intended to be a definitive rendering of this difficult bilingual play. Rather, it is meant to encourage future scholars far better equipped to solve the many problems related to this drama. All doubtful passages have been bracketed.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Sponsus*

*Chorus:*                    The Bridegroom comes, He Who is Christ; be  
   on your guard, virgins!  
   Whose Advent men do praise and will continue  
   to praise.

For He comes to free the tribes of people,  
Whom the demons have subjugated because of  
the Child of the First Mother.

<sup>17</sup>Sir E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, II, 2-7.

<sup>18</sup>Craig, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28; Chambers, *op. cit.*, II, 88.

<sup>20</sup>Young, *op. cit.*, II, 368.

<sup>21</sup>Chambers, *op. cit.*, II, 62.

<sup>22</sup>Young, *op. cit.*, II, 361; Craig, *op. cit.*, p. 75; A. W. Ward, *A History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne*, I, 36-37, fn 3.

<sup>23</sup>Young, *op. cit.*, II, 362-364; the author wishes to express appreciation to Dr. Winifred Shanon, Dr. June J. Morgan, Mrs. Vicki Rindom, and Mrs. Joyce Swift, of the Department of English, Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, for their invaluable suggestions and scholarly contributions to the translation of *Sponsus*.

This is the Second Adam mentioned by the  
 prophet,  
 Through Whom the sin of the First Adam is  
 lessened for us.

He suffers punishment in order that He may  
 commend us to the Heavenly Kingdom,  
 And from the side of evil He may free us.

The Bridegroom comes, He Who is a sacrifice  
 for our evils  
 Which by death He washes away, and Who  
 endured the Yoke of the Cross.

*The Prudent Ones approach, and Gabriel speaks:*

*Gabriel:*

Listen, Virgins, to what I affirm.  
 [And give ear] to what I command you.  
 Await the Bridegroom, Jesus the Savior by  
 name,  
 Guard against sleeping!  
 Let it be understood that the Bridegroom  
 awaits you now.

He comes to earth to take on your sins,  
 He was born of the Virgin in Bethlehem,  
 In the River Jordan, purified and baptized,  
 Guard against sleeping!  
 Let it be understood that the Bridegroom  
 awaits you now.

Christ was beaten, gibbeted, and lashed,  
 On the Cross beaten and nailed,  
 Christ was lowered to rest in the tomb,  
 Guard against sleeping!  
 Let it be understood that the Bridegroom  
 awaits you now.

Christ has arisen, the Scripture confirms it.  
 Gabriel am I, God has sent me here.  
 Wait for Him Who will come here soon,  
 Guard against sleeping!  
 Let it be understood that the Bridegroom  
 awaits you now.

*The Foolish Ones:*

We virgins who come to you.  
 Negligently, we have poured out the oil;  
 We, sisters, desire to beseech you,  
 As those in whom we have trust.  
 Distressed and weak, we have slept too much!

We are companions on this journey,  
 And sisters of the same race,  
 Whatever of evil comes to us miserable ones,  
 You are able to restore us to the superior ways.  
 Distressed and weak, we have slept too much!

Let the light of your lamps be shared,  
 [That you may act dutifully toward us in our  
 foolish ways.]  
 Lest He knock at the doors when we are not in  
 our places,

When the Bridegroom summons you unto His  
dwellings.

Distressed and weak, we have slept too much!

*The Prudent Ones:* We beseech you, and will continue to beseech  
you, the more,  
That you put aside, sisters, your idle ways.  
For you it will be in no way better  
Than to give prayers for this at the last  
moment.

Distressed and weak, you have slept too much!

But go now, go quickly,  
Ask the vendors pleasantly  
That oil for your lamps  
They indeed may give you indolent ones!

Distressed and weak, you have slept too much!

*The Foolish Ones:* Ah! wretched ones, how did we do this?  
Are we not able to keep watch at all?  
This hardship which we now bear,  
As well as our problems, have we heaped upon  
ourselves.

Distressed and weak, we have slept too much!

And let the merchant who is not busy give to  
us  
[That he may have this pay, our partner in  
this,]

Now we come to seek the oil  
Which negligently we ourselves poured out.

Distressed and weak, we have slept too much!

*The Prudent Ones:* She asks us to give of our oil.  
She shall have none of it, let her buy some.  
[God is the supplier Who wishes you to go to  
Him.]

Distressed and weak, you have slept too much!

*Merchants:* Gentle ladies, we cannot supply [satisfy] you.  
Neither can we permit you to tarry here.  
The counsel [consolation] she seeks we cannot  
give you.  
Let her ask God, Who can counsel [console]  
you.  
Go back to yours, [thus you will be reunited,]  
And pray until wearied for the glories of God  
Of oil to make succor to you.  
Do it now, for the Bridegroom will soon come.

*The Foolish Ones:* Ah! wretched ones, to what end have we come?  
Nothing is this for which we have searched.  
[It has been decreed, and we shall see,]  
That never shall we enter into the Nuptials.  
Distressed and weak, we have slept too much!

*In this manner, the Bridegroom comes. The Foolish Ones speak:*  
Hear, O Bridegroom, the voices of the lament-  
ing:  
Open for us the entrance way,  
Along with our companions, to the sweet feast.  
For our sins provide a remedy!  
Distressed and weak, we have slept too much!

*Christ:* Truly, I say unto you, I do not know you,  
 for you bear no light.  
 [Because those who lose the light of their  
 kingdom must go afar.]  
 Go away, weak ones, go away, cursed ones!  
 For eternity may you be delivered into torture.  
 To the extremity of Hell let them be con-  
 ducted.

*In this manner, the demons accepted them, and they were precipitated  
 into the inferno.*

This early form of the eschatological play incorporates six basic actions or movements, summarized as follows: (1) the Chorus predicts that the Bridegroom will soon appear and warns the Virgins to be alert and watchful; (2) Gabriel also cautions the Virgins to prepare for the Advent; (3) he reviews the events of Christ's life (Nativity, Crucifixion, and Resurrection); (4) the Foolish Virgins seek to replenish their supply of oil, first, from the Prudent Virgins and, then, from the Merchants; (5) the Bridegroom appears and fails to recognize the Foolish Virgins; and (6) He consigns them to the inferno. In these six actions are expressed the basic principles of eschatology in a noteworthy arrangement of dramatic event, interest being sustained in the simple device of anticipation. Moreover, by means of the dominant light symbol, the drama effectively asserts its important warning that man should not waste time or light in preparing for Final Judgment. Attention is also constantly directed to the plight of the Foolish Virgins, explained as the result of their negligence in having slept too much. Furthermore, a comparison of these simple features of the plot of *Sponsus* with the parable which is its source readily suggests those elements of the narrative original to the play:

Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be similar to the Ten Virgins, which promised brides, having received each her own lamp, go forth to meet the Bridegroom. Five, however, were foolish, and five were prudent. But the five foolish ones, when they received their lamps, did not take oil with them. The prudent ones, to be sure, did take oil in the vessels with their lamps. But the Bridegroom delayed, and all fell asleep and rested. Midway in the night, moreover, the cry was raised, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go forth and meet Him." Then, all those virgins arose and fitted out their lamps. And the foolish ones said to the wise ones: "Give to us from your supply of oil, since our lamps have gone out." The prudent ones answered, speaking, "But perhaps there may not be enough for us and you both; rather, you go to those who sell and purchase for yourselves." But during the time they went out to purchase, the Bridegroom came, and they who were prepared went with Him to the nuptials, and the door was closed. Finally, the remaining virgins came, saying, "Master, Master, open to us." But He, answering them, said, "Truly, I say unto you, I do not know you." And so be watchful, since you do not know the day or the hour.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Translated from the Latin text in Young, II, 365.

The parable clearly emphasizes that the failure of the Foolish Virgins to provide themselves with ample supplies of oil is the cause of their banishment into Hell; whereas, in *Sponsus*, their negligence is shown to be the result of their having slept too much. In addition, the following elements, present in the drama but not in the parable, suggest the expansions of the theme which may have been the work of the unknown author: (1) the Chorus, its prediction of Advent, and its warning to the Virgins to be watchful; (2) Gabriel, his mission, his account of the life of Christ, and his admonition to the Virgins; (3) the attempts by the Foolish Virgins to purchase oil from the Merchants; (4) Christ's sentencing of the Foolish Virgins, and the devils' execution of His orders.

It is possible, next, to trace the theme of the Antichrist to Jewish eschatology in the character of the False Messiah,<sup>25</sup> but Craig suggests that plays based upon this theme had their source in 2 Thessalonians ii, with extensions of the plot taken from Daniel and the Gospels.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, Young calls attention to the so-called Sibylline prophecy of the fourth century; and warnings of the coming of an Antichrist have been noted in Matthew XXIV: 15 and Mark XIII: 22.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, Craig's belief in Thessalonians is undoubtedly correct, since it was a Scripture assigned to devotions for the Saturday of the fourth week in Advent.<sup>28</sup> It has been pointed out, as well, that St. Augustine also refers to this same passage in discussing the Antichrist, confessing, however, that he does not fully comprehend its meaning.<sup>29</sup> At least, scholars agree that the *Antichristus* play was performed during Advent and that the services prescribed for this season constitute the religious background from which dramas concerned with this theme eventually emerged. Chambers and Young think that the initial play of the Antichrist was *Libellus de Antichristo* by Adso of Toul in the tenth century.<sup>30</sup> Craig, however, conceding that this play may well have been the source of later amplified versions of the Antichrist theme, thinks it unlikely as the source of the original Antichrist dramas, and proposes instead an early Italian vernacular play, *Ludus de Advento et Interitu Antichristi*, which combines the two themes of the Antichrist and Last Judgment.<sup>31</sup> For the purposes of this present study, however, an outline of the plot of Adso's *Antichrist* serves to illustrate the basic form of this eschatological play in the following seven movements: (1) Antichrist comes to Jerusalem intent on bothering the righteous; (2) proclaiming himself the Son of God, he enters the temple and performs "miracles;" (3) he brands his converts with the initial of the first letter of his name, stamped on their foreheads; (4) the Roman emperor surrenders his crown to Antichrist; (5) Enoch and Elijah unite the righteous and expose Antichrist; (6) the

<sup>25</sup>*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, I, 626.

<sup>26</sup>Craig, *op. cit.*, p. 75; Chambers, *op. cit.*, II, 62.

<sup>27</sup>Young, *op. cit.*, II, fn. 4, 369; 370.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>29</sup>Marcus Dods (tr.), *The City of God*, pp. 739-740.

<sup>30</sup>Chambers, *op. cit.*, II, 63-64; Young, *op. cit.*, II, 370.

<sup>31</sup>Craig, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

executed rebels arise on the third day; and (7) Christ intercedes, slaying Antichrist with the "breath of His mouth." Closely adhering to the events of its source, this play, nevertheless, reveals the following amplifications of the basic theme: (1) the episode of the Roman emperor; (2) the branding of Antichrist's victims; (3) the opposition of Enoch and Elijah; and (4) the death and resurrection of the rebels. This plot is manifest, also, in the earlier mentioned Tegernsee play of Antichrist, *Ludus de Advento et Interitu Antichristi*, which Craig places in the twelfth century and considers a remarkable, precocious work.<sup>32</sup> It shows an expansion of the Adso plot in its use of the abstractions, *Gentilitas*, *Synagoga*, *Ecclesia*, *Misericordia*, and *Justicia*, and in its prologue,<sup>33</sup> containing, as well, the following "new" action: (1) the Roman emperor's designs upon France, Greece, and Jerusalem; (2) the attack upon Jerusalem by Antichrist in league with Hypocrisy and Heresy; (4) the Teutonic King's attack upon Antichrist and, later, his conversion to the teachings of Antichrist; and (5) the triumph of Antichrist.<sup>34</sup>

It is possible that the *Judicium*, the third play in the history of this form, may have been divorced from the Antichrist theme early in the fourteenth century, to assume an independent status, eventually becoming the terminal play in the well known medieval cycles, as revealed in the English York, Towneley (Wakefield), and Coventry groups, and in the Chester cycle wherein it is the dominant theme of the last three plays (*i.e.*, XXII, the imminent destruction of the world heralded by fifteen signs of doom; XXIII, the coming of Antichrist; and XXIV, Doomsday). Craig dates three of these cycles as follows: Chester, 1327-1328; York, 1378; and Coventry, 1392.<sup>35</sup> Clark would place the Towneley cycle in the early years of the fifteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Scholars have pointed out that, in most cases, the plays in these cycles closely parallel their Biblical sources,<sup>37</sup> and they agree that the *Judicium* is based in a large part upon Matthew XXV:31-46, a Scripture assigned to devotions at the close of Advent and, thus, associated with eschatology.<sup>38</sup>

From the standpoint of source, the York Judgment Play shows the least amount of tampering. It opens with God's lamenting His creation of the world because of man's disobedience to the Commandments. God observes that, although He has sent His Son into the world to atone for man's sins, and Christ has harrowed Hell and liberated the wretches, man has, nevertheless, continued to sin. Resolved, therefore, to put an end to man's folly, God commands His angels to sound their trumpets and summon all creatures to judgment—the blessed to His right hand and the cursed to His left. In praising Him, the Good Souls repent their sins, asking His Grace. To the contrary, the Bad Souls, terrified because

<sup>32</sup>*Loc. cit.*

<sup>33</sup>Young, *op. cit.*, II, 395.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 387-390.

<sup>35</sup>Craig, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>36</sup>Sidney W. Clark, *The Miracle Play in England*, p. 28.

<sup>37</sup>A. W. Pollard, *English Miracle Plays, Moralities, and Interludes*, pp. xxix-xxx.

<sup>38</sup>Craig, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-77.

they are unable to produce evidence of good deeds and realizing that their most secret sins are to be revealed, show great fear at the prospects of being dispatched into Hell. At this point in the play, Christ descends to earth and displays His wounds acquired in attempting to save man's soul. The play, then, shifts to the locale of judgment with Christ opening the scene, vowing to fulfill His promises. After the Apostles express their loyalty to Him, He proceeds to the Seat of Judgment against a musical background provided by angelic choirs. Following an interlude depicting the conditions in Hell, during which devils make preparations to receive their imminent victims, the action once again returns to the judgment center, where all souls, both good and evil, take their respective positions on either side of the Seat of Judgment. Then, Christ displays His wounds, alludes to the events of the Crucifixion, and again promises celestial happiness to the blessed whom He describes as those who have never rejected Him in His distress, but who have fed, clothed, pitied, comforted, and lodged Him in performing such acts for the needy. Turning to the evil souls, He alters His mood, announcing that they are to experience eternal sorrows, charging them with neglect of His person. At this point, He casts the evil ones into Hell, calling the good ones to His side, and the play ends with the following direction: *Et sic facit finem cum melodia angelorum transiens a loco ad locum.*<sup>39</sup> A comparison of the *Sponsus* and York plots reveals the following amplifications of the judgment theme in the York version: (1) God's lament and decision to end man's folly in a general reckoning; (2) the Angels' announcing the general resurrection; (3) the right and left hand assignments of souls; (4) the Apostles who accompany Christ to the Seat of Judgment; and (5) God's criteria for judgment. By now, it is clear that the emphasis has been shifted from *preparations for judgment* (the main concern of *Sponsus*) to *judgment* itself, exemplified in the York play in a threefold action: the Summons, the Judgment, and the Reward (Punishment). Here, as well, dramatic suspense is achieved, first, in Christ's distinguishing between good and evil souls and, secondly, by the devils' preparations to receive the wicked into Hell.

The thirtieth and final play in the Towneley cycle, the *Judicium*, demonstrates a further expansion of this same judgment theme in its introduction of thirteen new characters, otherwise closely paralleling the basic York text in numerous instances, especially in the significant judgment scene. The following table will, perhaps, help clarify the main differences between these two judgment plays:

Towneley	<i>Parallels</i> York	Variations
17-29	142-156	<i>T.</i> , 30-32 differs from <i>Y.</i> , 157-160.
73-88	169-184	<i>T.</i> , 40-72, <i>Malus Quartus</i> speaks.

<sup>39</sup>J. M. Manly, *Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearean Drama*, I, 211.

386-531

229-372

*T.*, 89-228 (broad comedy of demons) replaces *Y.*, 184-228 (Jesus and Apostles).

*T.*, 512-515, not represented in *Y.*

*Y.*, 343-344, not represented in *T.*

*T.*, 532-612, not represented in *Y.*

*Y.*, 373-380, not represented in *T.*

It is evident that the devils in the Towneley play have a much greater responsibility in the action than those in the York drama. Indeed, at one time, angels must even drive away the demons from the righteous when Christ descends for the Judgment. Thereafter, only Christ's voice, as He reviews His suffering for mankind, has any pronounced effect upon the noisy Towneley crew. Perhaps, the most important innovation is the character of Tutivillus, who, with the demons, gloats over his victims.

The Coventry *Domesday*, infinitely more serious and religious in tone than its York or Towneley counterparts, marks another stage in the development of the judgment play in its use of Gabriel, Michael, and Peter. Although it reflects the essential details of the plots of the York and Towneley judgment plays, it also shows the following amplifications: (1) the descent of Jesus accompanied by Gabriel and Michael; (2) Michael's summoning mankind to Judgment (assigned to unnamed angels in York and Towneley); (3) the quaking of the earth and the outbreak of fire when Gabriel consigns the wicked to Hell; (4) Peter's opening of the Gates of Heaven; (5) God's mockery of the cries of the damned; (6) the branding of the First Devil's victims; and (7) the Second, Third, and Fourth Devils' parody of God's remonstrances to the wicked.

As mentioned earlier, the last three plays in the Chester cycle are concerned with eschatology. For example, in XXII, *The Prophets of the Antichrist*, the characters of Ezechielle, Zacharias, an Expositor, Daniel, and Iohannes Evangelista are introduced, and, beginning with *l.* 261, there follows a list of fifteen signs of doom. As Craig has pointed out, this play is actually an extended prologue to XXIII, *The Coming of Antichrist*, which, in turn, introduces the characters of Enoch and Helyas and, once again, employs an Expositor as interpreter. Although it frequently resembles the plots of the earlier Antichrist plays, *The Coming of Antichrist* occasionally asserts its independence and omits, for example, the episodes of the Roman emperor so prominent in the Adso play and the Tegernsee *Antichrist*. Indeed, a major portion of the Chester plot is concerned with Antichrist's attempts to convince the kings, by his dubious

miracles, that he is the one true god. His overthrow, as well, is achieved by quite different means in each of these dramas. In the Adso version, he dies upon contact with Christ's breath; in the Tegernsee drama, he is destroyed by a thunderbolt when he proclaims himself the true god; and in the Chester *The Coming of Antichrist*, he is thwarted by Michael and taken into Hell by the First and Second Devils.

With XXIV, *The Last Judgment*, the terminal play in the Chester cycle, one may determine to what extent the theme of the judgment play has, by now, been amplified in a comparison with the relatively unembellished York play. Like its predecessors, *The Last Judgment* adheres to the main features of its source, making use of the simple dramatic frame of the Summons, Judgment, and Reward (Punishment), however with the following expansions: (1) the souls awaiting judgment are named *Papa*, *Rex*, *Imperator*, and *Regina*, their good or bad qualities designated by the addition of *Saluatus* or *Damnatus* (thus, *Papa Saluatus*, *Papa Damnatus*, etc.); (2) Demon Secundus challenges Christ for the souls of the wicked; and (3) Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each testify that he has warned mankind to be watchful for the approach of Judgment Day.

The following table reveals the characters and events which occur in the development of these eschatological plays, noting the significant amplifications of the themes of Judgment and Antichrist:

Judgment Plays	Characters	Events
<i>Sponsus</i> (11th or 12th Century?)	Bridegroom Wise Virgins (5) Foolish Virgins (5) Gabriel Merchants (?) Chorus	(1) Choral warning of Advent; (2) Gabriel's warning and review of the Life of Christ; (3) The search by the Foolish Virgins for oil from Wise Virgins and Merchants; (4) The Advent of Christ; (5) Judgment and sentencing; (6) Casting the Virgins into the Inferno.
York, <i>The Judgment Day</i> (1378)	God Angels (3) Good Souls (2) Apostles (2) Jesus Devils (2) Bad Souls (?)	(1) God's summons to all Creation; (2) Repentance of Good Souls; (3) Fright of Evil Souls; (4) The Advent; (5) Jesus and Apostles; (6) Jesus' account of Crucifixion; (7) Assignment to the right hand of God; (8) Casting of Evil Souls into Hell.
Coventry, <i>Domesday</i> 1392)	<i>Innovations:</i> Michael Peter (Gabriel)	<i>Innovations:</i> (1) Earthquake and fire; (2) The branding of the Devils' victims.
Towneley, <i>Judicium</i> (15th century)	<i>Innovations:</i> 1 Devil	<i>Innovations:</i> (1) Long comic scene between the

	Tutivillus 2 Good Souls	Devils and Tutivillus; (2) Increased importance in roles of Devils.
Chester, <i>The Last Judgment</i> (1604 text)	<i>Innovations:</i> Pope Matthew Mark John Thieves (2) Papa Imperator } Saluatus Rex Regina Saluata Papa Imperator } Damnatus Rex Regina Damnata Justiciarius Damnatus Mercator Damnatus	<i>Innovations:</i> (1) Four Prophets' warnings to mankind to prepare for Judgment.

Plays of Antichrist	Characters	Events
Adso, <i>Libellus de Antichristo</i> (10th Century)	Antichrist Christians Jews Roman Emperor Enoch Elijah	(1) The Coming of Anti- christ to Jerusalem; (2) Antichrist's tormenting of the righteous; (3) Anti- christ's proclaiming him- self the Son of God; (4) His occupation of the temple and performance of "miracles"; (5) The branding of his victims; (6) The Roman emperor's surrendering of the crown; (7) The exposure of Antichrist by Enoch and Elijah.
Tegernsee, <i>Ludus de Advento et Enteritu Antichristi</i> (12th Century)	Kings, France, Germany, Greece, Teutons, Babylonia, Jerusalem Gentilitas Ecclesia Hypocrites Heresy Synagoga (Enoch and Elijah)	(1) The plans of the Roman emperor to con- quer France, Greece, Jerusalem; (2) The at- tack upon Jerusalem by King of Babylonia; (3) Hypocrites' campaigning against the populace and King of Jerusalem; (4) Antichrist's defeat of King of Jerusalem in league with Hypocrites and Heresy; (5) The un- successful attack upon Antichrist by Teutonic King; (6) Synagoga's sub- mission to Antichrist.

Chester, <i>The Prophets of Antichrist</i> (1604)	<i>Innovations:</i> Expositor Ezechielle Zacharias Daniel Iohannes Evangelista	<i>Innovations:</i> (1) Expositor as interpreter; (2) Ezechielle's prophecy of the approach of Judgment Day; (3) Zacharias' prophecy that Enoch and Helyas will reform the world; (4) Daniel's prophecy concerning the four beasts; (5) Iohannes's prophecy that Enoch and Helyas will save God's chosen; (6) Fifteen signs of Doom; (7) the Expositor's warning to man
Chester, <i>The Coming of Antichrist</i> (1604)	<i>Innovations:</i> Michael Doctor	<i>Innovations:</i> (1) Proof of the supremacy of Antichrist; (2) Exchanges between Helyas and Antichrist; (3) Doctor's support of Antichrist; (4) Helyas' exposure of Antichrist; (5) Michael's thwarting of Antichrist; (6) The ascension of Enoch and Helyas.

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This study reveals that the Judgment play progressed from the relatively simple *Sponsus* of six characters and six movements to the much more expansive Chester play of *The Last Judgment* of twenty-three characters and at least nine actions. Similarly, the Antichrist plays show amplification from the Adso *Antichristo* to involve two separate plays which terminate the Chester cycle. Always discernible is the framework upon which these variations of the eschatological theme have been arranged, especially true in the case of the Judgment plays in the English cycles.

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