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A STUDY OF THE FORMATION AND AUSPICES OF THE
LUDUS COVENTRIAE. [Portions of Text in Middle
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Rice University, Ph.D., 1973
Language and Literature, general

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A STUDY OF THE FORMATION AND AUSPICES
OF THE LUDUS COVENTRIAE

by

Mary Lampland Tobin

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis Director's signature:

Thomas D Kelly

Houston, Texas

May, 1973

Abstract

A STUDY OF THE FORMATION AND AUSPICES OF THE LUDUS COVENTRIAE

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Though anomalous in a number of ways in comparison to the other Middle English Corpus Christi cycles, the Ludus Coventriae has traditionally been thought to have developed, as did its analogues, under civic auspices. This assumption has set expectations against which the cycle is found to be wanting: there are no signs of an imagination of comic originality like the "Wakefield Master"'s, nor are there parallels to the "York Realist"'s episodes of fabliau-like digression. What has been seen to distinguish the Ludus Coventriae instead is a so-called ecclesiastical tone, supposedly a detraction from effectiveness as drama. However, this idea of incompatibility between ecclesiastical qualities and dramatic interest is not borne out by the plays. Rather, they show theatrically powerful effects applied to stirring faith and devotion. Among the differences of this cycle from its analogues is that it reflects greater ingenuity in the adapting of non-dramatic material--including homily, devotional narrative, liturgy, and visual devotional images--to dramatic form.

In view of these contrasts, the approach of this study has been to re-examine the Ludus Coventriae without the pre-supposition of civic auspices. The goal has been to form a more complete understanding of the qualities that distinguish

this cycle by exploring the apparent interests and aims of the dramatist, and the influences which they reflect.

Chapter One is an examination of the evidence on which arguments attributing the cycle to the city of Lincoln have been based. The outcome is recognition that this argument rests on unsound inferences from scanty documents. Thus, the way is cleared to consider the possibility for auspices of another kind.

Results of studying the Ludus Coventriae manuscript are presented in Chapter Two. The characteristics of British Museum MS. Cotton Vespasian D.viii suggest that instead of making a polished "official" copy of texts in the possession of guilds, the person responsible for the Ludus Coventriae book was directly involved in amalgamating plays and parts of plays which had not been combined before his book was made. This conclusion is based on correlations among the pattern in which several paper types are spread through the manuscript, irregularities in the lengths of quires, and variations in the quality of the main scribe's hand. The importance of the conclusion is that it warrants analyzing the plays from the assumption of authorship by a single craftsman who shaped their content at the time the manuscript was made.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five analyze the content of the two most distinctive portions, the Passion and Marian sequences, toward determining the playwright's apparent interests and aims. Chapter Three affirms the hypothesis of single authorship by demonstrating the intellectual unity evident in sophisticated dramatic structure. In Chapter Four it is

argued that the differences of the Ludus Coventriae Passion from its analogues are most satisfactorily explained by concluding that this playwright intended to write drama generically closer to devotional narrative. Chapter Five uses an iconographical approach toward finding cultural relationships of the Marian plays.

One outcome of these studies of Ludus Coventriae content is to find one sign after another of association between the plays and Franciscan approaches to doctrine and devotion. Consequently, Chapter Six relates the latest understandings about provenance based on dialect, to the possibility of Franciscan auspices.

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this study is the Corpus Christi cycle of mystery plays known as the Ludus Coventriae. There are four extant Middle English examples of this genre, of which the main defining characteristic is a sequence of episodes of sacred history, beginning with the Creation, extending through certain standard Old and New Testament events, and ending with the Last Judgment. Medieval records document that the three analogues of the Ludus Coventriae were first produced in the 1370's, that the productions were supervised by city governments in York, Chester, and Wakefield, and that production responsibility was shared by occupational guilds. The practice was to assign each episode or play within the cycle to a specific craft organization (or perhaps to several in cases of especially demanding plays or smaller guilds). The roles are thought to have been filled by the guildsmen themselves, rarely by anyone who could be called a professional actor. A major source of guild expenses for the plays was the use of scenery-carrying wagons, which together with the street served as playing area. Thus in the case of these three cycles, performance of the entire narrative was not continuous on a single stage, but rather each guild's segment was seen on a platform of

its own, the stages being successively drawn into position before a stationary audience. Although the initial purpose of the productions was to mark a sacred festival with devotional pageantry, town records show that the commercial benefits from increased tourism helped determine that the custom was maintained. Cycle segments attributed to the "Wakefield Master" and the "York Realist" show that the religious occasion and subject matter had no inhibiting effect on invention of comical and naturalistic fabliau-like additions to scriptural story.

Although the Ludus Coventriae conforms to the Corpus Christi genre in scope and selection of episodes, this about marks the end of its resemblance to the other English cycles. To mention only the most conspicuous differences, there is no evidence in the manuscript of the plays being assigned to guilds, and the Proclamation suggests performance by a traveling company; at least two large gatherings of episodes, one of them the Passion section, are written for performance by a single cast in an arena with scaffold-like platforms establishing scene; the other of these two groups expands the usual beginning of New Testament material by adding apocryphal episodes from the early life of the Virgin; and while the cycle lacks any comic scenes, original or otherwise, it shows greater ingenuity in the adapting of non-dramatic material--including homily, devotional narrative, liturgy, and visual devotional images--to dramatic

form. In spite of these differences, it has traditionally been assumed that the Creation-to-Doomsday content and the structure in self-contained episodes (not fully true of the Passion plays) imply civic sponsorship of the kind on record in Chester, Wakefield, and York. Until recently challenged on linguistic grounds, a case for regarding the Ludus Coventriae as the civic cycle of Lincoln was widely accepted. Now that dialect is recognized as pointing to Norfolk, there has been speculation that this text is an early form of a cycle sponsored by Norwich.

The premise on which this study has been based is that differences as great as those of the Ludus Coventriae from other Corpus Christi cycles must reflect a basic difference in circumstances of origin. The goal has been to find evidence, both within the text and in relationships of its content to the cultural milieu, that will help to illuminate the mystery of auspices. The findings described in the following pages suggest that the plays of the Ludus Coventriae were performed by a company with a strong mission to spread the faith and inspire devotion. If not Franciscans themselves, the playwright and actors were dedicated to Franciscan causes and espoused a style of spirituality identified most closely with the Franciscan Order.

Investigation began with a study of the manuscript (British Museum MS. Cotton Vespasian D.viii). The most important result was seeing details of its appearance which

indicated a process of formation different from the model hypothesized for the civic cycles. Correlations among positions of differing paper types, variations in the quality of the script, and irregularities in quire lengths suggest that the scribe had not simply made transcriptions of texts in the possession of guilds, but that he was combining plays and parts of plays which had had varying kinds of origin. The Passion section appears to have been copied earlier than the material in preceding and following quires, and there are signs of addition and revision at the time of compilation in the larger manuscript. Though belonging to the latest stage of copying, the plays in the Marian group also show signs of an amalgamation by the scribe of previously separate parts. The general significance of manuscript characteristics is that they show the Ludus Coventriae to be a collection of material deliberately chosen and adapted by a single compiler-dramatist, rather than a record of plays written and revised (by perhaps numerous authors) as varying civic and guild leadership determined.

The Passion and Marian sections of the manuscript show the greatest degree of the compiler's creative involvement with the text. They also contain the greatest divergences from analogous parts of the other cycles. It would seem then that they offer the most promising possibilities for finding distinctive aims, which may in turn lead to insights about auspices. Consequently, study of dramatic content has

been focused on these two major portions.

Given the desire to find reasons for the uniqueness of the Marian material and the Passion sequence in comparison to analogous mystery drama, it was necessary to look for relationships of these Ludus Coventriae plays to material in other contemporary forms of expression. For the Passion section, understanding what the playwright was about appeared to involve at least two considerations. Since the theological significance of the Passion events had been formulated in several different ways, the intellectual content of the play was studied to determine what interpretation governed this playwright's handling of the biblical material. The most important result of this approach was to see the hypothesis of a single controlling imagination affirmed by the intellectual unity of the sequence. The second approach suggested by the Passion section was to look for possible influences behind the playwright's continual appeal to spectators to see the pertinence of the action to their own spiritual health. The outcome of this inquiry was to conclude that the Ludus Coventriae playwright had conceptualized his drama as a form generically closer to devotional narrative than the other English Passions are. The fact that the prototype of devotional narrative is the Franciscan Meditationes vitae Christi forms one step toward the conclusion about auspices.

Judging the significance of the Marian sequence is difficult because of the thoroughness with which Marian adoration

had permeated Christianity by the late Middle Ages. In view of this, some method had to be found which would illuminate cultural relationships of especially unusual details. The approach chosen was an iconographical survey to determine where, besides the mind of this playwright, there was interest in events like the apocryphal presentation of the Virgin in the temple. Here again signs of Franciscan sponsorship emerged, from both the locations of iconographical parallels and related doctrinal controversy.

Though the quest for auspices has determined the shape of this study, it has not been an end in itself. The Ludus Coventriae has literary merit and interest which are bound to miss recognition as long as the cycle is read with expectations set by the plays of Chester, Wakefield, and York. The uniqueness of the Ludus Coventriae makes it of particular interest as a segment of English dramatic heritage. The justification of this quest for its origin is that it has led to seeing greater variousness in the craft and art of dramaturgy in the Middle Ages.

Chapter One

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CURRENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE LUDUS COVENTRIAE: A CASE FOR REVISION

For many years scholarly interest in the Ludus Coventriae (British Museum MS. Cotton Vespasian D.viii) centered around a tradition that dates back to 1656. In that year William Dugdale, going at least partly on a note attached to the manuscript by a seventeenth-century librarian, related this mystery cycle text to the plays which supposedly had been performed by the Greyfriars of Coventry.¹ It is recognized now that when Sir Robert Cotton's librarian Richard James wrote on the fly-leaf of MS. Vespasian D.viii, ". . . vulgo dicitur hic liber Ludus Coventriae sive ludus corporis Christi . . .," he understood "Ludus Coventriae" as a generic term, parallel with "ludus corporis Christi." James may have become acquainted with the phrase "Ludus Coventriae" during his years at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Robert Hegge, from whom apparently James acquired the manuscript for Cotton, was a fellow of Corpus Christi College. In the area of Oxford, the most prominent city with records of Corpus Christi play production in the Middle Ages is Coventry--hence the custom that in that area the Corpus Christi play, as James says, ". . . vulgo dicitur . . . Ludus Coventriae"² Dugdale has traditionally been considered not to have under-

stood "Ludus Coventriae" generically. Having read James's note in MS. Vespasian D.viii and having learned that medieval Coventry was famous for plays acted there on Corpus Christi Day--before 1538, supposedly by the Greyfriars--Dugdale wrote,

Before the suppression of the Monasteries their City /Coventry/ was very famous for the pageants that were play'd therein, upon Corpus Christi day; which occasioning very great confluence of people thither from far and near was of no small benefit thereto; which pageants being acted with mighty state and reverence by the friers of this house /the Greyfriars/ had Theaters for several scenes, very large and high, placed upon wheels and drawn to all the eminent parts of the City for the better advantage of Spectators: And contain'd the story of the New Testament, composed into old English Rithme, as appeareth by an antient MS.^p intituled Ludus Corporis Christi or Ludus Coventriae /a note in the margin here gives the reference: "p In Bibl. Cotton. sub effigie Vesp. D.9" (so apparently by a slip for viii)7. I have been told by some old people who in their younger days were eyewitnesses of these pageants so acted that the yearly confluence of people to see that show was extraordinary great.³

It has never been questioned that Dugdale meant to attribute the Ludus Coventriae to Coventry. Yet there are other issues of interpretation that remain unsettled. An example is the debated authoritativeness of Dugdale on Greyfriar actors. The idea of the acting of the Coventry Franciscans could be simply an unexamined borrowing from Richard James. Besides describing the contents of MS. Vespasian D.viii as "Ludus Coventriae sive ludus corporis Christi," James wrote, "Elenchus contentorum in hoc codice Contenta novi testamenti scenice expressa et actitata olim

per monachos sive fratres mendicantes"4 There has been controversy over how reliable James himself should be considered, since he mentions only New Testament material, while the cycle contains seven Old Testament plays as well. Resolving the question of James's reliability depends on discovering when the manuscript leaves were first assembled as they are in the present volume--information which appears to be irretrievable. K. S. Block poses the reasonable question, "Is it possible that this mistake has any connection with the fact that R. Hegge's second signature is found on a blank folio preceding the second Passion group which shows signs of having been at some time an outside leaf?"5 Like James, Dugdale writes as if there were no Old Testament plays, and he uses phrases very close to James's Latin (e.g., "composed into English Rithme" for "scribitur metris anglicanis").6 The significance of the first of these points is made problematical by the fact that Dugdale and James both may have identified as the Ludus Coventriae a text less complete than the one which we now know by that name. Miss Block points out that Dugdale's note giving the manuscript number of Ludus Coventriae reads "In bibl. Cotton. sub effigie Vesp. D.9." Since the leaf at the beginning of the second half of the Passion play (f. 164) shows signs of having been an outside leaf at one time,7 one must consider the possibility that "sub effigie Vesp. D.9" is not an error, but rather an indication that at the time of James and Dugdale, one part of what we call the Ludus Coventriae

was classified as "D.8" and another part (presumably the second half of the Passion play to the end) classified as "D.9."⁸ If this were so, then neither James nor Dugdale would have been describing the contents inaccurately, and Dugdale would not necessarily have been uncritically borrowing from James. In any case, Dugdale altered James's statement in eliminating the alternative of acting "per monachos." The question that remains is whether Dugdale had definite facts behind his assertion of mystery play acting by Coventry Greyfriars. Miss Block, for one, has not rejected the possibility.⁹

A second unresolved problem in interpreting Dugdale arises from his vagueness about the auspices of the plays mentioned by the "old people who in their younger days were eye-witnesses of these pageants so acted." Whether or not Coventry's Greyfriars acted, the city did in fact have a mystery cycle produced by craft guilds. In order to have told Dugdale about plays seen before the dissolution of the Greyfriars' house in 1538, his "eye-witnesses" would have had to reach ages past 100. However, people of a more likely lifespan could well have spoken to Dugdale about seeing craft guild plays, since these were not "laid down" in Coventry before 1580.¹⁰ What is impossible to determine is whether Dugdale recognized that the plays seen by his acquaintances must have been produced under auspices other than the Greyfriars'. If he did recognize this point, then his state-

ment could mean simply that the eye-witnesses saw plays produced with "Theaters for several scenes, very large and high, placed upon wheels and drawn to all the eminent parts of the City for the better advantage of Spectators" (i.e., "so acted" could refer to the production method Dugdale described while speaking of plays prior to the suppression of the monasteries). Perhaps his vagueness about sponsorship is deliberate, resulting from his not knowing of any mystery play text associated with Coventry other than MS. Vespasian D.viii, and from the absence of any signs in that text of alternatives to Greyfriar (or monastic--vide James's note) auspices.

Until the late nineteenth century, literary historians regarded Dugdale's attribution of the Ludus Coventriae as authoritative. In fact, scholars worked at making their findings harmonious with Dugdale's position. Thomas Sharp's main contribution in the Dissertation on the Coventry Mysteries (1825) was to show that Coventry had had a mystery cycle produced by craft guilds and consisting of plays other than the contents of the Ludus Coventriae. But not questioning the belief that the Ludus Coventriae title identified that cycle with Coventry, he presented arguments for the acceptance of both Dugdale's position and his own findings. Sharp pointed out that there was documentary support for Dugdale's mention of Greyfriar actors, though it was only "a solitary mention in one MS. not older than the beginning of Charles I's reign of Henry VII's visit to the

city in 1492 'to see the Plays acted by the Grey Friars.'"11 While his phrasing called attention to the apparent slenderness of Dugdale's evidence, Sharp nevertheless accepted the attribution of the Ludus Coventriae to Coventry Greyfriars on the ground of Dugdale's authority as a historian of the locality.¹² We shall see shortly that interpretation of what is generally considered Dugdale's only evidence has continued to be a controversial subject in our own time.

When J. O. Halliwell prepared the first complete edition of the Ludus Coventriae in 1841, he acknowledged the thinness of evidence for Greyfriar auspices, but he stopped short of dismissing the possibility. His rather meager examination of dialect led him to say that the assertion of a Coventry origin for the cycle was not contradicted by linguistic features.¹³ Responding to the hint in the Proclamation that the plays were presented in more than one town,¹⁴ Halliwell proposed that either the Proclamation belonged to a different series of plays or that the Ludus Coventriae was occasionally performed elsewhere than in Coventry. Then he added, ". . . it must be confessed that the conclusion would suit a company of strolling players much better than the venerable order of the Grey Friars."¹⁵ Halliwell would seem to have had a less than adequate conception of late medieval Franciscans if he saw their "venerability" precluding itinerant acting of devotional plays.

Studying the Ludus Coventriae along with the other Mid-

dle English cycles in 1889,¹⁶ Alexander Hohlfeld was concerned both about the apparent existence of two cycles from Coventry--one associated with craft guild auspices and the other with Greyfriars--and about the suggestion in the Ludus Coventriae Proclamation that the plays it introduces were presented by a traveling troupe. Fitting Greyfriar actors, the existence of a separate Coventry civic cycle, and the Ludus Coventriae Proclamation into one hypothesis, Hohlfeld reasoned that competition from the cycle produced by craft guilds forced the Coventry Greyfriars to take their cycle into towns in the environs of Coventry, the names of such towns being inserted in the Proclamation (for "N. town," l. 527) when the location of each succeeding production was announced. Hohlfeld commented on the fact that Dugdale's attribution of the Ludus Coventriae apparently had only James's note as its basis. But finding it possible to work out an hypothesis that accounts for two cycles in Coventry, he carried evaluation of Dugdale's view no further.

Thoroughly trained, precise examination of dialect and scribal features was the approach to the Ludus Coventriae that produced the first substantial challenges of Dugdale's reliability. Using this approach, in 1892 Max Kramer published the conclusion that the original home of the Ludus Coventriae was in the southern-most East Midlands, but that the extant manuscript copy reflects the northern East Midlands.¹⁷ Ten Brink assigned the dialect and scribal pecu-

liarities to the northern East Midlands alone,¹⁸ and he was followed by Pollard.¹⁹ Both ten Brink and Pollard affirmed that the cycle belonged to a strolling company and were not concerned with identifying a specific town of origin.

With Dugdale now effectively contradicted on the attribution of the Ludus Coventriae to Coventry, it must be asked whether there is any point in giving further attention to his description of Greyfriar actors. One reason for not dropping the matter altogether appears in a late seventeenth-century manuscript catalogue of the Cotton collection. The author of the catalogue, Dr. Thomas Smith, wrote in 1696, "Vespasianus D.viii. A collection of plays in old English metre, i.e. Dramata sacra in quibus exhibentur historiae veteris et N. Testamenti, introductis quasi in scenam personis illic memoratis quas secum invicem colloquentes pro ingenio fingit Poeta, Videntur olim coram populo sive ad instruendum sive ad placendum a Fratribus mendicantibus repraesentata."²⁰ It is clear from Smith's mention of Old as well as New Testament material that he was not relying exclusively on James's fly-leaf note. The fact that he writes of only mendicant friars as the actors and not of the monks James mentioned as an alternative possibility may indicate that he had seen and accepted Dugdale's comment on the manuscript, published forty years earlier. But then why, one wonders, did he say nothing about Dugdale's identification of the plays with Coventry? Smith's note allows--though very tenuously--the speculation

that in mentioning mendicant friar actors, he spoke from knowledge of more than James's and Dugdale's comments.

As we have seen, linguistic and scribal details make it very likely that Dugdale was mistaken in identifying MS. Vespasian D.viii as the play performed by Coventry Greyfriars. Yet considering the notes of Richard James and Dr. Smith, who mention friar actors without pointing to a specific region, one becomes curious about the extent of Dugdale's error. He asserts a connection between Franciscans and the specific kind of play called ludus corporis Christi. If he was mistaken in concluding that the Coventry Greyfriars performed the specific ludus corporis Christi in MS. Vespasian D.viii, might he have been accurate to the extent that they performed another version of the ludus corporis Christi kind? And if Franciscans in Coventry performed a ludus corporis Christi, then might not their confreres in the East Midlands have done so too, leaving the Ludus Coventriae manuscript as a record of their performance? Admittedly these questions are very speculative, but identification of the original Ludus Coventriae auspices cannot be considered a closed matter until they have been confronted. We shall return to them in later sections of this study.

In the twentieth century, attention has been diverted from the possibility of other than civic auspices of the Ludus Coventriae by efforts to identify this cycle with the city of Lincoln. The information that initiated these ef-

forts appeared in an essay written in 1900 by Arthur F. Leach.²¹ The influential part of the essay was not his discussion of the Ludus Coventriae, which was limited to very brief remarks. Having pointed out that evidence is lacking to support either Coventry origin or Greyfriar auspices, Leach affirmed only that "The banns of the play, as was long ago pointed out by T. Sharp in his Dissertation on the Coventry Mysteries, show that they were written for a company of strolling players, for they have the name of the town a blank, represented by N. for nomen."²²

The section of the essay which helped to form the dominant issue in twentieth-century Ludus Coventriae scholarship includes no reference to any extant text. Leach's objective in this portion was only to extrapolate a picture of dramatic activity in Lincoln from the city's available medieval records. Although Leach himself was not concerned with identifying extant texts to match the dramatic activity on record, his interpretations of the Lincoln documents have formed the basis of subsequent arguments for attributing the Ludus Coventriae to that city. Thus it becomes necessary to examine his evidence and interpretations in detail.

Leach begins the description of drama in medieval Lincoln with the evidence in a roll copied apparently in the reign of Henry VIII. It seems to be a list of town officials and important events chronologically arranged. Leach finds in the document ten notations reflecting dramatic activity:

a Ludus de Pater Noster mentioned in 1397-8, 1410-1, 1424-5, and 1456-7; a Ludus Sancti Laurencii mentioned in 1441-2; a Ludus Sancti Susanne in 1447-8; a Ludus de Kyng Robert of Cesill in 1452-3; a Ludus de Sancta Clara in 1455-6; and a Ludus Corporis Christi in 1471-2 and 1473-4. There are no further references to drama before the roll ends in 7 Henry VIII (1515). Before listing the entries about plays, Leach writes by way of introduction, "Interspersed among these lists of town officials and notable events are the following references to the play."²³ The preconception that causes him to refer to the different ludi as "the play" becomes clear in the next phase of his description, which is based on four additional records: (1) The Act Books of the Cathedral Chapter show that in 1469 the Chapter "provided for the expenses of Sir J. Hanson, chaplain, about the show (visum) of the Assumption of the Virgin on St. Anne's Day last past, given in the nave of the church" ²⁴ (2) ". . . in the second earliest existing City Minute-book on December 31, 13 Henry VIII, 1521 /sic (conflicts with date of Henry's accession, 1509); Hardin Craig finds the records unclear as to the year of this order ²⁵, at a Corporation meeting, it was 'agreed that Paternoster Play shall be played this year.' Also that every alderman shall make a gown for the 'kyngys' in the pageant in the procession of St. Anne's Day."²⁶ (3) A half year later, on June 13, 1522, ²⁷ "it was ordered that "every occupacion within this city shall prepare and

make redy their pageant to be brought forth the same day
Leach takes this as St. Anne's Day, July 26⁷ accordyng
 to the old laudable custom.' The mayor was to 'ayde the
 Graceman in the ordering of the same,' while two persons
 were appointed to collect in each parish."²⁸ (4) A record
 (presumably also in the City Minute-book) with a mysterious
 date, November 12, 31 Henry VII (cited by Leach without com-
 ment; Henry VII reigned for only twenty-four years)²⁹ is para-
 phrased, "it was agreed by the Common Council that a large
 door should be made at the late schoolhouse that the pageants
 may be sent in, and rent was to be charged for warehousing of
 4d. for every pageant, 'and Noy schippe 12d.'"³⁰ When Hardin
 Craig re-examined the same published version of these records
 that Leach had used, he found minor differences from Leach's
 transcription. None, however, alters the general conclusions.

The facts in the records as Leach read them are limited
 to the following: On St. Anne's Day in 1469 there was a
 "sight" having to do with the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.
 It was paid for by the Lincoln Cathedral Chapter, shown in
 the nave, and apparently accomplished primarily through the
 efforts of a chaplain named J. Hanson. In 1521 (Leach's ac-
 curacy about this date is questionable), the Lincoln Corpora-
 tion either ordered or authorized that a Paternoster play
 would be performed in the coming year. It ordered also that
 gowns for kings in the St. Anne's Day procession would be pro-
 vided by the aldermen. About six weeks before that same St.

Anne's Day, the Corporation ordered citizens grouped by occupation to prepare their "pageants" for the traditional St. Anne's Day observance. The city government lent its support to organizing the observance and apparently to collecting funds from the citizenry to meet costs. Citizen groups owned vehicles called pageants which were stored in rented space in a former school house. A pageant representing Noah's ship was three times more costly to store than any other.

The point of repeating this information is to highlight the element of unfounded inference in Leach's interpretation. Commenting on the four records from the Chapter Acts and City Minute-book, described above, he writes, "Here then we see that as at Beverley the play [my emphasis] was a city function, and that the various craft guilds of the city acted, or were responsible for, different acts or scenes in the play; while the reference to the gracemen--a title peculiar to Lincolnshire apparently, for the alderman or head of a gild--shows that the Play of St. Anne, at all events, was like the Play of Pater Noster at York, as evidenced by the still extant account roll of its receipts, under the general superintendence of a special gild."³¹ It will be noticed that the records from which these conclusions are drawn include no explicit mention of an acted play at either St. Anne's Day or any other occasion. Leach has apparently assumed "pageants" to imply the presentation of dramatized story, and the St. Anne's Day procession to imply the presentation of

dramatized story, and the St. Anne's Day procession to imply processional drama. Yet context makes it clear that "pageant" as used by the Lincoln Minutes-keeper (see particularly the direct quotation in item 3 above) means "vehicle"--perhaps like the parade float familiar to us. There is nothing to indicate that the procession of pageants included drama. It appears that Leach was overly anxious to find evidence that Lincoln, like some other English cities prominent in the Middle Ages, observed the custom of annually producing a cycle of mystery plays using wagon stages. His response to the fact that Lincoln records mention specific ludi besides the St. Anne's Day event is to assume that the subject chosen for the city's play varied from year to year, the imagined "Play of St. Anne" being one of the several alternatives.

Additional references to St. Anne's Day observances--these in the Chapter Acts--cause Leach to make further assertions about cycle drama in Lincoln. He notes an entry of June, 1483, which he translates as saying that the Dean and Chapter, "discussing the procession of St. Anne to be made by the citizens of Lincoln on St. Anne's Day next, determined that they would have the play or speech (sermonium) /sic; Hardin Craig was later to point out that Leach misread sermonium for serimonium⁷ of the Assumption or Coronation of the Blessed Mary repaired and got ready, and played and shown in the procession aforesaid, as usual in the nave of the said church."³² The entry goes on to record details about how

costs were to be covered, but neither this information nor the details quoted above support the inferences drawn by Leach. Interpreting this item, he writes, "Here then we find the Dean and Chapter being responsible like one of the city guilds for the performance of one of the scenes of St. Anne's Play, and that one the Assumption or Coronation of the Virgin, undoubtedly the crowning scene of the play, in the very nave of the cathedral itself;--and a grand theatre it must have been."³³

In the remainder of his discussion of drama in Lincoln, Leach cites the following documentary information: (1) The Chapter Acts record a decision by the canons on September 13, 1488, to retain one Robert Clarke in a chantry position because "he is so ingenious in the show and play called the Ascension, given every year on St. Anne's Day."³⁴ (2) In 1517, provision was made for the appointment of a St. Anne's priest, one of whose responsibilities was "yearly to help to the bringing forth and preparing of the pageants in St. Anne's Gild."³⁵ (3) In 1521, the mayor made it known that Mr. Dighton, the grammar school master, had provided for a chantry priest to be appointed after his death, with a proviso that the priest "shall yearly be ready to help to the preparing and bringing forth the procession of St. Anne's Day."³⁶ (4) Also in 1521, two aldermen were ordered to "bring forth" the Gild of St. Anne under penalty of 40s. When they complained of difficulty in getting proper garments and "honour-

ments" for the pageants because of the plague, "it was agreed to borrow a gown of Lady Powis for one of the Maries, and the other Mary to be arrayed in the crimson gown of velvet belonging to the gild."³⁷ (5) Minute-book records in 1539, 1540, and 1547 seem to reflect interruptions in the custom of yearly St. Anne's Day observances. Part of the 1539 agreement that "St. Anne's Gild shall go up on the Sunday next after St. Anne's Day, in manner and form as it hath been in times past" was that anyone who failed to do so would be required to pay 3s.4d. The 1540 order for St. Anne's Day included a stipulation that the "occupations" should "bring forth their pageants according to the old custom, 'and every occupation that hath their pageants broken to make them ready against the day, on pain of forfeiting 20s.'"³⁸ (6) In 1547, about two weeks before St. Anne's Day, an order was issued that the "procession and show" should take place on the Sunday after the feast day as in times past.³⁹ In view of the unfriendliness of the religious reformers to practices like Marian devotion, the likelihood is great that Lincoln's St. Anne's Day tradition was suppressed soon after that year.

(7) Queen Mary's accession saw a revival of St. Anne's Guild activity in the city, but there is a hint that in 1554 at least, the former tradition was modified somewhat. A Minute-book entry dated July 6, 1554 (i.e., shortly after St. Anne's Day), contains the first specific mention since 1471-2 and 1473-4 of a Corpus Christi play in Lincoln. The record says

that in Secret Council "it was ordered that St. Anne's Gild with Corpus Christi Play shall be brought forth and played this year; and that every craft shall bring forth their pageants as hath been accustomed."⁴⁰ The phrasing allows at least two interpretations. Leach regards the Corpus Christi Play as synonymous with the bringing forth of the pageants "as hath been accustomed." An equally likely meaning is that the bringing forth of pageants followed the old procession tradition (the documentary references to which give no explicit evidence of dialogue drama), while the presentation of a Corpus Christi play was a separate event. One wonders if it might have been a climax to the procession like the visus of the Assumption which the cathedral clergy had provided many years earlier in conjunction with the St. Anne's Day procession. No illumination of the issue is provided by the last record of religious drama in Lincoln, an entry of June 3, 1555. It says simply that St. Anne's Guild is to be brought forth according to the familiar custom.

On the basis of the evidence surveyed above, and with the assumption that "Corpus Christi play" means a Creation-to-Doomsday cycle, Leach reaches the following conclusion about medieval drama in Lincoln:

The Play of St. Anne in the reign of Henry VIII appears to have completely superseded the Corpus Christi and the Pater Noster Play. Thus did the cult of the Mother tend to eclipse that of the Son and His works. But from the mention of four plays, four distinct pageants or acts, Noah's ship, the Three Kings of Cologne, the Ascension, and the Coronation of the Virgin,

it seems most likely that the Play of St. Anne did not differ much from the Corpus Christi Play. Like the latter, it was a conglomeration of diverse plays on incidents in Biblical history, performed on St. Anne's Day instead of Corpus Christi Day, and with special scenes added in honour of the Virgin and her mother. There are almost yearly mentions in the city minute-books of the gild and pageants of St. Anne's Play, which point to its identity in all but name and day with the Corpus Christi Play, while in 1554 it is even called by the latter name.⁴¹

Leach published his extrapolated picture of drama in medieval Lincoln only shortly after ten Brink, Kramer, and Pollard had associated the Ludus Coventriae with the northern West Midlands on the basis of dialect and scribal characteristics. Leach had not identified any extant texts with the dramatic activity he found recorded in the northern West Midland city of Lincoln, and ten Brink, Kramer, and Pollard, influenced by the suggestion in the Proclamation of a traveling troupe, had not sought signs of affiliation between the Ludus Coventriae and any particular civic auspices.

The initial step toward identifying the Ludus Coventriae as the civic cycle of Lincoln was taken by C. M. Gayley in 1907.⁴² The way had been prepared for him, to some extent, by Chambers, who several years earlier had developed his account of drama in Lincoln partly from Leach and, more importantly, had disputed the notion of Ludus Coventriae production by itinerant players. Chambers wrote, "As to the dialect I offer no opinion; I am sorry not to have been able

to see M. Kramer, Sprache und Heimath der Coventry-Plays. But I do not think that the strolling company is proved. The vexillatores may be merely proclaimers of banns sent around the villages hard by the town where the play was given. And 'N.' may be an abbreviation for a definite town name. Northampton (q.v.) has been suggested; but would not scan. Norwich (q.v.) would; and there might conceivably be a cycle played by the guild of St. Luke at Norwich before the crafts took the responsibility for the Whitsun plays from it."⁴³ Observing the unusually full treatment of legends of the Virgin, Chambers suggested that the Ludus Coventriae might have been written for performance on St. Anne's Day, which was the time indicated for the Massacre of the Innocents in the Digby MS. and for the Lincoln cycle (as imagined by Leach). In suggesting Lincoln as the origin of the Ludus Coventriae, Gayley hypothesized correlation between the emphasis in that cycle on legends of the Virgin and the apparent custom in Lincoln of producing a play cycle on St. Anne's Day. He proposed correlation also between the ecclesiastical tone of the Ludus Coventriae and the fact that, as Leach had pointed out, the Lincoln cathedral clergy cooperated with the supposed citizens' cycle by producing one of the plays themselves.⁴⁴

Hardin Craig has been the most persistent spokesman for the Lincoln attribution of the Ludus Coventriae. On account of the authority deriving from his vast knowledge of early

drama, Craig's position has been accepted without much scrutiny. The first stage of his argument about this cycle appeared in 1913.⁴⁵ Obviously influenced by Leach, Chambers, and Gayley, Craig re-emphasized the apparent connection between unusually full treatment of the life of the Virgin and the presumed association of drama with Lincoln's St. Anne's Day observance. In the light of the foregoing evaluation of Leach's inferences, it is surprising to find Craig accepting Leach's model with such minimal tentativeness. Craig wrote, "The somewhat scanty record of the Lincoln plays seems to point to a Corpus Christi play which was transferred to St. Anne's Day, and acted regularly as a St. Anne's play until near the middle of the sixteenth century. It was an ordinary cyclic play with certain features appropriate to St. Anne's Day."⁴⁶ Craig presented the following additional points in his effort to correlate the Ludus Coventriae with Leach's picture of drama in medieval Lincoln:

1. Since there were probably more than three aldermen in Lincoln, the order found by Leach calling for each alderman to supply a silk gown for one of the kings probably corresponds to something other than a Magi play. The Ludus Coventriae happens to include a more likely possibility, a prophet play, which "calls for no less than thirteen kings, and is, moreover, a procession which foretells the birth of Mary, and not of Jesus; it might well, therefore, be regarded as a St. Anne's Day play."⁴⁷

2. Lincoln records indicate both plays staged processionally and acting on a fixed stage. "This state of things is exactly reflected in the Hegge cycle /Craig's preferred title for the Ludus Coventriae7, since the mass of the plays were evidently acted on a fixed stage, and yet pageants were employed in at least two, and probably more, cases."⁴⁸

3. Even though the action in the Ludus Coventriae is generally continuous, numbers in the manuscript divide the cycle into separate episodes, "as if to maintain the identity of the different pageants in the procession, a thing which would have been necessary at Lincoln, since the trading companies were held responsible, according to ancient custom, for the presentation of their pageants in the St. Anne's Day procession."⁴⁹

4. Details of the prologue (i.e., the Proclamation) and the Assumption play in the Ludus Coventriae seem to fit with Leach's idea that a typical Corpus Christi cycle was transferred to St. Anne's Day. "The prologue, which represents an earlier stage of the play, is manifestly intended for a processional play. The manuscript . . . offers interesting confirmation of the later addition to the cycle of the play of the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin, since that play is written in a hand slightly later than that of the body of the cycle."⁵⁰

5. Not only does the property list of the Lincoln Tobias play correspond well, as Leach observed, with what

would have remained from a typical mystery cycle, but the "strange piece of mechanism" of the double cloud corresponds strikingly to the needs of the Ludus Coventriae Assumption play, wherein "St. John . . . reports that he has made the journey upon a 'white cloud'; later St. Peter and St. Paul arrive together on 'diverse clouds.'"⁵¹

The foregoing arguments for attributing the Ludus Coventriae to Lincoln were published in expanded form in 1914, accompanying a master's thesis advised by Craig, Esther L. Swenson's "An Inquiry into the Composition and Staging of Ludus Coventriae."⁵² Craig uses some of Miss Swenson's findings to reinforce his arguments for Lincoln auspices. All of the points of the 1913 article are repeated without change, except that he describes the Assumption play as being in a hand of about the same time as the rest of the manuscript (instead of in a later hand).⁵³ His data consist of excerpts from the Lincoln Corporation Minute-book printed in the Fourteenth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, Appendix 8, which Leach also had used; the quotations available in Leach's essay, from the Lincoln Chapter Acts; and a few medieval records quoted by Canon Wordsworth in his Lincoln Statutes and Notes on Medieval Services in England. The most striking fact about Craig's article is that he proceeds from a complete acceptance of Leach's inference that recorded preparations for processions in Lincoln indicate cyclic mystery drama. This assumption is apparent, for instance, in Craig's explanation of the meaning of "pageant." We have noted above

that in Corporation Minute-book excerpts quoted by Leach (which appear again in more complete form in Craig's article), there is nothing to suggest that the word "pageant" denotes anything other than a decorated vehicle. Assuming that such a vehicle implies drama, Craig writes, "'Pageant' frequently meant the vehicle on which plays were acted and was usually associated with that idea."⁵⁴

Several other points in the 1914 statement of Craig's position are noteworthy. One is the way in which he confronts the suggestion in the Proclamation that the Ludus Coventriae belonged to a traveling troupe. Acknowledging that since Halliwell's edition in 1841, "The idea that Ludus Coventriae is the play-book of a strolling company has been very generally entertained,"⁵⁵ Craig points out that Chambers, however, "does not consider the strolling company hypothesis proved."⁵⁶ Then Craig calls attention to the large numerals in the manuscript which mark off episodes in generally continuous action, and to Miss Swenson's hypothesis that the Proclamation represents "an earlier, purely cyclic stage of the same plays."⁵⁷ We have already seen that he considers the marginal numerals to be a means of defining the portions for which various guilds were responsible. This point and the Swenson hypothesis are reasons for considering the Ludus Coventriae a product of civic auspices in Craig's opinion, and he finishes the argument by observing, "Still Chambers does not rule out the idea that we have to do in

the Hegge cycle with a series of craft-plays. He suggests Norwich and says that the elaborate treatment of the legends of the Virgin suggests a performance, like that of the Lincoln plays [*i.e.*, Leach's extrapolated notion of them⁷], and of the Massacre of the Innocents in the Digby MS., on St. Anne's day (July 26)."⁵⁸

Craig uses details of manuscript appearance besides the marginal numerals to argue for civic auspices. He points out that the Assumption play is not only in a different hand from the rest of the manuscript, but that the first pages of the two-part Passion sequence look as if they had once been outside leaves. "We evidently have to do," he concludes, "with an 'original' which has been made up of old and new parts. It is probably an official document analogous to the Corporation Register at York."⁵⁹ That the manuscript is a compilation of material copied over a substantial time interval cannot be disputed, but there is no reason for necessarily considering it the result of supervision by city officials.

Craig seeks to show that the Ludus Coventriae seems to have been formed in the same way as the cycles of Wakefield, York, and Chester. Yet he recognizes the need to account for the unusual emphasis on the life of the Virgin and the seemingly stronger ecclesiastical influence. For this purpose he finds the Assumption play especially helpful. It will be remembered that Leach discovered records to the effect that the Lincoln cathedral chapter sponsored something called a visus

on the subject of the Assumption, and that in 1483, the chapter agreed to present this visus in conjunction with the St. Anne's Day procession. The Lincoln records indicate that the Assumption visus was customarily presented in the nave of the cathedral, and Craig observes, ". . . the Hegge play of the Assumption of the Virgin makes use of a choir and an organ, as if it were acted in a church."⁶⁰ The evidence of cooperation between clergy and townspeople in dramatic activity looked more significant in 1914 than it has since publication of Harold Gardiner's Mysteries' End (1946). It appeared to Craig that "the remarkable homiletic and apocryphal interest of the Hegge cycle" indicated very unusual production arrangements, since before Gardiner's work it was assumed that civic control of plays implied suppression of religious content. Craig felt that the prominence of Lincoln as an ecclesiastical center and the recorded cooperation between clergy and townspeople not only exactly accounted for the homiletic and apocryphal interest, but also were very significant in being a set of conditions "rare to find in any other place."⁶¹

The first information necessitating modification of Craig's case for the Lincoln attribution was found and published by Craig himself.⁶² Searching in Lincoln for craft guild records, he found that an account book of the Cordwainers' Company appears to be the only such material extant. Entries in the book indicate that the Cordwainers financed a "pageaunt of Bethelem . . . in the tym of procession of the

gild . . . of saint Anne,"⁶³ but there is no sign that the company paid for any acting connected with the pageant--an expense that shows up routinely in guild records of other cities. Craig concludes, "The St. Anne's day expenses are too slight and too definite to refer to the performance of a play, and there can be no reasonable doubt that the business of the Cordwainers on St. Anne's day, during the years for which we have their records [1527-1561] was to present a mere pageant or float to be drawn through the streets from the Chapel of St. Thomas upon the High Bridge to the minster upon the hill."⁶⁴ Later in the article he adds, ". . . the Cordwainers certainly did not participate in any other dramatic festival besides the St. Anne's day sights."⁶⁵ Although these findings might appear to call Leach's reconstruction of Lincoln drama into doubt, Craig implicitly continues to accept it and works toward an hypothesis that combines the Leach model with his own new findings. The most influential factor behind the conjectures of both Leach and Craig is an assumption that the only possible meaning of "Corpus Christi play" is a cycle of self-contained dramatic pageants under some kind of guild sponsorship. Since Lincoln records include references to ludi corporis Christi but a (presumably) representative craft guild recorded no expenses for producing an episode thereof, Craig concludes that in Lincoln the cycle was managed by a Corpus Christi guild (a brotherhood bound by a common religious dedica-

tion only, without respect to occupational identity). He concludes also that since municipal legislation in Lincoln lacks references to stations where plays were acted (such references are abundant in Coventry and York records), the Corpus Christi play in Lincoln must not have been processional, at least in the years from which civic records remain (sixteenth century on). At the time of this article on the Cordwainers' records, Craig thinks that the Corpus Christi play at Lincoln and what he calls vaguely "the St. Anne's day sights" either were once united or both made use of the same decorated vehicles. Documentary references to "the St. Anne's day sights" indicate that the destination of the procession was the cathedral close. Craig adds, "What happened at the minster can be determined with some clearness from chapter acts and accounts preserved there; but space is at this time lacking to go into it."⁶⁶ However, he appears in his conclusion to be moving toward the idea that the Ludus Coventriae was performed in the close. He writes, "This state of affairs seems, in some measure, to agree with the hypothesis that the so-called Coventry Mysteries or Hegge plays are the lost Lincoln cycle, since the Coventry Mysteries were once evidently a processional play, but, in the form preserved, were obviously acted on a stationary stage."⁶⁷

Between 1917 and 1955, when Craig's English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages was first printed, several other scholars published information which seemed to strengthen

Craig's case for the Lincoln attribution. In a short note in 1926, Herbert Hartman pointed out that the Lincoln Cathedral Treasurer's Inventory of 1536 included the following description:

Item a Rede coope called the Rutte of Jesse
of Rede velvett browdered w^t Imagies of gold
sett w^t roses of perles w^t a presyouse orfrey.
havyng a morse of clothe of gold w^t vj stones
wantyng other vj havyng a hede sett yn gold
the wyche hede hath now one ston.⁶⁸

Hartman observed that this elaborate Radix Jesse vestment would have been an appropriate costume for the character called Radix Jesse in the Ludus Coventriae Prophets play. Emphasizing the uniqueness of this role among English cycles, he concluded, "If only by reason of its singularity this mention of an elaborate Radix Jesse vestment merits addition to the list of pertinent stage properties already found which argue favorably in support of the Lincoln hypothesis of the home of the Hegge Plays."⁶⁹ However, Hartman's note concerning the Prophets play should not be accepted without considering an iconographical study by John K. Bonnell.⁷⁰ The aim of Bonnell was to point out resemblances of the Ludus Coventriae play to representations of the Tree of Jesse in stained glass, sculpture, miniatures--all medieval forms of pictorial representation. At the end of a list of specific instances of the Tree of Jesse motif from the eleventh through the fourteenth century, Bonnell writes, "In the fifteenth century [the time of MS. Vespasian D.viii] the exam-

ples in sculpture, in painting, and in different kinds of decorative art, are very numerous and show a great variety of design. A splendid example of a fifteenth-century Jesse window is that at Dorchester in Oxfordshire. The subject was so popular that it was employed even in decorating private residences."⁷¹ Given this degree of popularity, it seems hardly distinctive that the Lincoln Cathedral treasury included a Tree of Jesse vestment in the sixteenth century. Furthermore, there is an alternate liturgical explanation for the existence of the vestment in the Sarum Breviary. The Sarum offices for the Feast of St. Anne and the Feast of Mary's Nativity give considerable attention to the theme of the Tree of Jesse.⁷² Since Lincoln's use was nearly identical to the Sarum use, it is likely that the vestment was used for a liturgical occasion.

Another topic which has seemed to give support to the Lincoln attribution is the similarity of certain features of the Ludus Coventriae to parts of the Castle of Perseverance. Both contain versions of the Debate of the Four Daughters of God (which appears in the Ludus Coventriae alone of the four English mystery cycles). Both have banns spoken by vexillatores for the purpose of describing plays which the audience will soon have an opportunity to see. In both cases the banns seem to indicate that the plays were presented in more than one place. There are close resemblances between speeches of the character Mors in the two works, and it has been

thought significant that action is punctuated by the same crude gestures in both. In 1923, W. K. Smart presented arguments from dialect and the mention of a place called Canwick, for assigning a Lincoln origin to the Castle of Perseverance.

R. S. Loomis considered Smart's arguments conclusive and proposed that the Castle of Perseverance "reveals what to expect from a Lincoln product, and may serve as a touchstone for ascertaining the provenance of other plays."⁷³ The study in which he makes this proposal is concerned chiefly with assembling all available information about drama in medieval Lincoln. He includes both Leach's inferences from city records (accepting them as facts)⁷⁴ and an adaptation of some of Craig's conclusions. Loomis points out distinctive resemblances between the Castle of Perseverance and the Ludus Coventriae in seven categories: dialect, stanza forms, content of the banns, staging, crude gesture, the character Bakbytere, and dramatic use of the debate among the Four Daughters of God. He concludes, "Some of these seven features common to the morality and the Corpus Christi cycle are found elsewhere, and not one of them affords conclusive proof that they emanated from the same town, but taken together they support the hypothesis that the home of CP, namely Lincoln, was also the home of HC Hegge Cycle, or Ludus Coventriae⁷, or at least of considerable parts."⁷⁵ Loomis is disinclined to agree entirely with Craig on the conclusion that the form of the cycle in MS. Vespasian D.viii

was attained under the auspices of a city-wide organization in Lincoln. The main reasons for his disagreement are that "two dialectal features--ending of 3rd sing., pres. ind. in -eth and the obj. case of pronoun hem . . .--indicate that the scribe of the Hegge MS. was of a more southern county [than Lincolnshire],"⁷⁶ and the banns--whether left from an earlier version of the cycle or not--indicate to him that "HC was regarded by the composer of these banns as intended for a troupe of itinerant actors" ⁷⁷ Emphasizing the composite nature of the manuscript, he reasons that the compiler drew some of the material from the cycle which Leach imagined to be represented in Lincoln's records about the St. Anne's Day procession.⁷⁸ ". . . at least a substantial part," Loomis says, "must have been the work of Lincoln men."⁷⁹ Using arguments developed by Craig, he mentions as probable Lincoln material specifically the Prophets play, the five plays concerning the life of the Virgin (8-11, 13), and the Assumption.

It is worth noting that the probability of a Lincoln origin for the Castle of Perseverance has been re-confirmed in recent years by Jacob Bennett.⁸⁰ His study of the play also yields the interesting point that like the Ludus Coventriae, the Castle of Perseverance appears to have banns which were written for a version different from what the extant text preserves. However, it must be acknowledged in the end that whatever the Castle of Perseverance tells us about

drama in Lincoln, it offers no support at all for theories of regularly occurring cycle production by a city-wide organization. It is to the point that Loomis accounts for there being no mention of the Castle of Perseverance in city records by citing "the fact that CP was not performed by any civic or religious body but by a strolling troupe."⁸¹

In his 1914 article, Craig commented, "One can not be sure whether or not the principal manuscripts have been read carefully for the purpose of getting all possible information about the plays, or whether a study of completer forms of the references already found might not yield a good deal more information than they do in their imperfect versions. The Chapter Act Books and the Chapter Computi seem particularly promising."⁸² The search for additional information about drama in the Lincoln Chapter records was undertaken by Virginia Shull, who published her results in 1937.⁸³ She found evidence that dramatic productions in addition to the visus of the Assumption were being given by the cathedral clergy as late as 1561, but the Chapter records yielded no new material about dramatic activity of the laity. There were recurrent expenditures for the following presentations in addition to the visus of the Assumption on St. Anne's Day; a ludus of the three kings at Epiphany, a ludus of St. Thomas Didimus at Eastertide, a ludus on the day of the Resurrection, a presentation referred to continuously as salutacionis in the service of matins at dawn on Christmas Day, a spec-

tacle at Pentecost which Miss Shull describes as "of a doubtfully dramatic nature," and perhaps another separate event for which a dove, a banner, and a clock (orrilogium) were required. In the latest version of his position on the Ludus Coventriae, Craig speaks of these dramatic productions by the cathedral clergy as examples of liturgical plays from which the core of the hypothetical Lincoln vernacular cycle is likely to have evolved. Whether or not the productions of the cathedral clergy inspired vernacular imitations, since no texts remain, it is impossible to establish any positive relationship between drama in Lincoln Cathedral and the Ludus Coventriae.

This point is particularly important with reference to the clergy's St. Anne's Day visus and the Assumption play in the Ludus Coventriae. The entry in the Chapter Acts which has been the basis for assertions that the visus and the Assumption play are one and the same reads as follows: ". . . et communicantes una simul decreuerunt quod illud ludum siue serimonium de Assumptione siue coronatione beate Marie erga dictum festum de novo reparatum & preparatum habere voluerunt ac ludificatum & ostensum in processione predicta prout consuetum fuerat in Naui dicte ecclesie."⁸⁴ Chambers and Wickham have pointed out that the word ludus and its derivatives in medieval usage denoted either dialogue drama or dumbshow (or practically any kind of entertainment in which there was acting).⁸⁵ The words "reparatum" and "preparatum"

conceivably could refer to rehearsing a play like the Ludus Coventriae Assumption, but that they indicate refurbishing equipment for a spectacle without dialogue is at least as likely. If the record is interpreted to mean that the clergy agreed to present their visus as the procession was in motion, then a play as complex in staging requirements as the Ludus Coventriae Assumption could hardly have been their text. If the meaning is instead that the visus was presented in the cathedral when the procession arrived, then assuming that the visus was the Ludus Coventriae Assumption raises questions about how a transition to the concluding Doomsday play is likely to have been made. Whether the Assumption visus is likely to have been the Ludus Coventriae Assumption is one issue which remains to be settled before proof of the Lincoln attribution can be considered complete.

Another is the questionable validity of inferences that pageants in procession imply dialogue drama, and that the existence in Lincoln of Guilds of Corpus Christi and St. Anne necessarily imply sponsorship of plays. So far documentary evidence to confirm either of these points has not been found.

On the other hand, certain details at variance with the Lincoln attribution persist in commanding attention. One is the dialect of the Ludus Coventriae. As early as 1940, it was argued that the manuscript appeared to be a Norfolk rather than a Lincolnshire product.⁸⁶ By 1950, Harold Whitehall

had made a study of the text for the Middle English Dictionary and reached the following conclusions:

1. In its present form, the Hegge cycle MS. is obviously of mixed dialect.
2. It is possible to see clearly that the mixture contains a Central or South East Midland layer (probably from northern East Anglia), and a Northern or extreme North East Midland layer (probably from Lincolnshire).
3. All the internal evidences point to the latter as the original dialectal stratum and to the former as being the result of copying.
4. If you possess other, non-linguistic evidence for an original North Lincolnshire provenience of the original, you would be perfectly safe in assuming that the present version is either a Norfolk derivative of the original or a derivative version made by a scribe trained in or around Norfolk.⁸⁷

Additional support for a Norfolk origin of the Ludus Coventriae has appeared in a 1955 article by Norman Davis on the Paston letters⁸⁸ and in the introduction by Mark Eccles for his recent edition of the Macro Plays.⁸⁹

Besides dialect, the dissimilarity of the Ludus Coventriae to other civic cycles interferes with the Lincoln attribution. Differentiating features include the more ecclesiastical tone and content of many passages, the evidence in the manuscript that sections were performed apart from the whole, and the suggestion in the Proclamation (or banns) of production in more than one town. The editor of the current standard edition, clearly familiar with the 1914 version of Craig's position, comments, "The examination of the MS. affords no conclusive evidence on such questions, but it gives much to support the theory that the MS. represents a selection from the repertory of a body of ecclesiastical

actors. As Dr. Smith says: 'Videntur olim coram populo sive ad instruendum sive ad placendum a Fratribus mendicantibus [Miss Block's emphasis] repraesentata.'"⁹⁰

In short, although identification of the Ludus Coventriae as the Lincoln cycle has been widely accepted,⁹¹ a considerable portion of the argument remains open to question. Furthermore, this cycle's various types of nonconformity with the civic cycles of Chester, Wakefield, and York encourage one to look for signs of other than civic auspices. The aim of the following chapters is to re-examine both the manuscript and the content of the text without presupposing the traditional model of civic production. Through characteristics of script and the distribution pattern of paper types, the manuscript of the Ludus Coventriae tells us more than any other extant mystery play manuscript about at least its own process of formation. The distinctive content of the Ludus Coventriae offers to tell us more about the variousness of mystery play auspices than has yet been fully recognized.

Notes to Chapter One

1. Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated (1656), p. 116.

2. Arguments for recognizing "Ludus Coventriae" as a generic term have appeared previously in a study by W. W. Greg and in the introduction to the standard edition of the cycle. Greg commented, "The manuscript already bore, in an Elizabethan hand, the title, 'The plaie called Corpus Christi,' and the Coventry miracles were by far the most famous Corpus Christi plays in England. It will be noticed how James uses the terms 'Ludus Coventriae' and 'Ludus Corporis Christi' as though they were synonymous." Bibliographical and Textual Problems of the English Miracle Cycles (London, 1914), p. 109.

Miss K. S. Block, the editor of the current standard edition of the Ludus Coventriae, wrote, "The suggestion might be hazarded that James in the sentence 'vulgo dicitur hic liber Ludus Coventriae, sive ludus corporis Christi' is using the words 'Ludus Coventriae' generically, taking the name of the best-known example as the name of a type of dramatic performance. The words 'vulgo dicitur' suggest this. It may be gathered from the anecdote in the 'Hundred Merry Tales,' quoted by Halliwell [editor of MS. Vespasian D.viii for the Shakespeare Society in 1841], of the Warwickshire village priest who referred his parishoners for confirmation of his doctrine to the Coventry Corpus Christi play, that Coventry was the accepted background for a story concerning the Corpus Christi pageants; Heywood's allusion in the Four P's proves that Coventry was recognized as the local habitation of the Mystery devil; and there is evidence that the name Corpus Christi had come to be used for the collective mysteries apart from the occasion of their performance. Weaver, in a passage [Block's note: "John Weaver, Funeral Monuments, 1631, p. 405."] also quoted by Halliwell, says of a play the subject of which was 'the sacred scriptures from the creation of the world,' 'They call this Corpus Christi play in my country.' The title written in a sixteenth-century hand on the first page of the present collection, 'The plaie called Corpus Christi,' is apparently used in this wider sense, and James in his note on the fly-leaf may be expanding this title: 'vulgo dicitur hic liber Ludus Coventriae sive ludus corporis Christi,' i.e. 'This book is commonly called the Coventry or Corpus Christi play.'" Ludus Coventriae or the Plaie called Corpus Christi, EETS e.s. 120 (London, 1922; reprinted, 1960), pp. xl-xli. All quotations of the Ludus Coventriae in this study follow Miss Block's edition and are identified in the text by her system of numbering lines.

3. Block, pp. xxxviii-xxxix (the bracketed insertions are Miss Block's).

4. Quoted by Block, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

5. Block, p. xxxviii, n. 1.

6. The close correspondence in phrasing was pointed out by Miss Block, p. xxxix.

7. See Block, p. 270n (my own examination of the manuscript confirmed this point).

8. See Block, p. xxxix, n. 1.

9. Block, p. xl.

10. Block, p. xxix, quoting Thomas Sharp, Dissertation on the Coventry Mysteries (1825), p. 12.

11. Quoted by Block, p. xxxix, from Sharp, p. 5.

12. Block, p. xxxix.

13. Halliwell identified the use of x- instead of sh- in words like "xal" and "xulde" as the principal mark of the Ludus Coventriae dialect, observing that this feature belongs to Middle English in the part of England where Coventry is located. James O. Halliwell, ed. Ludus Coventriae, A Collection of Mysteries, Formerly Presented at Coventry on the Feast of Corpus Christi (London, 1841), p. viii.

14. The third vexillator, after he and two companions have recited 515 lines about the individual episodes in their play, concludes:

Now haue we told 3ow all be-dene
the hool mater þat we thynke to play
whan þat 3e come þer xal 3e sene
this game wel playd in good a-ray
Of holy wrytte þis game xal bene
and of no fablys be no way
now god þem save from trey and tene
ffor us þat prayth upon þat day
And qwyte them wel þer mede
A sunday next yf þat we may
At vj of þe belle we gynne oure play
In N. town wherfore we pray
That god now be 3oure Spede

(p. 16/11.
515-528).

The interpretation of longest standing is that "N. town" indicates an intention that a variety of different place names would be used in the Proclamation. Sharp said he was repeating

the view of an unnamed predecessor when he gave this interpretation. J. P. Collier alluded to the convention of using N. to stand for nomen where a particular name was to be inserted, "as N. stands in the marriage ceremony unto this day." Quoted by Hardin Craig, "Note on the Home of Ludus Coventriae," University of Minnesota Studies in Language and Literature, No. 1 (Minneapolis, 1914), p. 75. Cited hereafter as Craig, Note.

15. Halliwell, p. xi.

16. "Die Altenglischen Kollektivmysterien," Anglia, XI (1889), 219-310.

17. Max Kramer, Die Sprache und Heimat des sogenannten Ludus Coventriae, (Halle, 1892), pp. 68-69.

18. B. ten Brink, History of English Literature, II, trans. Wm. Clarke Robinson (London, 1901), 283.

19. A. W. Pollard, English Miracle Plays, Moralities, and Interludes (Oxford, 1890; 6th ed., 1914), p. xxxviii.

20. Quoted by Block, p. xxxviii.

21. "Some English Plays and Players, 1220-1548," in An English Miscellany Presented to Dr. Furnivall (Oxford, 1901), pp. 205-234. Cited hereafter as Leach.

22. Leach, p. 232.

23. Leach, p. 223.

24. Leach, p. 223.

25. Craig, Note, p. 78.

26. Leach, p. 224.

27. This date seems to be an error. There is an entry to this effect under 1519. See Historical Manuscripts Commission, Fourteenth Report, Appendix, Part VIII (London, 1895), p. 27.

28. Leach, p. 224.

29. Hardin Craig supplies the date 1539 for this record and reads "3d." where Leach read "4d." See English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1955; reprinted 1960, 1964), p. 272. This work is cited hereafter as ERD.

30. Leach, p. 224.

31. Leach, p. 224.
32. Leach, p. 225.
33. Leach, p. 225.
34. Leach, p. 225.
35. Leach, p. 226.
36. Leach, p. 226.
37. Leach, pp. 226-227.
38. Leach, p. 227.
39. Leach, p. 227.
40. Leach, p. 227.
41. Leach, p. 226.
42. Plays of Our Forefathers (New York, 1907).
43. The Medieval Stage (London, 1903), II, 421. Cited hereafter as TMS.
44. Gayley, pp. 135-136.
45. "The Coventry Cycle of Plays," The Athenaeum, Aug. 16, 1913, p. 166; cited hereafter as Craig, Coventry Cycle. Craig published his position in very similar form in The Nation two months later. See the issue of Oct. 2, 1913, pp. 308-309.
46. Craig, Coventry Cycle, p. 116.
47. Craig, Coventry Cycle, p. 116.
48. Craig, Coventry Cycle, p. 116.
49. Craig, Coventry Cycle, p. 116.
50. Craig, Coventry Cycle, p. 116.
51. Craig, Coventry Cycle, p. 116. See Leach, p. 228, for mention of these properties in discussion of post-Reformation Lincoln documents.
52. Craig, Note, pp. 72-83.
53. The grounds for this revision of the 1913 statement

had been pointed out by W. W. Greg in a letter to Athenaeum, printed in the issue of Sept, 13, 1913, p. 262.

54. Craig, Note, p. 79.
55. Craig, Note, p. 75.
56. Craig, Note, p. 75.
57. Craig, Note, p. 75.
58. Craig, Note, p. 75.
59. Craig, Note, p. 80.
60. Craig, Note, p. 81.
61. Craig, Note, p. 81.
62. "The Lincoln Cordwainers' Pageant," PMLA, XXXII (1917), 605-615; cited hereafter as Craig, Cordwainers'.
63. Quoted in Craig, Cordwainers', p. 606.
64. Craig, Cordwainers', p. 611.
65. Craig, Cordwainers', p. 614.
66. Craig, Cordwainers', p. 613.
67. Craig, Cordwainers', p. 615.
68. Quoted in Herbert Hartman, "The Home of the Ludus Coventriae," MLN, XLI (1926), p. 530.
69. Hartman, p. 531.
70. "The Source in Art of the So-Called Prophets Play in the Hegge Collection," PMLA, XXIX (1914), 327-340.
71. Bonnell, p. 332.
72. See Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesiae Sarum, ed. Francis Procter and Christopher Wordsworth (Cambridge, 1879), III, 539-555 and 770-786.
73. "Lincoln as a Dramatic Center," in Mélanges d'histoire du théâtre du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Gustave Cohen (Paris, 1950), pp. 241-247; p. 244.
74. See especially p. 243 and note 78 below.

75. Loomis, p. 256.

76. Loomis, p. 246.

77. Loomis, p. 246.

78. Loomis' acceptance of Leach's inferences is evident in the passage which follows his summary of Lincoln records: "Since the 'procession' just mentioned consisted, as we shall see, of a cycle of vernacular plays performed by the gilds on 'pageants' (movable stages), the Assumption, which the cathedral clergy performed in the nave, was in all likelihood also a vernacular play and may have served as a finale to this procession" p. 243.

79. Loomis, p. 247.

80. "The Castle of Perseverance: Redactions, Place, and Date," Mediaeval Studies, XXIV (1962), 141-152.

81. Loomis, p. 244.

82. Craig, Note, p. 76.

83. "Clerical Drama in Lincoln Cathedral, 1318-1561," PMLA, LII (1937), 946-966.

84. Quoted in Craig, ERD, p. 270.

85. See Chambers, TMS, II, 369, passim; and Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages, I, 1300-1576 (London, 1959), pp. 185, 188-189, and 234-235; hereafter EES.

86. J. E. Dobson, "The Etymology and Meaning of 'Boy'," Medium Aevum, IX (1940), 153. Dobson states directly, "The hypothesis of a Lincoln origin is untenable."

87. Quoted in Loomis, p. 246, n. 27.

88. Discussing noteworthy aspects of vocabulary in the Paston letters, Davis commented, ". . . brethel is used twice by Margaret, and by her husband, and appears also in the York plays, the Macro plays, the Ludus Coventriae--probably from Norwich--and in the works of John Bale, who was born in Suffolk and educated at Norwich." "The Language of the Pastons," Proceedings of the British Academy, XL (1955), 133.

89. Eccles wrote, "We may compare the banns for the Corpus Christi play called Ludus Coventriae, probably acted in Norfolk during the fifteenth century" The Macro Plays, EETS o.s. 262 (London, 1969), p. xxii.

90. Block, p. xxxiv.

91. See, for example, Wickham, EES, I, 117n and 163n. See also Martial Rose, ed., The Wakefield Mystery Plays (Garden City, 1961), p. 43; Kenneth Cameron and Stanley J. Kahrl, "The N-Town Plays at Lincoln," Theatre Notebook, XX (1965-66), 61-69; and Martin Stevens, "The Missing Parts of the Towneley Cycle," Speculum, XLV (1970), 263n.

Chapter Two

THE ATTAINMENT OF CYCLE FORM BY THE LUDUS COVENTRIAE

When, in 1922, K. S. Block published her edition of the Ludus Coventriae manuscript, she identified its various paper types by their watermarks and included as well a complete description of how these types are distributed throughout the manuscript. The standard theory of how the Ludus Coventriae took shape was formulated before Miss Block's work was in print, and there has been no thorough reconsideration of the theory in the light of her analysis. This is not surprising; compared to reading a text, scrutinizing the means of its recording can be a dreary task, and there is no guarantee that significant results will be forthcoming. Fortunately, the data of paper type and distribution in MS. Vespasian D.viii yield information about the compilation of the Ludus Coventriae which makes a study of this evidence worthwhile. My purpose in the following pages is to present the results of reconsidering, in the light of all available manuscript evidence, the question of how the individual elements in the Ludus Coventriae came to constitute the present cycle.

Physical characteristics of MS. Vespasian D.viii suggest that the circumstances of its origin were different from conditions associated with the copying of the other extant English mystery cycle texts. The York cycle, the

Wakefield or Towneley cycle, and the Cornish Ordinalia are all preserved in single vellum manuscripts of the fifteenth century. Although there are five copies of the Chester cycle extant, none is dated earlier than 1591,¹ and all are written on paper instead of vellum.² The word "ordinalia," which is the heading given to his book by the scribe of the Cornish cycle, suggests that this text was thought of as having something in common with the liturgical ordinal, the book which describes how various rites should be performed.³ It is currently held that the Ordinalia originated with a college of secular canons and that as long as the cycle was produced (assuming it was; no documents have survived to confirm this), it remained under their auspices.⁴

The manuscripts of the York and Wakefield cycles appear to be copies, ordered by municipal governments, of individual play texts which were at some time in the possession of craft guilds.⁵ The Chester cycle manuscripts are probably transcripts of such a master copy which itself has disappeared,⁶ or else they are copies made directly from texts held by guilds in the late sixteenth century.⁷ The registers, as the York and Wakefield manuscripts were called, contain evidence that from time to time a new version of a certain episode might be substituted for an old; and that long after cycles were complete with all basic episodes, additional plays were added--for instance, when a lately prospering guild wished to take part in the celebration. The York cycle manuscript, dated between 1430 and 1440,⁸ corresponds

to this general description most closely. At the head of each play stands the name of the craft or crafts responsible for producing it, and the individual plays are clearly defined units which seldom include transitional material for continuity of plot throughout the cycle. The manuscript of the Wakefield cycle is apparently an official copy made for a town's production but copied before responsibilities were distributed among craft guilds. This is the conclusion of Martial Rose, who bases it on two observations: (1) there are only four guild names written in the manuscript, all of which are in a sixteenth-century hand, and (2) it is doubtful that before the sixteenth century the guilds of Wakefield were large enough to undertake full production of all the plays in the manuscript.⁹ The production method he proposes to have been in use in the fifteenth century is organization of the whole performance by a single group, either one large religious guild like St. Luke's in Norwich and the guilds of St. Anne and Corpus Christi in Lincoln, or the town corporation.¹⁰ Whatever the sponsoring organization was, Rose indicates that the scribe charged with making the official copy of the cycle apparently transcribed four different types of material: some plays "such as Isaac and Jacob, were already nearly a hundred years old, their dramatic structure was crude and their versification gauche; some such as The Harrowing of Hell followed the York text closely throughout and might have been borrowed from that

cycle; some, indigenous and borrowed, had been substantially altered through revision, as in the case of *The Killing of Abel*, or through interpolation (378 lines) in the case of *The Judgment*; and in the last group were the five new plays written by the Wakefield Master."¹¹

The Ludus Coventriae manuscript is comprised of 225 paper leaves approximately eight by five-and-a-half inches-- a small size compared to the parchment leaves of the Wakefield and York books, but not unusual for paper leaves.¹² Most of the script is in a single fifteenth-century hand, but small segments are the work of three other scribes, two approximately contemporary with the main scribe and one slightly later.¹³ The date 1468 on f. 100v appears to be in the main scribe's hand. The only marking in the manuscript that associates it with a particular place is the mention of Coventry on the fly-leaf in the note of a seventeenth-century librarian. The likelihood that the phrase involving Coventry should be interpreted as a generic term rather than as an indication of the manuscript's origin has been discussed in Chapter One. Virtually all the manuscript tells us about its place of origin is that its scribe either lived in East Anglia or had been trained there.¹⁴

There are no indications that the copying of the text was done under civic auspices, and the names of guilds-- either the type organized solely around a particular devotional objective, or the kind formed by people of a single

trade--are entirely absent. On the other hand, there are some marginal notations of a kind not found in any of the other mystery cycle manuscripts. These consist of genealogies showing the descent of Noah from Adam, of Abraham from Noah, and of the Virgin Mary from the parents of Joachim and Anna; a note on the dimensions of Noah's ark and the height of the flood waters; a list of five women named Anne who figure in biblical history; and a list of several ecclesiastical feast dates. Most of these notations are in liturgical script, as are a few lines of the text itself.¹⁵ Miss Block suggests, "These marginal additions give support to the conclusion to be drawn from the general characteristics of the compilation, that it is of ecclesiastical and not of civic origin."¹⁶

Unfortunately, what we know about the ownership of the manuscript offers no illumination of the mystery of auspices. Specific owners can be traced back to within about one hundred fifty years of the time it was copied. The earliest owner on record was Robert Hegge of Durham, whose signature appears on f. 10r where the Creation play begins and again on f. 164r, the otherwise blank page preceding the second section of the Passion sequence. An historian of Oxford, where Hegge was a fellow of Corpus Christi College, wrote that he was "accounted, considering his age, the best in the university for the Mathematical faculty, History, and Antiquities, as afterwards for his excellent knowledge in the Sacred

Scriptures."¹⁷ Hegge died in 1629 at the age of thirty, and it was apparently near that time that Richard James acquired the Ludus Coventriae manuscript for Sir Robert Cotton, in whose collection it came to the British Museum.

The most provocative difference of the Ludus Coventriae manuscript from other mystery cycle books is the irregularity of quire lengths. As the scribes of the York and Wakefield cycles began their work, apparently they had before them blank quires made up in fours (i.e., eight leaves to a quire).¹⁸ Here and there they might leave space for a text not immediately at hand, but generally the copying was done consecutively, plays begun near the ends of quires being completed in the immediately following ones. Although some quires have lost leaves, either by accident on account of weakened binding or by deliberate cutting out, it appears certain that they consistently contained eight leaves at the time the manuscripts were copied and assembled. In contrast, the gatherings in MS. Vespasian D.viii range in size from two to twenty leaves. Twenty-one quires were recognized by the person (someone later than the main scribe)¹⁹ who signed them A through W, and perhaps when this lettering was done, a twenty-second quire containing the end of the Doomsday play had not yet disappeared. The sequence of quire sizes is as follows (in numbers of leaves): 20, 20, 8, 2, 2, 14, 19, 17, 19, 2, 2, 10, 13, 3, 2, 2, 8, 16, 10, 20, 16.²⁰

Variability of quire length is not the only kind of ir-

regularity in MS. Vespasian D.viii. There are discrepancies between the Proclamation and the text. Certain plays are not provided for in the Proclamation, and in a few cases the Proclamation specifies an order of events which differs from what we find in the plays.²¹ Stage directions, which are quite sparse in the other three Middle English cycles and nearly always in Latin,²² in the Ludus Coventriae are sometimes in Latin, other times in English. The directions in English are abundantly detailed, and some plays have stage directions in both languages. While it appears that some plays in the Ludus Coventriae are suited to being staged on movable pageant wagons as we assume was the case of the York, Wakefield, and Chester plays, others clearly require an arena with several scaffolds. There is also a curious variety of meter and stanza forms. While there is nothing like the consistency of the eight-line ballad stanza ($aaa^4b^3aaa^4b^3$ or $aaa^4b^3ccc^4b^3$) in the Chester cycle, neither is the variety of forms nearly as diverse as the collection of twenty-two different stanza types which Miss Smith recognized in the York cycle.²³ At most, five different stanza forms can be identified in the Ludus Coventriae, and a recurring accentual rather than syllabic verse type--other commentators have described it with Saintsbury's term "tumbling verse"--appears in several of the five rhyme patterns. Some plays have only one stanza type, but others are a mixture of several.

Features of the copying show a mixture of regularity and

inconsistency. The cycle is composed of the Proclamation, forty-two episodes marked by large red numerals in the margin, and two prologue-like speeches not clearly linked with the material that adjoins them in the manuscript.²⁴ To take the inconsistencies first, nineteen of the forty-five elements have either some form of heading or sign of conclusion (e.g., "hic incipit," "explicit," "Modo de . . .," "Amen," etc.), or both opening and concluding signs; the other twenty-six have no marks designating their beginnings except the marginal numerals and in some cases large red initial capitals.²⁵ There are blank spaces between plays not in all forty-four possible cases, but in only twenty-five; these occur particularly on either side of the Passion sequence.²⁶ Thirty-three of the forty-five elements begin at the tops of folios, and of these, twenty-four begin on recto sides and nine on verso. In only eight cases do beginnings of plays coincide with beginnings of quires. Twenty-three of the elements begin with large red initial capitals.²⁷

First among consistent features of the copying is the presence of a single hand on all but twenty-four of the 425 sides which have writing (there are twenty-five sides blank except for random scribbles later than the main scribe's work²⁸). The excepted twenty-four sides are described in Appendix A. Practices which the main scribe has used consistently throughout the manuscript are the bracketing of rhyme words, the writing of speakers' names in the right-

hand margin slightly above the first lines of speeches, and the drawing of horizontal lines at the ends of speeches. These markings are made in black ink. Markings in red ink include lines under stage directions, loops around speakers' names in the margins, symbols like paragraph signs to mark the beginnings of stanzas, large initial capitals in the first lines of some plays, touches in initial letters of a number of lines throughout the cycle (designated in Miss Block's edition by capitals), and the large numerals which mark the various episodes. There are several reasons for thinking that the rubricating was done by the main scribe. The most persuasive is that among scattered minor corrections in red ink is a full line written (in red) at the bottom of f. 154r (see Plate I), and the hand appears to be that of the main scribe (though probably later in time than the other script on the page). The line thus written--which is noteworthy also for the fact that it affirms the doctrine of Transubstantiation--is a recopying of a line initially omitted and squeezed into the righthand margin (from which some of it was lost when the leaves were trimmed). Another reason for thinking that the main scribe was the rubricator concerns the complex relationships between numbers in the Proclamation stanzas and the red marginal numerals that mark beginnings of plays. This subject is discussed in Appendix B.²⁹

Taken all together, details of the copying indicate that even though the stage directions vary in language, fullness,

and in what they imply about the method of staging; even though segments of action are sometimes separated from one another by blank space and sometimes not; even though there are discrepancies between Proclamation and plays; still, the manuscript is essentially the work of one individual, and he was at work on the book not more than between twenty and thirty years later than the scribes of the more homogeneous Wakefield and York manuscripts.³⁰

There have been attempts to formulate models of development for the Ludus Coventriae which make order out of the puzzling mixture of irregularities and consistencies that we have been discussing. The most ambitious effort is Esther L. Swenson's An Inquiry into the Composition and Staging of Ludus Coventriae,³¹ which sets forth a solution still widely held as, if not the last word, at least the latest satisfactory idea of how the cycle developed.³² Miss Swenson's hypothesis is that the Ludus Coventriae began as a typical Creation-to-Doomsday cycle staged on movable pageant wagons; however, especially in certain sections, the original material has been extensively reworked and adapted to arena-with-scaffold staging. In more detail, her conclusions are as follows:

1. The Proclamation represents an earlier and more primitive form of the cycle than the one we find in MS. Vespasian D.viii (p. 63).
2. The most extensive modifications of the original

cycle are in the sections concerning the life of the Virgin and the Passion (p. 63).

3. In addition, there have been brief expansions of original plays with episodes like Lamech's killing of Cain in the Noah play, the story of the cherry tree in the Journey to Bethlehem, and the Veronica episode in the Crucifixion play (p. 63).
4. Much of the material not provided for in the Proclamation is in a so-called "tumbling measure"--an accentual rather than syllabic verse type--which thus appears to be a sign of the redactor's hand (p. 63).
5. Material from the earliest phase of development has simple Latin stage directions, whereas more detailed directions in English occur in the revised or lately added portions (pp. 67-68).
6. The original cycle was apparently acted on a series of movable pageant wagons, but at least the life of the Virgin group and the Passion section as they now stand--if not the entire revised cycle--were acted on a fixed stage (pp. 70-71).

Though thorough in other respects, Miss Swenson's analysis takes very slight account of the metrical and stanzaic variety in the cycle (see point 4 above). Studying this kind of detail primarily, W. W. Greg (also in 1914) reached a very different conclusion about how the cycle took shape. Instead

of postulating successive revisions of one Creation-to-Dooms-day original, Greg proposed that the Ludus Coventriae is the result of sections being taken from at least three other cycles--one composed of thirteen-line stanzas (ababababcbdddc), another of ballad stanzas (aabccb or aaabcccb; Greg uses the term "romance sixes and eights"), and another of quatrains (both single and linked pairs: ababbcbcb). The necessity of postulating full cycles in all three forms seems doubtful, but Greg's hypothesis about the nature of the compiler's work is very significant. He asserted that material from various sources was being combined at the time of the copying of MS. Vespasian D.viii. In other words, either the main scribe or a dramatist or dramatists whom he served was making the artistic and doctrinal decisions about what would constitute the Ludus Coventriae.³³

Having seen Vespasian D.viii firsthand, Greg criticized the edition available when he wrote (Halliwell's, 1841) because "it hardly reflects at all the extraordinary confusion of the original manuscript, and consequently affords no clue for the unravelling of the bibliographical and literary history of the cycle."³⁴ Indeed, some details of the copying defy representation in print, but Miss Block has amply corrected the shortcomings of Halliwell's edition. After studying her analysis of quire lengths and the distribution of various paper types, in relation to contrasting samples of the main scribe's hand, one becomes convinced that the copyist

was bringing together material which had not been previously combined. More detail about this procedure will be apparent after we survey correlations in the manuscript evidence.

Miss Block has identified seven types of paper in the manuscript. Named by watermark and listed in order of quantity, they are as follows:

1. YHS in a Sun: between 116 and 119 leaves, used for quires C (8 leaves); D (2 leaves); F (14 leaves); G (19 leaves); H, except leaves 95 and 96, (15 leaves); (the letter I is omitted from the signatures); J, except leaf 112, (18 leaves); K (2 leaves); L (2 leaves); M (10 leaves); V (20 leaves); W, except leaves 213 through 222, (6 leaves); and perhaps leaf 143 in quire N and leaves 184 and 185 in quire T. The uncertainty about the last three leaves mentioned is due to their lack of watermarks. Their wire lines correspond to those of both the YHS in a Sun and the Bunch of Grapes paper types.³⁵
2. Bunch of Grapes: between 43 and 46 leaves, used for quires A (20 leaves); B (20 leaves), and O (3 leaves); and perhaps leaf 143 in quire N and leaves 184 and 185 in quire T.³⁶
3. Bull's Head: 24 leaves, used for quires N, except leaf 143, (12 leaves); P (2 leaves); Q (2 leaves); and R (8 leaves).
4. Two Crossed Keys: 24 leaves, used for quires S (16

leaves); and T, except leaves 184 and 185, (8 leaves).

5. Two-Wheeled Cart: 10 leaves, used for leaves 213 through 222 in quire W.
6. Hand: 3 leaves, used for leaves 95 and 96 in quire H, and leaf 112 in quire J.
7. Pitcher: 2 leaves: used for quire E.

The last three paper types listed, those marked by the Two-Wheeled Cart, the Hand, and the Pitcher, contain the work of the three minor scribes.³⁷ The ten leaves of the Two-Wheeled Cart paper, which were used for the play of the Assumption, were in place when the rubricating of the entire manuscript was done. If the main scribe was the compiler and the rubricator, as seems likely, then this section shows the single instance in the manuscript of the main scribe incorporating material previously written by another scribe without transcribing it. The leaves marked by the Hand and by the Pitcher, which likewise have no work by the main scribe, were added to the manuscript after it was rubricated.

Thus there are four different paper types which were used by the main scribe: those marked by YHS in a Sun, Bunch of Grapes, Bull's Head, and Two Crossed Keys. Two major divisions in the content of the cycle coincide with units defined by the location of the Bull's Head (quires N, P, Q, and R) and the Two Crossed Keys (quires S and T) papers. The action covered on the folios of quires N through R extends from the council in which the Jewish leaders decide that Jesus

must be stopped from drawing their people away, to the lament of the Virgin Mary on hearing that her son has been arrested. The group of stanzas at the end of quire R which Miss Block has called the Prologue of the Doctors (ff. 163r and 163v) are not related by narrative sequence to the preceding material. Differences in size of script and rubricating method suggest that this material was copied later than the foregoing part, to make use of paper originally left blank.³⁸

The first leaf of Two Crossed Keys paper, beginning quire S, was originally left blank on both sides. The recto side (f. 164r) is now discolored and stained, and on the left half it bears a brownish-black triangular mark about two-thirds the height of the paper. F. 164r also now has "In nomjne Dei . Amen" in book hand at the top and Robert Hegge's signature about halfway down (as well as the letter S at the bottom, identifying the quire). This evidence seems sufficient basis for Miss Block's conclusion that leaf 164 was once an outside leaf and that quires S and T had an existence apart from incorporation in the Ludus Coventriae.³⁹ The text which begins on f. 165r offers a clue to what the original relationship between quires N through R and quires S and T was: they were apparently two halves of a Passion play produced with a year's time coming between the sections. If the Ludus Coventriae was ever presented as the Proclamation suggests, with the entire Creation-to-Judgment scope staged continuously at one occasion, then the prologue of Contemplacio on f. 165r

I am so lord lucifer I hope of your kin
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow

26

I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow


I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow

W. L. L.

I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow
I hope of your kin & of your kin of hollow

R

17



Aug

folios 184, 185, as in the interpolated fo. 143 in quire N, being noticeably firmer. It recovers its earlier more regular and less conspicuously marked with red; i.e., earlier in point of occurrence in the MS. 7 form in quire V."⁴² Quire O (leaves 149, 150, and 151), which obviously falls in the N through T group but is excluded from the copy described as more roughly written, consists of a paper type different from what was used for the surrounding material. This fact, along with the confusion of catchwords at the bottom of f. 148v and the blank space on ff. 151r and 151v, suggests that quire O was inserted in the sequence sometime after the rest had been copied. The folios which Miss Block describes as both interpolated and filled with firmer writing than is usual in this part of the manuscript (ff. 143r, 143v, 184r, 184v, 185r, and 185v) are also of a paper type different from what prevails in the N, P, Q, R, and S, T groups.⁴³

The meaning of these facts becomes clear when we look again at the general distribution of paper types. The arrangement in the manuscript of the types used by the main scribe is as follows:

Bunch of Grapes:	Proclamation through beginning of Conception of Mary
YHS in a Sun:	continuation of Conception of Mary through Raising of Lazarus
Bull's Head:	first half of Passion play (within this section are three leaves of Bunch of Grapes paper and one of either Bunch of Grapes or YHS in a Sun)

Two Crossed Keys: second half of Passion play through beginning of Guarding of the Sepulchre (within this section are two leaves of either Bunch of Grapes or YHS in a Sun type)

YHS in a Sun: continuation of Guarding of the Sepulchre through the end of the cycle

The greatest regularity of quire lengths is at the beginning of the manuscript in the two twenty-leaf quires made up of Bunch of Grapes paper. The first breakdown of consistency between the Proclamation and the text of plays--with the Conception of Mary, not provided for in the Proclamation--coincides with the beginning of irregularities in quire lengths and YHS in a Sun paper. A study of textual content especially at division points of quires indicates that while using YHS in a Sun paper, the scribe was compiling material which had not previously been combined. The implication of these observations and of the finer quality of script in the early quires contrasted with the Passion section is that the scribe began with the intention of making a polished fair copy with little if any alteration of the material being copied; then after the first forty leaves he went on not merely transcribing, but actually re-making, by combining plays and parts of plays which had not previously been joined. It appears that when he came to the Passion sequence, instead of re-copying, he incorporated a text he had written earlier and in rougher form, yet making a few revisions (recognizable by the more polished writing and the use of either Bunch of Grapes or YHS in a Sun paper). At the end of this earlier-made Passion

play text, he continued the plan implied in the Proclamation of assembling a sequence extending through the play of Doomsday.

Specific differences of script on Bull's Head and Two Crossed Keys paper from the main scribe's hand elsewhere include less distinct and uniform spacing between words, less uniformity in the angles of vertical elements, and less gracefully formed curved strokes and swirls (e.g., in 3, g, e, and the contraction for terminal -ur). These characteristics suggest that the scribe's writing skill was at an earlier stage of development when he copied the Passion section, and perhaps that the copy was envisioned as only a working text of some kind and thus not written with the most painstaking care. The unusual fullness of stage directions in this part of the manuscript raises the possibility that quires N, P, Q, R, S, and T were originally a director's text.

In general, the evidence of script characteristics and groupings of paper types suggests a process of cycle formation in the Ludus Coventriae which reflects a single dramatic imagination more fully than the process implicit in theories like Miss Swenson's. A look at specific instances of revision will give a clearer sense of how the scribe shaped content.

Ff. 142v and 143v (see Plates IV and V) show how he went about adding the scene of fetching an ass for the Triumphal Entry. As has been noted above, leaf 143 is an interpo-

The lorde of the shire of cheshire in othe place
+ dethen the people to the pite
be thei so thei let him not passe
van be my thei so thei let him not passe

thei do not can pass

The pite of the shire of cheshire on to the case
+ in so thei let him not passe
thei do not let him not passe
thei do not let him not passe

The lorde of the shire of cheshire in othe place
+ dethen the people to the pite
be thei so thei let him not passe
van be my thei so thei let him not passe

thei do not can pass

The lorde of the shire of cheshire in othe place
+ dethen the people to the pite
be thei so thei let him not passe
van be my thei so thei let him not passe

thei do not can pass

thei do not can pass

The lorde of the shire of cheshire in othe place
+ dethen the people to the pite
be thei so thei let him not passe
van be my thei so thei let him not passe

thei do not can pass

Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world
take I have to go to the
to day I have to go to the

Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world
And I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world

Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world

Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world

Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world

Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world
Wichyn I am a man of the world

lation in quire N--a leaf of either YHS in a Sun or Bunch of Grapes type,⁴⁴ inserted among leaves which have the Bull's Head mark. To place the new scene in proper sequence, it was necessary for the scribe to cancel a stage direction and the speech of Peter which begins, "O 3e pepyl · dyspeyryng be glad," on f. 142v. The canceled speech is recopied on f. 143v exactly to the point where the first line on f. 144 fits (incidentally, the scribe appears to have made use of the recopying to make minor changes in spelling and pointing, and to add syllables that improve meter).

A more complicated example involves the end of the Crucifixion scene and the interpolated leaves 184 and 185 (see plates VI-X). It appears that in the course of his initial effort of copying the second half of the Passion sequence, the scribe stopped at the top of f. 183v (plate VI), in the midst of the scene rendering Christ's words from the cross.⁴⁵ The folio in quire T where the writing again most closely resembles the writing up to the top of f. 183v is f. 186v (plate X). To account for two different variations in the main scribe's writing between ff. 183v and 186v, I suggest that three different stages of work are in evidence in this portion of the manuscript. In the first stage, the scribe copied the Passion sequence as far as lines 860-861, "heloy · heloy · lamazabathany / my fadyr in hevyn on hy" (p. 302). He then stopped copying, left the remainder of f. 183v and an indeterminate number of following leaves blank, and resumed copying again at the top of f. 186v with the line,

In manus tuas domine
 My feyde in helle be — for he not quene my feyde
 I comende my fygge to ye
 yal go to fonde & felle
 for nolle my herte be gyngly to helle
 And ye mo yal & non felle
 Rinc cōmmitte of
 249a

Alas alas I lode to longe
 to fe my fete fone & pynne fonge
 do a theff on croo dely fonge
 And nolye yet dede ho fyne
 Alas my doyl chylde to deith is delyd
 nolle is my cas hel me in gossyd
 And ye herte & pyn is pelyd
 for felle my herte dely the pynne

A blyssed mayde chynge zo thought
 for yet zo fone to felle to fonght
 yet by hie othe ye hie yis hie is thought
 And hiefuly hie dely to take
 zo to hie ho chynge mo hie
 I am zo faveant my lade doyl
 the hie for & pyn zo to be of good chie
 And mothe is p zo make

Thou ho had nolye of me be boyn
 + I for hie flose pyn al to toyn
 on lak be hie yon on hie be foun
 Eont & hie yon hie do

2222

194
Q zeno mo it boi but wast
to holdyn as to standyn fast
hollo loggo may not last
p. derbo doj dollen i throllo
my payz ffrendz nolle llole i buallo out of hoj panto po
i xul ho bypugo yet myd to yollo

Qut yollu nolle i buallo w ful appn syllt
that goddys doj sone is nappid outyo
thos bmidzful tokomoz d'vyn ful ppght
gdj vojo filino dor ojat fto

thovoyr chitoo of god i suppose p ho bo
t so it somptu llole bo ho bmidzful llole
i oytz soj q llole yth t p agyoyth mo
llo myst t grett llolyz it is bmidz d'vyn

Qock moxvoplio fhallo may non ortholy man
p oyz is ppght dojto p ppght llole ppght cloj
tho oytz q llole is grett p llole d'vyn llole llole
thos tokomoz pino llole m llole is out d'vyn poy
ho fadyz is poyalos llole of most onpoy
bollo llole of mo llole t llole of llole llole
z it out of att llole to llole no olt of damgoj
ho llole llole ho doj sone for no att to d'vyn

Qalas alas what ppght is llole
to so p llole t llole of llole
p noyze llole no dodo d'vyn
llole nappid upon arodo
alas llole llole llole llole llole
d. zo llole llole llole llole llole
llole llole llole llole llole
all ho blyssyd blood

Pentecost

¶ A stoll treble tolle theyl 1 ban
 3 me was godys othein sone
 1 knolle he is both god + man
 he is both 3 he is 10 dno

¶ 3 was nothe man but god. 3 colde inabo morthof
 3 dno was of human boyn
 theyl he nothe so gret a cleit
 1t passeth from all yoll he had stoyne

¶ hee lallo was treble 1 day thel spon
 3 hee talke us hee 1 amonge
 3 hee 1 jeds 3o tyne 3o fave
 3 a mowde 3o hee 3o 3eunge

¶ O good lord ihu. 3 deyst noll hee on jodo
 hane maye owne. + fae 3yf me my mpo
 1 hold me boychey hee 3 my good
 3 may come to m blyss

¶ to pylat noll thel 1 goon
 + also 3o body of my lord ihu
 to boye 3 noll thel 1 soon
 in my gade 3 is so noll

¶ heyl sey pylat 3 pnterth in joto
 heyl justys of jollers man do 3e calls
 heyl 3e hettys. 1 do 3e gote
 1 3e 3o of a lono thel so be falls

¶ to boye ihu 10 body 1 thel 3e 3e
 3e hettys out of mowde 3e 3e
 for to maythe 3e 3e 3e 3e 3e
 pan thel no man hee boye 3e 3e 3e

Liberty of 3e

"A now trewly telle weyl I kan," spoken by the Centurion (307/1043). The reason for the interruption can only be guessed, but a likely possibility is that a part near the end of the text being copied was missing when the scribe was first at work (if the version being copied were a manuscript of a Passion play only, the part conjectured as missing would have been very close to the end). It can be conjectured further that f. 183v, several intervening folios, and f. 186r were left blank in anticipation of locating a text of the missing material at some later time.⁴⁶ The second stage in this hypothetical reconstruction of the scribe's procedure consisted of filling ff. 183v, several intervening folios not now in the MS., and f. 186r with text completing Christ's words from the cross and presenting the descent into hell of Anima Christi, a trace of which is the first stanza on f. 186r; and the dialogue of f. 186r involving the Centurion, two soldiers, and Nicodemus. The squeezed appearance of the writing at the bottom of f. 183v (see plate VI) may indicate that the scribe left fewer blank folios than he needed for the material to be inserted. Finally the hypothetical third stage consisted of replacing some second-stage material between ff. 183v and 186r with interpolated ff. 184r-185v. The fact that these two leaves are late interpolations is indicated because they are on paper corresponding to either the Bunch of Grapes type or the YHS in a Sun type, and by the firmer, more regular writing (see plates

VII and VIII). The scribe's splicing procedure can be conjectured by examining the text on ff. 184r-185v. It begins with a stanza that completes Christ's words from the cross, then presents a dialogue between the Virgin Mary and John at the foot of the cross, and ends with all but the last stanza of the Descent into Hell of Anima Christi. Presumably the material on ff. 184r-185v which fits, narratively speaking, on either side of the dialogue at the foot of the cross was recopied from the second-stage text, in order smoothly to splice in the foot-of-the cross dialogue.

Given the relationships among paper types, quality of script, and variations in quire length which are represented in this example and in details surveyed above, MS. Vespasian D.viii appears to be not a record of a certain town's cycle, traditionally staged from beginning to end at a time like Corpus Christi, but rather a compiling scribe's effort to collect a sequence of plays analogous in content to the English Corpus Christi form. If performance of the whole on a single occasion were envisioned, his work with the manuscript ended before the minor changes required for continuous staging had been made.

The value of the foregoing analysis is that it frees us from certain traditional presuppositions about the process by which the Ludus Coventriae was formed. The most important result of studying MS. Vespasian D.viii is the realization that instead of consisting of pieces which have more or

less fallen together after composition by different generations of writers, the Ludus Coventriae is the result of the selection of material by one individual--a person who in certain instances took an active part in modifying content. It follows that if this deliberately chosen and adapted collection can be found to manifest distinctive purposes or ideas repeatedly, then it will be possible to make some inferences about the identity of the compiler.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. Chambers, TMS, II, 407.
2. Hermann Deimling, ed. The Chester Plays, Part I, EETS, e.s. 62 (London, 1892), pp. vii-x; cited hereafter as Chester.
3. Chambers, TMS, II, 143. See also Robert Longworth, The Cornish Ordinalia: Religion and Dramaturgy (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), pp. 104-105.
4. Longworth, pp. 6 and 18. It appears that one scribe copied the first third of the text and a second, the remaining two-thirds. There are signs that later individuals made minor additions in the form of corrections and supplemental stage directions, but division of the Creation-to-Ascension scope into three portions, each designated as one day's material, was made at the initial copying. See Longworth, p. 5.
5. Chambers, TMS, II, 143; V. A. Kolve, The Play Called Corpus Christi (Stanford, 1966), p. 288; Martin Stevens, "The Missing Parts of the Towneley Cycle," Speculum, XLV (1970), 263.
6. Chambers, TMS, II, 143.
7. This is the view of Hardin Craig in ERD (1964 ed.), pp. 180-181, and it resembles conclusions drawn by W. W. Greg in Bibliographical and Textual Problems, pp. 44ff.
8. Lucy Toulmin Smith, ed., York Mystery Plays (Oxford, 1885), pp. xviii-xxviii; cited hereafter as York.
9. Martial Rose, ed., The Wakefield Mystery Plays (Garden City, 1962), pp. 10-13 and 30-32.
10. Rose, pp. 30-31.
11. Rose, p. 13.
12. The leaves of the York manuscript are eleven inches high and eight inches wide; those of the Wakefield book, twelve inches by eight and one quarter. See York, p. xiv; and Louis Wann, "A New Examination of the Manuscript of the Towneley Plays," PMLA, XLIII (1928), 139.

13. Block, pp. xvi-xviii. See Appendix A for details of the minor scribes' work.

14. Greg, Bibliographical and Textual Problems, p. 110.

15. In the Moses play, the lines giving the Latin versions of the Ten Commandments have the appearance of hastily done liturgical script in that they are always less cursively written than the surrounding text, though in some cases the difference is less marked than in others. See pp. 53-57 in Block. There is a similar occurrence of a rather roughly achieved liturgical script in the Conception of Mary, again for Latin lines and this time ones having a definite liturgical origin. See p. 66. The fifteen psalm incipits in Mary in the Temple are in liturgical script, as is the incipit for the Nunc dimittis in a stage direction of the Purification play. See pp. 75-77 and 167.

16. Block, p. xxxvii.

17. Quoted in Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. IX, 366, from Wood, Fasti Oxon., ed. Bliss, i. 372, 393.

18. York, p. xiv; and Wann, p. 139 (by inference).

19. Miss Block describes the hand of the numbering and lettering as simply "modern" (p. xi). Given the correspondence in ink shade between the numbering and lettering and Robert Hegge's signature on f. 164r, one wonders whether Hegge may have done this marking that puts the manuscript in order.

20. The quire marked W is actually one gathering within another; the play of the Assumption, on 10 leaves of a different paper type and in a different hand from the rest of quire W, has been inserted between its six leaves.

21. The following examples are a representative but not exhaustive collection: (1) In the Ludus Coventriae text, the death of Judas occurs ahead of Christ's initial trial before Pilate; it involves only eight lines of dialogue, and attention is quickly directed away to the fully developed trial scene. The Proclamation, on the other hand, devotes an entire stanza to Judas' death, places it after the beginning of the trial, and mentions a tearful expression of deep remorse, as well as the bringing of Judas' soul to hell--details absent from the text. (2) The dramatic text presents Longinus thrusting his spear into Christ's side after the soul of Christ has descended to hell and after Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus have asked Pilate's permission to bury the body. The Proclamation describes a Longinus pageant occurring before the descent to hell and before the request

of Joseph and Nicodemus for the body. (3) There is no specific mention in the Proclamation of a procession to Calvary, which, on account of its inclusion of Simon of Cyrene and Veronica, is a major part of the Crucifixion play. (4) There is no mention in the Proclamation of the trial before Herod, which forms a complete episode of the Passion sequence. (5) Proclamation stanzas about the Last Supper and the Betrayal say nothing about the noteworthy action of Mary Magdalene in the dramatic text. She anoints Christ's feet and carries news of the betrayal to the Virgin Mary. (6) Whereas the Passion sequence begins with a rather expansive presentation of the conspiring of the Jews, the Proclamation gives no sign of presentation of their motives and plotting in anything like comparable detail.

22. For instance, Louis Wann notes that in the Wakefield cycle, except for three instances in play XIV, all stage directions are in Latin, and of the thirty plays, eleven have no stage directions at all. See "A New Examination of the Manuscript of the Towneley Plays," pp. 141-142. Editions of the York and Chester plays indicate no significant difference from this example.

23. See York, pp. 1-111.

24. The Summoner's Prologue (f. 74v, p. 123) and the Prologue of the Doctors (ff. 163r and 163v, pp. 269-270).

25. The nineteen instances involve the following plays: Noah, Abraham and Isaac, Moses, The Prophets, The Trial of Joseph and Mary, The Birth of Christ, The Adoration of the Shepherds, The Massacre of the Innocents, Christ and the Doctors, The Baptism, The Temptation, The Woman Taken in Adultery, The Raising of Lazarus, The Appearance to Mary Magdalene, The Appearance on the Way to Emmaus and Appearance to Thomas, The Ascension and Choice of Matthias, The Day of Pentecost, The Assumption of the Virgin, and Doomsday.

26. The plays between which there are blank spaces are the following: Proclamation and Creation of Heaven and the Angels, Cain and Noah, Moses and Prophets, Prophets and Conception of Mary, Betrothal of Mary and Parliament of Heaven, Salutation and Joseph's Return, Joseph's Return and Visit to Elizabeth, Prologue of Summoner and Trial of Joseph and Mary, Trial of Joseph and Mary and Birth of Christ, Birth of Christ and Adoration of Shepherds, Adoration of Shepherds and Adoration of Magi, Purification and Massacre of Innocents, Death of Herod and Christ and the Doctors, Christ and the Doctors and Baptism, Baptism and Temptation, Temptation and Woman Taken in Adultery, Woman Taken in Adultery and Raising of Lazarus, Betrayal and Prologue of the Doctors, Appearance to

Mary Magdalene and Appearance on the Way to Emmaus, Appearance to Thomas and Ascension-Choice of Matthias, Ascension-Choice of Matthias and Pentecost, Pentecost and Assumption of Virgin, Assumption of Virgin and Doomsday.

27. The twenty-three instances are the beginnings of the following plays: Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham and Isaac, Moses, Prophets, Conception of Mary, Mary in the Temple, Joseph's Return, Visit to Elizabeth, Trial of Joseph and Mary, Birth of Christ, Adoration of Shepherds, Adoration of Magi, Purification, Massacre of Innocents, Woman Taken in Adultery, Raising of Lazarus, Last Supper, Prologue of the Doctors, Appearance to Cleophas and Luke, Ascension and Choice of Matthias, Assumption of Virgin, and Doomsday.

28. Ff. 30v, 51v, 52r, 66v, 88r, 91v, 105r, 105v, 111v, 115v, 120r, 120v, 126v, 127r, 151v, 162v, 164r, 164v, 201v, 209v, 213r, 213v, 223r.

29. Whoever was responsible for the rubricating, it appears to have been done before the scribe of leaves 95, 96, and 112 (one of the three minor scribes) had added his interpolating. The evidence for this conclusion is the fact that unlike any other episode mentioned in the Proclamation, the Baptism play lacks a marginal numeral, and at the same time, the number 22, which, according to the sequence up to this point in the manuscript, would have been the one given to the Baptism play, is missing from the sequence. A reasonable explanation for its absence would be that the interpolated leaf 112, which contains the beginning of the Baptism play, replaced the main scribe's text of this material, which would have carried the large red 22.

30. Concerning the Wakefield manuscript, Louis Wann writes, "Except for the alterations, all the plays but the last were evidently written by the same scribe about 1450. Play XXXII is in the hand of another scribe, writing in the early part of the 16th century." "A New Examination of the Manuscript of the Towneley Plays," p. 141. The York manuscript is thought to date from between 1430 and 1440; see note 8 above.

31. Minneapolis, 1914.

32. For instance, her conclusions are repeated by Hardin Craig in ERD, pp. 265-280. Dr. Craig's inclination to this theory doubtless dates from his work as advisor of Miss Swenson's study, but he found no cause, not even Miss Block's information, in the fifty years preceding the later version of ERD to make any substantial change. A more recent example of how the Swenson-Craig model is being accepted as

fact appears in Kenneth Cameron and Stanley J. Kahrl, "Staging the N-Town Cycle," Theatre Notebook, XXI (1967-68), 122-138 and 152-165.

33. See Bibliographical and Textual Problems, p. 143.

34. Bibliographical and Textual Problems, p. 111.

35. See Block, p. xii.

36. See explanation of "perhaps" in survey of YHS in a Sun paper on p. 62 above.

37. See Appendix A for details of their involvement with MS. Vespasian D.viii.

38. See Miss Block's note on p. 269. Esther L. Swenson, p. 56, has suggested that the Prologue of the Doctors is in a hand different from the main scribe's (and different from any of the minor scribes')--though without any paleographical explanation. Block, however, groups this writing in the main scribe's work. Although larger than his usual writing, features like his characteristic inclination to use the capital a nearly always when this letter begins a word, and his arbitrary use of ff, seem to justify attribution to him.

39. Block, p. xxxiii and p. 270n.

40. The method of line identification used throughout this study is by page in Block's edition (here 271) and line numbers as assigned by Block (here 9-20). Upper case signifies letters touched with red ink, rather than capital letters in the manuscript.

41. Ff. 143r, 143v, 149r, 149v, 150r, 150v, 151r, 184r, 184v, 185r, and 185v.

42. Block, pp. xv-xvi. See also p. 225, n. 1 and n. 2; p. 247, n. 2; p. 251, n. 2; and p. 256, n. 2.

43. The paper of leaves 143, 184, and 185 is Bunch of Grapes of YHS in a Sun. See explanation on p. 62 above.

44. See p. 62 above.

45. See Block, p. xiv and p. 302, n. 1.

46. Quire T now has 10 leaves. 183 and 186 are conjugate, as are 184 and 185, the pair at the center.

Chapter Three

THE INTELLECTUAL UNITY OF THE LUDUS COVENTRIAE PASSION SEQUENCE

Because of its length and continuous linking of scenes, the Passion sequence offers a particularly good opportunity to determine the degree of the Ludus Coventriae compiler's shaping influence. In the following pages, this issue will be approached in three steps. We need first to look into what can be learned about his method from the way varying meter and stanza types are spread through the text. Analyzing this evidence involves countering some earlier interpretations of its significance. Second, we must explore the pertinent theological background--specifically, understandings of how the Passion accomplished redemption--in order to see the degree of intellectual cohesiveness. The final step in recognizing the compiler's craftsmanship is to observe how the intellectual content is given dramatic form.

Developed by Esther L. Swenson in 1914,¹ the standard theory about the Ludus Coventriae Passion is that the material as it now stands, which has clearly been written for platea-with-loca staging, was adapted for this more "modern" production method from a series of once separate, processional staged plays. In 1916, a variant of this idea was published by Frances Foster, who was concerned especially with accounting

for discrepancies between action outlined in the Proclamation and the actual content of the Passion sequence.² Miss Foster based her conclusions partly on observation of the variety of stanza and meter types in the cycle. The three main stanza forms are one of thirteen lines rhyming ababababcbdddc, found in the Proclamation as well as in various plays (hereafter referred to as the "thirteener"); a so-called ballad stanza, usually of eight lines rhyming aaabcccb and known also as rime couée;³ and a quatrain of four-stress lines. A common variant of the third type is an octave made by linking quatrains by rhyme: ababbcbcb. There is one major variation from standard syllabic meter: a line lengthened by a variable number of unstressed syllables. This meter, which in the Ludus Coventriae appears only in quatrains and octaves, has come to be referred to as "tumbling verse," a term picked up by Saintsbury from King James the Sixth of Scotland's Rewlis and Cautelis.⁴ Thirteeners and rime couée appear most often in parts of the cycle whose directions are vague enough to allow critics to imagine that they were staged processionally; hence Foster postulates that the original Ludus Coventriae was constituted as the Proclamation specifies and that it was written in thirteeners and rime couée. The Passion section, which both diverges considerably from the Proclamation and is mostly in quatrains and octaves, thus seems to be the work of a reviser, "B, who . . . composed fresh plays on the events from the Entry into Jerusalem to the Crucifixion, and rewrote the story of Longinus and the

Burial."⁵ It happens that instances of tumbling verse are confined almost entirely to the two sections clearly written for platea-with-loca staging, the Marian group and the Passion sequence. Foster notes that the content in tumbling verse is often "scholastic and theological" amplification and adornment, and she attributes this to a second reviser, "C," whose "purpose appears to have been the formation of three small cycles, one of which might be given apart from the rest of the plays in any year. These cycles were: (1) The Early Life of Mary (Plays VIII-XIII), (2) the Last Supper and Capture (XXV-XXVIII), and (3) the Trial, Death, and Resurrection (XXIX-XXXV)."⁶

After examining the manuscript, K. S. Block responded to Foster's hypothesis as follows: "The evidence of the MS. supports the view that a compiler is putting together parts to make a whole rather than the view suggested by Dr. Foster (Northern Passion, E.E.T.S. 147, p. 99) that a reviser has separated a whole into groups, though he drew apparently on a cycle--or the remains of a cycle--of plays in thirteen-lined stanzas as well as on single plays and on groups of plays."⁷ As we have noted in Chapter Two, some physical details of the manuscript--the distribution of paper types, changes in the quality of the copying, and stains which mark certain leaves as initially having been outer ones--support Block's conclusion that when the compiling scribe came to the Passion section of the Ludus Coventriae, instead of con-

tinuing to use YHS in a Sun paper for a fresh copy of the text to be incorporated, he inserted a copy of a Passion sequence which he had made earlier.⁸ For some unknowable reason, he neglected to revise the prologue of Contemplacio (between the two Passion play sections) to suit the continuous form of production which the Proclamation at the beginning of the cycle implies.

Until now, the only challenges besides Block's to the idea of composition advanced by Swenson and Foster have been in work of W. W. Greg and Eleanor Prosser.⁹ Miss Prosser's recent discussion of the first half of the play focuses on thematic patterns and the structural idea that seems to govern the arrangement of episodes. She concludes, "Undoubtedly the present text includes lines by several hands, written at different periods of time, but the meticulous dramatic structure of the play indicates one hand prevailing throughout. . . . All the evidence points to one major compiler-reviser, a man of true dramatic genius."¹⁰

Since Prosser's assessment of "The Passion Play. I" (both this caption and "the Passion Play. II" are Block's; neither appears in the manuscript) is made rather parenthetically--as she explains, "to answer scholarship that might render suspect" her evaluation of the Magdalene role¹¹--it is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject of cohesiveness in the Passion sequence. It is beyond her purpose, for instance, to inquire into the relation-

ship of "The Passion Play. I" to its sequel in the manuscript. On the other hand, no aspect of her analysis precludes the possibility that the two divisions form a single unit--a conclusion which is indicated by several types of evidence. First, in stanza form and meter, the two sections are for the most part homogeneous.¹² Second, in introducing the Passion sequence, the Prologue of Demon poses a question that underlies the meaning of the ensuing action: whether Jesus can in fact make good his claim to save mankind from the dominion of the devil (226/41-48). The question is not answered, of course, until the action of "The Passion Play. II" has unfolded. Third, the Prologue of Contemplacio, introducing the second division as a continuation of the first, gives a summary of previous action which corresponds exactly to "The Passion Play. I." Thus, if the present form of "The Passion Play. I" can be attributed to "one major compiler-reviser" as seems likely, it appears that his work extends through "The Passion Play. II" as well.

Examination of discontinuities in script and paper type make it possible to discern revisions made at the time of compilation. One finds that whatever the scribe-compiler's relationship to composition of the quatrain Passion, his sense of what the play should stress was fully in accord with the conception of that basic version. There are four instances of change at the time of compilation. The first is leaf 143 (pp. 237-239), of either Bunch of Grapes or YHS

in a Sun paper,¹³ inserted in the midst of the Bull's Head paper of quire N. It contains Christ's request that the disciples bring an ass for him to ride, their doing so, and a sermon by Peter. The first two parts are in thirteeners¹⁴ and the third, octaves of tumbling verse. The next interpolation is quire O (pp. 247-251), three leaves of Bunch of Grapes paper inserted between quires of the Bull's Head type. Contained in this segment are the scene of Magdalene repenting and anointing Christ's feet, followed by his absolution and her expression of gratitude (four thirteeners); Judas' objection to the seeming wastefulness of Magdalene's act (one stanza of rime couée); and Christ's prediction of betrayal, followed by the disciples' expressions of horror at the thought of a traitor's fate (octaves and quatrains). The third interpolation consists of leaves 184 and 185 (pp. 303-306), either YHS in a Sun or Bull's Head paper¹⁵ inserted among the Two Crossed Keys leaves of quire T. The text here is a dialogue between the Virgin and John standing at the foot of the cross, and the descent into hell of Anima Christi. Both parts are entirely in rime couée.

The final instance of change at the time of compilation involves obliteration of how the basic quatrain Passion play ended. As we have previously noted, "The Passion Play. II" has been copied on paper with the Two Crossed Keys watermark. Use of this paper stops with quire T, in the midst of the Guarding of the Sepulchre. The stanza type in this

scene, to all but the last four lines of quire T, is the quatrain. These last four lines, as well as the remaining part of the Guarding of the Sepulchre, the Harrowing of Hell, the Resurrection including Christ's appearance to the Virgin, and discovery of the Resurrection by the guards--scenes which follow in quire V--are in rime couée.¹⁶ Since quire V is of YHS in a Sun paper--which, for reasons given in Chapter Two, appears to belong to the latest stage of the Ludus Coventriae scribe's work--it can be surmised that in compiling the full cycle, he has set aside an ending for the Passion play in quatrains and used instead, the version in rime couée.

From these observations, we can conclude that contrary to the thinking of Foster, material in thirteeners and rime couée represents not remnants of an "original cycle" which has been displaced in the Passion section by the present text, but rather, amplifying segments added by the scribe, for the most part at the time of compilation.¹⁷ These two stanza types perhaps do indicate that whole plays or fragments in thirteeners and rime couée, analogues of parts of the Passion section, were known by the scribe-compiler. However, more significant than any speculation about origin of the stanzaically anomalous material is the fact that content rendered in these forms reinforces emphases already present in the basic quatrain Passion play.

In view of the foregoing conclusions, the phrase "the Ludus Coventriae Passion playwright" can reasonably be used

to stand for either one individual who both composed the play and incorporated it in the cycle, or a pair of collaborators, one the author of the basic quatrain play and the other the compiler, whose sense of what Passion drama should be was essentially the same as the author's.

The consistency of purpose can be seen most clearly by observing the intellectual cohesiveness of the play. Compared with its analogues in Middle English, the Ludus Coventriae Passion is distinguished by more explicit and complex provision for doctrinal teaching. The strongest unifying factor is the playwright's continual glossing of action to point up both the doctrinal significance of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, and the means which the Church provides for men to avail themselves of divine grace. This is not to say that the playwright has provided poorly for effective drama. On the contrary. Many of the elements which he developed to enhance the intellectual coherence of the play involve lively, affecting, and anxiety-producing action. And his imagination for establishing continuity through an abundance of invented naturalistic detail manifests itself in plot, dialogue, and busy movement among the scaffolds of the playing area. But his concern was overwhelmingly centered on elucidating doctrine as well as inspiring faith and devotion.

The fundamental theological question in the story of Christ's suffering and death is what bearing it had on the

relationship between the Creator and mankind. Broadly speaking, medieval theologians wrestled with two different formulations of redemption or atonement doctrine. The older of the two has come to be called the "abuse-of-power" theory. According to this interpretation, Adam, by yielding to Satan's temptation, had made the human race subject to the devil's power, or had, so to speak, given Satan certain rights with respect to mankind. Thus estranged from God, men were destined to follow earthly life by passing eternity in hell. But God in His mercy devised a way in which Satan's greed for dominion over man would work to the ultimate destruction of his power: God would take upon Himself human nature, and when Satan attempted to assert his power over the incarnate deity, that power would be broken once and for all.¹⁸

The treatise regarded as the earliest thorough formulation of an alternative to the abuse-of-power concept in the Middle Ages is Anselm's Cur Deus Homo (later eleventh century). That this work was directly prompted by dissatisfaction with the abuse-of-power concept is clear in one of the early statements of Anselm's imaginary interlocutor Boso:

I do not see the force of that argument, which we are wont to make use of, that God, in order to save men, was bound, as it were, to try a contest with the devil in justice, before he did in strength, so that, when the devil should put to death that being in whom there was nothing worthy of death, and who was God, he should justly lose his power over sinners; and that, if it were not so, God would have used undue force against the devil, since the devil had a rightful ownership of man, for the devil

had not seized man with violence, but man had freely surrendered to him. It is true that this might well enough be said, if the devil or man belonged to any other being than God, or were in the power of any but God. But since neither the devil nor man belong to any but God, and neither can exist without the exertion of Divine power, what cause ought God to try with his own creature (de suo, in suo), or what should he do but punish his servant, who had seduced his fellow-servant to desert their common Lord and come over to himself¹⁹

Obviously Anselm was concerned with developing an explanation which was less equivocal about the omnipotence of God. Though his newly devised approach is rationalistic and juridical, he states clearly that Cur Deus Homo was written not to promote "attaining to faith by means of reason, but that [inquirers] may be gladdened by understanding and meditating on those things which they believe" (Cur Deus Homo, I,i, p. 178). He began by demonstrating that the redemption itself was a logical necessity. The basic argument is that since the Creator's intention was for mankind to replace the angels fallen from heaven, the inevitable completion of the Almighty's plan determined that redemption would occur.²⁰ Anselm was superseded on this issue by theologians who referred the question not to the design of the cosmos, but to the nature of God. Prevailing at the time of the Ludus Coventriae was the view, articulated by both Bonaventure and Aquinas among others, that there was no absolute necessity for man's restoration from his fallen state, but that nevertheless it suited the attributes of God for this

to occur. The Ludus Coventriae Passion alludes to a well-known way of treating this theological issue in the arts. In the scene of Christ praying in Gethsemane immediately before his arrest, the comforting angel mentioned by Luke is given the following speech:

Heyl bothe god and man in dede
The ffadyr hath sent þe þis present
He bad þat þou xuldyst not drede
But fulfyllle his intent
As þe parlement of hefne hath ment
þat mannys sowle xal now redemyd be
Ffrom hefne to herd lord þou wore sent
þat dede Appendyth on-to þe (264/945-952).

The Passion playwright apparently expected audiences to be familiar with the parliament of heaven allegory (known also as the debate of the four daughters of God), in which four figures representing God's attributes of truth, justice, mercy, and peace argue so as to show that the Incarnation and Passion must be the means of man's redemption. However, when the full Ludus Coventriae cycle was compiled, a dramatization of the parliament was included in the play of the Salvation and Conception.

The aspect of Anselm's exposition which had the greatest and most sustained impact on later theology was the conceptualization of Christ's death as "satisfaction" for the sin of Adam. This idea runs through the Ludus Coventriae Passion, but in a form which reflects theological trends after Anselm. As set forth in the Cur Deus Homo, the satisfaction theory involves conceptualizing humanity as a collective abstraction to which effects of the acts of Adam and Christ are trans-

ferred. In the hands of later theologians, the satisfaction theory came to be applied to humanity in a less abstract sense, in which the meaning of Adam's transgression was associated more directly with the sins of individual human beings. In many cases, the Ludus Coventriae playwright's phrasing seems deliberately open to both the abstract and the personal understandings of "man." For instance, speaking to the disciples at the Last Supper, Christ explains:

Ffor þe prophetys spoke of me
And seydyn of deth þat I xuld take
Fro wech deth I wole not fle
But for mannys synne A-mendys make
(261/865-868).

There are also passages which very unambiguously express the satisfaction theory applied at the personal level. An example is the Virgin's apostrophe to Christ immediately after receiving word of his arrest:

Wher-fore þan xuld 3e soffer þis gret peyn
I suppoce veryly it is for þe tresspace of me
And I wyst þat myn hert xuld cleve on tweyn
(268/1062-1064).

As Eleanor Prosser has noted, by assigning these words to the Virgin--characterized as model of virtue and righteousness--the playwright makes irony underscore his point.²¹

Because of its bearing on definition of the nature of Christ--a recurrent dogmatic theme in the Ludus Coventriae Passion²²--Anselm's exposition of the satisfaction theory deserves attention. Working from the belief that the nature and will of God are expressed, among other ways, in perfect

balance and order, he argues that there must be payment for Adam's sin because for God to allow it to go unpunished would be to leave it "undischarged," and "it is not fitting for God to pass over anything in his kingdom undischarged" (Cur Deus Homo, p. 203).²³ Faith in order and balance as the ground of truth is likewise apparent in Anselm's explanation of why Christ alone was able to redeem mankind. He argues that since the surrendering of immortality was the measure of man's rebellion against God's will, the payment necessary to restore honor due to God was a voluntary death (Cur Deus Homo, p. 264). Voluntary death, however, could be undertaken by only one creature, one for whom death was not inevitable yet possible. These conditions could be met only by a perfectly sinless man. Yet no creature less than God could be capable of achieving complete satisfaction of a debt owed to God. Anselm concludes that only a creature both God and man could accomplish the atonement. He insists further, ". . . if these two complete natures are said to be joined somehow, in such a way that one may be Divine while the other is human, and yet that which is God not be the same with that which is man, it is impossible for both to do the work necessary to be accomplished. For God will not do it, because he has no debt to pay; and man will not do it, because he cannot. Therefore, in order that the God-man may perform this, it is necessary that the same being should be perfect God and perfect man, in order to make this atonement" (Cur Deus Homo,

p. 246).

Historically, the most important result of this argument was its heightening of awareness of the full humanity of Christ. Anselm's demonstration of the logical necessity that the redeemer be divine and human was never granted the status of official doctrine, but no major theologian after him bypassed the question of why God chose particularly Christ's Passion as the means of redemption. Foreshadowed in Abelard's commentary on Romans, the understanding which came to be favored over Anselm's was that God had chosen His particular method of redemption on account of the supreme force of so great a proof of love. Peter Lombard (c. 1100-1160 or 1164), whose Sentences became (next to the Bible itself) the basic theological textbook in the universities, described the redeeming efficacy of Christ's sacrifice in terms which include the following: "So great a pledge of love having been given us we too are moved and kindled to love God who did such great things for us; and by this we are justified; that is, being loosened from our sins we are made just. The death of Christ therefore justifies us, inasmuch as through it charity is excited in our hearts."²⁴ The explanation that God had chosen the Passion as the fittest means of redemption--fittest because it best enabled man to realize the greatness of His love--was given by the two most influential theologians of the thirteenth century, Bonaventure (in his commentary on the Sentences) and Aquinas (in the Summa Theologica).²⁵

The destiny of Anselm's concept of the Passion as satisfaction was that it became the link between atonement theology and the sacraments. As explained in Aquinas' Summa--in the later Middle Ages and still today the most authoritative exposition of doctrine for the Roman Church--Christ, pleasing God with the love and obedience expressed in his voluntary death, accomplished not only sufficient but superabundant satisfaction for the sins of mankind. He thus established a store of merit available for continually making satisfaction for men's transgressions. Baptism, by which one becomes part of the body of Christ, is the first step toward being able to receive absolving merit, or grace. Penance and the Eucharist are the primary means by which grace may be actively sought.

In surveying developments in atonement doctrine after Cur Deus Homo, we have thus far not considered how Anselm's successors responded to the abuse-of-power theory. To assume that this patristic formulation was discarded outright would be to ignore a basic principle of ecclesiastical tradition: new thinking establishes itself as orthodox by, among other things, demonstrating its harmony with prior orthodoxy. Thus, Peter Lombard, whom we have seen to be firmly in the post-Anselmian tradition, uses language associated with the abuse-of-power concept, particularly the idea of subjection to the power of Satan. But, as others have noted, the metaphoric value of the terms is made more explicit than was the case

in the writings of the Fathers.²⁶ For instance, the Lombard speaks of mankind being released by Christ "a vinculis diaboli," which he interprets, "id est a peccatis."²⁷ And Christ's death, he explains, extinguished "whatever fault there was in consequence whereof the Devil detained us before Christ's coming. . . . For though he tempts us after the death of Christ as he tempted us before, yet he cannot conquer, as he used to conquer before."²⁸ In Aquinas also, as Gustaf Aulén, among others, has pointed out, ". . . certain of the characteristic points of the classic abuse-of-power view appear, such as the deliverance of men from the power of the devil, which he seeks to reconcile with the idea of satisfaction."²⁹

As for which concept of the atonement prevails in the Ludus Coventriae Passion, the few scholars who have considered the matter disagree.³⁰ It is no wonder that a case can be made for either the abuse-of-power theory or an Anselmian position as the controlling idea of the play. This is so because the intellectual content essentially mirrors the developments in doctrine which we have followed in the foregoing survey. The abuse-of-power theory appears to have been used by the playwright for its obvious effectiveness in putting abstract mysteries into concrete terms, rather like myth. But while Satan's plot-line provides a running doctrinal gloss, intelligible to the simplest of spectators, the playwright's representation of the character and motivation of Christ is inspired by theologians who glory in the

abstract wonders, particularly the moral force of God's expression of love, reflected in the perfect son's voluntary self-sacrifice.

Details of the characterization of Christ will have our attention in the following chapter, which is devoted to the playwright's methods of converting the spiritual implications of theology to dramatic experience. His concern to provide also for a basic understanding of the faith and its responsibilities is evident in the use he makes of the abuse-of-power theory, expressed primarily through the figure of Satan.

As devised in the Ludus Coventriae Passion, Satan's role makes it visually clear that the demonic and human figures who brought about Christ's sacrifice were merely the agents of the will of God. The playwright has built Satan's plot on the idea that the devil is unsure whether to believe Christ's claims of divine sonship and of power to release mankind from his subjugation. By taking on human nature, God causes Satan's greed for men's souls to work to the destruction of his power. Thus, though the theme of contention between Satan and Christ belongs to the abuse-of-power concept, little remains of this early expression of doctrine except part of its narrative vehicle. The uncomfortable notion of trickery or deception by God is played down, and there is scant suggestion that Satan has rights to a just settlement before yielding dominion over Adam's

kin. Motivated by vengefulness both for having been cast out of heaven and for Christ's refusal in the wilderness to yield to temptation, the Ludus Coventriae Satan becomes victimized by his own malicious nature. He is not deceived by God so much as by the "prudens and dyscrecion" (227/60) which he ironically boasts.

The plot of cosmic contention between Satan and God/Christ re-emerges at various times throughout the play, but the identity established for the devil is actually two-fold. Satan's prologue, the opening speech of the play, divides into two nearly even halves, the first being a prediction of future action made from a standpoint outside of time. Having reviewed occasions when Christ thwarted his power over men (the resisting of temptation in the wilderness, the raising of Lazarus, and the forgiving of Magdalene), Satan announces how he plans to test the claims of Christ and presumably do away with his interference once and for all:

But whan þe tyme xal neyth of his persecucion
 I xal Arere new Engynes · of malycious conspiracy
 Plente of reprevys · I xal provide · to his confusyon
 · · · · ·
 a tretowre xal countyrfe · his deth · to fortyfye
 þe rebukys þat he gyf me · xal turne to his displesauns
 (226/49-51 and 55-56).

Then suddenly Satan shifts to make a direct appeal to his listeners for their allegiance:

Gyff me 3our love · grawnt me myn Affeccion
 And I wyl vnclose · þe tresour of lovys Alyawns
 And gyff 3ow 3oure desyrys afftere 3oure intencion
 no poverte xal aproche 3ow · fro plentevous Abundauns
 (227/61-64).

He goes on to detail the particular modes of appearance, action, and response to God's preachers which mark the followers of Satan.³¹ Thus the playwright establishes that the fiend represents a force in the familiar world of the audience's everyday experience, as well as the power that alienated mankind from God before the Incarnation. The two aspects of Satan's identity closely resemble the distinction between surface meaning and "gostly interpretacioun" that recurs several times in the play.³²

Satan is present primarily in two ways in the body of the Ludus Coventriae Passion: there are physical appearances of the character which underscore the involvement of God's eternal plan with the historical conspiracy; and Satan is alluded to often in explanations by Christ of his redemptive mission.

The first appearance of Satan after his prologue occurs as Judas leaves the Last Supper to complete his act of betrayal. Sharing with the audience his delight in Judas' cooperation, the fiend exclaims,

A . A . Judas Derlyng myn
 þou art þe best to me þat evyr was bore
 þou xalt be crownyd in helle peyn
 and þer-of þou xalt be sekyr for evyr-more
 (258/786-790).

Although there is scriptural basis for attributing Judas' motivation to Satan (Luke 22:3 and John 13:27), the three analogues of this scene in Middle English leave out any supernatural element, concentrating rather on establishing a con-

nection between Judas' objection to Magdalene's use of ointment on Christ's feet and his practice of skimming a tenth for himself from the disciples' revenue. The selling of Christ in the other versions is thus treated as Judas' means of getting what he missed by Magdalene's buying ointment instead of giving "cash." In contrast, the Ludus Coventriae playwright provides scarcely any plausible human motivation, emphasizing instead Judas' function as agent in a supernaturally determined chain of events.³³

At the second appearance of Satan in the main action, we see that though he was sure "no thyng may excede . my prudens and dyscrecion" (227/60), nevertheless he has caught himself in a process which he can do nothing to reverse. As Christ is being led from Herod's court to a second trial before Pilate, Satan tells the audience of the cross, nails, and spear which are in readiness to bring about his adversary's death. But his orders to the ranks in hell to prepare for Christ's arrival are abruptly interrupted by a demon's warning that they stand no chance against their master's intended victim. Satan's response is to try to prevent the death of Christ by persuading Pilate's wife in a dream that she should convince her husband to protect the Galilean's life. Pilate accepts her plea, but the persistence of the Jewish leaders in seeking his assent to their will makes Satan's last minute effort come to naught. Furthermore, Christ is entirely ready to complete the Father's plan. The

audience sees this as, hanging on the cross, he says to the Virgin,

And woman þou knowyst þat my fadyr of hefne me sent
to take þis manhod of þe · Adam ys rawnsom to pay
Ffor þis is þe wyl · and my faderys intent
þat I xal þus deye · to delyuere man · fro þe develys pray.

Now syn it is þe wyl of my fadyr · it xuld þus be
Why xuld it dysplese þe modyr · now my deth so sore
And for to suffre Al þis for man · I was born of the
to þe blys þat man had lost · man A-3en to restore
(300/826-833).

The climax of Satan's plot is imminent as Christ, breathing his last, announces,

I xal go sle þe fende þat freke
ffor now myn herte be-gynnyth to breke
wurdys mo xal I non speke
Nunc consummatum est
(303/895-898).

When Anima Christi appears at the gate of hell (recalling Satan's prologue: "Whan þe soule fro þe body · xal make separacion" [226/447]), Satan has the answer to his wishful doubts about Christ's claims. Woefully he acknowledges,

Onto þi byddynges must we bow
þat þou art god now do we know
Of þe had we grett dowte
A3ens þe may no thynges stonde
All thynges obeyth to thyn honde
bothe hevyn and helle watyr and londe
All thynges must to þe lowte
(306/1003-1009).³⁴

The last scene involving Satan brings the multiple levels of time in the play into clear focus. Still in hell and about to lead forth Adam and Eve, Abraham, John the Baptist, "et Alijs," Anima Christi pauses for final measures to secure his conquest of Satan:

Thorwe blood I took of mannys kynde
 Ffals devyl I here þe bynde
 In endles sorwe I þe wynde
 þer-in evyr-more to dwelle
 now þou art bownde þou mayst not fle
 Ffor þin envyous cruelte
 In endeles dampnacion xalt þou be
 And nevyr comyn out of helle (319/1392-1399).

In his last words, Satan acknowledges, "I xal nevyr com from helle" (320/1407). The devil's plot thus ends in destruction by Christ of his dominion over men. Yet in the second half of his prologue, Satan indicated that he does indeed still manage to be active in the world of men, and as we shall see, the play elsewhere contains frequent recommendations to the audience of a way to "defende 3ow fro þe ffende." Rather than amounting to inconsistency, these details represent two simultaneously maintained interpretations of the historical death of Christ, one joining history with the eternal plan of God, and the other uncovering the truths about the soul which scriptural history conceals. On the mythic-theological plane, Christ's victory over Satan is accomplished from eternity; on the spiritual plane, the struggle must be repeated in every human life. Christian orthodoxy recognizes both significances in the history of the Passion and Resurrection.

The relationship of Christ's historical sacrifice to the striving of every soul for salvation is treated most concretely in teaching about the Eucharist (perhaps rather too concretely for modern taste). Commenting on the partaking of bread and wine at the Last Supper in the Ludus

Coventriae, Eleanor Prosser has noted, "Here, attention is focused entirely on the institution of the Sacrament, on Christ's love-offering of his heart's blood for man's sin. . . . No such emphasis is found in the other mystery versions of the Last Supper, in which writers tend more to stress the commemorative nature of the feast as the last meal together."³⁵ In fact, it would be difficult to find a more explicit and detailed explication of Eucharistic doctrine elsewhere in popular literature. The playwright has greatly amplified the gospel account in order to establish the sacramental equivalence of the Eucharist to Christ's self-sacrifice in the Crucifixion. Furthermore, he provides for recognition that the action of Christ interpreted to be the prototypical consecration of the Eucharistic elements is identical to the central action of the priest officiating at Mass. It would detain us too long to cover the full depth of how the playwright establishes the meaning of the sacrament; figural interpretation of Old Testament history (e.g., 254/670-685), tropological exegesis (e.g., 256-257/718-761), and images referring to multiple stages of divine revelation (e.g., "agnus dey," 255/713; "awngellys mete," 257/760) all contribute to the resonance of the consecration scene. It will best serve our purpose of highlighting the playwright's explicit concern for the souls of spectators if we focus attention on details that establish the power of the consecrated elements.

That the playwright means to provide visually for as-

sociation between the Last Supper and the Mass is clear in the stage direction "here xal jhesus take an oble in his hand lokyng vpward in to hefne . . ." (255/after 693). After words defining his nature as both divine and human, Christ says over the oble (the thin wafer-like cake used by the Church for Eucharistic bread),

And þus þurwe þi myth fadyr and blyssyng of me
Of þis þat was bred is mad my body (255/700-701).

Then, turning his eyes to the disciples, he explains,

bretheryn be þe vertu of þese wordys þat rehercyd be
þis þat shewyth as bred to 3our Apparens
Is mad þe very flesche and blod of me
To þe weche þei þat wole be savyd must 3eve credens.

And as in þe olde lawe it was comawndyd and precepte
To ete þis lomb to þe dystruccyon of pharao vn-kende
So to dystroy 3our gostly enmye · þis xal be kepte
ffor 3our paschal lombe in-to þe werdys ende
(255/702-709).

The words of Christ at the consecration of the chalice repeat the theme of receiving strength for spiritual struggle and, with striking abruptness, yoke the sacrament to his nearing death:

Takyth þese chalys of þe newe testament
And kepyth þis evyr in 3our mende
As oftyr as 3e do þis with trewe intent
It xal defende 3ow fro þe ffende.

Than xal be dysciplys com and take þe blod · Jhesus seyng

þis is my blood þat for mannys synne
Outh of myn herte it xal renne (259/807-812).

In addition to the playwright's visual effects for linking the Last Supper and the Eucharist, as well as Christ and all priests, there are choices of language which work to

the same end. The words of the drama's Christ in offering the chalice are close to translation of actual liturgy. A fifteenth-century English manuscript canon of the Mass records that as a priest took the chalice in his hands, he would say,

Accipite et bibite ex eo omnes. Hic est enim calix sanguinis mei novi et aeterni testamenti, mysterium fidei, qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum.

Then the rubrics direct,

Hic eleuet Calicem usque ad pectus vel ultra caput, dicens: Haec quotiescunque feceritis, in mei memoriam facietis.³⁶

Thus the Mass essentially dramatizes the priest's function as agent of Christ by having him speak in his person. Conversely, by having Christ's role echo the liturgy, the playwright dramatizes the article of faith that Christ is the supreme high priest. The liturgical overtones additionally reassert the two levels of time and meaning we are reminded of throughout the play: "ghostly," tropological realities inhering in literal, historical event.

At the conclusion of the disciples' partaking of the wine, the playwright amends gospel record with details which in effect show administration of the Eucharist to be a responsibility assigned by Christ to his ministers. The playwright adapts his source not only by adding an event, but also by shifting scriptural phrases from their original contexts. And relocation of the phrases is not simply a matter of applying the original meaning to a freshly imagined situation; because of doctrinal overtones which linger from ex-

planation of the sacrament, the phrases take on new implications of concrete Eucharistic reference. The scriptural context in which Peter receives Christ's command "Feed my sheep" (259/818) is the last instance recorded by John of the Lord's being present with the disciples after the Resurrection (John 21:15-17); nothing in the context implies literal feeding with the Lord's Supper. Similarly, the scriptural context of Christ's promise "I am with you always" (259/823: "And evyr I xal þus A-byde with 3ow") is the last appearance of Christ to the disciples which Matthew records (28:20). Again, nothing in the account suggests that Christ intends reference to his sacramental presence in consecrated bread and wine. Both phrases are invested with doctrinal reference when the Ludus Coventriae playwright incorporates them in his invented conclusion for the institution of the Eucharist. He has Christ tell the disciples what they are to do and preach as his ministers, saying,

Werfore petyr and 3e every-chon
 3yf 3e loue me fede my schep
 þat for fawth of techyng þei go not wrong
 But evyr to hem takyth good kep.

3evyth hem my body as I haue to 3ow
 Qweche xal be sacryd be my worde
 And evyr I xal þus A-byde with 3ow
 In-to þe ende of þe werde.

Ho so etyth my body and drynkyth my blood
 Hol god and man he xal me take
 It xal hym defende from þe deuyl wood
 and at his deth I xal hym nowth for-sake.

and ho so not ete my body nor drynke my blood
 Lyf in hym is nevyr A dele

Kepe wel þis in mende for 3our good
 and every man save hym-self wele
 (259-60/817-832).

Like a preacher ingeniously reiterating his sermon theme through varied approaches, the author of the Ludus Coventriae Passion shapes succeeding parts of the play into opportunities for repeating Eucharistic doctrine. Continually he asserts the relationship between Christ's historical death and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, both being aspects of the means of mankind's redemption. For instance, to the description in Luke (22:41-46) of Christ's agony in Gethsemane, the playwright adds the appearance of an angel carrying chalice and bread and saying,

þis chalys ys þi blood þis bred is þi body
 Ffor mannys synne evyr offeryd xal be
 To þe fadyr of heffne þat is al-mythty
 þi dyscipulis and all presthood xal offere fore the
 (264/953-956).

This reference to the Eucharist has no basis in scripture (Luke says simply, "And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.") nor does it appear in any Middle English analogue.³⁷ Again, in a review of what the audience has been shown in the first half of the Passion play--a very sketchy review limited to only eight lines--the prologue-speaker Contemplacio makes certain his listeners will remember that in the sacrament instituted at the Last Supper, Christ continues to be present in the world:

The last 3ere we shewyd here how oure lord for love of man
 Cam to þe cety of jherusalem · mekely his deth to take
 And how he made his mawnde · his body 3evyng þan

to his Apostelys evyr with us • to A-bydyn for mannys sake
(271/9-12).

The two subsequent allusions to the Eucharist in the second half of the Passion play bear on the question whether different stanza types represent work of several authors who differed about the appropriateness of didacticism to drama. While the Passion play is mainly in quatrains (both single and pairs linked by a common rhyme), these later speeches of Anima Christi and Jesus which refer to the Eucharist are in rime couée. The first is in the scene immediately after Christ's death when--with the player of Christ apparently still on the cross--a figure representing his soul approaches the gate of hell. What needs to be explained by Anima Christi is his identity and his mission to release the righteous souls being held by Satan. Speaking directly to the audience, he points out that his dead body "hangyth ȝitt on þe rode" and then adds

ffor mannys sake my body is deed
ffor mannys helpe my body is bred
And sowle drynk my bodys blode
(305/984-986).

Thus, with action momentarily stopped, spectators are reminded that consecrated bread and wine transmit the redeeming power of the death they have just witnessed. After the confrontation between Anima Christi and Satan/Belyall,³⁸ stanza form returns to quatrains, and there are scenes of the Centurion's testimony, Joseph of Arimathea requesting permission from Pilate to bury Christ, the burial, and the setting of the watch. Rime couée and quatrains are mixed in the scene of

the soldiers on guard, and the harrowing of hell by Anima Christi is entirely in rime couée, which continues as the only stanza form through the Resurrection and beyond. At the beginning of the Resurrection scene, the theme of the Eucharist as sustenance for the soul appears again. Anima Christi enacts re-union with the body by disappearing from sight at the tomb, and then, stepping forth, the resurrected Christ reviews what he has undergone since coming from heaven. This aside to the audience ends as he says,

Ffor mannys loue I tholyd dede
and for mannys loue I am rysyn up rede
ffor man I haue mad my body in brede
his sowle for to fede (320/1424-1427).

Once again the physical self-sacrifice by Christ and the liturgical sacrifice in the Eucharist are abruptly linked.

In addition to illustrating the prominence of Eucharistic doctrine in the play, the foregoing examples show that passages in quatrains and in rime couée, in long lines of tumbling verse, and in regular syllabic meter stress the same specific point: that the Eucharistic elements have power to benefit the soul because sacramentally they become the same as the life sacrificed by Christ. Thus, whatever multiple stanzaic and metrical forms represent as to number of authors contributing to the Ludus Coventriae, it is clear that explanation and recommendation of the Eucharist was not solely the idea of a hypothetical sermonizing reviser identified by tumbling verse.

In the preceding discussion, we have noted the reflec-

tion in the Ludus Coventriae Passion of multiple approaches to explaining the atonement. It may be wondered, then, on what basis the play can be spoken of as intellectually unified. Explanation lies in the parallel between the playwright's method and the imagination for synthesis revealed in the work of his contemporaries in theology. Among the playwright's practical concerns was the problem of making the theological meaning of the Passion understandable to "lewd" folk, and at the same time offering inspiring insights to the learned. His approach to the problem may be inferred from a prologue written into the manuscript late (by the main scribe), on leaves left blank when "The Passion Play. I" was first copied. The First Doctor explains,

To þe pepyl not lernyd · I stonde as A techer
Of þis processyon · to geve informacion
And to them þat be lernyd · As A gostly precher
that in my rehersayl · they may haue delectacion
(269/9-12).

It is not difficult to imagine the "delectacion" provided by the playwright's many theologically interpretive embellishments of narrative. And for those lacking the background to hear the reverberating tones of theological tradition, there was the doctrinally instructive plot of Satan, intertwining the historical narrative.

The subject to which the playwright devotes his greatest imaginative energies for both "lernyd" and "lewd" is the grace-giving efficacy of the Eucharist--Corpus Christi. There seems little question that the Ludus Coventriae Passion is a theologically erudite preacher's play.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. An Inquiry into the Composition and Structure of Ludus Coventriae. Univ. of Minn. Studies in Language and Literature, No. 1 (Minneapolis, 1914).

2. The Northern Passion, Introduction, Old French Passion, Variants and Fragments, Notes and Glossary, EETS, o.s. 147 (London, 1916), pp. 96-101.

3. The meter of rime couée is three stresses in the fourth and eighth lines and four stresses in the others. Rime couée is the stanza form of the Chester cycle.

4. Historical Manual of English Prosody (London, 1914), p. 237.

5. The Northern Passion, Introduction, p. 98.

6. The Northern Passion, Introduction, p. 99.

7. Block, p. xxxiv.

8. Block, p. xxxi.

9. Greg's, which appeared in Bibliographical and Textual Problems (1914), has been discussed in detail in Chapter One. Prosser's challenge is in the Appendix of Drama and Religion in the English Mystery Plays (Stanford, 1961), pp. 201-205.

10. Prosser, pp. 204-205.

11. Prosser, p. 201.

12. In both halves of the Passion play, quatrains of four-beat lines predominate, though in the first half there are more instances of quatrains linked by rhyme (ababbcbc). In both halves there are occasional passages in couplets, and both have sections in tumbling meter (in Part I this is found in the Council of the Jews, parts of the Last Supper, and the Betrayal; in Part II, in the trial scenes). Each part has a short segment of rime couée. Thirteeners appear at five places in Part I, but not in Part II.

13. The leaf has no watermark, but its wire lines correspond with those of Bunch of Grapes and YHS in a Sun paper types. See Block, p. xii.

14. With the exception of the first quatrain, borrowed from the beginning of the Triumphal Entry, p. 241.

15. The reason for the uncertainty is the same given in note 13.

16. This appearance of rime couée in text copied on Two Crossed Keys paper is not unprecedented. Other instances are on f. 183v (pp. 302-303) and f. 186r (pp. 306-307). There are no instances of rime couée in the half of the Passion play copied in quires N, P, Q, and R (Bull's Head paper). These facts suggest that when copying (or composing) the first half of the Passion, the scribe had no play in rime couée at hand, while he did have such a text to draw from during the copying of the second half. Alternatively, we need not rule out that he composed in rime couée; see Block, p. xxxv.

17. Concerning the qualification, see note 16.

18. For a survey of treatment of the "abuse-of-power" or "devil's rights" theory in patristic commentary (e.g., John Chrysostom, Pseudo-Ambrose, Augustine, Leo the Great), see Timothy Fry, O.S.B., "The Unity of the Ludus Coventriae," SP, XLVIII (1951), 529-531.

19. Cur Deus Homo, I.vii, p. 187 in Saint Anselm: Basic Writings, trans. S. N. Deane (La Salle, Ill., 1962). All subsequent quotations of Cur Deus Homo, identified in the text, are from this edition.

20. A reflection of this argument appears in the Ludus Coventriae version of the Salutation and Conception. Telling Gabriel the message he is to convey to the Virgin, the second person of the Trinity says, "Sey here she xal restore / Of 3ow Aungellys þe grett Ruyne" (104/203-204).

21. Prosser, p. 144. It seems likely that this Marian lament has been grafted into the play to provide a stirring conclusion for the first half of the Passion sequence. That the lyric was probably composed originally with the foot-of-the cross setting in mind is suggested by the line "And now þe bryth colour of his face doth fade" (268/1072). This implies that Christ is within the Virgin's sight, which is of course not the case at the moment of action where the poem has been placed in the play.

22. E.g., 255/694-698, 256/726-733, 265/945, 302/863-865, 305/979-986, and 307/1045-1046.

23. Anselm argues further, "There is also another thing which follows if sin be passed by unpunished, viz., that with

God there will be no difference between the guilty and the not guilty; and this is unbecoming to God" (p. 203).

24. Sentences. iii. Dist. xix.I. I quote the translation of Hastings Rashdall in his The Idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology (London, 1919), p. 371. As Rashdall points out, the Lombard is here expressing the main atonement concept of his teacher Abelard, whose independent thinking on various theological matters prevented a sympathetic hearing by immediate contemporaries.

25. Quaestio i and Quaestiones xlii-xlix. I owe these references to J. K. Mozley, The Doctrine of the Atonement (London, 1915), p. 135.

26. E.g., see Rashdall, p. 370.

27. Sentences. iii. Dist. xix.I, quoted in Rashdall, pp. 370-371 and note.

28. Sentences. iii. Dist. xix.I, translated by Rashdall, pp. 370-371.

29. Christus Victor, trans. A. G. Hebert (New York, 1969), p. 95.

30. Mary Hammer ("The Savior as Protagonist in the Ludus Coventriae, unpublished Univ. of No. Carolina M.A. thesis, 1944) concludes that the cycle follows Anselm's formulation of the atonement. Fr. Timothy Fry ("The Unity of the Ludus Coventriae," SP, XLVIII [1951], 527-570), also addressing himself to the entire cycle, argues (p. 529), "The theory of the Redemption on which the Ludus Coventriae is built is known as the abuse-of-power theory . . ." Although both studies concern the cycle as a whole, there is nothing to suggest that the authors would depart from their general positions if confining attention to the Passion play alone.

31. That Demon's Prologue is a variation on a common pulpit device can be seen by comparing it with the following sermon excerpt:

Good men and wymmen, now is passed the holy time of Ester, and eche man and wyman is shryven and houseled, so that thei have forsaken the devell and all is werkes and been turned to God and to is servyce. Wherefore be reson it owgt to be no nede to preche you, ne for to teche you for to kepe you from the dewell and is engenes . . . for the feend hase lost is preye, and therfore he is full sorye. But he goyth aboute to restore hym

by synne, ffor nowe he seis that the tyme
is fayre and warme, and metes and drynkes
amenden and been more delisious than thei
were, and many beth now fayre clothed, and
wymmen nycely arrayed; all this hym thenketh
that is conabull to hym, and thus with many
othur colours he disseyvith the pepull.

MS. Roy. 18. B.xxiii, fol. 97. Quoted in G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1961), p. 400.

32. E.g., 239/235ff. and 256/716ff. The basic idea of "gostly"--i.e., tropological--interpretation underlies John the Baptist's prologue, 229-30/17ff. See also, in the play of Mary in the Temple, the Virgin's "gostly" glossing of the Fifteen Gradual Psalm incipits, 74-7/84-143.

33. The difficulty of accounting for Judas' action by means of a human motive is increased by the scene immediately prior to his leaving. One by one the disciples (with Judas present) give their horrified and ominous reactions to Christ's prediction of betrayal. After exposure to the vivid details of damnation in the disciples' speeches, no human, it seems, could have the will on his own to head directly for the fate they describe.

34. The speaker's name in the margin beside this speech and the last to come from a denizen of hell, on p. 319, is "Belyall" rather than "Satan." Changes in script and stanza form at this point in the manuscript suggest that the use of the name "Belyall" reflects not that the playwright meant to introduce a new devil character, but rather that the source from which these speeches (rime couée) were taken called the devil "Belyall" and the playwright took the name to be synonymous with "Satan."

35. Prosser, p. 141.

36. Missale ad Usum Insignis Ecclesiae Eboracensis, Vol. I, Publications of the Surtees Society, LIX (Durham, 1874), 186.

37. In addition to the Ludus Coventriae, only the York cycle has an angel appear to Christ in Gethsemane. The speech assigned to the angel by the York playwright is a simple rendering of the gospel-writer's point that Christ was strengthened:

Thy bale schall be for þe beste,
Thurgh þat mannys mys schall be mende;
þan schall þow withouten any ende
Regne in thy rialte full of reste
(York, 245/119-122).

38. See note 34.

Chapter Four

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE LUDUS COVENTRIAE PASSION

. . . ofte sythis by siche myraclis
pleyinge men and wymmen, seyng the
passioun of Crist and of his seyntis,
ben movyd to compassion and devociun,
wepyng biteere teris, thanne thei ben
not scornynge of God but worschipyng.

argument attributed to
an adversary by the
Wycliffite author of
A Treatis Against Myraclis
Pleyinge (ca. 1400)¹

The Ludus Coventriae Passion differs from its analogues in a number of ways, some readily noticeable and others more subtle, the latter having been at best superficially explored. The most comprehensive difference from English, though not Continental, analogues is the method of staging for which the play was written. Richly detailed directions make it clear that the entire Passion sequence was meant to be acted continuously (or perhaps in two sections with a year's time intervening) in an arena around which were arranged various scene-setting properties, some on raised platforms. Thus, rather than having the dramatic illusion broken between episodes as each different craft guild cast presented a part of the story, spectators of the Ludus Coventriae Passion could experience sustained imaginative involvement with minimum awareness of the factitiousness of representation.

Like its analogues, both English and Continental, the Ludus Coventriae play includes considerable naturalistic amplification of the biblical source. But while much of the naturalistic material in other plays--Continental examples especially--is in some degree comic, there is essentially no comedy in the Ludus Coventriae Passion. This playwright's naturalistic additions are limited to effects like Judas' stealthy movements between the Last Supper and the Jewish council (pp. 251 and 253); or Pilate's wife's frantic reaction to a dream inspired by Satan: ". . . she xal makyn a rewly noyse · comyng and rennyng of þe schaffald and here shert · and here kyrtyl in here hand · and sche xal come be-forn pylat leke A mad woman . . ." (289/following 522); or the excitement of the messenger who, after the prologues of the second half of the play, comes "in-to þe place rennyng and cryng Tydyngys tydyngys · and so rownd Abowth þe place · jhesus of nazareth is take · Jhesus of nazareth is take . . ." (273/following 69). The Ludus Coventriae playwright skillfully uses naturalistic movement to enhance verisimilitude, but it was apparently not to his purpose to invent or digress for the sake of evoking laughter.

Another characteristic which has often been noted is the more continuous presence of theological glossing.² As common as this observation is, its significance has yet to be explored. Among a number of unanswered questions are how deeply the theological element affects the nature of the

dramatic experience provided by the play, and whether it holds implications about auspices of production. These two issues will be our chief concern in the following pages.

We need first to survey the variety of ways theological material is grafted into the drama. The most obvious is by outright exegetical digression, represented, for instance, by Christ's explication of the Eucharist as the paschal feast under the New Law (254-7/670-761). A slightly less conspicuous means is the expansion of dialogue beyond what scripture suggests, to include a brief homiletic theme. One such theme recurs particularly often: a looking ahead to final judgment by Christ. The playwright's method of smoothly blending such material with the familiar narrative can be illustrated by one of the earliest examples, a brief speech by one of the children welcoming Christ at the Triumphal Entry:

Thow sone of davyd þou be oure supporte
At oure last day whan we xal dye
Where-fore we Alle Atonys to þe exorte
Cryeng mercy mercy mercye (241/290-293).

In contrast, the York and Chester cycles hold to the traditional tone of entirely jubilant welcome³ (the Wakefield cycle has no scene of the Triumphal Entry). Among other occasions used similarly to introduce the eschatological theme are Magdalene's speeches before and during the anointing scene (pp. 247-8), the disciples' reactions to Jesus' prediction of betrayal (pp. 249-51), and parting words among Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and the Virgin after the burial (p. 312). There are also numerous references to judgment and heavenly

reward in the speeches of Christ (e.g., 245/396-397, 260/841-844, 261/857-860, 259/827-828), and these bring us to the third major way theology pervades the Ludus Coventriae Passion. To a far greater extent than in the other English cycles, the speeches devised for Christ in this version characterize him as having constant awareness of his redemptive mission. Particularly for this role, the playwright substantially amplifies biblical record, and the amplification consistently serves to proclaim the significance of Christ's coming that extends through all time. In the Chester, Wakefield, and York cycles, the first appearance of Christ in the Passion sequence is comparatively unclimactic. In Wakefield, for instance, he is not seen at all between the Baptism play and his joining the disciples for the paschal meal. In York we first see him quietly healing a blind man and then a lame man, as he makes his way amidst celebration into Jerusalem. The Chester cycle presents the Triumphal Entry at the end of the play that centers on Magdalene's anointing. Holding closely to scripture, the Chester playwright has the Entry followed immediately by Christ's weeping over the city, and then the angry driving of the moneychangers from the temple. With these views of Christ as he begins his course toward the Passion, compare the Ludus Coventriae version: in response to the welcoming throng, he says,

Ffrendys be-holde þe tyme of mercy
 þe wich is come now · with-owtyn dowth
 Mannys sowle in blysse now xal edyfy

And þe prynce of þe werd • is cast owth
 As I haue prechyd in placys A-bowth
 And shewyd experyence • to man and wyf
 In to þis werd goddys sone hath sowth
 Ffor veray loue • man to revyfe.

The trewthe of trewthis xal now be tryede
 and A perfyth of corde be-twyx god and man
 Wich trewth xal nevyr be dyvide
 Confusyon on to þe fynd sathan (241/294-305).

The speech is, of course, entirely non-biblical, but a standard résumé of what theologians have made of scripture. Characteristically, the Ludus Coventriae playwright takes such liberty with his source to prepare spectators for seeing the doctrinal significance of what unfolds before them.

The theological material we have been surveying thus far affects the experience a spectator would have only by occasionally adding a layer of homily to the narrative line. However, there is another doctrinal theme in the play which, in addition to forming part of the intellectual content, affects dramaturgy as well. In the tradition of post-Anselmian atonement theology, the playwright has conceptualized the redemptive effect of Christ's sacrifice not only as satisfaction of God's sense of justice, but also as the Creator's plan for making charity displace individuals' inclinations to sin, for winning the souls of men through their natural capacities for gratitude and love. Instead of merely presenting this concept in the form of exegetical glossing, the Ludus Coventriae dramatist transposes it into dramaturgical technique. He essentially makes the play a means of stirring spiritually beneficial affective experience among the spectators.

One of the playwright's methods is to encourage intimate imaginative involvement in the action by obliterating any sense of temporal separation between the audience and the events being observed. He does this in part by means of speeches addressed to spectators as if they were contemporaries of characters in the drama. Two particularly important examples occur very early in the play: the prologue of John the Baptist and the sermon of Peter near the Triumphal Entry. While encouraging the sensation of being present at seemingly actual, not imitated, events, these speeches also call for recognition of a second level of meaning, spiritual truths concealed in the historical occurrences. Though in form they partially resemble the moralization technique familiar in medieval sermons, these speeches go beyond exegetically "uncovering" precepts of ethics and devotion (the usual sermon practice). Far from being the gratuitous homiletic digressions which they have often been dismissed as in the past, they have an integral involvement in guiding how the drama is to be experienced. Through form, they prepare the audience to relate to the forthcoming action in an intimate, personal way; through content, they motivate a desire for and a spiritual openness to the redemptive force of the Passion.

John the Baptist's prologue, the second speech in the play, is essentially a transition piece between the monologue of Satan and the beginning of the dramatic action; it

has as its main theme the necessity to prepare for judgment. The speech has puzzled scholars in the past, since no other English cycle has the Baptist appear in the Passion section, and in fact according to scripture, John had been beheaded well before the last days of Christ.⁴ For the most part, when there has been any attempt to account for the speech at all, it has been glossed over as a fragment of a Baptism play, curiously "worked in as a sort of preface to the events of the Passion."⁵ But, as Eleanor Prosser has recently shown, considering the content of the speech in relation to themes in the play as a whole, one finds it part of the initial presentation of a unifying doctrinal core.⁶ The prologues of Satan and the Baptist together, Miss Prosser observes, establish two themes, presumption and despair, as "foci" for teaching repentance doctrine. "The entire Passion I," she writes, "is a carefully unified sermon on repentance: a sermon with exhortations, exempla, and meditations."⁷

Though the play may resemble a sermon in its thematic unity, it of course differs greatly in essential ways. For instance, there is more to the function of the Baptist's prologue than introducing an important recurring topic. The speech is skillfully designed to make spectators mindful of the bearing of about-to-be-dramatized events on their individual souls, as well as to encourage intimate imaginative involvement in the action. The basis of the design is deliberate temporal ambiguity derived from orthodox figural in-

terpretation of the first coming of the Messiah.⁸ Proclaiming words from biblical accounts of his prophesying (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:7, Luke 3:16, John 1:27), John first addresses spectators as if they are his historical contemporaries:

I johan baptyst · to 3ow þus propheſye
 þat on xal come aftyr me · and not tary longe
 In many folde more · strengere þan I
 Of whose shon · I am not worthy to loſe þe thonge
 (229/1-4).

With the next line, the Baptist's speech begins to open out from historical to apocalyptic time. Spectators are alerted to understand his words eschatologically, to think of preparing for Christ's second coming, as judge at the end of time:

Where-fore I counſel þe 3e reforme all wronge
 in 3our concyens of þe mortall dedys · ſevyn
 And for to do penawns · loke þat 3e ffonge
 Ffor now xal come þe kyngdham of hevyn
 (229/5-8).

Then, using another scriptural fragment associated familiarly with the Baptist, the speech modulates to tropological interpretation. According to the gospels, John identified himself as the one whom Isaiah had prophesied, "A voice . . . crying in the desert, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths'" (Isaiah 40:3, Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4, and John 1:23). The Baptist of the Ludus Coventriae glosses "the way of the Lord" as his hearers' spiritual consciousness, particularly their awareness of the standing of sinners with God. Thus, making "straight his paths" means following a course midway between the right-hand boundary, by which

"3e xal vndyrstonde mercy" (229/18) and the left, "lykkenyd dysperacion" (229/19). To explain why the straight path is an exact balance of "hope and drede," he adds,

On þe mercy of god, to meche 3e xal not holde
 as in þis wyse · be-hold · what I mene
 Ffor to do synne · be þou no more bolde
 In trost þat god wole · mercyful bene
 And yf be sensualyte · as it is ofte sene
 Synnyst dedly · þou xalt not þerfore dyspeyre
 but þerfore do penawns and confesse þe clene

 Be-twyx þese tweyn · may be no dysseuerawns
 Ffor hope with-owtyn drede · is maner of presumpcion
 And drede · with-owtyn hope · is maner of dysperacion
 So these tweyn must be knyht be on Acorde
 (230/25-31 and 35-38).⁹

By the end of the Baptist's prologue, the audience has been prepared to recognize Christ's coming not only as a concrete historical event, but also as a fact of timeless significance for human souls. Beyond this, by the time the Baptist concludes, "How 3e xal aray þe wey · I haue made declaracion" (230/39), each spectator knows that preparing "þe wey" is an imperative involving his own soul.

The sermon of Peter, which follows the Baptist's prologue after one intervening episode, begins with an announcement of a kind rather predictable from the disciple of a known miracle-worker:

O 3e pepyl dyspeyryng · be glad
 A grett cawse 3e haue and 3e kan se
 þe lord þat all thyng · of nought mad
 is comynge 3our comforte to be
 All 3our langoris · salvyn xal he
 3our helthe is more than 3e kan wete
 He xal cawse þe blynde · þat þei xal se
 þe def to here · þe dome · for to speke
 (238-39/222-229).

Again in this case the playwright transposes the sermon theme to the context of personal salvation. Peter explains the afflictions of being blind, deaf, dumb, and lame as weaknesses of faith and devotion. Conversely, sound sight is perceiving with the eye of the spirit that Christ is God, one's maker (239/234-235); sound hearing, living according to the commandments of God (239/236-237). Being without lameness is walking as if on the two "legs" of Christ's summary of the law (Matthew 22:37-39):

Tweyn fete · heuery man xuld haue · and it were lokyd
 Wyche xuld bere · þe body gostly · most of substawns
 Ffyrst is to love god Above all other plesawns
 þe secunde · is to love · þi neybore as þin owyn persone
(239/240-243).

And being cured of muteness means confessing mortal sin and expressing contrition (239/246-249). The final note of the sermon has especially important implications concerning the response sought from spectators all through the play. The message is epitomized through one of the Middle Ages' most popular epithets for Christ, the "hevynly leche" (239/232 and 239/251). Having described the spiritual infirmities which Christ has come to heal, Peter takes up the question of how the "physician" shall be paid:

And as for payment · he wole shewe 3ow · no redrure
 Ffor with þe love of 3owre hertys · he wole be Aqwhyte
(239/252-253).

The idea with which Peter's sermon ends is laced through the Ludus Coventriae Passion in several forms. It will be possible to recognize the various instances more easily if we look first at the general understanding of spiritual re-

demption implicit in what Peter says. In metaphorically declaring "þe love of 3oure hertys" to be the full and sufficient payment required by Christ, the "hevynly leche," he reflects a way of conceptualizing salvation which we discussed in Chapter Three: the view that the degree to which one's soul is sanctified by grace, and the fullness of charity in one's heart are intimately related. This is a corollary of the basic post-Anselmian understanding of the atonement: that the saving effect of Christ's self-sacrifice is in the power of this pledge of love to excite charity in human hearts. In Peter's sermon perhaps the metaphorical framework prevents the doctrinal substructure from being as clear as it might (e.g., the payment figure implies that spiritual healing comes first and is responded to with the love-filled heart, though it would be doctrinally more precise to convey a sense of interdependence and simultaneity between the two). But there is nothing vague about the intent of the speech: to make spectators think on the association between redemption--Peter talks throughout about the curing of spiritual disabilities so that "Into þe celestyal habytacion . . . 3e Arn habyl to gone" (239/245)--and the heart filled with caritas. As we shall see, what the playwright means by "charity" accords exactly with the locus classicus of the patristic definition, Augustine's On Christian Doctrine 3.10.16: ". . . the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self and

of one's neighbor for the sake of God"10

Once the action of the play is fully underway, the audience is kept mindful of the substance of Peter's exhortation through four themes. The one repeated most often is Christ's explanation of the reason for his mission, which appropriately appears for the first time at the Triumphal Entry. After announcing to the welcoming crowd that "þe tyme of mercy" (241/294) has now come, Christ adds, "In to þis werd goddys sone hath sowth / Ffor veray loue · man to revyfe" (241/300-301).¹¹ Subsequent versions of the phrase "Ffor veray loue" lend themselves to being interpreted as intentional ambiguity. For instance, when Christ at the end of the Last Supper says, "Ffor mannys love I may do no mo / þan for love of man to be ded" (259/815-816), the words seem to mean simultaneously "to express my love for man, I can do no more than die" and "to inspire love of me in man, I can do no more" The ambiguous expression recurs at two later moments, especially intense dramatically. First, approaching the Mount of Olives and just before parting from the disciples for the agonizing struggle alone in Gethsemane, Christ says, "In peynys for hym my body schal schake / And for love of man man xal dey" (262/907-908). Second, among his initial words as the triumphant risen Lord, he says, "Ffor mannys loue I tholyd dede / and for mannys loue I am rysyn up rede" (320/1424-1425). If the ambiguity be granted, these lines convey the doctrinal understanding that Christ's life and sac-

rifice are divinely intended to stir charity in men's hearts.

The other two themes that echo the doctrine in Peter's sermon show the playwright extending theological ideas to the level of the individual's personal struggle against sin. In the scenes of the institution of the Eucharist and of Magdalene's absolution, he brings together the post-Anselmian view of the efficacy of the Passion, and an unsophisticatedly concrete conceptualization of sin. As elsewhere in the Ludus Coventriae Passion, sin in these two scenes is imagined as having the nature of a nearly tangible adversary that threatens to befoul and ultimately to cast the soul to hell. Redemption is thus a matter of keeping one's spirit strong enough to ward off the enemy, or of finding a means to root him out should he take hold. In Christ's speech following consecration of the Eucharistic bread--identified as the paschal lamb of the New Law (255/706-709)--the playwright deals with means of spiritual protection. His approach is to have Jesus gloss rules pertaining to the paschal feast under the Old Law, with their New Law meanings:

With no byttyr bred þis bred ete xal be
 þat is to say with no byttyrnesse of hate and envye
 But with þe suete bred of loue and charyte
 Weche ffortefyet þe soule gretlye.

And it schuld ben etyn with þe byttyr sokelyng
 þat is to mene 3yf A man be of synful dyspocycion
 Hath led his lyff here with mys-levyng
 þerfore in his hert he xal haue byttyr contrycion
 (256/718-725).

What stands out in this arbitrary exegesis is the implicit association of charity and sanctity, the emphasis on the role

of the heart in safeguarding the soul. The speech thus constitutes another part of the framework that keeps spectators mindful that salvation depends on responding to Christ with "þe love of 3oure hertys."

The scene in which this theme is dramatized most vividly is the anointing of Christ by Magdalene. This is especially noteworthy, since textual evidence shows the material to be one of the playwright's latest additions,¹² and incorporating it required him to take considerable liberty with scriptural record.

Long before the Ludus Coventriae dramatist was at work, an amplified version of what the Bible tells of Magdalene had established itself in interpretive tradition. She had come to be identified as one and the same with Mary the sister of Lazarus, and with the unnamed sinful woman in Luke's account of the anointing.¹³ In addition, this gesture--which to the mind of at least one evangelist was an expression of affectionate and reverent welcoming--became seen as primarily a way of emphasizing her penitence. From Luke's passing mention of the woman's reputation (7:37, "and behold a woman that was in the city, a sinner . . .") and 7:39, ". . . what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner"), the tradition developed that Magdalene was guilty of a grave degree of wrongdoing. Thus, her absolution by Christ was held up not only as a measure of the vastness of divine mercy,¹⁴ but also as Christ's commendation of how she

expressed repentance.¹⁵

As dramatized in the Ludus Coventriae, the anointing has the traditional exemplum value of showing the contrition and confession of an ideal penitent. But especially in the playwright's freely imagined details, another purpose stands out: to represent the impassioned quality of Magdalene's devotion. The individual filling this Magdalene role has more opportunity than usual to make affection for Christ part of the characterization. For instance, unlike versions in the other English cycles, her confession in the Ludus Coventriae is punctuated with epithets of adoration:

A mercy lord and salve my synne
 Maydenys ffloure þou wasch me fre
 þer was nevyr woman of mannys kynne
 so ful of synne in no countre

 where fore kyng of grace
 With þis oynement þat is so sote
 lete me A-noynte þin holy fote
 (247-48/475-478, 483-485).

Christ's response emphasizes the essential role of her heart in enabling her soul to receive the cleansing of absolution:

Woman ffor þi wepynge wyll
 Sum socowre god xal þe sende
 þe to saue I haue grett skylle
 ffor sorwefful hert may synne Amende
 All þi prayour I xal fulfyll
 to þi good hert I wul attende
 and saue þe fro þi synne so hylle
 (248/488-494).

Then, after an exorcising of seven perhaps visible "develys"¹⁶--
 glossed in standard commentary as the seven deadly sins¹⁷--
 Magdalene describes the internal effect of conversion, expressing herself, significantly, through an amatory image. Address-

sing Christ, she says, "Now I am brought from þe fendys brace / In þi grett mercy closyd and shytt" (248/505-506). The passionate, demonstrative manner which the playwright accentuates in this scene characterizes Magdalene's other Ludus Coventriae appearances as well.¹⁸ It can fairly be said that for this playwright, she is an exemplar of not only penitence, but also caritas, love centered entirely on the Lord. Furthermore, the extra-biblical and individualistic elements of this anointing scene recall the particular terms of Peter's sermon:

And of All þese maladyes · 3e may haue gostly cure
 For þe hevynly leche · is comyng 3ow · for to vicyte
 And as for payment · he wole shewe 3ow · no redrure
 Ffor with þe love of 3owre hertys · he wole be Aqwhyte
 (239/250-253).

While the playwright provides amply for the spiritual value of love for Christ to be told, he also more subtly makes the play a means of stirring that response. This objective stands out particularly in his handling of the role of Christ. Since evoking compassion for the Crucified is inherent in the very idea of dramatizing the Passion, the distinctiveness of the Ludus Coventriae in this aspect is chiefly a matter of method. This Passion play develops emotive potential beyond the level of its analogues largely through more extensive representation of the inner life of Christ.

One form of this difference in the Ludus Coventriae Christ role is a more extensive development of the tension between anxiety over impending harm and suffering, and commitment to carry out the redemptive mission. While this theme traditionally appears in Gethsemane scenes, the Ludus

Coventriae playwright makes it a part of the characterization of Christ from close to the beginning of the play. The first instance comes immediately after Jesus sends his followers to arrange for the Passover meal, a moment which in this playwright's conflation of events directly follows the Triumphal Entry. Apparently out of hearing of anyone but the audience, he gives a glimpse of the anxiety that comes from his foreknowledge:

þis path is Calsydon · be goostly ordenawns
 Wech xal conuey us wher we xal be
 I knowe ful reddy is þe purvyaunce
 Of my frendys þat lovyn me
 Contewnyng in pees · now procede we
 For mannys love þis wey I take
 With gostly ey I veryly se
 þat man ffor man · an hende must make
 (244/374-381).

In spite of this understanding and acceptance of the mission of self-sacrifice, the Ludus Coventriae Christ suffers from betrayal as fully as any man would, and more poignantly than his counterparts in the other English cycles. The ways in which the notion of betrayal is first presented illustrate this contrast. Spectators of the Chester, York, and Wakefield cycles first learn that Christ will be the victim of one of his own followers' treachery when they see Judas bargain with Annas and Caiaphas sometime before the Last Supper. In the Ludus Coventriae, the first words about betrayal come from Christ himself, accompanied by revelation of anguish which is doubly grievous, since the betrayer is one of his own. Speaking at the paschal meal, before Judas'

first treacherous move, Christ says,

Myn herte is ryght sory And no wondyr is
 Too deth I xal go and nevyr dyd trespas
 But 3itt most grevyth myn hert evyr of this
 On of my bretheryn xal werke þis manas
 On of 3ow here syttynge my treson xal tras
 On of 3ow is besy my deth here to dyth
 and 3itt was I nevyr in no synful plas
 Where-fore my deth xuld so shamfully be pyght
 (249/526-533).

It may be noted in passing that variations in paper type and script indicate this passage to be one of the playwright's later additions.¹⁹

Other variations in the Ludus Coventriae treatment of the betrayal likewise manifest heart-stirring qualities in the personality of Christ. Through face-to-face encounters with the traitor which are more prolonged than one finds in the English analogues, the Ludus Coventriae playwright creates a more poignant sense of Jesus' complete selflessness. In the York cycle, the manuscript leaf which apparently covered Christ's identification of his betrayer has been lost,²⁰ but most likely this play corresponded to the Chester and Wakefield versions. They simply show Christ acknowledging during the paschal meal that his betrayer is in the assembled group. With a guilt-revealing question, Judas makes known that he is the one, apparently leaves the gathering directly, and is not seen again until the capture of Christ in Gethsemane. In contrast, the Ludus Coventriae playwright first of all accentuates the element of Christ's self-surrender. This results from his showing no stage of the actual conspiracy to occur until after Christ has exposed Judas' questionable

loyalty and apparently left him with a choice of remaining faithful or not. When Judas--far more oozingly duplicitous than his counterparts elsewhere--asks,

The trewth wolde I knowe as leff as 3e
 And perfore good ssere þe trewth þou me telle
 whiche of vs All here þat traytour may be
 Am I þat person þat þe now xal selle
 (251/582-585),

Christ answers,

So seyst þi-selff Take hed att þi spelle
 þou Askyst me now here if þou xalt do þat treson
 Remembyr þi-self A-vyse þe ryght welle
 þou art of grett Age and wotysst what is reson
 (251/586-589).

What follows is the dramatically powerful scene of Judas stealing away from the gathering, making his way to bargain with the counselors of Annas and Caiaphas, and then returning "sotyly wher-as he cam fro" as he says,

Now wyl I sotely go seke my mayster Ageyn
 and make good face as I nowth knew
 I haue hym solde to wo and peyn
 I trowe ful sore he xal it rew (253/654-657).

Christ, of course, knows the reality behind the traitor's "good face," as is evident in the dialogue of a scene which has no parallel at all in York and Wakefield, and one that is only brief and slight in Chester. As the Meditationes vitae Christi records, exegetes disagreed over whether Judas received the Eucharist, Augustine having been one who affirmed the point.²¹ Apparently seeing an opportunity to dramatize Christ's total lack of vindictiveness (as well as the peril of receiving the sacrament unworthily), the Ludus Coventriae playwright follows Augustine to present a second tense en-

counter between betrayer and victim. Having explained after the words of consecration that "þis þat shewyth as bred to þour Apparens / Is mad þe very flesche and blod of me" (255/703-704), Christ offers the host to the disciples one by one, pausing before Judas to ask, "Judas art þou Avysyd what þou xalt take" (257/772). Judas answers as if ignorant of anything setting him apart from the other disciples, and Christ responds,

Myn body to þe I wole not denye
 Sythyn þou wylt presume þer-upon
 Yt xal be þi dampnacyon verylye
 I geve þe warnyng now be-forn (256/774-777).

There is foreshadowing here of Christ's accepting the betrayer's kiss in Gethsemane, and by adding the scene, the playwright accentuates the motif of his self-surrender. The encounter ends with Judas compounding his odiousness by taking the sacrament, and with Christ again voicing his natural human dismay at being failed by one of his own. He sends Judas off saying, "Me þou ast solde þat was þi ffrend / þat þou hast begonne brenge to An ende" (258/785-786).

The most individualistic touches in the Ludus Coventriae Gethsemane scene continue development of the affecting largeness of spirit in Christ. One of the playwright's invented details is that as Jesus saw the hour of his capture nearing, he not only feared for himself, but worried over the morale of his followers. As the group leaves the site of the Last Supper, he apparently draws Peter aside, both to ask and to

confide, "Now petyr make hall þi felawys chere / My flesch for fere is qwakyng fast" (262/891-892). Then again, in his last words before confronting the hostile mob of captors, Christ repeats,

Petyr whan þou seyst I Am for-sake
 Amonge myn frendys and stond Alone
 All þe cher þat þou kanst make
 Geve to þi bretheryn every-chone (264/969-972).

In the capture itself, the Ludus Coventriae playwright generally follows the analogues closely, showing Christ calmly to submit as he tells his captors the needlessness of coming after him as they would a common thief. But there is an original detail which again more deeply reveals the heart of Christ. Stage directions prescribe that the Jews will abuse him with much rough handling in spite of his lack of resistance. In the midst of this--almost sympathetic with their misguidedness--he asks,

Why dede 3e not me dysprave
 And herd me preche bothe lowd and lowe
 But now as woodmen 3e gynne to Rave
 And do thyng þat 3e notwth knove
 (267/1033-1036).

For this addition, it seems likely that the playwright's inspiration was the first of the traditional Last Words from the cross, which is expressed at its customary place in the narrative,

O Ffadyr Al-mythy · makere of man
 Ffor-gyff þese jewys þat don me wo
 Ffor-geve hem fadyr for-geve hem þan
 Ffor thei wete notwh what þei do (299/778-781).

Inventiveness in the Gethsemane scene, as elsewhere, implies

an aim to make affecting qualities in the personality of Christ pervade the drama as fully as possible.

Discussion of inventiveness in the Ludus Coventriae to promote affective response would be incomplete without mention of the larger role of the Virgin here than in the other English Passions. There are mainly two events that point up this contrast: Magdalene's telling Mary of Christ's capture moments after it takes place (not paralleled in any way in York or Chester; Wakefield shows Mary being informed by John, but not until they are about to meet Christ on the way to Calvary), and the removing of his body from the cross followed by the burial. In the York, Chester, and Wakefield plays, only Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea are involved in the latter episode, but the Ludus Coventriae playwright makes this scene the final parting of Mary from her son. The Virgin's part both at the receiving of Magdalene's news and at the deposition consists almost entirely of a planctus lyric, and these are in addition to a third at the traditional point, during Christ's death on the cross. Nearly every extant medieval Passion play, from the earliest known example (the Latin Montecassino Passion, ca. 1150) on through the cycles of Chester, Wakefield, and York, prominently incorporates a Marian lament in the Crucifixion scene. Implicit in this tradition is conceptualization of the Marian role as a means of amplifying the cost in suffering of man's redemption. Emile Mâle's explanation of influences affecting the Marian element

of visual Passion scenes is pertinent to drama as well. He writes,

L'idée d'une Passion de la Vierge parallèle à celle du Christ est une idée favorite des mystiques, qui ne séparent jamais, dans leurs méditations, la mère et le fils, Jesus et Marie, répètent-ils, sont plus qu'unis dans ce mystère, ils ne sont qu'un. La Vierge apparaît à sainte Brigitte, et lui dit: "Les douleurs de Jésus étaient mes douleurs, parce que son coeur était mon coeur." A la seule pensée que son fils allait mourir, ses entrailles se déchirent. L'homme, répètent les mystiques, n'a pas le coeur assez vaste pour sentir l'immensité d'une telle douleur. Gerson se plaint de n'avoir pas assez de larmes. "Qui me donnera, dit Suso, de verser autant de larmes que j'écris de lettres pour raconter les souffrances de Notre-Dame!" C'est pourquoi, de même que l'on dit Christi Passio, on commence à dire, dès le XIV^e siècle, Mariae Compassio: cette Compassion de la Vierge, c'est l'écho de la Passion dans son coeur.²²

This tradition is clearly the raison d'être for the dominant quality in each of the Virgin's appearances in the Ludus Coventriae Passion. The lyric with which she answers Magdalene's news of the capture has signs of having originated as a placatus in a Crucifixion scene.²³ By incorporating it here, the playwright invites spectators' commiseration with the Virgin from an earlier point in the story than usual, as well as increasing the number of occasions for this type of response. In the Crucifixion scene, rather than limiting the Virgin's words to a formal setpiece, the playwright uses traditional lament motifs in dialogue that conveys feeling more naturalistically. One of his invented details that has this effect is to show Mary distressed by Christ's delay in speaking to

her. The words of Christ that follow her first outpouring of grief at the foot of the cross are not a direct response to his mother, but rather the traditional appeal for God's forgiveness of his murderers. The request of the good thief for mercy and Christ's comforting answer--"pis same day in paradyse / with me pi god pou xalt be" (300/805-809)--follow. Then the Virgin addresses him a second time,

O my sone my sone · my derlyng dere
 what haue I defendyd þe
 pou hast spoke to alle þo · þat ben here
 and not o word pou spekyst to me.

To þe jewys pou art ful kende
 pou hast for-gove al here mysdede
 and þe thef · pou hast in mende
 for onys haskyng mercy · hefne is his mede.

A my sovereyn lord why whylt pou not speke
 to me þat am pi modyr · in peyn for pi wrong
 A hert hert why whylt pou not breke
 þat I were out of pis sorwe so stronge
 (300/810-821).

Christ responds with the traditional direction that henceforth Mary and John think of one another as son and mother, following this with a brief doctrinal explanation meant to comfort Mary by reminding her of what his death will accomplish. As this speech ends, the playwright directs, "her oure lady xal ryse and renne and halse þe crosse" (300/following 833). In this and other ways, he uses gesture as well as language to produce the emotional intensity of the scene.

For the Virgin's appearance at the Deposition, the playwright not only provides a lyric that urges spectators affectively to share her sorrow. Through scenic specifications,

he also pairs the lyric with a tableau in the form of perhaps the most popular of all medieval devotional images, the pieta. To set positions, he directs, "here joseph and nychodemus takyn cryst of þe cros on on o ledyr and þe tother on An-other leddyr and qwan is had down joseph leyth hym in oure ladys lappe" (311/following 1139). Joseph tenderly offers, "kysse hym now onys · eer he go" (311/1143), and the Virgin mourns,

A Mercy Mercy myn owyn son so dere
 þi bloody face now I must kysse
 þi face is pale with-owtyn chere
 of meche joy now xal I mysse
 þer was nevyr modyr þat sey this
 so here sone dyspoyled · with so gret wo
 and my dere chylde nevyr dede A-mys
 A mercy fadyr of hefne · it xulde be so
 (311/1144-1151).

The pervasiveness of affecting qualities in the roles of both Christ and the Virgin forms one of the sharpest contrasts of the Ludus Coventriae Passion with its English analogues. The Ludus Coventriae version has greater richness of detail that brings the sanctifying charity of these characters to life. At the same time, it gives briefer treatment to episodes in which Christ figures as the passive victim of monstrously brutal torturers.²⁴ A related difference is that the villainous characters of the Ludus Coventriae are less exaggerated, less capable of drawing attention away from the meaning of Christ's self-sacrifice. Nor is there digression in the form of nearly self-contained skit-like incidents that let spectators in on the entertaining humanity behind

pompous images. There is no parallel in the Ludus Coventriae to the Wakefield playwright's notion that Caiaphas is a hot-headed, power-crazed official, imprudently forgetful--as his cooler subordinate Annas reminds him--of the need to keep up at least an appearance of proper procedure (see especially play XXI, The Buffeting). Likewise, the Ludus Coventriae has no episodes comparable to the persevering of an attendant to arouse a rather testy Caiaphas for news of Christ's capture (York XXIX), or the conjugal patter between Pilate and his wife before sharing more than a bit of wine and bedding themselves for the night (York XXX).

One conclusion obvious from these contrasts is that the theater experience intended for spectators of the Ludus Coventriae was of an essentially different kind from what the playwrights of Chester, York, and Wakefield intended. The Ludus Coventriae playwright's intention seems more closely related to the genre of meditational narrative. Included in the prototype of this genre, the pseudo-Bonaventuran Meditationes vitae Christi, are frequent directions to the user of the book, many of which seem strikingly suitable for pointing out benefits available to a spectator of the Ludus Coventriae Passion. For instance, preceding his account of Christ's last days, the author of the Meditationes advises,

He who wishes to glory in the Cross and the Passion must dwell with continued meditation on the mysteries and events that occurred. If they were considered with complete regard of mind, they would, I think, lead the meditator

to a (new) state. To him who searches for it from the bottom of the heart and with the marrow of his being, many un hoped-for steps would take place by which he would receive new compassion, new love, new solace, and then a new condition of sweetness that would seem to him a promise of glory. . . . Therefore I exhort you that, if you have studiously considered the things said above on His life, you much more diligently concentrate the whole spirit and all the virtues, for here is shown more especially this charity of His that should kindle all our hearts.²⁵

It is a commonplace in commentary on medieval drama that authors of Passion plays were influenced by the Meditationes vitae Christi.²⁶ Usually, however, the kind of indebtedness recognized concerns simply points of narrative detail. Distinctively in the case of the Ludus Coventriae Passion, there is internal evidence of a more thoroughgoing identification with the Meditationes genre itself. What constitutes this evidence is the unified framework of theological interpretation. As we have seen, in speeches devised for Christ, the playwright repeatedly reminds hearers that the mission of atonement is above all else an expression of divine love for mankind. Thus, Gos's plan for redemption is to turn men's hearts through the impulse of gratitude. In scenes like Magdalene's absolution and the institution of the Eucharist, this understanding is applied to how an individual receives grace: hearers learn that ". . . love and charyte . . . ffor-tefyet þe soule gretlye." Not only has the action been set within this theological framework; the playwright also makes the drama a means of stirring the very responses whose spir-

itual value he has commended. Like the Meditationes vitae Christi, the Ludus Coventriae Passion is a vehicle for affective devotion.

The possibility of a medieval playwright formulating such an objective is confirmed (unexpectedly) in A Treatis Against Myraclis Pleyinge, written by a Wycliffite author around 1400. Among defenses of scriptural drama which this writer states for purposes of subsequent attack, he includes the following argument: ". . . ofte sythis by sicke myraclis pleyinge men and wymmen, seyng the passioun of Crist and of his seyntis, ben movyd to compassion and devociun, wepyngte bitere teris, thanne thei ben not scornynge of God but worshipyng."²⁷ The writer of this work leaves the performers he objects to unidentified. But an attack on drama by another Wycliffite, including reference to a Crucifixion scene, does identify performers, and thus suggests a possibility for the auspices of the Ludus Coventriae Passion. The verse satire "On the Minorite Friars" (ca. 1382)²⁸ charges the Franciscans with leading the public to false beliefs through certain dramatized scenes. The examples described involve both Christ and St. Francis. A recent analysis has shown that the poet was a rather ignorant and misguided interpreter of what he saw, but his criticism is nevertheless of great value as "the only extant piece of Middle English literature which expressly treats of the Franciscans and their activities in religious drama."²⁹

In view of distinctions between the Ludus Coventriae

Passion and its English analogues, the evidence of "On the Minorite Friars" is especially noteworthy. The theological framework of the play--where much of the distinctiveness lies--is strikingly harmonious with Franciscan thinking, especially as it developed under the leadership of Duns Scotus (d. 1308). This harmony can be seen by comparing the theology of the play with the following brief précis of a particularly pertinent segment of Scotist thought:

Little as there is in common between the teaching of the Franciscan doctors and that of the "little poor man" of Assisi who knew and cared as little for Plato as he did for Aristotle, we can just recognize one genuinely Franciscan tendency in the Scotist theology. It endeavored by a still further departure from St. Augustine to moralize and soften the harsh features of the Augustinianism which St. Thomas retained. The leading characteristic of the Franciscan ethics and theology is that it laid increased emphasis upon the will as compared with the intellect, upon love as compared with knowledge. The Scotists, unlike Thomas, actually identified "grace" with love. The Franciscan Heaven consisted in the plenitude of love rather than in the intellectual vision of God.³⁰

Of course the "Franciscan tendency" which this writer traces in the scholastically rigorous writings of Scotus appears in simpler form as the basis of the Meditationes vitae Christi, the paradigm of Franciscan devotional material in the Middle Ages. The Ludus Coventriae Passion has most suggestive signs of being a Franciscan play.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. Printed in Reliquae Antiquae, ed. Thomas Wright and J. O. Halliwell (London, 1843; New York, 1966), II, 45.

2. E.g., Hardin Craig, ERD, p. 253: "The Hegge plays belong to a different tradition, at least in part, from that of the York and Chester plays. They have greater uniformity in tone and contents than the York plays, and they are much more theologically and moralistically ambitious than the Chester plays. . . . The very theological learning that made the Hegge plays what they are caused the retention of more Latin than is to be found in any other cycle, and much of that Latin is liturgical."

3. York XXV ends with a formal Hayl lyric, essentially 55 lines of epithets for Christ made into alliterative lines. See York, pp. 216-218. The Chester version (in play XIV) ends with speeches by two children expressing excitement about taking part in the celebration (Chester, Part II, 256-7/201-208), and a stage direction specifying that all shall sing "hosanna filio David! Benedictus, qui venit in nomine Domini! hosanna in excelcisi!"

4. Matthew 14:3-12; Mark 6:21-29.

5. W. W. Greg, Bibliographical and Textual Problems, p. 135.

6. Drama and Religion in the English Mystery Plays, pp. 122-123; cited hereafter as Prosser.

7. Prosser, p. 121.

8. Cf. Erich Auerbach, "Figura" in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature (New York, 1959), p. 58: Figural prophecy implies the interpretation of one worldly event through another; the first signifies the second, the second fulfills the first. Both remain historical events; yet both, looked at in this way, have something provisional and incomplete about them; they point to one another and both point to something in the future, something still to come, which will be the actual, real, and definitive event. This is true not only of Old Testament prefiguration, which

points forward to the incarnation and the proclamation of the gospel, but also of these latter events, for they too are not the ultimate fulfillment, but themselves a promise of the end of time and the true kingdom of God.

9. The Ludus Coventriae may here reflect the influence of Robert Grosseteste's Templum Domini, a well known manual of instruction meant originally for parish priests. To define certain specific virtues, Grosseteste uses the concise scheme of the mean between extremes. Among these definitions is the following:

Presumptio: hac sperantur speranda et non
speranda: superfluum.
Spes: has sperantur speranda et non
speranda non sperantur: virtus.
Desperatio: hac nec speranda sperantur nec
non speranda: diminutio.

Quoted in W. A. Pantin, The English Church in the Fourteenth Century (Notre Dame, Ind., 1962), p. 193.

One is reminded of Grosseteste by the playwright's similar use of the mean-between-extremes formula in dealing with presumption and despair. However, as Eleanor Prosser points out, the two terms were standard "key words" in manuals for teaching the laity about repentance (Prosser, pp. 38-39).

10. Trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (New York, 1958), p. 88.

11. The explanation that Christ's love of mankind has brought him to earth is repeated in the following passages: 244/379-381, 259/815-817, 262/907-909, 269/1081-1084, 271/9-10, and 320/1424-1425. Outside the Passion play, one finds the theme also in the Parliament of Heaven (e.g., 102/163-164).

12. The main evidence of the late incorporation of the anointing scene is the crossing out of two sets of catchwords on the folio before this part of the text (quire O) and the fact that it has been copied on a different paper type and with initially closer writing than the material on either side. The paper type of quire O, watermarked with the Bunch of Grapes, occurs elsewhere in the manuscript only as the first two quires and possibly three leaves interpolated in quires N and T. Reasons for hypothesizing that Bunch of Grapes paper was used by the scribe at a late stage of his work have been given in Chapter Two. The three sets of catchwords at the end of quire N are "now cownterfedyd," "myn hert is ryth," and "as a cursyd." The first two sets have been crossed out. "Now cownter fedyd," written in the same ink as the main text in quire N, is the first phrase in quire P, in which script

and rubrication closely resemble quire N. This suggests that originally the council scene at the end of quire N was followed directly by Judas' announcing his intention to betray Christ. "Myn hert is ryth," the second crossed out set of catchwords, is the first phrase of a speech of Jesus at the top of f. 150r. This suggests that an intermediate version of the play had the council scene followed immediately by the beginning of the Last Supper when Christ predicts betrayal. This episode covers only two and a half of the available four folios (150r, 150v, 151r, and 151v), and the script is uncramped and relatively large. In contrast, the script on folios 149r and 149v, which are entirely filled with the anointing scene from beginning to end, gives the impression of being deliberately kept small in order to fit all the material within the space of two folios. Since the folios from 149r through 151v are all Bunch of Grapes paper, and there are no marked differences in the quality of the script they contain, probably there was no large time gap between the compiler's addition of first the Last Supper episode and then, preceding it, the anointing scene. The latter begins with Magdalene saying "As a cursyd . . .," which is the one set of catchwords not crossed out at the bottom of folio 148v.

It is noteworthy also that the anointing scene has metrical and stanzaic features different from the surrounding material. The dialogue between Magdalene and Christ consists of four thirteen-line stanzas, and Judas' complaint at the end of the scene is a "romance eight" (rime couée). Christ's response is a quatrain. The material on either side of the anointing scene is in single and linked quatrains. These metrical details may indicate that the compiler-playwright put together the anointing scene by borrowing segments of other plays.

For speculation about dramaturgical reasons for the playwright's revisions at this point, see Prosser, pp. 131-133.

13. See Prosser, pp. 112-113; and Pseudo-Bonaventure, Meditations on the Life of Christ, trans. Isa Ragusa, ed. Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (Princeton, 1961); cited hereafter as MLC. On Magdalene's identity, see especially pp. 169 and 303.

14. This exemplum use of Magdalene's story can be seen, for instance, in one of the many fourteenth-century lyrics devised as a speech by Christ from the cross. The especially pertinent stanzas are the last three:

Of all þi mysdedes luke þou blyn
 Mare es my mercy þan þi syn;
 þou call mercy with hert.
 Ask mercy & þou sall haue,
 And fra þe fende I sall þe saue,
 And fra his payns smert.

In my mercy dispaire þou noght,
 Sen I þe so dere haue boght,
 And ensaumple þou take
 Of synfull Mary maudelayne,
 Þat with syn was gastly slayne
 And sythen gan it for-sake.

All-so ensaumple may þou luke
 Of saint Peter þat me for-soke
 And sythen rewed it sare.
 Mercy had þai sone of me;
 Man þe same I will do þe

 þarfor lete at my lare.

Carleton Brown and G. V. Smithers, edd., Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1952), p. 61.

15. This emphasis has scriptural authority deriving from Luke's account. There Christ is presented explaining to Simon, "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much" (7:47).

16. That the playwright intended visual portrayal is hinted in Christ's addressing them, "ffendys fleth 3our weye / Wyckyd spyritys I 3ow conjoure / Ffleth out of hire bodyly bowre" (248/496-498), and by the general custom in the play of giving the supernatural concrete form (e.g., the angel administering the chalice to Christ in Gethsemane).

17. This interpretation is found, for instance, in a homily of Gregory the Great (PL 76, 1239c), quoted in Joseph Szövérfy, "'Peccatrix Quondam Femina': A Survey of the Mary Magdalene Hymns," Traditio, 19 (1963), 134. One finds it repeated in the fourteenth century by the Franciscan Nicholas of Lyra (In Marc. XVI). This is noted by Emile Roy in Le Mystere de la Passion en France du xiv^e au xvi^e siecle, Revue bourguignonne, XIII (Paris and Dijon, 1903), p. 86*n.

18. This is especially evident in the episode numbered by the scribe as 37, the appearance of the risen Christ to Magdalene. See, for instance, 334/13-16, 334/20, 334/37-40, 335/64, and 335/72-73.

19. See Block, pp. 247 and 251, p. 247, n.2 and p. 251, n.2.

20. See York, p. 236 and p. 236, n.1.

21. MLC, p. 315.

22. L'Art Religieux de la Fin du Moyen Age en France, 6th ed. (Paris, 1969), pp. 122-123.

23. The strongest hint of a Crucifixion scene origin for this Marian lament is in the fourth stanza:

O ffadyr of hefne wher ben Al pi be-hestys
 þat þou promysyst me whan A modyr þou me made
 pi blyssyd sone I bare be-twyx tweyn bestys
 And now þe bryth colour of his face doth fade
 (268/1069-1072).

The Virgin's comment on the fading of color from Christ's face would seem more natural and likely in the situation of watching him on the cross than it does in the part of the plot where it has been placed. Mary at this point has had no opportunity to see Christ and has only heard that the Jews have brutally taken him captive.

24. Cf. V. A. Kolve, The Play Called Corpus Christi (Stanford, 1966), p. 197: "The Ludus Coventriae must be distinguished from the other cycles in this respect, for although its extremely detailed stage directions indicate all the major games with Christ, and although game words are used to describe certain other actions, it contains relatively little new dialogue for the tortores. By speaking little, they reveal little about themselves, their moral natures, and how they feel about the job they are given to do. . . . This is not the case in the other three English cycles nor in that from Cornwall: they shape the scorning and death into a sequence of games and answer that sequence with a sudden and surprising victory--in terms of game--by the man who seemed to be the victim of the torturers' action."

25. MLC, pp. 317-318.

26. E.g., Male, L'Art Religieux de la Fin du Moyen Age en France, p. 36: "L'auteur des Méditations, en effet, a l'instinct du drame, et il se révèle disciple accompli de saint François qui mimait ses sermons et jouait la scène de Noël. . . . Les Méditations sont à la fois pittoresques et dramatiques, et c'est pour ces deux raisons qu'elles ont tant séduit les auteurs de Mystères."

Cf. Emile Roy, Le Mystere de la Passion en France du xiv^e au xvi^e siècle, Revue bourguignonne, XIII (Paris and Dijon, 1903), pp. 98*-99*: "L'influence contestée des Meditationes est certaine, puisque nous l'avons vu grandir de mystère en mystère depuis la Passion de Semur /before 1410/, mais cette influence n'est ni simple ni uniforme, elle s'exerce tantot directement, tantot par divers intermediares, et cela aussi bien au Midi qu'au Nord de la France. Les Meditationes ne sont donc pas, comme on l'avait dit, la source directe et constante de la Passion de Greban /before 1452/, pas plus que d'aucune autre Passion. Elles sont une de ces sources auxquelles l'analyse en ajoute beaucoup d'autres. . . . Mais il est établie des à present que c'est bien le

traite apocryphe de saint Bonaventure qui, avec le Dialogue apocryphe de saint Anselme, a renouvelé la Passion du moyen âge."

27. See note 1.

28. Dated by Thomas Wright, who edits the poem (from MS. Cotton Cleopatra B.ii) in Political Poems and Songs, I (London, 1859). On date, see p. lxix.

29. Lawrence Craddock, O.F.M., "Franciscan Influences on Early English Drama," Franciscan Studies, X(new series) (1950), 399.

30. Hastings Rashdall, The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology (London, 1919), pp. 383-384.

Chapter Five

THE MARIAN PLAYS IN THE LIGHT OF FRANCISCAN INFLUENCE ON ART AND DOCTRINE

Turning from the Ludus Coventriae Passion to the other especially distinctive sequence, the plays on the life of the Virgin, one again finds strong hints of Franciscan involvement--but only after venturing rather far from the world of theater. What takes us elsewhere in the cultural setting is that in relation to mystery drama, much of the Marian material is unique, but there is a richness of analogues in other art forms. Given our goal to uncover what these plays may reveal about auspices, the soundest kind of method is one that will take into account as wide a range of parallels to their content as possible. Thus, the procedure of this chapter will be to take the reader on a survey of non-dramatic material analogous to the Marian plays, working to glean from it what we can about interests and aims which caused the compiler to include this sequence in the Ludus Coventriae.

The necessity of this approach will be clearer if we take a brief look at earlier reasoning about the significance of these plays. The so-called Marian or Contemplacio group (plays 8 through 13 with interspersed speeches of an expositor, Contemplacio) has traditionally drawn more attention than most other parts of the cycle. There are pri-

marily two reasons: first, at least half of the material--specifically the plays of the Conception of Mary, Mary in the Temple, and the Parliament of Heaven, as well as Contemplacio's role--is distinctive for lack of analogues in extant English drama;¹ second, it has often been thought that the Marian emphasis has more to say about probabilities concerning the cycle's origin than any other detail excluding dialect.² Scholars have linked the plays with the city of Lincoln in particular on the basis of an apparent sign of fervent devotion to the Virgin there.

It must be acknowledged at the start that given the nature of Marian devotion by the time the Ludus Coventriae was compiled (some ninety years later than the other English cycles), to use this element for localizing the cycle is precarious business at best. Contrary to the suggestion of Hardin Craig and others,³ by the fifteenth century, a city whose cathedral was dedicated to the mother of Christ (i.e., Lincoln) would not necessarily have been more likely than other towns to stage plays in her honor. The English Church as a whole had a long tradition of devotion to Mary, represented, for instance, in the origin (as far as the Western Church is concerned) of the Feast of the Conception in the first half of the eleventh century.⁴ Furthermore, devotion to the Virgin was a universally prominent characteristic of the great burgeoning of lay piety that began in the fourteenth century. One sign of this fact is how consistently

the Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary appear in liturgical texts used by the laity. The evidence of Books of Hours and the Prymer, the best known layman's prayer book in England, is that only the Office of the Dead acquired comparable prominence in lay devotions.

Not only was Marian devotion itself nearly universal in late medieval Christendom, but the narrative content in the Ludus Coventriae plays--a mixture of apocryphal and canonical material--was widely known through a variety of the Church's means for teaching and inspiring piety.

i

The extra-biblical content of the plays derives ultimately from three apocryphal texts, the Protevangelium of James (second century),⁵ the Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew (dated somewhere between the fifth and ninth centuries), and the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary (eighth or ninth century).⁶ Having acquired authority through fabulous association with St. Jerome, the two latter works were drawn upon in the thirteenth century for three of the most widely circulated books of the Middle Ages: the Speculum historiale of Vincent of Beauvais (1190-1264), the Legenda aurea (between 1263 and 1288) by Jacobus de Voragine, and the pseudo-Bonaventuran Meditationes vitae Christi (ca. 1280). Sometimes directly and sometimes through one of these thirteenth-century compendia, the apocryphal stories came to be incorporated in liturgical offices for the steadily growing number of feast

days. At the same time, artists were disseminating the stories by using works like the Legenda aurea as sources for wall paintings, stained glass, sculpture, illuminations--virtually all of the pictorial forms. Especially in the later Middle Ages, religious narratives in the vernacular continued the process of making the Marian apocrypha widely known. The basic events in the Ludus Coventriae sequence are found, for instance, in the Cursor Mundi (ca. 1320), the three stanzaic versions of the Life of St. Anne (ca. 1400), Nicholas Love's rather free translation of the Meditationes vitae Christi (1410), Lydgate's Lyf of Our Lady (1421-2), and Osbern Bokenham's Legendys of Hooly Wummen (c. 1445)--to name only the most widely known fourteenth- and fifteenth-century examples in Middle English.

Thus, the only way we can hope to learn more about the Ludus Coventriae from the Marian plays is by finding relationships between specific aspects of their content and factors behind the growth of interest in this narrative sequence.

For the most part, plot in plays 8 through 13 corresponds to the account of the early life of Mary included in the section of the Legenda aurea for the Feast of the Virgin's Nativity (September 8). Since this very widely known version probably served as source material in one way or another for the majority of writers and artists who represented the stories, it offers a basis for discriminating between traditional elements and individual embellishments. After some genealogical material (which, interestingly, has

been copied in part on the folio preceding the first of the Ludus Coventriae Marian plays), Jacobus de Voragine relates:

Saint Jerome tells us in his Prologue that in his early youth he read the history of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin in a certain little book, and wrote it down as he remembered it, after a long passage of time. He relates therefore that Joachim, who was of Galilee and of the town of Nazareth, took to wife Saint Anna of Bethlehem. Both were just, and walked without reproach in all the commandments of the Lord. They divided all their substance in three parts, allotting one part to the Temple and its ministers, and another to the poor and the pilgrims, reserving the third part to themselves and the uses of their household. Thus they lived for twenty years, and had no issue of their wedlock; and they made a vow to the Lord that if He granted them offspring, they would dedicate it to the service of God. For this they went to Jerusalem to celebrate the three principal feasts of each year. And once, when Joachim and his kinsmen went up to Jerusalem at the feast of the Dedication, he approached the altar with them, in order to offer his sacrifice. A priest saw him, and angrily drove him away, upbraiding him for daring to draw near the altar of God, and calling it unseemly that one who lay under the curse of the Law should offer sacrifice to the Lord of the Law, or that a childless man, who gave no increase to the people of God, should stand among men who bore sons. At this Joachim was covered with confusion, and was ashamed to return to his home, lest he have to bear the contempt of his kindred, who had heard all. He went off therefore and dwelt for some time among his shepherds. But one day when he was alone, an angel appeared to him, surrounded with dazzling light. He was affrighted at the vision, but the angel bade him be without fear, saying: "I, the Lord's angel, am sent to thee, to announce to thee that thy prayers are granted, and thine almsworks have ascended in the sight of the Lord. I have seen thy shame, and heard the reproach of barrenness wrongfully cast upon thee. For God indeed punishes not nature, but sin; and therefore, when He closes a womb, it is only that He may later open it more wondrously, and that all may know that what is born thereof is not the fruit of lust, but of the divine munificence. . . . Thus Anna thy wife will bear thee a

daughter, and thou shalt call her name Mary. In accordance with your vow, she shall be consecrated to the Lord from her infancy, and shall be filled with the Holy Spirit from her mother's womb; nor shall she abide without, among the common folk, but within the Temple of the Lord, lest aught of evil be thought of her. And as she will be born of a barren mother, so will she herself, in wondrous wise, beget the Son of the Most High, Whose name will be called Jesus, and through Whom salvation will come to all nations! And this will be a sign to thee: when thou shalt come to the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, Anna thy wife will meet thee there, who now grieves at thy tarrying, and then will rejoice to see thee!" And with these words the angel left him.

Meanwhile Anna wept bitterly, not knowing where her husband had gone. Then the same angel appeared to her, and revealed to her the same things which he had announced to Joachim, adding that as a sign she was to go to the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, to meet her husband at his return. Thus it was that, following the angel's command, they came face to face, and shared their joy over the vision which they had both seen, and over the certainty that they were to have offspring. Then they adored God and set out for their home, awaiting the Lord's promise in gladness of heart. And Anna conceived and bore a girl child, and called her name Mary.

When the Blessed Virgin was three years old, and was weaned from the breast, her parents brought her with gifts to the Temple of the Lord. Around the Temple there were fifteen steps, one for each of the fifteen gradual Psalms; for, since the Temple was built upon a hill, one could not go up to the altar of holocaust from without except by the steps. And the Virgin, being placed upon the lowest of these steps, mounted all of them without the help of anyone, as if she had already reached the fulness of her age.

When they had made their offering, Joachim and Anna left the child with the other virgins in the Temple, and returned to their home. And Mary advanced in every virtue, and daily was visited by the angels, and enjoyed the vision of God. In a letter to Chromatius and Heliodorus, Jerome says that the Blessed Virgin had set for herself the following rule: from dawn to the third hour she devoted herself to prayer, from the third to the ninth hour she worked at weaving, and from the

ninth hour she prayed until an angel appeared, bringing her food.

When she had come to her fourteenth year, the high priest announced to all that the virgins who were reared in the Temple, and who had reached the age of their womanhood, should return to their own and be given in lawful marriage. The rest obeyed the command, and Mary alone answered that this she could not do, both because her parents had dedicated her to the service of the Lord, and because she herself had vowed her virginity to God. The High Priest was perplexed at this, because on the one hand he could not forbid the fulfillment of a vow, since the Scripture said: "Vow ye, and pay to the Lord your God"; and on the other, he dared not admit a practice which was unwonted in the Jewish nation. When the elders were consulted at the next feast of the Jews, all were of opinion that in so doubtful a matter they should seek counsel of the Lord. They all therefore joined in prayer; and when the high priest went in to take counsel with God, a voice came forth from the oratory for all to hear, and said that of all the marriageable men of the house of David who had not yet taken a wife, each should bring a branch and lay it upon the altar, that one of the branches would burst into flower and upon it the Holy Ghost would come to rest in the form of a dove, according to the prophecy of Isaias, and that he to whom this branch belonged would be the one to whom the Virgin should be espoused. Joseph was among the men who came; but to him it seemed not fitting that a man of his years should take so young a maid to wife, so that when all the others placed branches upon the altar, he alone left none. Thus nothing such as the voice of God had predicted took place, wherefore the high priest again took counsel with the Lord, Who said that he alone to whom the Virgin should be espoused, had not brought his branch. Being thus discovered, Joseph placed a branch upon the altar, and straightway it burst into bloom, and a dove came from Heaven and perched at its summit; whereby it was manifest to all that the Virgin was to become the spouse of Joseph. And when the espousals were completed, Joseph went back to his city of Bethlehem to make ready his house, and to dispose all that was needful for the wedding. Mary, however, retired to her parents' house in Nazareth, with seven virgins of her age who had been nurtured with her, and whom the high priest had given to her as com-

panions because of the miracle. And it was in those days that the angel Gabriel appeared to her as she knelt in prayer, and announced to her that she was to give birth to the Son of God.⁷

ii

It has long been recognized that the Ludus Coventriae plays which correspond to this account include signs of having once formed a unit separate from the entire cycle. Although one can see that this unit was amalgamated with material from other sources when MS. Vespasian D.viii was copied,⁸ it is still possible to identify the scope and basic content of the once independent Marian cycle. Most of the evidence is in speeches of the expositor Contemplacio. For instance, although the Proclamation gives the impression that production of the entire Ludus Coventriae was continuous, Contemplacio has a speech before the first Marian play (the eighth in the larger cycle) which welcomes and prepares an audience, and a speech after the Visit to Elizabeth which sounds suited to bidding an audience adieu. Apparently when the Proclamation was copied, it was not in the compiler's plans to use the Marian cycle. The Proclamation stanzas provide for the Prophet play to be followed directly by Mary's Betrothal. As finally copied, though, the manuscript includes two plays between the Prophets and the Betrothal, as well as Contemplacio's introduction, which begins,

Cryst conserve þis congregacion
fro perellys past · present and future
and þe personys here pleand · þat þe pronunciacion
of here sentens to be seyð · mote be sad and sure
And þat non oblocucion · make þis matere obscure

but it may profite and plese eche persone present
 ffrom þe gynnyng to þe endyng so to endure
 þat cryst and every creature · with þe conceyte be content
 (62/1-8).

Then, although the play of Mary's Visit to Elizabeth (for which there is no Proclamation stanza) is followed in the manuscript by the chronologically very close event of the Trial of Joseph and Mary, a speech of Contemplacio intervenes which ends with implications of the audience's dismissal:

Now most mekely we thank 3ou of 3our pacyens
 and beseke 3ou of 3our good supportacion
 If here hath be seyde ore don Any inconuenyens
 we Asyng it to 3our good deliberacion
 Be-sekyng to crystys precious passyon
 conserve and rewarde 3our hedyr comyng
 with Aue we be-gunne · and Aue is oure conclusyon
 Ave regina celorum · to oure lady we syng (122/29-36).

The content of the Marian cycle in its initial form can be inferred from this "preview" given by Contemplacio in his opening speech:

This matere here mad · is of þe modyr of mercy
 how be joachym And Anne · was here conception
 Sythe offred into þe temple · compiled breffly
 than maryed to joseph · and so folwyng þe salutation
 Metyng with Elyzabeth · and þer with a conclusyon
 in fewe wordys talkyd þat it xulde nat be tedyous
 to lernyd nyn to lewd · nyn to no man of reson
 þis is þe processe · Now preserve 3ow jhesus (62/9-16).

The only substantial difference between this overview and the episodes which follow in the manuscript is the absence of any reference to both the Parliament of Heaven, which precedes the Salutation, and the play of Joseph's Return. Signs of disturbance in the manuscript, as well as metrical features, make it clear that the latter was interpolated between once continuous parts of the Marian cycle.⁹ It has been noted as

well that the play of Joseph's Return differs substantially in tone from the material that precedes and follows it.¹⁰

It is reasonable to conclude that the Marian sequence in the Ludus Coventriae is for the most part a once separate cycle devoted to narrating these events--mostly apocryphal--in the early life of the Virgin: her birth to long childless parents (play 8), her presentation in the temple to fulfill her parents' vow (play 9), her betrothal to a spouse chosen by God from the house of David (play 10), the annunciation of Gabriel that she would bear God's son (play 11), and her visit to Elizabeth, who was to give birth to John the Baptist shortly before the nativity of Christ (play 13).

The Ludus Coventriae playwright may not have had precursors in rendering this entire sequence dramatically.¹¹ But a considerable number of analogues in the visual arts survive, making it clear that the stories were both widely known and of substantial importance in influencing contemporary faith and devotion. Furthermore, comparison of the scenes that traditionally compose pictorial Marian cycles to the content of the Ludus Coventriae sequence strongly suggests that the playwright was influenced by these pictorial analogues in planning the scenic detail of his plays.

Picturing the focal points of action in the Marian cycle (excluding the interpolated play of Joseph's Return), one finds the plays to center around the following scenes:

Play 8

The Conception of Mary

- i. rejection of Joachim's offerings (65-6/73-83)
- ii. appearance of angel to Joachim in field with
shepherds (68-9/147-178)

- iii. appearance of angel to Anna (70/191-202)
- iv. meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate (70-1/213-222)

Play 9

Mary in the Temple

- v. the child Mary ascending temple steps from Joachim and Anna to the high priest (74-7/68-151)
- vi. Mary being visited in temple and fed by an angel (80-1/228-275)

Play 10

The Betrothal of Mary

- vii. presentation of rods by bachelors of house of David, with Joseph's alone bursting into flower (88-91/191-301)
- viii. betrothal ceremony conducted by high priest for Joseph and Mary (91-3/302-334)

Play 11

The Parliament of Heaven and Salutation

- ix. parliament among the four daughters of God and the three persons of the Trinity (99-104/49-212)
- x. Gabriel addressing Mary, who humbly listens to the role planned for her in the incarnation (104-6/217-260)

Play 13

The Visit to Elizabeth

- xi. Elizabeth and Mary greeting one another at door of Elizabeth's home (117/47-80).

iii

A search for visual analogues of this sequence, beginning in the catalogue of the Iconographic Index of Christian Art at Princeton University, has brought together twelve examples from Western Europe in the period between 1300 and the approximate date of the Ludus Coventriae (1468). In singling out these examples from numerous groupings of various particular Marian scenes, the chief consideration was that, like the Ludus Coventriae, they combined events in the lives of Joachim and Anna before the Virgin's birth, with legendary

material about her childhood. The collection makes no claim to being exhaustive. For instance, it omits potential cases among no longer extant works, which have yet left shadows in various documents. Also excluded are series referred to as life-of-the Virgin cycles of which it was impossible to learn the specific content. However, such incompleteness as there is does not seriously detract from the usefulness of the survey in indicating where the story of the Virgin's parents and her early life was most familiar, or in suggesting how it entered into the spiritual life of the time. Grouped by medium, the examples consist of four fresco cycles, one in relief sculpture, four sets of panel paintings, and three series of illuminations in Books of Hours.

Eight of the twelve originated in Italy, and at least five of these show traces of influence from the earliest in the group, Giotto's magnificent fresco series in the Arena Chapel at Padua (ca. 1305).¹² Built by Enrico Scrovegni adjacent to the family palace, the chapel was dedicated to the Virgin of the Annunciation, which explains in part why considerable space in the decorative program is given to legendary material about her parents and her early life. In addition to the moving psychological depth in the representation of character, Giotto's Marian cycle is notable for its fullness of narration, the relatively large number of scenes. Filling the highest tier, and progressing from the southeast to the northeast corner of the nave, the sequence consists

of twelve scenes:

- i. expulsion of Joachim from the temple
- ii. Joachim withdrawing among his sheep in the pasture
- iii. annunciation by angel to Anna
- iv. Joachim sacrificing an animal to God
- v. appearance of angel to Joachim while sleeping
- vi. meeting of Anna and Joachim at Golden Gate
- vii. birth of the Virgin
- viii. presentation of the Virgin in the temple
- ix. presentation of rods by suitors of the house of David
- x. watching of rods on the temple altar
- xi. betrothal of the Virgin to Joseph holding rod in flower
- xii. Virgin's return home.

Following directly, on the triumphal arch facing the entrance, is the Annunciation, both the subject of the chapel's dedication and the transition between the Marian cycle and the program of the second and third tiers, the Life of Christ.

During the next sixty years, three of Giotto's Florentine followers painted cycles similar in scope to the sequence at Padua, but composed of fewer episodes. A five-part fresco series, beginning with the expulsion of Joachim from the temple and ending with the betrothal of Mary and Joseph, was done between 1332 and 1338 by Taddeo Gaddi¹³ in the Baroncelli Chapel of Santa Croce--then and still the largest church belonging to the Franciscan Order. Dating also from the first half of the century is Bernardo Daddi's polyptych cycle now in the Uffizi.¹⁴ Its seven panels depict

- i. rejection of Joachim's offering
- ii. angelic annunciation to Joachim asleep near sheep in pasture
- iii. meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate
- iv. birth of the Virgin
- v. presentation of the Virgin in the temple

- vi. Gabriel's annunciation to Mary
- vii. the nativity of Christ

About 1365 another chapel of Santa Croce, consecrated by Francesco Rinuccini to the Madonna and Mary Magdalene, was decorated in part with frescoes which differ little in either subject matter or design from Gaddi's Marian cycle in the Baroncelli Chapel nearby. Three scenes--Joachim being expelled from the temple; the appearance to him of the announcing angel, followed by the meeting with Anna at the Golden Gate; and the birth of the Virgin--are attributed to Giovanni da Milano. The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple and the Betrothal of Mary and Joseph were painted by a collaborator known only as the Rinuccini Master.¹⁵

The fifth and sixth examples are two series of panels by Veronese painters: a group of twelve scenes by Turone (third quarter of the fourteenth century), now in the Musée Royal at Brussels,¹⁶ and an eight-scene group by Martino da Verona (active between 1396 and 1413), now in a private collection in Florence.¹⁷ Both are sequences of uniform square or nearly square pictures. Their relatively small size suggests that they were used as house altarpieces. In both instances, the cycle extends past the Nativity to include scenes involving both the Virgin and Christ.¹⁸ The iconography of both series shows varying degrees of derivation from Giotto's Paduan frescoes.¹⁹

A notably different Italian school is represented by a

a twelve-panel life-of-the Virgin series now in the Louvre (figures 1-4). Attributed--with some tentativeness--to the Venetian Jacopo Moranzzone (active 1430-1469),²⁰ these panels are surrounded by mystery involving more than the identity of the painter. The present mounting within three-part frames is not original, and there is no basis for being sure that the scenes now grouped together are all that the cycle ever contained. It seems to be a hint of loss that though the series shows the Annunciation to Joachim, it lacks the most frequent of all scenes involving Joachim, the Meeting with Anna at the Golden Gate. The absence of the Annunciation by Gabriel has led two scholars to hypothesize that the twelve panels originally were part of a polyptych having a large Annunciation scene as its centerpiece.²¹ However, in view of the small scale and intimate detail, it seems less likely that they were part of a grand altarpiece than that they were intended for a domestic devotional setting. As the standing authority on their attribution comments, "These are paintings that we look at with pleasure, paintings for the home or for intimate places" ²² Here, as in the two Veronese panel series, scenes from before the Virgin's birth through her betrothal are joined with episodes from the Nativity on that emphasize her maternal relationship to Christ. One of the most curious features of the Venetian cycle is that unlike any of the other eleven examples, it includes two "phases" of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple (the parallel of



a

b

c

Fig. 1



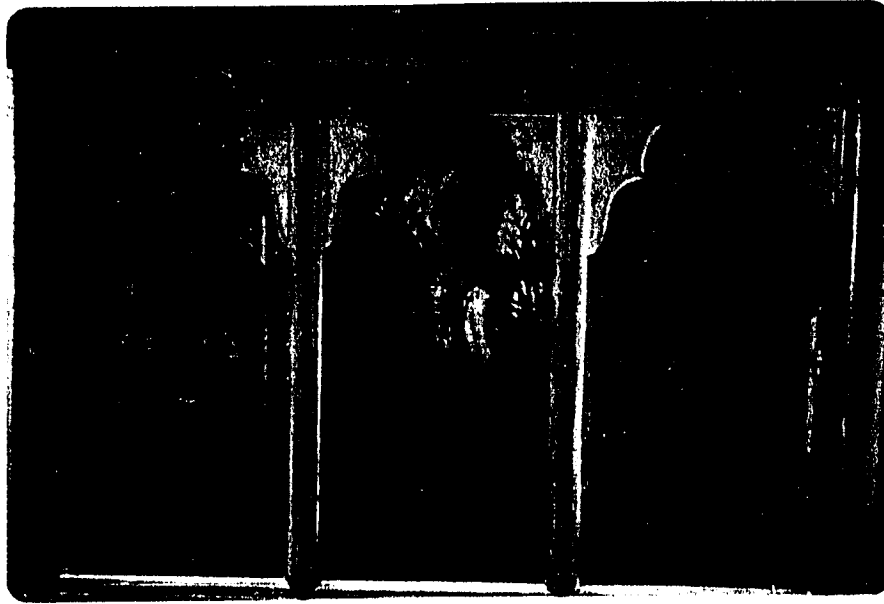
d

e

f

Fig. 2

Jacopo Moranzzone (?), Scenes from the Life of the Virgin.
Paris, Louvre, M.1.455-460.



g

h

i

Fig. 3



j

k

l

Fig. 4

Jacopo Moranzzone (?), Scenes from the Life of the Virgin.
Paris, Louvre, M.1.461-466.

play 9 in the Ludus Coventriae). Moranzone's colleagues had chosen either of two gestures in the depiction of three-year-old Mary: a resolute ascent of the stairs with head turned toward the high priest or (contrary to the apocryphal source, though more affectingly childlike) a hesitant turning toward Anna and Joachim, appreciative of their protection and momentarily regretful of parting. In separate scenes, the Venetian painter depicts both the tender moment of parting and the strong climb upward that expresses her self-dedication.

An earlier Italian painter also depicts both Mary's childlike dependence on Anna and Joachim and her boldly independent ascent toward the high priest. In an illuminated miniature of the Presentation, Giovannino dei Grassi (d. 1398) renders two successive moments: on the left he shows Mary in the arms of Anna, reaching the temple with Joachim; and on the right, her unaided ascent of the stairs as her parents watch prayerfully from behind. The scene belongs to an eleven-part Marian cycle which begins with the marriage of Anna and Joachim, and ends with the Annunciation by Gabriel. It forms the first decorative program in the Book of Hours commissioned from Giovannino by his fellow Milanese Giangaleazzo Visconti. One would expect Marian pictorial cycles to appear in Books of Hours more typically than they in fact do. The one essential standard component of a Book of Hours--descendant of the Psalter as the main liturgical book for private devotions of the laity--is the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary,

or the Hours of the Virgin. Natural as it might seem that the miniatures accompanying these Marian devotions would depict her entire history, the most common practice was to use a cycle beginning with the Annunciation of Gabriel, continuing through the Nativity and events soon thereafter, and ending with either the Coronation or the Death of the Virgin.²³ Why so elaborate a Marian cycle appears in the Visconti Hours seems to be explained mainly by the patron's especially fervent devotion to her.²⁴ With the history of Mary and her parents in the miniatures of the Visconti Hours, we come to the last of the Italian examples.

Cycles corresponding to the Marian plays of the Ludus Coventriae appear in two later Books of Hours, the work of artists from the North. Around the year 1440, in Utrecht, an illuminator known only as the Master of Catherine of Cleves decorated the Little Office of the Virgin with a series of scenes beginning with the Annunciation to Joachim, continuing through the Virgin's early life, the Nativity, and the Flight into Egypt, and ending with the Assumption of Mary.²⁵ At nearly the same time, the so-called Bedford Master was at work in France on a book for a woman of another royal household, perhaps Marguerite de Bourgogne. Known as the Sobieski Hours (after its seventeenth-century owner, John III Sobieski, King of Poland), the work is now in the Royal Library of Windsor Castle.²⁶ The Marian cycle in the Sobieski Book of Hours is a series of small scenes on a single page at the be-

ginning of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. Above the opening verse of Matins in the center of the page is the Annunciation by Gabriel, and around this centerpiece are the following subjects, rendered on a slightly smaller scale: Rejection of Joachim's Offering; Joachim with Shepherds in the Pasture; Meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate; Birth of Mary; Presentation of Mary in the Temple; Mary Weaving, Attended by an Angel; and the Betrothal of Mary and Joseph.²⁷

The two pictorial cycles that remain to be mentioned are both of English origin. The earlier of the two, a series of frescoes done very close to 1300 in a small parish church in the village of Croughton, Northamptonshire, is surrounded by mystery. All that is known about the painter is that his stylistic affinities are to London.²⁸ The date of the work makes it possible that inspiration for the Marian material came from the artist's having seen one or another of the cycles newly completed by Italian painters.²⁹ But iconographical as well as stylistic differences argue against that possibility. The presence of some of the scenes of Joachim, Anna, and the young Virgin in a twelfth-century Psalter written at Winchester³⁰ suggests that it would have been possible for a book by an English illuminator to have inspired the artist. But no specific possible source has been uncovered. Nor is there anything about the dedication of the church--named in full, the Church of All Saints--that would explain the unusual fullness of Marian material. After much effort to account for these scenes in the Croughton parish, M. R. James

concludes simply, "How they came to be there nobody quite knows" ³¹ Forming the first tier of decoration on the south wall, the sequence consists of the following scenes:

- i. rejection of Joachim's offering
- ii. angel promising Virgin's birth to Anna (tentative; scene is damaged)
- iii. meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate
- iv. birth of the Virgin
- v. presentation of the Virgin in the temple
- vi. Anna instructing Mary and her departure with Joachim
- vii. betrothal of Mary and Joseph.

At the beginning of the second tier is a space now vacant which must originally have contained the Annunciation. Next in order is the Visitation, followed by scenes from the life of Christ.

The second English example, and last of the twelve to be noted, is in the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral. Completed in the first half of the fourteenth century, these Marian scenes are in relief sculpture in the spandrels over seats for clergy in the chancel. ³² The dedication of the chapel at least partially explains the appearance of the cycle here--uncommon though it generally is in England.

iv

Searching for pictorial analogues of the Marian plays leads inevitably to the question why does this subject matter seem to have been better known or more popular in Italy than elsewhere in the West? Part of the explanation is the general hospitality of Italian art to Byzantine influence; apocryphal material about the Virgin made its way into the arts, and into liturgy as well, earlier in the East than in the West. But

probably a more powerful factor is the origin and centralization of the Franciscan movement in Italy. Two aspects of Franciscanism are especially pertinent to the appearance of pictorial cycles involving Anna, Joachim, and the Virgin before Christ's birth. First, beginning with the devotional emphases of St. Francis himself, the order was continuously involved in glorifying the role of Mary in the process of redemption. Second, the concept of making narrative a vehicle for devotion--which essentially underlies use of the Marian and other cycles as ecclesiastical decoration--has distinctively Franciscan associations. The best known and most ambitious representation of the principle is, of course, the pseudo-Bonaventuran Meditationes vitae Christi.

Explicit evidence of Franciscan interest in the Marian cycle is not far to seek. When the decorative program of the mother church of the Franciscans--the Church of St. Francis at Assisi--was planned, the main shaping influence seems to have been Bonaventure's life of St. Francis, decreed in 1266 to be the one and only orthodox account. Bonaventure's identification of the particularly important figures and subjects in Francis' devotional life more or less determined what would form the subject matter decorating the church that bore his name.³³ Of St. Francis and the Virgin Mary, Bonaventure had written, "The mother of the Lord Jesus Christ he held in unspeakable love, since it was through her that the Lord of Majesty became our brother, and we are followed by her mercy . . . and to her honor he fasted from the feast of the Apostles

Peter and Paul to the feast of the Assumption most devoutly."³⁴ It is the apse of the Upper Church that reflects this aspect of the saint's devotion. In the lower of two tiers are scenes of the Last Hour of the Virgin, the Dormition, the Assumption, and her position as Mediatrix between humanity and the God-head. The four scenes of the upper tier are the Annunciation to Joachim, the Birth of the Virgin, the Assembling of the Suitors (the original is badly obliterated; this might rather have been the Presentation of the Virgin³⁵), and the Betrothal of Mary and Joseph. Thought to date from the 1280's, the frescoes are attributed to Cimabue, the teacher of Giotto.

For most of the Marian cycles surveyed above, the possibility of direct Franciscan influence cannot be determined. For two, however, among the most spectacular of the twelve examples, Franciscan auspices are certain: the fresco cycles of Taddeo Gaddi and Giovanni da Milano and collaborator are in Santa Croce, the grandest church of the order.

The aspect of Franciscan spirituality most closely related to devotional use of narrative--in pictorial form or otherwise--is the emphasis on responding to the personages and facts of sacred history primarily with the emotions. Because of its effectiveness in manifesting human personality, narrative was a natural means of establishing qualities of character that would evoke affective response. This is the very obvious function of story in the Meditationes vitae Christi, and in pictorial narratives like the Marian cycles

as well. One notices, for instance, that this particular sequence usually begins by expressing the poignant longing of Joachim and Anna for a child, continues with representation of their exemplary devotion, and then turns to the piety and sweetness of the young Virgin. The concluding scenes express her humility and obedience, as well as endearing glimmers of warmth, tenderness, and graciousness.

Not surprisingly, the Marian plays of the Ludus Coventriae give similarly vivid and full representations of character. What the painters conveyed through facial expressions and gestures, the Ludus Coventriae playwright has accomplished through speeches that reveal inner thoughts and feelings. In both forms, the qualities emphasized are those particularly likely to stir an affective response. For instance, pictorial scenes of Joachim's dejection after the refusal of his offering are matched by the following bit of dialogue:

Primus pastor

A welcom hedyr blyssyd mayster · we pasture hem ful wyde
they be lusty and fayr · and grettly multiply
how de 3e mayster 3e loke al hevyly
how doth oure dame at hom sytt she and sowyht.

Joachym

to here þe speke of here it sleyth myn hert veryly
how I and sche doth god hym self knowyth
The meke god lyftyth up þe proude over throwyht
Go do what 3e lyst se 3our bestys not stray (67/109-116).

Then Joachim prayerfully unburdens his heart, establishing the mood which by contrast will heighten the joy of the angelic annunciation:

I am nott wurthy lord · to loke up to hefne
 my synful steppys Anvemynynd þe grounde
 I loth-folest þat levyth · þou lord hiest in þe setys sefne
 What art þou lord · What am I wrecche · werse þan an hownde
 þou has sent me shame · which myn hert doth wounde
 I thank þe more here fore · þan for all my prosperite
 þis is a tokyn þou lovyst me · now to the I am bounde
 þou seyst þou art with hem · þat in tribulacion be.
 And ho so haue þe · he nedyth not care thanne
 my sorwe is feryng I haue do sum offens
 punchyth me lorde · and spare my blyssyd wyff anne
 þat syttyth and sorwyth ful sore of myn Absens
 Ther is not may profyte but prayour to 3our presens
 With prayorys prostrat · by-fore þi person I wepe
 haue mende on oure a-vow · for 3our mech magnyficens
 and my lovyngest wyff Anne · lord for þi mercy kepe
 (67-8/123-138).

The ties that bind familial relationships--like devotion of husband to wife in Joachim's prayer--are frequently the means by which both artists in the pictorial forms and the Ludus Coventriae playwright accentuate the poignancy of a scene. The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple offers a particularly good opportunity to observe the sharing of this technique. Recalling the likely source version in the Legenda aurea, one notes that no mention is made of any parting words between the Virgin and her parents, nor is anything said of hesitancy on the child's part in ascending the steps to the altar. In fact, one of the apocryphal books undoubtedly drawn upon by Jacobus, the Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew, makes the point explicitly, "She ascended quickly the fifteen steps, without looking back and without inquiring of her parents as children usually do, much to the astonishment of everyone; and the priests themselves wondered at her."³⁶ Among the pictorial cycles surveyed above, there is

ample evidence of the trend in iconography of the Presentation noted by Louis Reau:

A partir de la fin du Moyen-âge, et à plus forte raison à l'époque de la Renaissance et de la Contre-Réforme, l'art ne tient plus aucun compte de la tradition fixée par les Apocryphes. . . . La "petite Infante" ne monte pas seule les degrés: elle est aidée par sa mère ou par un ange (Tenture de Beaune, retable de Saluces à Bruxelles). Elle se retourne à mi-chemin vers ses parents qui la suivent du regard (Orcagna). La scène de séparation devient plus humaine et l'artiste y trouve en outre l'avantage de ne pas montrer la Vierge de dos. La psychologie et l'esthétique se liguent contre le texte et en triomphent.³⁷

Like many of the pictorial versions of the Presentation (e.g., see fig. 1c), the play of Mary in the Temple makes a touching moment of the young Virgin's parting from her parents:

Maria

Modyr and it plese 3ow · fyrst wole I take my leve
of my fadyr · and 3ow my modyr i-wys
I haue a fadyr in hefne · þis i be-leve
now good ffadyr · with þat fadyr 3e me blysse.

Joachym

In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti.

Maria

Amen · Now 3e good modyr.

Anne

In nomine patris et filij et spiritus sancti // Maria ·
Amen.

Maria

Now oure lord thank 3ow for this
here is my fadyr and my modyr bothe
most mekely I beseche I may 3ow kys
now for-3eue me yf evyr I made 3ow wrothe.

Et explexendo osculabit patrem et matrem.

Joachym

Nay dowtere 3e offendyd nevyr god nor man
lovyd be þat lord · 3ow so doth kepe.

Anne

Swete dowtyr thynk on 3our modyr An
3our swemyng smytyht to myn hert depe.

/Maria/

Ffadyr and modyr I xal pray for 3ow and wepe
To god with al myn hert specyaly
blysse me day and nyght evyr her 3e slepe
good ffadyr and modyr · and beth mery.

Joachym

A ho had evyr suche a chylde
nevyr creature 3it þat evyr was bore
Sche is so gracyous she is so mylde
so xulde childyr to fadyr and modyr evyr more.

Anne

Than xulde thei be blyssyd · and plese god sore
husbond and it plese 3ow not hens go we xal
tyl mary be in þe temple above thore
I wold not for al erthe se here fal (73-4/49-75).

Besides illustrating the development of potentially affecting moments, this scene represents the principle that consistently governs characterization throughout the Marian cycle: the sacred figures should be made to seem like natural, familiar human beings--albeit of a distinctive gentleness and devotedness of manner. We see this, for instance, in the exchange of good wishes by Anna and Joachim with Mary and Joseph newly betrothed (pp. 94-5), in Joseph's solicitousness toward Mary when he leaves to prepare a place for them to live (p. 95), in the Virgin's humble response to Gabriel (p. 105), and in her greeting of Elizabeth her cousin (p. 117). The point intended to be made through characterization stands out rather clearly in this brief exchange between Mary and Elizabeth:

Maria

but cosyn Elyzabeth I xal 3ow here kepe
and þis thre monethis Abyde here now

tyl 3e han childe to wasche skore and swepe
and in all þat I may to comforte 3ow.

Elizabeth

A 3e modyr of god · 3e shewe us here how
we xulde be meke þat wrecchis here be
All hefne and herthe wurcheppe 3ow mow
þat are trone and tabernakyl of þe hy3 trinite
(120/109-116).

This mingling of naturalistic domestic simplicity with tribute to the awesome roles of characters in sacred history is a style of characterization which spread into medieval art and literature mainly from the Meditationes vitae Christi. While in this work, characterization is directly related to devotional purposes of the Franciscan author, considering the late date of the Ludus Coventriae, to find the same style of characterization there does not take us as far as we would wish toward determining the auspices of the plays. By the mid-fifteenth century, the mode of spirituality in the Meditationes had spread widely beyond Franciscan precincts. One sign of this fact is that the English translation-adaptation of the Meditationes about 1410--which expert opinion holds to have been what the Ludus Coventriae playwright knew instead of the pseudo-Bonaventure's work itself³⁸--was written by a Carthusian, Nicholas Love. The fundamental premise of Franciscan spirituality--that love, rather than intellectual understanding, must be the primary approach to knowing God³⁹--led to the form of contemplative devotion for which the Meditationes was written. Additionally, as the main alternative to grounding faith in the theological demonstrations of

scholasticism, the premise drew adherents without Franciscan association, and naturally led to varied forms of affective devotion itself. Referring initially to the Meditationes, Dom François Vandenbroucke sums up the diffusion of affective piety as follows:

This work brings out once again how much the spirituality that we call Franciscan, at the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, was a bridge between the spirituality of the twelfth century which was still almost exclusively the monopoly of the cloister, and the one that began to flourish at the end of the fourteenth, the Devotio moderna, which was for long to set its mark on the spiritual life of the Church. "Bernardine" and "Franciscan" devotion were still anchored, so to speak, to the "objective" contemplation of Christ's mysteries. The drift in the direction of "subjective" devotion was to take place during the fourteenth century. The twelfth had opened the spiritual life to new milieux; the fourteenth was to give it a new character, interior and "devotional," which would make its way into almost every circle of fervent Christians.⁴⁰

Thus, though the affective element in the Marian plays, in addition to associations of some of their pictorial analogues, may suggest the likelihood of Franciscan auspices, considering the date of the Ludus Coventriae these details are not sufficient to establish the Greyfriars as the most likely sponsors.

v

The case for the Franciscans is strengthened, however, by devotional and particularly by doctrinal material in the plays.

As well as telling a story, the Marian plays include very deliberate teaching of certain forms of devotion. Within the narrative scope of the plays are the moments when the Ave Maria, the Magnificat, and the Benedictus by tradition originated. Usually pairing the Latin verses with their English equivalents, the playwright both teaches the meaning of the canticles and commends them for devotional use. For instance, the first part of the Ave Maria and its translation form a natural part of the dialogue in the Salutation; Gabriel approaches the Virgin saying, "Ave Maria gratia plena Dominus tecum / Heyl fful of grace god is with the / Amonge All women blyssyd art thu" (104/217-218; Latin line unnumbered). Likewise, the second part is incorporated in one of Elizabeth's speeches in the Visitation. In the course of welcoming Mary, she says, "blyssyd be þou Amonge All women. / And blyssyd be þe frute of þi wombe also" (117/58-59). The expositor Contemplacio brings the two parts together in his epilogue, saying,

lystenyth sovereynys here is conclusyon
 how þe Aue was mad • here is lernyd vs
 þe Aungel seyde • Ave gratia plena dominus tecum
 benedicta tu in mulieribus
 Elizabeth seyde • et benedictus
 fructus uentris tui • thus þe chirch addyd Maria
 And Jesus her
 who seyth oure ladyes sawtere dayly ffor A 3er þus
 he hath pardon • ten thousand And eytte hundryd 3er
 (121-2/1-8).

"Oure ladyes sawtere" (1. 7) was the medieval analogue of the Rosary, consisting of reciting Ave Marias in multiples of one hundred fifty, the number of psalms in the Psalter.⁴¹

For the Magnificat, the playwright temporarily halts the dramatic action of the Visitation. He follows Luke (1:46-55) in making the canticle spontaneously come to the Virgin after she hears Elizabeth's confirmation of what Gabriel has reported about the conceiving of John. But he departs from the gospel account in order to give the Latin with farcing. Mary and Elizabeth "do" the Magnificat antiphonally, Mary giving the Latin verses and her cousin their meanings in the vernacular. In this case the Virgin herself reminds spectators of how the canticle is used devotionally:

This psalme of prophesye seyde be-twen vs tweyn
In hefne it is wretyn with Aungellys hond
evyr to be songe · and Also to be seyn
Every day Amonge us at oure eve song (120/105-108).

Since the occasion of the origin of the Benedictus is not dramatized, but only mentioned by Contemplacio in summary, this canticle is not taught and translated like the others. Yet not overlooking a chance to link narrative and devotion, the expositor says near the end of his epilogue,

And evyr oure lady a-bod styлле þus
tyl johan was of his modyr born
and þan zakarye spak i-wus
þat had be down and his spech lorn
he and Elizabeth prophesyed as þus
they mad Benedictus · them be-forn
and so Magnificat · And · Benedictus
ffyrst in þat place þer made worn (122/17-24).

The most elaborate of the playwright's devotional amplifications is also especially interesting, since it appears to be unprecedented. In the play of the Virgin's Presentation in the Temple, as she climbs the fifteen steps to the high

priest, young Mary recites the Latin incipits of the fifteen gradual psalms, preceding each with an English quatrain giving the meaning of the Latin and a "ghostly," or tropological, interpretation as well. Although this section of the Psalter (psalms 119-134) has a long history of use as a devotional exercise,⁴² and although the apocryphal story of the Presentation--including mention of the fifteen temple steps--was widely known,⁴³ the idea that the Virgin meditated on the gradual psalms as she climbed the steps appears to be unique to the Ludus Coventriae. The playwright, it seems, has adapted his source in order to present spectators with a memorable lesson in reciting the psalms of degree.

While known narrative sources available to the playwright have nothing comparable to Mary's meditation, a trend in the iconography of the Presentation scene hints that there may have been a tradition of linking the image of the stair-climbing with recitation of the gradual psalms. Despite the specific mention of fifteen temple steps in the most widely known Presentation accounts, artists in the pictorial forms were not particularly rigorous about rendering this detail literally. As Louis Réau points out, "Les peintres ne se croient plus obligés de figurer les quinze marches rituelles de l'escalier et ils en réduisent arbitrairement le nombre."⁴⁴ However, among versions of the scene after about 1300, it becomes more common to find all fifteen steps pictured. In fact, the stairway in many cases is made so prominent a part

of the picture that a meditator could easily "ascend" them imaginatively, reciting one of the psalms on each step. As instances of this treatment of the step motif, both Presentation frescoes in Santa Croce have the stairs arranged in three runs of five steps each which fill the left and center foreground and middle ground. Two other examples, the pair of Presentation panels in the sequence by Jacopo Moranzzone (see fig. 1c and 2d) and the miniature in the Marian cycle of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, belong to works that appear to be for specifically devotional use--which can be assumed one of the intended functions also of wall paintings. Among numerous fifteen-step Presentation scenes not combined in Marian cycles is a Spanish panel probably from the decade following the Ludus Coventriae. Now in a private collection in Montreal, this is another case where prominence of the steps seems suggestive of relationship to a devotional purpose (see fig.5).⁴⁵

If there is a connection between use of Presentation scenes as devotional images, and recitation of the fifteen gradual psalms, then the prominence of the fifteen-step motif in the frescoes at Santa Croce may indicate that the Franciscans, perhaps among others, associated this devotion with the Presentation as is done in the Ludus Coventriae play.

Another element giving a devotional tone to the Marian plays is liturgical music. Stage directions indicate that the needed cast includes singers representing a heavenly

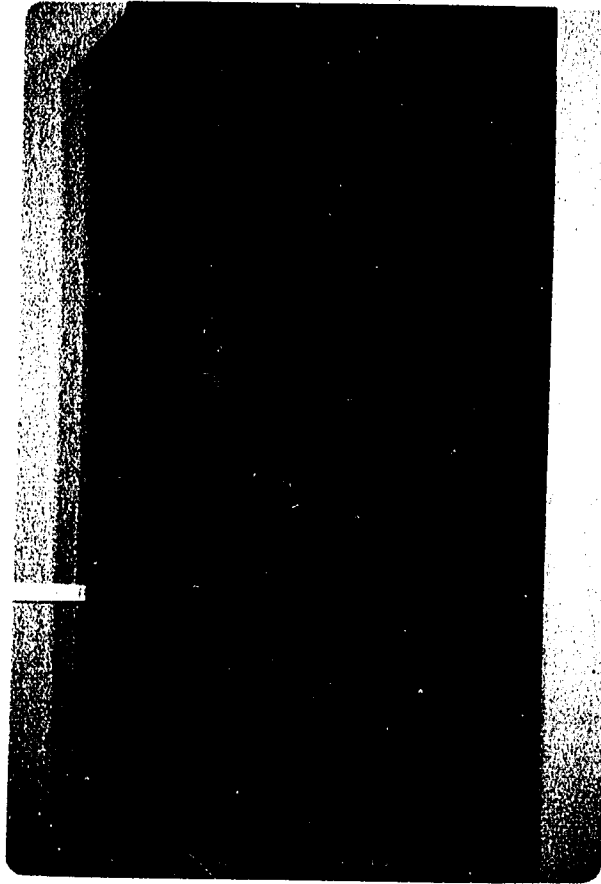


Fig. 5

Martin de Soria, Presentation of the Virgin.

Montreal, Museum of Fine Arts,

Hosmer-Pillow-Vaughan Gallery,
(on loan from private collection).

chorus, and eight times during the action, either this group or characters in the religious hierarchy present Latin hymns and sequences. Sung by either group, the music serves to convey a sense of divine participation in events. For instance, music by the chorus accompanies the angel's appearance to Joachim, promising Mary's birth (p. 68). Likewise, the angel who visits Mary in the temple comes against a background of "heavenly" music (p. 81); and the same is true of Gabriel's return to heaven after the Annunciation (p. 108). Elsewhere these Latin hymns and sequences--with bold anachronism--form parts of ecclesiastical ceremonies. For example, the ritual at which Joachim's offering is rejected begins with the sequence Benedicta sit beata trinitas (p. 65). The same sequence is sung by the congregation of the play when Joseph's rod flowers (p. 91). Baffled over how to reconcile Mary's vow to remain a Virgin dedicated to God, with the law that she must choose a spouse, the high priest ("Episcopus") and his colleagues seek divine guidance by singing, appropriately, Veni creator spiritus (p. 82). Another sequence marks the end of the Betrothal ceremony (p. 93). Finally, perhaps the entire cast, and spectators as well, are the "we" whose singing Contemplacio mentions at the end of the epilogue: "with Aue we be-gunne . and Aue is oure conclusyon / Ave regina celorum . to oure lady we synge" (122/35-36). The specific liturgical selections tell us only that the playwright was familiar with eighth-, tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-

century material incorporated in various English missals and breviaries, and in some instances, in other Western uses.⁴⁶ However, as to performers, the musical element of the plays tells us that the anticipated cast would have had at least some members with training more likely among people in holy orders than among the laity.

Of all the features comprising the Ludus Coventriae Marian plays, doctrinal material includes the most suggestive signs of specifically Franciscan auspices. Beginning with the Parliament of Heaven, doctrinal points are generally paralleled by passages in the Meditationes and in its English translation-adaptation, The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesus Christ. This is true, for instance, of the involvement of the whole Trinity in the incarnation, which prompts one of the playwright's most elaborate visual effects:

here þe holy gost descendit with iij bemys to
our lady · the sone of þe godhed nest with iij
bemys to þe sone · And so entre All thre to
here bosom . . . (stage direction, 107/following 292).⁴⁷

Likewise, the playwright's detailing of the uniqueness of the child in Mary's womb,

parfyte god and parfyte man
havyng Al schappe · of chyldly carnalyte
Evyn Al at onys · þus god began.

Nott takynge ffyrst o membyr and sythe A-nother
but parfyte childhod 3e haue A-non (107/294-298),

repeated in the Visit to Elizabeth (118/70-71), has close parallels in the two devotional narratives. The pseudo-Bonaventure writes, "At that very point the spirit was created and

placed into the sanctified womb as a human being complete in all parts of His body, though very small and childlike. He was then to grow naturally in the womb like other children, but the infusion of the soul and the separation of the limbs were not delayed as in others. Thus He was a perfect God as well as a perfect man"48 And Nicholas Love, ". . . not as othere children / conceyued and born by kynde / ben schapen / membre after membre / and after the soule sched in to the body · but anone at the firste instaunce he was ful schapen in alle membres and alle hole man in body and in soule . . . at the firste he was ful perfite god and man"49

While some of the doctrinal themes indicate only the playwright's use of The Mirroure (and perhaps the Meditationes), as well as his desire to make the plays instructive, one in particular--a subject of controversy--suggests that he was at least on the side of the Franciscans, if not a Greyfriar himself. Play 8, which covers the rejection of Joachim's offering and the angelic promise of a child to him and Anna (and is also without analogous material in The Mirroure and the Meditationes), includes a scene which became linked with belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin. As a way of explaining how Mary could have been conceived without being tainted by the fleshly lust of her parents, the tradition developed that conception took place by means of the kiss exchanged by Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate. Ac-

cordingly, as noted by Louis Réau, "Dans l'église orientale et dans la première version de l'art d'Occident, l'Immaculée Conception de la Vierge est associée à la Rencontre de ses parents Anne et Joachim sous la Porte d'Or de Jérusalem.

. . . Cette scène est de beaucoup la plus populaire du cycle d'Anne et de Joachim parce qu'on y voyait au Moyen-âge non seulement le prélude de la Naissance de la Vierge, mais encore le symbole de son Immaculée Conception."⁵⁰

We come now to the issue whether the playwright's version of the meeting at the Golden Gate reflects this association with the Immaculate Conception. Though there are no digressions to unequivocally expound the doctrine, the entire play emphasizes the miraculousness of Mary's conception, and dialogue associates it particularly with the moment of reunion at the traditional gate. Preparation for the doctrinal point begins when the angel speaking to Joachim reminds him that the mothers of Isaac, Joseph, Sampson, and Samuel had once been barren. The heavenly messenger continues,

þe conception of all swych · it is ful mervelyous.

And in þe lyke wyse · Anne þi blyssyd wyff
sche xal bere a childe · xal hygth mary
which xal be blyssyd · in here body · and haue joys ffyff
and ful of þe holy goost · inspyred syngulyrly

· · · · ·
And as sche xal be bore · of a barrany body
So of here xal be bore · with-out nature jhesus.

That xal be savyour · vnto al man-kende
In tokyn whan þou come · to jherusalem to þe gyldyn gate
þou xalt mete anne þi wyff · haue þis in þi mende
(68-9/162-166 and 169-173).

Momentarily, after telling Anna of the message brought to her husband, the angel informs her,

At the goldyn gate þou xalte mete hym ful mylde
and in grett gladnes returne to 3our hous
So be proces þou xalt conseyye and bere A childe
(70/195-197).

If "be proces" seems to cloud exactly when the miracle occurs, the words exchanged by the couple at the moment of meeting leave little uncertainty:

Joachym
A gracyous wyff Anne now fruteful xal 3e be
Ffor joy of þis metyng · in my sowle I wepe
Haue þis kusse · of clenness · and with 3ow it kepe
in goddys name now go we wyff · hom to our hous.

Anne
þer was nevyr joy sank in me so depe
now may we sey husbond · god is to us gracyous & veryly
(70/213-218).

After eight lines expressing their gratitude to God and their intention to depart toward home, the play ends.

The speech of Contemplacio between this play and the next poses some interpretive problems, but one entirely supportable reading identifies the meeting of Joachim and Anna as the moment of the Immaculate Conception. The expositor summarizes:

Sovereynes 3e han sen shewyd 3ow be-fore
Of Joachym and Anne · here botherys holy metyng
How our lady was conseyyd · and how she was bore
We passe ovyr þat · breffnes of tyme consyderynge
And how our lady in here tendyr age and 3yng
In to þe temple was offryd and so forth proced (71/1-6).

The crucial clause "How our lady was conseyyd" is in an ambiguous position; Contemplacio can be saying either "You have seen the holy meeting of Joachim and Anna, how our lady was conceived" (thus affirming the traditional association between the kiss and the Immaculate Conception), or "We pass

over how our lady was conceived and born." For several reasons, the first alternative seems more likely to have been the playwright's intention. The two "and"'s introduce descriptions of episodes equally standard in the tradition of Marian cycles; one is being skipped over and other is about to be played. There is no traditional episode associated with Mary's conception other than the meeting at the Golden Gate. Thus, it seems more likely that "How our lady was consevid" refers to the same episode described in the preceding line than that it stands for a different episode which is being linked by "and" with "how she was bore" as object of "passe ovyr." (It is useful to recall that initial capitals in Miss Block's text--duplicated here--signify rubricated letters rather than capitalization in the script).

Taken together, the preceding passages make firm ground for concluding that the first play in the Marian sequence is intended partly to encourage belief in the Immaculate Conception. Because of the controversial status of this tenet--not yet official dogma when the Ludus Coventriae was written--the affirmation has clear-cut implications about the auspices of the Marian plays.

The basic theological issue from which the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception developed was the question of how the Virgin became purified of Original Sin--such purity being taken to follow necessarily from her motherhood of God. Reasoning that she was sanctified while in her mother's womb,

the most influential theologians of both the twelfth and thirteenth centuries--Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), Albertus Magnus (d. 1280), Bonaventure (d. 1274), and Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274)--all argued against the Immaculate Conception. Anthony of Padua (d. 1231), a Franciscan, is one of the earliest medieval Mariologists identified as a supporter of the doctrine, though whether he actively taught it is much debated.⁵¹ Considering the later course of Franciscan teaching, there is a noteworthy distinction in Bonaventure's position from that of other opponents. A historian of Mariology observes, ". . . if he sided with opponents of the Immaculate Conception, holding theirs 'the more common, more reasonable, and safer' view, nevertheless he refused to reprehend the other school of thought. Indeed, St. Bonaventure may even be said to have helped the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception toward ultimate victory, in that he admitted Mary's soul could have come under the influence of the Redemption from the first moment of its creation."⁵² Early definite support for the doctrine came from certain Oxford theologians including the Cistercian Alexander Neckam (d. 1217) and Robert Grosseteste (d. 1253). The lectures of Grosseteste to Franciscans at Oxford are credited with having laid much of the groundwork for what became the official teaching of the order in favor of the Immaculate Conception.⁵³ The great breakthrough for the "immaculists" came with the work of Duns Scotus (d. 1308), another Franciscan. In his com-

mentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, he effectively disposed of the main argument behind Aquinas' opposition to the doctrine. Scotus asserted that instead of contradicting the universality of redemption (Aquinas' position), Mary's preservation from all sin was received from her divine Son and was the greatest of all redemptions.⁵⁴ From Scotus on, the doctrine gained support rapidly, first throughout the Franciscan Order, and by the latter half of the fourteenth century, among Carmelites, Augustinians, Premonstratensians, Trinitarians, and Servites, as well as many Benedictines, Cistercians, and Carthusians.⁵⁵ Controversy continued into the fifteenth century, but opposition was confined mainly to members of the Dominican Order. Finally, on February 28, 1476, the Franciscan Pope Sixtus IV decreed official acceptance of the doctrine by adopting the Feast of the Immaculate Conception for the entire Latin Church.⁵⁶

In view of the various points of contact noted above between the Ludus Coventriae Marian plays and Franciscan art and spirituality, the prominence of the Franciscans in promoting the doctrinal point central to the first of the plays is especially suggestive. We have found clerical auspices of some kind indicated by use of the narrative to give instruction in devotional forms, as well as by the rich embellishment with liturgical hymns and sequences. Hypothesizing that these clerics were Franciscans brings two brief passages to note. It is well known that an aspect of the

mission adopted by the Greyfriars was to make up for deficiencies of the parochial clergy, which might involve influencing the public to expect more devoted service from their priests. In the play of Mary's Conception, Joachim's role momentarily becomes a vehicle for moralizing about the obligations of a pastor. Soon after introducing himself, the Virgin's father says,

I am clepyd Ryghtful why wole 3e se
 Ffor my godys in to thre partys I devyde
 On to þe temple . and to hem þat þer serving be
 A nodyr to þe pylgrimys and pore men . þe iijde
 ffor hem with me abyde

So xulde euery curat in þis werde wyde
 3eve a part to his chauncel i-wys
 A part to his parochonerys þat to povert slyde
 The thryd part to kepe for hym and his (64/25-32).

Similarly gratuitous is a passage in the play of the Betrothal, exalting an attitude cherished more by the Franciscans than by any other order because of the example of their founder. Joseph says to Mary before leaving to find their home,

We Ar not ryche of werdly thyng
 and 3et of oure sustenauns we xal not mys
 Therfore A-bydyth here styлле to 3our plesynge
 to worchep 3our god is all 3our blysse.

he þat is and evyr xal be
 Of hefne and helle Ryche kynge
 in erth hath chosyn povert
 and all Ryches and welthis refusynge (95/413-420).

The anachronism of Joseph's remark is not at all unusual in mystery drama, but making an occasion to emphasize Christ's choice of poverty is not the way anachronism typically occurs.

The playwright and performers of the Marian sequence presented spectators with affectively moving narrative, opportu-

nity to learn and practice acts of devotion, and explanation of great mysteries of the faith--the Virgin's perpetual sanctity, the atonement, the incarnation. For the numberless folk who had no Books of Hours, no private altars with paintings to guide meditation, and no opportunity to visit great shrines of worship, these actors created live devotional images, tableaux vivants. Their theater could have been any village green large enough for several raised platforms--even wagons perhaps--decorated to establish locations of the action. It seems very likely they were a band of Franciscans, joyously following the example set by their founder one Christmas in Greccio around 1204. For in his official life of Francis, Bonaventure records that the saint, wishing to arouse the devotion of the public, made new plans this year for celebrating the Nativity. After obtaining necessary papal permission, he had a stable prepared and furnished with straw and an ox and an ass led in. Here, with the brotherhood and the populace assembled, Mass was celebrated, with Francis as deacon chanting the Gospel and preaching of the birth of the King among the poor. One of those present, Sire Jean de Greccio, attests that he saw a little child of extreme beauty sleeping in the manger, and that Francis took the child lovingly in his arms.⁵⁷ Here was dramatic representation in the service of inspiring devotion, a concept which animated the preaching style of the Franciscans and which would have led very naturally to plays like the Marian group in the Ludus Coventriae.

Notes to Chapter Five

1. The Ludus Coventriae Betrothal of Mary play is also essentially without analogues. The event is mentioned in the Wakefield and York cycles, but not dramatized.

2. As noted in Chapter One, it was chiefly the concentration of Marian material that led Chambers to propose association of the Ludus Coventriae with St. Anne's Day observance, and Hardin Craig to carry Chambers' idea another step by asserting a relationship between the Ludus Coventriae text and the records of St. Anne's Day pageantry in Lincoln. See TMS, II, 421, and ERD, pp. 267-280.

3. ERD, p. 267. See also Kenneth Cameron and Stanley J. Kahrl, "The N-Town Plays at Lincoln," Theatre Notebook, XX (1965-66), 61-69.

4. Edmund Bishop, "On the Origins of the Feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary," in Liturgica Historica (Oxford, 1918; reprinted 1962), p. 249.

5. According to Sr. Mary Jerome Kishpaugh, The Feast of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple: An Historical and Literary Study (Washington, D.C., 1941), pp. 2-3, although the Protevangelium apparently received its present form in the fourth or fifth century, the prevailing current view is that in the main it is a second-century book. Sr. Kishpaugh writes, "The author calls himself James and seeks, doubtless, to give the impression that he is none other than James the Less, Bishop of Jerusalem (d. 62 A.D.)." The Protevangelium became a text very frequently used by Byzantine preachers, hagiographers, poets, and artists.

6. Kishpaugh, pp. 5 and 8. Both the Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew and the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary (known also as Historia de nativitate Mariae et de infantia Salvatoris) consist of a mixture of detail derived from the Protevangelium of James and of amplification apparently originating with the later author.

7. The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine, ed. G. Ryan and H. Ripperger (London and New York, 1941), quoted in James H. Stubblebine, ed. Giotto: The Arena Chapel Frescoes (New York, 1969), pp. 118-121.

8. Block, pp. xxx-xxxii.

9. See Block, pp. 108 and 115.

10. Summarizing traditional opinion, Eleanor Prosser writes, "Critical rejection has been general: the play is long, unnecessarily coarse, and--in contrast to other Hegge plays--wholly secular. Its only saving grace is thought to be its realism, the element that at the same time makes the play thoroughly repellent." Prosser, p. 96.

11. The office composed by Phillip de Mézières about 1372 for the Feast of the Presentation of the Virgin includes mimetic representation of some of the narrative detail in the Ludus Coventriae Mary in the Temple. As well as paralleling only a small part of the cycle, it has no resemblance to the Ludus Coventriae play except some of the same apocryphal source material.

12. Illustrated in Stubblebine, figs. 7-20.

13. Giotto's godson and most accomplished pupil.

14. Evidence of the influence of Giotto's Arena Chapel work on Daddi's scene of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple has been presented by Michael Mallory in "Toward a Chronology for Paolo Giovanni Fei," Art Bulletin, XLVI (1964), 533n.

15. Mallory suggests that the figures of Joachim, Anna, and the Virgin in the Presentation in the Temple may have been modeled after Daddi's panel of the same scene (534n).

16. Illustrated in Evelyn Sandberg-Vavalà, "A Chapter in Fourteenth Century Iconography: Verona," Art Bulletin, XI (1929), fig. 2.

17. Illustrated in Sandberg-Vavalà, "A Chapter in Fourteenth Century Iconography: Verona," fig. 3.

18. Turone's twelve scenes are (i) Joachim Expelled from the Temple, (ii) Sacrifice of Joachim, (iii) Annunciation to Anna, (iv) Meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate, (v) Birth of Mary, (vi) Presentation of Mary in the Temple, (vii) Nativity of Christ, (viii) Adoration of the Magi, (ix) Christ with the Doctors, (x) Marriage at Cana, (xi) Raising of Lazarus, (xii) Death of Mary. The eight scenes by Martino da Verona are (i) Meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate, (ii) Birth of Mary, (iii) Presentation of Mary in the Temple, (iv) Annunciation to Mary, (v) Betrothal of Mary and Joseph, (vi) Nativity, (vii) Christ with the Doctors, (viii) Raising of Lazarus.

19. For a thorough survey of the particular corre-

spondences, see Sandberg-Vavalà, "A Chapter in Fourteenth Century Iconography: Verona." Of Turone, she comments (p. 382), ". . . he has clearly studied the frescoes at Padua at first hand" She finds that in general the scenes of Martino da Verona--some thirty years later than Turone's --without reflecting as much Northern influence as the work of some predecessors, are yet less reminiscent of Giotto than Turone's scenes (pp. 405, 406, passim).

20. Evelyn Sandberg-Vavalà, "Il maestro della vita della Vergine, al Louvre," Dedalo, XV (1931), 663-680.

21. Gustavo Ludwig and Pompeo Molmenti. See Sandberg-Vavalà, "Il maestro della vita della Vergine, al Louvre," p. 663.

22. Sandberg-Vavalà, "Il maestro della vita della Vergine, al Louvre," p. 667: "Sono quadri che vediamo volentieri, quadri per la casa e per l'intimità"

23. M. R. James summarizes the results of examining the pictorial decoration of some 112 Books of Hours in the Fitzwilliam Museum saying, "There is a well-defined cycle of pictures, which will be found in most books; but variations from it are not unfrequent. One picture usually stands at the head of each Hour-service.

Matins	The Annunciation
Lauds	The Salutation or Visitation (Mary and Elizabeth)
Prime	The Nativity: Joseph and Mary adore the Child
Tierce	The Angel and the Shepherds
Sext	The Adoration of the Magi
Nones	The Presentation in the Temple <u>[of Christ]</u>
Vespers	The Flight into Egypt, or The Massacre of the Innocents
Compline	The Coronation of the Virgin, or The Death of the Virgin."

A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum (Cambridge, England, 1895), p. xxx.

24. Reproductions of the entire sequence of miniatures have been published as The Visconti Hours, introduction by Millard Meiss, introduction and commentaries by Edith W. Kirsch (New York, 1972). The Marian cycle is found on plates BR1, BR1v, BR2, BR2v, BR22v, BR35v, BR48, BR60v, BR76, BR90, BR104v. Edith Kirsch explains that among other signs of the patron's devotion to the Virgin was his vow that any sons born to him would be dedicated to her. His first son was born Sept. 7, 1388, a time which other evidence points to as a likely starting point of work on the Book of Hours. Miss Kirsch concludes, "It seems probable that Giangaleazzo's Book of Hours was also begun to celebrate the birth of his son as well as to honor the child's patroness" (p. 24).

25. Reproductions of these and all illuminations that follow in the manuscript have been published as The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, introduction and commentaries by John Plummer (New York, no date).

26. Reproductions of all sixty pages of illuminations, with commentary, have been published in a limited edition titled The Sobieski Book of Hours (London, 1972). I am grateful to Mrs. Katherine Brown of Rice University for making known to me the Marian cycle included here.

27. Speaking of the 112 Books of Hours in the Fitzwilliam Museum, M. R. James indicates that there are other examples of this arrangement: "Thus, in several Rouen books in this collection, the story of Joachim and Anne, and the Marriage of the Virgin, in small pictures, surround the Annunciation." A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum, p. xxx.

28. E. W. Tristram and M. R. James, "Wall Paintings in Croughton Church, Northamptonshire," Archaeologia, LXXVI (1926-27), 183. Photographs of the Croughton paintings accompany this article.

29. In addition to Giotto's in the Arena Chapel at Padua, the painter conceivably could have seen a Marian sequence on a noteworthy altarpiece by the so-called San Martino Master at Pisa (completed in the 1280's).

30. Known now as Psalter Nero C.iv; see Tristram and James, p. 197.

31. Tristram and James, p. 197.

32. Illustrated in M. R. James, The Sculptures in the Lady Chapel at Ely (London, 1895).

33. A. Nicholson, Cimabue (Princeton, 1932), p. 5.

34. Quoted (and translated) in Nicholson, p. 12.

35. For a description of traces of the original, see Nicholson, p. 13; see also Nicholson's fig. 15. Speculation that the scene was originally the Presentation may be found in Mallory, "Toward a Chronology for Paolo Giovanni Fei," p. 533n: "The ruined fresco in the apse of the upper church at Assisi may have represented the Presentation of the Virgin, for there is now visible a procession of figures who carry what may originally have been torches, and a temple approached by steps. The Virgin, however, is not present, and because the fresco has been completely repainted, it is difficult to be certain of what it originally represented."

36. Quoted in Millard Meiss, Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death (New York, 1951), p. 27, from M. R. James, The Apocryphal New Testament (Oxford, 1924), p. 73.

37. Louis Réau, Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien, II.ii (Paris, 1957), 165.

38. See Block, Introduction, Note B, pp. lviii-lx.

39. Jean Leclercq, François Vandenbroucke, and Louis Bouyer, The Spirituality of the Middle Ages (London, 1968), pp. 304-305, 310-311, and 334-335.

40. Leclercq, et al., p. 314.

41. Beverly Boyd, The Middle English Miracles of the Virgin (San Marino, 1964), p. 121.

42. Edmund Bishop has traced the origin of using these psalms as a devotional unit in Western Christendom to the monastery of Inde or Cornelimünster under Benedict of Aniane (ca. 750-821). This was among the devotions incorporated in the fourteenth century in the Prymer, the main prayer book of the English laity. See Bishop, "On the Origin of the Prymer," Liturgica Historica (Oxford, 1918; reprinted 1962), pp. 212-237, esp. pp. 214 and 224.

43. It appears that association of the gradual psalms with the Presentation narrative was made initially in the apocryphal Gospel of the Nativity of Mary (extant in a Latin manuscript of the tenth century and thought to date from the Carolingian period). The writer refers to the graduum psalmos seemingly for no reasons other than the verbal association with the word for "steps," gradus, and perhaps a tradition that the psalms had received this designation from use by the Hebrews on pilgrimages to the temple. The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary says nothing about recitation of the psalms by Mary. Vincent of Beauvais and Jacobus de Voragine incorporate the Presentation account of this apocryphal gospel almost verbatim, which makes it certain that the association of the gradual psalms with the temple steps in this particular story was widely known. The Speculum historiale reads, "Erant autem circa templum .xv. gradus iuxta .xv. graduum psalmos . . .," and the Legenda aurea, "Erant autem circa templum juxta xv graduum psalmos xv adscensionis gradus" Both passages are quoted in Kishpaugh, pp. 69-70.

44. Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien, II.ii, 165.

45. The panel is attributed to Martin de Soria, active

1471-87, and is currently on loan to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Out of the twelve Marian cycles surveyed above, the Presentation scenes of at least six prominently depict fifteen steps. Besides the Santa Croce frescoes, the panels by Moranzzone, and the illumination in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, these are the Presentation among the frescoes at Croughton, and the relief sculpture in the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral. A seventh example, the Presentation scene in the Visconti Hours, seems intended to represent fifteen steps, though only fourteen are completely visible. The fifteenth can be taken to be at the foot of the picture behind the border.

46. This is the upshot of research on the origins of the various hymns and sequences by Sr. M. Patricia Forrest, presented in "Sources and Style of the St. Anne's Day Plays in the Hegge Cycle" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The Catholic University of America, 1965), pp. 40n, 45n, 51, and 51n.

47. Cf. Meditationes, p. 16: "For you must know that the exalted labor of the Incarnation belonged to the whole Trinity, though only the person of the Son was incarnated, as when one person is dressing with the aid of two others who stand at his sides holding the sleeves of the gown. . . . What a small house it was in which these Persons entered, and what events They caused! Although the Holy Trinity is everywhere, consider that at this time and place It was here in a singular way for a singular purpose."

Cf. also The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesus Christ, ed. Lawrence F. Powell (London, 1908), p. 25: "For thou schalt vndirstonde that this blessed incarnacioun was the hig werk of alle the holy trinite / though it so be that al only the persone of the sone was incarnate and bycome man", and p. 31, ". . . anone with oute dwellynge goddis sone entred into hir wombe . and thoruz worchyng of the holy goost was made man in verray flesche and blood taken of hir body"

48. MLC, pp. 19-20.

49. Mirrour, p. 31.

50. Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien, II.ii, 79 and 159. See also Emile Male, The Gothic Image (New York, 1958), p. 241.

51. George W. Shea, "Outline History of Mariology in the Middle Ages and Modern Times," Mariology, ed. Juniper B. Carol, I (Milwaukee, 1955), 292-293.

52. Shea, pp. 294-295.

53. Shea, p. 303.

54. Frederick G. Holweck, "Immaculate Conception," Catholic Encyclopedia, VII (New York, 1910), 679.
55. Shea, p. 307.
56. Holweck, p. 679.
57. Legenda S. Francisci, cap. x, paraphrased in A. Didron, Christian Iconography, trans. E. J. Millington, II (Paris, 1886; republished New York, 1965), 233.

Chapter Six

THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE LUDUS COVENTRIAE ORIGINATED WITH NORFOLK FRANCISCANS

For as long as modern readers have been interested in Middle English mystery plays, the Ludus Coventriae has been recognized to differ from the cycles of Chester, York, and Wakefield more than these do from one another. Thus far, all attempts to account for these differences have assumed that the standard Creation-to-Doomsday form and the division into pageants imply some form of civic auspices. The hypothesis about provenance which presently holds sway--though doubts have begun to be voiced--is Hardin Craig's argument that the Ludus Coventriae is the text of a cycle which appears to have been played in Lincoln on St. Anne's Day with the participation of the cathedral clergy.¹

The main challenges to Craig's hypothesis so far have arisen from linguistic observations. For instance, in 1971 Mark Eccles pointed out,

Craig chose the right criteria to distinguish the dialect of Lincolnshire from that of Norfolk, but he was quite wrong about the forms in the manuscript. The usual forms in Ludus Coventriae are not sal and suld but xal and xuld, also written schal(1), shal(1), schuld(e). . . . The form hem is more frequent in the manuscript than pem, them, as it was in East Anglia but not in the city of Lincoln. The normal ending of the third per-

son present singular is -th; -s is rare but occurs a few times in rime These alternative forms, sal or shal, them or hem, -s or -th, are the recognized criteria for distinguishing between the dialect of Lincolnshire in the fifteenth century and the dialect of Norfolk or Suffolk. The manuscript of Ludus Coventriae was clearly not written in Lincolnshire. . . . The evidence does not support the hypothesis that Ludus Coventriae was written down anywhere else than in northern East Anglia. It is not my purpose to speculate on the ultimate origin of the separate plays, some of which have been revised. As they survive in the manuscript, all are written in East Anglian dialect.²

As Eccles acknowledges, several observers before him felt the soundest interpretation of linguistic evidence to be that MS. Vespasian D.viii originated in Norfolk.³

If reconsiderations of dialect establish Norfolk as the likely place of origin, mystery yet remains as to what kind of organization produced the Ludus Coventriae. There are twelve locations in Norfolk which we know from extant documents to have had dramatic activity in the Middle Ages.⁴ However, none of this evidence could be construed as referring to the content of MS. Vespasian D.viii. In fact, only one set of records, mainly entries in the assembly book of the corporation of Norwich, even hints of something like the traditional Creation-to-Doomsday cycle.⁵ Consequently, since the Norfolk origin of the Ludus Coventriae manuscript appears certain, it must be concluded that if there were any local documents associated with this particular text, they have either been destroyed or not yet

come to light.

As we have seen in the foregoing parts of this study, there are a number of reasons for hypothesizing that differences of the Ludus Coventriae from the other three Middle English cycles reflect, among other things, a difference in auspices. For instance, in Chapter Two we observed the signs that MS. Vespasian D.viii is a compiler-playwright's not completely finished working copy, instead of an official register of texts held by a city's guilds, which the York and Wakefield manuscripts are, and of which the Chester manuscripts are copies. There are no names of guilds attached to individual parts of the Ludus Coventriae, nor does the Proclamation give any indication that responsibility for each episode was assigned to a particular craft or crafts. In fact, the relationship between the Proclamation and the text of the plays themselves is much more complex in the Ludus Coventriae than it is in the case of comparable material connected with the other cycles. From discrepancies in both narrative detail and numbering, it appears that when the Proclamation was copied, the compiler had in mind a text somewhat different from the present form of the Ludus Coventriae, and that although he started to bring it into conformity with the final arrangement of parts, the task was left unfinished. However, whatever were the changes of intention as the manuscript took shape, they have no bearing on what the Proclamation implies about performance. As Glynne

Wickham has pointed out, the function of a document like the Chester Banns--roughly analogous to the Ludus Coventriae Proclamation--was mainly a "police" function, "to instruct the performers in the whys and wherefores of their task."⁶ In contrast, the function of the Ludus Coventriae Proclamation is to advertise, to arouse the interest of hearers in being present when

A sunday next yf þat we may
At vj of þe belle we gynne oure play
In N. town . . . (16/525-527).

If the Proclamation were less detailed (it runs to 528 lines) and lacked some of the distinctive emphases (particularly on emotionally stirring moments) which it shares with the plays, then we might conclude that "N. town" simply indicates that the scribe was copying a general prologue suitable for introducing any standard Corpus Christi cycle. It could follow from this view that the citizens hiring the scribe-compiler would substitute for "N. town" the name of their own. Given the detail of the Proclamation, the more likely possibility is that the Ludus Coventriae was intended to be performed by players taking it from place to place; for "N. town" the third vexillator would supply the name of wherever they were about to perform. Having been suggested repeatedly over the years, this notion eludes any attempt to explain it away for the sake of the Lincoln attribution. Another suggestive feature of the Proclamation is the vexillators' recurring reference to a company of players which they belong to themselves. Be-

sides the mention of "oure play" in the last stanza, there are no fewer than twenty other passages⁷ which give the impression that the banner-bearers speak for a group that makes biblical drama at least part of its profession, rather than for an association of guildsmen that mounts yearly productions for religious celebration, but for tourists' shillings as well. It is worthwhile to note in passing that the expositor's comment in the prologue of the second Passion play section, "We intendyn to procede þe matere þat we lefte þe last 3ere," (271/6) indicates association of a particular part of the text with players who periodically re-visit or perform for the same audience(s).

To learn what might be the identity of such a quasi-professional company is difficult, to say the least. We know from medieval documents that in addition to layman amateurs, men in religious orders often presented scriptural plays. An example appears in the pre-Reformation Chester Banns (significantly in a passage deleted by a post-Reformation reviser):

Appon the day of corpus (ch)r(ist)i
The blessed Sacrament caried shalbe
And A play sett forth by the clergie
In honor of the fest.⁸

Evidence also exists in records like a 1378 protest by choristers of St. Paul's, London, to Richard II. Pointing out that they had been "at great expense" in preparing for a public performance at Christmas, they complained of the intrusion of "inexpert persons," perhaps laymen organizing a play of their

own.⁹ London records also seem to indicate that the Guild of Parish Clerks (St. Nicholas' Guild) presented a cycle of some kind fairly regularly from 1384 on at Clerkenwell.¹⁰ There are additional examples of apparently vernacular, non-liturgical drama performed by clergy in Chambers' extensive survey of medieval records.¹¹

As far as records relating to the Ludus Coventriae are concerned, we can come no closer to the time of compilation than within about one hundred sixty years. This earliest document is the famous fly-leaf note of Sir Robert Cotton's librarian, made apparently around 1629: "Elenchus contentorum in hoc codice Contenta novi testamenti scenice expressa et actitata olim per monachos sive fratres mendicantes · vulgo dicitur hic liber Ludus Coventriae · sive ludus corporis Christi · scribitur metris Anglicanis."¹² We of course have no way of knowing what the basis was for James's attributing performance to "monachos sive fratres mendicantes." Part of his attribution gains authority, however, from the agreement of a later expert on the Cotton collection who was not an unquestioning follower of James. As we observed in Chapter One, when drawing up a catalogue of the Cotton collection in 1696, Dr. Thomas Smith revised James's note somewhat, but in the part having to do with performers, his change was only slight. Smith wrote, "Videntur olim coram populo sive ad instruendum sive ad placendum a Fratribus mendicantibus repraesentata."¹³

In the light of conclusions reached in Chapters Three, Four, and Five, these early associations of the Ludus Coventriae with mendicant friars are worthy of being considered more seriously than modern readers generally have done. While it is a commonplace in comparisons of the English cycles that the Ludus Coventriae is "more ecclesiastical,"¹⁴ there have been few attempts to identify particular influences or objectives in the so-called ecclesiastical content. Use of this approach has uncovered some suggestive relationships. As we have seen, the most distinctive portions of the cycle, the Passion sequence and the Marian plays, contain signs of association with one of the two largest and strongest mendicant orders, the Franciscans. Some of these signs are in the playwright's abundant doctrinal glossing. The Passion play is laced with the theme that charity brings grace to the soul. Its various forms include explanations, mainly by Christ, of why his death was chosen to be the means of atonement; sacramental actions like Magdalene's absolution which are made to be examples if not "proofs" of the theme; and expressions of character which are seemingly governed by the principle that capacity for charity is an index of sanctity (Christ and the Virgin representing the positive limit, and Judas, Annas, and Caiaphas the negative). The emphasis on love of God as a means to grace was one of the key points that distinguished the teaching of St. Francis' followers from other interpretations of the gospel. In the Marian plays, in addition to

the general aim of glorifying the Virgin, we find encouragement of belief in the Immaculate Conception, a controversial doctrine at the time, which the Franciscans were among the earliest and most active to support.

Besides doctrinal content, there are generic and stylistic distinctions which compose part of the ecclesiastical quality, but, more specifically, are dramaturgical reflections of Franciscan spirituality. Imagining the experience provided by the Passion of the Ludus Coventriae, compared to the experience of seeing the English analogues, leads to the conclusion that the Ludus Coventriae playwright sought a response closer to the aim of devotional narratives. The prototype of this genre is the Franciscan Meditationes vitae Christi, and the idea of using affectively rendered visual and verbal "scenes" as a means of meditative devotion--though it grew to characterize medieval piety in general--was associated with no group so closely and for so long as it was with the Greyfriars.

If dialect points to a Norfolk origin and content encourages hypothesizing Franciscan auspices, then there is another step to take before this study can be brought to a close. According to the Victoria County History of Norfolk, the county had four Franciscan friaries: the oldest in Norwich, established in 1226; one at King's Lynn, founded around 1230; another at Yarmouth, established in 1271; and a fourth at Walsingham, dating from 1347.¹⁵ It appears that only the

first of these communities was ever large enough to have been able to meet cast requirements of the Ludus Coventriae. Though, like the other three, the Norwich Greyfriary housed a community continuously till suppression in 1538, information about variations in size is sparse. The most we know is that "there are said to have been about fifty friars in the early fourteenth century."¹⁶ If the community managed to regain this size after almost certain reduction by the mid-century plagues, then it could easily have produced any part of the cycle, including the most demanding Passion section.¹⁷

The Ludus Coventriae Proclamation suggests anticipation of performance in various towns, and it seems likely that Norwich with its large population would have been one. For staging in the platea-with-loca manner that this cycle uses, there was a suitable place in the spacious Greyfriary cloister yard. Its dimensions were smaller by about a quarter than the large Franciscan convent yard in Romans (Provence), which, by the good luck of a surviving account book and text, we know was used as playing area and "auditorium" for the Mystère des Trois Doms. In the Romans cloister yard, the arena and loca took a space roughly 120 by 60 feet. The seating area--large enough to accommodate over 4,000--began in the yard but extended to the street for a total of 108 feet.¹⁸ The cloister of the Norwich Franciscans--enlarged after 1299--was a square 105 feet on a side.¹⁹ Subtraction of the width of the cloister itself would have left a still

sizeable yard within.

While it seems doubtful that the performers of the Ludus Coventriae will ever be identified for certain, the effect this need have on appreciating the plays is obviously negligible. Especially because of its uniqueness in comparison with other English cycles, the survival of MS. Vespasian D.viii is among the most fortunate accidents of medieval literary history. Having the Ludus Coventriae, we know more than we otherwise would about many things: English use of platea-with-loca staging; compilation and revision as practiced by a fifteenth-century playwright; the mutuality of influence between medieval drama and pictorial art; the influence on both, of spirituality in the Franciscan style; apparent ties between dramaturgy and non-dramatic genres like devotional narrative; the use of liturgy in vernacular plays with no sign of derivation from liturgical drama; the possibility of an itinerant company of Greyfriar actors. If this study has provided for seeing the uniqueness of the cycle more specifically, and appreciating the author's craftsmanship more deeply, then its purpose has been served.

Notes to Chapter Six

1. Craig first published the hypothesis in 1914 as a note appended to Esther Swenson's An Inquiry into the Composition and Structure of Ludus Coventriae (Univ. of Minn. Studies in Language and Literature, No. 1). It was brought to wider attention when included in ERD (1955). Referring to Craig's hypothesis in a discussion of the Ludus Coventriae Passion, part I, Glynne Wickham wrote in 1959 (EES, I, 155), "This Passion Play, which Professor Craig has now successfully shown to belong to Lincoln, demands in its later scenes" See also p. 305: ". . . a close resemblance in stagecraft exists between the stationary Valenciennes Passion Play and the Ludus Coventriae (which we must now attribute to Lincoln)" Craig's hypothesis has been argued for most recently by Kenneth Cameron and Stanley J. Kahrl in "The N-Town Plays at Lincoln," Theatre Notebook, 20 (1965-66), 61-69.

2. "Ludus Coventriae Lincoln or Norfolk?" Medium AEvum, XL (1971), 135-137.

3. E.g., see conclusions of Harold Whitehall quoted by R. S. Loomis in "Lincoln as a Dramatic Centre," Mélanges offerts à Gustave Cohen (Paris, 1950), pp. 241-247; and E. J. Dobson, "The Etymology and Meaning of Boy," Medium AEvum, IX (1940), 121-154.

4. Eleven of the locations are known through Chambers' survey of documents in TMS, II, Appendix W, pp. 363-399; Croxton (?--the town which the manuscript in question names may be a Croxton outside Norfolk), Garboldisham, Harling, Kenninghall, King's Lynn, Lopham, Middleton, Norwich, Shelfanger, Wymondham, and Yarmouth. Evidence of drama at a twelfth Norfolk location, the village of Accle, was found by Iris G. Calderhead. See "Morality Fragments from Norfolk," MP, XIV (1916), 1-9.

5. A 1489 entry indicates that citizens processed by guilds in a specific order on Corpus Christi Day, but there is no reference to any equipment or texts for plays. The record on which most of the speculation about drama in Norwich has been based is an assembly book page with two items. One is a petition from the Guild of St. Luke in 1527 that henceforth the responsibility for a Whitmonday procession of "many and divers disgisings and pageaunts, as well of the lieffs and marterdoms of divers and many hooly Saynts, as

also many other light and feyned figurs and picturs of other persones and bests" [quoted in Henry Harrod, "A Few Particulars Concerning Early Norwich Pageants," Norfolk Archaeology, III (1852), 67] be shared by all the occupations of the city. On the same assembly book page is a list titled "Pageants," which pairs groups of guilds with scriptural subjects (e.g., Mercers, Drapers, and Haberdashers with the Creation of the World). There is no extant text that contains plays corresponding to the twelve pageants in this list. But until sometime in this century, an eighteenth-century transcript of a play originally in the possession of the Norwich Grocers existed. Although the transcript has now disappeared, this happened after it had been printed by Waterhouse in The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays (EETS e.s. 104; London, 1909). Because the subject of the Grocers' play agrees with the pageant assigned to the Grocers in the assembly book list, and because its revised banns (dated 1565) mention two subjects that sometimes preceded the Grocers' play, which are also in agreement with the assembly book list, it has been inferred that there were once texts of dialogue drama corresponding to not only the Grocers' pageant, but to all twelve pageants in the list. Although there is no solid ground for refuting this idea, it should be acknowledged that the original petition of St. Luke's Guild speaks of spectacles that sound more like floats carrying tableaux and perhaps dumbshows ("divers disgisings," "feyned figurs and picturs of other persones and bests") than they sound like actual plays. As Alan H. Nelson points out, "A pageant is not necessarily a play. Certainly a pageant which goes in a procession is not at all a play, but rather a scenic device on wheels. The Guild of St. Luke was asking in 1527 not for plays, but merely for pageant wagons." "On Recovering the Lost Norwich Corpus Christi Cycle," Comparative Drama, IV (1970-71), 242.

If the pageants were used as floats in processions, and on other occasions in staging plays, the cycle indicated by the pageant list would have diverged in major ways from the standard Corpus Christi form. The twelve pageants named are "Creation off the world, Paradyse, Helle Carte, Abell & Cain, Noyse Shipp, Abraham & Isaak, Moises & Aaron with the Children of Israel, & Pharo with his Knyghts, Conflict of David & Golias, The Birth of Christ with Sheperdes, & iij Kyngs of Colen, The Baptysme of Criste, The Resurrection, and The Holy Gost." (Harrod, pp. 8-9)

6. EES, I, p. 133.

7. 1/5, 1/14, 2/29, 2/53, 2/59, 4/102, 6/187, 8/237, 8/243-244, 8/259-260, 9/275, 9/280-281, 9/297-298, 10/309, 10/314, 11/359, 12/399, 14/451, 15/477, and 16/517.

8. Quoted from British Museum MS. Harl. 2150 in Wickham, EES, I, Appendix D, 347.

9. Wickham, EES, I, 162.

10. Wickham, EES, I, 162-163.

11. See TMS, II, Appendix W.

12. Block, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

13. Block, p. xxxviii.

14. Perhaps the best known version of the general point is Hardin Craig's in ERD, p. 253, passim. Among the ways it recurs in one of the most recent mystery drama studies is the following comment of Rosemary Woolf on the Temptation play: ". . . in general it is surprising that the author of the Ludus Coventriae who is normally so doctrinally articulate, failed to execute the design of his play." The English Mystery Plays (London, 1972), p. 221.

15. See Ecclesiastical Map of Norfolk Showing Ancient Rural Deaneries and Religious Houses in Victoria County History of Norfolk, Vol. II (London, 1906), and David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, Medieval Religious Houses, England and Wales (London, 1953), pp. 191-194.

16. Knowles and Hadcock, p. 192.

17. There is modern production experience to go on in establishing the requirements of this portion. Glynne Wickham writes, "I know from the practical exercise of producing the Passion and Resurrection Plays from the Ludus Coventriae that this tough sequence can be mounted comfortably with a cast of less than fifty actors." EES, I, 140. It does not necessarily follow that a traveling "Ludus Coventriae troupe" would need to have been so large (and difficult to manage) as fifty-strong. For minor roles (e.g., the majority of the disciples, who have only one speech), extras could have been recruited from performance locations. There are also possibilities for doubling (e.g., an actor playing one of the counselors of the Jews early in the play might later portray a soldier of Pilate) which are not reflected in Wickham's figure.

18. The ground plan has been reconstructed from the play text and account book by Glynne Wickham. See EES, I, 306.

19. Victoria County History of Norfolk, II, 430.

Appendix A

THE WORK OF THE THREE MINOR SCRIBES IN MS. VESPASIAN D.VIII

The three minor scribes of the Ludus Coventriae are each identified with one small group of leaves, and each of the minor scribes used a paper type not used by any of the others or by the main scribe.

The minor hand covering the largest span of leaves is the hand of the Assumption play, ff. 214r through 222v inclusive. All of the leaves filled by the Assumption play scribe have the Two-Wheeled Cart watermark. The only ten leaves of this paper in MS. Vespasian D.viii form a quire which has been inserted in the middle of quire W (i.e., there are three leaves of a different paper type--YHS in a Sun--on either side of the Assumption play leaves), but they were not recognized as a separate group by the person who did the signatures. It was apparently the main scribe who combined the six YHS in a Sun leaves and the ten Two-Wheeled Cart leaves to make quire W, the latter being already filled with the Assumption play.¹

The paper type of the folio where the second minor hand appears (f. 51r) has the Pitcher watermark of the pot d'étain type, which Briquet says is not earlier than the last decade of the fifteenth century.² The text written by this scribe

is superfluous to the basic content of the play concerned, the Betrothal of Mary. What the scribe of f. 51r has added is a brief dialogue between aged Joseph and his kinsmen which presents his trait of recalcitrance more fully than did the original play.

The folios where the hand of the third minor scribe appears--95r, 95v, 96r, 112r, and 112v--have a Hand watermark.³ However, unlike the other two minor scribes, the person whose script is on paper with the Hand mark has also made marginal notes and very brief revisions at a number of other points in the manuscript. The sections of the text which are entirely in his script contain traditional material essential to the main narrative point or to clarity, namely, the presentation of gifts in the play of the Adoration of the Magi (ff. 95r, 95v, and 96r), and explanation of the identity of John the Baptist at the beginning of the play of Christ's Baptism (ff. 112r and 112v). At the positions of these leaves in the manuscript, there are signs that original leaves have been lost.⁴ Thus, it appears that one of the services of the scribe of leaves 95, 96, and 112 was to fill gaps resulting from the disappearance of folios originally written by the main scribe.

Notations by the third minor scribe on folios in the hand of the main scribe suggest two other concerns: he saw fit to provide synonyms for words--particularly ones in alliterative formulas--that may have been unfamiliar to an

anticipated audience, and he had reason to make notes for use in a performance situation.⁵ For instance, at several points in the margin of the Guarding of the Sepulchre are jottings like "Nota hic," which appear to have had the purpose of indicating where certain actors (perhaps those playing Amorawnt, Arphaxat, Cosdram, and Affraunt) should be alerted to prepare for action of some kind. A similar note in the Appearance on the Way to Emmaus indicates that one Worlych, perhaps an actor playing Cleophas, is to be alerted to go out quickly. Notes elsewhere in the hand of the third minor scribe suggest that some Ludus Coventriae material was at one time produced in combination with additions not part of the manuscript that has survived. Examples are the "Nota anima latronis" at the point where Anima Christi approaches the gate of hell in the Descent into Hell, and references to speeches of the devil, Christ, and Cain in the Harrowing of Hell. As these plays stand in the Ludus Coventriae, there are no parts written for Anima Latronis or Cain.

There is an indication that the third minor scribe had something to do with production of Ludus Coventriae material in a way other than continuous mounting of the entire cycle: his note at the end of the Resurrection, "finem 1^a die Nota" (p. 327, following l. 1647). Unfortunately the manuscript gives us no guide to where the material for "1^a die" begins or to how subsequent plays might have been apportioned to succeeding days. But since the note occurs roughly seven-

eighths of the way along in the cycle, it is doubtful that it pertains to a complete production of the text collected in MS. Vespasian D.viii. The alternative is that the Resurrection and some of the plays preceding, at some time received performance apart from the entire cycle and in a time period lasting more than one day.

Notes to Appendix A

1. The main reason for concluding that the main scribe himself inserted the Assumption play in quire W is that the large red "41" in the margin belongs in the sequence of marginal numerals which were inserted throughout the manuscript by the rubricator, who, if not the main scribe himself, was at least a person who worked with the manuscript soon after the main scribe. On the folio preceding the beginning of the Assumption play (f. 212v, YHS in a Sun paper), the main scribe finished his copy of a Pentecost play, and after leaving one folio (f. 223r) blank, he began to copy a Doomsday play right after the Assumption (on f. 223v, conjugate with leaf 212). One wonders if f. 223r may have been left blank in anticipation of adding a transitional speech of some kind at a later time.

2. Block, p.xi.

3. Miss Block adds that the Hand is "of the gloved type marked with a 3 on the palm and surmounted by a pentagon. Unfortunately not enough of the lower part of the mark on fo. 95 remains to make it clear whether the wrist is laced. No example exactly corresponding with this mark is given by M. Briquet. It belongs to the general class described by him as Main aux quatre doigts serrés, le pouce seul écarté. Of the subdivision lacée au poignet, M. Briquet gives 1526 as the date of the earliest example known to him. If the lines which can just be discerned across the gauntlet could be taken as lacing, these folios, according to the evidence of handwriting, would be earlier. Fo. 112, also an interpolation, has no watermark, but the wire lines correspond with those of folios 95, 96" pp. xi-xii.

4. The folios containing the play of the Adoration of the Magi fall at the middle of quire H. Leaf 92, on which the play begins, would thus have been conjugate with the original leaf 95, and leaves 93 and 94 are conjugate. As Miss Block has pointed out, leaves 92 and 93 have been trimmed to a narrower width than any other leaves in the manuscript, and have thus lost parts of signs near the edges of folios like the red numeral 18 on f. 92r. This suggests that leaves 92, 93, 94 and the original 95 were removed from their initial position as part of quire H; perhaps incorporated with leaves of a narrower width, being cut down accordingly; and later restored, with the exception of leaf 95, to their position in quire H. Presumably the original leaf 95 contained text comparable in content to what the third minor

scribe has copied on the present 95th and 96th leaves. That one leaf (2 folios) might originally have provided enough space for equivalent narrative content is suggested by the fact that of the four folios provided by the inserted leaves, only 95r, 95v, and half of 96r are filled. Of course it is impossible to know whether the scribe of these leaves was providing the exact content originally in the play at this point, or something analogous of his own devising. If the content now found on leaves 95 and 96 had existed originally on one leaf only, the 95th, conjugate with leaf 92, then the leaf now numbered 97 would have been the 96th, and quire H would have originally contained an even number of leaves (16, or 8 pair). It will be noticed that the scribe of leaves 95 and 96 has made sure that his insertion will fit with the following folio in quire H by having his copy end with the same line that begins f. 97r: "herowdys to þe devyl he tryste." It is tempting to speculate on the meaning of the scribe's final notation on f. 96r, "loke ferþer." Clearly this is not a catchword; could it perhaps be a memo to look further for the original 95th leaf?

The main indication of disturbance in the manuscript at the third minor scribe's leaf 112 is the absence of marginal numeral 22. The only other numeral missing in the sequence from 1 to 42 is 17, which the rubricator apparently neglected to use by accident (there is no gap in predictable content between the plays numbered 16 and 18; see other reasons for this inference in Greg, Bibliographical and Textual Problems, p. 122). Leaf 112 falls at the center of quire J, and the fact that its content comes between the conclusion of one play (Christ and the Doctors, which ends on f. 111r with f. 111v left blank) and narrative later than the usual beginning of the next play (the text on f. 113r begins with Jesus asking John for baptism) indicates that leaf 112 replaces a beginning of the Baptism play which is no longer in the manuscript. It is impossible to know whether the text replaced by the present ff. 112r-112v was deliberately removed or accidentally became dislocated. It seems possible that the content in place of which ff. 112r and 112v now stand may have occupied four folios (i.e., two leaves in the center of quire J, conjugate with one another). What suggests this possibility is the fact that the Ludus Coventriae Baptism play as it now stands omits a narrative element present in each of the other extant Middle English versions (the Baptism plays of the York and Wakefield cycles; the Chester cycle has none), namely the angel's summoning of John to perform the baptism. Whereas the other two Baptism plays are straightforward imitations of biblical history, the Ludus Coventriae version begins in a way that conflates historical time with the present in which the play is performed. John's speech at the beginning of the play is both an imagined version of what John the Baptist his-

torically said to his contemporaries and an exhortation to baptism phrased for being taken to heart by the contemporaries of the person playing John's role. Perhaps a conventional beginning of the Baptism play in the Ludus Coventriae was removed in order to be replaced by the homiletically more ambitious version on the present ff. 112r and 112v. If the material replaced by leaf 112 did originally occupy two leaves, then quire J would have had ten pair of leaves like quires A, B. and V.

5. See Block: p. 172, n. 2 and p. xviii; p. 306; pp. 312-314; pp. 319-320; p. 327; and p. 345, n. 2 and n. 3.

Appendix B

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PROCLAMATION NUMBERS AND MARGINAL NUMERALS IN MS. VESPASIAN D.VIII

The facts about numbering in MS. Vespasian D.viii are these: The Proclamation stanzas which describe the sequence of episodes in the Ludus Coventriae refer to the individual "pageants" by numbers, from one through forty. The red marginal numerals which stand at the beginning of each "pagent," are not in agreement with the Proclamation numbers from the Adoration of the Magi (marginal numeral 18) on, and there is agreement in the cases of "pagents" (or plays) 10 through 16 only because corrections of the original Proclamation numbers have been made (in black ink). The reason for the marginal numerals is especially curious in the sequences concerning the life of the Virgin and the Passion. In both cases, dramatic action continues without interruption from one numbered episode to another, and rather than marking divisions that would be recognizable by other signs, the marginal numerals have been inserted arbitrarily. Yet the segments of action which they mark off do generally correspond to the segments defined in the Proclamation stanzas. The apparent sequence of the manuscript work is that the Proclamation was copied before the compiler's plan of what the cycle would include was complete in every detail. The

play texts were then gathered in a process which included transcribing some, incorporating a copy of others made earlier by the same scribe, and adding one text--the Assumption play--which had been copied by another person. Then the rubricating was done, and where action was continuous, the marginal numerals were placed to coincide as closely as possible with the divisions of action made in the Proclamation stanzas. After insertion of the marginal numerals, someone (perhaps the rubricator, perhaps the main scribe, who may have been one with the rubricator, or perhaps a near contemporary) went back to the Proclamation to bring its numbers into harmony with the numerals in the text. No changes were necessary until the stanzas about the Betrothal of Mary, originally identified with "pagents" 8 and 9. Since the cycle itself includes two plays before the Betrothal which are not provided for in the Proclamation, when the rubricator numbered these as 8 and 9, a discrepancy with the original Proclamation numbering was introduced. Corrections have been made to harmonize Proclamation numbering with the marginal numerals through the number 16 (the play of the Adoration of the Shepherds). At this point the effort to correct Proclamation numbering was abandoned. It happens that in the course of inserting marginal numerals, the rubricator omitted 17 (that absence of 17 signifies accidental skipping of the number rather than material lost from the text is indicated by the fact that there is no evidence of a loss

of leaves between the Adoration of the Shepherds and the Adoration of the Magi, and there is no lack of narrative material traditionally at this point). Perhaps, as W. W. Greg has suggested, when the person making the corrections realized the omission, he gave up the project of harmonizing the two number sequences.¹ The reason for thinking that the main scribe may have done the rubricating, or at least that he had access to the manuscript again after it had been done, is that the word "tende" which corrects the Proclamation number in the stanza about the Betrothal play (f. 2v) appears to be in his hand. It is unlikely that the scribe of leaves 95, 96, and 112--who also made corrections on other leaves of the manuscript was the rubricator, since there is no rubrication on the folios which contain his script.²

Notes to Appendix B

1. Bibliographical and Textual Problems, p. 122.
2. See Block, p. 158, n. 3.

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