

DOWNLOAD PDF CHESTER WHITSUN PLAYS: ANTICHRIST (HENGWRT VERSION)

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They included regular events such as the weekly attendance of mayor and aldermen at church or the election and accounting days of the craft guilds, and special occasions like the visit of a noble or royal personage. At the opposite end of the spectrum were the informal sports, recreations, and pastimes of the populace, often rowdy and even illicit, which at their most disorderly included frequenting brothels and drinking in alehouses. They might involve illegal games such as dice, cards, tables, bowls, and shovelboard indoors. Bowling greens were laid out in the 17th century. Under the Tudors there were private archery butts in the city. They were valued in the early 17th century as evidence of the antiquity and continuity of the community of Chester, and as the means of furthering that sense of communal solidarity. In response, supporters sought new justifications, or modified or abandoned them. As a result, the identity of specifically local communal culture was undermined. Chester seems to have clung to its customary practices more tenaciously than most other English cities, apparently needing to reassure itself in times of difficulty about a past which it imagined as more glorious and prosperous. The resurgence was artificial and brief: The Chester Plays Corpus Christi Procession and Play By the early 15th century and perhaps by Chester was clearly celebrating the feast of Corpus Christi varying according to the date of Easter within the period 23 May to 24 June with a procession escorting the consecrated Host through the streets. In the s the guilds processed in a set sequence, as on other civic occasions, from St. Nothing is known about the text, the method of production, or the place or places of performance. The Corpus Christi procession and a play performed by the clergy, however, continued perhaps until Corpus Christi was cancelled as a feast of the English Church in The banns may have been composed to announce the change of date of the civic play from Corpus Christi to Whitsun and reassure the populace that the celebration would continue in its original form. History A civic play at Whitsun, 11 days before Corpus Christi, was being performed by the guilds before In the mid s the Cappers claimed that they had been given responsibility for their play, Balaam and Balaak, by Mayor Thomas Smith who held office in 15, 16, and 17. Its combination of spiritual and civic interests and sanctions against breakers of the peace, together with other details, suggests a possible origin in St. It also contained indications that the traditions of performance had not been consistently maintained. A new beginning seems implied, combined with a desire to affirm solidarity with the past. Performance was said, vaguely, to be in Whitsun week, whereas the pre-Reformation banns announced that the play would be performed on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of that week. As a three-day production, the play was evidently regarded as a trilogy rather than a single work. If those inferences are valid, then the shift from a one-day to a three-day production may have occurred between 15 and 17. Whereas the Corpus Christi play was probably an annual event, the Whitsun play seems to have been less regular. It is unlikely that productions were maintained annually in the political and religious circumstances of the middle and later 16th century. By then, opposition to it was mounting. The move was probably caused by the threat of plague at Whitsun; when the threat receded preparations were evidently sufficiently advanced to hold a performance. Goodman protested privately to the mayor and publicly in a sermon. Not all the plays were performed, some being thought superstitious. Myths of Origin Official public pronouncements during the 16th century included statements about the authorship and origins of the plays. The constant claim before the Reformation was that they began in the mayoralty of John Arneway, who was later thought to have required a short rehearsal time and the provision of a carriage for each pageant. The proclamation of 17 ascribed the text of the plays to a monk of St. The traditions were without historical foundation, though antiquarians of the late 16th and early 17th century attempted to reconcile them with more certain facts. They nevertheless hint at the possible political functions of the plays. The Arneway connexion linked their origins with the office of mayor, who certainly had complete authority over both the

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text and the allocation of the individual pageants. Goodman attributed the initiative for the productions of the s to the personal will of the mayors, and the privy council summoned Mayor Savage to answer the charge that he alone was responsible. Higden presumably superseded the largely unknown Francis as a better known, more scholarly, and so more defensible author. The fact that he was a monk was addressed by representing him as a proto-protestant who, at considerable danger to himself, invented the play in order to bring the Scriptures to the people in their own tongue. Those diverse considerations may go some way towards explaining how the myths of origins developed and why the play was defiantly performed in the s. They reflected or created a pride in the cycle which seems unique to Chester among English towns with play-cycles and probably contributed to the survival of the written text.

Content, Text, and Performance There are three kinds of evidence for the content of the Whitsun play. The first is lists of companies and their plays from the later 16th century; an earlier version may represent the order of guilds in the cycle, since it includes the Worshipful Wives and the title of their play, the only one to be named. The manuscripts attest a cycle of 24 plays, of which the Flagellation and Crucifixion was divided into two separate plays in the four earliest manuscripts, recalling the dispute of about that section of the Corpus Christi play. The cycle has a stylistic uniformity and a thematic and structural coherence which support the view of single authorship or revision at some point in its development. On the performance dates, each pageant was performed first at the Abbey Gate in Northgate Street and then at the Cross. Rogers saw the route as symbolic of the partnership of Church and city; the clergy watched at the abbey and the mayor and his brethren at the Cross. The movement of the carriages was co-ordinated by reports taken from station to station. No single design for the carriages was possible: When the plays became a three-day production, carriage-sharing agreements were possible among companies playing on different days, like the earliest known, from , involving the Vintners Day 1, the Three Kings , the Masons and Goldsmiths Day 2, Massacre of the Innocents , and the Dyers Day 3, Antichrist. The emphasis in the pre-Reformation bans was upon the spectacular carriages rather than the text. The companies spent heavily in relation to the plays on food and drink, as well as on payments to actors and the renewal of props and costumes. Choristers from the cathedral and professional musicians were hired. By the late 16th century the watches were largely ceremonial, traditions about their origins had developed, and they had become another means of manifesting civic hierarchy and promoting the established order.

Christmas Watch The traditional origins of the Christmas muster of armour were set out in a speech written for the illiterate mayor Robert Brerewood, who learned it by rote and addressed the watch at Christmas , and also by David Rogers c. The responsibility remained with those holding the lands. In the 16th century the watch was charged to safeguard the city against breaches of the peace, but in practice it was simply an occasion for civic banqueting. The participants, usually deputies for the landholders, were required to attend the mayor on the first night of Christmas and the sheriffs on the next two, in order to receive their commission to patrol the streets and protect the city from fire and criminal acts on those evenings. The mayor and sheriffs retired on each evening to banquet. The watch was not observed while the city charter was suspended, but its observance was resumed in , only to fall victim to successive cancellations from and final abandonment in It developed into a great carnivalesque parade, more popular and enduring than the Corpus Christi and Whitsun plays. David Rogers claimed that the show was older than the play, but elsewhere its origins were attributed to the mayoralty of Richard Goodman in 1499, when Prince Arthur visited Chester and the north wing of the Pentice was rebuilt. Each guild was required to provide an armed escort, and its members attended the mayor in their gowns on St. Repeated orders by the guilds reflected a reluctance of members to attend and to dress appropriately. In the s preparations for the show took at least six weeks. By the 17th century, however, most companies were escorting a richly dressed boy on horseback. Nevertheless, the ready interchange between religious plays and carnival show invested the transfer of the performance of the plays from Whitsun to Midsummer with added significance. The show encountered opposition during the later 16th century, both for its carnivalesque character and more particularly for the inclusion of quasi-Scriptural figures. In , when Midsummer Day fell on a Sunday, the Assembly was concerned about profaning the sabbath and moved the

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show to the Saturday and the fair to the Monday, against opposition; fn. In the puritan mayor, Henry Hardware, had the giants broken up and banned the dragon, the naked boys, and the devil; instead, the show was led by an armed man with every company following a boy on horseback. Nevertheless, their inclusion became increasingly unusual and in , when Mayor Edward Button insisted that the Cooks and Innkeepers include their comic alewife and devils, it was to the disapproval of both clergy and people. Holding the show at fair time was said to be prejudicial to trade since, in order to take part, company members were compelled to shut their shops for lack of apprentices. The show was thus by then regarded as a tourist attraction held for commercial benefit. First, in the afternoon of Shrove Tuesday at the cross on the Roodee and in the presence of the mayor, the Shoemakers presented the Drapers and the Saddlers with a football, to be played from there to the common hall, an event conducted with much violence and injury. Secondly, at the same time and place, each master of the Saddlers, on horseback, presented the Drapers with a painted wooden ball on the point of a spear, decorated with flowers and arms. Thirdly, every man married in Chester during the previous year, or living in Chester but married elsewhere, offered the Drapers a ball of silk or velvet. The Drapers then provided bread and beer for the Saddlers, Shoemakers, and the mayor on Shrove Tuesday, leeks and salt on Ash Wednesday, and gave a banquet on the Thursday, all at the common hall. The customs were said to be long-standing, and perhaps dated from a time when the three companies separated from a united body. First, the Saddlers, instead of the football, were to give the Drapers six silver arrows, each worth 6d. Secondly, instead of the wooden ball, the Saddlers were to give the Drapers a silver bell, valued at 3s. The changes stemmed from a dual concern, to maintain public order and decorum under mayoral authority, and to rationalize a practice whose origins had been forgotten. Gee transformed a discrete series of homages into an organized sporting competition for the city while retaining the element of homage. In the early 17th century David Rogers commended the homage, but despite fines for non-compliance, there was evidently continuing laxity in its observance and in the mayor arbitrated over points of procedural difficulty. The practice is said to have begun in Bears were also baited there, as in , fn. The waits were entitled to a stipend, new cloaks every three years, and 10s. The constable was supposed to have vested his power in the Dutton family, whose successors as owners of the manor of Dutton retained it in the s. By then, the court had been elaborated into an annual event on Midsummer Day which began with a proclamation in Eastgate Street summoning musicians and minstrels to play before the lord of Dutton, who then rode to St. More music was played inside the church. A licensing court for minstrels was then held elsewhere, in later years at an inn. Courts were held by successive owners of Dutton until Many of them were pipers or fiddlers who played in inns or for private functions. A late but typical example was John Peacock, a piper resident with a Chester vintner in Among his earlier competitors had been his brother Robert, who served the Savage family with his own consort of musicians. Some of the wealthier families possessed virginals or viols, and by Chester had a specialist musical instrument maker. The guilds also employed cathedral choristers and made use of various musical instruments, such as a portable organ or regal. It is likely that the organizers drew upon all available resources: Those developments augmented the range of civic entertainment and changed the context within which the older celebrations were viewed. The decline of communal celebration was due in part to changes in religious and civic attitudes, in part to the spectacular and more spectatorial public entertainments which allowed more centralized control, and in part to the growth of private entertainments. Entertainments in the private houses of the wealthy must always have been held.

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Chapter 2 : Leisure and culture: Plays, sports and customs before | British History Online

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Without the support of the Wednesday morning coffee club, it would never have been written. I am deeply grateful to them all. As a founder member of that Board who has since moved on, I have been very pleased by how the series has established itself, and am honoured now to be one of its contributing authors. Much of this book has seen previous incarnation in a number of articles and essays I have published in recent years. Brepols, , " People and Plays in Medieval Europe, ed. Any inaccuracies in the English translations of the Latin elsewhere in the volume are my own responsibility. Last but not least, however, is Meg Twycross who has shared the journey with me all the way, corrected my errors, contributed numerous pieces of additional information, brought the manuscript to camera-ready form, and used her superior computer skills to take the labour out of generating the bibliography and index. For all this, and above all for her tireless and exacting services as my critical friend, I am in her debt. Black and others London: HM Stationery Office, " , reprinted Nedeln: TAN Books, , facsimile of Baltimore: Migne, " ; reprinted Murphy, edition. University of Michigan Press, " Danby Pickering, 24 vols Cambridge: Bentham for Charles Bathurst, " Andrews and others for the Society, ". Vulgate Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam Clementinam, ed. Alberto Colunga and Laurentio Turrado Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Lawley, 2 vols, Surtees Society Publications 71 for and 75 for Henderson, Surtees Society Publications 63 Henderson, 2 vols, Surtees Society Publications 59 for and 60 for For Goddes blissede body it bar for oure boote, And it afereth the fend " for swich is the myghte, May no grisly goost glide there it shadweth! Introduction Civic Drama and Worship English medieval drama has been understood throughout most of the modern period to consist chiefly of two dominant categories of play. Both categories are devotional in focus, treating aspects of the narrative of the Fall and Redemption of humanity. This narrative derives from orthodox Western European medieval theology and is reflected across the arts and culture of the later Middle Ages. Mystery plays present the narrative as biblical history. Town Plays, are understood as being virtually complete. In addition, two long, composite, and late mystery plays have survived from Coventry, and there are records and fragments of other similar productions which took place elsewhere. Where plays, or records of plays, survive which do not appear to have been part of larger cycles, they were assimilated into the same category. The moral interlude, on the other hand, has been distinguished by the fact that it presents the same narrative trajectory of Fall and Redemption in the allegorical mode. This simple convergent model has come under increasing pressure, particularly since the work of the Records of Early English Drama project has revealed a plethora of dramatic activity in late medieval England which does not conform to the binary model derived from surviving scripts. At the same time, those scripts have been subjected to continuing scrutiny which has focused increasingly on the tenuous nature of the received modal categories. It is now well known that the so-called N. Town Plays represent a compilation whose circumstances of performance, actual or conceptual, differ markedly from the civic cycles. Even the Chester Plays, whose status as a civic cycle is well supported, survive in texts which were recorded after the Reformation and though originally a Corpus Christi Play, were performed at Whitsun from at least , with a final outing at Midsummer in The time seems right to return to a broadly textual approach, free from the cross-cycle comparisons upon which a whole generation of latetwentieth-century scholars was reared, but informed by the work on civic history, cultural theory, and staging, and by the publication of archival materials, which have characterised recent scholarship. The term now means different things to scholars approaching it from different angles. To the student of fifteenth-century dramatic literature, the York Cycle is embodied in the series of forty-seven pageants which survive in British Library Additional MS The exercise of registering never achieved a definitive record, yet as a working document the Register nonetheless provides complete texts of a large number of short pageants, and their attributions to the trade and craft guilds

responsible for their performance, complete with the speech headings from which cast lists can be constructed, as well as a few sparse stage directions. It is indeed only one of a number of important records of the Cycle, although its status as script has tended understandably to give it a special standing. Longman, ; 2nd revised edition, Exeter: University of Toronto Press, ; Barbara D. University of Leeds School of English, Perhaps the greatest challenge to the canonical status of the Register, however, is the first detailed record of the episodes presented in York in celebration of Corpus Christi Day, the so-called Ordo paginarum of The guild attributions vary somewhat in this list from that in the Register. One might expect this, given the economic vicissitudes faced by the city in the intervening half-century. What the Ordo additionally reveals, however, is that the number of episodes and the cast list within each was often very different in Moreover, the accumulation of all extant evidence concerning the cycle throws into ever sharper relief the major unanswered questions about its ultimate origins and about the authorship of the pageants, areas attracting well-informed speculation but as yet no conclusive evidence. The scholar in the archives is now 4 Records of Early English Drama: Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols Toronto: Maud Sellers, 2 vols, Surtees Society Publications for and for University of Toronto Press, Erasures and ellipses offer a different order of information, albeit hard to retrieve, from what remains legible on the page. Students of the performing arts are comfortable with the concept of ephemerality and have developed languages with which to deal with the fleeting cultural moment; but whatever critical and theoretical language one chooses, it remains clear that a definitive York Cycle is irretrievable. Mathematicians specialising in topology supply a useful metaphor in the torus. A torus is a figure with a hole in the middle. The material surrounding the hole can be, for example, a ringdoughnut, a bagel, or a teacup; the hole is still there, defined by the surrounding matter. This study seeks to take bearings on the hole that is the York Cycle by re-examining the Register, acknowledging its proper status in regard to the history of the cycle, and reviewing the nature of the cycle as a phenomenon of its own shifting cultural moment. The focus here will be on the relatively secure territory of subjectmatter. This is not, of course, new to the devisers of the cycle, being a commonplace of the mainstream Latin and vernacular theological tradition of its time. But as simple reception theory teaches us, subject-matter does not exist essentially but only as a product of the interaction between text and audience. There are, however, other areas of exploration which have been given less attention and to which the bulk of this study is devoted. They lie particularly in the area of popular worship. The York Cycle emerges in the records, as we shall see, at a particular ecclesiastical and theological moment for the Church in the North of England. Its evolution, the evolution of its subject-matter, and the particular articulation of that subject-matter, merit reading against those particularities. There has been no sustained study of the relationship between the cycle and the liturgy since the middle of the twentieth century, yet, for urban laypeople, the liturgy provided the skeleton of all their communal religious experience, the pattern of their calendar, and their focus on the different biblical texts which go to make up the Christian narrative. A return to the text must centrally involve a renewed focus on the worship of the city in its various forms. It occurred on the last Thursday after Trinity Sunday, which could be any time between 23 May and 24 June. Both the feast itself and the festive events which clustered around it have been the subject of a number of studies and a wide range of different approaches, 1 yet the precise relationship between the festal meaning of Corpus Christi and the nature of the cycle remains in certain respects to be satisfactorily addressed. The cycle, from its first modest appearances in civic records at the end of the fourteenth century, 2 became an increasingly ambitious project, involving a sequence of pageants in procession, telling the story of the world from Creation to Doomsday. Routledge, , and Signifying God: University of Chicago Press, Cambridge University Press, , 37â€” Approaching the question purely pragmatically, Corpus Christi was the holiday which fell closest to the longest day, so offered the best promise of good weather northern England can hope for. Mystery plays were high summer festivals. When the sacramental focus of Corpus Christi became theologically uncomfortable for post-Reformation Chester, the cycle there was moved back to Whitsun â€” only eleven days earlier â€” and a number of its characters then reappeared in the Show on Midsummer Day. Corpus Christi remained a common choice, however, in the second half of the sixteenth century in a number

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of other places including for example Coventry, where there was also a Midsummer Show involving a procession of giants. Answers to these questions depend on how the subject-matter of the cycle is understood and described. Clearly it is based on narrative events drawn from the Bible and Apocrypha. The resultant selection has come to be recognised as canonical, but is superficially rather odd. It begins with an account of the Fall of the Angels, which is not where the Bible begins at all, then moves on to present a cluster of events from the beginning of the Old Testament. There follows a collection of episodes surrounding the birth of Christ, then a minimal sequence covering the events of his adult life, preparing for a relatively detailed account of the events surrounding the Passion and Resurrection. The cycle concludes with Pentecost and the Ascension, followed by a cluster of pageants dealing with the end of the life of the Virgin Mary, and the spectacular finale, Doomsday. Medieval Institute Publications, Discussion has been informed by knowledge of the great Passion Plays performed in the later Middle Ages in continental Europe. One way of reading the cycle is as a Passion Play which is embellished firstly by a series of Old Testament episodes that contemporary theology presented as figural types of the Redemption, and which secondly offers a more complete account of the parallel life and death of the Virgin Mary. Town Plays, a sequence now known to have developed by merging and extending a pre-existing set of pageants with the addition of a Passion Play and a play of the life of the Virgin Mary. The view that all events were important to contemporary theology and therefore to the authors of the cycle primarily for their figural meaning has become the most influential explanation for the narrative selection in the cycle. What has not been demonstrated in these accounts is whether and how the York Cycle is a play for Corpus Christi. They also fail to explain how the milieu in which the cycle was generated and received understood its connection to their own place in the grand design. Do the texts of the pageants as preserved in the York Register relate to forms and patterns of lay Host-worship? Taken together, the answers to these two questions will help to articulate a reading of the Cycle as a celebration specific to the feast of Corpus Christi, rather than a reprise of Christian history located at the time of the feast because the weather was likely to be good and the day long. The Mary Play from the N. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Princeton University Press, , 7 The laity was generally mustered according firstly to the hierarchy of central civic government, and secondly in confraternal organisations that processed in an order that reflected their relative status. Many cities in Spain still celebrate Corpus Christi Day in this manner.

Chapter 3 : Appendix Welsh Manuscript Collection

"York corpus Christi plays: The resurrection -- Chester Whitsun plays: Antichrist (Hengwrt version) -- York corpus Christi plays: The Judgment Day -- Part II. Digby plays: The conversion of St. Paul -- The play of the sacrament -- Part III.

The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Culture. It becomes detached from the performance of the liturgy. Works like the Beauvais Ludus Danielis, and the Tegernsee Antichrist are clearly major theatrical events in their own right. But they fall outside my self-imposed remit. We have room for just one play which illustrates a different, arguably modern, approach to its biblical material: Two concomitants were, he theorizes, that the dialogue should become spoken rather than sung, and that it should be in the vernacular rather than Latin. It seems to have all the prerequisites, apart from the ultimate one: It dates, probably, from the second half of the twelfth century. It was acted in the open air, outside the church. It is written in Norman French – possibly thus an English production. It is lively, psychologically incisive, and very contemporary. Though it is a biblical play, it must be nearer to secular drama than the liturgical ordines which were going on at the same time? Well, yes and no. The modern reader tends to blank out the Latin. In performance, it would be the core of the whole proceeding. In this liturgy, the story of the Fall is divided into six sections, responsories, starting with the creation of Adam and Eve. The spectator could understand and empathize with the characters, while shuddering as they fell into the trap and cringing with their shame and despair. As a drama-tization technique, it is quite different from the Quem quaeritis. This modernization is very much the kind of treatment we might expect nowadays. It has its drawbacks, however. Topicality can rapidly lead to obsolescence. Nowadays, the complaints of the Towneley Shepherds still strike a possibly misleading Marxist chord; the attempts of the Towneley Cain to avoid tithing can with an effort be translated to tax evasion; but the equally topical sniping of the Towneley Doomsday devils at the human legal system has become largely incomprehensible. The Urban Cycle Plays: They were ambitious in scale, covering a vast range of biblical and extra-biblical material. They were truly popular, a major open-air summer event put on at a period when the appetite for corporate display and public participation in religious ceremonial was at its height. They were also a collaboration. But the scripts as we have them are learned, complex, and theologically sound, almost certainly written by the clergy. We do not know who wrote York: These men had close personal relations with the laymen who needed to commission scripts, and as a group had traditionally shown an interest in religious theatre – the clerks of the earlier clerks' plays. We have here, then, a collaboration between professionals and amateurs, where the clergy provided the verbal creativity and learning and the laity the practical organization, production values, and the all-important funding. The two groups will have had the same aims, but different emphases. It is theatre as celebration, strengthening faith by participation, whether as actors or as audience. But which the clergy would have seen as their particular responsibility it was also an instrument of instruction in the faith. It showed the story of salvation: Above all, it showed what it was. Before we look at how this was done, we need to readjust our focus. Any theatrical version of a canonical work is played out against the backdrop of our awareness of the original. But how do we assess what this was for the audience of the mystery plays? We tend unconsciously to assume that the Bible will be available, in our native tongue, to anyone who wants to read it. It will therefore provide a yardstick by which any creative retelling can be judged. Additions will be noted. Differences of interpretation will be foregrounded. We will react to changes in tone. Direct quotations will have a special resonance. But what if this was not in general true for a late-medieval audience? One extreme viewpoint is that ordinary people did not really know the Bible at all. To begin with, it was in Latin. Yes, every time parishioners attended Mass they would hear the Gospel read aloud with the utmost ceremony, and were urged to pay it a special reverence, but this did not mean that they understood it. Other details have become so much part of our culture that we assume they are biblical, even if they are not. He saide oure sauyoure shall be sene Betwene [two] bestis lye. He does not, however, use its story of the midwives, who appear in both Chester and N. It is clear that the playwrights knew and used these popular retellings. Sometimes they merely

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quarry them for plot details or apocryphal episodes; sometimes they use the very words. Both the York and N. Town makes extensive use of Nicholas Love; and there are many more. For both literature and plays provide a value-added reading. Besides supplying extra material of various kinds, they propounded different modes of interpretation. Twycross This declaration is presented in various ways. Some objects, because of the attention focused on them onstage, cry out to be treated as signs and symbols. The gifts brought by the Magi are read as gold for king-ship, frankincense for Godhead, myrrh for death. Chester 9: Neither of these interpretations is actually biblical, though they persist to this day. Twycross The Doomsday scenario, from Matthew But the main lessons are taught through example. The characters are eager to point this out: All men may take example, lo Of lowly mekenes evyn right here. The Virgin Mary is second only to her Son as an example of patience, charity, humility, and open-eyed submission to the will of God. Mary Magdalene demonstrates passionate repentance and loyalty, Abraham obedience. See, however, Mills Sayers is fascinated by his psychology, and invents a plausible political reason for him to ally himself and then become disillusioned with Christ. The plays are much more interested in the paradox of the necessary instrument of evil. For them, the problem is theological instead of psychological. In , it consisted of a phenomenal 57 pageants, stretching from the beginning to the end of time. Of the latter, 10 are clustered round the Birth and Childhood of Christ; 7 are events in the Ministry; 18 treat of the Passion, culminating in the Harrowing of Hell; 6 of the Resurrection and beyond; 4 of the later life of the Virgin Mary; and the last of the Day of Judgement. Apart from Coventry, which had no Old Testament plays, this is the general pattern of the other cycles, though no others break them up into quite as many episodes. Why this particular balance? One obvious model is liturgical drama. In some religious centres, the basic Easter Visitation and its Christmas clone, the Visit to the Manger. Quem quaeritis in praesepe, pastores, dicite? Elsewhere, a range of individual dramatic ceremonies were played during the Christmas period, especially at Epiphany, right up to the Presentation in the Temple 2 February at the end of the festive season. Chapter 21; Erler The Corpus Christi Play probably started life as a chronological sequence of pageant tableaux. Presumably it emulated the kind of picture sequences that appeared in Bible picture books, illustrated Psalters, and slightly later, Books of Hours. Kauffmann ; Wieck ; Wright These two last became the devotional books par excellence of the laity. These programmes were replicated by other religious art for public consumption, such as stained glass window sequences and alabaster retables. Anyone trying to create a series of dramatic tableaux would not have far to seek for a model. It cannot be over-stressed that the playwrights, if they were clergy, were mainly familiar with the Bible from their daily immersion in the liturgy. King Whether the civic plays took place, as at York and Coventry, on Corpus Christi Day, or, as at post-Chester, in Whit Week, they acted as a recapitulation of the sacred history which had just been lived through for another year. This has several effects. It contributes to the habit of mind which sees the Bible as a series of self-contained episodes, in play terms, individual pageants. The results range from the anecdotal assumption that the number of massacred Innocents was „12 the number of the male virgins who accompany the Lamb in the matching Lesson from Revelation. It may also explain the comparatively very sparse selection of Old Testament episodes. We have seen how the narratives of the Fall and of Cain and Abel in Adam were expansions of the Breviary responsories for Septuagesima. These Old Testament episodes would thus have been associated in the minds of the clergy, and of the pious layman who possessed a Breviary, with the period of preparation for Lent. Corpus Christi naturally emphasizes the sacrament of the altar and the magic of transubstantiation. The surviving plays of the Last Supper¹³ all comment and instruct as well as showing the Institution as a recognizably ritual act. This focus must have affected a further perhaps unconscious selection. This is not replicated in the plays. Overall, there is remarkably little representation of preaching. The playwrights are interested in a different kind of convincement. There is debate, but much of it concerns the sacraments, and the mysteries and paradoxes of the faith.

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Chapter 4 : The York Mystery Cycle and the Worship of the City (Westfield Medieval Studies) - PDF Free D

Part I is devoted to the craft-cycles and their congeners, such as Plays from Norwich Whitsun, Towneley, Hegge, Brome, Chester Whitsun, Coventry, York Corpus Christi, Digby, Robin Hood, St George, The Revesby Sword Play, etc; Athenaeum Press Series.

History[edit] A record of shows that the plays took place at the feast of Corpus Christi and this appears to have continued until The plays were then expanded into a three-day cycle on Whit Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. In the years between the plays there was the Chester Midsummer Watch Parade instead. The plays are based on biblical texts, from creation to the Last Judgement. They were enacted by common guildsmen and craftsmen on mounted stages that were moved around the city streets, with each company or guild performing one play. Prior to the event the Crier read out these banns: Such early banns exhorted each company to perform well. Despite this a play cycle was performed in and the cathedral paid for the stage and beer as in They were performed again, over four days, in This resulted in the mayor, when he retired from his office, being taken to the Star Chamber in London to answer allegations against him, but with the support of the council or assembly he was freed. The most well-known of the Chester plays relates the story of Noah and the Great Flood , traditionally acted by the Drawers of Dee watercarriers. In it, Noah and his sons load up the provisions and the animals while his wife gossips with the neighbours. Noah urges her to hurry aboard, "The flood comes in fleeting fast; On every side it speadeth full fare; For fear of drowning I am agast; Good gossip, let us draw near". At the end of the play, God provides a rainbow as a token that mankind has had enough punishment for its sinful deeds. Revival in the 20th century[edit] The stage for the Chester Mystery Plays: A view of Cathedral Green which has been taken over for the time being for the production of the Chester Mystery Plays. This view is from the city walls and the raked seating area is on the right. The plays were revived in as part of the Festival of Britain , [1] and are presented in the city of Chester , England, every five years. The run of plays begins on 27 June at Chester Cathedral , and runs nightly until 14 July. Performances are every evening at 7. Revival in the 21st century[edit] Under the direction of Dr. Details and a video may be found on this website: The Mysteries is an adaption by the poet Tony Harrison , principally based upon the Wakefield Cycle , but incorporating scenes from the York , Chester and N-Town canons, first performed in at the National Theatre , and again revived in as a celebration of the millennium.

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Chapter 5 : The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Culture Pages - - Text Version | PubHTML5

York corpus Christi plays: The resurrection --Chester Whitsun plays: Antichrist (Hengwrt version) --York corpus Christi plays: The Judgment Day --Part II. Digby plays: The conversion of St. Paul -- The play of the sacrament -- Part III.

De Occisione Innocentium, edited by J. A. Facsimile of MS. Bodley, edited by R. Chambers, in *The Medieval Stage*,] that the plays on Old Testament subjects made their appearance in connection with the various prophets of the *Processus Prophetarum* until there arose the whole series of Old Testament plays from the Fall of Lucifer to the Nativity of Christ. The theory that the Old Testament plays, to use Mr. Such an amplification was, moreover, a natural development of the Passion and Resurrection and was required to bring out the full significance of those plays. This would connect the Old Testament plays with those that grew up at Easter, and not with those that grew up at Christmas. With regard to the former, M. Sepet points out that, following a tendency which he calls "assimilation," the number of prophets in the procession has been increased. To the original list appearing in the eleventh-century Limoges *Prophetæ*, which is a dramatized version of the famous pseudo-Augustinian *Sermo contra Iudæos, Paganos et Arianos de Symbolo*, has been added a considerable number of prophets. Such a tendency no doubt operated widely, and there were probably other local amplifications similar to those at Rouen; but in examining the plays in their later forms no evidence can be found for any basal list of prophets more extended than that of the original sermon. This does not bear on the question except negatively, as tending to show that a simple form of the *Processus Prophetarum* was disseminated over a wide territory, and that its variations were of a local character. In the Rouen play there are two cases of what M. Sepet calls the tendency to "amplify certain prophecies. When the time comes for Nebuchadnezzar to utter his messianic prophecy, there is introduced a little play of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego with a fiery furnace "in medio navis ecclesiae. The other is the Balaam play. When Balaam appears in the procession, he is seated "super asinam," and there is enacted the little play of the speaking ass. Only the first words of the speeches are given, but it is possible to follow the plays by reference to the sources. The Balaam play is of fairly wide currency. It occurs as an appendage to the *Ordo Prophetarum* of Laon, a *processus* of primitive structure, where the Balaam episode is apparently a borrowing, and if so, an illustration of the mediaeval tendency to borrow widely rather than to originate from mere opportune suggestion. In the Chester cycle Balaam scene is merely an episode, though the principal one, in the *Processus Prophetarum*, as it is in the *Benedictbeuern* play, and had been from the time of its origin. In spite of considerable literary development, it shows traces of its origin. At the end of the play Balaam utters his familiar prophecy, "Une estoille istra de Jacob, etc. The *Ordo Joseph*, recently discovered by Professor Karl Young, shows the liturgical origin of the widely current play of Joseph and his Brethren. The material of the play would indicate that, although it seems to have had an existence independent of the cycles, it belongs to the group to be treated later. There is, however, in several liturgical plays of the Slaughter of the Innocents, a confusion of the Rachel who utters the *planctus* with Rachel, the wife of Jacob and the mother of Joseph, which may have suggested the composition of the play. It at any rate shows no connection with the *Prophetæ*. The fragmentary Isaac and Rebecca of the *Kloster Vorau* is treated below. Nothing can be told of the *Elisæus* mentioned by Gerhoh of *Reichersberg* or of the elaborate battle plays of the Riga performance except that they seem to be outside of the current of the popular development of Old Testament plays. The *Ordo representationis Adæ* is made up of a long and elaborate Adam play with full stage directions, a shorter Cain and Abel play in the same style, and a prophet play ending with the part of Nebuchadnezzar. There is also in the manuscript a version of the *Fifteen Signs of Judgment*, material connected with the Sibylline prophecy. The Adam and the Cain and Abel show deliberate literary composition, and the play as a whole is evidently an early attempt at cycle making. The plays are based upon the Scriptures, or rather, as I believe, upon the pericopes from Genesis read in the week of Septuagesima Sunday, and show little, if any, legendary or apocryphal influence. Because of the presence of the prophets, the Adam is usually regarded as a Christmas play; but there is some reason to think that the

play belongs rather to Easter and is in fact the fragment of a Passion play. The play looks strongly forward to the Redemption. Adam bewails his fate and relies upon the promise of salvation through Christ; Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and each successive prophet are dragged off to Hell. I do not know of any other cases where the prophets are so disposed of, though they sometimes appear as patriarchs in Hell awaiting redemption. There are several other cases where the Prophetae was borrowed into the Easter series, and Adam and Eve are in like manner dragged off to Hell in the Vienna Passion play and in several other plays of the same structure. This use of a prophet play is exceptional, for the normal and original function of the prophets is to foretell the Nativity. The Adam is also singular in the fact that Adam and Eve are carried off to Hell before the murder of Abel, a feature which does not elsewhere appear. The mass of popularly developed cycles had a restricted number of subjects, and usually practically the same subjects; namely, the Fall of Lucifer, Adam, Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham and Isaac, and usually Moses and the Exodus. Round about these themes were sporadic episodes from the same field, such as the Death of Adam, the Death of Cain, Abraham and Lot. There seems to be a tendency, the cause of which is not very clear, to regard the simpler French cycles as abridgments of the longer, more highly developed ones; but, in the face of so many plays in France and in other countries showing a like lower stage of development, it seems unnecessary to do so. It contains, for example, the complaint of Adam, as do all Old Testament cycles, and the debate of the Four Daughters of God, and these scenes look forward to the redemption, as if a passion were to follow. The last-mentioned has been amplified by the embodiment of the Seth legend. The English cycles which have been preserved, and the lists of subjects in lost cycles, show a general use of the conventional subjects in England. In Germany the Passion plays developed into complete dramas of the Fall of man, the Passion of Christ, and the Resurrection, with or without Old Testament plays, and, as I think, independent of the Prophetae. The stages of this development can be seen by an examination of the various plays preserved, though of course it is necessary to take into consideration the forms of the plays and their degrees of development as well as the dates of their preservation. In Germany, and certainly in France also, we have developed, from the simple Latin plays of Passion and Resurrection, logically complete cycles with no regularly present Old Testament plays and frequently no prophets. At first he is merely the scriptural Satan; later he becomes Lucifer, and the story of his fall and his betrayal of man is introduced. The most primitive plays introduce Satan only in connection with the Harrowing of Hell, and in other places demanded by the sources. In the Benedictbeuern Passion play Satan appears as a mute character in connection with the part of Judas. The play is fragmentary and breaks off before the Harrowing of Hell scene, though that was doubtless part of the original, as it certainly was of the fragmentary Anglo-Norman Resurrection. There is also a somewhat primitive conception of Satan in the Innsbruck play of the Resurrection and the plays of its type, the Frankfort Dirigierrolle, the St. Gall play, and others. Disregarding certain developments of the part in the direction of diablerie, we may regard this play as presenting the normal appearances of Satan in the more primitive plays. In another large number of plays, in which the part of the devil is greatly amplified, there is the introduction of the story of Lucifer and his betrayal of man. Such plays are the Redentin Passion play, the Frankfurt play, and the plays of that group, the Alsfeld play, and the Tyrol plays. In this series of plays the stories of the fall of Lucifer and of man are frequently introduced in connection with the prayers of Adam and the patriarchs for redemption from bondage, a characteristic also seen in the French plays. There are, however, German Passion plays which show an arrangement according to chronological sequence. The Vienna Passion play, which is one of the oldest preserved, dating, as it does, from early in the fourteenth century, begins with the presentation of the fall of Lucifer and the fall of man. It has a full list of Old Testament subjects, a complaint of Adam and the patriarchs in limbo, a debate of the Four Daughters of God, and, at the end, the presentation of Mary in the Temple. The Innsbruck Frohnleichnamsspiel of the end of the fourteenth century, a procession of prophets, apostles, and Magi, begins with the thanking of the Savior by Adam and Eve for their release from Hell, as if the scene had been borrowed directly from a Harrowing of Hell play. They are primarily prophets of the Nativity, and there are a large number of plays and many indications within the great composite cycles which tend to show that

the play of the prophets was closely bound up with the plays of the Nativity, a thing which would be very natural, since they all unquestionably grew up at Christmas time. Sepet devotes a section of his article to proving that the *Processus Prophetarum* is the regular prologue to the Nativity. He cites the Benedictbeuern Christmas play, the St. Vallicelliana in Rome, and the Rouen Incarnation and Nativity. Several other French plays show the same thing, and in the English plays there is also the closest connection between the *Prophetæ* and the Nativity. The prologue to the Annunciation in York is a summary of a prophet play. At Chester the prophet play has been divided, and one portion of it incorporated with the Annunciation. It is evident then that there are two types of cyclic plays—the one, familiar to us in the English *Corpus Christi* plays, is chronologically arranged and complete; the other, familiar to us in the German and French plays, is usually not chronologically arranged and not complete, since it has no Old Testament plays, and frequently has no Nativity plays, and no *Prophetæ*. The latter, however, sometimes approximate the former both in content and in arrangement and are logically complete, since they embrace the fall and redemption of man. Since it is possible to trace the growth of the second type, even when entirely independent of *Prophetæ* and Nativity plays, to a stage approximately parallel to the first, it has seemed to me reasonable to believe that the first type is only a variety of the second; namely, a Passion play to which has been added a number of scenes derived from the Old Testament. I am inclined to think that this amplification occurred before the Easter and Christmas plays were united into a single cycle, and the form of the original Easter play at such a city as Chester could then be arrived at by withdrawing from the cycle the *Processus Prophetarum* and all the plays of the Nativity group. It would be absurd to think that the Lucifer and Adam scenes of the German passion plays originated from the *Prophetæ*, because their development bears every mark of being entirely within the Passion plays themselves. They were demanded by the subject, and we have a natural point of growth provided for them in the Harrowing of Hell and other scenes of the Passion and Resurrection. Neither the documents cited by M. Sepet, nor the evidences of the manner of development of the larger plays, so far as they are ascertainable, seem to establish his theory; let us, therefore, inquire more directly into the origin of the Old Testament plays. The series of Old Testament plays, referred to above, stand as a single conventional group with practically the same subjects and in the same order, as if they had been introduced as a unit from one principal source, or at least introduced to conform to one definite pattern. It is evident that a parallel exists between the cycles of plays and the great religious epics of the Middle Ages. The conception of an epic of redemption had long been in existence. Besides the *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Daniel*, it contains a poem known as *Christ and Satan*, which is made up of, first, the Fall of Lucifer, secondly, the Harrowing of Hell, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the return to final judgment, and, thirdly, the Temptation. I have no disposition to regard this or *Avitus* as a source for the plays; but they both offer examples of the epical treatment of the earlier Old Testament themes with manifest consciousness of their theological significance. The *Cursor mundi* represents a very much more amplified form of religious epic than the one which seems to be paralleled in the more primitive cycles of plays. The *Historia Scholastica* of *Petrus Comestor* is a summary of Old Testament events, and contains most of the legendary materials involved; but it goes very much farther in its account than the mystery plays do. It gives only a brief form of the Lucifer story, as compared to the Old English *Genesis* and the thirteenth-century *Genesis* and *Exodus*. The *Genesis* and *Exodus* and the Vienna *Genesis* follow the scriptural accounts with a fair degree of closeness. The *Canticum de Creatione* refers to most of the events of the Book of *Genesis* and gives special prominence to the Seth legend. Such epical accounts may have had influence on the later forms of the plays, or suggested the cyclical idea; but I think it is not necessary to go so far afield for the sources of the earliest Old Testament plays. In fact the Adam and the Cain and Abel plays of the *Ordo representationis Adæ* seem to bear upon their faces the evidences of their source. The stage direction at the beginning of the play contains these words: *In principio creavit Deus celum et terram*," to which the Chorus sing the response, *Formavit igitur Dominus*. The subjects for the week, as indicated by the *responsoria*, were the Creation, the Temptation and Fall, and the story of Cain and Abel. The actual selections read in the service varied to a certain extent, but the subjects were always the same, and it

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will be noticed that the responses themselves carry the story. The Adam is practically a dramatization of the lectiones and responsoria of the week of Septuagesima Sunday. In like manner the lectiones and responsoria of the Sunday and ferial services of the week of Sexagesima were devoted to the story of Noah and the Flood; those of Quinquagesima, to the story of Abraham; those of the second Sunday in Quadrigesima, to Isaac, Jacob, and Esau; those of the third Sunday in Quadrigesima, to the story of Joseph and his Brethren; those of the fourth Quadrigesimal Sunday, to Moses and the Exodus. I have followed the order of the Sarum Breviary; but the use of these subjects for readings for the period of Septuagesima and Lent, as shown by the responsoria and by the lectiones from sermons which accompany them in various service books, was general. We have here the entire list of Old Testament subjects appearing in the more primitive cycles except for the play of the Fall of Lucifer. The play of Isaac and Rebecca of the late twelfth century Latin fragment from Kloster Vorau in Styria seems to bear some traces of origin from lectiones of the week of the second Sunday in Quadrigesima; there is at least a chorus which accompanies the action with the narrative of that time.

Chapter 6 : Project MUSE - Four Middle English Mystery Cycles

Part of the Uniform Editions of the Plays of J.M. Barrie. 1st thus of the Scribner's printing in , copyright by Barrie. In very good condition with a tiny tear on the upper spine from shelving over the years.

Chapter 7 : Project MUSE - Night of the Living Bread: Unstable Signs In Chester's "Antichrist"

The Chester Plays, edited by Thomas Wright, , reprinted in The Chester Mystery Plays: Seventeen Pageant Plays from the Chester Craft Cycle, edited by Maurice Hussey, The Chester.

Chapter 8 : The Chester Plays Principal Editions - Essay - www.nxgvision.com

city council supported Savage's proposal to hold the plays at Midsummer, they also required him to take advice on necessary amendments to the plays, and annalists commented that some plays were omitted because they contained superstitious material (, pp.).

Chapter 9 : Bibliography (Part VII - Romance, Drama, Lyrics) -- Derek Pearsall

The plays were then expanded into a three-day cycle on Whit Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. In the years between the plays there was the Chester Midsummer Watch Parade instead. The plays are based on biblical texts, from creation to the Last Judgement.