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THE MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS DRAMA OF ENGLAND:
A NEW CONCEPT OF THE YORK PLAYS AND THEIR CREATORS

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Dedicated to
The Members of My Family

PREFACE

An anonymous critic of the late fourteenth century charged:

. . . since these players of miracles take in jest the serious works of God, there is no doubt that they scorn God, as did the Jews who mocked Christ; for they laughed at his passion, as these laugh and poke fun at the miracles of God.

By his harsh treatment of the players, this early critic denounced, as well, the plays and their creators. Similar cries of discontent have been alleged against the miracle plays for centuries, culminating in the traditional view that they are crude, artless works set forth by unskilled, "parrotting" writers. In short, the miracles simply have not been considered dramatic forms, nor have their creators been viewed as artists. Some thirty years ago, George R. Coffman sought to disprove some of this criticism, by making a plea for the study of the Corpus Christi plays as drama. However, his suggestion was virtually ignored by most medieval scholars. Only a perceptive few, such as Frederick M. Salter (Mediaeval Drama in Chester) and Waldo F. McNeir ("The Corpus Christi Passion Plays as Dramatic Art"), investigated the plays themselves and discovered them to be more artistic than was previously supposed. These works, then, were the beginnings of the re-evaluation of the cycle plays and their authors which is now being

thoughtfully pursued by a number of medieval scholars. A more recent study is Eleanor Prosser's Drama and Religion in the English Mystery Plays, in which the plays are approached from the viewpoint of the medieval audience. Prosser analyzes several recurring characters from the various cycles, depicting them in reference to the basic religious doctrines of the day. As a result of this comprehensive study, many of the plays are revealed as skillful, dramatic interpretations of the original fixed themes. Regrettably, Prosser's enlightening work was not available to this writer until after the present investigation had been completed, and thus, served primarily as reassuring evidence that the task of re-evaluating the English miracle plays and their authors continues.

Discrediting the traditional claims against any form of art is a monumental undertaking which may be accomplished only in degrees over a long period of intensive research. Generally, the broader area (in this instance, the religious plays of medieval England) must be narrowed to only one phase of study before any valuable contributions may be made to the total concept. Therefore, the present investigation involves only a limited number of the cyclic plays of medieval England, the forty-eight York Cycle plays. Each play was examined primarily for evidences of secularization, seemingly the most logical indications of the artistic

talents of the various writers and the dramatic value of the plays. The necessary background material concerning the development of religious drama in England during the Middle Ages was obtained from the skillful works of such scholars as Hardin Craig, English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages; Karl Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church; Sir E. K. Chambers, The Medieval Stage; Lyle M. Spencer, Corpus Christi Pageants in England; Sidney M. Clarke, The Miracle Play in England; and Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages 1300 to 1660. In addition, G. G. Coulton's Medieval Panorama proved to be most helpful as an intriguing and sweeping account of the Age in which the miracle plays flourished. Lucy Smith's edition of the York Cycle manuscripts, (York Plays: The Plays Performed by the Crafts or Mysteries of York on the Day of Corpus Christi in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries), was the source for the plays under examination; and John Wycliffe's translation of the New Testament was consulted in reference to the Scriptural sources therein. However, the Biblical comments throughout the study are based primarily upon the King James version of the Holy Bible, since it verbally closely parallels the Wycliffe translation.

I am gratefully indebted to Dr. Charles E. Walton and Dr. June Morgan, of the Kansas State Teachers College Department of English, for their knowledgeable guidance throughout this investigation; to Dr. George R. R. Pflaum and Dr. and

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CHAPTER I

A GLANCE AT MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS DRAMA

The decline of the Roman Empire foreshadowed the degradation and eventual demise of the classical theatre. The drama itself, a reflection of contemporary morals and manners, had degenerated into gross buffoonery and obscenity, in an effort to compete with the attractions of the amphitheatre and the circus.¹ Comedy and tragedy gradually became farce and pantomime, the flagrant descendents of Greek mime which combined coarse actions with ethical portrayal and comment; and, in these forms, they were little more than vulgar enactments of human decadence.² Of course, the Christian church took a vehement stand against these crude, sensuous exhibitions; but the depraved populace, undaunted by the objections, continued to flock to them. The barbarian invaders, simply because they did not understand them, were equally contemptuous of these last exponents of classical entertainment; and their protests, with those of the church, totally annihilated the shows, making their dissolution parallel the fall of the Empire itself.³

¹Sidney M. Clarke, The Miracle Play in England, p. 3.

²Karl Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church, I, 9.

³Randolph Goodman, Drama on Stage, p. 64.

Drama was somehow destined to re-live during the Middle Ages, though; and, incongruously enough, the church was to be its chief perpetrator. That one of the theatre's most formidable opponents should be responsible for its revival is readily justified if one considers the power of the medieval church, as well as its plan of worship. Feudalism, a monopolistic scheme, dominated the social system and the religious order of the times. Until the Norman Conquest, England, like the Scandinavian countries, remained the least feudalistic of nations.⁴ However, William the Conqueror laid the foundations for a regular and logical feudalistic social plan, by initiating a policy, the Oath of Salisbury, demanding that all vassals disregard their loyalties to each other, and pledge their allegiance to the crown.⁵ Landholders depended upon the King for their holdings; and the chain of allegiance and dependence continued downward, following a pattern based upon station or rank, to the lowest level, the peasant.⁶ The Roman Church had a similar organization, with a network of officials ranging from the Pope, and the Cardinals who were his chief legates in the relations with local prelates, to the Archbishops and Bishops,

⁴George G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama, pp. 54-55.

⁵Loc. cit.

⁶Ibid., pp. 48-49.

and finally to the local priests and lesser clergy.⁷ Thus, the people of the Middle Ages, regardless of social status, were dominated by the King and the Pope or Church--the former controlling their physical needs; the latter, their minds.⁸ Because of this way of life, intellectual growth continued to flourish in the sacred acts of the populace, as it had in all previous ages.⁹

The re-birth of drama came from the midst of the liturgy or the plan of public worship of the Church of Rome which dominated Western Europe throughout the medieval period.¹⁰ In the liturgy, dramatic effect was inherent in the symbolic actions, gestures, and movements of the ritual.¹¹ Although there is no indication that the liturgical plays were performed in Rome, they were controlled by the Roman See, as they became prevalent in other quarters--France, Spain, Germany, England, and Northern Italy.¹² In England, these earliest enactments were not extensions of traditional

⁷Ibid., p. 120.

⁸Ibid., p. 20.

⁹Clarke, op. cit., p. 1.

¹⁰Young, op. cit., I, 16.

¹¹Hardin Craig, English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages, pp. 3-4; 20.

¹²Young, op. cit., I, 15.

forms, nor were they borrowings from foreign sources, but rather they were achievements emerging from within the boundaries of religion.¹³ Young makes a distinction between these initial creations of the tenth century, and the later productions which were sponsored by the town guilds: i.e., the first group consists of the independent enactments chanted in Latin by the clergy, which remained in the service books of the church until after the Reformation; and the second group includes the vernacular plays of the laity which had their roots in the worship but were gradually modified during their development outside the church.¹⁴ Beginning about 1378, the plays of the second group flourished in England for approximately one hundred and fifty years.¹⁵

During the Middle Ages, to know Latin was to be literate; and literacy was remarkably lacking among the laymen of the period.¹⁶ Although it was not considered a foreign language because of its extensive use in government, law, commerce, travel, education, and miscellaneous civic affairs, Latin remained the language of the learned few throughout the

¹³Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁴Loc. cit.

¹⁵Sir E. K. Chambers, The Medieval Stage, II, 109.

¹⁶Coulton, op. cit., p. 226.

medieval period.¹⁷ Therefore, the liturgical plays grew out of a need to clarify the Latin worship service for the unlettered members of the congregation.¹⁸ These earliest forms of religious drama were called tropes; and they strictly adhered to the liturgical text and in no way were designed to alter its meaning.¹⁹ Their purpose, then, was to enhance the meaning of the formal liturgy, by brief interpretations of terms and phrases.²⁰ Since the tropes were chanted in Latin, they were effective devices mainly through their elements of action and impersonation.²¹ Normally, the priests and choir members were the participants in the tropes, but in smaller parishes, lay members were often called upon to assist the clergy.²² In the beginning, the tropes were simply portrayed at the base of the chancel; but as they became more elaborate, the enactments were portrayed before edifices especially built for performance.²³ This form of

¹⁷Craig, op. cit., p. 1.

¹⁸Clarke, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁹Reverend H. Gaffney, "The Early Drama and the Corpus Christi," The Irish Ecclesiastical Record, LXIII, (January-June, 1944), 155.

²⁰Loc. cit.; Craig, op. cit., p. 31.

²¹Frederick M. Salter, Mediaeval Drama in Chester, p. 7.

²²Clarke, op. cit., p. 7; Chambers, op. cit., II, 87.

²³Young, op. cit., I, 24-28; Gaffney, op. cit., pp. 156-157; Coulton, op. cit., p. 598.

religious teaching became so popular that eventually some part of almost every season of the liturgical year was dramatized.²⁴

The most significant early presentations were the Easter and Christmas tropes presented by the clerics and deacons at the altar.²⁵ Both of these tropes were extremely static, however, resembling tableaux rather than plays.²⁶ The earliest form of the Easter trope, Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, is the tenth-century manuscript from the Monastery of St. Gall, in Switzerland.²⁷ The Quem quaeritis is based upon the assumed conversation which took place between the three Marys and the Angel at the tomb of Christ.²⁸ As a part of the worship service, the Easter trope introduced the introit to the Mass; but it was later changed to the third nocturn at Easter Matins.²⁹ The plan of the Christmas trope, Quem quaeritis in praesepe, is similar to that of the Easter enactment, but the dialogue occurs between the shepherds and

²⁴Craig, op. cit., p. 31.

²⁵George B. Woods, Homer A. Watt, and George K. Anderson, (eds.), The Literature of England, p. 287.

²⁶Loc. cit.

²⁷Craig, op. cit., p. 31.

²⁸Young, op. cit., I, 4; Chambers, op. cit., II, 7; J. Q. Adams, Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas, pp. 4-5.

²⁹Chambers, op. cit., II, 11-14; Craig, op. cit., p. 32.

some unidentified personages stationed at the Bethlehem manger.³⁰ The unspecified individuals were later described as the obstetrices (mid-wives) who assisted at the birth of Christ.³¹ Like the Easter trope, the eleventh-century Christmas enactment retained its simplicity only as long as it was part of the Mass, before it was transferred to Matins.³² Young suggests that neither the Christmas nor the Easter trope was a genuine play until it was transferred to the Matins service, because of the absence of impersonation, an integral part of drama.³³ The elaboration of the original Christmas trope, by the addition of the announcement of Christ's birth to the shepherds, accompanied the transfer of the trope to the Matins, apparently preparing the way for further developments.³⁴ Four Christmas plays evolved out of the trope: e.g., Officium Pastorum (the visit of the shepherds to the Bethlehem manger), Officium Stellae (the coming of the Magi), Ordo Rachelis (the slaughter of the Innocents), and Ordo Prophetarum (the testimonies of the Prophets).³⁵

³⁰Young, op. cit., I, 3-4.

³¹Ibid., I, 5.

³²Craig, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

³³Young, op. cit., I, 9.

³⁴Craig, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

³⁵Young, op. cit., I, 172.

No English text of the Christmas trope exists; however, two Rouen manuscripts, one from the fourteenth century, and the other from the fifteenth, are extant.³⁶ Because of its superior development, the Rouen Prophetæ is the most outstanding of all the Latin plays.³⁷

The practice of augmenting original units with specific detail had its humble beginning in the tropes; but it reached far greater proportions in the later developments, known as the secular plays.³⁸ Edification of church dogma by dramatic enactments became a valuable teaching device, once its potentiality was recognized and imaginative minds were stimulated.³⁹ The representations for the appointed Holy Days of the Liturgical Calendar were supplemented with dramatizations of the lives of saints and the legends of the Virgin.⁴⁰ This second stage of development in religious drama was so rapid and extensive, and well-received by the people, that even the largest churches could not accommodate the multitudes who gathered there to view the plays.⁴¹ By

³⁶Adams, op. cit., p. 25.

³⁷Craig, op. cit., p. 60.

³⁸Ibid., p. 48.

³⁹Charles M. Gayley, Plays of Our Forefathers, p. 5.

⁴⁰Woods, op. cit., p. 73.

⁴¹Alfred W. Pollard, English Miracle Plays, Moralities, and Interludes, p. xxiii.

the twelfth century, the dramatizations had completely outgrown the boundaries of the church proper, and were moved outside, at first onto the steps of the great west door, with the spectators standing in the churchyard; and then into the city streets, when it became apparent that even the precincts of the church were inadequate for the vast number of viewers.⁴² These open-air enactments were designated as "miracles," an abbreviation of the longer title, repraesentatio miraculi.⁴³ Some scholars use the term miracle only in connection with the plays about the saints, reserving another term, mystery, for reference to the representations based upon the Scriptures; but most authorities employ the two terms interchangeably.⁴⁴

Moving the performances of the plays to a staging area outside the church was the result of an attempt to solve two major problems: the first, that the large crowds of spectators could not be accommodated within the church precincts; and the second, that the increases in the production costs and the required number of performers could no longer be met by the clergy. Thus, the miracle plays, which

⁴²Allardyce Nicoll, The Development of the Theatre, p. 63; Chambers, op. cit., II, 79.

⁴³Hardin Craig, (ed.), A History of English Literature, p. 133; Chambers, op. cit., II, 104.

⁴⁴George R. Coffman, "A Plea for the Study of the Corpus Christi Plays as Drama," SP, XXVI (October, 1929), 418.

also were no longer under the absolute control of the church, came into the hands of the trade-guilds, possessing the most dominant social power of the times.⁴⁵ This shift in sponsorship did not totally divorce the plays from church influence, however, since the guilds themselves were semi-religious in nature, having their own patron saints, chapels, hospitals, and shrines within the church, and assuming the responsibilities for both the spiritual and economic interests of their own members.⁴⁶ Nor was the basic subject matter of these plays estranged from its initial religious purpose, as modification occurred through the gradual process of secularization, the relaxing of the restraints imposed by religious worship.⁴⁷ Craig believes that the later productions were influenced as much by the liturgy as were the earlier forms, since originally the liturgy was the ". . . intermediary between the Scriptures and the plays . . ." ⁴⁸ One cannot minimize the important role of the guilds in the secularization of the English miracles, since it is the guild influence which distinguishes the plays from the Continental

⁴⁵Nicoll, op. cit., p. 63; Chambers, op. cit., II, 79.

⁴⁶Salter, op. cit., p. 8.

⁴⁷Chambers, op. cit., II, 79; 87.

⁴⁸Craig, English Religious Drama, p. 254.

religious presentations.⁴⁹ Naturally, these English plays had to overcome some obstacles. Ecclesiastical opposition, for example, mounted as the representations gradually came to include a greater amount of secularized material. However, these objections were directed mainly to the clergy's participation in the plays, and culminated in several edicts prohibiting the clergy from performing in these productions outside the church.⁵⁰ The other detrimental force was the English weather, which was not favorable to open-air performances during the most celebrated liturgical seasons, Christmas and Easter. Consequently, the outdoor performances were shifted to the spring and summer months.⁵¹

After the separation of the plays from the church, the next most distinctive innovation in England was the series or cycles.⁵² The services of the liturgical year provided the plan for combining the plays into cycles.⁵³ In this form, the plays represented a chronological sequence of events, based upon both Biblical and Apocryphal subjects, ranging from

⁴⁹Hardin Craig, (ed.), A History of English Literature, p. 134.

⁵⁰Clarke, op. cit., pp. 112-113.

⁵¹Chambers, op. cit., II, 94.

⁵²Ibid., II, 113.

⁵³Craig, English Religious Drama, p. 133.

the Creation to Doomsday.⁵⁴ Here, too, the English plays differed from those of the Continent, which were not necessarily chronological, nor as encompassing.⁵⁵ The most elaborate of all the church celebrations during the spring months was the Corpus Christi Festival.⁵⁶ Because of the importance of this occasion, and because the climatic conditions in England were more favorable during this time of the year, the Corpus Christi celebration became the focal point for most of the performances of the English cycles.⁵⁷

The Festival of Corpus Christi was first instituted by Pope Urban IV, in 1264; and was established, in 1311, as a time of universal celebration, by the Council of Vienna.⁵⁸ The Feast of Corpus Christi, on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, (i.e., between May 21 and June 24), celebrated the Real Presence of Our Lord in the consecrated host, commonly known as the Doctrine of Transubstantiation.⁵⁹ The universality of the feast created a need for the adoption of a form

⁵⁴Clarke, op. cit., p. 18.

⁵⁵Craig, op. cit., p. 70.

⁵⁶The Catholic Encyclopedia Dictionary, p. 259.

⁵⁷Lucy T. Smith, (ed.), York Plays: The Plays Performed by the Crafts or Mysteries of York on the Day of Corpus Christi in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries, p. xliii.

⁵⁸Chambers, op. cit., II, 95.

⁵⁹Gayley, op. cit., p. 5.

to be used in all observances; and St. Thomas Aquinas assumed the responsibility of compiling an office for the occasion, making the most important part a ceremonial procession through the streets, in which the host was borne on high, accompanied by notable church and guild personages.⁶⁰ It is not known precisely when the Corpus Christi procession was first introduced into England, but the earliest extant date of 1325 appears in the Guild Charter of Ipswich.⁶¹ The plays centering around the Corpus Christi celebration seem to have developed soon after the procession reached England; and this celebration may have been the stabilizing force in the retention of the basic religious quality of the plays even as they became more popular through the reflection of contemporary attitudes.⁶² Among medieval scholars, the relationship between the procession and the plays has long been a point of contention. Some suggest that the two were combined as a single performance; others, insisting that the processional and the plays were not presented together, maintain that their only relationship lay in their common purpose of honoring the same church celebration.⁶³ The extensiveness of the cycles

⁶⁰Chambers, op. cit., II, 95.

⁶¹Lyle M. Spencer, Corpus Christi Pageants in England, p. 16.

⁶²Loc. cit.

⁶³Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages, 1300-1660, I, 122.

tends to discredit the former theory, since the plays themselves would have required the expenditure of a great deal of time in execution. Also, since the subjects of the plays were not solely relevant to the Corpus Christi celebration, but were, instead, liturgical themes which could be readily combined into a series, one may consider them as separate manifestations, not in a sense, in combination with the Corpus Christi processional.⁶⁴

The organization of the cycles followed the same general lines in all of the communities involved in their production--Chester, York, Beverley, Coventry, Newcastle, Lincoln, and Norwich.⁶⁵ The plays were presented on large pageants or movable stages, so that vast crowds of spectators could more easily observe them.⁶⁶ The pageants, in turn, were transported through the city streets to previously appointed stations or "halts" where the plays were then performed. It is generally thought that at the conclusion of the performance at one station, the stage was then moved to another, until the performance had been repeated at each station, each pageant succeeding another until all of the

⁶⁴Craig, op. cit., p. 137.

⁶⁵Chambers, op. cit., II, 113.

⁶⁶Smith, op. cit., pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

scenes had been enacted at each station.⁶⁷ Furthermore, each guild maintained its own pageant, keeping it in order, making necessary repairs, and providing it a suitable storage place or "pageant-house" between seasons.⁶⁸ The guilds were responsible also for their own separate productions. Generally, they enlisted the services of amateurs among their own ranks for the various acting parts, but, later, when rivalry between the guilds had mounted, they solicited the help of outside professionals.⁶⁹ In addition, two craft members were appointed by the others to serve as "pageant-masters." Their duties were to control the internal affairs of the group, by collecting contributions from the members for the production of the plays and accounting for the expenditures; and by maintaining order during the performance of the play.⁷⁰

On the other hand, preparations for the entire cycle and the performances of all the individual scenes were under the strict authority of the city council, or corporation, composed of representatives from each guild. These authorities proclaimed the standards for the presentations and

⁶⁷Nicoll, op. cit., p. 69; Chambers, op. cit., II, 133.

⁶⁸Ibid., II, 113; Smith, op. cit., pp. xxvi; xxxvi; Raton-rowe, an area containing several storage houses for the local York pageants, is a railway station today.

⁶⁹Coulton, op. cit., p. 602; Smith, op. cit., p. xxvi.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. xxxviii.

collected fines from the guilds failing to meet these requirements. They also pronounced judgment in disputes between crafts over various play-production problems, maintained order during the performance of the cycle, and, most importantly, retained the original texts of all the plays.⁷¹

Although the stories portrayed in all of these cycles were similar because of their common origin in the Scriptures and doctrines of the church, the cycles themselves were varied, for a number of reasons. First, the guilds were often the cause of these diversifications because they could not meet the mounting production expenses of the more elaborate presentations. Since they were fined by the city council if they were unable to comply, some of the poorer guilds joined the richer companies in productions, or petitioned the council for complete liberation from the responsibilities of presenting a play, in order to avoid this calamity.⁷² On the other hand, when a city like York prospered and new guilds were developed, a need for more plays was created and a solution was found in subdivision of existing plays so as to provide each guild with a scene. To the end of the fourteenth century, division of plays was prevalent; whereas, amalgamation

⁷¹Chambers, op. cit., II, 114.

⁷²Gayley, op. cit., p. 98.

predominated after that time.⁷³

Studies of the compositional elements of the four extant cycles of English miracle plays--York, Wakefield (Towneley), Chester, and Coventry--reveal that these cycles were not the work of a single author.⁷⁴ The so-called "Wakefield Master," whose genius is apparent in some of the Towneley plays, is the only major exception to this premise.⁷⁵ The authors of the Chester and York plays, however, show a measure of supremacy over those responsible for the other cycles.⁷⁶ The medieval playwright undoubtedly borrowed ideas, or, at times, whole scenes from other adapters; and these practices, as well as the actual revisions of some plays, resulted in similarities among the various groups.⁷⁷ The most interesting characteristics of the medieval playwright were his anonymity and his sense of dedication to the creation of works for the glorification of God and fulfillment of a duty to the church, rather than for personal gain or recognition.⁷⁸ While these men may have been connected

⁷³Pollard, op. cit., p. xxx.

⁷⁴Craig, op. cit., p. 170.

⁷⁵Craig, (ed.), A History of English Literature, p. 136.

⁷⁶Chambers, op. cit., II, 147.

⁷⁷Ibid., II, 145.

⁷⁸Goodman, op. cit., p. 61.

with the church in one way or another, it was not necessary that they be; and it is apparent that they were not original artists, since their adaptations were drawn from the Bible, the legends of saints, and the doctrines of the church.⁷⁹

The individual practices of each writer definitely contributed to the diversity between plays based upon the same general theme; but creativity, as such, was not a trait of the medieval author, for the rather simple reason that all knowledge was recorded and available to all men.⁸⁰ The idea of supplementing the body of existing knowledge in any way did not occur to him; and any semblance of inventiveness grew out of his intrinsic ability as a writer and, therefore, may be considered as purely accidental.⁸¹

The changes resulting from the workings of natural human forces are apparent within the liturgical drama in the "Boy Bishops" and the "Feast of the Ass."⁸² Deposit is the name ascribed to these liturgical farces which represented the revolt of the clerk and the choirboy.⁸³ These activities were the result of an attempt to balance restraint and freedom

⁷⁹Loc. cit.; Chambers, op. cit., II, 145; Woods, op. cit., p. 293.

⁸⁰Craig, op. cit., p. 170.

⁸¹Loc. cit.

⁸²Young, op. cit., I, 104.

⁸³Coulton, op. cit., p. 606.

through the mockery of typical characters or episodes; but they cannot be considered theatrical presentations because they were under the control of the subdeacons and because they observed the regular order of the Mass and Canonical Office.⁸⁴ These liturgical burlesques seem to have originated during the twelfth-century, being especially observed in France; but they were also performed in England, from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century.⁸⁵ Because of the fundamental revelry of these enactments, ecclesiastical authorities frowned upon them from the beginning, even though they did not officially condemn them until the revels had lost all semblances of religious edification.⁸⁶

Both the antics of the Boy Bishops in the liturgical plays and the extraneous episodes and characters, humorous or otherwise, in the miracle plays, developed from a need to relieve the emotional stress provoked by the more restrained aspects of the church service or the dramatic presentation.⁸⁷ Craig suggests a similarity between these early innovations and the pre-Lenten activities of modern times; and, at the same time, he emphasizes the medieval playwright's ability

⁸⁴Young, op. cit., I, 104.

⁸⁵Ibid., I, 104-106.

⁸⁶Coulton, op. cit., p. 688.

⁸⁷Pollard, op. cit., p. xli.

successfully to combine sincerity with farce.⁸⁸ However, the facility to change instantaneously from gaiety to solemnity, or vice versa, is not a distinctive feature only of the medieval mind, since it may be observed in the capabilities of the human mind throughout all periods of time.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, one may observe two types of "tension relief" in the miracle plays: one, involving comedy, was devised for temporary distraction; and the other, involving a form of melodrama, heightened the situation to a point wherein the circumstances at hand almost completely absorbed the more intolerable episodes.⁹⁰ In the first group, human nature inevitably became the scapegoat.⁹¹ Chambers notes that the comic extensions generally were identified with characters not clearly defined in the Biblical accounts.⁹² However, several examples of secularization from the York Cycle discredit this theory, insofar as the composition of that particular cycle is concerned. Of course, one must realize that not all of the secular embellishments of the miracle

⁸⁸Craig, (ed.), A History of English Literature, p. 134.

⁸⁹Craig, English Religious Drama, p. 7.

⁹⁰Waldo F. McNeir, "The Corpus Christi Passion Plays as Dramatic Art," SP, XLVIII (July, 1951), 628.

⁹¹Coulton, op. cit., p. 606.

⁹²Chambers, op. cit., II, 90.

plays were comic elements, since some extensions of the subject matter were achieved through incident or characterization.

Differences between the four extant English cycles center around the tone or general concept of each group of plays. The Coventry Cycle, or Ludas Coventriae, consists of forty-two plays presented in connection with the Corpus Christi celebration.⁹³ They are obviously didactic in nature; but they do not follow a chronological sequence, as do those of the other cycles. They are, instead, isolated scenes and explanations which have been united into cyclic form with no well-defined scheme.⁹⁴ The oldest and simplest, yet most religious of the English Corpus Christi cycles is the Chester group.⁹⁵ Unlike the others, the Chester Cycle apparently did not undergo an extensive revision in all of its plays, but changes in the individual plays undoubtedly were made during the years of their performance.⁹⁶ Like the Coventry plays, the Chester Cycle is basically didactic; but that it does not entirely lack humor is apparent in the Deluge play.⁹⁷ There is no doubt that the Towneley plays

⁹³Smith, op. cit., p. lxvii.

⁹⁴Woods, op. cit., p. 301.

⁹⁵Craig, op. cit., p. 166.

⁹⁶Loc. cit.

⁹⁷Woods, op. cit., p. 300.

were performed by the Wakefield crafts, even though they are generally referred to by the former name because the manuscripts were held in the possession of the Towneley family.⁹⁸ The dialect of the Towneley Cycle is the same as that of the York series; and five plays from both cycles are found to be similar, with the exception of certain passages deleted or revised in either the Towneley or the York series.⁹⁹ Although the composition of the York Cycle follows a clearly defined chronological sequence of events, the forty-eight York plays were apparently isolated works from the city of York and the surrounding area.¹⁰⁰ It is the most complete text of English cycle plays presented by the guilds at the Corpus Christi Festival.¹⁰¹

York was a "play-loving" city; but, as the seat of the Archbishop, it was also an ecclesiastical center during the Middle Ages.¹⁰² Consequently, it is not unlikely that the recording of the York Cycle during the fifteenth century was tempered with the religious influence of the city.¹⁰³ As in

⁹⁸Adams, op. cit., p. 94.

⁹⁹Smith, op. cit., p. xlvi.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. xxxi; xlv.

¹⁰¹Adams, op. cit., p. 94; Smith, op. cit., p. xliii.

¹⁰²Smith, op. cit., p. xxviii; Craig, op. cit., pp. 147; 199.

¹⁰³Loc. cit.

the other cycle communities, the York plays were officially "registered" by the city corporation, which took full possession of the volume of manuscripts.¹⁰⁴ Also, when the plays were performed in York during the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the corporation assumed full authority over them.¹⁰⁵ Chambers suggests that the York pageants (stages) also may have belonged to this corporation.¹⁰⁶ According to various facts in city records, however, the York guilds as frequently experienced financial problems in connection with their pageants and plays as did the other cycle-town guilds.¹⁰⁷

The York Corpus Christi plays were undoubtedly performed before 1378, although this is the date usually given as the first indication of their presentation in that city.¹⁰⁸ Various problems arose in their execution, not the least of which were the prescribed locations of the halts or stations. In 1394, city authorities settled the differences by ordering that previously designated stations must be followed; but in 1417, they revoked this order and appointed the stations

¹⁰⁴Smith, op. cit., p. xi.

¹⁰⁵Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁶Chambers, op. cit., II, 115: In 1422, a York guild was forced to replace its own pageant banner with one bearing the arms of the city.

¹⁰⁷Smith, op. cit., p. xix.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., pp. xxxi-xxxii.

according to the highest price offered for the right to perform.¹⁰⁹ Throughout these disputes over the York halts, however, the gates at Holy Trinity in Micklegate apparently remained the starting point for the presentation of the cycle of plays.¹¹⁰ Other problems resulted from the combined performances of the Corpus Christi plays and the Corpus Christi procession, which made the celebration of the Festival unusually extensive. In York, this practice of combining the plays and the processional was finally abandoned in 1426; and the plays continued to be presented on the Festival Day, while the procession was changed to the second day.¹¹¹ And finally, the guilds were beset with numerous productional problems, since they now assumed the complete responsibility of these presentations under the strict authority of the city council.¹¹²

Because it is the most extensive of the English series of plays, the York Cycle is an excellent and reliable basis for an examination of the long neglected secular elements in medieval religious drama. One may assume that the innovations in the four extant English cycles are likely to follow

¹⁰⁹Ibid., pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. xi.

¹¹¹Ibid., pp. xxiv-xxxi.

¹¹²Ibid., pp. xxxviii-xlii.

the same general patterns, since the plays of all the English cyclic groups are fundamentally religious in content and their embellishments are principally the result of the secular forces at work upon them.

The York plays underwent various modifications throughout the years of their performance; and an extensive revision of the entire cycle occurred in 1568, in an effort to avoid the harsh criticism of Archbishop Grindal.¹¹³ However, the stories presented in the plays remained basically the same, originating in Scriptural narratives and popular apocryphal legends of the day.¹¹⁴ Of the apocryphal works, The Gospel of Nicodemus was the most inspirational for the York playwrights; and the legends in the texts of Transitus Mariae, surrounding the life and death of the Virgin Mary, provided several episodes for a group of plays honoring Christ's Mother.¹¹⁵ The York Cycle also resembles an extensive fourteenth century narrative poem, Cursor Mundi, which was composed shortly before the York Cycle plays were created (c. 1340-50).¹¹⁶ That the York playwrights were influenced by this poem is evident in the similarities of content and

¹¹³Ibid., p. xvi.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. xliv.

¹¹⁵Ibid., pp. xlvii-xlix.

¹¹⁶Ibid., pp. xliv-xlv.

chronology, even though the plays are compositionally superior.¹¹⁷

In 1415, the York corporation provided the funds for combining the cycle manuscripts into a volume--the compilation being complete about 1430-40.¹¹⁸ However, since all of the York scripts were not available at the same time, it appears that the copyist started his work with those which were readily at hand, beginning with Play III.¹¹⁹ Because of this and other changes in the original sequence of the plays, the chronology of the York Cycle is not without question.¹²⁰ The volume of York Cycle manuscripts presumably was kept at the priory at Holy Trinity during the period of the performance of the plays in York.¹²¹ From the time of their discontinuance in York performance (c. 1580), these plays were kept in the possession of various members of the Fairfax family, until finally becoming the property of Lord Ashburnham, who gave permission for publication.¹²² Although the binding of the York volume is badly worn, the manuscripts

¹¹⁷Loc. cit.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. xvii.

¹¹⁹Loc. cit.

¹²⁰Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.

¹²¹Ibid., p. xi.

¹²²Ibid., pp. xii-xiii.

themselves are intact, except for some leaves which are thought to have been deliberately removed during the various revisions of the scripts.¹²³ The two hundred and seventy parchment sheets of the volume are virtually unadorned; and the manuscripts lack punctuation and other compositional markings.¹²⁴ In reading the York plays, one may perceive the wealth of both Scriptural and apocryphal knowledge of the York playwrights and their facility of presenting these stories in a variety of ways.¹²⁵ But the extraneous matters of the plays, originating in the imaginative abilities of the playwrights and their perceptive observations of life and human nature, are the elements which not only set the cycle plays apart, as a form unto themselves, but also determine the extent of secularization in the religious plays of the Middle Ages.

Smith's edition has been used in this investigation of the secular elements of the York manuscripts because it provides one with an excellent general picture of the composition and performance of the York Cycle and the necessary

¹²³Ibid., pp. xiii-xiv.

¹²⁴Ibid., pp. xiii-xiv; xvi-xvii.

¹²⁵Ibid., pp. 1-lii: That the York plays were not translations of foreign works but rather the creations of English writers is apparent in their wide diversity of metre, apparent in twenty-two different stanzaic forms.

materials for a detailed study of the structural characteristics of the individual plays.¹²⁶

¹²⁶Lucy T. Smith, (ed.), York Plays: The Plays Performed by the Crafts or Mysteries of York on the Day of Corpus Christi in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries.

CHAPTER II

PROVOCATIVE INNOVATIONS FROM THE YORK CYCLE PLAYS

The Holy Bible states: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." But in a medieval play, Deus (God) proclaims: "I am gracyus and grete, god withoutyn begynnyng, / I am maker vnmade, all might es in me."¹²⁷ Thus, two poets, each in a different way, begin the story of the Creation of the World. Few could seriously dispute the appropriateness of either passage as an effective prelude to a narration of God's wonders; nor is it improbable that the Biblical interpretation served as a pattern for the dramatic version. The principal difference between them is, after all, only one of emphasis: the first enumerates the marvels themselves; the second extols the Power behind them. And so it is throughout the entire York Cycle--the authors, using the Scriptures or the gospels and legends from the Apocrypha as bases, composed a series of plays, ranging in subject matter from the Creation to Doomsday, to tell the story of man's salvation.¹²⁸

The term, secularization, is used by Chambers to designate the ". . . relaxing of the close bonds between the

¹²⁷Play I: The Creation, and the Fall of Lucifer, ll. 1-2.

¹²⁸Smith, op. cit., pp. xlvii-1.

nascent drama and the religious worship."¹²⁹ Therefore, changes in the original source, or deviations from it, may be called secular elements. The religious drama of medieval England underwent an extensive period of change, spanning some five hundred years. Modification first occurred when the simple Latin enactments, instigated by the clergy to clarify the Easter and Christmas Masses, were transferred to Matins from their original positions as introductions to the Introit of the Mass.¹³⁰ Gradually, as the presentations grew in number and content, they were forced from the interior of the church and, eventually, into the city streets, where their sponsorship was later assumed by the local craft-guilds.¹³¹ Outside the church, the plays gradually became an integral part of their new environment and finally emerged into the forms which were eventually recorded in the middle of the fourteenth century.¹³² Secularization resulted when the plays became the products of the people as well as the church; and when they became representative of "Christ's humanity in the outside world," and not merely enactments of "adoration, praise and thanksgiving" as they had been while

¹²⁹Chambers, op. cit., II, 79.

¹³⁰Adams, op. cit., p. 3; Craig, English Religious Drama, p. 49.

¹³¹Wickham, op. cit., I, 291.

¹³²Chambers, op. cit., II, 79.

within the church.¹³³ Thus, the people--those who composed, transcribed, acted, and viewed them--were the great shapers of these dramatic manifestations of the religious attitudes of the times.¹³⁴ The interest and influence of the medieval people are further evidenced in the innumerable revisions of the scripts throughout the period of secularization, which were obvious results of an attempt to suit the presentations to each performance.¹³⁵

The York Cycle, as a whole, is rich in evidences of secularization, but one discovers that the amount of alteration varies within the individual plays. Modifications in the original sources are apparent in a number of ways: in some instances, digressions emerge from the interweaving of two or more interpretations of the same incident or personage; in others, a character or happening may remain basically the same, although embellished in some manner; and, occasionally, a figure or event from the original source is completely eliminated in the dramatic form. Furthermore, one notes that converting narration into dialogue oftentimes resulted in the composition of additional scenes or even in the creation of new personages; and, if a Biblical suggestion

¹³³Wickham, op. cit., I, 314.

¹³⁴Craig (ed.), A History of English Literature, p. 132.

¹³⁵Craig, English Religious Drama, p. 7.

showed "promise" of further development, the York playwright frequently elaborated it beyond its initial proportions.

A careful perusal of the York plays reveals that the elements of secularization in this cycle are far too numerous to be presented comprehensively, and thus, excerpts from a number of the York scripts have been chosen to illustrate the various kinds of innovations undertaken by the York playwrights. Although the innovative patterns greatly vary, they may be generally categorized into three major areas: (1) characterization; (2) incident; and (3) language. Oftentimes, these three areas overlap, however, and cannot in all instances be treated as separate elements. For example, the excerpt from the York play at the beginning of this part of the study depicts God (Deus) in a different way from His presentation in the Biblical source. The basic innovation is, of course, in the characterization of Deus; but the device for achieving this modification is obviously dependent upon His choice of language. Therefore, the inventiveness of the York playwright is here revealed in two areas of alteration; that is, characterization and language.

Aside from the innovations in the portrayal of God, the original creation story presented in Play I (The Creation, and the Fall of Lucifer) is further embellished in the characterization of Lucifer. The presence of this legendary figure in a basically scriptural tale is an innovation in

itself; but, here, his appearance is used to best dramatic advantage in providing both enlightenment and entertainment for the audience. Lucifer's demeanor is not completely alien to Biblical interpretations: there are various allusions to the disobedient angels who were punished for their misconduct, one being found in Jude.¹³⁶ In addition, a passage in Isaiah, which long served as the only Biblical reference to Lucifer, depicts him in much the same way as does the York playwright.¹³⁷ This latter excerpt, however, was recently discredited as an accounting of the Angel Lucifer, and is now considered to be a description of the King of Babylon.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, the author of Play I may have used the verses as a pattern for his creation of the angel, since the aspirations of the two Lucifers are similar.

Pride, Lucifer's foremost weakness, is the reason for his eventual banishment from heaven; and it also provides an excellent means of edifying various church doctrines or Christian beliefs. Deus favors Lucifer with a handsome appearance, an abundance of power, and the assurance of continued bliss as long as he remains loyal. But Lucifer flaunts these attributes, and turns them into objects of self-esteem.

¹³⁶Jude iv.

¹³⁷Isaiah xiv. 12-15.

¹³⁸The Encyclopedia Americana, XVII, 681.

It is through his own words that Lucifer's pride is most apparent. For example, during a sequence in which the other angels praise Deus, Lucifer interjects passages of self-adoration. He extols his personal comeliness in his first speech of self-praise:

All the myrth þat es made es markide in me,
 De bemes of my brighthode ar byrnande so bryghte,
 And I so semely in syghte my selfe now I se,
 For lyke a lorde am I lefte to lende in þis lighte,
 More fayrear be far þan my peres,
 In me is no poynte þat may payre,
 I fele me fetys and fayre,
 My powar es passande my peres.
 (ll. 49-52)

In his second pretentious outburst, Lucifer boasts of his handsome appearance and abundant power, and declares himself free from suffering:

O! what I am fetys and fayre and fygured
 full fytt!
 De forme of all fayrehede apon me es feste,
 All welth in my weelde es, I wete be my
 wytte,
 De bemes of my brighthe are bygged with
 the beste.
 My schewyng es schemerande and schynande,
 So bygly to blys am I broughte,
 Me nedes for to noy me righte noghte,
 Here sall neuer payne me be pynande.
 (ll. 65-72)

Similarly, Lucifer's conceited remarks continue into his third such speech, but they are suddenly replaced by his cries for help as he is thrust into the depths of Hell, for his arrogance:

Owe! certes! what I am worthely wroghte with wyrship
 i-wys!

For in a glorius gle my gleteryng it glemes,
 I am so mightyly made my mirth may noghte mys,
 Ay sall I byde in this blys thorowe brightnes of bemes.
 Me nedes noghte of noy for to neuen,
 All welth in my welde haue I weledande,
 Abowne zhit sall I be beeldand,
 On heghte in þe hyste of hewuen.
 Ther sall I set my selfe, full semely to seyghte,
 To ressayue my reuerence thorowe righte o renowne,
 I sall be lyke vnto hym þat es hyste on heghte;
 Owe! what I am derworth and defte.--Owe! dewes! all goes
 downe!
 My mighte and my mayne es all marrande,
 Helpe! felawes, in faythe I am fallande.
 (ll. 81-96)

Lucifer's final speech differs from his other two in several respects, even though the wording throughout its major portions is similar. In the first line, for instance, two terms ("Owe!" and "certes") are definitely not characteristic of Lucifer's general demeanor exemplified in the earlier portions of the play. They do serve a purpose, however: i.e., to attract the attention of the other angels who are obediently glorifying Deus. Lucifer's façade of arrogance is again destroyed in the last three lines, when his usually pretentious language is replaced by vernacular expressions. This departure from his established language pattern may have been an attempt on the part of the York playwright to "humanize" Lucifer, thereby making the lessons embodied in the incident more meaningful to the audience.

Depicting a dramatic character as more "life-like" through the use of vernacularized language, or the application of human traits to his traditionally conceived demeanor

was a common practice, one eventually is to discover, of the York playwrights. Here, one sees that the York playwright has modified Lucifer's grandeur in the final speech by the insertion of ordinary expressions, and by showing his human tendency to turn to others for assistance in a time of need (1. 96).

Of the multitude of Biblical characters whose personalities were similarly amplified in the York Cycle, Isaac and Moses are prime examples of a playwright's efforts to familiarize through characterization. In their original sources, the personages are human, not mythical, beings; but in the York plays, they acquire new dimensions of reality. For example, Isaac is Abraham's beloved son who must be sacrificed by God's will in Play X (Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac). Here, he retains his original Biblical attributes of obedience and love for God and his father, but he also acquires an additional trait, that of the human weakness of fear. In ascribing this defect to Isaac's otherwise perfect filial demeanor, the playwright achieved two ends: first, he made Isaac a more believable person, and secondly, he injected an element of suspense into the sacrificial scene. Like Lucifer's pride, Isaac's fear is revealed in his own speech. The first indication of dread is contained in Isaac's self-analysis and his frank admission to his father that he is afraid. That Isaac is willing to obey God's command is evi-

dent in his request that Abraham bind his feet and hands so that he will be rendered helpless to resist:

I know myselfe be cours of kynde,
 My flessche for dede will be dredande,
 I am ferde þat 3e sall fynde
 My force youre forward to withstande.
 Ther-fore is beste þat ye me bynde
 In bandis faste, boothe fute and hande,
 Nowe whillis I am in myght and mynde,
 So sall 3e saffely make offerande.
 For fadir, when I am boune,
 My myght may not avayle,
 Here sall no fawte be founne
 To make youre forward faylle.
 For 3e are alde and all vnwelde,
 And I am wighte and wilde of thoght.

(ll. 209-222)

Isaac's loyalty is not only to God but to his father as well. His request to be bound served two purposes: to make him unable to escape from his duty to God; and to make it possible for his father to fulfill his commitment to God. When he asks Abraham to use his sword quickly, Isaac, again, displays his fear:

Nowe farewele, all medilerth,
 My flessche waxis faynte for ferde;
 Nowe fadir, take youre swerde,
 Me thynke full lange 3e tarie.

(ll. 269-272)

But again, the final act is delayed by Abraham's lament of his son's impending death. Isaac's growing fright prompts another request--that his eyes be covered with a handkerchief:

A! dere fadir, lyff is full swete,
 The drede of dede does all my dere.
 As I am here youre sone,

To God I take me tell,
 Nowe am I laide here bone,
 Do with me what 3e will,
 For fadir, I aske no more respete,
 Bot here a worde what I wolde mene,
 I beseke 3ou or þat 3e smyte,
 Lay doune þis kyrcheffe on myne eghne.
 Than may 3oure offerand be parfite,
 If 3e wille wirke thus as I wene.
 And here to god my saule I wite,
 And all my body to brenne bydene.
 (11. 279-292)

Here, one sees that in each of his admissions of fear, Isaac plainly reveals a desire to obey his father and God; but his dread increases with each delay, until the anticipation of the inevitable is almost too great for him to bear. Thus, he must ask for some kind of relief: i.e., being bound and having his eyes covered. For the members of the audience, already undoubtedly familiar with the story, the anticipation of the inevitable mounted with each lament of Abraham and each request of Isaac, until the Angel appeared to prevent the death blow.

It is significant that a similar suspense or anticipation device is used by the authors of the York crucifixion plays. Christ's death is, of course, inevitable, but the act of crucifixion is delayed by the preparations which it entails. These sequences will be closely examined later as a type of embellishment through incident. Obviously, the circumstances are somewhat different, but the same type of delay occurs in Play XVIII (Flight into Egypt). For example,

Joseph has been warned of Herod's treachery to seek out and kill the Christ Child, and he must take Mary and the Babe into Egypt. Mary, in much the same way as Mrs. Noah in an earlier play, does not understand the reason for the king's malice, nor does she comprehend the urgency of the matter. Thus, in an innovated episode, the impending danger to the Christ Child draws near, as Mary laments her sorrow and refuses to heed Joseph's commands (ll. 84-161).

In Play XI (The Departure of the Israelites from Egypt, the Ten Plagues, and the Passage of the Red Sea), fear again becomes a personality trait of Moses, a major character. The technical pattern is not the same as it was in the case of Isaac, who started out as a strong individual but gradually weakened during the course of the play, since Moses' imperfection is made perceptible to one from the beginning of the play in his hesitancy to obey God's will. The York playwright has caused Moses' characterization, then, to move in the opposite direction--from trepidation to assurance. At the same time, one should note that the apprehension evident in Moses' portrayal is not completely the work of the York playwright, since Moses Biblically is shown to be wary of God's command when he is first told of his mission.¹³⁹

¹³⁹Exodus iii. 11.

In the play, alarm for his own safety among people not of his own kind is Moses' first excuse for not wanting to obey God's order: "A! lord syth, with thy leue, / Dat lynage loues me nocht, / Gladly they walde me greve, / And I slyke boodword brought." (ll. 129-132). His second reason for not wishing to comply concerns his not being a persuasive speaker: "Ther-fore lord, late sum othir fraste / Dat hase more forse pam for to feere." (ll. 133-134). Although Deus assures him that he has nothing to fear, Moses is not completely convinced, and he asks Deus for some visible sign which will aid him in the undertaking:

We! lord, pai wil nocht to me trayste,
 For all the othes pat I may swere.
 To neven slyke note of newe
 To folke of wykkyd will,
 With-outen taken trewe,
 They will nocht take tente per-till.
 (ll. 139-144)

Of course, the "taken trewe" is the rod by which Moses, with God's help, was able to perform marvels before Pharoah.¹⁴⁰ It is through Deus' specific instructions concerning the rod that Moses gains the strength and confidence necessary for his later encounters with the Israelites and Pharoah.

In Play XLVI (The Appearance of Our Lady to Thomas), Thomas becomes involved in a similar situation because he is apprehensive about spreading the word about Mary's Assumption.

¹⁴⁰Exodus iv. 1-5.

Similarly, he feels that since he is an unpersuasive speaker he must have some token with which to prove the truth of his statements. Consequently, Mary gives her girdle to Thomas, as a "token trewe," (ll. 144-188). And, like Moses, Thomas immediately receives the confidence which he needs to carry out his mission.

After receiving from God his powers over the wand, Moses gains confidence in each situation he must face thereafter. For example, in his first encounter with the Hebrews, he confidently assures them that their sorrows will soon be abated:

Beeths of youre mornyng blyne,
 God wil defende you of your fays,
 Oute of þis woo he will you wynne,
 To plesse hym in more plener place.
 I sall carpe to þe kyng,
 And fande to make you free.
 (ll. 197-202)

Later, with great authority Moses utters his command to Pharaoh to heed his words: "Kyng Pharo! to me take tent." (l. 205). And, his subsequent statement of intention is equally bold: "Fro god of heuen þus am I sente, / To fecche his folke of Israell / To wildirnesse he walde thei wente." (ll. 207-209). Moses' warnings that God will send His vengeances upon the people and the land if he is not allowed to lead the Israelites out, could not be more ominous: "Danne will god veneaunce take / On þe and on al þyne;" (ll. 215-216) and "God sende sum veneaunce sone, / And on þi werke

take wrake." (ll. 251-252).

The marvels which Moses works with the wand do not convince Pharaoh that he should permit the Israelites to leave his country, but these miracles do arouse his curiosity. Moses' first act of wonder involves the turning of the rod into a serpent:

3aa! sir, he saide pou suld despise,
 Botht me & all his comaundement.
 In thy presence kast on this wise
 My wande he bad by his assent,
 And pat pou shulde turne to a serpent.
 And in his haly name,
 Here sal I ley it downe,
 Loo! ser, se her be same.
 (ll. 231-239)

As in the Biblical source, Moses must, now, cause the rod to return to its original state:

He saide pat I shulde take be tayle,
 So for to proue his poure playne,
 And sone he saide it shuld not fayle
 For to turne a wande agayne.
 Loo! sir, behalde!
 (ll. 241-245)

One may imagine that Moses performed these marvels with his wand with great flourish so that they become highlights in this play because they provided moments of spectacle for the audience.

As further proof of his command of the situation, Moses disregards Pharaoh's deceitful messages when they are brought by a servant. When the first message is delivered, he openly speaks of Pharaoh's malice:

I wate ful wele per wordes er wrang,
 That sall ful sone be sene,
 For hardely I hym heete
 And he of malice mene.
 Mo mervaylles mon he mett.

(ll. 284-288)

In his reply to Pharaoh's second message, Moses repeats his previous thought: "He mon haue more mischeff / But if his tales be trewe." (ll. 311-312). Herein, both "mervaylles" and "mischeff" refer to the plagues of God's vengeance. Thus, the York playwright has emphasized again, Moses' confidence in himself.

Moses' announcement to the Israelites that they will be led out is not prompted by Pharaoh's third dispatch, but rather by the completion of God's wrath upon the land and the people:

And to passe am I paied,
 My frendes, bees nowe fayne;
 For at oure will now sall we wende,
 In lande of lykyng for to lende.

(ll. 359-362)

Moses' final words are couched in the form of assurance to the Jews. First, he promises them God's protection from their enemies:

Beis noght aferde, god is youre frende,
 Fro alle oure foes he will vs fende.
 Darfore comes furthe with me,
 Haves done, and drede yow noght.

(ll. 367-370)

When the Israelites reveal their fears about crossing the Red Sea, Moses tells them of his God-given powers to part

the waters with the wand:

I sall make vs way with my wande,
 For god hase sayde he saue vs sall;
 On aythir syde þe see sall stande.
 Tille we be wente, right as a wall.
 Therefore have 3e no drede.
 But faynde ay god to plese.

(11. 376-381)

The three characters involved in the preceding discussions have one common trait--they are advocates of God. Lucifer, it is true, took advantage of God's generosity and did not remain long in His favor, but even he must be considered as a servant of God. The other two, Isaac and Moses, dutifully performed their tasks, although encumbered by fear.

Three other major York characters, all adversaries of God, also have another trait in common--namely, an abundance of personal pride. They are the three sovereigns, Pharaoh, Herod, and Pilate. Although all possess the self-esteem similarly shown in the earlier characterization of Lucifer, only one, Pharaoh, is brought to death by his arrogance. The pride of Herod and Pilate is similarly revealed in pretentious language, but, at the same time, it is the motivating force in their actions against Christ. Pharaoh opposes God through his refusal to grant the Israelites permission to leave Egypt (Play XI). His self-esteem is at once apparent in the opening lines of the play in which he addresses his subjects proclaiming his power. He speaks first of his authority through inheritance:

O pees, I bidde þat noman passe,
 But kepe þe course þat I comaunde,
 And takes gud heede to hym þat hasse
 Youre liff all haly in his hande.
 Kyng Pharo my fadir was,
 And led þe lorshippe of this lande,
 I am hys hayre as elde will asse,
 Euere in his steede to styrre and stande.
 (11. 1-8)

Then, of his possession of all of Egypt:

All Egippe is myne awne,
 To lede aftir my lawe,
 I will my myght be knawen,
 And honnoured als it awe.
 (11. 9-12)

And, finally, that he will condemn to death anyone who does not abide by his law:

Ther-fore als Kyng I commaunde pees
 To all þe pepill of þis Empire,
 That noman putte hym fourthe in prees,
 But þat will do als we desire.
 And of youre sawes I rede you sees,
 And sesse to me, youre sufferayne sire,
 That most youre comforte may encrease,
 And at my liste lose leffe and lyre.
 (11. 13-20)

Pharaoh's obsession with the preservation of his authority is the driving force behind his acts against Moses and the Jews. When the rapidly multiplying Jews of Goshen threaten his sovereignty, Pharaoh questions their strength: "Why, devill, what gawdes haue thy begonne? / Er þai of myght to make a frayse?" (11. 37-38). His curiosity is aroused by the fact that the Jews increase at a rapid pace: "What devill euer may it mene, / Dat they so fast encrease?" (11. 47-48). The fact that the Jews have expanded from seventy

to three hundred thousand in only four hundred years apparently does not discourage Pharaoh, however, since he quickly assures his counsellors that the Israelites will be quelled before they increase their ranks any further: "Fy on þam! to þe deuell of helle! / Swilke destanye sall we noght dreade." (ll. 67-68). He will accomplish this feat by destroying the infants at birth:

We sall make mydwayes to spelle þam,
 Whenne oure Ebrewes are borne,
 All þat are mankynde to kelle þam,
 So sall they sone be lorne.
 (ll. 69-72)

And he will place the other Jews in more severe bondage:

For of the other haue I non awe,
 Swilke bondage sall we to þam bede,
 To dyke and delfe, beere and drawe,
 And do all swilke vn-honest dede.
 Dus sall þe laddis be holden lawe,
 Als losellis euer thaire lyff to leede.
 (ll. 73-78)

Pharaoh's plans to kill all the Jewish male infants and to subject the remaining Israelites to bondage are Biblically founded.¹⁴¹ The innovation apparent within the speech, then, becomes a matter of the introduction of secularized terminology. Also, the medieval concept of station is depicted in the last portion of this passage wherein "vn-honest dede" and "losellis" characterize the Israelites' bondage under Pharaoh. Herod's similar decree came as the

¹⁴¹Exodus 1. 11-22.

result of Christ's threat to his sovereignty. Obviously, the killing of the male babies is the focal point in the two scripts, Play XVIII (Flight into Egypt) and Play XIX (Massacre of the Innocents).

Pharaoh's strength does not diminish even when he is confronted by an equally strong opponent, Moses. At their first meeting, Pharaoh and Moses exchange proclamations of authority, Pharaoh revealing his power by commending Moses to the devil and warning that Moses will increase the Jews' bondage:

3aa! wende pou to be devell of hell,
 I make no force howe pou has mente,
 For in my daunger sall bei dwelle.
 And faytor, for thy sake,
 Dei sall be putte to pyne.
 (ll. 210-214)

When Moses tells Pharaoh that God commands him to release the Israelites from bondage, Pharaoh vehemently replies: "Biddis god me? fals lurdayen, pou lyes / What takyn talde he, toke pou tent?" (ll. 229-230).

Although they intrigue Pharaoh, Moses' actions with the wand do not dissuade him from his original threat to increase the punishment of the Jews because of Moses:

Hopp illa hayle!
 Nowe certis pis is a sotill swayne
 But pis boyes sall byde here in oure bayle,
 For all pair gaudes sall nocht pam gayne;
 Bot warse, both morne and none,
 Sall bei fare for thy sake.
 (ll. 246-251)

Pharaoh's pride in his personal authority is openly displayed in his boisterous proclamations of power and use of coarse language in commending his opponents to the devil. He is capable, also, of preserving his sovereign dignity by devious means, such as his deceitful messages to Moses in which he falsely gives the Israelites permission to depart. Pharaoh's cunning is also revealed in his statement to Moses after the country has been plagued with toads and frogs and swarms of lice (manifestations of God's vengeance): "God, saie we sall no lenger greue; / But þae sall neuere þe tytar gang." (ll. 279-280). His second deceitful message is dispatched as the people and beasts are infested with flies and murrain:

Go, saie we giffe þam leue to goo,
 To tyme there parellis be ouerpast;
 But, or thay flitte over farre vs froo
 We sall garre faste þam foure so fast.
 (ll. 305-308)

After the boils and blains and the hail and fire have invaded the country, Pharaoh sends a third deceitful message to Moses: "Late hym do fourth! þe devill hym spede! / For his folke sall no ferre / Yf he go welland woode." (ll. 332-334). Even though his last dispatch does not reach Moses before other plagues (locusts, darkness, pestilence) have threatened the existence of Pharaoh's people, Pharaoh, nevertheless, is unswerving in his determination to obliterate the Jews:

God, saie we graunte þam laue to gange,

In the devill way, sen itt bus be done,
 For so may fall we sall þam fang,
 And marre þam or to-morne at none.
 (ll. 353-356)

Pharaoh's complete command of the situation is revealed as he gives the orders to pursue the Jews:

Horse harneys tyte, þatþei be tane,
 Dis ryott radly sall þam rewe,
 We sall not sese or they be slone,
 For to pase we sall þam sew.
 Do charge oure charyottis swithe,
 And frekly folowes me.
 (ll. 389-394)

But that God was in command of the situation is apparent when the pursuit ends in the deaths of Pharaoh and his followers as they ride into the Red Sea. And Pharaoh's last utterance is not too unlike Lucifer's upon falling into the pit of Hell: "Owte! ay herrowe! devill, I drowne!" (l. 403).

The depictions of Pilate and Herod are similar to that of Pharaoh in a display of lust for authority; but they resemble the handling of Lucifer in their speech and mannerisms. Both are overly conscious of their handsome and regal appearances; and, inevitably, they mingle boasts of power with declarations of personal splendor. Like Lucifer's speeches, Herod's and Pilate's are highly alliterative, picturesque, and pretentious. While there are countless examples to be found of this type of discourse in the York Cycle, their proclamations of authority serve as adequate illustrations of this type of verbosity. For example, Herod

ostentatiously asserts his sovereignty at the beginning of Play XVI (The Coming of the Three Kings), by claiming first dominance over the planets:

The clowdes clapped in clerenes pat per clematic
 in-closis,
 Jubiter and Jouis, Martis and Mercury emyde,
 Raykand ouere my railte on rawe me reioyses,
 Blonderande per blastis, to blaw when I bidde.
 Saturne my subgett, pat sotilly is hidde,
 I list at my likyng and laies hym full lowe;
 The rakke of pe rede skye fully rappely I ridde,
 Thondres full thrallye by thousandes I thrawe
 when me likis;
 Venus his voice to me awe
 Dat prince of planetis pat proudly is pight
 Sall brace furth his bemes pat oure belde blithes,
 De mone at my myght he mosteres his myght;
 (11. 1-14)

He does not elaborate upon his power over earthly beings, but he is certain to mention it, at least: "And kayssaris in castellis greate kyndynes me kythes, / Lordis and ladis loo luffely me lithes," (11. 15-16). Furthermore, his personal splendor is revealed in his closing statements:

For I am fairer of face and fressher on folde
 (De soth yf I saie sall) seuene and sexti sithis,
 Dan glorius guller pat hayer is pan golde
 in price;
 How thynke ze per tales pat I talde,
 I am worthy, witty, and wyse!
 (11. 17-22)

Herod's language is notably more picturesque than Pharaoh's in which oaths conveyed the meaning. Herod's claim of power over the stars, planets, and earthly beings is indicative of his aspirations for complete domination. His final statement, "I am worthy, . . . ," rather simply states his ideas

expressed in the preceding twenty-one lines.

Pilate's speech pattern is similar to Herod's, because he, too, is engrossed in a concept of his own dignity. The language is not as decorative, but the content is based upon the same idea of total control. Pilate addresses his subjects at the beginning of Play XXVI (The Conspiracy to Take Jesus). Then, he proclaims his sovereignty over the entire region:

Vndir þe ryallest roye of rente and renowne,
 Now am I regent of rewle þis region in reste,
 Obeye vnto bidding bud busshoppis me bowne,
 And bolde men þat in batayll makis brestis to breste.
(11. 1-4)

Next, Pilate reminds his subjects of the penalty for disobeying his laws:

To me be-taught is þe tent þis towre begon towne,
 For traytours tyte will I taynte, þe trewþe for
 to triste,
 The dubbyng of my dingnite may nozt be done downe,
 Nowdir with duke nor dugeperes, my dedis are so
 dreste.
 My desire muste dayly be done
 With þame þat are grettest of game,
 And þer agayne fynde I but fone,
 Wherefore I schall bettir þer bone.
 But he þat me greues for a grume,
 Be-ware, for wystus I am.
(11. 5-14)

Pilate's personal analysis reveals him to be as pompous and arrogant as Herod:

Pounce Pilatt of thre partis
 Ðan is my propir name;
 I am a perelous prince,
 To proue wher I peere
 Emange þe philosfers firste

Ther fanged I may fame,
 Wherefore I fell to affecte
 I fynde nozt my feere.
 (ll. 15-22)

Again, he reminds his subjects of their duties to his law:

He schall full bittirly banne
 Dat bide schall my blame;
 If all my blee be as bright
 As blossome on brere.
 For sone his liffe shall he lose,
 Or lefte be for lame,
 Dar lowtes nozt to leere.
 (ll. 23-29)

And, finally, since all judgments rest in his decision,

Pilate invites those with business to step forward:

And bus sen we stande in oure state,
 Als lordis with all lykyng in lande,
 Do and late vs wete if ze wate
 Owthir, sirs, of bayle or debate,
 Dat nedis for to be handeled full hate,
 Sen all youre helpe hanges in my hande.
 (ll. 30-35)

In these three characterizations, the York playwrights obviously embellished the Biblical portrayals of Pharaoh, Pilate, and Herod, causing them to be even more pretentious and treacherous than in the original sources. With language the major device for innovation, here, the York playwrights depicted the rulers as self-centered, power-hungry individuals who flaunted their authority at every opportunity.

Although Pharaoh's vernacularized language, and Herod's and Pilate's pretentious terminology distinguished their characters from those of their Biblical counterparts, their personalities were not basically altered from the original

conceptions. However, this situation is not the case in many of the York characterizations of major Biblical characters. One of the most varied portrayals in the York Cycle is the "Christ image," which one would otherwise naturally expect to be comparatively stock. Even though the York playwrights, in most instances, judiciously adhered to Christ's Biblical sayings, they, nevertheless, altered His general demeanor through the vernacularization of his language. Thus, by modifying Christ's language, they changed the Christ image to suit the immediate situations which they endeavored to convey. For example, in Play XX (Christ with the Doctors in the Temple), Jesus' speech, in any literary sense, is not readily distinguishable from those of the other characters, although His remarks to the learned doctors appear to be slightly boastful: "To lerne of you nedis me no thing. / For I knawe both youre dedys and sawes." (ll. 87-88). One cannot ascertain whether this boastful attitude were intentional; perhaps, however, it was accidental, but it recurs in a following assertion: "I wote als wele as yhe / Howe þat youre lawes wer wrought." (ll. 93-94). Furthermore, one observes that Jesus' language in the rehearsal of the Ten Commandments is highly secularized. First, one of the doctors reads the first commandment from his book; but Jesus, without the aid of the written word, recites the second commandment:

3e nedes non othir bokes to bring,

But fandis þis for to fulfill.
 The secounde may men preue
 And clerly knawe, wher by
 Youre neighbours shall 3e loue,
 Als youre selffe, sekirly,
 This comaunded Moyses to all men,
 In his x comaundementis clere,
 In þer ij biddings, schall we kene,
 Hyngis all þe lawe þat we shall lere.
 (11. 151-160)

To emphasize the importance of the first two commandments,
 Jesus admonishes the hearers to obey without fail:

Whoso ther two fulfille than
 With mayne and myght in gode manere,
 He traylye fulfillis all þe ten
 Dat aftir folowes in feere.
 (11. 161-164)

Again, He repeats the first two commandments:

Dan schulde we god honnoure,
 With all youre myght and mayne,
 And loue wele ilkea neighbour
 Right as youre selfe, certayne.
 (11. 165-168)

The doctors marvel at Jesus' knowledge in one so young of
 age; and they urge him to continue in his recitation. With-
 out hesitation, He complies:

The ij biddis whare so 3e goo,
 Dat 3e schall halowe þe halyday,
 Than is þe fourthe for frende or foo,
 That fadir and modir honnoure ay.
 The v^{te} you biddis noght for to sloo
 No man nor woman by any way.
 The vj^{te}, suthly to see,
 Comaundis both more and myne,
 That thei schalle fande to flee
 All filthes of flesshely synne.
 The vij^{te} forbedis you to stele
 3oure neighboures goodes, more or lesse,
 Whilke fautez nowe are founden fele
 Emang þer folke þat ferly is.

The viij^{te} lernes 3ou for to be lele,
 Here for to bere no false witesse.
 3oure neighbours house, whilkis 3e haue hele,
 The ix^{te} biddis take nozt be stresse.
 His wiffe nor his woman
 The x^{te} biddis nozt coveyte.
 They are þe biddingis x,
 Whoso will lelly layte.

(11. 171-192)

One notes, herein, that the original chronology of the commandments has been altered slightly, for no apparent reason; but even more interesting, perhaps, is the obvious inclusion of various analogies from everyday life, possibly to make the recitation more significant to the medieval audience.

One may perceive a similar pattern of vernacularization in Play XXI (The Baptism of Jesus). Here, Jesus talks to John of the virtues of baptism and explains to him the reasons for His own baptism. The speech is presented in common terms of the day, perhaps to make it more meaningful to the audience. Jesus tells John that all mankind must be baptized because it is the only means to eternal bliss:

John, kynde of man is freele
 To þe whilke þat I haue me knytte,
 But I shall shewe þe skyllyis twa,
 Ðat þou schallt knawe by kyndly witte
 By-cause why I haue ordand swa;
 and ane is þis,
 Mankynde may nozt vn-baptymde go
 to endless blys.

(11. 84-91)

Jesus vows that He will be baptized as an example for all mankind:

And sithen my selffe haue taken mankynde

For men schall me per myrroure make,
 I haue my doying in ther mynde,
 And also I do be baptyme take.

I will for-thy
 Myselfe be baptiste, for ther sake,
 full oppynly.

(11. 92-98)

He, then, explains that because of His baptism, the baptismal water hereafter shall be Holy:

Anodir skill I schall be tell,
 My wille is pis, pat fro pis day,
 Di vertue of my baptyme dwelle
 In baptyme-watir euere and ay,
 Mankynde to taste,
 Thurgh my grace perto to take alway
 be haly gaste.

(11. 99-105)

Amplification occurs in the content, since the Scriptural source is far less descriptive.¹⁴² In the play, the virtues of baptism are emphasized to a far greater degree than they are in the original, probably for didactic purposes.

In Play XXII (The Temptation of Jesus), Christ's replies when tempted by the devil are also generally more elaborate than those contained in their Biblical sources. The playwright shows an abundance of what one may call stock expressions in his version, thus extending the passages. For example, Jesus' refusal to be tested on the pinnacle clearly illustrates this method of expansion. Here, Satan orders Christ to fall from the heights to determine if He be the

¹⁴²Matthew iii. 13-15.

Son of God, assuming that He will escape injury in the protection of angels. Jesus angrily replies:

Late be, warlow, they wordis kene,
 For wryten it is, with-uten wene,
 They god pou schall not tempte with tene,
 nor with discorde;
 Ne quarell schall pou none mayntene
 agaynste pi lorde.
 And perfore trowe pou, with-uten trayne,
 Dat all pi gaudes schall no thyng gayne,
 Be subgette to pi souereyne
 arely and late.

(ll. 115-124)

In this passage, the Scriptural statements are found in ll. 116 and 117; the remainder of the speech is the result of the playwright's additions. Furthermore, one observes that the two Biblical versions of this passage are more directly stated.¹⁴³ Christ's anger is depicted in several other York plays. For example, in Play XXVIII (The Agony and the Betrayal), Christ is angered on two occasions by inattentive attitudes of His disciples who have fallen asleep during their vigil as He prayed (ll. 66-67; 98-101). In Play XXXVI (Mortificacio Cristi), Christ reprimands His mother for revealing her inability to accept God's will by lamenting His death (ll. 144-147).

A milder and more dignified "Christ image" emerges in Play XXVII (The Last Supper), perhaps because of the proximity of the dramatic version of the original source. Jesus'

¹⁴³Matthew iv. 7; Luke iv. 12.

speech following the washing of the disciples' feet has been amplified, but the first five lines are almost synonymous with the original:¹⁴⁴

3oure lorde and maistir 3e me call,
 And so I am, all welthe to welde,
 Here haue I kneid vnto 3ou all,
 To wasshe youre feete as 3e haue feled.
 Ensaumple of me take 3e schall
 Euer for to 3eme in 3oupe and elde,
 To be buxsome in boure and hall,
 Ilkone for to bede othir belde.
 For all if 3e be trewe
 And lele of loue ilkone,
 3e schall fynde othir ay newe,
 To greue when I am gone.

(ll. 60-71)

Jesus' answers given at His trials generally are closely allied with the Biblical sources. For example, in Play XXIX (Peter Denies Jesus. Jesus Examined by Caiaphas), Jesus' reply to Caiaphas' inquiry if He is truly the Son of God is a condensed statement of the major points found in the original source: "Sir, þou says it þi selffe, and sothly I saye, / Ðat I schall go to my fadir þat I come froo, / And dwelle with hym wynly in welthe all-way." (ll. 295-297). At the time of His crucifixion, Jesus' comments also closely resemble the Biblical sources, particularly in the matter of content. An incident involving the two thieves and Christ, as they are near death upon the crosses, is preserved in the play much as it is in the Biblical source, the remarks of the

¹⁴⁴John xiii. 13-15.

thieves being almost synonymous in both versions. However, Christ's reply is a synthesis of several Scriptural verses.¹⁴⁵ One of the thieves mockingly tells Jesus to save Himself and them if He really is Christ; but the other asserts that the two thieves are justly condemned, whereas Jesus has committed no wrong. Whereupon, Jesus commends the second thief:

For sothe, sonne, to be schall I saie,
 Sen pou fro thy foly will falle,
 With me schall dwelle nowe þis daye,
 In paradise place principall.
 Heloy! heloy!
 My God, my God, full free,
 Lamazabatanye,
 Whar-to for-soke pou me,
 In care?
 And I did neuere ille
 Dis dede for to go tille,
 But be it at þi wille.
 A! me thristis sare.

(ll. 209-221)

In all of the examples depicting the various changes in the York "Christ image," language has been the tool by which the modifications were achieved. Generally speaking, the altered characterization was simply a matter of vernacularized language, and not a modification of original subject matter. In the same way, Christ's Mother, Mary, acquired a diversity of personalities in these York plays. Her meek and mild manner of the early portrayals before the time of Christ's birth now gives way to a highly vernacularized presentation of her

¹⁴⁵Luke xxiii. 43; John xix. 28; Mark xv. 34.

character as she assumes the role of motherhood and is beset with the multitude of problems inherent to the role of the Mother of Christ. Some of these more secularized characterizations of Mary will be examined later as examples of innovated incidents in the York Cycle.

Any number of additional examples may be cited to illustrate the facility of the York playwrights to embellish the characterizations of major Biblical personages. Therefore, it is not too presumptuous for one to conclude that in the York Cycle, at least, the matter of innovations was not confined solely to the less important characters of the Biblical narratives, a theory which has long been accepted by many medieval scholars.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, a large number of the minor characters in the York plays became almost as essential to the story in which they appeared, as did the major personages, because of their embellishments. The part which they played in the telling of the story, however, varied with the basic subject matter of the play and, of course, with the ingenuity of the playwright. Sometimes their dramatic purpose seems to have been to amplify the characterization of a principal personage; at other times, to introduce new action, or summarize previous sequences. One may consider the children of Noah, (Play IX: Noah and

¹⁴⁶Chambers, op. cit., II, 90.

His Wife: The Flood and Its Waning), as minor characters whose purpose is to emphasize the major characters and happenings. For example, the scene between Mrs. Noah and her son achieves several ends, when she is finally persuaded to go to her husband in the ark: i.e., Mrs. Noah is introduced to the audience for the first time; the Christian teaching of obedience is exemplified in the son's efforts to comply with his father's demands; and the action of the next scene is introduced:

i fil. Where are ye, modir myne?
Come to my fadir sone.

Vxor. What sais pou? sone?

i fil. Moder, certeyne
My ffadir thynkis to flitte full ferre.
He biddis you haste with al youre mayne.
Vnto hym, pat no thyng you marre.

Vxor. 3a! good sone, hy be faste agayne,
And telle hym I wol come no narre.

i fil. Dame, I wolde do youre bidding fayne,
But yow bus wende, els bese it warre.

Vxor. Werre! pat wolde I witte.
We bowrde al wrange, I wene.

i fil. Modir, I saie you yitte,
My ffadir is bowne to flitte.

Vxor. Now, certis, I sall nougt sitte,
Or I se what he mene.

(11. 55-70)

The children assist their father in his efforts to entice Mrs. Noah into the ark; and help to tell the story of the flood: "Beis mery, modir, and mend youre chere, / This

worlde beis drowned with-outen drede." (ll. 103-104). They, also, emphasize the reason for their being spared the waters: "Goode lorde! on vs pou luke, / And sesse oure sorow sere, / Sen we al synne for soke / And to thy lare vs toke." (ll. 247-250).

In Play XI (The Departure of the Israelites from Egypt, the Ten Plagues, and the Passage of the Red Sea), the officers of Pharaoh and the Egyptians are bearers of necessary information. The First Counsellor instructs Pharaoh about the Jews of Goshen:

The felons folke, Sir, first was fonn
 In kyng Pharo zoure fadyr dayse;
 Thay come of Joseph, Jacob sonn,
 That was a prince worthy to prayse,
 And sithen in ryste furthe are they run,
 Now ar they like to lose our layse.
 Thay sall confounde vs clene,
 Bot if pai sonner sese.

(ll. 39-46)

He tells Pharaoh, also, of the Israelite who will become their leader:

Lorde, we have herde oure ffadres telle,
 Howe clerkis, pat ful wele couthe rede,
 Saide, a man shulde wax pam emell,
 That suld for-do vs and owre dede.

(ll. 63-66)

Because Pharaoh has refused the Israelites permission to leave his country, God sends His vengeance upon the land and the people in the form of ten plagues. As far as the action of the play is concerned, these adversities do not take place in the sight of the viewers, but are the subjects of various

reports from the Egyptians. For example, the First Egyptian describes the first plague, the turning of the waters into blood:

Sir kyng, slyk care was neuere kende.
 Oure watir þat was ordand
 To men and beestis fudde,
 Thurghoute al Egipte lande
 Is turned to rede blude;
 Full vgly and full ill is it,
 Dat was ful faire and fresshe before.
 (ll. 260-266)

The other plagues are reported by the Egyptian advisers and soldiers, as they occur. Pharaoh's authority is exemplified in the display of loyalty in his officers and counsellors, who willingly obey his commands throughout the course of the play. For example, when he orders them to pursue Moses and the Jews, the Egyptian officers unhesitatingly obey:

Lorde, to youre bidding we er boune,
 Owre bodies baldely for to bede,
 We sall nocht byde, but dyng þam doune,
 Tylle all be dede, with-ouen drede.
 (ll. 397-400)

As they are swallowed up by the Red Sea at the end of the play, the First Egyptian's desperate cry summarizes the cause of their destruction: "Allas! we dye, for alle our dede." (l. 404).

In Play XIII (Joseph's Trouble about Mary), the servants of Mary are secondary personages whose primary function is to amplify the characterization of a leading individual, their mistress. Mary has been degraded by her husband,

Joseph, who believes that she has been unfaithful to their marriage vows. In loyalty to Mary, the servants attempt to redeem her, by assuring Joseph that she has, in no way, sinned. The First Servant vows that she has been with Mary at all times, and that no man has come to Mary:

If 3e threte als faste as yhe can,
 Dare is noght to saie pare till,
 For trulye her come neuer noman,
 To waite her body with non ill,
 Of this swete wight.
 For we haue dwelt ay with her still,
 And was neuere fro hir day nor nyght.
 Hir kepars haue we bene
 and sho ay in oure sight,
 Come here no man bytwene
 to touche þat berde so bright.
 (11. 112-122)

The other servant, to verify her mistress' chastity, unwittingly provides Joseph with further cause for slander, when she tells of the angel who comes each day to feed Mary with "bodily foode." The "Angel" is interpreted by Joseph to be a man in disguise:

Na, here come noman in þere wanes,
 And þat euere witnesse will we,
 Saue an Aungell ilke a day anes,
 With bodily foode hir fedde has he,
 Othir come nane.
 Wharfore we ne wate how it shulde be,
 But thurgh þe haly gaste allone.
 For trewly we trowe þis,
 is grace with hir is gone,
 For sho wroght neuere no mys,
 we witnesse euere ilkane.
 (11. 123-132)

Even though Joseph refuses to accept the testimonies of the servants, they have accomplished their purpose and have pre-

sented Mary in a different light, contrary to Joseph's derogatory remarks made at the beginning of the play.

In the first portion of Play XXIV (The Woman Taken in Adultery: the Raising of Lazarus), a group of Jews accuses a woman of committing adultery. Although they play an important part in the development of the story, these Jews must still be considered as minor characters. Their manifold functions in the play are comparable to those of Noah's children, in that they amplify the characterization of a major personage, they review the major points of the story, and they introduce new actions into the play. The First Jew is anxious to have the offender punished:

Leppe fourthe, late vs no lenger stande,
 But smertely pat oure gere wer grayde,
 Dis felowe pat we with folye fande,
 Late haste vs fast pat she wer flayed.
 (ll. 1-4)

The second accuser pledges to bear witness against the woman:

We will bere witnesse and warande
 How we hir raysed all vnarayed,
 Agaynste þe lawes here of oure lande
 Wher sche was with hir leman laide.
 (ll. 5-8)

They both agree that the offense merits the strictest punishment:

- i Judeus. 3aa, and he a wedded manne,
 Dat was a wikkid synne.
- ii Jud. Dat bargayne schall sche banne,

With bale nowe or we blynne.
 (11. 9-12)

And, as the accused attempt to steal away, the First Jew name calls and reminds them of their sin:

A! ffalse stodmere and stynkand stroye,
 How durste pou stele so stille away!
 To do so vilauce avowtry,
 Dat is so grete agaynste oure lay.
 (11. 13-16)

Finally, the ultimate punishment for adultery is prophecied by the second accuser:

Hir bawdery schall she dere abyge,
 For as we sawe, so schall we saye,
 And also hir wirkyng is worthy
 Sho schall be demed to ded pis day.
 (11. 17-20)

Because the script embodies two subjects, the playwright developed a bridge between the two actions in a short sequence in which a messenger comes to Jesus, bearing a request from Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, that Jesus come to their ailing brother:

Jesu, pat es prophett veray,
 My ladys Martha & Marie,
 If pou fouchesaffe, pai wolde þe pray
 For to come vn-to Bethany.
 He whom pou loues full wele alway
 Es seke, and like, lord, for to dye.
 Yf pou wolde come, amende hym pou may,
 And comforte all þat cumpany.
 (11. 98-106)

Probably the most important lesson to be gleaned from the series of York plays is that of the salvation of man through Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. In the

plays which deal with Christ's agony, the minor characters are of utmost importance since they usually perform the malicious acts against Him. The soldiers, of course, are His most brutal tormentors, and in Play XXXIII (The Second Trial before Pilate Continued; the Judgment of Jesus), they taunt Him unmercifully. First, they strip Him:

iv Mil. Late vs gete of his gere, God giffe hym ille grace.

i Mil. Dai ere tytt of tite, lo! take þer his trasshes.

iii Mil. Nowe knytte hym in þis corde.

(ll. 349-352)

Then, they beat Him until He faints:

ii Mil. I am caut in þis case.

iv Mil. He is bun faste, nowe bete on with bittir brasshis.

i Mil. Go on, lepis, har 3e, lordyngis, with lasshes, And enforce we þis faitour to flay hym.

ii Mil. Late vs friffe to hym derfly with dasshes, Alle rede with oure rowtes we aray hym And rente hym.

iii Mil. For my parte I am prest for to pay hym.

iv. Mil. 3a, sende hym sorow, assaye hym.

i Mil. Take hym þat I haue tome for to tente hym.

ii Mil. Swyng to this swyre, to swiftly he swete.

iii Mil. Swete may þis swayne for sweght of our swappes!

iv Mil. Russhe on this rebald and hym rathely rehetel!
(ll. 353-366)

To arouse Jesus, the soldiers flail Him, again:

- i Mil. Rehete hym I rede you with rowtes and rappes!
- ii Mil. For all oure noy, pis nygard he nappes.
- iii Mil. We sall wakken hym with wynde of oure whippes.
- iv Mil. Nowe flynge to pis flaterer with flappes.
(11. 367-370)

When Jesus does not ask for mercy, the soldiers continue their physical attacks upon Him:

- i Mil. I sall hertely hitte on his hippes
and haunch.
- ii Mil. Fra oure skelpes not scatheles he skypes.
- iii Mil. 3itt hym list not lyft vp his lippis,
And pray vs to haue pety on his paunch.
- iv Mil. To haue petie of his paunche he propheres no
prayer.
- i Mil. Lorde, how likis thou pis lake and pis lare
pat lere 3ou?
- ii Mil. Lo, I pull at his pilche, I am proud payer.
- iii Mil. Thus youre cloke sall we cloute to clence you
and clere 3ou.
(11. 371-376)

At a later point in the same play, the soldiers again torment Jesus, and deride Him:

- i Mil. Aue! riall roy and rex judeorum!
Hayle! comely kyng, pat no kyngdom has kende,
Hayll! vndughty duke, pi dedis ere dom,
Hayll! man, vnmyghty pi menze to mende.
- iii Mil. Hayll! lord with-out lande for to lende,
Hayll! kyng, hayll! knave vnconand.
- iv Mil. Hayll! freyke, without forse pe to fende.
Hayll! strang, pat may not wele stand
to stryve.

i Mil. We! harlott, heve vp thy hande,
 And vs all þat þe wirschip are wirkand
 Thanke vs, þer ill mot þou þryve.
 (ll. 409-420)

These malicious acts of the soldiers against Christ established in these early scenes are further magnified almost beyond credibility as they later prepare Him for crucifixion. These more extensive episodes illustrate the ingenuity of the York playwrights in amplifying Scripturally sound notations beyond the original proportions of theme, and will also be examined later as innovated incidents.

Again, examples of embellished characterizations are limitless among the minor personages in the York plays. In addition, these secondary characters oftentimes were made to be as important to the development of the action, because of these amplifications, as the personages of greater Biblical significance.

Frequently the embellishment of either a minor or major character apparently suggested to the York playwright an additional scene in which these characters could participate without seriously disrupting the main theme of the play. At other times, he seems to have been inspired by a particular point in the initial story which could be appropriately developed into an enlightening or entertaining episode that would enhance the primary lesson. And, finally, the York playwright evidently constructed scenes by amplifying Bibli-

cal suggestions or implications. These innovated episodes serve many purposes, as do the amplifications of original characters. In the samplings of the York characterizations already discussed, one finds numerous instances in which the amplified characterization itself apparently suggested the further development of a scene. For example, the children of Noah are only casually mentioned in the Bible; but in the play, they are functioning beings who illustrate the Christian virtue of obedience by their efforts to assist their father in his plight with their mother, and later, in their thankful prayers to God for sparing them from the waters. They also help tell the story of the progress of the flood with their intermittent remarks throughout the play concerning its devastation; and they cause the characterization of Mrs. Noah to become more vivid with their coaxings and their explanations of the happenings, and, of course, their display of filial kindness and consideration to her when she misconstrues each of Noah's statements about the situation. One cannot consider the children of Noah to be "colorful" personages, but neither can he deny their importance to the story. It is clear, then, that the author of Play IX used a slight Biblical suggestion to its fullest dramatic advantage by amplifying certain characters and constructing scenes around them in order to emphasize the major lessons of the plot. One may perceive similar compositional patterns emerg-

ing in many other incidents of amplified characters which reveal how adept the York playwrights were in using every available means of making their presentations instructive and entertaining.

Innovated sequences involving both major and minor characters occur frequently throughout the York Cycle. Some embellishments of the source serve as entertaining moments of relief from the more provocative sections of the plot. Others are used as instruments for clarifying or emphasizing the major lessons of the plays; and still others are combinations of enlightenment and entertainment. For example, the Hell scene in Play I is both enlightening and entertaining. In a series of plays which has as a basis the story of man's salvation, the depiction of Hell is of the utmost importance, because it is the ultimate punishment for those who deny God's way. In Hell, Lucifer is a miserable lost soul deprived of the attributes he so arrogantly flaunted during his existence in a state of bliss. Consequently, the first lesson in the York treatment of Lucifer's fall concerns man's inevitable punishment for self-esteem and disobedience. Next, the play depicts some of the torments which Lucifer must endure in Hell as "just" punishments for his sins. Lucifer's first concern is to escape the intense heat of Hell's fire: "Owte owte! harrowe! / helples, slyke hote at es here," (ll. 97-98). But as part of the atonement

Lucifer has been deprived of his handsome demeanor, a loss which is as torturous to him as is the heat:

This es a dongon of dole þat I am to-dyghte,
 Whare es my kynde be-come, so cumly and clere,
 Nowe am I laytheeste, allas! þat are was lighte.
 My bryghtnes es blakkeste and blo nowe;
 (ll. 99-102)

In the foregoing speech, Lucifer refers to Hell as a "dongon of dole," and then he elaborates upon the wretched state of the surroundings: "My bale es ay betande and brynande, / That gares ane go gowlande and gyrnande. / Owte! ay welaway! I well enew in wo nowe!" (ll. 103-105). Next, these undesirable conditions and eternal torments of Hell are reemphasized in the wails of a second lost soul who bemoans his woe:

"Owte! owte! I go wode for wo, my wytte es all wente nowe, / All oure fode es but filth, we fynde vs beforne, / We þat ware beelled in blys in bale are we brent nowe," (ll. 106-108).

Reluctant, however, to accept the blame for his plight, he angrily turns upon Lucifer, casting the guilt upon him:

Owte! on þe Lucifer, lurdan! oure lyghte has þu lorne.
 Di dedes to þis dole nowe has dyghte vs,
 To spill vs þu was oure spedar,
 For thow was oure lyghte and oure ledar,
 De hegheste of heuen hade þu hyght vs.
 (ll. 109-113)

Lucifer appears not to hear him, though, seeming to be lost in his own sorrow: "Walaway! wa! es me now, nowe es it war thane it was. / Vnthryuandely threpe zhe, I sayde but a thoghte." (ll. 114-115). Determined to place the blame upon Lucifer, the other devil once more accuses him: "We! lurdane,

pu lost vs." (l. 116). This time, Lucifer hears his accuser but quickly denies the guilt, calling the other devil a liar and denying that he had known beforehand that they would have been punished in this manner: "3he ly, owte! allas! / I wyste noghte þis wo sculde be wroghte. / Owte on 3how! lurdans, 3he smore me in smoke." (ll. 117-119). The other devil, however, will not accept Lucifer's excuses and reiterates: "This wo has þu wroghte vs." (l. 120). Again, Lucifer calls him a liar: "3he ly, 3he ly!" (l. 121). The Hell scene ends with the enraged devil's gathering together some of his peers and converging upon Lucifer to inflict bodily harm: "Thou lyes, and þat sall þu by, / We lurdans haue at 3owe, lat loke." (ll. 122-123). One hardly disputes the effectiveness of this scene as an edifying device; neither can he overlook the many entertaining aspects of the scene, such as the devils' antics in attempting to escape from their woe, or in tormenting Lucifer with accusations and physical blows at the conclusion of the scene. Here, the ingenuity of the York playwright has enabled him to compose a scene in which an important Christian tenet is both enjoyably and significantly emphasized. The foregoing scene is based upon a legend and, therefore, cannot be considered an embellishment of a particular Biblical source.

In another representation based upon a legend from The Gospel of Nicodemus, Play XXXVII (The Harrowing of Hell),

Lucifer is alluded to but does not actually participate in the activities. The other devils, however, apparently provide some lively entertainment for the viewers as they attempt to keep Christ out of Hell. Lucifer is included in Belsabub's list of devils to be summoned for council in the matter: "And bidde þame bringe also, / Lucifer louely of lyre." (ll. 118-119). The strategy of the devils is in vain, of course, and, as the gates of Hell are thrown open, Belsabub wails: "Telle Lucifer alle is vnlokynne." (l. 195). The prison image of Hell conveyed in one of Lucifer's earlier speeches is repeated in this play in the scene in which the devils are restrained by chains: "Oute! beholdes, oure baill is brokynne, / And brosten are alle oure bandis of bras." (ll. 196-197).

Unlike the Lucifer sequence, several other scenes in the York Cycle having to do with Hell or Satan are amplifications of the Scriptural sources. In Play XXII (The Temptation of Jesus), Satan resembles the Fallen Lucifer to the degree of speaking like him, and yet, he is a Biblical character. In the first part of the play, Satan unsuccessfully tempts Jesus, and is later ordered to return to Hell because of his blasphemy. Here, he displays his utter disappointment, in having to return to Hell, in terminology similar to that which Lucifer used in Play I:

Owte! I dar nozt loke, allas!

Itt is warre pan euere it was,
 He musteres what might he has
 hye mote he hang!
 Folowes fast, for me bus pas
 to paynes strang.
 (ll. 175-180)

The image of Hell as a dungeon is again apparent in Play XXIII (The Transfiguration). Moses has been summoned from Hell to bear witness to the Transfiguration. He identifies himself by saying that he is the one to whom God gave the Tablets and confessing that his home has been in Hell. He also says that Christ is the "same" who will eventually come to free them:

And sythen in helle has bene oure hame,
 Allas! Adam's kynne pis schall 3e knawe,
 Vn-to crist come, pis is be same,
 Dat vs schall fro pat dongeon drawe.
 (ll. 125-128)

The speeches of Moses and Satan are obvious outgrowths of Scriptural suggestions, and are examples of the York embellishments of both characterization and incident.

There are innumerable innovated scenes in the York Cycle which were suggested by Biblical incidents or figures. In Play XXVI (The Conspiracy to Take Jesus), the Biblical narrative of Judas' betrayal of Jesus has been elaborated with an innovated episode centering around Judas' plea for entrance into Pilate's court for the purpose of presenting his play of betrayal. A similar situation is not recorded in the Biblical account of the betrayal of Jesus, even though

Judas did, of course, consult Pilate.¹⁴⁷ As a teaching device, the sequence stresses two points: Judas' loathsome personality and the wickedness of his crime. Judas asks the Porter to admit him, but the Porter is wary of his looks, and refuses to open the gate:

Jud. Do open, porter, be porte of bis prowde place,
That I may passe to youre princes
To proue for youre prowde.

Jani. Go hense, pou glorand gedlyng!
God geue be ille grace,
Thy glyfftyng is so grymly
Dou gars my harte growe.
(ll. 155-161)

Again, Judas asks permission to enter; and, again, the Porter refuses, telling Judas that he can see by his countenance that he is a treacherous person:

Jud. Goode sir, be toward bis tyme,
And tarie noght my trace,
For I haue tythandis to telle.

Jani. 3e, som tresoune I trowe,
For I fele by a figure in youre fals face,
It is but foly to feste affeccioun in zou.
For Mars he hath morteessed his mark,
Eftir all lynes of my lore,
And sais 3e are wikkid of werk,
And bothe a strange theffe and a stark.
(ll. 162-171)

Even though Judas becomes enraged with the Porter's stubbornness, the Porter still refuses to open the gate, another example of the York tendency to embellish the original source:

¹⁴⁷Matthew xxvi. 14-15.

Jud. Sir, þus at my berde and 3e berk
It semes it schall sitte yow full sore.

Jani. Say, bittilbrowed bribour,
Why blowes þou such boste?
Full false in thy face in faith can I fynde
Ðou arte combered in curstnesse
And caris to þis coste;
To marre men of myght
Haste þou marked in thy mynde.

(11. 172-180)

Judas insists that his intentions are not malicious, but the
Porter can see only malice in Judas' face:

Jud. Sir, I mene of no malice
But mirthe meve I muste.

Jani. Say on, hanged harlott,
I holde þe vn-hende,
Thou lokist like a lurdayne
His liffelod hadde loste.
Woo schall I wirke þe away but þou wende!

(11. 181-187)

Once more, Judas pleads for admission. Finally, he begins to
interest the Porter by suggesting that the latter's "duge-
peres" may be spared sorrow if Judas may speak to them:

Jud. A! goode sir, take tente to my talkyng þis tyde,
For tythandis full trew can I telle.

Jani. Say, brethell, I bidde þe abide,
Ðou chaterist like a churle þat can chyde.

Jud. 3a, sir, but and þe truthe schulde be trayed,
Of mythe are þer materes I mell.
For thurgh my dedis youre dugeperes
Fro dere may be drawen.

(11. 188-195)

Not completely understanding Judas' business, here, the
Porter is reluctant to open the gate but decides to announce
in the hall that Judas is waiting to speak to the master:

Jani. What! demes pou till oure dukes
That doole schulde be dight?

Jud. Nay, sir, so saide I noght,
If I be callid to counsaillie
Dat cause schall be knawen
Emang pat comely companye,
To clerke and to knyght.

Jani. Byde me here, bewchere,
Or more blore be blowen,
And I schall buske to be benke
Wher baneres are bright,
And saie vnto oure souereynes,
Or seede more be sawen,
Dat swilke a seege as be selff
Sewes to per sight.

(ll. 196-210)

One notes that the Porter finally agreed to speak to his master about Judas only after becoming concerned for the safety of his superior. This open concern for others is a human trait, and its incorporation into the Porter's characterization makes both character and situation more credible.

A similar episode, insofar as it, too, incorporates the "permission device," and is an elaboration of a Biblical suggestion occurs in Play XXV (The Entry into Jerusalem upon the Ass). Jesus sends Peter and Philip to get an ass for Him to ride through the streets of Jerusalem. In the Biblical account, these two disciples perform the task without incident.¹⁴⁸ The York playwright, however, seized an oppor-

¹⁴⁸Matthew xxi. 1-11; Luke xix. 28-44.

tunity to emphasize orthodox Christian beliefs and to prolong the major action of the play, i.e., the ride of Jesus. When Peter and Philip arrive at the "castell" they are delayed by a Porter from taking the beast:

Saie, what are 3e pat makis here maistrie,
 To loose pes bestis with-owte leverie?
 Yow semes to bolde, sen noght pat 3e
 Hase here to do, perfore rede I
 such pingis to sesse,
 Or ellis 3e may falle in folye
 and grette disease.

(ll. 64-70)

The Porter obviously thinks them presumptuous for taking the beast without permission especially since they are total strangers. And so, Peter asks permission: "Sir, with pi leue hartely we praye / Dis beste pat we myght haue." (ll. 71-72). But the Porter must first know the reason for their needing the beast: "To what in-tente, firste shall 3e saye? / And pan I graunte what 3e will craue, / Be gode resoune." (ll. 73-75). Philip answers: "Oure maister, Sir, pat all may saue, / Aske by chesoune." (ll. 76-77). The Porter is a little angry to think that a total stranger could believe that He had a right to the beast: "What man is pat 3e maistir call? / Swilke priuelege dare to hym clayme." (ll. 78-79). Peter's answer is filled with Christian edification:

Jesus of Jewes kyng, and ay be schall,
 Of Nazareth prophete be same,
 Dis same is he,
 Both god and man, with-uten blame,

Dis trist wele we.
 (ll. 80-84)

The Porter has heard of Jesus, but wishes to know where He is: "Sirs, of þat prophette herde I haue, / But tele me firste playnly, wher is hee?" (ll. 85-86). Philip tells the Porter that Jesus awaits them at Bethphage: "He comes at hande, so god me saue, / Dat lorde we lefte at Bephage, / He bidis vs pere." (ll. 87-89). The Porter gives them permission to take the ass, but he also offers to go ahead into Jerusalem to announce the coming of Jesus:

Sir, take þis beste, with herte full free,
 And forthe 3e fare.
 And if 3ou thynke it be to done,
 I schall declare playnly his comyng
 To the chiffe of þe Jewes, þat þei may sone
 Assemble same to his metyng,
 What is your rede?

(ll. 90-96)

Peter commends the Porter for his thoughtfulness and assures him that his beast will be restored:

Dou sais full wele in thy menyng,
 Do forthe þi dede.
 And sone þis beste we schall þe bring,
 And it restore as resoune will.

(ll. 97-100)

Here, again, York amplification of a character has resulted in a completely innovated episode. The Porter does not appear in the Biblical source, but the York playwright has chosen to embellish the incident, thereby emphasizing important Christian doctrines. The amplification of the role of the Porter is further utilized in the following sequence of

the play when to the people of Jerusalem he announces the coming of Jesus (ll. 101-117). In this capacity, the Porter bridges the two major portions of this play, as did the Messenger in Play XXIV. The Porter in the Judas sequence magnified the faults of a stranger, just as the Porter in the other episode helped to emphasize the virtues of Christ.

In Play VII (Sacrificium Cayme et Abell), Cain and his servant have an unpleasant encounter over the matter of grain which the servant had assumed that his master would offer to God. In the first portion of this play, Abel had tried to persuade Cain to make a sacrifice, but the belligerent Cain had blasphemously refused. The servant, unaware that his master has refused to fulfill this sacrifice to God, brings him a bundle of the finest grain:

Lo! Mr. Cayme, what shares bryng I,
 Evyn of the best for to bere seyde.
 And to the feylde I wyll me hye
 To fetch you moo, if ye haue neyd.
 (ll. 73-76)

This act angers Cain: "Come vp! sir knave! the devyll the speyd, / Ye will not come by ye be prayd." (ll. 77-78). In his rage, the actor playing Cain may have advanced toward the servant causing him to stub his toe upon an object, since the servant next painfully wails: "O! maister Caym, I haue broken my to!" (l. 79). Nevertheless, Cain ignores him and, instead of sympathy, offers him drink: "Come vp, syr, for my thyrst, / Ye shall drynke or ye goo." (ll. 80-81). The

proposed drinking episode is interrupted by the appearance of an Angel, however, and at this point, the servant is no longer a part of the scene. In this play, again, is evident the ability of a York playwright to amplify the characterization of a minor character and compose a scene in which this embellishment can appropriately be used to magnify the undesirable traits of a major character. Thus, two Biblical figures, Judas and Cain, whose loathsome characters are conveyed in the original narratives become even more vivid to the medieval viewers through the actions and remarks of amplified minor characters.

Two similar innovations occur in Plays XXX and XXXI, with minor characters exemplifying the traits of major personages. In these instances, pomposity, not wickedness, is the motivation for the action. One discovers that both sequences are more entertaining than enlightening, since they both center around Herod's and Pilate's elaborate preparations for retiring. Their exaggerated bed-time rituals are performed with the aid of their servants. In Play XXX (The Dream of Pilate's Wife: Jesus before Pilate), the retirement episode is one phase of a lengthy innovated sequence. First, Pilate, his wife and son, and members of his court participate in late evening revelry. When the hour grows late, they retire to their separate chambers, and Pilate's chamber becomes the setting for the episode. Inci-

dentally, one should point out that this scene also presages Pilate's being awakened by the news that the soldiers have brought Jesus to him for trial. Pilate remarks to a servant that since his wife has retired he, too, will retire. His pomposity, already established elsewhere in his speeches of power and self-esteem, is now epitomized in his desire to be "rychely arayed," even upon retiring:

Nowe wente is my wiffe, yf it wer not hir will,
 And scho rakis tille hir reste as of no thyng scho
 rought.
 Tyme is, I telle þe, þou tente me vntill,
 And buske þe belyue, belamy, to bedde þat y wer
 brought.
 And loke I be rychely arayed.

(11. 125-129)

Knowing his master's idiosyncrasies, the servant, one learns, has previously prepared the bed to Pilate's specifications: "Als youre seruaunte I haue sadly it sought, / And þis myght, sir, newe schall ye noght, / I dare laye, fro ye luffely be layde." (11. 130-132). Apparently Pilate must have required assistance in getting into the bed, for, here, too, he is particular and must instruct his servant:

I comaunde þe to come nere, for I will kare to my
 couche,
 Haue in thy handes hendely and heue me fro hyne,
 But loke þat þou tene me not with þi tastyng, but tendirly
 me touche,

(11. 133-136)

The servant now complains of his master's exceeding weight; but Pilate blames it on the wine, and urges him on, asking not to be disturbed in his rest:

Bed. A! sir, yhe whe wele!

Pil. Yhe, I haue wette with me wyne.
 Yhitt helde doune and lappe me even here,
 For I will slylye slepe vnto synne.
 Loke þat no man nor no myron of myne
 With no noyse be neghand me nere.
 (ll. 137-142)

In Play XXXI (Trial before Herod), the circumstances surrounding the second retirement episode are somewhat different from those in the preceding scene, since, here, Herod has just proclaimed his authority to his officers and subjects. The practical matters at hand, however, are attended to in much the same way in both sequences. After the court has been cleared, the servant suggests that Herod have drink:

Mounseniour, demene you in menske in mynde
 what I mene,
 And boune to youre bodword, for so holde I best,
 For all þe comons of þis courte bene avoude clene.
 And ilke a renke, as resoune is, are gone to þer
 reste,
 Wher-fore I counsaile my lorde, 3e comaunde you a
 drynke.

(ll. 32-36)

Herod agrees to his servant's suggestion, and then requests that they retire:

Nowe certis, I assente as þou sais,
 Se ych a qwy is wente on his ways,
 Lightly with-uten any delayes.
 Giffe vs wyne wynly and late vs go wynke,
 And se þat no durdan be done.

(ll. 37-41)

As the servant is readying the bed, Herod prepares himself for his rest, also warning that he does not wish to be disturbed in his sleep:

i Dux. My lorde, vn-lase you to lye,
Here schall none come for to crye.

Rex. Nowe spedely loke pat pou spie,
Dat no noyse be neghand þis none.

i Dux. My lorde, youre bedde is new made,
You nedis not for to bide it.
(ll. 42-47)

Herod's next remark is similar to Pilate's in the preceding sequence, as he reminds his servant to be gentle because he is "tendirly hydrid:"

Ya, but as pou luffes me hartely,
Laye me doune softely,
For þou wotte full wele
Dat I am full tendirly hydrid.
(ll. 48-51)

Apparently assisting his master into bed was a task not as difficult for Herod's servant as it was for Pilate's, since the former merely asks if Herod is comfortable: "Howe lye 3e, my goode lorde?" (l. 52). Herod assures him that he has no complaint, and, after "blessing" everyone with the protection of Satan and Lucifer, Herod bids his servant good-night:

Right wele, be þis light,
All hole at my desire,
Wherefore I praye sir Satan, oure sire,
And Lucifer moste luffely of lyre,
He sauffe you all sirs, and giffe you goode
nyght.
(ll. 53-57)

The similarities in content between these two preceding scenes are obvious. Both Pilate and Herod are particular about the manner in which their servants prepare them for bed; and in their respective remarks, their innate arrogance

is vividly displayed. At the end of the sequences, both Herod and Pilate speak of the devil, implying their allegiance to him and verifying, again, their inherent wickedness.

Another retirement episode involves Percula, Pilate's wife, and her servant. The actions in this short sequence do not seem to be as preposterous as they are in the ones concerning the kings, but the compositional pattern is similar.¹⁴⁹ The foregoing York innovations magnify the personalities of major characters through action and speeches of minor characters.

Three lengthy embellishments of the crucifixion story occur in the York Cycle and amplify the important Christian doctrines pertaining to the Passion of Christ. Here, innovation may be observed fully in all of the crucifixion episodes, as the preparations for the execution of Christ are minutely detailed, from building the cross to securing it in the ground.

In Play XXXIV (Christ Led up to Calvary), the soldiers first assemble the gear, including the cross, for the execution. The First Soldier emphasizes the urgency of the situation, by reminding the others that the task must be completed by noon:

¹⁴⁹Play XXX: The Dream of Pilate's Wife, ll. 150-158.

Oure gere be-houes to be grayde,
 And felawes sammed sone,
 For Sir Pilate has saide
 Hym bus be dede be none.
 Where is sir Wymond, wotte pou oght?
 (ll. 42-46)

His inquiry about "Wymond" is answered by the Second Soldier:

"He wente to garre a crosse be wrought / To bere pis cursed
 knave." (ll. 47-48). That haste is of the utmost importance
 is reiterated by the First Soldier: "That wolde I sone wer
 hyder brought, / For sithen schall othir gere be sought, /
 That vs be-houes to haffe." (ll. 49-51). The other soldier
 enumerates the gear which they must have in order to accom-
 plish the task:

Vs bus haue sties and ropes,
 To rugge hym tille he raue,
 And nayles and othir japes,
 If we oure selue wille saue.
 (ll. 52-55)

As the First Soldier bemoans the fact that they will all
 suffer from Wymond's delay, the absent soldier appears,
 bearing the cross:

i Mil. To tarie longe vs were full lathe,
 But Wymond come, it is in wathe
 But we be blamed all three.
 We! howe! Sir Wymond, wayt es skathe.

ii Mil. We, howe! Sir Wymond, howe?

iii Mil. I am here, what saie 3e bathe,
 Why crye 3e so on me?
 I haue bene garre make
 Dis crosse, as yhe may see,
 Of pat laye ouere pe lake,
 Men called it pe kyngis tree.
 (ll. 56-66)

One may observe two cleverly concealed viewpoints in the comments of the other soldiers about Wymond's having referred to the cross as the "kyngis tree." The First Soldier's remark that Wymond would not be punished for taking something in the name of the king emphasizes a social attitude involving allegiance and state of being: "Nowe sekirly I bought þe same, / For þat balke will noman vs blame / To cutte it for þe kyng." (ll. 67-69). A religious doctrine, Christ's Kingship, is the crux of the Second Soldier's jeering remark that the cross is rightfully used to hang one who calls Himself king:

This karle has called hym kyng at hame,
 And sen þis tre has such a name,
 It is accordyng thyng,
 Dat his rigge on it may reste,
 For skorne and for hethyng.

(ll. 70-74)

And Wymond agrees with them: "Me thoughte it semyd beste / Tille þis bargayne to bryng." (ll. 75-76). The soldiers, then, discuss the craftsmanship displayed in the cross, Wymond dispelling the First Soldier's fear that it may not be of the correct proportions, saying that he had measured their intended victim before making the cross:

i Mil. It is wele warred, so motte I spede,
 And it be lele in lengthe and brede,
 þan is þis space wele spende.

iii Mil. To loke þer-aftir it is no nede,
 I toke þe mesure or I yode,
 Bothe for þe fette and hande.

ii Mil. Be-holde howe it is boorede
 Full euen at ilke an ende,
 This werke will wele accorde,
 It may not be amende.
 (11. 77-86)

In Wymond's next remark, the playwright has injected into this innovated scene a Scripturally based point--i.e., that two thieves will also hang.¹⁵⁰ Wymond speaks also of the equipment required for their executions:

Nay, I haue ordande mekill more,
 3aa, thes theues are sente before,
 Dat beside hym schall hang;
 And sties also are ordande pore,
 With stalworthe steeles as mystir wore,
 Bothe some schorte and some lang.
 (11. 87-92)

And a short discussion about the gear precedes another sound Biblical point:

i Mil. For hameres and for nayles,
 Late see sone who schall gang.

ii Mil. Here are bragges pat will nocht faile,
 Of irnne and stele full strange.

iii Mil. Danne is it as it aweth to bee,
 But whiche of yowe schall bere pis tree,
 Sen I haue broughte it hedir?
 (11. 93-99)

This second Scriptural point concerns, of course, the allegation that Jesus bore His own cross to Calvary.¹⁵¹ The York playwright, however, points up this event by assigning the

¹⁵⁰John xix. 18.

¹⁵¹John xix. 17.

comment to the soldiers bent upon torturing their victim:

i Mil. Be my feithe bere it schall hee
Dat þer-on hanged sone schall bee,
And we schall teeche hym whedir.

ii Mil. Vppon his bakke it schalle be laide,
For sone we schall come thedir.
(ll. 100-105)

The episode ends with Wymond's giving the orders to gather the gear so that they may proceed with the task at hand:

"Loke þat oure gere be grayede, / And go we all togedir."

(ll. 104-106). Because there are only two Biblical statements in the entire sequence, it must be considered an innovation of a York playwright.

One notes a similar pattern of embellishment in Play XXXV (Crucifixio Christi), as the York author amplifies two procedures of the crucifixion which must be taken for granted in the original source--i.e., nailing Christ to the cross, and setting the cross into the ground. There are four soldiers involved in this episode; and it begins with one of the soldiers ordering Christ to lie upon his back upon the cross: "Haue done belyue, boy, and make þe boune, / And bende þi bakke vn-to þis tree." (ll. 73-74). The fourth soldier remarks about the precision with which Christ fulfilled the order: "Byhalde hym-selffe has laide hym doune, / In lenghe and breede as he schulde bee." (ll. 75-76). Because Christ has claimed that He is a king, the soldiers decide to give him a crown:

This traitoure here teynted of treasoune,
 Gose faste and fette hym þan, 3e thre.
 And sen he claymeth kyngdome with crowne,
 Even as a kyng here haue schall hee.
 (ll. 77-80)

The soldiers divide the work of securing each part of Christ's body to the cross, hoping therein to accomplish the task in a shorter period of time:

- ii Mil. Nowe, certis, I schall noȝt feyne
 Or his right hande be feste.
- iii Mil. De lefte hande þanne is myne,
 Late see who beres hym beste.
- iv Mil. Hys lymmys on lenghe þan schalle I lede,
 And even vnto þe bore þame bringe.
- i Mil. Vnto his heede I schall take hede,
 And with myne hande helpe hym to hyng.
- ii Mil. Nowe sen we foure schall do þis dede,
 And medill with þis vnthrifty thyng,
 Late no man spare for speciall speede,
 Tille þat we haue made endyng.
 (ll. 81-92)

They discuss their work as they proceed with their grim task:

- iii Mil. Dis forward may not faile,
 Nowe are we right arraiede.
- iv Mil. This boy here is oure baile
 Shall bide full bittir brayde.
- i Mil. Sir knyghtis, saie, howe wirke we nowe?
- ii Mil. 3is, certis, I hope I holde þis hande.
- iii Mil. And to þe boore I haue it brought,
 Full buxomly with-outen bande.
- iv Mil. Strike on þan harde, for hym be boght.
 (ll. 93-101)

The first soldier drives a nail into one of Christ's hands:

"3is, here is a stubbe will stiffely stande, / Thurgh bones
and senous it schall be soght. / This werke is well, I will
warande." (ll. 102-104). But another soldier has difficulty
in "fitting" the other hand to the cross:

- ii Mil. Saie, sir, howe do we pore,
Dis bargayne may not blynne.
- iii Mil. It failis a foote and more,
De senous are so gone ynne.
- iv Mil. I hope pat marke a-misse be bored.
- ii Mil. Dan muste he bide in bittir bale.
- iii Mil. In faith, it was ouere skantely scored;
Dat makis it fouly for to faile.
(ll. 105-112)

By stretching the body, however, they manage to secure the
hand to the beam:

- i Mil. Why carpe ze so? faste on a corde,
And tugge hym to, by toppe and taile.
- iii Mil. Za, pou comaundis lightly as a lorde,
Come helpe to haale, with ille haile.
- i Mil. Nowe certis pat schall I doo,
Full suerly as a snayle.
(ll. 113-118)

A nail is, then, driven into the other hand by the Third
Soldier:

And I schall tacche hym too,
Full nemely with a nayle.
Dis werke will holde, pat dar I heete,
For nowe are feste faste both his handis.
(ll. 119-122)

Obviously, the difficulty encountered by the soldiers in
trying to secure Christ's upper body to the cross was unex-

pected; but it served to make them realize that they must all work on the lower extremities, in order to complete the task on time:

iv Mil. Go we all foure panne to his feete,
So schalloure space be spedely spende.

ii Mil. Latte see, what bourde his bale myght beete,
Tharto my bakke nowe wolde I bende.

(ll. 123-126)

And again, the soldiers must use their ropes to stretch Christ's limbs into place:

iv Mil. Owe! pis werke is all vnmeete,
This boring muste all be amende.

i Mil. A! pees man, for mahounde,
Latte noman wotte pat wondir,
A roope schall rugge hym doune,
Yf all his synnous go a-soundre.

ii Mil. Dat corde full kyndely can I knytte,
De comforte of pis karle to kele.

i Mil. Feste on panne faste pat all be fyttte,
It is no force howe feele he feele.

(ll. 127-136)

One perceives the difficulty of the work in the soldiers' remarks as they tug at the body:

ii Mil. Lugge on ze both a litill zitt.

iii Mil. I schall nought sese, as I haue seele.

iv Mil. And I schall fonde hym for to hitte.

ii Mil. Owe, hayll!

iv Mil. Noo nowe, I halde it wele.

(ll. 137-141)

The first soldier drives a nail into the feet: "Haue done, dryue in pat nayle, / So pat no faute be foune." (ll. 142-

143). Having finished the job, the men retire a few feet to admire their work, as a fourth soldier compares their efforts with those necessary to restrain four bulls: "Dis wirkyng wolde nozt faile, / Yf foure bullis here were boune." (ll. 144-145). Then, they discuss Christ's suffering as a result of their tortures:

i Mil. Ther cordis haue evill encressed his paynes,
Or he wer tille þe booryngis brought.

ii Mil. 3aa, assoundir are both synnous and veynis,
On ilke a side, so haue we soughte.

iii Mil. Nowe all his gaudis no thyng hym gaynes,
His sauntering schall with bale be bought.
(ll. 146-151)

The fourth soldier is eager to report the success of the mission: "I wille goo saie to oure soueraynes / Of all þis werkis howe we haue wrought." (ll. 152-153). However, the first soldier reminds them that they must rear the cross before their task is finished:

Nay sirs, a nothir thyng
Fallis firste to noue me
I badde we schulde hym hyng,
On heghte þat men myght see.
(ll. 154-157)

While the action of the episode is appallingly grotesque, the manner in which the soldiers perform their tasks, including the stretching of Christ's body with ropes because the cross was too large, provided some relief from the otherwise distressing situation and, at the same time, heightened a sense of Christ's agony. Through the ingenuity of the York

playwright, the task of nailing Jesus to the cross began as a contest, each soldier working on a certain part of His body; but since the work was much more difficult than they had anticipated, all had to bind and nail Christ's feet. The result of their labor is epitomized in the fourth soldier's analogy to the bulls (ll. 144-145).

In the final remarks of the first soldier, the business of the next sequence is introduced. He decrees that the cross must be erected so that all may see the dying Christ (ll. 156-157). Here, too, the task of carrying the cross requires team-work, each soldier responsible for a particular part of the burden:

- iii Mil. Now certis, I hope it schall nocht nede
To calle to vs more companye.
Me-thynke we foure schulde do þis dede,
And bere hym to 3one hille on high.
- i Mil. It muste be done, with-outen drede,
Nomore, but loke 3e be redy;
And þis parte schall I lefte and leede,
On lenghe he schalle no lenger lie.
Therefore nowe makis you boune,
Late bere hym to 3one hill.
- iv Mil. Thanne will I bere here doune,
And tente his tase vntill.
- ii Mil. We twoo schall see tille aythir side,
For ellis þis werke will wrie all wrang,
- iii Mil. We are redy, in Gode, sirs, abide,
And late me first his fete vp fang.
(ll. 169-184)

Once again, the work proves to be more than they had bargained for, since they now discover that the cross is too

awkward and heavy to lift:

- ii Mil. Why tente ze so to tales pis tyde?
 i Mil. Lifte vppe!
 iv Mil. Latte see!
 ii Mil. Owe! lifte a-lang.
 iii Mil. Fro all pis harme he schulde hym hyde,
 And he war God.
 iv Mil. De deuill hym hang!
 i Mil. For grete harme haue I hente,
 My schuldir is in soundre.
 ii Mil. And sertis I am nere schente,
 So lange haue I borne vndir.
 iii Mil. This crosse and I in twoo muste twynne,
 Ellis brekis my bakke in sondre sone.
 (ll. 185-197)

They must put down the cross again: "Laye doune agayne and leue youre dynne, / Dis dede for vs will neuere be done."

(ll. 198-199). In their dilemma, the soldiers hope that Christ will be able to solve the problem for them by resorting to some sort of trickery:

- i Mil. Assaie, sirs, latte se yf any gynne,
 May helpe hym vppe, with-uten hone;
 For here schulde wight men worschippe wynne,
 And nocht with gaudis al day to gone.
 ii Mil. More wighter men pan we
 Full fewe I hope ze hynde.
 iii Mil. Dis bargayne will nocht bee,
 For certis me wantis wynde.
 iv Mil. So wille of werke neuere we wore,
 I hope pis carle some cautellis caste.

ii Mil. My bourdeyne satte me wondir soore,
 Vnto þe hill I myght noght laste.
 (ll. 200-211)

The soldiers laboriously erect the cross, in their second attempt:

i Mil. Lifte vppe, and sone he schall be þore,
 Therefore feste on youre fyngeres faste.

ii Mil. Owe, lifte!

i Mil. We, loo!

iv. Mil. A litill more.

ii Mil. Holde þanne!

i Mil. Howe nowe!

ii Mil. De werste is paste.

(ll. 212-219)

One perceives, now, a change of attitude in the soldiers' concept of Christ's body as they reflect on the difficulty of raising the cross. In the earlier sequence, they had suggested that Christ's body was perhaps small and shrunken, and, therefore, not too heavy, as they stretched it to the cross. Here, however, they refer to Christ as a heavy person because His weight has caused their difficulty:

iii Mil. He weyes a wikkid weght.

ii Mil. So may we all foure saie,
 Or he was heued on heght,
 And raysed in þis array.

iv Mil. He made vs stande as any stones,
 So boustous was he for to bere.
 (ll. 220-225)

Their most heinous act of violence upon Christ's body occurs

when they purposely drop the cross into the mortice:

i Mil. Nowe raise hym nemely for þe nonys,
 And sette hym be þis mortas heere.
 And latte hym falle in alle at ones,
 For certis þat payne schall haue no pere.

iii Mil. Heue vppe!

iv Mil. Latte doune, so all his bones
 Are a-soundre nowe on sides seere.
 (ll. 226-232)

They, too, recognize the tortures endured by Christ because of this act:

Dis fallyng was more felle,
Dan all the harmes he hadde,
Nowe may a man wele telle,
De leste lith of þis ladde.
 (ll. 233-236)

Much to their chagrin, the soldiers now discover that they have again measured incorrectly because the cross will not stand upright:

iii Mil. Me thynkith þis crosse will noght abide,
 Ne stande stille in þis morteysel zitt.

iv Mil. Att þe firste tyme was it made ouere wyde,
 Dat makis it wave, þou may wele witte.
 (ll. 237-240)

The solution to this problem is discovered by the first soldier who suggests that they drive wedges into the hole until the cross is stable:

i Mil. Itt schall be sette on ilke a side,
 So þat it schall no forther flitte,
 Goode wegges schall we take þis tyde,
 And feste þe foote, þanne is all fitte.

ii Mil. Here are wegges arraied
 For þat, both great and smale.

iii Mil. Where are oure hameres laide,
Dat we schulde wirke with all?

iv Mil. We haue þem euen atte oure hande,

ii Mil. Gyffe me þis wegge, I schall it in dryue.

iv Mil. Here is anodir zitt ordande.

iii Mil. Do take it me hidir belyue.

i Mil. Laye on þanne faste.

(11. 241-253)

The ending of this episode is similar to that concluding the earlier sequence, as the soldiers commend themselves for a job well done:

3is, I warrande.

I thryng þame same, so motte I thryve.

Nowe will þis crosse full stabely stande,

All yf he raue þei will nocht ryve.

(11. 254-257)

In view of the fact that Christ has remained silent throughout each of these innovated episodes, one must consider the remaining remarks of the soldiers as additional acts of mockery:

i Mil. Say, sir, howe likis þou nowe,
Dis werke þat we haue wrought?

iv Mil. We praye youe sais vs howe,
3e fele, or faynte 3e ought?

(11. 258-261)

One does not question the success of the soldiers in their malicious attempts to torture Christ in each of the innovated sequences. The agony which Christ must have endured as the soldiers stretched His body with ropes is exceeded only by their violence in handling the cross as they rear it and drop

it into the mortice. Christ's silence throughout His suffering was perhaps an intentional reminder to the viewers that He willingly endured untold agonies for their sake. On the evidence of these three episodes alone, one recognizes the ingenuity of the York writers whose keen perception and unfettered imagination enabled them to magnify important Christian teachings vividly as contemporary happenings.

Although the sufferings of Christ are depicted in a number of the York plays devoted generally to the story of His Passion, they are never more graphically portrayed than in the foregoing innovated sequences. A glance at some of the other plays, however, reveals that the soldiers also were the agents of torture in most of the other agony scenes. In Play XXVI (The Conspiracy to Take Jesus), the soldiers are anxious to do physical harm to Jesus even before He is found guilty of any crime; and in a similar episode, in Play XXXI (Trial before Herod), the soldiers' desires to deal with Jesus themselves are thwarted by Herod's order to return Him to Pilate. The soldiers make a game of buffeting Jesus, in Play XXIX (Peter Denies Jesus: Jesus Examined by Caiaphas), as they jeer Him and mockingly dress Him in the garb of a fool. They taunt Him in Play XXX (The Dream of Pilate's Wife: Jesus before Pilate) when He refuses to bow before Pilate; and they mock Him with false praise, and adorn Him with a robe and crown and present Him a scepter in

Play XXXI and in Play XXXIII (Second Trial before Pilate Continued: Judgment of Jesus). Finally, the soldiers in their mockery of Christ, cast lots for his clothing (Play XXXV: Crucifixio Christi); and pierce his side with a spear to make sure that He is dead (Play XXXVI: Mortificacio Cristi). To be sure, these acts were deeds of violence upon Christ's whole being; but still, none of them equals the brutality of the innovated crucifixion scenes.

Adam and Eve's anguish is in no way comparable to Christ's agony except that it, too, is the center of several extraneous sequences. God's banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden was the result of their disobedient act of eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. Although they are both to blame for their punishment by willingly disobeying God's command about the tree, Adam and Eve, in separate instances, fall prey to Satan's devious ways. In Play V (Man's Disobedience and Fall from Eden), the enticement scene between the devil and Eve is amplified beyond its original proportions.¹⁵² It is the York playwright's embellishment of the enticement of the devil which allows the incident to become one of the most entertaining in the entire cycle. After openly stating that he will assume the guise of a "worme" before going to Eve, Satan calls to her: "In a worme

¹⁵²Genesis iii. 1-6.

liknes wille y wende, / And founde to feyne a lowde lesynge,
 / Eue, Eue!" (ll. 23-25). Eve answers: "Wha es pare?" (l.
 26). The serpent presents himself as a friend, and then
 questions Eve about the fruit of the garden:

I, a frende.
 And for thy gude es þe comynge,
 I hydir sought.
 Of all þe fruyt that ye se hynge
 In paradise, why eat ye noight?
 (ll. 27-31)

When Eve tells the serpent that she and Adam may eat the
 fruit of any tree except from one, the serpent inquires
 about that particular tree:

Eua. We may of tham ilkane
 Take al þat vs goode þought,
 Save a tree outt is tane,
 Wolde do harm to neygh it ought.
 Sat. And why þat tree? þat wolde I witte,
 Any more þan all othir by?
 (ll. 32-37)

Eve replies truthfully that God has commanded that she and
 Adam do not partake of the fruit:

For oure Lord god forbeedis vs itt,
 The frute þer of, Adam and I
 to neghe it nere,
 And yf we dide we shuld dye,
 He saide, and sese oure solace sere.
 (ll. 38-42)

The serpent cunningly explains to Eve that God does not wish
 Adam and her to become as knowledgeable as He:

Yha, Eue to me take tente,
 Take hede and þou shalte here,
 What þat the matere mente,
 He moved on þat manere.

To ete per-of he you defende,
 I know it wele, þis was his skylle,
 By-cause he wolde non othir kende
 Thes grete vertues þat longes per-till.
 For will þou see,
 Who etes the frute of goode and ille
 shall haue knowyng as wele as hee.
 (ll. 43-53)

Eve is stunned by these comments and questions the serpent about the source of such knowledge: "Why what-kynne thyng art þou, / Ðat telles þis tale to me?" (ll. 54-55). The absurdity of the serpent's having knowledge of these matters is completely disregarded by Eve, who is more intent upon convincing him that she and Adam now have everything they need:

Sat. A worme þat wotith wele how
 þat yhe may wirshipped be.

Eua. What wirshippe shulde we wynne ther-by?
 To ete per-of vs nedith it nought,
 We have lordshippe to make maistrie
 Of alle þynge þat in erthe is wrought.
 (ll. 56-61)

The serpent tries to convince Eve that she and Adam can have more power if she will only follow his suggestion: "Woman! do way! / To greter state ye may be broughte, / and ye will do as I schall saye." (ll. 62-64). Eve refuses to be swayed from fulfilling her duty to God: "To do is vs full lothe, / Ðat shuld oure god myspaye." (ll. 65-66). But the serpent is equally reluctant to acquiesce to Eve:

Nay, certis it is no wathe,
 Ete it safely ye maye.
 For perille ryght þer none in lyes,

But worshippe and a grete wynnyng,
 For right als god yhe shalle be wyse,
 And pere to hym in all-kyn thyng.

Ay! goodis shalle ye be!
 Of ille and gode to haue knawyng,
 For to be als wise as he.

(11. 67-75)

These last remarks arouse Eve's curiosity: "Is pis soth þat þou said?" (1. 76). Realizing that he is on the verge of winning his case, the serpent again assures Eve that he speaks the truth; and Eve, now a prey to her own vanity, promises to do his will:

Sat. Yhe! why trowes þou nozt me?
 I wolde be no-kynnes wayes
 telle nozt but trouthe to þe.

Eua. Than wille I to thy techyng traste,
 And fange þis frute vnto owre foode.
 (11. 77-81)

The sequence ends with the serpent's instructing Eve to eat the fruit from the forbidden tree and take some to Adam: "Byte on boldly, be nought a-bashed, / And bere Adam to amende his mode, / And eke his blisse." (11. 82-84). The content of these speeches closely parallels the points of the Scriptural source, except that the emphasis in the play is placed upon Adam and Eve's becoming gods if they eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. Another difference in the two interpretations is that, Biblically, Eve is finally persuaded to partake of the fruit by her own observations of the tree itself; while in the play, she disobeys God because of her personal vanity in her desire for knowledge and power.

The story of Adam and Eve's disobedience continues into the next movement, (Play VI: Adam and Eve Driven from Eden), but the emphasis, here, shifts to the theme of their remorse and Adam's attempts to deny his guilt. Like the scene between Satan and Eve, the encounter between Adam and Eve is didactic, as well as entertaining. Here, two Christian tenets are stressed: the consequences incurred by those who disobey God's commands; and the futility of blaming others for one's own weakness. The entertaining aspects emerge from the gradual transition of the liturgical discourse into a common quarrel between marriage partners. The encounter between Adam and Eve begins with Eve's recognition that their punishment is justified because of their deed:

We are fulle wele worthy i-wis
 To haue þis myscheffe for oure mys,
 For broght we were to byggely blys,
 euer in to be.
 Nowe my sadde sorowe certis is þis,
 my silfe to see.

(11. 123-128)

Adam is less ready to accept his sorrow, and bemoans that they must "go nakid" hereafter:

To see it is a sytfull syghte,
 We bothe þat were in blis so brighte,
 We mon go nakid euery-ilke a nyght,
 and dayes by-dene.

(11. 129-132)

One may perceive in his final statement, however, that Adam has shifted the emphasis of his remarks to make an observation about women in general: "Allas! what womans witte was

light! / Dat was wele sene." (ll. 133-134). Obviously, the statement is directed to Eve, but presumably it reveals, as well, Adam's thoughts about all women. Eve is not so easily rebuffed and promptly counters with an observation about men:

Sethyn it was so me knyth it sore,
 Bot sythen that woman witteles ware,
 Mans maistrie shulde haue bene more
 agayns þe gilte.

(ll. 135-138)

The insults become more personal, now, as Adam accuses Eve of refusing to listen; and Eve asserts that he, as head of the family, should have dissuaded her from committing a sin:

Ad. Nay, at my speche wolde þou never spare,
 Dat has vs spilte.

Eue. Iff I hadde spoken youe oughte to spill,
 Ye shulde haue taken gode tent þere tyll,
 and turnyd my þought.

(ll. 139-143)

The argument continues when Adam regrets having listened to his wife, suggesting that women are not to be trusted:

Do way, woman, and neme it nought,
 For at my biddyng wolde þou not be,
 And therefore my woo wyte y thee,
 Thurgh ille counsaille þus casten ar we,
 in bittir bale.

Nowe god late never man aftir me
 triste woman tale.

For certis me rewes fulle sare,
 That euere I shulde lerne at þi lare,
 Thy counsaille has casten me in care,
 þat þou me kende.

(ll. 144-154)

Eve, then, reminds him that it is futile to bemoan their plight, and repeats her own acceptance of guilt:

Be stille Adam, and nemen it na mare,

it may not mende.
 For wele I wate I haue done wrange,
 And therfore euere I morne emange,
 Allas! the whille I leue so lange,
 dede wolde I be!

(ll. 155-160)

The sequence ends with Adam repeating his lament:

On grounde mon I never gladde gange,
 withowten glee,
 Withowten glee I ga,
 This sorowe wille me sla,
 This tree vn-to me wille I ta,
 þat me is sende.
 He þat vs wrought wisse vs fro wa,
 whare-som we wende.

(ll. 161-168)

One observes that verbal encounters between men and women have not changed greatly through the years, since common expressions, such as "you never listen to me" (ll. 139-140), "never trust a woman" (ll. 149-150), and "let's don't talk about it anymore" (l. 144), were as prevalent in medieval times as they are now. Certainly, the vernacularization of the language, as well as the York playwright's ability to embellish the major lessons of the sequence with accounts of extraneous marital differences and observations about human nature made the foregoing sequence a successful blending of entertainment and enlightenment.

Arguments between marriage partners found their way into two other plays in the York Cycle. For example, in Play IX (Noah and His Wife: The Flood and Its Waning), Noah has difficulty in convincing his wife that she must go aboard the ark; and in Play XIII (Joseph's Trouble about Mary),

Joseph is unwilling to believe that Mary has been faithful to him. Both episodes are embellishments of Biblical suggestions, particularly the first one, since one notes that Mrs. Noah is merely alluded to in the original narrative.¹⁵³ The encounter between Joseph and Mary has some semblance of truth in it, since a Scriptural passage refers to Joseph's concern about her.¹⁵⁴

The turmoil that develops between Noah and his wife arises from Mrs. Noah's obstinate refusal to seek refuge in the ark and from her lack of comprehension about the serious nature of the situation. Noah, next, attempts to deal with the problem by stating the truth of the matter, but these efforts are fruitless. Consequently, he becomes increasingly agitated with his wife; and the scene eventually embodies a physical encounter as well as a verbal clash. The son has brought his mother to the ark where she is greeted by Noah:

Vxor. Wher arte pou Noye?

Noe. Loo! here at hande,
Come hedir faste, dame, I þe praye.
(ll. 75-77)

Mrs. Noah, however, will not go into the ark and summons her children to accompany her to town. Noah warns that they will drown if they depart; and this admonition prompts his wife's

¹⁵³Genesis vii. 7.

¹⁵⁴Matthew i. 18-19.

suggestion that he find something better to do:

Vxor. Trowes þou þat I wol leue þe harde lande,
And tourne vp here on toure deraye?
Nay, Noye, I am nouzt bowne
to fonde nowe ouer þere ffellis,
Doo barnes, goo we and trusse to towne.

Noe. Nay, certis, sothly þan mon ye drowne.

Vxor. In faythe þou were als goode come downe,
And go do som what ellis.
(11. 78-85)

When Noah attempts to explain the situation to his wife, she accuses him of being mad:

Noe. Dame, fowrty dayes are nerhand past,
And gone sen it be-gan to rayne,
On lyffe salle noman lenger laste
Bot we allane, is nought to layne.

Vxor. Now Noye, in faythe þe fonnes full faste,
This fare wille I no lenger frayne,
Dou arte nere woode, I am agaste,
Fare-wele, I wille go home agayne.
(11. 86-93)

Noah, however, suggests that his wife is the mad one; and, again, he tells her that everything will be destroyed by the waters. He apparently has tried to stop her, here, by means of some physical action, because his wife's reply indicates that she has been detained:

Noe. O! woman, arte þou woode?
Of my werkis þou not wotte,
All þat has þan or bloode
Salle be ouere flowed with þe floode.

Vxor. In faithe, þe were als goode
to late me go my gatte.
We owte! herrowe!
(11. 94-100)

Mrs. Noah is determined, nevertheless, to return to her home, and Noah is forced to call upon his children to assist him in restraining her:

Noe. What now! what cheere?

Vxor. I wille no narre for no kynnes nede.

Noe. Helpe! my sonnes to holde her here,
For tille her harmes she takes no heede.

2 fil. Beis mery, modir, and mende youre chere,
This worlde beis drowned with-uten drede.

Vxor. Allas! þat I þis lare shuld lere.

Noe. Dou spilles vs alle, ille myght þou speede!

3 fil. Dere modir, wonne with vs,
þer shal no-pyng you greve.

Vxor. Nay, nedlyngis home me bus,
For I haue tolis to trusse.

Noe. Woman, why dois þou þus,
To make vs more myscheue?

(11. 99-112)

Even though the building of the ark and the flood are still the main topics of conversation assigned to Noah and his wife, the tone of the discussion reflects marital problems. For example, Mrs. Noah is distressed because Noah had left her at home without telling her where he was going:

Noye, þou myght haue leteyn me wete,
Erly and late þou wente þer outte,
And ay at home þou late me sytte,
To loke þat nowhere were wele aboutte.

(11. 113-116)

Of course, Noah's reply has a basis of truth: "Dame, þou holde me excused of itt, / It was goddis wille with-uten

doutte." (ll. 117-118). Mrs. Noah apparently misunderstands his remark, because she is convinced that he had intended to leave her: "What? Wenys pou so for to go qwitte? / Nay, by my trouthe, pou getis a clowte." (ll. 119-120). After cautioning his wife first to be silent, Noah repeats his original statement: "I pray þe, dame, be stille. / Thus god wolde haue it wrought." (ll. 121-122). In Mrs. Noah's next speech, one detects a number of personality traits. First, she apparently believes that a wife's opinion is important in situations involving a marriage; secondly, she is curious to know of Noah's whereabouts during his absence; and finally, she believes that she should have been consulted before Noah committed them to any "bargane:"

Thow shulde haue witte my wille,
 Yf I wolde sente þer tille,
 And Noye, for þat same skylle,
 þis bargan sall be bought.
 Nowe at firste I fynde and feele
 Wher þou hast to þe forest soght,
 Þou shuld haue tolde me for oure seele
 Whan we were to slyke bargane brought.
 (ll. 123-130)

Noah's explanation is again founded on truth. He reassures his wife that they have not suffered a financial loss because of the ark and he admits that he has been gone for a long time; but he emphasizes the fact that all of these happenings are God's will:

Now, dame, þe thar nozt drede adele
 For till accounte it cost þe noght,
 A hundereth wyntyr, I watte wele,

Is wente sen I þis werke had wrought.
 And when I made endyng,
 God gaffe me mesore fayre
 Of euery-ilke a thyng,
 He bad þat I shuld bryng
 Of beestis and foules zynge,
 Of ilke a kynde, a peyre.
 (11. 131-140)

Mrs. Noah finally begins to believe her husband's story, but she still does not realize that it is only her family who is to be spared from the flood:

Nowe, certis, and we shulde skape fro skathe,
 And so be saffyð as ye saye here,
 My commodrys and my cosynes bathe,
 Ðam wolde I wente with vs in feere.
 (11. 141-144)

Noah points out the absurdity of her wish: "To wende in þe watir it were wathe, / Loke in and loke with-uten were." (11. 145-146). Eventually, Mrs. Noah agrees to board the ark, although she is saddened by the thought that she must leave her friends: "Allas! my lyff me is full lathe, / I lyffe ouere lange þis lare to lere." (11. 147-148).

In the second example of York encounters between marriage partners, the greatly secularized portion of Play XIII, in which Joseph doubts Mary's fidelity, questions the legitimacy of her unborn child, and generally degrades her unblemished demeanor, is an ingenious blending of absurdity with truth; the former being supplied by Joseph's accusations; the latter in Mary's replies. The major damage to Mary's character is conveyed by Joseph in an extensive monologue at the beginning of the play (11. 1-75). He, then,

returns to question her. As was noted previously, the servants are the ones who first attest to their mistress' fidelity; but Joseph will not be swayed by their remarks and must ascertain the truth from Mary herself. He asks Mary, therefore, how she could have done such a deed, and, then, who is the father of the child; but Mary's replies, based upon the truth, deny all blame:

Jos. Allas ! why wrought þou swa,
Marie ! my weddid wiffe?

Mar. To my wittenesse grete God I call,
Dat in mynde wroght neuer me no mysse.

Jos. Whose is þe childe þou arte with-all?

Mar. Youres sir, and þe kyngis of blisse.
(ll. 154-159)

Joseph, however, is not satisfied and comments that his wife's physical appearance suggests that she has been untrue:

Ye, and hoo þan?
Ne, selcouthe tythandis than is þis,
Excuse þam wele there woman can.
But Marie, all þat sese þe
may witte þi werkis ere wan,
Thy wombe all way it wreyes þe,
þat þou has mette with man.
Whose is it? als faire mot ye be-fall.
(ll. 160-167)

Her answer is the same: "Sir, it is youres and Goddis will."
(l. 168). To attest to his own innocence in the matter, Joseph reminds Mary that they have never "flesshly" met; and then, he repeats his question about the father of the child:

Nay, I ne haue noght a-do with-all.
Neme it na more to me, be still!

Dou wate als wele as I,
 Dat we two same flesschly
 Wroght neuer swilk werkis with ill.
 Loke pou dide no folye
 Be-fore me preuely
 Thy faire maydenhede to spill.
 But who is þe fader? telle me his name,
 (ll. 169-176)

Mary alters her answer, slightly: "None but youre selfe."
 (l. 177); and Joseph becomes enraged over the personal impli-
 cation:

Late be, for shame.
 I did it neuere, pou dotist dame, by bukes and
 belles,
 Full sakles shulde I bere þis blame aftir þou
 telles.
 For I wroght neuere in worde nor dede,
 Thyng þat shulde marre thy maydenhede,
 To touche me till.
 For of slyk note war litill nede,
 Yhitt for myn awne I wolde it fede,
 Might all be still.
 Darfore þe fadir tell me, Marie.
 (ll. 178-189)

Mary, now, reverts to her original answer: "But God and
 yhow, I knowe right none." (l. 190). Joseph is more sorrow-
 ful than angry about Mary's apparent evasions of the truth,
 and becomes philosophic, admitting that he is too "alde" for
 such "games." Hoping Mary will privately confide in him, he
 assures her that he will not divulge her replies:

A! slike sawes mase me full sarye,
 With grete mornyng to make my none.
 Therefore be nozt so balde,
 Dat no slike tales be talde,
 Eut halde þe stille als stane.
 Dou art yonge and I am alde,
 Slike werkis yf I do walde,
 Dase games fra me are gane.

Therefore, telle me in priuite
 whos is þe childe þou is with nowe?
 Sertis, þer sall non witte but we,
 I drede þe law als wele as þou.
 (ll. 191-202)

Mary does not directly reply to Joseph, but rather makes her supplication to God, asking Him to show Joseph the truth:

Nowe grete God of his myght,
 Dat all may dresse and dight,
 Mekely to þe I bowe!
 Rewe on þis wery wight,
 Dat in his herte might light
 De soth to ken and trowe.
 (ll. 203-206)

Having realized no progress in discovering the father of Mary's child, Joseph alters his approach and now openly questions Mary about her chastity:

Jos. Who had thy maydenhede Marie? has þou oght
 mynde?

Mar. For suth, I am a mayden clene.

Jos. Nay þou spekis now agayne kynde;
 Slike þing myght neuere naman of mene.
 A maiden to be with childe,
 Dase werkis fra þe ar wilde,
 Sho is not borne I wene.

(ll. 207-213)

Still insisting that she has committed no sin, Mary suggests that Joseph has been beguiled. Following an angry outburst, Joseph makes an observation about all womankind, as did Adam in an earlier discussed episode:

Mar. Joseph, yhe ar begiled,
 With synne was I neuer fillid,
 Goddis sande is on me sene.

Jos. Goddis sande! yhe Marie! God helpe.

Bot certis! pat childe was neuere oure two.
 But woman kynde gif pat list yhelpe,
 Yhitt walde bei naman wiste per wo.

(11. 214-220)

Joseph leaves Mary when he realizes she will not change her answer; but, before departing, he assures her that he does not believe that she is innocent:

Mar. Sertis, it is Goddis sande,
 Dat sall I neuer ga fra.

Jos. Yha! Marie, drawe thyn hande,
 For forther zitt will I frande,
 I trowe not it be swa.
 De soth fra me gif pat pou layne
 De childe bering may pou nozt hyde,
 But sitte stille here tille I come agayne,
 Me bus an erand here beside.

(11. 221-229)

Mary is perplexed, and turns to God for assistance:

Now, grete God! be you wisse,
 And mende you of your mysse,
 Of me, what so betyde.
 Als he is kyng of blysse,
 Sende yhow som seand of pis,
 In truth pat ye might bide.

(11. 230-235)

The "seand" which Mary asks God to send to Joseph is the Angel Gabriel, who appears while Joseph is resting from the vigor of his encounter with Mary.

One notes that, in this instance, as in the Noah episode, the Christian attribute of truth is almost destroyed through misunderstanding. While Noah was, at length, able to persuade his wife to come into the ark and be saved, Mary is unsuccessful in her attempts to convince Joseph that she is not culpable.

In Play XVIII (The Flight into Egypt), the foregoing pattern is reversed as Joseph attempts to convince Mary that they must journey hastily to Egypt to save their Son from Herod's wrath. One observes, first, that Mary has become more secularized. Her slow comprehension of the situation is comparable to that displayed by Mrs. Noah concerning the ark and the flood. The York playwright, however, has not caused Mary to be as cantankerous as Mrs. Noah, and has Mary's apprehension emerge largely from her motherly concern. This episode is not as incongruous to the original story as were either of those concerning Noah and his wife or Adam and Eve.

In Play VII (Sacrificium Cayme et Abell), one detects another use of the interrogatory device previously employed in the York Cycle. As one noted earlier, the innovated sequence between Cain and his servant is suddenly interrupted by the appearance of the Angel. However, it is not particularly evident that the Angel in this play, in his opening remarks, is different from the other York Angels in the cycle:

Ang. Thowe cursyd Came, where is Abell?
Where hais thowe done thy broder dere?

Cayme. What asks thowe me that taill to tell?
For yit his keper was I never.

Ang. God hais sent the his curse downe,
Fro hevyn to hell, maldictio dei.
(ll. 82-87)

Cain's anger is consistent with his previously established

cursed nature: "Take that thy self, evyn on thy crowne, / Quia non sum custos fratris mei," (ll. 88-89). The Angel disregards Cain's remark and repeats God's curse, adding one of his own: "God hais sent the his malyson, / And inwardly I geve the myne." (ll. 90-91). It is this last remark which distinguishes this Angel from other York Angels who are generally depicted as having a milder demeanor. It initiates, as well, the final violent action of the play in which the Angel and Cain apparently buffet one another, as Cain blasphemously shouts:

The same curse light on thy crowne,
 And right so myght it worth and be,
 For he that sent that gretyng downe
 The devyll myght speyd both hym & the.
 Fowll myght thowe fall!
 Here is a cankerd company,
 Therefore goddes curse light on you all.
 (ll. 92-98)

Cain's wickedness is apparent both in language and action; but the more startling characterization is that of the Angel. Because of the York amplification of this figure, however, one notes that there is little difference between the portrayals of Cain and the Angel, since their speeches and actions are equally blasphemous. The incongruity of the use of Latin terms in an almost totally vernacularized sequence is disconcerting, unless perhaps they are remnants of the original scene which was deliberately edited.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵Smith, op. cit., p. 37.

These last examples of amplification make it clear that the York playwrights obviously embellished major Biblical characters. All of these sequences are extensions of the Scriptures, but, as one has noted, they vary in the degree of their individual elaboration. The Adam and Eve sequences are loosely based upon the original story of the Creation, since many of the innovated speeches therein are extensions of the Biblical passages. On the other hand, in the Noah episode, the motivating theme is a total innovation except for the interspersed and Scripturally sound notations which occur as matters of reference. Neither can Joseph's dilemma about Mary be considered to be Biblically correct, except insofar as it emphasizes the Virgin Birth of the Christ Child. Similarly, the second Mary-Joseph episode, and the angry discussion between Cain and the Angel, while not actually parts of the original sources are extensions of major points.

One concludes that the dramatic effectiveness of these York innovations depended, to a large extent, upon the ingenuity of the playwright. The examples already discussed display this inherent quality of craft in the York authors who were adept in extending the original Scriptural narratives by means of characterization and incident. One observes, however, that in these episodes they confined their efforts to one particular story.

On the other hand, some of the York playwrights successfully combined two or more Biblical themes into a single dramatic presentation, with a result that was both enlightening and entertaining. One of these plays is Play XV (The Angels and the Shepherds), which appears to have been loosely based upon two portions of the nativity story: the announcement of the Christ Child's birth to the shepherds, and the shepherds' visit to the manger in Bethlehem.¹⁵⁶ An idea borrowed from the Biblical narrative concerning the Wise Men is introduced toward the end of the play when the shepherds present gifts to the Babe in Bethlehem.¹⁵⁷ Since nearly all of this play may be considered innovative, only two or three examples of amplification of the source used by the York playwright will be cited. The appearance of the Angels to the Shepherds is, of course, Scripturally sound, but the dramatic version has been greatly secularized. When the Angels appear to them, the Shepherds marvel at the unusual sight in the heavens:

i Pas. We! huddle!

ii Pas. We! howe!

i Pas. Herkyn to me!

ii Pas. We! man, pou maddes all out of myght.

¹⁵⁶Luke ii. 8-11.

¹⁵⁷Matthew ii. 11.

i Pas. We! colle!
 (11. 37-41)

These seem to be familiar medieval expressions of surprise. Two of the Shepherds continue to express wonder because of the spectacle:

iii Pas. What care is comen to þe?

i Pas. Steppe furth and stande by me right,
 And tell me þan
 Yf you sawe euere swilke a sight!

iii Pas. I? nay, certis, nor neuere no man.
 (11. 42-46)

A third Shepherd, apparently entering from another area of the field, thinks that his friends have come upon good fortune and quickly attempts to claim his share of it: "Say, felowes, what! fynde yhe any feest, / Me falles for to haue parte, parde!" (11. 47-48). Even though the second Shepherd points out the unusual sight in the sky, the third Shepherd still does not comprehend its significance:

i Pas. Whe! huddle! be-halde into the heste!
 A selcouthe sight þan sall þou see
 vppon þe skye!

ii Pas. We! telle me men, emang vs three,
 Whatt garres yow stare þus sturdely?
 (11. 49-53)

Two of the Shepherds are obviously dumbfounded by the spectacle of the Angels in the sky; but the third, more mercenary-minded, Shepherd apparently does not even notice the miracle in his determination to claim any commodity of good fortune which his friends may have acquired.

One suspects that the Shepherds' imitation of the Angels' song was probably amusing, since it was apparently executed with much gusto inasmuch as the second Shepherd complains of the damage done to his throat and lips:

Ha! ha! his was a mery note,
 Be the dede pat i sall dye,
 I haue so crakid in my throte,
 Dat my lippis are nere drye.
 (ll. 65-68)

One cannot minimize the value of these innovated speeches as effective devices for familiarizing an ancient tale; but the ingenuity of the York author, here, becomes even more apparent in the sequence evolving from the Shepherds' visit to the Bethlehem stable. In the Biblical source, the Shepherds do not present gifts to the Christ Child.¹⁵⁸ However, in an earlier scene (ll. 79-81) the playwright seemingly borrowed from the Magi narrative, and it is likely that he may have turned again to that source as his inspiration for the Shepherds' gift-bearing episode. Of course, the gifts of the Wise Men--gold, frankincense, and myhrr--not only depicted their wealth, but also signified royalty, godhead, and heritage of death, respectively.¹⁵⁹ The gifts of the Shepherds reflect their station in life, common objects of everyday use. For example, the first Shepherd offers his only orna-

¹⁵⁸Luke ii. 15-17.

¹⁵⁹Craig, op. cit., p. 51.

mental possessions, a plain brooch and a tin bell:

The Aungell saide pat he shulde saue
 This worlde and all pat wonnes per-in,
 Therefore yf I shulde oght aftir craue,
 To wirshippe hym I will be-gynne.
 Sen I am but a symple knave,
 Dof all I come of curtayse kynne,
 Loo! here slyke harnays as I haue,
 A baren broche by a belle of tynne
 At youre bosom to be,
 And whenne ze shall welde all,
 Gud sonne, for-gete nozt me,
 Yf any fordele falle.

(11. 96-107)

The gift of the second Shepherd, two cob-nuts on a ribbon,
 was apparently parts of a medieval game:

Dou sonne! Dat shall saue bope see and sande,
 Se to me sen I haue þe soght,
 I am ovir poure to make presande
 Als myn harte wolde, and I had ought.
 Two cobill notis vppe a bande,
 Loo! litill babe, what I haue broght,
 And when ze sall be lorde in lande,
 Dose goode agayne, for-gete me noght.
 For I haue herde declared
 Of connyng clerkis and clene,
 That bountith after rewarde;
 Nowe watte ze what I mene.

(11. 108-119)

A horn spoon is the offering of the third Shepherd. His
 remark that it is large enough to hold "fourty pese" is
 perhaps another indication of his previously established
 mercenary nature:

Nowe loke on me, my lorde dere,
 Dof all I putte me noght in pres,
 Ye are a prince with-uten pere,
 But lo! an horne sponne, pat haue I here,
 And it will herbar fourty pese,
 Dis will I giffe you with gud chere,
 Slike novelte may noght disease.

Fare wele þou swete swayne,
 God graunte vs levyng lange,
 And go we hame agayne,
 And make merthe as we gange.
 (ll. 120-131)

One may perceive that in each of the speeches which accompany the presentations of the humble gifts, the York playwright has incorporated two ideas: first, the gifts are given as tokens of devotion to the Christ Child; and secondly, they are presented as supplications for God's favor.

The examples of amplification presented, herein, are only a small portion of the almost unlimited number of innovations to be detected throughout the entire York series of plays. Various patterns of embellishment in characterization, incident, or language are apparent in all of the plays in the York Cycle, as are numerous stylistic techniques. Of the latter group, those evident in the innovations previously discussed are the anticipation or delay devices noted in the crucifixion plays and the Abraham and Isaac sacrificial sequence; the humanizing devices such as the induction of secular elements and vernacular language into the marital discussions between Adam and Eve, Noah and his wife, and Mary and Joseph; and the general vernacularization of the language of most of the York characters, in the interests of humanizing them. All of these matters of form are important in determining both the artistry of the playwrights and the dramatic value of the plays, and the extent of secularization

in the five-hundred-year growth of medieval religious drama
in England.

CHAPTER III

A RE-EVALUATION OF THE YORK PLAYS AND AUTHORS

A study of the innovations which occur in the York Cycle plays evokes a new concept of the medieval author of liturgical drama. Heretofore, he has been denounced critically as a simple, unimaginative writer whose only claim to literary fame was purely accidental.¹⁶⁰ His works, which are the components of the popular English cycles, have been characterized, for the most part, as crude, unskilled creations possessing little or no literary value.¹⁶¹ However, primary evidence clearly reveals the developing artistry of these York authors. The York innovations cited and analyzed herein turn out to be enlightening or entertaining digressions from the original sources, emerging from character embellishment or the device of the extended incident. Furthermore, one discovers that many of the York playwrights, for so they now may be called, consciously humanized the subject matter of their sources by a frequent use of vernacular expressions. Consequently, the elementary stylistic patterns of drama which evolve out of the York plays encompass three major areas of fundamental stagecraft: (1) char-

¹⁶⁰Craig, op. cit., p. 170.

¹⁶¹Chambers, op. cit., II, 145; Craig, op. cit., p. 7.

acterization; (2) incident; and (3) language.

The York playwrights were as different in their treatment of a particular character as they were in their handling of a group or tableaux. For example (Play I), Deus is presented as a powerful and awesome character, when He tells of His wonders and, later, creates the world. He is positive and stern in His dealings with the Angels, demanding their obedience and love. He is similarly depicted (Play IV) when He forbids Adam and Eve to partake of the fruit. Deus' candid explanation of His power to judge all beings and His review of the major events (depicted in Plays I-VII) further emphasize His might and authority (Play XLVIII). On the other hand, He is endowed with a more artistic temperament in giving life to the creatures of the world, distinguishing them with special traits of their kind. Thus, one discovers a character interpreted by the York playwrights within the scope of two widely diverse attitudes.

An even greater variety in characterization is achieved in the York presentations of Christ. For example (Play XX), Jesus is shown as a young boy surrounded by the learned doctors in the temple. Here, a York playwright ascribes to Him two distinct traits: first, (often common to the gifted child) a boastful pride in superior knowledge; secondly, (not solely confined to the precocious child) an impatience with elders. The boastful attitude is revealed

when Jesus recites the laws to the doctors; and later, when He curtly reminds His mother that He must fulfill God's will. On the other hand, the mature Christ is next depicted as a stern master, scolding His disciples for falling asleep during their prayerful vigil (Play XXVIII). He admonishes the travellers going to Emmaus for their lack of faith (Play XL); and, later, He similarly reprimands Thomas (Play XLII). Furthermore, in Play XXVIII, Christ frankly admits His fear of death, thereby revealing a human weakness. However, He is the epitome of strength as He patiently endures the mockeries of the trials (Play XXIX and XXXIII) and the agonies of His crucifixion (Plays XXXV and XXXVI). He is a Teacher and a source of strength for His disciples (Plays XXI, XXIII, XXVII, XXXVII, XXIX, XLII, and XLIII); a Comforter, when He dispels His mother's fears of death (Play XLV); and a just King, when he exalts His mother to the position of Queen of Heaven (Play XLVII). Here, then, in the figure of Christ, one discovers numerous variant York characterizations of the same personage.

Christ's mother, as well, is depicted by the York playwrights in a variety of ways, some of her characterizations appearing to be secularly incongruous. For example, in the first part of Play XII, Mary resembles the meek, humble maiden of the Biblical source, when Gabriel tells her that God has chosen her to become the mother of Christ.

Thereafter, one observes similar depictions of Mary in portions of Plays XIII, XIV, XVIII, XLIII, and XLIV. However, her demeanor becomes more secular in the latter part of Play XII, when she visits her cousin, Elizabeth. Now, Mary becomes an ordinary woman anxious to reveal important news to a dear relative. Again, Play XIII follows a similar pattern of characterization, presenting a humble and gentle Mary in the early portions of the play; later, ascribing to her the traits of an average, forgiving wife whose main concern is the welfare of her husband and her unborn child. On the other hand, the order is reversed in Play XIV: Mary is, now, a more secular character at the beginning, shown in her motherly concern for her child who is to be born in the wretched stable; and, later, after the birth of her Babe, Mary is again the meek, mild maiden, shown in her humble adoration of her Infant. In the final sequence of the same play, yet a third interpretation of Mary occurs, an interesting combination of the two previously established views. For example, at the beginning of Play XVIII, Mary is a devoted servant of God, praising her Babe. Next, she becomes a more secular person in her inability to comprehend the significance of the situation, comparable in her behavior to Mrs. Noah who manifests ignorance about the ark and the flood. Mary's motherly concern is next revealed when, in fearing for the life of her Child, she expresses sorrow over

Herod's malicious intention of killing the Jewish male babies. As a rule, in the York plays, the character of Mary is less secularized when she is revealing her devotion to God; but in Play XLI, a highly secularized Mary obediently fulfills her obligation to God by making her offering in the act of purification. Finally, in Play XLV, Mary is an old, ailing woman who is close to death. Now, she is both complaining and demanding when she describes her illness to John; when she requests that all of the apostles be present at her funeral; when she implores Christ to spare her from the sight of the devil at the approach of death; and, finally, when she asks Christ to bless the oppressed beings who pray in her name. One notes, furthermore, that a strong and confidence-begetting Mary is also depicted in Plays XLIII, XLIV and XLVI: first, when she is shown to be the stabilizing force among the frightened disciples awaiting Christ's return; and, secondly, when she is the source of Thomas' strength when he starts upon his mission to spread the word of her Assumption. Finally, she is gloriously regal when she is exalted to the position of Queen of Heaven (Play XLVII). These examples emphasize the considerable variations in the York interpretations of Mary. Generally, however, she is depicted as an ordinary human being with a recognizable sense of duty to her family and God.

Adam is a character who is also given a number of var-

iant treatments in his frequent appearances in the initial plays of the York Cycle. In Play III, he is humble and obedient in dutifully offering his thanks to God. He is similarly portrayed in the beginning of Play IV and, later, in the final sequence of Play VI. In the major portions of Plays IV and V, however, he reveals the more dishonorable aspects of his personality by openly disobeying God's command about the fruit. Adam's sin is shown to be prompted by his selfish aspirations for power, another stressed weakness in his character which emerges in the York Cycle. He is cowardly (Play V) when he blames Eve for their punishment and implies that he is a "hen-pecked" husband in deriding Eve for persuading him to disobey God. He appears, later, (Play XXVII), as one of the souls in Limbo. Here, he has, once more, become the obedient and loyal servant of God and thereby, rejoices in the promise of his liberation. Adam's portrayals in the York plays, therefore, encompass two extreme attitudes: selflessness and selfishness. He readily fluctuates between these two character extremes, when swayed either by his sense of obedience to God or by concern for his own personal well-being.

The York interpretations of Eve are less varied, and in the cycle she remains, basically, an obedient servant of God. For example (Play III), she thanks God for creating her and praises His might when she observes His other wonders.

She is shown to be weak because of her personal vanity (Play IV) when she succumbs to the enticement of the serpent; but she is revealed as being strong when she immediately repents and willingly accepts her share of the blame. Her repentant attitude is revealed, also, in the latter part of Play IV and in Play V, when she attempts to convince Adam that their punishment is just. In Play V, she is, also, shown to be a spirited contender when she matches wits with Adam in discussing the cause of their downfall. Furthermore, like Adam, she is an obedient soul in Limbo (Play XXXVII), awaiting solace from God. The York interpretations of Eve, therefore, represent a variety of attitudes but do not reveal any major changes in the fundamental submissive nature of her character.

Noah is a feeble, complaining, old man (Play VIII), when he makes an apologia for not carrying out God's plan, founded upon physical incapacities as well as his lack of knowledge about shipwrighting. A marked change in his attitude occurs, however, when he discovers that Deus will guide him in every step of the enterprise. Thereafter, he willingly accepts his responsibilities to God and, at the same time, becomes a physically strong character. He is obedient and capable when he builds the craft according to God's specifications. Later, he displays self-confidence in boasting about his accomplishment. In Play IX, he is again revealed

as a strong, capable individual when he completes his mission for God, even though he must overcome difficulties, not the least of which is his wife's obstinancy. During his argument with his wife, he discloses a variety of emotional patterns. For example, he is patient, at first, when he methodically explains the circumstances to his wife; later, he becomes irritable when he fails to penetrate her density; finally, he is desperate, when he must resort to physical force in detaining his wife. There are, then, two widely diverse York interpretations of Noah: one, that of an aged, feeble, apprehensive servant of God; the other, that of a strong, capable, self-assured individual.

Even though Joseph is usually depicted in the York Cycle as an ordinary individual, he reveals, nevertheless, a variety of attitudes. For example (Play XIII), he is an angry, miserable, old man when he complains that his young wife has been unfaithful; he is distraught when he yearns for death as the only solution to his problems; and he is self-centered when he bitterly complains of his personal shame because of his wife's indiscretion. Joseph's selfish interests are apparent later (Play XX) when he is reluctant to seek Jesus in the temple because of his worn clothing and his inadequate speech. After Gabriel has assured him that Mary's condition is the will of God, however, Joseph becomes a humble and repentant husband and asks Mary's forgiveness

(Play XIII). This latter characterization, that of the gentle and considerate Joseph, is especially discernible when Joseph and Mary prepare for their journey to Bethlehem prior to the birth of the Christ Child (Play XIV); and, later, (Play XVIII), when they must flee to Egypt. For example, Joseph is distressed by the conditions of the stable in which the Babe is to be born (Play XIV); and he not only offers to carry the Babe when Mary's arm becomes tired, but he also instructs her to hold the mane of the beast on which she rides to make her journey more comfortable (Play XVIII). A similar concern of his for Mary is revealed (Play XLI) when he assists her in finding a proper sacrifice for her purification. Furthermore, an encounter resembling the Noah-Wife episode occurs in Play XVIII, when he first attempts to explain Herod's edict to Mary to convince her that they must hastily depart for Egypt. The similarities between the two plays are obvious; but the latter episode is neither as lengthy nor as vigorous as the former. Joseph's difficulty in explaining the situation to Mary stems not from her obstinacy, but from her preoccupation with the safety of her Son. The wonderment with which Joseph listened to Gabriel's message concerning Mary (Play XIII) is again obvious when he questions the necessity for Mary's act of purification, since she is still chaste (Play XLI); and, later, in the same play, when he listens to Symeon

and Anna speak of the miracles of the Virgin Birth and of the attributes of their Son. His obedience to God is, of course, clearly revealed in his genuine solicitude for Mary, but it is even more apparent when he agrees to offer his Son in sacrifice at Mary's purification (Play XLI). These examples show that the York playwrights usually presented Joseph as an ordinary man, although they achieved variations in their characterizations by altering his reactions to the circumstances in which he found himself.

The York presentation of Moses (Play XI) reveals a character progression from weakness to strength. For example, in the beginning, Moses is shown to be weak when he declines to obey God's will because he is aware of his limitations as a persuasive speaker; but he is fearful, when he is concerned for his personal safety. Moses progressively becomes stronger, however, after he receives God's "token" (the wand), subsequently agreeing to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. His increasing self-confidence is apparent when he goes to Pharaoh and demands permission to remove the Jews from bondage; and, later, when he assures the frightened Jews that they will soon find solace. The strength in the characterization of Moses is again apparent (Play XXXVII) when he testifies in behalf of Christ at the Transfiguration. The York playwrights, therefore, have characterized Moses in much the same way as they treated

Noah and Joseph, i.e., within the scope of two widely diverse attitudes.

Isaac's behavioral pattern (Play X) is the antithesis of the pattern accorded Moses in the York Cycle: he is diminished in stature from a strong individual at the beginning of the play to a frightened young man during the sacrificial sequence. He is strong when he willingly prepares to make his offering to God; but he is weak when he apprehensively faces death at the sacrificial altar. He is devoted to his father, when he asks Abraham to bind him so that God's will may be fulfilled; and, also, when he asks Abraham to forgive his wrong-doings. He is frightened when he admits openly his fear of death; when he asks that his eyes be covered; and when he implores that Abraham strike quickly the final blow. He is, of course, the obedient servant of God throughout the entire play, willingly accepting God's command. The York playwrights obviously ascribed these weaknesses to Isaac's character in order to humanize him; but in so doing, they achieved, also, a variety of attitudes with little altering of his basic depiction.

Mrs. Noah (Play IX) is cantankerous and obstinate when she refuses to board the ark. She is remarkably simple-witted when she fails to comprehend any part of the predicament; but she is domineering when she implies that Noah should have consulted her before building the ark, and mercenary-

mindful when she fears that they have suffered a financial loss in the venture. On the other hand, she is basically a servant of God, as she demonstrates when she finally agrees to board the ark with the rest of her family and, later, when she thanks God for sparing them in the flood. Thus, as an ordinary person as well as a servant of God, she assumes a variety of attitudes in the York Cycle in her reactions to the enveloping circumstances.

The Magi (Three Kings) are depicted by the York playwrights as ordinary human beings, even though in their general aspects they are regal. They appear in two plays (XVI and XVII), which pieces are identical, after having begun in dissimilar ways, i.e., the former opening with Herod's pretentious proclamation of authority and his subjects' loyal assertions of allegiance; the latter beginning with the Three Kings' supplications to God for guidance in their journey and their preparations to travel together. They show that they are obedient to God, when they search for the Christ Child in order to worship Him; and, later, in Herod's presence, when they dutifully praise Him although Herod has openly announced his allegiance to Mahounde (Mohamet). They are respectful of law and authority, when they ask Herod's permission to pass through his land; and when they agree to return with information about the Babe. They are cognizant of God's succor (Play XVII), turning to Him for guidance

after losing sight of the auspicious star; and they are reverent, when they reach the Bethlehem stable and tender their gifts to the Babe. On several occasions, however, the Three Kings in aspect become more ordinary than regal mainly because of their unique approach to various problems. For example, they decide that the First King should be the first to present his gift because he is the oldest. Such logic is no more profound than that which is embodied in the familiar saying, "Age before beauty." Later, after each King has made his presentation, all must decide what next to do. The First King suggests that they continue in their adoration of the Christ Child; the Second King proposes that they return to Herod as they have promised to do; and the Third King counsels that they rest after their long journey. Of course, they sleep, since this act is a common enough device in the York plays for providing an opportunity for the introduction of a new sequence (in this instance, the Angel's warning of Herod's treachery). Thus, the Three Kings are characterized by the York playwrights not only as regal obedient servants of God, but also as ordinary men with ordinary problems to solve.

One may term some of the York characterizations constant since they remain basically unaltered even if the pertinent characters reappear in successive plays. For instance, Herod and Pilate remain fundamentally unchanged in their

various appearances in the York plays although both display a variety of attitudes. For example, in Play XVI, Herod is arrogant when he boasts of his splendor and power and when he asks, on three occasions, to be "richely arayd" when the Three Kings ask to confer with him (Plays XVI and XVII); when the servant prepares him for bed (Play XXXI); and when the soldiers bring Jesus to him (Play XXXI). He is proud of his authority when he discovers that his jurisdiction over Jesus is recognized by Pilate, and when he describes himself as having power equal to Mahounde's (Play XIX). He is cunning when he feigns friendship, thereby procuring information from the Magi (Plays XVI and XVII); but he is indecisive when he relies heavily upon his advisers, thereby solving his problems (Plays XVI, XVII, XIX, and XXI). He is wary, when he hears of the Christ Child (Plays XVI and XVII), and when he learns of a traitor who calls Himself King (Play XXXI). He is depressed when he discovers that the Kings have returned to their own countries (Play XIX); but he is angered, later in the same play, when he discovers that his soldiers may not have killed the Christ Child. He is disrespectful when using people for his own purposes, as in Play XXXI, when he commands Jesus to entertain him with "gaudis" and "games." Pilate, similarly, is treacherous and arrogant. He is contemptible when he threatens to kill those who would dethrone him (Play XXVI); and later (Play XXXIIII), when he

allows himself to be swayed in his judgment of Christ. He is proud when he boasts of his personal splendor (Play XXX) and of his heritage (Play XXXII). He is god-like when he asserts that all help lies within him (Play XXVI). He is self-assured, when he initially refuses to recognize Christ's threat to his power (Play XXVI); and later (Play XXX), when he refuses to judge Him. He is indecisive when he remands Jesus' case to Herod (Play XXX); and later (Play XXXVIII), when he relies on his advisers for solutions to problems provoked by Christ's Resurrection. Thus, the York characterizations of the two rulers are obviously based upon similar patterns, since, at times, there is little distinction to be noted between them. It is apparent, also, that the York playwrights successfully sustained these basic interpretations of treachery and arrogance in presenting these characters in various situations.

Since much of the treachery of Pilate and Herod depended upon the advice of their counsellors, these York advisers are frequently depicted as having characteristics similar to those of their superiors. For example (Play XIX), Herod orders the killing of the Jewish male babies but relies upon his counsellors to instruct the soldiers in their mission. Here, the counsellors are as contemptible as Herod, when they order the soldiers to kill all the babies. When Herod is puzzled because the Three Kings do not return from

Bethlehem, he turns to his advisers for assurance in the matter. Because the counsellors previously advised Herod to allow the Kings to pass, they now cover their mistake when they assure Herod that the story of the Kings must have been false (Play XIX). Pilate's advisers are the first to inform him of Jesus' existence (Play XXVI); and they are the ones to suggest that Jesus be crucified (Play XXVI). In particular, the characterization of Caiaphas, one of Pilate's chief advisers, follows a pattern similar to that accorded to Pilate. For example (Play XXIX), he is proud, when he proclaims his authority and boasts of his learning in law. He is cunning (Play XXVIII) when he devises various schemes with which to preserve his honor, such as paying for lying the soldiers who allowed Christ to escape from the tomb. He is the epitome of cowardice, however, when he admits his fear of Christ's Resurrection (Play XXXVIII). Fundamentally, then, all of the York advisers manifest loyalty to their superiors, thereby assisting them in their deceptive schemes; and they are, furthermore, patterned after their treacherous masters.

Several of the York figures of stabilized characterization appear only in a single play. For example (Play XXX), the York depiction of Percula, resembling the pattern observed in the interpretations of Pilate and Herod, is sustained throughout the major portion of the play and is altered only

when the source from which it stems (her husband's authority) is threatened. She is self-centered, when she boasts of her personal splendor and when she makes elaborate preparations for retiring. She is charming when she graciously accepts the compliments of her peers and her servants. She is devoted to Pilate, when she commends him for his elegance and power. Percula's self-assurance wanes, however, when Satan warns her in a dream that Jesus' death will destroy her husband, and she becomes a frightened individual. The characterization of Percula is comparable to Lucifer's, which alters only when its very existence is threatened.

The York depiction of Abraham (Play X) is even more unchanged, and he continuously remains the obedient servant of God. Although the York playwrights attribute various changes in attitude to Abraham through his emotional reactions to the happenings of the play, they do not attempt to alter the basic demeanor of his character. He is a devoted father, when he expresses his love for Isaac and laments over having to part with his son. He is an understanding person, when he complies with Isaac's requests to be bound and to have his eyes covered. He is a forgiving father, when he absolves Isaac from his trespasses. He is a grievous father, when he mourns his son's impending death; and he is a joyous father, when he discovers that Isaac's life will be spared. Thus, the York depiction of Abraham is a sustaining

one: he is, at all times, an obedient servant of God and a devoted father.

In Play VII, a similar pattern is to be observed in the characterization of Abel. He, too, is an unfaltering servant of God. He is obedient when he unquestioningly prepares to make his offering to God; and when he persistently attempts to convince Cain that he should do the same thing. Cain's depiction in the same play is similarly sustained, but in a direct contrast with the characterization of Abel. Cain is blasphemous when refusing to abide by God's law and when questioning God's right to a share of his holdings. He is crude when he criticizes Abel and, later, when he reprimands his servant and blasphemes the Angel. He is unsympathetic when ignoring his servant's injured toe. He is selfish when declining to share his abundance with God, and later, when being more concerned with personal harm than with repentance of his sin. These basic aspects in the characterizations of the York Cain and Abel are constant throughout the play.

The York interpretation of Pharaoh (Play XI) is, in some respects, comparable to that of Cain, in the episodes in which the sovereign rants and blasphemes his way to his death. Pharaoh is, also, comparable to Herod and Pilate, however, particularly in his obvious pre-occupation with his personal power and elegance. He is self-centered when he boasts of his authority and splendor. He is devious when he

proposes to retain his power at all costs and, later, when he sends his deceitful messages to Moses. He is self-assured when he orders his troops to pursue Moses and the Jews to the Red Sea. Thus, by combining the traits of two other types of characters, the York playwright created yet a third king, sustaining the concept throughout the plays.

The Shepherds, ordinary folk in reality, are depicted in what is basically a realistic pattern. For example, in the first part of Play XV, two shepherds observe with wonderment the vision of the Angels in the sky, expressing their amazement in the vernacular. The other shepherd, as well, is depicted as an ordinary person, but he has the additional trait of the mercenary-minded individual. Misinterpreting the wonderment of his companions, he places his claim on a portion of the good fortune which he thinks the others have found. The Shepherds' light-hearted gaiety is revealed when they imitate (badly, one assumes) the song of the Angels; but their reverence for God is apparent when they journey to Bethlehem to worship His Son. As they present their gifts to the Babe, they once more reveal their lowly states, by giving Him humble gifts (a brooch and a bell, some cob-nuts on a ribbon, and a horn spoon). Their recognition of God's power is revealed when they accompany their gifts with speeches of praise and supplication to gain His favor. It is apparent that the York playwright consciously endeavored

to depict the Shepherds as ordinary beings, successfully preserving their basic characterizations throughout the presentation.

The York Angels and Devils are groups of characters and, therefore, cannot be classified as sustained characterizations. However, one may classify them within their own special groups and, subsequently, examine them in the light of their sustained characterizations. Of all the York Angels, Lucifer (Play I) is by far the most eloquent. He is proud when he boasts of his power and elegance. He is self-assured when he brags that he will never endure pain. He is god-like when he elevates himself to the highest seat in Heaven. Yet he is frightened when he plunges into the depths of Hell. In the York interpretation, then, Lucifer is the epitome of prideful arrogance, a depiction which is sustained until the pride itself is destroyed.

On the other hand, Gabriel is purposely a god-like Angel, since he is God's most powerful messenger. He is authoritative when he tells Mary (Play XII) that God has chosen her as Christ's mother; and when he tells Joseph (Play XIII) to accept Mary as his wife. Gabriel becomes more god-like in blessing Mary before taking his leave of her (Play XII). A similar treatment of a York Angel emerges in Play X, when an Angel of God informs Abraham that he must sacrifice his son. Here, then, are representatives of a

second type of York Angel, the powerful, god-like, messengers of God.

In two plays the York playwrights have substituted Angels for God in adapting their Biblical sources. However, the alteration in Play VI is virtually inconsequential since the characterization of the Angel follows closely the pattern given the authoritative, stern Deus of an earlier play. On the other hand, replacing God with an Angel in Play VII allowed the York author liberties of characterization which would otherwise have been too incongruous, thereby making the change an obvious necessity. The depiction of the Angel in the first and last sequences of the play resembles that accorded to the other god-like, powerful Angels, but when he and Cain contend in a battle of words and exchange bodily blows, the Angel now becomes comparable to Cain. He is blasphemous when he matches curses with Cain; and he is violent when he returns Cain's blows and sets his own mark upon him. Obviously, the liberties taken by the York playwright would not have been in keeping with the characterization of Deus, thereby making this character substitution intentional.

The other Angels interspersed throughout the York Cycle are not as clearly delineated as are those already discussed. They are stereotyped, bland personages representative of the host of celestial servants of God who willingly assist and adore Him. Such characterizations afforded abun-

dant opportunities to emphasize important liturgical teachings, and, as a consequence, make up in matters of enlightenment what they lack in depiction. This type of York Angel occurs in Plays V, VII, and XXI.

The Devils are as numerous in the York plays as are the Angels, and, like them, are characterized in various ways. Lucifer (Play I) becomes a devil when he is sent to Hell because of his pride. He is a miserable being, when he complains of the heat of Hell's fire. He is a depressed being, when he bewails the loss of his good looks and abundant power. And, he is an angry being, when he vehemently denies his part in the punishment of the others. Thus, the York depiction of Lucifer in Hell is the extreme opposite of that of Lucifer in Heaven. Interestingly enough, Lucifer is later alluded to (Play XXXVII) as being "louely of lyre," an obvious carry-over from his days of grandeur, even though in this particular play, he is a devil.

The Devil becomes a serpent (Play V) when he entices Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. He is cunning, when he appeals to Eve's personal vanity; and he is tenacious, when he persists in his efforts until she relents. A similar depiction of Satan occurs in Play XXII, when he attempts to beguile Christ. Here, the York playwright has not attributed the guise of a serpent to Satan, but he has followed a similar pattern of beguilement. Satan resembles the serpent, when

he states that his beguilement is based upon his revenge for God's disfavor; but he resembles the falling Lucifer, when he regretfully returns to Hell.

In Play XXXVII, an army of Devils takes up arms against Christ when He prepares to harrow Hell. "Sattan" is the leader; "Belsabub" is the strategist; and the other Devils are the troops. Sattan resembles the three prideful sovereigns (Pharaoh, Herod and Pilate), when he proposes to kill anyone who threatens his authority. The lesser Devils, the troops, enliven the sequence in their vain attempts to keep the gates closed. Similar depictions of groups of similar Devils occur in Plays I and XXXVII. It is apparent, therefore, that the York playwrights have patterned their Devils after pre-established characterizations of other York figures; and that the Devils, like the Angels, have been typified by their own actions.

The York plays are abounding in so-called minor characters who appear frequently and only briefly in a single play. These secondary characters are advocates of God or followers of Christ, used to magnify the importance of major figures. For example (Play XII), Elizabeth emphasizes the significance of the Virgin Birth when Mary and she discuss the miraculous event. Furthermore, the York depiction of Elizabeth is comparable to the characterization of Mary in the York Cycle: an ordinary person, rejoicing in

the news of the birth of the Christ Child. In Play XLI, Anna alludes to the Virgin Birth, but she also elucidates the principles of the Law of Purification, thereby adding necessary information evolving from the major theme of the play. In the same play, the old and feeble Symeon emphasizes the attributes of the Christ Child, when he reveals his desire to live long enough to hold Him in his arms. Later (Play XXXVII), he repeats his story, as one of the souls in Limbo. In both plays, Symeon's characterization is obviously based upon the depictions of the other old men in the York Cycle (Noah, Joseph, and Moses). Mary Magdalene (Play XXXVIII), one of Christ's most faithful followers, reveals her bitter grief when she laments Christ's suffering and death, and later, when she returns to His tomb to anoint His body for burial. Her faith in Christ's Resurrection is revealed when she remains at the sepulchre after the other Marys have departed, in hopes of seeing Him again (Play XXXIX). Here, then, is a group of minor York characters who serve to amplify the more important characterizations of God and Christ.

The York depictions of Christ's disciples frequently resemble either their source interpretations or various other personages in the York plays. For example (Play XXI), John resembles his source in his reluctance to baptize Jesus; but, on the other hand, his apprehension is comparable to Noah's

and Moses', since it is based upon a concept of personal unworthiness. At length, he agrees to perform the act, only after he has discovered that eternal bliss will be denied him unless he does. Thus, he resembles the other York servants of God. In Play XXXVII, John, depicted as a soul in Limbo, repeats his story of the baptism of Jesus. Peter (Play XXVII) is reluctant to have Christ wash his feet. Like John, he pleads unworthiness, saying that he should be washing the Master's feet. Peter eventually relents, only after learning that eternal bliss will be denied him unless he follows Christ's dictates. Here, then, Peter is again likened to John. In a later play (Play XXIX), Peter turns against Christ, by denying Him three times. His cowardice stems from the Biblical source, but it resembles, as well, Moses' trepidation (Play XI) because it evolves from his own fear of personal harm. John (Play XXXVI) is chosen by Christ to take His place as Mary's son after His death. His characterization is consistent throughout his various appearances in the York plays, since he retains a mild, obedient, solicitous attitude, resembling that of Abel or Abraham. He is, also, particularly mindful of Mary's requirements, thereby revealing himself as a devoted servant of God. For example (Play XXXIV), John is fearful that Mary will die of grief if she witnesses Christ's death, but he willingly stays at her side when she refuses to leave the cross. John is Mary's

mentor (Play XLV) when he comes to her as she nears death; and he is Mary's most grieved mourner at her death. These York characters are all servants of God; and it is apparent that their characterizations closely resemble their Biblical interpretations, and that they are based upon the pre-established patterns displayed in the depictions of other York characters.

In the beginning, Judas was a faithful follower of Christ, but, like the other wicked beings of the York plays, he became obsessed with his own interests, thereby becoming a traitor. Judas' despicable nature stems from his having been cheated out of his usual graft. The "wasted oil" (used to anoint Christ's feet) would have brought him thirty pieces of silver had it been sold. However, he retrieves his loss (Play XXVI) when he betrays Christ to Pilate for thirty pieces of silver. His wickedness is recognized by various persons with whom he has dealings. For example (Play XXVI), the Porter at Pilate's gate recognizes Judas' treachery immediately upon looking into his face; Annas and Caiaphas are amazed to think that anyone would betray his master (Play XXIX); and Pilate (Play XXVI) is equally abashed at Judas' malice. In Play XXXII, Judas' attitude is reversed when he attempts to return the ill-gotten money to Pilate. He is remorseful of his treachery, but his pleas for Christ's release are rebuffed by Pilate. Judas becomes despairing

when his attempts fail to free Jesus and he proposes to kill himself. The aspects of the York characterization of Judas are in keeping with the pattern displayed in the depictions of Cain, Pharaoh, and the other malicious York characters.

Generally, the York soldiers are depicted simply as the advocates and the informers of their various sovereigns. For example (Play XI), Pharaoh's soldiers obediently carry out his commands and inform him of the workings of Moses and the Jews. Like the lesser Angels of Play I, then, these are rather colorless, stereotyped individuals, representing respect for authority and performing the tasks necessary for the action of the play. On the other hand, the soldiers of Herod and Pilate are more keenly depicted as they assume their responsibilities. For example (Play XIX), Herod's soldiers are sent to kill the Jewish male babies. These soldiers intend, of course, completely to fulfill the command. However, their efforts are thwarted by some of the mothers whose babies they have killed, and the soldiers return to Herod after devising a story about having killed all the Jewish babies. A similar pattern of behavior is to be observed in Play XXXVIII. Here, Pilate's soldiers exonerate themselves from their mistake at Christ's tomb (they fell asleep while on guard), by explaining to Pilate that a large group of strong men removed Christ's body. A frightened soldier (Play XXXVIII) tells Pilate of the won-

drous and fearful sights he observed at Christ's death, thereby suggesting that Christ had been misjudged. These, then, are the more elaborate depictions of the York soldiers.

The most colorful and highly developed soldiers in the York plays are those who torment Jesus. They taunt Him for not bowing to their sovereigns (Plays XXIX, XXX, and XXXI); they scourge Him (Plays XXIX, XXX, XXXIII, and XXXV); they mock Him (XXIX, XXXI, XXXIII, XXXIV, and XXXV); and, finally, crucify Him (Plays XXXV and XXXVI). The York soldiers, then, are of two types: those who display only a modicum of initiative when they dutifully perform tasks for their sovereigns; and those who are more aggressive in their actions when they treacherously or cunningly devise their own methods of approach.

Some of the York minor characters have not been fully developed into recognizable individuals, but are, nevertheless, important to the action of the play. For example (Play IX), Noah's children, while they are not vibrant individuals, perform innumerable tasks necessary either in the telling of the story or in emphasizing the statures of the major characters. Similar patterns are observed in the depictions of the various messengers in the York plays. For example (Plays XVI and XVII), a messenger tells Herod of the Three Kings, thereby providing necessary information and bridging two portions of the play; and, in the same way, a messenger sum-

mons Jesus to Lazarus.

Other minor characters are included in the York plays expressly for emphasizing the characterizations of the major personages. For example (Play XXX), Pilate's son obviously imitates his father and the soldiers when he commands Jesus to kneel before the king, thereby exemplifying Pilate's power and the soldiers' mockery of Christ. The personal servants of Mary, Pilate, Herod, Percula, and Cain are included in the York plays to emphasize specific traits of their superiors. For example (Play XIII), Mary's two servants characterize their mistress as a humble, gentle, and chaste person. Pilate's servant (Play XXX) obediently prepares his master for retiring, thereby depicting his master's arrogance. Percula's servant (Play XXX) and Herod's servant (Play XXXI) similarly magnify the arrogance of their superiors. Cain's servant (Play XII) brings out the worst in his master, when he serves him by bringing a bundle of the best quality of grain. Therefore, the minor characters who serve their mistresses and masters amplify various aspects in the depictions of the major characters.

The characterizations of the Porters in Plays XXV and XXVI are obviously based upon the same general pattern and are included in the plays for the purpose of exemplifying major characters. In Play XXV, the Porter detains Peter and Philip when they wish to fetch an ass for Christ to ride on

through the streets of Jerusalem. By interrogating the disciples, the Porter eventually becomes satisfied that the beast is being borrowed for a worthwhile cause. He further reveals his loyalty to God by offering to announce Christ's coming to the people of Jerusalem. The Porter in Play XXVI is unwilling to admit Judas into Pilate's court because he detects by Judas' face that he is a wicked man. During the subsequent discussion, the Porter persistently refuses to open the gates, thereby amplifying the despicable aspects of Judas' characterization.

These examples of York characterizations reveal a great variety of delineation. Some of the York depictions closely resemble the Biblical personages; others obviously evolve from the combination of Scriptural characterizations and dramatic innovations; and still others result from the integration of two or more York interpretations into a single characterization.

The York playwrights elaborated the original sources of their plays, not only with embellished characterizations, but also with amplified or additional incidents. Some of these innovated sequences provide so-called "comic relief" in the midst of more trying circumstances. For example, while the addition of a Hell scene (Play I) effectively emphasizes the necessity for following God's will, it also furnishes some entertaining moments when the devils blame

one another for their torment. A similar effect is achieved in Play XXXVII when the devils prepare to fight against Christ. In Play XV, an incident which unquestionably is added for its entertaining value centers around the antics of the Shepherds when they imitate the song of the Angels. Of course, the retirement sequences involving Pilate and Percula (Play XXX) and Herod (Play XXXI) are light-hearted, extraneous episodes emphasizing the pomposity of the royal personages. In Play VII, the sequence involving Cain and his servant, and later, Cain and the Angel, must certainly have been construed as more entertaining than enlightening. The arguments between the various marriage partners of the York Cycle are generally entertaining, even though they are based upon happenings in the major portions of the plays. For example (Play VI), the altercation between Adam and Eve is the result of their disobedience to God; and in Play IX, Noah's difficulty with his wife arises when he attempts to explain the flood and the ark. The humor of both of these incidents is apparent mainly in the verbal assaults upon such subjects as marriage duties and womankind. On the other hand, the humor of the encounter between Joseph and Mary (Play XIII) is more illusive. Joseph's angry accusations of Mary's infidelity are met with almost stoic denial. Therefore, the opponents are obviously not equal, and the humor must depend largely upon the absurdity of Joseph's charges

and his manner of attack. The entertaining aspects of the other encounter between Mary and Joseph (Play XVIII) are similar to those found in the episode involving Noah and his wife. Here, Joseph must convince Mary to accompany him into Egypt, but Mary does not comprehend the situation. In a similar manner, Joseph and Mary disagree as to who will go after their Son in the temple (Play XX). Mary wants Joseph to go, but he is ashamed of his clothing and his speech. She eventually solves their dilemma by suggesting that they go together, saying that she will speak if Joseph is unable to talk to the doctors. All of these episodes between marriage partners, including the one in Play XIII, are extensions of the original sources but are only loosely based upon the Scriptural lessons. Therefore, they were developed into fundamentally entertaining digressions by the York playwrights through the inclusion of matter related to ordinary problems emerging out of the relationships between marriage partners.

Numerous other innovated sequences are primarily devices for enlightenment. Oftentimes, they amplify various aspects of particular York characterizations. For example (Play IV), Eve's pride is most obviously emphasized by the amplification given it in the enticement scene. Adam, too, partakes of the forbidden fruit because of his desire to become more knowledgeable and, thus, powerful. Noah's building of the ark (Play VIII) not only emphasizes his

obedience to God but also reveals his rejuvenated strength and spirit. In Play IX, the brief innovated episode between Noah's wife and one of his sons displays Mrs. Noah's obstinacy and curiosity when she refuses, at first, to obey Noah's summons and, then, decides personally to verify the situation. Mary's wonderment over not having to forego her chastity even though she is to become a mother (Play XII) magnifies her most distinctive attribute, that of her virginity. The variant attitudes of Joseph are depicted in innovated sequences. For example, he ridicules Mary's chastity (Play XIII), thereby revealing his own undesirable characteristics. On the other hand, he is an obedient servant of God (Play XVIII), in the innovated scene which depicts his and Mary's preparations for the journey into Egypt. Thomas' remissiveness (Play XLVI) is apparent when he is reprimanded by the disciples for failing to attend Mary's funeral, and when his story of Mary's Assumption is unheeded by them. Much of Caiaphas' treacherous cunning is revealed in extraneous episodes. For example (Play XXXII), he robs the Squire of his deeds of property and, then, orders the soldiers to follow him, as a precaution against retaliation. In the same way, Herod's treachery becomes more pronounced in a number of innovated scenes. For example (Play XIX), he himself threatens to kill the Christ Child when he discovers that the soldiers may not have succeeded. In Plays

XVI and XVII, he attempts despicably to preserve his authority, when he threatens to bind and beat the Three Kings who intend to pay homage to the Babe in Bethlehem; and, later, when he gives them permission to pass through his land only if they return to him with reports of the Babe. Herod's credulity (Play XIX) is apparent when he readily accepts the false security offered by his counsellors in suggesting that the Kings are afraid to return because of their false stories about the Babe. Herod's mockery of Christ (Play XXXI) is loosely based upon its source, but it has been amplified, so as to emphasize Herod's treachery. In Play XXXI, Herod's arrogance is emphasized in two innovated episodes: first, when he proclaims his power and flaunts his splendor; and secondly, when he retires, following an elaborate self-centered procedure. Herod's impatience is revealed (Play XXXI) when he is aroused by the news that the soldiers have brought a prisoner (Jesus), and later, when his attempts to find fault with Jesus are futile. The characterization of Pilate is, also, amplified by innovated sequences. For example (Play XXVI), Pilate proclaims his authority and threatens to kill anyone who disputes it. In Play XXX, he boasts of his heritage, as well as his power, and, in a retirement episode comparable to the sequence involving Herod and his servant, he reveals his arrogance. Pharoah's power and splendor are emphasized in an innovated speech in

Play XI.

Even before His birth, Christ is depicted as a "special" being, in the actions and sayings of various York characters. For example, His miraculous birth is emphasized in several innovated sequences: when Mary contemplates the wonders of the event (Play XII); when Mary vows that her unborn Child is God's and Joseph's (Play XIII); and when Gabriel assures the doubting Joseph that Mary is still chaste (Play XIII). After Christ is born, His state of blessedness is emphasized in numerous extraneous incidents: when Mary and Joseph marvel at the reverence of the beasts in the stable and offer their own prayers of adoration (Play XIV); when the Shepherds offer their gifts to Him (Play XV); when the Magi speak to Herod of their mission to find Him (Plays XVI and XVII). In His youth, Jesus characterizes Himself when He recites the laws in the temple (Play XX). Although the incident is loosely based upon a Biblical source, it has been extended and secularized. Jesus boastfully recites the Ten Commandments in vernacular terms, thereby revealing Himself an ordinary being.

The actions of Christ's followers in numerous innovated scenes reveal their devotion to Christ, depicting Him as the Master. For example (Play XXI), John is reluctant to baptize Christ, until he discovers that he must do it for the sake of all mankind. John's trepidation is, of course,

Biblically founded, but it has been elaborated upon for obvious didactic reasons. Joseph and Nicodemus reveal their devotion to Christ after His death, when they ask to prepare His body for burial (Play XXXVI). The disciples marvel at the miraculous Transfiguration, (Play XXIII), thereby emphasizing Christ's place in the Trinity. The apostles praise Christ for saving the adultress (Play XXIV), and Lazarus praises Him for restoring his life, affirming Christ's goodness and power. Several incidental characters, such as the Porter, the Citizen, the Blind Man, and the Pauper (Play XXV), emphasize Christ's power, as they speak of His deeds. The Angel's dismay about Christ's having talked with the Devil (Play XXII) amplifies His strength against adversity. Both Judas' remorse (Play XXXII) and John's grief (Play XXXIV) bear witness to Christ's willing sacrifice for mankind. Here, then, are innumerable sequences involving Christ's advocates, which interpolations emphasize His various attributes.

The only innovated sequence in which Christ is depicted as a weak individual occurs in Play XXVIII, when He frankly admits his fear of death, thereby emphasizing His human traits. Characteristically, He is strong in all other extraneous instances relating to His suffering. His submissive attitude in the face of the mockery and the brutality of the soldiers is the most candid testimony of His acceptance

of God's will. The taunts are, at first, rather mild, when the soldiers merely deride Him for not bowing before their king (Play XXX); and when they insult Him with the mockery of a robe, a scepter, and a crown of thorns (Play XXXIII). Later (Play XXXIV), however, when they lead Christ to Calvary, they derisively cast lots for His clothing and bind Him once again. Certainly, their most brutal acts against Christ were the torments involved in their "fitting" and nailing His body to the cross, and in their dropping the cross bearing His body into the mortice (Play XXXV). Finally (Play XXXVI), the soldiers continue in their mockery, commanding Christ to descend from the cross. These York innovations depict the torments of Christ's adversaries which emphasize His miraculous strength during the time of His bitter agony.

Just as some of the innovated sequences in the York plays emphasize the aspects of various major characterizations, others apparently were designed to enhance the particular lessons or major actions of the play-proper. For example (Play III), the events in the creation of Adam and Eve are not fundamentally altered from their sources, but the play has been extended by means of various language flourishes and implied actions, thus enhancing the dramatic effectiveness of the event. In Play XIV, the condition of the stable is vividly and, perhaps, deliberately described by Joseph and Mary, thereby stressing the humble beginnings

of the Christ Child. The addition of an episode in which a maiden greets the Three Kings at the door of the stable (Play XVII) provides an opportunity for the repetition of the story of the Virgin Birth. An innovated sequence involving Herod's soldiers and certain bereaved mothers whose babies have been killed (Play XIX) points up the inherent malice of Herod's edict. The baptism of Christ (Play XXI), apprehensively performed by John, has also been extended in the York version to magnify the unworthiness of human beings over and against the mercy of God in providing a means of redemption from sin. In Play XXV, when Peter and Philip are delayed in obtaining the beast for Christ's triumphant ride, the brief encounter with the Porter furnishes them an opportunity to speak about Jesus and His works. Another extension of original source material occurs when Symon is reluctant to assist Christ in bearing His cross to Calvary (Play XXXIV), thereby through his selfishness, amplifying the theme of mankind's injustice to Christ. The innovations observed in Play XXXVII, when Christ sends a "light" to the souls trapped in Limbo and, later, instructs Michael to take the repentant sinners to Paradise, emphasize the quality of Christ's forgiving mercy. The discussion between Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas, of the crucifixion, and the comments of the Centurion who was frightened by the spectacle at the cross (Play XXXVIII) provide brief summations of these events.

In Play XII, the elaboration of Mary's act of purification accomplishes several ends, first, emphasizing Mary's commonness and chastity, when she willingly obeys God's law; secondly, depicting Christ as a sacrifice, when Mary and Joseph decide to offer their Son to Him because they do not have the animals specified in the ritual; and thirdly, providing an opportunity for the repetition of the events of Christ's life, when Symeon and Anna praise God's Son and the Virgin Mary. In Play XLIII, the innvovated opening speech given to Jesus magnifies the necessity for righteous living, as He foretells the Day of Doom when all judgments will be determined according to deeds. The threats of the Jewish doctors to harm the disciples and the fear of the disciples for the doctors (Play XLIII) point up the degree of adversity endured by the faithful followers of Christ. Later, when the disciples express their intentions of going into the world to spread the teachings of Christ, they emphasize the steadfastness of many of Christ's advocates. Here, then, are numerous examples of York innovations which emphasize either particular lessons or major actions of the York plays.

On two occasions, the York playwrights abbreviated the original sources, creating incidents which may be loosely construed as innovations. For example, in the original source, the punishment of Adam and Eve for their disobedience is meted out in great detail; but in the dramatic version of

this event (Play V), the author chose to include only the major points, deleting many of the particulars. A similar pattern of interpretation is apparent in Play IX, when Noah sends the dove out only once to bring a token from the land. Thus, a portion of the source has been deleted, since the dove originally was dispatched aloft three times.

Some of the York innovated scenes appear to have been devised as "bridges" for major sequences of the plays. For example (Play XII), the amplified salutations of Mary and Elizabeth join the first part of the play (Gabriel's visit to Mary and the announcement that she is to be Christ's mother) to the last part (Mary's conversation with Elizabeth concerning the Virgin Birth). In Play XIII, Joseph falls asleep after his encounter with Mary, providing an opportunity for Gabriel to reveal the truth to him, and, at the same time, connecting the two major sequences of the play. A similar pattern of innovated "bridges" occurs in other York plays: when Joseph falls asleep and Gabriel appears to him announcing that he must take Mary and the Babe to Egypt (Play XVIII); when the soldiers fall asleep while guarding the tomb of Christ, paving the way for Christ's Resurrection (Play XXVIII); when Thomas falls asleep after becoming weary from his wanderings and Mary visits him, telling him of her Assumption (Play XLVI); when Mary falls asleep and Gabriel delivers a message to her, telling of her impending

death and her elevation to the stature of Queen of Heaven (Play XLV). These examples represent specific devices used by the York playwrights in order to connect the various sequences of their plays.

On the other hand, a series of York innovations seems merely to have been employed to augment the major actions of the plays, either in matters of enlightenment or entertainment. For example (Play XVIII), a York playwright elaborated the journey of the Holy Family into Egypt by creating a sequence in which Mary and Joseph discuss their humble possessions and pack them in readiness for their journey. In Play XXV, Jesus reminds Peter that the ass must be returned to its master, thus concluding the incident involving the beast and fulfilling His earlier promise. The doctors in the temple (Play XX) introduce the action of the play by asking for valid corrections or amendments to the existing laws. Later, they discuss among themselves the superior knowledge of Jesus, eventually deciding to permit Him to remain among them. In Play XLV, Jesus commands His angels to bring Mary to her place beside Him in the Trinity. The soldiers must be instructed by Pilate before they apprehend Jesus (Play XXVIII); and, later (Play XXX), before they take Him to Herod. They must also react to the mystifying light surrounding Christ when He is betrayed (Play XXVIII), and, later (Play XXX), they must react to the Beadle's

observations concerning Christ, each incident causing them to have misgivings for fear that they had been mistaken initially in seizing Jesus. Generally, the soldiers successfully execute their tasks, but occasionally, they do not succeed in their missions. For example (Play XXXIV), they attempt to disperse the crowds gathered to witness Christ's death, but Mother Mary insists upon going to Calvary. Again, in Play XXXVIII, they fall asleep guarding Christ's tomb, thus failing in their attempt to prevent His Resurrection.

These examples, then, indicate that the York playwrights exercised great care in amplifying their selected happenings, thereby making them more credible by adding specific details, as in Plays XVIII, XLV, XXVIII, XXX, XXXIV, and XXXVIII; or by concluding an earlier incident, as in Play XXV.

The language of the York Cycle indicates that the York playwrights consciously attempted to make their subjects more familiar and their characters more human by the judicious selection of appropriate terminology. The characters of the York plays are not the remote figures from the Scriptures or the legends, but rather are the ordinary folk of contemporary life--the soldiers, the mothers, the fathers, the sons, the friends, the countless individuals with whom medieval spectators were familiar. The list becomes even greater when one includes the specific types of characters created by the York

playwrights, such as the shrewish wives, the anguished mothers, and the obedient sons. At times, even Deus is humanized by the York playwright, speaking the language of the people, as in Play II, when he describes in minutae His creation of the Heavens and the Earth, adding the "planitys" and "clowdis clere," and the growth cycle of a single seed. Similarly (Play XX), Jesus makes the Ten Commandments more meaningful by explicating each one by means of a familiar illustration; i.e., "The vij^{te} forbedis you to stele / 3oure neghboures goodes, more or lesse, / Whilke faute3 nowe are founden fele / Emang per folke þat ferly is." (ll. 181-184).

Most of the language of the York plays is almost wholly couched in the vernacular. There are only twelve instances in which the terminology closely resembles the wording of the original sources, if, indeed, it is not precisely the same. For example, the language of the York Christ is frequently similar to the original wording. In Play XXIX, His answer to Annas and Caiaphas when he is taken before them for the first time expresses the same thoughts as the Scriptural source and closely adheres to its pattern of terminology. A similar pattern is followed in Play XXXIII, when Christ answers Pilate. In Play XXX, His answer to Pilate is given almost verbatim, although, for obvious didactic purposes, some of the major points therein are repeated. This pattern of adaptation occurs also in Play

XXXIV, when Jesus addresses the lamenting crowd gathered for His crucifixion; in Play XXXIX, when He converses with Mary Magdalene after His Resurrection; and in Play XL, when He reprimands the travellers to Emmaus for their doubts concerning His Resurrection. Christ's pronouncements of judgment upon the good and the bad souls (Play XLVIII) are closely allied with the Biblical interpretations of these events. However, the York playwright amplifies some of the major points, for obvious didactic purposes. Christ's final words in the dramatic interpretation of His death (Play XXXVI) combine several Scriptural passages, but are almost synonymous with these original sources. Three York plays closely resemble their original sources in all three areas of stagecraft: characterization, incident, and language. Much of the terminology of the dramatic interpretations of Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac (Play X) and the Israelites' flight from Egypt (Play XI) is comparable to Scriptural source. In Play X, however, the York playwright amplified the sacrificial scene by means of various anticipatory devices, such as Abraham's laments and Isaac's requests, thereby delaying the final death blow. In Play XI, the order of the plagues is altered, for no apparent reason, and Pharaoh does not personally experience the plagues but has them reported to him by the Egyptians. And finally, the account of Gabriel's visit to Mary, in the first part of

Play XII, differs only slightly from its Scriptural source. The York playwright has, of course, transposed portions of the original narrative into dialogue, thereby attributing to Mary replies which are Scripturally sound. Here, then, are the York interpretations which closely follow the original sources, particularly in language, but frequently in characterization and incident, as well.

On the other hand, three other York plays are almost totally vernacularized. The two Noah plays (VIII and IX) are based upon Biblical narrative transposed by the York playwrights into dramatic dialogue. Since the characters in these plays are ordinary beings, they speak in the vernacular. Thus, when Noah builds his ark, he talks to himself in vernacular terms; and when he and his wife argue about the ark and the flood, as well as about their marital problems, they do so in the vernacular. The reason for the presence of the vernacular in Play XXXVIII is not as readily explained, however. Since the York playwrights frequently humanized their characterizations of Christ to emphasize various aspects of His demeanor or the major points of His teachings, so, too, would His language likely become more common. These plays, then, represent the York playwrights' use of vernacular language in humanizing characters and familiarizing events.

In the York plays, the language of a dramatic figure frequently characterized him as a particular type of being.

For example, Noah, Moses, and Joseph, in Plays VIII, XI, and XIII, respectively, are characterized through their speeches as ordinary, old men who, as obedient servants of God, must overcome personal weaknesses in order to do His will. Since they are all ordinary, humble individuals, they, of course, speak in the vernacular. Symeon (Play XLI) is another aged York character. His last request before dying (to hold the Christ Child in his arms) characterizes him as a servant of God; and his praise of God, the Babe, and the Virgin Mary, testifies to his obedience and faith. John (Play XXI), too, is an ordinary being, when he acknowledges his unworthiness to baptize Christ. Like Noah, Joseph, and Moses, he must conquer his personal doubts in order to carry out God's will. Mary (Play XII) is, of course, a common, humble maiden who expresses her desire to please God. And, like the other ordinary folk of the York plays, she generally speaks in the vernacular. She is depicted as a mother and wife (Plays XIII, XIV, XV, XVIII, XX, XXXIV, XXXVI, and XLI); later (Play XLV), as an old, feeble, dying woman; and then (Play XLVII), as a god-like figure, after her coronation as Queen of Heaven. The use of the vernacular in the characterizations of the Shepherds is unquestionably appropriate, since they, too, are ordinary beings. Their language, therefore, depicts their stations in life. The scores of other York characters--the soldiers, the groups of citizens, the Por-

ters, and the servants--whose states of being or relationships with other York figures depict them as ordinary people --also use vernacular terminology. These illustrations reveal, then, that the York playwrights relied heavily upon the use of vernacular language to humanize their characters, thereby depicting them as ordinary folk.

Oftentimes, a York character is distinguished from the others by his use of a certain type of language. For example, Pharaoh frequently uses oaths (Play XI); while Pilate (Plays XXVI, XXX, XXXII, XXXIII, and XXXVIII), Herod (Plays XVI, XVII, XIX, and XXI), and Lucifer (Play I), use pretentious language. Herod's son (Play XVI) is not as eloquent as his father, but he is equally pretentious. In Play XXX, the language pattern of Percula is similar to that apparent in the characterization of Pilate, her husband. Here, then, the York playwrights obviously particularized some of their characters with types of language patterns which become integral parts of their general demeanors.

In some York plays, Christ's language closely resembles the wording of the original sources. However, His speech is frequently in the vernacular not only for the purpose of emphasizing His humanity but also of making His teaching more meaningful. For example (Play XXII), Jesus speaks to Satan in vernacular terms because He represents all mankind in His contention against evil. He tempers His recitation of the

Ten Commandments (Play XX) with illustrations from ordinary life, causing them to be more meaningful. Later (Play XXXIV), as He nears death upon the cross, He speaks in the vernacular when He admonishes man to mend his ways. Then, He complains of having no place in which to rest His head, showing, again, His human traits. Thus, the York playwrights endeavored to depict Christ as an ordinary person, representing all mankind, and, at the same time, to enhance His teachings, through the use of the vernacular.

Resemblances between various characters are oftentimes apparent in the York plays because of similarities in language patterns. For example, Isaac's willingness to obey his father (and God) in Play X is comparable to the obedience displayed by Noah's sons (Play IX). Noah, Joseph, and Moses are alike because they are old and apprehensive and must overcome personal weaknesses in order to carry out God's will. A similarity arises between Moses (Play XI) and Thomas (Play XLVI) when they both gain strength through "tokens," one from God, and the other from Mary. The soldiers who pledge their allegiance to Herod (Play XVI) are not greatly unlike Pharaoh's (Play XI) and Pilate's (Plays XXVI, XXX, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV, XXXVI, and XXXVIII) loyal soldiers. Occasionally, especially when he is riled, Herod is much like Pharaoh because his generally pretentious speech is replaced with oaths. For example (Plays XVI and XVII), he angrily

swears upon hearing that Jesus calls Himself King; and later (Play XIX), he swears upon discovering that his soldiers may not have killed the Christ Child. In these illustrations, then, the similarities between various York characters emerge from comparable language patterns.

Some of the resemblances between York characters occur because of the similarities in expressing particular thoughts. For example (Play XVIII), when he and Mary commence upon their journey into Egypt, Joseph observes: "Are was I wayke, nowe am I wight," (l. 219). This is comparable to Noah's remark (Play VIII) upon realizing that God had strengthened him: "Ful wayke I was and all vn-welde." (l. 93). In Play XIX, a mother whose son is slain by Herod's soldiers wails: "And I hadde but hym allone." (l. 214). Similarly, Mary bemoans her Son's possible death (Play XVIII): "And I have but hym allone." (l. 145). In Play XXVIII, Jesus fears death: "My flessch is full dredand for drede." (l. 47). Thus, He is likened to Isaac (Play X) who admits: "My flessche for dede will be dredande." (l. 209). In Play XXXVII, Sattan says: "I bidde zou be nozt abashed / But boldely make youe boune." (ll. 177-178), therein paraphrasing the serpent's command to Eve (Play V): "Byte on boldly, be nought a-bashed," (l. 80). Later, Sattan howls in defeat: "Owt, ay! herrowe! helpe Mahounde! / Nowe wex I woode oute of my wittes." (ll. 343-344), an outburst which resembles

the moan of the Secundus Diabolus (Play I): "Owte! owte! I go wode for wo, my wytte is all wente nowe," (l. 105). Numerous statements also embody the same basic idea but are not as similar as these in their wording. For example, Pilate (Play XXVI) calls himself a "perelous prince," depicting himself as god-like, since the phrase in the York Cycle usually has reference to God or Christ. In Play XXVIII, Caiaphas commands: "Both armed and harneysed 3e be," (l. 195); and Annas later says: "De devell hym spede go we with oure knyghtis in fere" (l. 217), both resembling the speeches of Pharaoh (Play XI). The soldiers (Play XXVIII) marvel at the sights during Christ's crucifixion; the Shepherds (Play XV) wonder at the vision of the Angels; and the disciples (Play XXIII) gape at the Transfiguration. Jesus speaks of being a "myrroure" for mankind (Plays XXI and XXII); and Mary explains that she will be mankind's mirror (Play XLVI). Her heart is "heuy as any lede" ("heuy as leede") in Plays XX and XXXVI, as is Joseph's heart (Play XIII) and Peter's "lymmys" (Play XXVIII). The Serpent speaks of his plans to beguile Eve (Play V); and Sattan speaks of his beguillery of Christ (Play XXII). Pharaoh thinks Moses is a beguiler (Play XI); Herod believes the Three Kings are beguilers (Play XIX); and Sattan thinks Christ is a beguiler (Play XXXVII). A woman accuses Christ of sorcery (Play XXIX); and Pilate makes a similar accusation (Play XXXIII), when the

banners bend. Deus creates Adam and commands him to "rise vppe" (Play III). Similarly, a servant summons Mary to Joseph (Play XIII); Jesus awakens his disciples (Play XXIII); and an Angel summons Mary to her coronation (Play XLVI). Herod's soldiers derisively refer to the mothers of the slain children as "quenys"; and Pilate's soldiers call the three Marys the same (Play XXXIV). The soldiers make a game of their mockery of Christ (Play XXIX); and, later (Play XXXV), make a contest of nailing Him to the cross. Variations of the familiar Quem quaeritis inquiry ("Whom seek you?") frequently occur in the York plays. For example, in Play XVII, a maiden at the Bethlehem stable confronts the Three Kings: "Whame seke 3e syrs, be wayes wilde," (l. 229); in Play XXVIII, when the soldiers come to seize Him, Jesus asks: "Doo, whame seke 3e all same," (l. 266); and later (Play XXXIX), He asks a similar question: "Whome sekist pou pis longe daye?" (l. 26). These are only a few of the countless terms or expressions repeatedly used by the York playwrights because of their appropriateness or because of the similarity between the incidents in which they are employed. Such similarities of events and characters may, also, indicate the common authorship of the York plays in which they occur, even though it is likely also that in some instances they were the result of borrowing, a common practice among medieval playwrights.

Various kinds of speeches are also composed upon the same general patterns throughout the York Cycle. For example, speeches of adoration, such as the Angels' praise of Deus (Play I) and the Three Kings' worship of the Babe (Play XVII), are similar in form and structure in all York plays. The York proclamations, such as Pharaoh's (Play XI), Pilate's (Play XX), and Herod's (Play XVI) boasts of personal power and splendor, too, resemble one another structurally. Similarly, the soldier's command for silence (Play XXXIV), Caiaphas' claim of superior knowledge in law (Play XXIX), a Beadle's announcement of Jesus' judgment (Play XXX), and an Angel's announcement of Judgment Day (Play XLVIII), follow the basic pattern of the other York proclamations. Admonitions, such as Deus' commands to Lucifer (Play I) and to Adam and Eve (Play IV) concerning obedience, and the Angel's similar speech to Abraham and Isaac (Play X), become stereotyped in all the York plays. A pattern consisting of the repetition of a particular term at the beginning of each line is also frequently used by the York playwrights. For example, speeches in which the term, "Hayle," is the initial word of each line occur in Plays XIV, XVII, XXV, XXXIII, XLI, and XLVI. In Play XXXIII, the term Hayle is used as a salutation, when the soldiers return to Pilate with Jesus, and later, when they mock Jesus with false praise. Otherwise, the use of the term is comparable to the pattern found in

familiar liturgical prayers. In Play XLI, some of the "Hayles" are changed to "Welcome" or "Farewell," but the basic pattern for the speeches remains unaltered. Similar modifications occur in Play XLVI. These various kinds of speeches become similar in structure in the York plays by the use of a basic compositional pattern.

These examples of the language patterns to be found in the York plays reveal that the playwrights conscientiously attempted to suit the speech to the character. Furthermore, the frequent use of the vernacular in the York plays seems to emphasize the conscious efforts of the York playwrights to humanize their characters and to familiarize the incidents.

In this study of York innovations, the developing artistry of the York playwrights and the elementary stylistic patterns which they employed encompass three areas of stagecraft: (1) characterization; (2) incident; and (3) language. As a result of this investigation, a new concept of at least some of the practices of the medieval liturgical authors emerges. These playwrights, the ones responsible for composing the York Cycle plays, were not mere adapters, showing little originality or style; rather, they were artists, displaying remarkable ingenuities and stylistic tendencies. Of course, they retained the basic religious spirit of their plays; but they freely modified these original themes by means of their unrestrained imaginations and their percep-

tive selection of character and event. They were keenly aware of their audiences and conscious of dramatic effect, as well, humanizing their characters and the events in their plays. They possessed developing, stylistic tendencies, as their delineations of characters and modifications of events attest. Here, then, are the characteristics embodied in the new concept of the medieval playwrights. Undoubtedly, these writers will remain anonymous; but, perhaps, some day, their talents will be accepted for their intrinsic literary merits, as further investigations of their works may eventually prove.

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