



ABSTRACT

LUDUS COVENTRIAE AND THE BOSSES IN THE NAVE
OF NORWICH CATHEDRAL: THE CHRISTIAN
HISTORY OF MAN IN TWO DISCIPLINES

By

Helen S. Sherman

The bosses in the nave of Norwich Cathedral, carved with scenes from the Old and New Testaments, express the message of salvation through the church. Ludus Coventriae, a Corpus Christi play, expresses the same message and is built on the same materials. The similarity of program, in conjunction with other similarities between the two, prompted this paper, which compares and contrasts the sculpture and drama in relation to the possibilities and limitations of the two media, and questions the effect of medium on form and the power of expression. Two tangential areas are also considered: first, Émile Mâle's theory of dramatic influence on art, and, second, the likelihood that Ludus Coventriae, place of origin unknown, was created in Norwich, a theory propounded by Mark Eccles.

Beginning with an examination of the many similarities between the sculpture and the play, the present study reviews both the histories of the two works and their

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relations to their respective disciplines. The works are then analyzed with respect to the choice of incidents, organization and the effects on them of their different traditions. Next, the problems of medium are considered and the manner in which form is affected by medium. Finally, the technical qualities of Ludus Coventriae and the bosses are evaluated.

In conclusion, the comparison reveals that, although alike in general purpose, the play and the sculpture each have a separate function of its own; the play must entertain and the bosses must form part of the symbolic decoration of the church. Some noticeable differences in the characters of the two arts are pointed out; the drama, for example, confronts the spectator actively in contrast to the passivity of the sculpture. As the comparison develops no evidence emerges to indicate interaction between the drama and the sculpture. This lack, in conjunction with the gaps in Mâle's theory, makes the theory inapplicable to this particular comparison. It confirms that, as other scholars have warned, Mâle's theory is only valid when careful attention is paid to dates of works and when a number of other factors are taken into account. Nothing appears in the course of the comparison either to support or deny Eccles' contention that Ludus Coventriae originated in Norwich.

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OF NORWICH CATHEDRAL: THE CHRISTIAN
HISTORY OF MAN IN TWO DISCIPLINES

By

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I. INTRODUCTION

The tall spire of Norwich Cathedral, so striking when seen in the distance, reflects only a small part of the grandeur of the interior. Here, in perfect harmony, the early Middle Ages intermingles with the later in one of England's noblest churches. It has an air of its own; Westminster Abbey is sumptuous, splashed with color from silken banners, and Canterbury, every way larger, is quietly busy with its crowds of pilgrims solemnly seeking Beckett's shrine. But the primary quality that impresses the visitor to Norwich is a serene and gracious dignity, warmed and mellowed by its cream colored stone from Caen, a dignity at once simple and sophisticated. And this spirit of the cathedral is wholly and beautifully expressed in one of its most distinctive features, the bosses in the vaults of the nave.

These bosses, stone plaques, vaguely round, carved in relief and painted, cover the intersections of the ribs in the vaults (Figure 3). The sculptures on them are scenes from the Old and New Testaments in an order roughly chronological. These not only decorate the ceiling but

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also bear a message, for they exemplify the medieval view of man and the world as the church presented it to the people: a world where faith was paramount, founded on the Old Testament, informed by the teachings of Christ, structured by the Sacraments and ending in salvation. This conception of life was the guiding or controlling principle, in fact, for the major works of the medieval period in all disciplines: the windows of Chartres, the wall paintings of Giotto or the Biblia Pauperum to name just a few. The reason is that the clergy, the nobility, government officials, i.e., all those with the means or the power to commission art works, were taught and shared the same conception. In the case of the bosses the intention to be meaningful is evident in the selection and arrangement of subjects which take a coherent form, employing chronology, emphasizing narrative, allotting space significantly. The elaborately sculptured facades of some Gothic churches also reveal such planning but it is rare in bosses, and only at Norwich is there a narrative sequence of bosses on such a scale. The cycle is, in fact, close to being unique.

Among the extant medieval English drama cycles structured in a similar way, of chronologically ordered scriptural subjects, Ludus Conventriae is especially interesting because it is contemporary with the Norwich bosses, dating from the last part of the fifteenth century. It is a collection of plays in which selections from the Old and New Testaments are dramatized, complete individually

but forming a cycle of the kind called a Corpus Christi play when taken together. Such a play represents the height of dramatic development at the end of the Middle Ages, and Ludus Conventraie, one of the few that have survived, is unequalled in some ways. One is its skillful use of theater and another is its intellectuality: that is, where the authors of other plays are satisfied to use religious clichés when discussing the mysteries of the faith, the author of Ludus Conventriae offers his audience solid theological reasoning of rather a high order. Examples will be given later. Another intriguing thing about the play is that its place of origin is unknown. Many scholars have speculated about it, but so far no one has proved its provenance beyond a doubt. Recently Mark Eccles has put forward a theory that Ludus Coventriae originated in the city of Norwich itself,¹ and this exciting possibility would make any parallels between the bosses and Ludus Coventriae even more significant.

Here, then, are two large Christian works based on Scripture, from the same time, with the same message--perhaps even from the same place. The major purpose of this study will be to explore the parallels between two disparate yet similar works; we will compare and contrast them, particularly with respect to the inherent qualities, possibilities and limitations, of the two media employed,

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question the effect of medium on form and the power of expression, and perhaps arrive at some conclusions regarding the differing intentions and accomplishments of sculpture and drama. To begin with, in the balance of this introduction, we will look more fully at the inescapable similarities between the bosses and the play and then briefly consider Émile Mâle's theory of dramatic influence on art which may explain why some of the similarities exist.

After this discussion Chapter II will summarize the histories and backgrounds of the play and the sculptures, and in Chapter III I will compare the two cycles, noting the organization of subject matter in each, as well as similarities and differences in the choice of subjects, and the way in which they are affected by the difference in their respective traditions. Chapter IV will deal more intensively with the topic of medium, and analyze the technical qualities of the bosses and Ludus Coventriae, concluding with an evaluation of Mâle's theory in relation to them. The last chapter will present some conclusions about the nature of these different art forms and Gothic art in general.

Similarities between Ludus Coventriae and the Norwich Bosses

Content is, without doubt, the single most important factor when comparing the sculpture and the play. As in all Corpus Christi cycles Ludus Coventriae relates the

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history of mankind from the creation to the last judgment. It includes selected stories from the Old Testament which prophesy the coming of Christ or which relate to the theme of salvation, and the major incidents of the New Testament--especially the nativity, passion and resurrection. Kolve interprets this to mean that a Corpus Christi play is based on the three advents of God, that is, the three occasions when God intervenes directly into human affairs: the creation, incarnation and last judgment.² Legends from the Apocrypha fill the gaps in the narrative, making the story complete and adding human interest.

The cycle of bosses over the nave of Norwich cathedral, 255 in number, covers the same subject matter generally, although some variation occurs in the selection of incidents. Some parts of the sequences are out of Biblical order within a single bay owing to the artistic necessity of placing the most important scenes along the center ridge rib³ but no other significant pattern can be

²V. A. Kolve, The Play Called Corpus Christi (Stanford, Cal., 1966), p. 58. He apparently takes no account of the flood or the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai.

³Such a concern is interesting in view of the fact that a visitor can only see the bosses clearly from the floor of the church on a bright and sunny day; even then it is hard to take in the whole series because holding one's head all the way back in order to look straight up quickly becomes very uncomfortable. Nowadays mirror-topped tables on wheels roll up and down the aisles and make viewing easy, but the medieval worshipper did not have the freedom to move about during the service and so for another reason had trouble reading the whole series.

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observed. (The exact design will be described in Chapter III.) There is also occasional inexplicable disarray in the placement of the bosses, perhaps because of the carelessness of the workmen or their failure properly to identify the subjects. This is a difficulty the viewer also faces; experience in viewing many other examples of Christian art is necessary to recognize the subjects, especially with figures dressed in Gothic clothing and with Gothic appurtenances.⁴

The presentation of Bible stories according to the prevailing traditions was a commonplace in the large scale, public work of art of the Gothic period;⁵ it was meant to honor and glorify God, and to represent with tender and reverent affection, in a way which would appeal to the people and impress them, the "theological" facts on which their hope of salvation rested. Therefore, as Gothic style required, the lives of Mary and Joseph were embellished with many details and, although treated with dignity, were presented in a way which accentuated their human joys and sorrows. Genre touches were added wherever they were

⁴C. J. P. Cave in "Roof Bosses in the Transepts of Norwich Cathedral Church," Archaeologia, LXXXIII (1933), pp. 45 and 48, blames the master of the works for irregularities in placement.

⁵In comparison with other cycles, however, Ludus Coventriae contains more theology and seems to be on a more intellectual level. See Hardin Craig, English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1955), p. 260.

appropriate, little domestic motifs from daily life such as a pan of milk warming by the fire in the nativity scene,⁶ but the doctrines of Christianity were always in control and determined what was to be included. In addition, the natural desire of the artist and playwright to appeal to their audiences brought about the inclusion of secular motifs and comic elements, while the necessity for communicating clearly was responsible for some of the costuming (as with the comic and tragic masks of the classical theater) and for the simple and direct statements. Ludus Coventriae and the Norwich bosses both employed these conventions, but each also contained original and individual features which will be pointed out in Chapter III.

Produced within twenty-five years of each other, as it happens, both Ludus Coventriae and the bosses were late Gothic creations, coming after a long development in their respective disciplines. The bosses were put in place when the nave was vaulted in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, possibly after the fire of 1455. The manuscript of Ludus Coventriae, now in the British Museum as Cotton MS. Vespasian D. viii, is generally believed to have been

⁶Émile Mâle, L'Art religieux de la fin du moyen âge en France (Paris, 1908), p. 36, and Gustave Cohen, Histoire de la mise en scène dans le théâtre religieux français du moyen âge (Paris, 1956), p. 109. Mâle's book will be referred to from here on as De la fin.

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written in 1468 since that date appears on the verso of folio 100 in the hand of the main scribe.⁷

In some ways this was a propitious time for the arts; the Hundred Years War had ended and the towns in the east of England were full of vitality. Norwich in particular was pioneering in political experiments leading toward civil freedom.⁸ This was undoubtedly one expression of the breaking down of feudal society, and another was the disturbed and lawless condition prevailing in Norwich from the middle of the fifteenth century.⁹ Although York and Lancaster were engaged in their struggle for the crown and the citizens of Norwich raised money and sent soldiers as they were bound to do,¹⁰ the townspeople seemed in fact to be more concerned with the problems they were facing in the city than with who won the Civil War.

But, if there was trouble, there was also prosperity. Industry had grown and a money economy had developed; the burghers were able to purchase materials and pay wages and consequently they had the power of patronage, something

⁷Esther Swenson, An Inquiry into the Composition and Structure of Ludus Coventriae (Minneapolis, 1914), p. 3.

⁸A. S. Green, Town Life in the Fifteenth Century (London, 1894), I, p. 361.

⁹The Victoria History of the Counties of England, Norfolk (Westminster, 1906), II, pp. 487-489.

¹⁰Green, II, p. 37.

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they had not previously possessed. The increasing wealth and influence of the merchant class were reflected in the many parish churches and guild halls erected then, and also in the renovation and refurbishing of many older buildings, such as Norwich Cathedral, which were symbols of importance in the town. The dramatic arts received much support too; in the fifteenth century St. Luke's Guild (painters, braziers and plumbers) was responsible for the pageants and continued to be until 1527 when the Corpus Christi drama was divided into its component parts and these were assigned to the local trading companies. The records of the fifteenth century Norwich plays have not survived, but E. K. Chambers has published the fifteenth century expense lists for the plays of some other cities and these give an idea of the casts, costumes and fees as they probably were in Norwich too.¹¹

Economic conditions accounted for Norwich's position as one of the important cities of late medieval England. Now it ranks thirty-third in size, but in the Middle Ages it was one of the four largest. Although in 1579 the population was down to 9,320, it had been 13,000 in 1311; over 7,000 lives were lost during the plague.¹² Except London which was the largest of all, only Bristol and York

¹¹The Medieval Stage (Oxford, 1903), II; the Coventry list on p. 363 and the Hull list on p. 370 offer examples.

¹²See Josiah C. Russell, British Medieval Population (Albuquerque, 1948), p. 284.

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were as big or larger than Norwich. Norwich's prosperity arose from the cloth trade, the most important industry of the late Middle Ages; in 1404 the city was wealthy and powerful enough to request and be granted a mayor.¹³ It therefore had the necessary attributes for producing two such elaborate works as the play cycle and the sculptural program: wealth, status and population. It is, then, a little disappointing to find only insignificant references to the part which the cathedral played in the history of the town. The Victoria History mentions only that Margaret Paston named it in her will, and John Paston was attacked at its portal by Charles Newell in 1452 during the civil war over the possession of Sir John Fastolf's estates.¹⁴

However, recorded or not, in such a time and in such a place Norwich Cathedral received its last glorious touches, the bosses. Ludus Coventriae may or may not have been written and produced in Norwich, but it was created at the same time and the place must have been very like the city of Norwich.

¹³Nikolaus Pevsner, Norfolk and Norwich (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1961), pp. 204-205.

¹⁴pp. 250-251.

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Émile Mâle's Theory of Dramatic
Influence on Art

The similarity between Ludus Coventriae and the bosses in content, message and tone, while strong enough to make a comparison possible, is not unique. These art works are typical expressions of Gothic culture singled out here because they are unquestionably contemporary, and also because of the possibility that Ludus Coventriae might have originated in Norwich as Eccles has suggested, but they exhibit characteristics found in other sculptures, stained glass windows, manuscripts and plays of the period. The characteristics of many Gothic works, in fact, are so unmistakably similar that scholars have speculated about the similarity and the reasons for it, and the one whose theory has been most discussed is Émile Mâle. In 1904 he first published his theory that the iconography of painting and sculpture changed radically in the fifteen century under the influence of the theater,¹⁵ and new motifs appeared, costumes and settings were changed, new characters and incidents were depicted. He believed that because the plays were such successes and so wholly captivated the

¹⁵"La renouvellement de l'art par les mystères,"
Gazette des beaux arts (Feb. - May, 1904), 215-230.

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people, artists and sculptors either consciously or unconsciously imitated what they had seen on the stage.¹⁶

In some specific cases he is undoubtedly correct. The Holkham Bible Picture Book, an early fourteenth century English work from the eastern Midlands, has an illustration which supports his argument. The subject is the punishment of Salome, one of the midwives Joseph brought to Mary at the nativity. Not believing that Mary is still virgin Salome is preparing to test her. According to the legend when she touched Mary her hand withered, and this is conveyed to the viewer by the inclusion of the glove dangling from her wrist, ready to be put on when it was time to create the effect (Figure 1). Only the influence of the drama could explain this detail. However, when choosing examples to illustrate his theory, Mâle allowed his enthusiasm to distract him from careful methodology and he used examples without regard for their exact chronology. Consequently many critics have accused him of not clearly establishing a cause and effect relationship and his theory has been subject to criticism.¹⁷ At the end of Chapter IV

¹⁶But he ignores the fact that this phenomenon did not occur until the fifteenth century though the great developments in the theater took place in the fourteenth century, especially after the founding of Corpus Christi Day in 1311.

¹⁷See L. Bréhier, L'art chrétien (Paris, 1918), p. 342; L. Réau, Iconographie de l'art chrétien (Paris, 1955), p. 263; G. Cohen, Histoire de la mise en scene (Paris, 1956), p. 115; A. Watson, Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse (London, 1934), p. 35.



Fig. 1.--The Punishment of Salome. Taken from M. D. Anderson, Drama and Imagery in English Medieval Churches, p. 139.

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we will consider Mâle's theory in relation to the bosses and Ludus Coventriae.

Although this study was designed specifically to compare and contrast two examples of Gothic art in different media, the Ludus Coventriae and the bosses at Norwich, we should bear in mind that both are completely in the spirit of their time and therefore resemble other programs in sculpture, wall paintings, manuscript illuminations and plays as much as they do each other. Furthermore other examples of the Gothic arts might have influenced the two cycles we are examining instead of, or in addition to, their possible influence on each other.

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II. THE HISTORY OF LUDUS COVENTRIAE AND THE NORWICH BOSSES

As a foundation for the analysis of the bosses and plays which will take place in the next chapter, the history of each of the cycles and its relation to its own discipline should be reviewed. Such a review will also provide better appreciation for the very special value of these two works.

Fortunately the history of the cathedral has been thoroughly studied and recorded--the books by Dean Goulburn and Nikolaus Pevsner especially will be cited in this paper. Furthermore, the Society of the Friends of Norwich Cathedral has been founded for the protection of the cathedral and has taken charge of its history and preservation. Therefore we can say quite definitely that Norwich Cathedral was begun in 1096 under Bishop Herbert de Losinga after the founding of the see of Norwich in 1094, but the consecration of the building did not take place until 1278.

Compared with other cathedrals it sustained a normal number of accidents such as the falling of the spire in 1362, and several damaging fires in 1171, 1272, 1445 and 1463, all of which required rebuilding in various parts of the

structure.¹⁸ As new styles came into fashion other parts were redone or added to: the west front in 1449 and the cloisters from 1297 on into the fifteenth century. The last entirely new work was the stone vaulting of the nave, chancel and transepts, in that order, from 1446 until after 1509. But from the eighteenth century on many restorations have been planned and executed, and still continue to be, under the sponsorship of the Friends of Norwich Cathedral.

The mixture of styles, Norman through Perpendicular, was so judicious, however, that a sense of unity has been preserved. This is even more remarkable in view of the considerable size of the cathedral. The central tower, for instance, 315 feet high, is the tallest Norman tower in England, and it presides impressively over the Gothic cloister, an especially large and beautiful cloister decorated with bosses in its vaulted ambulatory.¹⁹ Only Salisbury in all of England has a larger cloister than that at Norwich; also it is the only cloister where a second story, which was probably used as a study or scriptorium, remains. The total length of the church is 410 feet, of which the nave takes up 259 feet--the second longest nave

¹⁸ Enumerated by Pevsner, p. 210.

¹⁹ The bosses of the cloisters are described by M. R. James in the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Journal, 1911, pp. 12 ff, and by E. W. Tristram, Eighth Annual Report of the Friends of the Cathedral Church of Norwich, 1935, pp. 12-19.

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in England (St. Albans has the longest). The height of the nave is 72 feet, not as great as the 83 feet of the choir but still lofty. Besides its outstanding measurements Norwich is embellished with carvings, tracery and stained glass windows, but each of these decorations is subordinated to the overall effect of dignity and strength in the medieval building.

The bosses in the nave are our particular concern, however, and they were erected with the lierne vaulting²⁰ in the tenure of Bishop Lyhart, 1446-72, after a fire, perhaps caused by lightning, had destroyed the wooden roof of the nave. There are two possible explanations as to why it was considered worthwhile to spend time and money on the bosses, which are at best difficult to view and at worst impossible. One is, very simply, that if something is made to honor God, perhaps it is not important that people see it--a concept similar to the idea that anonymous charity is the most pleasing to the Lord. Then, too, granting that the work is not being done to bring glory or gratitude to the doer but only to God and, that the vaults of the church symbolize the vaults of heaven, the bosses relating the history of man and expressing the message of salvation appear there appropriately. There

²⁰Liernes are tertiary ribs, not springing from the wall or ridge rib, serving a purely decorative function. They are an English innovation introduced at Bristol at the end of the thirteenth century.

are other examples in the church of art which may escape notice: the misericords, sculpture on buttresses, roofs and towers, and even windows. If one stands directly in front of a large Gothic window filled with many scenes, one may be able to understand all of it with time and patience, but the worshipper or casual stroller receives at first an impression of color and design rather than narrative, and perhaps will only be able to perceive a small part of the subject matter.

The other suggestion (which does not exclude the first) is that placing sculpture up high in the vaults is part of the Gothic tendency to spread decoration into all available spaces. Just as the illumination covers more and more of the manuscript pages, sculptures, tracery, cusps, finials and crockets gradually eliminate any solid wall surfaces on church facades. At the same time, in the interiors, the vaults become more elaborate and, in some cases, bosses were added, a means of elaborating the vaults still further, the profusion of decoration offering an analogue to the plenitude of creation.

Roof bosses had been in use since Norman times although not extensively. In Norman usage the design in the center of the boss was generally a face--of a man, a beast or a bird--and this was surrounded by foliage. But in the Early English style, begun at Canterbury, richly sculptured foliage alone covered the whole surface of the

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boss.²¹ Figures, however, began to reappear in the early thirteenth century. The introduction of lierne vaulting at the end of the thirteenth century, with more ribs and therefore more intersections, provided the opportunity for more bosses and they became much more common in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Most of these were created as independent pieces; that is, one was not related to the next in any pattern either typological, narrative or chronological, but at Tewkesbury in the fourteenth century a sequence of bosses appeared which Cave claims is the first instance of storied bosses.²²

Storied bosses never became a commonplace, and Norwich is unique in having five separate series. The oldest begins in the east walk of the cloister; it was probably started at the time of the rebuilding of the cloister in 1297 and was finished by 1318. The first bosses in this series are foliage carvings but toward the northern end of the walk scenes of the passion are presented, surrounded by various other subjects, human, animal and grotesque. The narrative continues in the north walk but the work there was later, not beginning until the fifteenth century, all such projects having stopped when

²¹C. J. P. Cave, Roof Bosses in Medieval Churches (Cambridge, 1948), p. 5.

²²Ibid., p. 11. Storied is the term he uses for *bosses* with figures, used in a sequence and relating a *story*.

the Black Death ravaged the land. The bosses of the north walk were completed quickly when once begun, in fact by 1430; their subject matter includes many scenes of Christ's appearances after the resurrection, and scenes of the ascension and Pentecost.

The second series is in the south and west walks of the cloisters. Here scenes from the apocalypse are interspersed among other subjects. The first part of the series, in the south walk, was completed by 1330; then, for some unknown reason, nothing was done until 1338. The program was unaffected, however, and the series was finished as planned originally, in 1348.²³ The first and second series together contain nearly 400 bosses and are considered by some critics to be the finest in the country.

The third series to be put in place was the one in the Bauchun Chapel. The chapel itself had been constructed early in the fourteenth century, but about the middle of the fifteenth the roof was removed, the walls were raised several feet and a new roof, vaulted in stone and decorated with carved bosses, was built as the gift of William of Sekyngton who was buried there in 1460. The subject matter of these bosses is totally different from all others in

²³ Cave, and James whom he cites on p. 12 of Roof Bosses in Medieval Churches, both believe these bosses reflect the general style of East Anglian MS. In "Roof Bosses in the Transepts of Norwich Cathedral Church," Cave expresses the same opinion about the transept bosses, p. 49.

the cathedral. The story they tell is of an Empress, falsely accused and condemned to death, who undergoes many terrible experiences and is finally saved through the mercy of Mary.²⁴ This is a type of stories known as Miracles of Our Lady; Chaucer uses an accused queen story, though not a Miracle of Our Lady, in the "Man of Law's Tale."

The nave bosses were next in order. Because the nave is so long²⁵ 255 bosses are placed among its vaults depicting scenes from the Old and New Testaments, beginning with the creation and ending with the last judgment. A portrait of Bishop Lyhart on the last center boss, C85, serves as a kind of signature.

The transept series was the last, put in place in the early sixteenth century. Its 150 scenes are from the New Testament, relating the childhood and early life of Christ. The intention may have been to supplement what had already been done in the nave, to fill in the gaps in the lives of Christ and Mary, but the designer of the

²⁴M. R. James tells the story and describes the bosses in "The Sculptured Bosses in the Roof of the Bauchun Chapel of Our Lady of Pity in Norwich Cathedral," Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society, 1908, pp. 1-7.

²⁵Norwich nave is the only one in England with fourteen bays. See the Thirteen-Hundredth Anniversary of the Diocese of East Anglia, Official Handbook, ed. by Dean Cranage (Norwich, 1930), pp. 1-55, for a general description of the church.

program must have been unaware of the many possibilities or working with limited patterns, for a number of scenes are repeated several times. In addition, the master of the works did not strictly oversee the installation of the bosses so that the narrative is hard to follow. On the whole this series is regarded as the least successful of all.²⁶

Now that the first series at Tewkesbury Cathedral and the five series at Norwich have been mentioned, it only remains to name three more series to complete the whole catalogue of storied bosses in England: the cloister at Worcester, the chancel of Nantwich in Cheshire and the chancel of Salle in Norfolk.²⁷ There are many examples of single bosses with scenes carved upon them, but the series we are going to discuss is a rare and important work because of its completeness and extent. Individual examples of the series illustrated in this paper have never been published; the whole has been published only as in Figure 3 of this paper where the separate bosses are almost indecipherable.²⁸

²⁶ See Cave, "Roof Bosses in the Transepts of Norwich Cathedral Church," pp. 45-65.

²⁷ Cave, Roof Bosses in Medieval Churches, p. 14.

²⁸ Professor Alan Nelson, University of California at Berkeley, took these photos and allowed their use in this paper.

From this account of the history of the bosses which so clearly points to their importance as a distinctive example, one of the few examples ever created, of a very special kind of work, let us turn to Ludus Coventriae which is also unique but in a different sense. Whereas storied bosses were always rare, scripts of the plays were once plentiful--not, it should be noted, as literature but as scores for guiding the performances. Ludus²⁹ is now one of only four complete versions of the English Corpus Christi play that survived the anti-Catholic suppression. The forerunners of the Corpus Christi plays were the sequences, which Kolve defines as groups of plays comprising a series of actions that conclude with the episode appropriate to the particular day of performance.³⁰ Smaller than the Corpus Christi play, they had begun to develop in the liturgical stage of the drama, when plays were still being performed in Latin in the church. They grew much larger when the plays moved out of the church into the town and Latin was replaced by the vernacular in the thirteenth century.

In general sequences could be divided into two main types. The climax of one was the nativity and

²⁹From this point I will use the more concise and convenient title, Ludus, more appropriate too since the full title contains the incorrect attribution to Coventry.

³⁰p. 35.

therefore it was played at Christmas time; the other dealt mainly with the passion and resurrection and was presented at Easter. Both kinds of sequences became very lengthy on the continent, especially the passion groups in Germany--and in part this resulted from the addition of Old Testament plays. These were not always added to the sequences but they often were: in the passion play man's fall and the expulsion from Paradise provide the logical necessity for Christ's sacrifice, while in the nativity group Moses and the burning bush or the prophets would establish the continuity between the two Testaments.

Kolve explains how the Old Testament incidents might have been selected--after the basic condition of typological significance was satisfied³¹--by choosing those which related to the three advents of God.³² The framework thus set up, he contends, was further refined by being combined with two conventional systems for understanding man's history. One was the seven ages of man incorporated into Christian philosophy through St. Augustine's City of God, and developed afterwards in the

³¹This was necessarily the point of origin, but in using the material to produce the best possible drama the writer had many other things to consider. See A. Williams, "Typology and the Cycle Plays," Speculum XLIII (1968), p. 683.

³²The creation, incarnation and last judgment.

Golden Legend.³³ The other conception was the three periods of law: the natural law, from Adam to Moses; the Old Law, from Moses to Jesus; and the New Law, from Jesus to the Last Judgment.³⁴

That the Old Testament incidents must fit into or relate to these systems is the only explanation Kolve can find for the fact that some Old Testament stories are dramatized and others never are, even though they may be rich in typological significance like the legends about Joseph, son of Jacob. As the plays grew larger, the additions and amplifications obscured the original structuring, but an occasional, otherwise meaningless reference indicates that underneath such a structure is still effectively assisting the author by setting limits to the material. In the Noah play in Ludus, for example, such a reference appears:³⁵

In me Noe þe secunde age
in dede be-gynnyth as I 3ow say
afftyr Adam with-outyn langage
þe secunde fadyr am I in fay . . . (4,14-17)

³³Considering which Old Testament figures would be thought most important, Kolve finds direct correlation between those enumerated in the seven ages of man and the Corpus Christi drama. See Kolve, p. 92.

³⁴Ibid., p. 97.

³⁵All citations from Ludus are taken from K. S. Block, Ludus Coventriae or The Plai Called Corpus Christi, E.E.T.S., No. 120 (London, 1922).

The Corpus Christi play, "the most ambitious of all literary schemes" in Craig's terms, had a wide distribution.³⁶ In England, although the south continued to prefer the older forms of the sequences, the Corpus Christi drama developed in the north. It used to be thought that the earliest examples were borrowings from the French,³⁷ but now an independent origin is considered more likely. The name Corpus Christi, at any rate, soon became descriptive of a large cycle which joined the Christmas and Easter groups of plays, added a play of the last judgment and possibly other plays on the early life of Mary and the public life of Christ--some of which may have existed independently before--and was organized chronologically. It was, furthermore, acted by the craft guilds under municipal control. The term was so established that it continued to be used when the play was no longer presented on Corpus Christi Day; in Norwich and Chester this was the case although the play was acted on Whitsun.

In a statement which also has relevance for the development of bosses, Craig explains the formation of the

³⁶Described by Craig, pp. 112-113.

³⁷Craig still cites the Chester cycle as a translation of a Provençal MS., p. 113, but more recent thinking is expressed by M. D. Anderson, Drama and Imagery in English Medieval Churches (Cambridge, 1963), p. 41.

Corpus Christi play as a natural consequence of medieval thought:

We know that from the earliest times of the religious drama two tendencies were at work. One of these was a tendency toward amplification, and the other a tendency towards the combination of smaller units into larger ones. Both of these tendencies are characteristic of the medieval mind, a mind that was actuated by reason and dominated by logic, that dwelt on particulars and for its own satisfaction demanded completeness. Whatever happened had a cause or arose out of a need, and the desire of the Middle Ages was to fit all details into their proper places according to large patterns. The greatest pattern of all was that of Man's creation, fall, and redemption, and by far the greatest part of all medieval writing is devoted to the explanation and fulfillment of this pattern.³⁸

He is not only thinking of this as a process that occurs on a sub-conscious level but finds evidence that the development of the cycle was "a conscious and deliberate community act," that it was done "formally and intelligently."³⁹ Mainly, the evidence he cites is the distribution of the individual plays among the guilds, a distribution which sometimes accommodates the subject of a play to the labor of the guild, i.e., the Water-carriers do Noah, and therefore can be seen as the result of rational decision making.

No records exist to explain why the founding of the festival of Corpus Christi in 1311 should have been the inspiration for a new dramatic form. Although it quickly

³⁸p. 50.

³⁹pp. 132-133.

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became common practice, no procession was required until after John XXII decreed it in 1316 as an analogue of the procession of the Ark of the Covenant.⁴⁰ But in addition to the procession two other elements were needed before the Corpus Christi play could evolve: the sequences of plays had to be combined into a new whole, and the plays had to be connected with the procession by having the actors take part in it. Craig calls this "a more or less accidental thing."⁴¹ The coincidence of timing, however, appears astonishing, but if the genius of any one person created the new mode we can no longer determine it. The appropriateness of the invention is obvious. The Corpus Christi festival celebrates the Eucharist, initiated by Christ at the last supper. Urban IV, proposing the new festival in 1294, wanted the people to have an opportunity to rejoice over this gift from God and celebrate the institution of the sacrament fully, without the other considerations attached to the last supper.⁴² Since this occasion is regarded as the central point between the fall and the last judgment it seems to call for a play which extends to the limit in both directions. Or, perhaps, because the Eucharist represents salvation it therefore recalls the fall and points to the last judgment.

⁴⁰Craig, p. 128.

⁴¹p. 129.

⁴²Kolve, p. 45.



And so the great cycles were created by putting together some existing plays, filling in the gaps between the incidents by borrowing from other cycles or writing new plays, and then they were presented at a new and better time of the year.⁴³ Their popularity was tremendous and by the end of the fourteenth century they were considered part of ancient custom. However, by the end of the sixteenth century they had been suppressed because of the anti-Catholic position of the government, and to some extent they were replaced by Biblical, but not Catholic, drama or by adaptations of the Latin comedies of Terence, Plautus and Seneca. Even the manuscripts of the mysteries were destroyed because they contained such "dangerous" sentiments, except for those in private libraries or which were tucked away among other documents and overlooked. Many town records remain, however, which contain much incidental information about the costs of costumes and props, and actors' fees. Even the problems of regulating the plays and processions are hinted at in the mention of the obligations and responsibilities of various guilds.⁴⁴ None of this

⁴³Kolve does not agree that the Corpus Christi play evolved in this way as a dependent once removed of the liturgical drama. Rather he claims for it an independent origin directly from liturgy. See p. 42.

⁴⁴See Craig, pp. 145-150.

information makes up for the sad fact that so many plays have been lost to us.⁴⁵

Ludus is one of four complete cycles still remaining and is the only one of unknown origin. Identified in the British Museum as Cotton MS. Vespasian D. viii, it is a small volume, 8" x 5½", with 255 leaves.⁴⁶ The first definite evidence concerning it places Ludus in the possession of Robert Hegge of Durham. It is possible that he acquired the manuscript there, or if not, then later in Oxford where he died in 1629.⁴⁷ Ludus then passed into the hands of Richard James, a fellow member of Corpus Christi College, who was librarian to Sir Robert Bruce Cotton and as such collected books, coins and other rarities for him. In this manner Ludus--up to this point untitled--became part of the Cotton collection, and Dr. James identified it on the flyleaf, according to custom, with a brief description of its contents. Here the problem begins, for he had obviously not read the text and was only writing what he had been told about it or was surmising. His note calls these plays of the New Testament which were acted by monks or medicant friars, to which he added that the book was

⁴⁵For details of the suppression and decline, see Craig, pp. 354-363.

⁴⁶Only a coincidence but the same number of pages as bosses.

⁴⁷Madeleine H. Dodds, "The Problem of Ludus Coventriae," MLR IX, p. 90.

commonly called the Ludus Coventriae or The Plai of Corpus Christi. Miss Dodds offers the suggestion that James' careless blunder might be explained by the fact that mystery plays were still being performed in Coventry in the early seventeenth century, much later than in other places, and that in 1630 when James labeled the MS. they were still talked about--meaning that James might have associated any book of plays with Coventry, not knowing there were others.⁴⁸ Craig, on the other hand, thinks he might have used the name generically, perhaps thinking of Ludus Coventriae as a two part noun, not to be separated.⁴⁹

Unfortunately James' error was accepted by Dugdale who described the pageants of the Grey Friars of Coventry in his Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated, 1656, and referred to Ludus as the text of their performance. Not until the early nineteenth century was Ludus carefully examined; Thomas Sharp then pointed out in his Dissertation on the Coventry Mysteries, 1825, that this manuscript was very unlike the two plays of the Coventry cycle that had survived. Later scholarship has proved that there is no connection between Ludus and Coventry, although Chambers tried to find it in another way by suggesting that, since the existing Coventry plays date from the sixteenth century, Ludus might represent a discarded fifteenth

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 79.

⁴⁹ P. 239.

century cycle.⁵⁰ He does admit, however, that the differences are very great. The Coventry plays used only New Testament material and besides were presented processionally. Ludus has Old Testament plays as well as New and requires a stationary performance: there are no well marked breaks between the plays, the same persons appear in more than one play, and the rubrics call for machinery more complex and used in more scenes than could be managed from a pageant wagon.⁵¹ Then, too, the craft plays did indeed survive until 1580 at Coventry, but the House of the Grey Friars was suppressed in 1538. In view of these facts no one could insist upon any links between Ludus and Coventry.

The next phase of scholarship on Ludus dealt with other possibilities. B. ten Brink and M. Kramer, at the end of the nineteenth century, separately investigated the language peculiarities of Ludus and determined that it must have come from the northeast Midlands,⁵² thereby eliminating Durham which had been proposed because it was the original residence of Robert Hegge. Kramer's developed theory stated that the core of Ludus was southern in origin, possibly

⁵⁰E. K. Chambers, The Medieval Stage II (Oxford, 1903), p. 420.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 421. Also discussed by Swenson, pp. 68-69.

⁵²Their theories are quoted by Craig, p. 240.

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from Wiltshire, and that only the additions and revisions had been done in the northeast Midlands.⁵³

The play itself offers the reader an opportunity to speculate when the third vexillator says, at the end of the proclamation:

A sunday naxt yf þat we may
At vj of þe belle we gynne oure play
In N. town (Proclamation,
525-527)

This has inspired two other suggestions. One is that N. stands for nomen and that Ludus was performed by a company of strolling players who filled in for nomen the name of whatever town they were playing in.⁵⁴ The objections to this theory are that, on the existing evidence, strolling companies consisted of only half a dozen players who acted single plays, not sequences, in performances that lasted two or three hours.⁵⁵ Ludus needs a large cast and would take several days to play.

The alternative theory was that N. was an abbreviation and perhaps stood for a town's name. Northampton was suggested and discarded; it has too many syllables and would spoil the scansion of the verse. Norwich was considered but the idea was not followed up at the time because another attribution seemed more likely even though it did

⁵³Swenson, p. 2.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 1.

⁵⁵Dodds, p. 80. An exception is The Castle of Perseverance which requires about thirty actors and would take four or more hours.

not explain the N. This was the town of Lincoln. C. W. Gayley, Chambers and Craig⁵⁶ all accepted this location because of the unusually large number of plays concerning the life of the Virgin in Ludus. Lincoln was an ecclesiastical and cultural center especially dedicated to the honor and worship of the Virgin; it was also a center for the ecclesiastical drama.

Herbert Hartmann, who also accepted Lincoln as the home of Ludus, finds another reason for assigning it there.⁵⁷ Some of the particular kinds of props called for in Ludus, such as the fiery cloud and the double cloud, are mentioned in the city records. These records also contain the direction that every Lincoln Alderman make a gown for one of the kings in the St. Anne's Day pageant, and, since this would produce more than the usual three, such a quantity of royal robes might relate to Ludus' prophet play which has thirteen kings.

The latest study, by Mark Eccles, re-examines the text of Ludus linguistically.⁵⁸ Eccles says that, although Craig used the right criteria for distinguishing between the dialects of Lincoln and Norfolk, he was not careful

⁵⁶ Gayley cited by Swenson, p. 2; Chambers, p. 241; Craig, p. 267.

⁵⁷ "The Home of the Ludus Coventriae," MLN XLI (1926), pp. 530-531.

⁵⁸ "Ludus Coventriae: Lincoln or Norwich?" Medium Aevum 40 (1971), pp. 135-141.

enough in applying them to the text, particularly in noting the use of "x" and "s." He concludes that the language of Ludus is definitely East Anglian; in his opinion the manuscript was written in Norfolk or possibly in Norwich, the largest city in the area, but certainly not in Lincoln. Although acknowledging that Ludus is very different from the Norwich guild plays still extant in two versions, Eccles points out that guild plays were not the only dramatic productions at Norwich. There the matter rests for the present, still theoretical.

Ludus presents a serious problem in its composition since it is a compilation of old and new material. Miss Block describes the physical characteristics of the manuscript fully in her introduction to the text.⁵⁹ The watermarks, for instance, indicate that seven different kinds of paper were used. The black ink varies (red is used for rubrication, see Block, p. xxv) and so does the handwriting, although one major scribe who wrote a good fifteenth century hand did the greatest part.⁶⁰ The stage directions in some plays are in Latin, in others in English. Many revisions of letters and lines indicate a process of adaptation and incorporation; this is true of

⁵⁹ Craig recaps her findings, pp. 241-243.

⁶⁰ Also see F. M. Salter, "The Old Testament Plays of Ludus Coventriae," Philosophical Quarterly XII (1933), pp. 406-409.

the numbering of the passages also. Still other differences are in the headings and in the occasional use of pointing.⁶¹

Miss Swenson's close study of the metrical patterns⁶² confirms Miss Block's finding that there was a compilation process. She found five types of meter in the original material which had been connected by means of a tumbling meter⁶³ and by varying types of rhyme schemes. Miss Block concludes from all these facts that the surviving manuscript is the compiler's book, not a transcript; that it contains plays collected according to a plan which was subject to alteration as it proceeded; that some of the plays or groups of plays had been acted as separate plays or groups before being incorporated; that one portion of the text, possibly two, had had a separate existence also (some leaves are soiled as if they had been outside leaves); and that the compiler had command of other versions of plays or groups of plays from which he drew.⁶⁴

The confusion of the physical assembly of the text is reflected in the content. There are small

⁶¹A point is a period slightly raised, taking up a beat of the meter.

⁶²Pp. 4 and 63.

⁶³Meter constructed around stresses and rhyme instead of by syllables.

⁶⁴P. xxxiii.

incongruities such as in the visit to Elizabeth: Mary says she will stay three months until the birth of Elizabeth's child and then leaves immediately, but at the end of the scene Contemplacio talks about Mary's having remained. Another lack of consistency causes names to sometimes change: a character called Abysaker in the trial of Joseph and Mary becomes Ysaker in the barrenness of Anna and the play of Mary in the temple.⁶⁵ Mary's three handmaidens are not consistently present as the text stands: only two are mentioned in the return of Joseph and none in the salutation and conception.

More important is the lack of correspondence between the long proclamation and the plays themselves. Since the proclamation is meant to introduce the plays and describe them, and since some plays are not so described, Miss Swenson claims the proclamation must represent the original plan, or an early stage of the compilation, while the plays not mentioned in it belong to a later stage. For the most part these are the plays about the Virgin in the nativity group, and the passion plays.⁶⁶ Craig summarizes the matter of all these discrepancies in this way:

It [Ludus] was, to begin with, a cycle of a pronounced Marian trend that was then revised and in part reconstituted in three major and various minor ways: first,

⁶⁵Cited in a further study by Block, "Some Notes on the Problem of Ludus Coventriae," MLR X (1915), p. 51.

⁶⁶See Swenson, p. 83.

by the intrusion of a series of St. Anne's Day plays; secondly, by the re-embodiment within the main cycle of a minor cycle in two parts having been built, with various additions, out of the Passion group of the original Corpus Christi play. This Passion play may have led for a time an independent dramatic existence. To these add, thirdly, a play of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary differing from the rest of the cycle in style, paper, and handwriting; also a play of the Presentation in the Temple. Lastly, add many minor revisions mainly learned in style, dramatically necessary, and obviously theological. There have been some transfers of materials from play to play; that is, there are some places in which episodes that are called for by the Proclamation in certain plays are found in the cycle in other plays.⁶⁷

It seems, then, that the proclamation was written for a full-sized Corpus Christi play which may have been presented processionally since the word pageant is used throughout the prologue, even though no guilds are mentioned.⁶⁸ In the plays added to the cycle a stationary playing area or fixed stage is indisputably indicated and the emphasis on the role of the Virgin increases. The length becomes so extensive that almost a week would be required for a full performance of the whole, which has resulted in suggestions about partial presentations.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Craig, pp. 246-247.

⁶⁸ In other cycles the guild name is included in the title, as *The Hell Cart* by the Glaziers and Carpenters, from the list of Norwich plays. Some historians doubt that Ludus was presented processionally even in the original version; see Craig, p. 244.

⁶⁹ Swenson, pp. 68-69. Apropos of the way in which the play grew, by accumulation so to speak, Professor Yunk points out that it is very like the random manner in which the cathedrals also developed.

These alterations, indicating a higher stage of dramatic development in Ludus, make it somewhat exceptional as compared with the other Corpus Christi cycles; even the mention of playing on Sunday is unusual since Corpus Christi Day is always a Thursday.⁷⁰ Ludus is different in other ways too; there is more theology in this cycle than in the others, possibly indicating ecclesiastical sponsorship or supervision, but certainly going beyond the run of the mill sources.⁷¹ Miss Block thinks it less likely that Ludus was a civic cycle for that reason, but Miss Dodds holds that it was indeed originally a civic cycle from N. town filled out with additions from the craft guild plays of other places.⁷² The more serious tone of Ludus could be a reflection of the ecclesiastical influence Miss Block suspects; the opportunities for farce or low comedy in the stories of Noah, Cain or the shepherds are not taken advantage of, and in only a couple of the interpolated plays is there any coarseness of tone. Two other differences indicate a learned authorship for Ludus: the author is more aware of legendary material than the authors of the other plays appear to be (the story of Veronica for example is not in the other English cycles), as well as employing

⁷⁰Miss Dodds suggests Whitsun, the Sunday before the holiday, p. 87.

⁷¹See the introduction to the text for its sources, pp. xliii-1.

⁷²Block, MLR, p. 56.

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many literary techniques (the virtues personified as the four daughters of God).

It also happens that in Ludus we find more plays unknown to other cycles, although York, Towneley and Chester each have some too. The ones found only in Ludus are the conception of the Virgin, Mary in the temple, the betrothal, the trial of Mary and Joseph and the Cherry tree, but in addition there are incidents or parts of plays which either appear only in Ludus or else show in Ludus a highly original development. One example is the prophet play in which a number of kings, and the same number of prophets, talk of the "clene mayde" who shall be born of Jesse's lineage, emphasizing the birth of Mary rather than the birth of Christ as is customary. This is another aspect of the important role Mary plays in Ludus compared to the other plays (and also to the bosses). Another example of a play developed in an original way is Christ with the doctors in the temple in which the discussion of the meaning of the Trinity is unique among the five surviving plays on this subject.

Although Ludus may seem inferior to the other cycles in literary or poetic quality, in pathos or in humor (compared with the killing of Abel in the Wakefield cycle, the birth of Jesus from the York cycle or others) from a standpoint of dramatic technique it is superior. It uses more stage devices and other aids to create spectacle, such as singing and processions, than the other

cycles. Judging from the rubrics, the woman taken in adultery, the death of Herod and the passion plays must have been quite impressive. Some of these accomplishments accrue because Ludus was the last of the cycles to be compiled, but Craig compliments it on other grounds: "Whatever literary credit may be due to clarity, good taste, restraint, and intelligence may be claimed, within limits, for the cycle as a whole."⁷³

The above descriptions of the Norwich bosses and Ludus indicate a number of likenesses between them: both were created in the last third of the fifteenth century with the intention to honor God and express the message of salvation through the depiction of the Bible. They may even have been created in the same place. It seems, therefore, that a comparative discussion of the two works may help us to understand them better, and also to understand the similarities and differences of these sister arts. As the comparison proceeds other works will be mentioned, for we shall be attempting to evaluate the accomplishments and originality of Ludus and the bosses, as individual works, as truly Gothic productions, and as superior examples of two artistic disciplines. One work which will be referred to very often, as it provides a sort of norm against which to measure the typological possibilities of the bosses, is the Biblia Pauperum. This

⁷³P. 263.

was a most influential and popular manuscript, one of the first to be printed as a block book, and its history may go back as far as the ninth century.⁷⁴ Its great contribution was to familiarize preachers, artists in all disciplines and the public with the system of typology as a means of expressing the concordance of the Old and New Testaments. For instance, when the scene of the last supper is presented with the scene of Melchizedek offering Abraham bread and wine (Didron, p. 414), one is seen as a foreshadowing or type of the other; one the seed, the other the flower, the two Testaments are revealed as one truth. More particulars will be given in the next chapter of this significant text as we discuss and analyze Ludus and the Norwich bosses.

⁷⁴ Adolphe Didron, Christian Iconography II (New York, 1965), pp. 202-209.

III. LUDUS COVENTRIAE AND THE NORWICH

BOSSES: THE HISTORY OF MAN

Let us now turn to the comparison of the two cycles. The subject matter will receive our greatest attention, with the similarities and differences in the choice of incidents, but the way in which their respective traditions affect the choices will be taken into account too, as well as the techniques by which they are carried out.

Beyond all else, the story told by the bosses and the play--and the message of salvation--link them together, but we should remember that the same story is the basis of most Gothic works. Organized on the same principle, each presents the most important events in the spiritual history of man. In general the subject matter falls into four parts: the Old Testament stories, and the stories from the New Testament about the nativity, passion and last judgment. As we discuss these it will be necessary to mention specific bosses; here, then, is a system by which they can be identified.

The nave is divided into bays designated here as first, second, etc. beginning at the eastern end and proceeding west. Within each bay eighteen bosses are arranged

into six irregular rows (Figure 2); the fourteenth bay (itself an unusual addition) has, however, seven rows and therefore twenty-one bosses. The rows are perpendicular to the length of the nave and are numbered from one to eighty-five, number one being at the eastern end.

The bosses are further identified by position in the row: central (on the ridge rib, the actual spine of the nave), north and south (which appear as left and right in the accompanying illustration). These are designated by initials: C, N and S.⁷⁵

The most important boss in any bay is the central one in the fourth row of that bay.⁷⁶ It is always the largest in any bay--there are three or more different sizes of bosses throughout the nave. Figure 3 illustrates the first bay. From the floor the effect is of three parallel lines of bosses running the length of the nave vaults (Plate 3). Another factor to be noted is that the bosses in a single bay do not all face in the same direction (Figure 3), although one would expect them to be placed so that worshippers facing the altar might easily see them all. There doesn't seem to be any reason for such variation in the orientation of the bosses--it does not make for better

⁷⁵ This is the system of Professor Alan Nelson who photographed the bosses.

⁷⁶ Technically it may be described as being at the intersection of the transverse ridge rib and the longitudinal ridge rib.

IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM

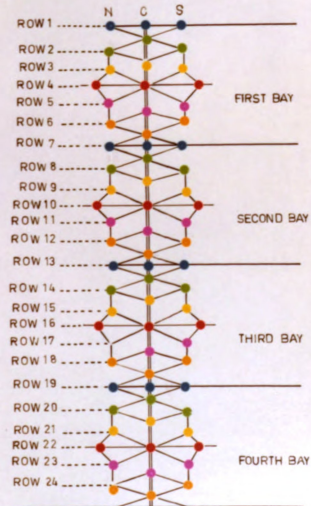


Figure 2

Fig. 2.--The Identification System.

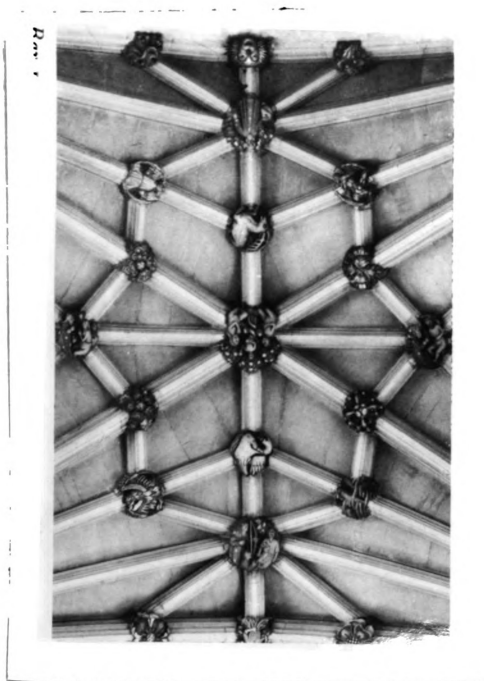


Fig. 3.--The First Bay.

communication or increase the effectiveness of the message. We can only wonder whether the workmen were careless or whether they wanted to accommodate spectators looking from all sides, but in combination with the height of the vaults the random placement makes viewing difficult--especially on a dark day.

The Creation and the Fall of Man

Both cycles begin with the creation as the Scriptures do (a list of the main subjects in the plays and bosses will be found in the Appendix). In play 1 Deus speaks first and describes his power:

My name is knowyn god and kynge
 My werk for to make . now wyl I wende
 in my self restyth my reynenge
 it hath no gynnyng ne non ende
 And all þat evyr xal haue beynge
 it is closyd in my mende . . .
 I may it saue I may it shende
 After my plesawns
 So gret of myth is my pouste
 All thyng xal be wrowth be me (1,1-11)

The point emphasized throughout is that everything owes its existence to God and that he can take it away again at his will--"I may it saue I may it shend." He also explains that he is the Trinity,⁷⁷ "oo god . in personys thre/ knyht in oo substawns," (1, 12-13), concluding:

⁷⁷ Interjecting the idea of the Trinity into the Old Testament is an anachronism, a "Christianizing" of the Old Testament, which is a common feature of Gothic culture.

I am fadyr of myth
 my sone kepyth ryth
 my gost hath lyth
 and grace with-alle.

(1, 23-26)

Deus proceeds to make "hevyn with sterrys of lyth" (1,30),
 and fills it with angels "my servauntys for to be" (1,33).
 The play concludes with the non-Scriptural incident of the
 fall of Lucifer which is not pictured in the bosses.

(This is only the first of many occasions we shall find
 that Ludus does not follow Scripture as closely as the
 bosses.) The action carries over into play 2 where Deus
 quickly (in sixteen lines) goes through the remaining six
 days of creation:

The secunde day watyr I make
 The walkyn also ful fayr and b[r]yth
 The iij^{de} day . I parte watyr from erthe
 tre and every growyng thyng
 both erbe and floure of Suede smellyng
 the iij^{de} day is made be my werkyng
 now make I þe day þat xal þe fferthe.

Sunne and mone and sterrys Also
 þe forthe day I make in same
 þe vte day . werm and ffysch þat swymme and go
 byrdys and bestys . bothe wylde and tame
 the sexte day my werk I do
 And make þe man Adam be name
 In erthelech paradys with-owtyn wo
 I graunt þe bydyng lasse þou do blame.

Fflesch of þi fflesch . And bon of þi bon
 Adam here is þi wyf and make (2, 85-101)

It is typical of Ludus that to convey all these actions
 Deus speaks in the first person, i.e., they are not
 dramatized but narrated--although props might have been
 used to accompany the speech.

In the sculpture God is depicted on C2, a splendid figure with golden hair and beard, wearing a red robe spotted with gold. His right hand is raised in blessing; he holds a compass in his left. The compass is a common symbol of creation and the scene might represent only the blessing of the newly created universe except that on God's right is a lion and on his left a unicorn. These are symbols that relate to Christ⁷⁸ and Dean Goulburn, who wrote the first description of the nave bosses, still the only comprehensive one, believes that the intention is therefore to represent the second person of the Trinity.⁷⁹ In the play the idea is explicit, but as we will see repeatedly, in the sculpture ideas must be inferred, and are dependent on the viewer's knowledge of Christian tradition.

The first center boss consists only of a large face encircled by golden rays. Dean Goulburn chooses to call it a representation of light, the first of God's creations (p. 15), although this is the typical form in which the sun is depicted in medieval art. This difference in interpretation presents us with another distinction between sculpture and drama--the sculpture can sometimes be

⁷⁸George Ferguson, Signs and Symbols in Christian Art (New York, 1966), pp. 21 and 26.

⁷⁹Edward Meyrick Goulburn, Ancient Sculptures in the Roof of Norwich Cathedral (London, 1896).

thematically ambiguous if the spectator is not knowledgeable about the tradition of Christian art whereas the play can be more specific. Other bosses in the bay, however, are identified more easily. Six of them, N and S in rows 1, 3 and 5 are conventionally foliated; although surely a reference is intended to the creation of plants, the number of bosses seems excessive. N and S in row 2 depict angels (these are on either side of the image of God). Three bosses at the other end of the bay represent the creation of fish and fowl: C5 has a swan, N6 an eagle and S6 a fish. The creation of animals occurs on C3, an important spot right next to the center, where a white hart is lying down-- a rebus for the name of Bishop Lyhart under whose auspices the bosses were erected.⁸⁰

But the creation in both cycles is treated only as a prelude to the fall of man. This subject, which explains the need for salvation and furnishes the necessity for Christ's incarnation and crucifixion, is given special emphasis. In the sculpture it occupies the focal spot, C4 (Plate 5), with the creation of Adam on the South and the creation of Eve on the north (Plate 4). In Ludus (going on with play 2), the drama is heightened in several ways. First, by the extreme generosity of Deus:

⁸⁰The bishop intrudes again with a portrait of himself on C85.

Now come Fforth Adam to parardys
 ther xalt þou haue all maner thyng
 bothe flesch and ffysch and frute of prys
 all xal be buxum at þi byddyng
 here is pepyr pyan and swete lycorys
 take hem all at þi lykyng
 both appel and pere and gentyl rys . . .
 (2,113-119)

which makes the trespass of Adam and Eve seem more flagrant, especially after Adam says, "I haue no nede to towche 3on tre/ A3ens my lordys wyl to werke . . ." (2,149-150). The dialogue between Serpens and Eve contrasts nicely the enticing, intriguing serpent--"Heyl Ffayr Wyff and comely dame" (2,169)--and the righteousness of Eve at first--"That appyl to Ete I were to blame" (2,173). But the serpent has his way and then the scene is re-enacted with Eve urging and Adam reluctant--"I dare not towch þin hand ffor dred/ of oure lord god omnypotent" (2,221-222). As soon as he takes the apple he is overcome with sorrow, saying, "Alas Alas ffor þis fals dede" (2, 247), and from that point the scene builds to a climax through their explanations to Deus, his pronouncements against them and the serpent, to the expulsion:

Ffor 3our synne þat 3e haue do
 out of þis blysse sone xal 3e go
 in erthly labour to levyn in wo
 and sorwe þe xal a-tast
 Ffor 3our synne and mys-doyng
 An Angell with a swerd brennyng
 out of þis joye he xal 3ow dyng
 3our welth awye is past
 (2,357-364)

And so they leave Paradise.

The story comes directly from the Bible but there seems to be some stress added, on pride as the cause of sin. In castigating the serpent Deus says, "Thou wyckyd worm ffull of pryde/ ffowle envye syt be þi syde" (2, 341-342). In the first play Deus also charges Lucifer with pride: "ffor þi mekyl pryde/ I bydde þe ffalle from hefne to helle" (1,66-67). As this reveals one of the underlying themes of Ludus is the moral lesson; we shall find it sometimes expressed more openly.

In the sculpture the temptation and fall are compressed into one scene (Plate 5). The serpent, a female figure with a long tail wound about the tree trunk, stands in the center of the tree. She has an apple in each hand. Adam and Eve, little nude figures in the foreground, each hold an apple also. Furthermore the tree bears many large golden apples on its branches. These are both decorative and a means of emphasizing the symbol, for this is an excellent example of the way subject matter is handled in the bosses. The symbolic and ceremonial quality they prefer to action is foremost as the two solemnly hold their apples and stare intently. Very like a seventeenth century emblem, the boss maintains its quiet and timeless air. As opposed to the play, the boss is passive; it awaits the viewer's contemplation, offering a vivid and visible reminder of the unseen, spiritual truth. All the center bosses in the first half of the nave permit the observer to reflect on the history of man by serving as types of

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the subjects in the second half; the boss of the fall of man in the first bay relates to the nativity, the center boss of bay 8. Subordinate to the symbol, the sequence of actions can be inferred: the serpent handing the apple to Eve and Eve then handing it over to Adam.⁸¹

The punishment of Adam and Eve, sometimes included in large programs,⁸² is not depicted in the bosses. There is no way, then, that we can perceive the incident as part of the sculptural program. On the other hand, even when the subject is not given full dramatic treatment, i.e., by being acted, it can be referred to as an action taking place offstage. Language offers this advantage in the drama while in sculpture each event must be presented concretely if the viewer is to recognize the existence of the action. Not seeing a boss with the punishment we may not perceive it taking place, whereas so easily in Ludus, with a few lines of dialogue, Deus condemns Adam to "Go teyl þi mete with swynk and swoot/ in to þi lyvys ende" (2, 327-328). And Eve, because Adam sinned at her bidding, is "to mannys byddyng bend . . . and bere chyldere . with gret gronyng/ In daungere and in deth dredynge/ in to þi

⁸¹The tempting of Adam is used in the Biblia Pauperum with the temptation of Christ. See Didron, p. 409.

⁸²An example of the punishment of Adam and Eve presented most expressively is on the bronze doors of Bishop Bernward at St. Michael's, Hildesheim, 1015. See H. W. Janson, History of Art (New York, 1970), p. 207.

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lyvys ende" (2, 336-340). The punishments must have been pronounced with great dramatic effect and were probably an important part of the sheer entertainment value of Ludus but more than that they form another of its themes; punishment and reward are declaimed strongly in Ludus--the punishments made as horrifying as possible: Diabolus says, "I krepe hom to my stynkyng stalle" (2,350), and the rewards beautiful.

The expulsion from Paradise is not depicted in the bosses either and this is a curious circumstance. First because it is one of the scenes most often represented, i.e., there were many models to follow, and second because it is the inverse of the later scene, the ascension of the good to Paradise.⁸³ There is a perfect spot for the scene too, right near the fall on C5. A swan is now carved on that boss, part of the creation of the animals, but we already have the hart on C3 and an eagle on N6 adequately covering the subject. Even if symbolism makes the presence of the swan desirable (the beautiful white exterior was believed to cover a black heart, symbol of evil), six foliage bosses fill out the first bay, only one of which would be absolutely necessary. In the absence of any positive information, however, we can merely speculate.

⁸³The expulsion is not presented in the Biblia Pauperum either.

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By this time, not quite through the first bay of the nave, it is apparent that someone has been making choices as to what scenes will be represented and what scenes will be omitted from the cycle. Whether he followed one single model, or put together a program eclectically, cannot be asserted. The possibility that Ludus was the model was one of the starting points of this comparison, but we can already see that the bosses are not following the exact plan of Ludus. Because the scene of the expulsion is lacking in the Biblia Pauperum, as in the bosses, we might consider the manuscript to be one possible source for the bosses, and undoubtedly it had some influence, even if only in a roundabout way, for it was imitated in windows, wall paintings and manuscripts. But it could not have been the only influence on the Norwich bosses--it contains incidents such as Jonah in the whale and the return from Egypt which are not in the bosses, and the iconography is different--but it made the typological relationship of the Old and New Testament so familiar that a program such as the program of the bosses, imbued with typology, must be related in some way. It had the same spirit, with the visible suggesting the invisible, the spiritual truths of God, and impresses the viewer with the same mystical expression.⁸⁴

⁸⁴Didron recaps the history of the Biblia Pauperum, pp. 202-203, and gives the text in Appendix III, 403-430.

The story of the Biblia Pauperum is based on the New Testament, presenting the important events from Christ's life beginning with the annunciation and ending with Pentecost. Commonly there were from thirty-four to forty pages in the various editions,⁸⁵ each presenting a New Testament scene in the center of the page between two Old Testament scenes which pre-figure the central one. Prophets appear at the top and/or bottom of the page, prophets whose writings predict the coming of Christ. In the accompanying illustration (Figure 4) the anti-type is Christ on the cross, and the Old Testament scenes are the creation of Eve and Moses striking the rock. If Adam asleep is a type of Christ dead on the cross, Eve issuing from Adam's side is a type of the blood that flowed when Christ's side was pierced, and so is the water that came from the rock struck by Moses. Viewed in this way the two Testaments are revealed as parts of the same truth which is God's plan, encompassing everything. The book, then, although possibly intended first of all as an aid to the clergy, was more than merely didactic; it offered a perception of truth and revelation unfolding. This is the basis of its powerful impact and explains why it was imitated so widely. In the bosses of Norwich nave, although the Old and New Testament scenes are presented

⁸⁵ See James Strachan, Early Bible Illustrations (Cambridge, 1957), for a description of the various editions.

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sequentially rather than side by side, the intention is the same and it is carried out in the same spirit.

Punishment and Reward: Cain and Noah

To continue the comparison of Ludus with the bosses, let us look at the story of Cain and Abel, and Noah, which begins in the sculpture with the last center boss of the first bay. Ludus, too, in play 3 presents these Old Testament incidents with their moral lessons, but (and this is another difference resulting from medium) the characters are developed so that we perceive them as individuals with human qualities. Using their words and gestures the drama shows the differences between Cain and Abel from the start: after Adam counsels them both "God ffor to loue and drede . . . the fyrst frute offyr to hym in scaryfice brent . . ." (3,40-42), Abel responds happily, "Gramercy ffadyr ffor 3our good doctrine/ Ffor as 3e vs techyn so xal we do" (3,45-46). Cain, however, says reluctantly:

And þow me be loth I wyl now also
On to 3our counsell ffadyr me unclyne
and 3itt I say now to 3ow both too
I had levyr gon hom well ffor to dyne.
(3,49-52)

At the time of the sacrifice Abel chooses "The best schep full hertyly/ amonges my flok þat I kan se" (3,83-84), but Cain thinks he is a fool:

to tythe þe best þat is not sownd
 and kepe þe werst þat is nere lost
 But I more wysly xal werke þis stownde
 to tythe þe werst and make no bost
 Off all my cornys þat may be fownde
 I xal lokyn on every syde
 here I tythe þis vnthende sheff
 lete god take it . or ellys lef (3,94-102)

Clearly the two brothers exemplify good and evil; Abel loves the Lord and is anxious to do right, Cain loves no one, and is a selfish cheat. The expectations that are aroused by their first behavior are fulfilled when Cain loses his temper because Abel's sacrifice burns more brightly than his:

What þou stynkyng losel and is it so
 doth god þe love and hatyht me
 þou xalt be ded I xal þe slo
 þi lord þi god þou xalt nevyr se
 Tythyng more xalt þou nevyr do
 With þis chavyl bon I xal sle þe
 þi deth is dyth þi days be go
 out of my handys xalt þou not fle
 With þis strok I þe kyllle (3,144-153)

The play obviously intends to make villainy repulsive and uses to the full the image of the "hot head"--a colloquial version of the allegorical figure of Wrath.

In the sculpture Cain stands, on C7 (Plate 6), ferociously brandishing the jaw-bone.⁸⁶ He is a three-quarter figure holding up his head so high that we see the under side of his nose and chin--a personification of arrogance. Abel is not visible but we presume this is the

⁸⁶In the English tradition the jaw-bone is always the weapon. Miss Anderson mentions other possibilities in Drama and Imagery, p. 144.

scene of the murder--as on van Eyck's Ghent Altarpiece, Cain is usually shown raising a club. For this significant subject (significant because Abel murdered was a type of Christ) the sculptor has chosen the climactic moment, and created a picture of uncontrolled anger and violence. Because Abel is not pictured the scene is more generalized, or even more abstract, violence and so once again takes on more of an emblematic than narrative character, but the goal is the same as that pointed out for the play.

Another boss, C6, representing the death of Cain has more of the narrative tendency.⁸⁷ This is a subject that rarely appears in sculptured or dramatic programs, but, as it happens, Ludus has the scene also--a fact which relates the play to the bosses even more significantly because none of the other English Corpus Christi cycles had the episode. On the boss Cain lies dying, the head of an arrow buried in his chest. Lamech stands over him holding a bow, while a young boy, probably Tubal-Cain, kneels before Lamech. More characters and by implication more actions make this less of an emblem; the comparison with the

⁸⁷The two bosses relating the story seem to have been switched as his death scene occurs first. Other problems with these bosses are that Cain's robe changes from red to white and his hair from yellow to black. Whether the workmen again were at fault or whether the restorers did not follow the original, or whether two workmen created the scenes, unaware of what each other did--we cannot know. This incident, the death of Cain, unlike Cain and Abel, is not in the Bible.

previous boss thus indicates that treatment of the subjects is not uniform throughout the nave.

The death of Cain, in the middle part of play 4, presents the same characters, but, as before, we learn more about them through the drama. Lamech describes himself as old and blind and the playwright builds the dramatic situation by having him talk of his youth: "whyl I had syht myht nevyr man fynde/ my pere of Archerye" (4,146-147). He and his companion, called Adolescents in the play, discuss that and then it seems quite natural for Lamech to say finally:

and 3it as me thynkht no man xuld shete bett
 Than I xuld do now . if myn hand were sett a-
 tryght
 A-spye som marke boy . my bow xal I bende wyght
 and sett myn hand euyn to ahetie at som best
 and I dar ley a wagour his deth for to dyght
 þe marke xal I hitt . my lyf do I hest.
 (4,160-165)

The speech is full of irony for it is indeed his own life or salvation that he is risking. But the climax has been set up in a most natural manner, taking advantage of quite ordinary feelings that any one could identify with--it is almost casual. When he discovers that he has killed Cain--who expires announcing, "With a brod arwe I am ded and sclayn" (4,175)--Lamech has an opportunity to display his ability to express a tremendous change in mood to a state of terror and anger:

Haue I slayn cayme . alas what haue I done
 pou stynkyng lurdeyn . what hast pou wrought
 pou art þe why I scle hym so sone . . .
 God wyl be vengyd ful sadly on me
 Ffor deth of caym I xal haue vii folde
 more peyn þan he had (4,182-193)

Right here there is even a parallel to be noted in the actual layout of Ludus and the sculpture. The incident of Cain and Abel takes place at the end of the play of Adam and Eve, and the death of Cain is interpolated in the story of Noah--in an interval which may represent the "hundrd þere rygth here haue I wrought/ this schypp for to make" (4,206-207). In the bosses the first scene is in the last row center of the first bay which is devoted to the creation and the fall of man; the second is in the first row center of the center bay which tells the story of Noah and the flood. Added to the choice of subject (the rarely used death of Cain), the similarity of placement offers a specific instance of parallelism between Ludus and the bosses over and above the general likenesses of Gothic style shared by so many other works.

Since the church was understood to be the ship of salvation, the association of it with Noah's ark was easily made,⁸⁸ and it became a popular subject in art from the Early Christian period on. (It is not, however, used in

⁸⁸Ferguson, p. 180. Typologically, however, the scene relates to the baptism of Christ, the main boss of bay 9, linked by the ancient concept of water as the cleansing agent: it cleaned the world of the wicked with the flood, and cleansed the soul for salvation.

the Biblia Pauperum.) In the bosses it becomes the major subject of the second bay (Plate 7). It is a quaint and charming scene: the ark, slightly tilted to one side, has three stories as the Old Testament prescribes. In the lowest story are the beasts: a bull, two cows, a bear with a muzzle and a lion. In the middle story Noah and his wife, and one son and his wife look out from the two central spaces. On one side of them a white and gold unicorn can be seen, on the other a number of birds with long golden bills. More birds are in the center of the uppermost level with some monkeys on the left and a strange creature on the right whom Dean Goulburn calls an elephant (p. 87). Only the heads of the people and animals are visible, lined up in neat rows.

Other bosses in the bay tell what happened before--Noah builds the ark on C8--and what happened later--Noah plants a vineyard on C12. Still other bosses fill in the story; Noah's son is seen with two lambs on N9; on N11 a woman carries a tray of birds on her head; on N and S 10 two couples, one with a child, enter or leave the ark. On S9 the raven is depicted eating carrion and on S11 is the dove with the olive branch. A few other bosses have foliage patterns and C9 has the scene of the drunken Noah, asleep and uncovered in his tent, discovered by his sons.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Noah mocked by his sons is another type, of Christ mocked, when crowned with thorns. See Biblia Pauperum, Didron, p. 418.

This story is presented in much more detail in the sculpture than the story of Adam and Eve, or Cain and Abel; almost exactly it follows the Old Testament. The play takes a slightly different tack. In the first part of play 4 Noah expresses the symbolic nature of his part:

In me Noe þe secunde age
in dede be-gynnyth as I 3ow say
afftyr Adam with-outyn langage
þe secunde fadyr am I in fay (4,14-17)

But a more important aspect of this play is the stress on the punishment of the wicked. In his first speech Noah says:

But men of levyng be so owt-rage
both be nyght and eke be day
þat lesse þan synne þe soner swage
god wyl be vengyd on vs sum way
In dede
Ther may no man go þer owte
but synne regnyth in every rowte
In every place rownde a-bowte
Cursydnes doth sprynge and sprede. (4,18-26)

In her turn his wife tells what will happen to these wicked men:

Ffor synfull levyng oure sowle xal spylle
Synne offendyth god in his face
and a-grevyth oure lord ffull ylle . . .
What man in synne doth all wey scleppe
He xal gon to helle ful deppe
than xal he nevyr after creppe
out of þat brennyng brook. (4,30-39)

Noah's sons and their wives in their speeches talk about their fear of doing wrong and losing their salvation, and so the stage is set for Deus to come forward and tell the audience, "I wol be vengyd . . ." (4,95) and "þat I made man sore doth me rewe" (4,106). Noah will be saved, however,

because of his piety: "all þis wyde werd xal be dreynt
 with flood/ saff þou and þi wyff xal be kept from þis
 gynne/ and also þi chylderyn with here vertuys good"
 (4,123-125). This is the main point of the play, that
 only the good shall be saved, and the miserable fate of the
 others is described in the speeches of Noah and his family:
 "of best is dreynt many a skore" (4,200), "In þis flood
 spylt is many a mannys blood" (4,204), "þis fflood is so
 gret on every asyde/ þat all þis wyde werd to care now is
 brought" (4,220-221), "On rokkys ryght sharp is many a man
 torn" (4,233).⁹⁰ The contrast is striking when Noah
 expresses his joy after the dove returns with the olive
 branch: "Ffor joye of þis token ryght hertyly we tende/
 oure lord god to worchep a songe lete vs synge" (4,252-253).

Since the play has been shaped to emphasize one
 point very strongly, some parts of the story which would
 have been distracting or tended to obscure that point have
 been omitted. Noah building the ark, planting the vine-
 yard and lying drunken in his tent are in the sculpture but
 not in the play. Another reason may be related to a dif-
 ference between the play and the sculpture in their overall
 plans which begins to be apparent at this point. This is
 that whereas the Old Testament takes up fully half the

⁹⁰ It will be noticed that the speeches here are
 supplying the pictorial element not being actually pre-
 sented on the stage, but which could be easily presented
 visually in the sculpture.

length of the nave, seven bays, it is allotted only one-sixth of the whole of Ludus. This distribution of Old and New Testament material in the sculpture is in the tradition of the visual arts which sometimes includes more of the Old Testament⁹¹--the vault of the nave of S. Savin-sur-Gartempe is decorated, in fact, with only Old Testament scenes.

Ludus, on the other hand follows the pattern of the English Corpus Christi plays; in these the Old Testament is much less important because typology is a minimal factor. The plays, unlike the bosses which are stationary and permit continuous viewing, move through time. The spectator cannot contemplate, he can only receive impressions and only in the minute they are offered. To expect him to look at the scene of the nativity, for example, and simultaneously recall the fall of man, linking them significantly, would be putting quite a burden on the medieval viewer. Although the idea would not be foreign to him, the excitement of the play would preoccupy his attention. As mentioned above Ludus has seven plays (including the prophets) of forty-two on Old Testament subjects; Chester has five of twenty-five, York eleven of forty-eight and Towneley nine of thirty. Typology may have underlying importance in the play of Noah, but the lesson of punishment and reward is on the surface--the exact reverse of

⁹¹See Émile Mâle, The Gothic Image (New York, 1958), pp. 131-175, for a description of the typical usage of the Old Testament in cathedral sculpture.

the boss where the emblematic character is nowhere stronger and the typology is the primary motive.

Abraham and Moses: Prefigurations of Christ

The story of Abraham and Isaac and the sacrifice of a loved son became a popular subject in Early Christian art because of its similarity to the story of Christ. This is the whole matter of play 5 in Ludus, a play of greater length than the play of Noah. On the other hand the sculpture does not give this purely Scriptural subject as much space as was given to Noah. Two bosses at the beginning of the third bay, in fact, have nothing to do with Abraham; on C13 a mason is shaping stone for the tower of Babel and on C14 the tower stands, a perfect little Gothic castle, complete with portcullis and crenellations (Plate 8). Most of the bosses in the bay relate the legend of Jacob and Esau, Isaac's sons. On S17 Abraham's servant goes with two camels to find a wife for Isaac; on S15 Rebekah stands at the well; Esau, the hunter, kills a deer on N18 while Jacob, the shepherd, kills a kid on S18. On N14 Rebekah puts the goatskin on Jacob, and on C17 Isaac, lying in bed, blesses Jacob (Plate 10); on S14 Esau returns from the hunt and Isaac blesses him on C18. Following the Bible in every particular the story of Jacob continues over the whole of bay 4 and includes such famous scenes as Jacob wrestling with the angel (Plate 12) and Jacob's ladder

(Plate 14), as well as the less well known subject of Jacob peeling the rods (Plate 13), the central boss of the bay.⁹² In art Jacob is very much a part of the tradition as a type of Christ and a model of faith, but in the drama a different tradition again prevails and no part of Jacob's life is depicted in Ludus, nor is it in the York or Chester cycles, though Towneley's play 6 is a play of Jacob.

The sacrifice of Isaac is preceded in the sculpture by two scenes of angels who announced the impending birth of his son to Abraham (a type of the annunciation) on N and S 16, and also by another scene infrequently rendered, Sarah laughing behind the tent door (Plate 11). This last boss is quite out of order, being the first central boss of the next bay. Another indication of carelessness or perhaps of a change of plan is that there are two bosses with the episode of the sacrifice. The treatment is altogether different in the two scenes. On N15 Isaac kneels on the ground bowing his head submissively, and Abraham stands over him with sword raised and head averted from the awful deed he must perform. Near by is a bundle of wood for the fire which will follow the sacrifice, although there is no carving of Isaac carrying the wood as there is in the Biblia Pauperum (Didron, p. 418). Nor is there a ram caught in the thicket represented--the

⁹² All these bosses here enumerated are an example of the manner in which a story must be broken up and presented in parts in the visual medium.

subject is broken up and some parts are on other bosses. At any rate the emphasis is not on the details but on the human emotions involved. The setting is very informal, and simplicity is the keynote. The other scene, C16 (Plate 9), shows Isaac seated on an altar. The altar is draped and fringed, and the typology is as explicit as in the Biblia Pauperum (Didron, p. 419). In this more formal and symbolic version the Gothic attitude toward church decoration is clear: the outward subject and the hidden meaning, the type and anti-type, were never more strongly combined.

Two other bosses fill in details of the sacrifice of Isaac: the angel who commands Abraham to stop the slaughter on N19 and the ram in the thicket on S19. They would complement either of the two scenes of the sacrifice, but since the second one (with Isaac on the altar) is on the center boss it must be taken as the official presentation; why, then, the other? One possibility is that there were two models for the cycle; another is that the two versions reflect an effort to portray two different levels of exegesis.⁹³ One, on the center boss, is the more symbolic and spiritual while the other represents the Gothic tendency of humanizing the subject.

Ludus in play 5 presents the episode of Abraham and Isaac very much as it is in the Bible, but appealing definitely to the emotions. That is, rather than stress

⁹³Suggested by Professor John Yunck.

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the typology, the incident is used dramatically. The feeling builds up from the beginning; Abraham talks about his "swete sone" (5,14) but also about how he loves the Lord and fears him. His conflict is thus clearly established. A touch of pathos is added by Isaac's innocent remark, "Ffadyr fyre and wood here is plente/ but I kan se no sacryfice" (5,125-126), or again, "tell me fadyr 3our grett mornyng/ and I xal seke sum help þer-fore" (5,135-136). When he sees that he must indeed carry out the sacrifice Abraham cries out:

The wyll of god must nedys be done
to werke his wyll I seyð nevyr nay
but 3itt þe ffadyr to sle þe sone
my hert doth clynge and cleue as clay
(5,161-164)

At the end, the emotional climax reached, reprieved and full of joy, Abraham praises the Lord:

Now god all thyng of nowth þat made
evyr wurcheppyd he be on watyr and londe
his grett honowre may nevyr more fade
in feld nor town se nor on sonde
As althyng lord þou hast in honde
so saue us all wher so we be
whethyr we syttyn walk or stonde
Evyr on þin handwerke þou haue pyte.
(5,257-264)

The play generates more emotion than the sculpture partly because once more only one main point is set forth--there is no diffusion of interest, and also because the play does not try to express the abstract idea.

The program of the sculpture diverges again from that of the drama in the fifth bay where the story of

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Joseph is presented. It is strange indeed that his story, so full of analogies with the life of Christ,⁹⁴ should not be included in the drama (it is not in any English cycle), but it is firmly within the visual tradition including the Biblia Pauperum (Didron, pp. 414 and 423). Both cycles come together again in the following subject, the life of Moses.

As before, the sculpture presents various episodes making a more complete picture but a less pointed one. The story begins with a scene of Moses in the bulrushes on C32, proceeds to Moses as a shepherd with the flock of Jethro on S32 and then to Moses taking off his shoes on N32 (actually a type of shoe with latchets across the instep, not the customary boot as in the Biblia Pauperum). This last scene is the prelude to C33 where Moses is before the burning bush, from which a bearded figure rises (Plate 16). This is the point, after a short speech of introduction, at which play 6 begins. Moses expresses his amazement, "A mercy god what menyth 3on syte/ A grene busch as fyre doth flame/ and kepyth his clowre fayr and bryghte" (6,17-19). The burning bush is a type of the nativity (Biblia Pauperum, Didron, p. 404) but the play does not give it importance except as spectacle. Instead Deus immediately speaks, has Moses take off his shoes as

⁹⁴ Mâle says Joseph typifies Christ not by one act, but by his whole life. See The Gothic Image for examples in art, p. 156.

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in the bosses, and promptly gives him the ten commandments: "these tabell-is I take þe in þin honde/ with my ffynger in hem is wrete/ all my lawys þou vndyrstonde" (6,38-40). The rest of the play is given to Moses' recital of the ten commandments. The author of Ludus has combined two scenes here, the burning bush and the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. The story is shortened by this means but retains the dramatic spectacle and the moral message, i.e., the essence of both episodes.

The fact that Moses brings the Old Law as Jesus was the giver of the New Law makes Moses a type of Christ, so it is surprising that, although the bosses follow Scripture quite closely, the ten commandments are not depicted--unless another boss is understood to represent that subject. This boss, C35 (Plate 19), is not one of the largest but it is in quite an important position next to the center. On it two clerics are carrying the ark of the covenant. It appears to be fairly large judging by its proportions in relation to the men;⁹⁵ it has the shape of a chest with a lid sloping up to a ridge. The sides are decorated and the object as a whole resembles a reliquary. Traditionally the ark is the place where the tablets of the law were kept; this boss, then, is acting as an emblem--presenting the idea symbolically, and suggesting in its

⁹⁵ The size of an object is not a reliable guide here since all the way through the nave many pieces like swords, Peter's keys and dice are deliberately exaggerated.

shape that the ark is a prototype of the church which is the vessel that carries Christ's law. An additional significance of the ark may be read into it also: it forms an analogue of the Host being carried through the streets of the town on Corpus Christi Day.

As opposed to the play where the main point of the Moses story is the ten commandments, the sculpture gives first place to Pharoah and his men drowning in the Red Sea (Plate 17). Pharoah, wearing his crown, is half submerged in the blood red sea; the heads of three of his men and a part of his chariot surround him. All the heads are turned in different directions giving the viewer several different perspectives. The main point made by the bosses, as indicated by position, seems to be the punishment of those who oppose the Lord's will. This scene is preceded by the depiction of Aaron and Moses before Pharoah on S35, two sculptures of Israelites ready to leave with Moses on N and S 34, and the portrayal of Moses dividing the Red Sea (Plate 18). On this last boss, following earlier medieval models Moses' horns are plainly to be seen. Still two more sculptures belong to this subject--musicians with lute and harp on N33 and heralds with trumpets on S33.⁹⁶ As in the case of the scene of Abraham and Isaac, the treatment of the Moses story seems to point to an entirely different tradition from that of Ludus; the emphasis is

⁹⁶These are in the style of medieval instruments.

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not on the ten commandments, and many extra incidents are presented. The choice of Pharoah drowning for the central boss might have been made partly on the basis that it was so perfect for pictorial purposes. The parting of the Red Sea could have been the central boss; as a miraculous event it would have then stressed God's grace and protection rather than punishment, but the bosses do not seem interested in striking that note.

Transition to the New Testament:
Kings and Prophets

From this juncture Ludus and the bosses proceed toward the New Testament by parallel but not identical paths. The bosses portray some scenes from the life of Samson in rows 36 and 37 and then, through the seventh bay, David and Solomon (Plates 20, 21, 22). Meanwhile Ludus in play 7, the prophets, presents thirteen kings and thirteen prophets who speak alternately, foretelling the incarnation and stressing Mary's royal heritage. The play at first suggests the older liturgical drama in which prophets delivered their predictions of Christ's sacrifice: Isaiah begins, saying, "pat a clene mayde thourgh meke obedyens/ Shall bere a childe which xal do resystens/ Ageyn foule Zabulon þe devyl of helle" (7,4-6). But after that Jesse, designated as Radix Jesse, makes his statement that "A blyssyd braunch xal sprynge of me" (7,17), the play takes a different turn and Mary remains the focus of attention.

David, for instance says, "Of my blood xal sprynge oure bote" (7,25); Roboas, "of oure kynrede 3itt men xul se/ A clene mayde trede down foule sathanas" (7,49-50) and so on. The prophets speak more generally: Jeremias, "god of his high beyvolens/ of prest and kynge wyll take lynage" (7,35-36); Exechiel, "A vysion . . . Of a gate þat sperd was trewly/ and no man but a prince myght þer-in go" (7,43-46). Thus the connection between the two testaments is demonstrated in Ludus.⁹⁷

The sculpture can be interpreted in similar fashion although at first glance the seventh bay seems filled with merely chronological scenes. Following Samson, included as a type of Christ because he delivered the Israelites from the Philistines⁹⁸--and a figure found in the Biblia Pauperum

⁹⁷ Because of the special glorification of the Virgin in this play, the symmetrical arrangement of kings balanced with prophets, the descriptive note in the proclamation: "Of þe gentyl Jesse rote/ þe sefnt pagent for sothe xal ben" (105-106), and the note at the end of the play, "Explicit Jesse," both John K. Bonnell in "Sources in Art of the So-Called Prophets Play in the Hegge Collection," PMLA XXIX (1914), p. 333, and Miss Anderson, Drama and Imagery, p. 36, believe this should not be called a prophet play but an equivalent of the many Jesse windows which were being set up at the time. It is pointed out that Haggai speaks as a king rather than a prophet to fit the scheme, and some prophets merely repeat what others have already said, i.e., they have been included to make up the number although no special prophecies were associated with their names.

⁹⁸ However the scenes here are of his fight with the lion, two of his parents, two of Samson with Delilah, and Samson carrying the gates of Gaza (a type of Christ breaking down the gates of Hell).

(Didron, p. 421), David is the first of Christ's ancestors depicted. His fight with Goliath occupies two central bosses, C38 (Plate 20) and C39, which are accompanied by scenes of Goliath approaching (N38), two men carrying his arms (S38) and David with a prophet after being appointed king in Hebron (S39),⁹⁹ but the chief boss of the bay is C40, the coronation of David (Plate 21).¹⁰⁰ Wearing his crown, seated on a throne and holding his harp, he looks to one side where a servant holds the sword of Goliath (S40), a symbolic reminder that right may overcome might. On his other side a servant carries the royal scepter (N40). The next center boss depicts David blessing Solomon (C41)--Bathsheba pleads for Solomon's right to succession on N42--and the last center boss of the bay presents King Solomon enthroned, holding the temple and a very large sword (Plate 22). The emblematic quality is striking in the bosses of both David and Solomon and is partly the reason meaning can properly be deduced from them. Another king occupies the first central boss in the next bay; he is identified only as an ancestor of Christ. We have, then, three kings on the ridge rib, expressing the idea of royal succession. The design is completed by three prophets

⁹⁹Dean Goulburn's attribution, p. 187.

¹⁰⁰Placement makes all the difference as this illustrates. If the scene of David and Goliath were central as it might have been, the whole meaning of the bay would have changed.

holding scrolls on N39, N41 and N43, while on the other side are three priests: S41, S42 and S43.¹⁰¹ Not exactly the plan of the tree of Jesse as employed in Ludus, but there are kings, prophets and priests from the Old Testament leading directly to the incarnation.

The Birth of Christ

Before presenting the nativity Ludus relates Mary's story in its entirety and here much that is apocryphal enters in. The first speaker in play 8 is Contemplacio who performs a sort of choral function. Opening with a greeting which indicates that the next few plays were formerly presented as a sequence, she then gives a summary of all they will see and concludes by invoking a blessing. Although brief, what she has to say would prepare the audience to better receive the plays. Speaking directly to the audience, she will admonish them when needed: "Now of 3our speche I pray 3ow spare/ all þat ben in þis place" (9,16-17). Once more in this section the author has the characters express their feelings very naturalistically, making them human creatures rather than symbols, especially when Joachim and Anna confront their predicament in the beginning of the play of the conception of Mary. Joachim says, "But blessyd wyff sore I drede/ In þe temple þis tyme to make sacryfice . . . I fere me grettly þe prest

¹⁰¹S42 has both a prophet and a priest.

suemful inidus make terus trekul down be my-face" (8:41)

What haue I do told to haue his blame
Ffor hevynes I dare not go hom to my wyff
And amonge my neyborys . I dare not abyde ffor
shame

Giotto's Arena Chapel for example--the scene is not repre-

102 This technique of building plot by having the actors anticipate what is going to happen is frequently used in Ludus.

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There is þe fyrst meditacion
 Contryssyon . compassyon . And clenness
 And þat holy mayde fruyssyon
 With these blessed maydenes xal be 3our besynes.
 (9,180-183)

and then seven priests "to schryve . to teche . and to
 mynystryng to the/ to lerne þe goddys lawys" (9,190-191)
 and their names are "dyscressyon . devocion . dylexcion .
 and deliberacion . dyvynacion" (9,193-194).

In this play, too, the author displays a rather
 intellectual (at least in comparison with the other Corpus
 Christi plays) pleasure in words. Toward the end of the
 play he has inserted an anagram, on the name of Mary.
 This unique instance is incorporated in the angel's answer
 to Mary after she says, "I am þe sympelest creature . þat
 is levynge here" (9,243). His praise takes this form:

In 3oure name Maria . ffyve letterys we han
 M. Mayde most mercyfull and mekest in mende
 A. Auerte of þe Anguysch þat Adam began
 R. Regina of regyon Teyneng with-owtyn ende
 I. Innocent be Influens of Jesses kende
 A. Aduocat most Autentyk 3our Antecer Anna
 hefne and helle here kneys down bende
 Whan þis holy name of 3ow is seyð Maria.
 (9,244-251)

Almost certainly an audience would not notice this nor how
 the anagram is carried through each line by the allitera-
 tion and, since the manuscript was not for reading, it
 seems that the author was only pleasing himself by insert-
 ing this private little bit in Mary's honor.

Still one more purpose served by the play of Mary
 in the temple was to fill in the story of her life and

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bring her to the time of the betrothal. Here, when Ludus returns to Scripture, the program is once more the same as the bosses. The sculptured scene (N44) presents Mary standing beside Joseph, supporting his elbow with her hand, as he leans on his stick. He is an aged man with a full beard, as he is usually portrayed, but in Ludus his age is exaggerated for comic effect. He says, "I am so Agyd and so olde/ þat both myn leggy's gyn to folde/ I am ny Almost lame" (10,226-228). Play 10 is again introduced by Contemplacio, once more reviewing the coming action of the play and even mentioning what will come after it in the next several plays. She doesn't mention the humor of it which is unusual in Ludus and carries on through as Joseph complains steadily. He doesn't even want to go to the temple, saying first there is no need and then that he cannot understand:

þat every man xuld come and brynge with hym a
whande
Abyl to be maryed þat is not I so mote I then
I haue be maydon evyr and evyr more wele ben
I chaungyd not 3et of all my long lyff
and now to be maryed sum man wold wen
it is a straunge thyng An old man to take a
3onge wyff. (10,175-182)

At the temple the suspense begins to grow. Of course all the humor of Joseph's complaints has also served the structure of the plot. Joseph tries to avoid the ceremony--"I xal a-bude be-hynde preuyly/ now wold god I were at hom in my cote" (10,199-200), he says while the others lay their wands on the altar. Only when Episcopus

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cries out in despair, "A mercy lord I kan no sygne a-spy" (10,229), does someone point out Joseph. Even then he does not come right forward; "Sere I kan not my rodde ffynde" (10,235). Finally in exasperation Episcopus demands, "offyr up 3our rodde sere in goddys name/ why do 3e not as men 3ow pray" (10,240-241). Through humor the playwright builds his plot more subtly than in some other plays and increases the anticipation. From here on the tone is more serious and then, at the end, exuberant:

A gracyous god in hevyn trone
 ryht wundryful pi werkys be
 here we may se A merveyll one
 A ded stok beryth flourys ffre (10,259-262)

Right after the wedding Joseph leaves to "go laboryn in fer cowntre" (10,467), making a point of being gone "ix monthis pou seyst me nowth" (10,469); the playwright obviously has the time of a normal pregnancy in mind and, in fact, all through Ludus there is evidence of logical thinking, planning for continuity and building dramatic effects.

At the conclusion of the betrothal of Mary Ludus presents another non-Scriptural play (11) called the parliament of heaven. This is a drama found only in Ludus of all the English Corpus Christi plays; it also is another subject not found in the bosses. Placed between the betrothal and the annunciation, the play explains the incarnation. Justice, Mercy, Peace and Truth are personified as the four daughters of God. It is an example of

scholastic thinking, i.e., applying logic to the mystery at the heart of Catholicism, to try to understand why Christ was born on earth. It is worked out by having the four daughters argue among themselves about what price will have to be paid for Adam's sin so that men may once more have a chance to win their way back to heaven, who are now groaning miserably in hell (11,3-5). In the complicated reasoning that follows Justice (who calls herself Righteousness also) and Truth, very offended by man's behavior, are not easily appeased and are only satisfied when it is decided that another death, of a very special person, "for mannys deth xal be redempcion" (11,145-150). Now that it appears reasonable for Christ to take human form the action proceeds to the annunciation in the second part of play 11.¹⁰³

The annunciation, a Scriptural subject, is represented in the sculpture on C44 (Plate 23). Mary and the angel are shown, she holding her cape close to her, the angel dressed in wings, an ermine cape and a feathered skirt. The symbolic lily is between them and an open book is inverted behind Mary. The splendor of the fur and

¹⁰³ Although the substance of the argument between the four daughters could not be represented in stone, the scene has visual possibilities as implied in a costume note in The Castle of Perseverance, c. 1425, in which the four daughters also appear. The note directs that they be dressed in symbolic colors: "Merçi in wyth, Rythwysnesse in red, Trewth in sad grene, and Pes al in blake" Cited by J. Q. Adams, Chief Pre-Shakespearian Dramas (Cambridge, 1924), p. 264.

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golden feathers is somewhat matched by the language of

Ludus when Gabriel says to Mary:

Thow sorwe in 3ow hath no place
 3ett of joy lady 3e nede more
 Therefore I Adde And sey Fful of grace
 Ffor so Ful of grace was nevyr non bore
 (11,221-224)

Or again when he takes leave, this poetic speech:

Ffare weyl turtyl . goddys dowtere dere
 Ffare weyl goddys modyr . I þe honowre
 Ffare weyl goddys sustyr . and his pleyngge fere
 Ffare weyl goddys chawmere and his bowre.
 (11,313-316)

Most of the play, however, does not have such a poetic touch and deals in a prosaic and literal manner with the supernatural event. Christ tells Gabriel, for example, when he is being dispatched to Mary, "Hy3e þe þou were there A pace/ ellys we xal be there the be-ffore/ I haue so grett hast to be man thore" (11,199-201). Mary talks like any mother thinking of her child in the womb; after the conception takes place she exclaims, "A now I ffele in my body be/ parfyte god and parfyte man . . . Nott takyng ffyrst o membyr and sythe A-nother/ but parfyte childhood 3e haue A-non" (11,293-298). There is a theological tone to this too and we can perceive the writer asking himself how this would have to be. In another speech to Gabriel Mary talks almost like an ordinary housewife:

I pray 3ow take it in to vsage
 be A custom ocupacion
 to vesyte me ofte be mene passage
 3our presence is my comfortacion. (11,325-328)

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At the same time this is one of the plays that reveals the superior stagecraft of Ludus. No directions explain how, but apparently Gabriel managed to fly to Mary: "I take my fflyth and byde nowth" (11,216). Again, the conception takes place visibly: "here þe holy gost discendit with iij bemys to our lady . the sone of þe godhed nest with iij bemys . to þe holy gost . the fadyr godly with iij bemys to þe sone . And so entre All thre to here bosom" (after 1.292). The effect on the audience must have been marvelous.

The next incident in Ludus was planned originally to be the visitation with Elizabeth. Twice during play 11 Elizabeth's pregnancy is mentioned. The Spiritus Sanctus says to Gabriel: "In tokyn here bareyn cosyn Elyzabeth is/ Qwyk with childe . in here grett Age i-wys" (11,208-209), and Gabriel in his turn tells Mary, "And se Elyzabeth 3our cosyn thore/ She hath conseyyd A son in hyre Age/ This is þe sexte monyth of here passage/ Of here þat clepyd was bareyn" (11,255-258). Mary also states her intention, "now myn cosyn ffayn wold I se/ how sche hath conseyyd as 3e dede specyfy" (11,310-311), but another play has been inserted between the conception and the visitation, a play describing Joseph's return. Not only is the action interrupted by this play but the whole tone of the drama

changes with it.¹⁰⁴ From the beginning of the play when Joseph cries, "How dame how . vn-do 3oure dore vn-do/ Are 3e at hom why speke 3e notht" (12,1-2), the change is evident. Louder, more aggressive and much coarser, he demands to know the identity of her child's father, and refuses to accept her answer, "Goddys childe pou lyist in fay/ God dede nevyr jape so with may" (12,43-44). The part would be played very broadly and was probably received with delight by the audience:

3a 3a all Olde men to me take tent
and weddyth no wyff in no kynnys wyse
pat is 3onge wench be myn a-sent
ffor doute and drede and swych servyse
Alas Alas my name is shent
all men may me now dyspyse
and seyn olde cokwold pi bow is bent
newly now after pe frensche gyse (12,49-56)

At the end the character is completely altered and expresses a whole different personality: "Now I thank god with spech and spelle/ pat Euyr mary I was weddyd to the" (12,221-222). None of this is Scriptural material except the angel's visit to Joseph and this is the only part depicted in the bosses, on S44. The angel touches Joseph's shoulder; his long red and gold wings and golden robe make him a splendid figure. One of Joseph's hands is broken off-- it may have been supporting his head, indicating he was asleep. This story in Ludus, although rather vulgar, is

¹⁰⁴Also true of the play following the visitation, the trial of Joseph and Mary. See Miss Block's introduction to Ludus, pp. xx-xxiv, for a description of how the return of Joseph relates to the whole manuscript.

less so than in the other Corpus Christi plays which take every opportunity for ribaldry.

Mary's visit to Elizabeth is represented in both the sculpture and in Ludus (not in the Biblia Pauperum, however, but by Giotto and many others). As the lesser miracle which reinforces the greater it occupies a center boss in row 47 (Plate 26). Here we see the two women embracing, both dressed in long golden robes, simple in style; except that they wear different headdresses and one has a red undergown, there is no difference between them. This presentation is entirely traditional but Ludus takes on a new aspect and displays an intention to set an example of a proper way of living, for after a simple greeting Mary and Elizabeth begin formal recitation of the Magnificat, Mary saying the Latin and Elizabeth the English, alternately. Reciting prayers and blessings and singing hymns seems to be a conventional part of this whole group of plays associated with Contemplacio (Joseph's return was not originally part of this group), which probably point to the way in which the first dramas were interspersed into the services. When the angel appears to Joachim "þe hefne syngyng Exultet celum laudibus" (8, after l.146), and when the angel brings gifts to Mary "þei xal synge in hefne þis hymne . Jhesu corona virginum" (9, after l.259). Joachim, Anna and Episcopus all recite blessings over Mary when she is taken to the temple; Episcopus later

blesse Mary's suitors and, when he leaves, gestures
 "Signando manu cum croce solenniter" (8, after 1.90).

Prayers are even more frequent: Episcopus prays for guidance about Mary's wedding (10,117-119); Joseph and Mary say their "devocionys" before leaving to visit Elizabeth (13,19-20); and Mary makes the point clear, speaking for the church:

Now lord dyspose me to prayour
 þat I may sey þe holy psalmes of dauyth . . .
 It makyht sowles fayr þat doth it say
 Angelys be steryd to help us þer with
 it lytenyth therkeness and puttyth develys
 Away. (10,429-436)

Almost at the end of this section Contemplacio says, "With
 Aue we be-gunne . and Aue is oure conclusyon/ Ave regina
 celorum . to oure lady we synge" (13,35-36).¹⁰⁵ The whole
 is thus enclosed in prayer, i.e., life is seen to be
 properly framed by prayer, a lesson for the populace.

Another interpolated play follows this, of the same
 type as Joseph's return; again non-Scriptural, play 14
 presents the trial of Joseph and Mary. It has an inter-
 esting and satirical insinuation about contemporary justice
 in the comment of Den, the summoner: "And loke 3e rynge
 wele in 3our purs/ Ffor ellys 3our cawse may spede þe

¹⁰⁵ In play 13 Contemplacio's introduction actually
 is more informative than usual, giving the history of
 Elizabeth and Zachariah. At the end she has a long
 speech, explaining that in this play is the origin of the
 Ave and that whoever says it daily "ffor A 3er þus/ he
 hath pardon . ten thousand And eyte hundryd 3er" (13,7-8).

wurs" (13,25-26). Two unpleasant characters called detractors act as anti-types of good behavior and symbols of those who mocked the church: "þer I come I do no good/ to reyse slawdyr is al my lay" (14,6-7), says the first and his companion adds, "I am bakbytere þat spylllyth all game" (14,29). Their comments about Mary must have seemed dangerously sacrilegious; one of the nicer ones is: "such a mursel as semyth me/ Wolde cause a 3onge man to haue delyght" (14,59-60). Den also when he brings them to court must have titillated and horrified the audience:

Ther-fore com forth cokewolde be name
þe busschop xal 3our lyff appose
Com forth Also 3e goodly dame
A clene huswyff as I suppose
I xal 3ow tellyn with-owtyn glose
and 3e were myn with-owtyn lak
I wolde ech day be-schrewe 3our nose
and 3e dede brynge me such a pak. (14,153-160)

Coming now to the nativity, the programs of the bosses and the play match one another again. The scene (Plate 24) occupies the central boss of the eighth bay on C46, very close to the actual center of the whole sequence of nave bosses. Midway between the creation and the last judgment, the position implies that this event is the central point in the history of man. The boss is a curious mixture of visual effects. There is realism in the foreshortening of the figures of Mary and Joseph sitting in front of the manger, and at the same time this is one of several bosses in which the perspective is so arranged that, while looking up at it, it appears that we see it from

above. Not quite so realistic is the fact that Mary, dressed in a golden gown, has a napkin tied apron-like about her waist, combining the splendid with the homey. The child in the manger, represented as a sort of trough right in the center of the boss, seems to be not a baby but a doll--with a body proportioned like a miniature adult, and very rigid, the least realistic part of the scene but the most symbolic, representing the word of God incarnate.

Mary and Joseph stare intensely with uplifted hands and this generates a feeling of tension; the expression of motherly love and tenderness incorporated in this scene by Giotto and many others is missing. Ludus, however, does develop much human feeling in play 15. It ranges from the petty annoyance of Joseph when he cannot pluck the cherries Mary asks for: "Ow . to plucke 3ow of these cheries . it is a werk wylde/ Ffor þe tre is so hy3 . it wol not be lyghtly/ þer fore lete hym pluk 3ow cheries . begatt 3ow with childe" (15,36-38),¹⁰⁶ to his worry over the poor lodging among the beasts which is all they can find; "god be þin help spowse it swemyth me sore/ þus febyly loggyd and in so pore degre/ goddys sone amonge bestys to be bore . . . In An hous þat is desolat with-owty Any wall/ Ffyer nor wood non here is" (15, 97-102). Basically Scriptural up to this point, except for the

¹⁰⁶This is another incident which only Ludus has, of all the English Corpus Christi plays.

little incident of the cherry tree, Ludus now incorporates several apocryphal stories, continuing to display a variety of emotions. Mary, when her child is born, is so happy that she laughs and this seems improper to Joseph, "why do 3e lawghe wyff 3e be to blame/ I pray 3ow spowse do no more so/ In happ þe mydwyuys wyl take it to grame" (15, 181-183). Here we see that an anti-type has been created from the incident of Sarah laughing when she heard the prophesy that she would bear a son (Gen. 18.12). Finally there is a moment of horror when Salome, a midwife who doubts Mary's virginity, sees her hand turn "ded and drye as clay" (15,255). Not only is there much more and varied emotion in the play but the cast of characters is larger and so is the scope of the action,¹⁰⁷ always directed, however, to presenting the idea that Christ was born on earth to save mankind.

The annunciation to the shepherds (play 16) is a little different in Ludus from the other English versions in that the shepherds are not comic characters, nor do they bring quaint little gifts,¹⁰⁸ but the play makes clear the

¹⁰⁷Up to this point the program of the bosses was the expanded one, taking in extra incidents, and Ludus' program was by comparison contracted, using only the essences, but with the scene of the nativity this is reversed, and continues through the rest of the programs.

¹⁰⁸See for example the Second Shepherds Play (Wakefield).

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supernatural manifestations that accompanied Christ's birth through the language of the shepherds:

I saw a grett lyght with shene shyne
 3it saw I nevyr so selkowth syne
 Shapyn vpon þe skyes
 It is bryghtere þan þe sunne bem
 It comyth ryght ouer all þis rem
 Evyn above bedleem
 I saw it brenne thryes (16,15-21)

In the bosses only two of the shepherds are shown; actually in the Gospel (Luke, 2.8) no specific number is named, but the reason for settling on three is easy to deduce. On S47 (Plate 25), with some sheep in the background, one shepherd blows on a pipe while the other, holding his crook, looks up at the sky and gestures with astonishment. The angel making the announcement is on S45; he holds a scroll which Dean Goulburn reads as Gloria in excelsis (p. 220). The shepherds in Ludus likewise sing the familiar Gloria in excelsis deo (16,62). The conclusion of the play offers a good example of Ludus' most graceful alliterative writing:

Heyl floure of flourys fayrest i-fownde
 Heyl perle peerles prime rose of prise
 heyl blome on bedde we xul be vn-bownde
 with þi bloody woundys and werkys full wyse
 heyl god grettest I grete þe on grownde
 þe gredy devyl xal grone grysly as a gryse
 whan þou wynnyst þis worlde with þi wyde wounde
 and puttyst man to paradys with plenty of prys
 (16,90-97)

The Magi on bosses N and S 46, which are beside the nativity, are splendidly dressed in comparison with the shepherds, wearing robes of gold. Two of them hold

chalices and one an incense burner.¹⁰⁹ In the play (18) they probably were dressed very richly too and, moreover, they speak in a much more cultivated way than the shepherds, showing an awareness on the part of Ludus' author of the need for fitting the speech to the character: "Lorde I knele vpon my kne/ Sote encence I offere to the/ Thow xalte be þe fyrst of hy3 degre" (18,243-245).

The most interesting character in the play of the Magi is Herod--in fact it is really his play. No gestures or expressions would be too extreme for this character; vain and boastful he struts and declaims:

Of bewte and of boldnes I bere ever-more þe
 belle
 Of mayn and of myght I master every man
 I dyng with my dowyntes þe devyl down to helle
 Ffor bothe of hevyn and of herth I am kyng
 sertayn
 I am þe comelyeste kyng clad in gleteryng
 golde
 3a and þe semelyest syre þat may be-stryde a
 stede (18,5-10)

Hiding his anger he is cunning with the Magi: "come a3en þis same way/ þe trewth to me to telle" (18,193-194), but when they have gone he explodes, "A Fy Fy on talys þat I haue ben tolde . . . This daye the kynggys xal be kold/ If þey cum ageyn be me" (18,217-224). Surely Herod has one of the most dramatic parts in Ludus. The end of this drama is put off to play 20 to allow space and time for

¹⁰⁹ Like the shepherds, no specific number of Magi comes from Scripture, Matthew 2.

Mary's purification in the temple, an episode which is also included in the bosses.

The purification, in play 19, is used by Ludus' author as an opportunity to present a lesson. Although Joseph tells Mary, "To be purefyed . haue ye no nede" (19,107) they will follow the law, and do what they are supposed to do and "take us be-twene/ Dowys and turtelys ffor sacrefyce" (19,115-116). The sculptor presents a similar scene (it is a Scriptural subject, Luke 2.24); Joseph on N45 is carrying a basket of doves, a wattled basket in fact as in medieval usage. In his other hand he holds his staff. This is one case where Joseph has no beard; it may mean that two or more sculptors were working on separate scenes at the same time but maybe with different models. C45 has the scene in the temple; the nude infant is being placed on the altar by Mary while prophetess Anna offers to receive him and Simeon stands near. Anna and Simeon are in the play also where the point seems to be quite simply the reiteration of what must be believed: that Christ, the son of God, was born on earth to save mankind. A subsidiary theme may be the reward of the righteous, for Simeon, a good old man who has waited all his life to see Christ, gets what he has waited for: his "prayer is herd in hevene" (19,42). His plea as an old man who is afraid he will soon die, is another instance of Ludus' expressive qualities:

gode lorde send dow þi son
 þat I with my ful mende
 myght wurcheppe hym if I con
 Bothe with my fete . and hondys to
 to go to hym and handele also
 my eyn to se hym in certayn
 my tonge for to speke hym to
 and all my lemys to werke and do
 In his servyse to be bayn.
(19,28-36)

The massacre of the innocents and the flight into
 Egypt are the subject of play 20 and of two rows of bosses,
 48 and 49, which conclude bay 8 and begin bay 9. Both are
 very popular subjects in art and drama, taken from Scrip-
 ture, and they are treated in similar fashion in the bosses
 and Ludus. The intention is to show what a villain Herod
 was and he is therefore displayed in Ludus as ranting and
 raving in his fury (but in intensely alliterative verse)
 because the Magi escaped:

I ryde on my rowel ryche in my regne
 Rybbys fful reed with rape xal I rende
 popetys and paphawkys I xal puttyn in peyne
 with my spere prevyn pychyn and to pende
 The gomys with gold crownys ne gete nevyr ageyn
 to seke þo sottys sondys xal I sende
 Do howlott howtyn hoberd and heyn
 Whan here barnys blede vndyr credyl bende
(20,9-16)

The massacre is carried out with as much cruelty as possible
 both because it enhances Herod's villainy and for its shock
 value dramatically. In the sculpture he is shown dressed
 in an ermine trimmed golden coat of a short length. He
 stands up between two soldiers in a strange posture--one
 leg bent at the knee and crossed over the other (Plate 27).
 The peculiar pose may have been intended to express his

irrationality. On either side of this boss is a scene of the massacre; on both a soldier in armor holds a child upside down by one leg and stabs him with a sword. On S48 a child's mother pushes a soldier unsuccessfully. Ludus can, of course, give more expression of the action and emotion of the mothers:

Alas qwhy was my baron born
With swappyng swerde now is he shorn
 þe heed ryght fro þe nekke
Shanke and shulderyn is al to torn (20,90-93)

The flight into Egypt is given only sixteen lines in Ludus. The angel speaks to Joseph in eight lines warning him to take his wife and child and flee, and Joseph immediately calls Mary to take care of the child while "I 3our clothis ley on hepe/ and trus hem on þe asse" (20,83-84)--the concern for little details, such as any person would think of if he had suddenly to leave on a trip, is a human touch. In the bosses (Plate 28) Mary and her child ride on a very small donkey with two large bundles behind her. On the boss to the south Joseph holds his staff, and on the north is the angel.

Ludus has an extra incident, the death of Herod, a non-Scriptural subject and one of the most dramatic incidents in the whole play. After the massacre Herod is delighted, thinking he is safe from the Christ child, and orders a banquet served. The dramatist builds up his happiness so that the contrast will be greater:

I was nevyr meryer here be-forn
Sythe þat I was fyrst born
than I am now ryght in þis morn
 in joy I gynne to glyde.
 (20,164-167)

Then in the midst of his expansive and smiling delight, the dark shadow of Mors creeps in--a sensational climax. Just in case every spectator in the audience did not get the message that death may strike at any time and he had better be ready, i.e., in a state of grace, the play ends with a sermon:

All men dwellyng upon þe grownde
Be-ware of me be myn councel
Ffor feynt felachep in me is fownde
I kan no curtesy as I 3ow tel
Ffor be a man nevyr sosownde
of helth in herte nevyr so wel
I come sodeynly with-in a stownde
me with-stande may no castel
 my jurney wyl I spede.
of my comyng no man is ware
Ffor when men make most mery fare
þan sodeynly I cast hem in care
 and sle þem evyn in dede.

(20,259-271)

The Public Life of Christ

One incident from the childhood of Christ is part of the tradition of both sculpture and drama, his visit with the doctors in the temple. Both Ludus and the bosses have the incident; Ludus in play 21 and the bosses on the three sculptures of row 50. The subject is from the New Testament (Luke 2:41) but Ludus has expanded on the simple facts and made it a highly logical and rational explanation of the incarnation. To win the interest of the audience

the beginning is comical; the doctors boast extravagantly about their knowledge, claiming to be masters "of gramer cadens and of prosodye" (21,6-8) and even more. When Jesus reminds them that "Al wytt and wysdam of god it is lent" (21,34), they respond crudely:

Goo hom lytyl babe and sytt on þi moderys lappe
and put a mokador a-forn þi brest
and pray þi modyr to fede þe pappe
of þe for to lerne we desyre not to lest.
(21,41-44)

But the real matter of the play is very serious. Jesus first explains the nature of the Trinity: it is like the sun which has the three elements of "splendure þe hete and þe lyght" (21,92) but is yet one sun--so the elements of the Trinity are power, wisdom and grace which belong respectively to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Tackling problems which must have indeed been puzzling for the average layman and in other words being educational, Ludus goes on to the difficult question of how Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Christ:

Lyke as þe sunne doth perysch þe glas
þe glas not hurte of his nature
ryght so þe godhed entyrd has
þe virgynes wombe and sche mayd pure¹¹⁰
(21,97-100)

¹¹⁰The analogy recalls the disguised symbolism of Northern Renaissance art, notably Jan van Eyck and Robert Campin. See E. Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 131 ff. Although original in English Corpus Christi plays, the thinking behind the analogy was part of the "commonplace" of Gothic culture and appears in many places. See A. Temko, Notre Dame of Paris (New York, 1962), p. 262.

[illegible]

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Another question asked is which of the three persons of the Trinity took flesh and why; Jesus answers that it was the second because it was against his nature that Adam and Eve sinned. The serpent "temptyd hym nowght be þe faderys myght/ Of þe gostys goodnes spak he ryght nowght/ but in connyng he temtyd hym ryght" (21,118-120). Jesus explains one more thorny problem before Mary and Joseph interrupt and take him away--the problem of his double nature. From his father, he says, "With-out begynnyng I am endles" (21,162) and therefore ageless, but in terms of the mortality he has from his mother he is about twelve years old. Lastly he explains why Mary was wed to Joseph:

To blynde þe devyl of his knowlache
and my byrth from hym to hyde
þat holy wedlok was grett stopage
þe devyl in dowte to do A-byde.

Also whan sche xulde to egypte gon
and fle from herowde for dowte of me
be-cawse she xulde nat go Alon (21,245-251)

This is the most theologically sophisticated play in Ludus and it makes Ludus once again unique in comparison with the other English cycles.¹¹¹ But the intellectual content does not displace the attention paid to human feelings which we have noted in other plays, for example the writer's awareness of the difficult plight of a woman traveling alone to a far country, and thinking this a good

¹¹¹The other plays can all be traced back to a common source, different from the one used by the author of Ludus. See the introduction of Ludus, p. liii.

[illegible]

reason for Mary's marriage. The same consciousness, perhaps, of the problems of people has Christ give some advice to the children: "Euery childe xulde with good dyligens/ his modyr to plese his owyn wyl forsake" (21,279-280), and then set the example by being ready to follow his parents "with obedyence" and do them "hy3 revernce" (21,274-276).

The subject of Christ disputing with the doctors in the temple is not as frequently depicted in art as some others; it is not found in the Biblia Pauperum, for instance, but Giotto painted it in the Arena Chapel and Duccio did also on the Maestà Altarpiece, so it is thoroughly within the visual tradition. In the bosses the scene is presented with some of the human feeling shown in the play. Mary and Joseph are represented searching for their lost child; he leans heavily on his stick on N50 and she presses forward anxiously on S50.¹¹² On the center boss (Plate 29) the youthful Christ is seated above the three doctors, one of whom, at the bottom of the boss, is strangely placed on the horizontal, probably so as not to obscure the figure of Christ. All are holding books with markings on them suggesting writing. The only noticeable

¹¹²These emotional qualities in the works make it obvious that they were not intended for a monastic audience. The St. Albans Psalter, on the other hand, is described by Otto Pächt as having a very close connection with the Rule and with the idea of renouncing the world. See Pächt, The St. Albans Psalter (London, 1960), p. 185.

thing about Christ is that his hair is cut round and short in the fashion of the serfs¹¹³--this may be meant to indicate his peasant origin or perhaps may represent a tonsure. Something about his pose, head held up alertly, leaning slightly forward, implies that he is explaining or discussing important matters, but by the nature of the medium we cannot know exactly what--a great contrast to the full body of information Ludus gives us, but on the other hand the boss permits the viewer to bring his own thoughts to the subject, and to contemplate beyond what he actually sees with his eyes on what he sees in his mind. First, however, he would have to recognize the visual presentation from knowing the play or other visual renditions of the subject--a significant difference in medium.

The baptism of Christ is the chief boss of the ninth bay (Plate 31); its central placement makes it more important, in this design, than the flight into Egypt, Christ with the doctors in the temple, the wedding at Cana or the raising of Lazarus--the other central bosses in the bay. Jesus stands in the nude in the rippling water which covers him almost to the waist; John kneels on one knee on the bank and pours water over Jesus' head from a very large footed vase without handles. It seems, then, that it is the act of baptism which is being emphasized, an act that

¹¹³Cf. Chaucer's description of the Reeve, "His heer was by his ears ful round yshorn," l.588 of the General Prologue.

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is one of the two most important sacraments the church performs, through which the church touches the lives of the people directly. The scene of the baptism is the chief boss, one must believe, because here the life of Christ, the function of the church and the daily life of the people all come together.

On either side of the baptism an angel is represented, one holding a towel or wrapper and the other a robe. Again the visual presentation cannot explain, only remind, but in Ludus John the Baptist actually preaches to the audience--he is an advocate for the church:

Baptyme I cowncell yow for to take
And do penance for your synnys sake
and for your offens amendys 3e make
your synnys for to hyde. (22,23-26)

The whole of play 22 is in fact a sermon. John speaks right from the beginning in this manner:

I am þe voys of wilDIRnesse
þat her spekyth and preschych yow to
loke 3e for-sake all wrecchidnesse
fforsake all synne þat werkyth woo
And turne to vertu and holynesse
Both clene of levyng in your sowle also
Than xall 3e be savyd from peynfulnese
Of fyere btynnyng in hell
If þat 3e for-sak synne
hevyn blysse xall 3e wyne
Drede 3e not þe devyllys gynne
with Angellys xall yow dwell. (22,2-13)

The lesson is made perfectly clear. Another part of the message is the importance of baptism; in fact according to Ludus Jesus apparently goes through the ceremony in order to teach something else: "þe vertu of mekenes here tawth

xal be/ Euery man to lere/ And take ensawmple here by
me" (22,73-75). One of the least dramatic plays in Ludus,
it ends with two metaphors, again teaching the virtue of
penance, and displaying the literary quality of Ludus:

A tre þat is bareyn and wyl bere no frute
þe ownere wyl hewe it down and cast it on þe
fyre

Ryght so it be man þat folwyth þe fowle sute
of þe devyl of helle and werkyth his desyre
God wyl be vengyd on man þat is both dum and
mute . . .

Schryfte of mowthe may best þe saue
Penauns for synne what man wyl haue
whan þat his body is leyd in grave
His sowle xal go to blys.

Corne þat is good man kepe it ful clene
Chaff þat is sympyl is ett wul nere at nought
So good man of levynge to god chosyn bene
Whan synful men be lyke chaff and to helle xul
be brought . . .

Now haue I tawght 3ow good penauns
god graunt 3ow grace at his plesauns
to haue of synne delyverauns (22,170-182)

This is one of several plays in Ludus where the
moral lesson, delivered in the form of a sermon, makes part
of the action; other examples are the raising of Lazarus,
the woman taken in adultery and the entry into Jerusalem.
The sculpture cannot give specific instruction as the plays
can but it achieves an approximation through the images it
employs and by poses, gestures and color. For instance,
the grotesqueness of the demons is contrasted with the
bliss of the saved. Furthermore the plentiful use of gold
in every scene helps make visible the precious quality of
the message, although that message must remain generalized

if not vague, and must depend on the viewer's knowledge of the subject.

At this point both cycles present the temptation of Christ and then diverge slightly. In Ludus the woman taken in adultery is the next subject while in the bosses the marriage at Cana is depicted, followed by the feast in the house of Simon. The programs then come together again with the raising of Lazarus.

In the play of the temptation (23) another incident in the life of Christ is explained by Ludus. Sathan and his colleagues, Belyall and Belsabub, who form an unholy trinity, meet to discuss Sathan's fear of Christ who, he has heard, is God's son. The three know that if this is so "Sorwe and care he wyl sone strewe/ All oure gode days þan xulde sone be goo/ and all oure lore and all oure lawe he wyl down hewe" (23,31-33). This is why the temptation takes place--another instance of the care the playwright takes to make his story logical. The story comes from Scripture (Matthew 4) but Ludus supplies the rationale, and this makes all the difference. They plan to test Christ "to make hym to don A-mys/ If þat he synne þis is no nay/ he may nat be kyng of blys" (23,43-45).¹¹⁴ The Bible does not say why Jesus was fasting for forty days and nights; Ludus says he fasted "for mannys sake"

¹¹⁴The same type of reasoning is used in the woman taken in adultery.

(23,67). Sathan entices him to relieve his hunger by performing a miracle: "turne these flyntys Anon lett se/ ffrom Arde stonys to tendyr brede" (23,81-82), i.e., to give in to his hunger would make him unfit to be the sacrifice required by the four daughters of god, and performing a miracle would reveal him as Christ to the devil. Nothing the devil tries succeeds in tempting Jesus; "Go Abak þou fowle sathanas" (23,183), Jesus tells him. At the end he tells the audience, "To Suffyr temptacion it is grett peyn" and he has done it "to teche þe how þou xalt rewle the" for which there will be a reward: "Shewe þi myght aþens þi ffoo/ whan þi sowle partyth the froo/ In blysse þan xal it be" (23,203-221). The didactic element is in the fore once more.

The subject of the temptation is often depicted in art; in the Biblia Pauperum it is found between the fall of man and Esau giving up his birthright for pottage (Didron, p. 409). Only the first of the three temptations is presented in the bosses. The hideous demon on N53 (Plate 34) with huge staring eyes and great teeth, horns and batwings, enormous ears and a lumpy, shaggy body, holds a scroll in his claw with the panis lap on it (bread from stone). On S53 (Plate 33) Christ sits, also holding a scroll; the script on it cannot be read but it is probably intended to recall to the viewer the familiar words Christ

spoke to Satan in Ludus: "Nott only be bred mannys lyff
3itt stood/ but in þe wurde of god" (23,92-93).

Play 24 which follows the temptation, the woman taken in adultery, is one of the most exciting examples of theater in Ludus. It has everything--beginning with a sermon on repentance, moving into a plot combining intrigue, humor and pathos, and ending with Jesus triumphant over his enemies. The motivation is once again the fear that Christ "Wyl breke oure lawe and make it lame" (24,44) which causes Scriba, Phariseus and Accusator to put Christ in an impossible situation where whatever he does will be wrong. They expect him to be merciful to the woman they have caught with her lover, but if he is not it will still serve their purpose:

Of grace and mercy hevyr he doth preche
And þat no man xulde be vengeable
Ageyn þe woman if he sey wrech
Than of his prechyng he is vnstable . . .
than haue we cawse bothe iuste and Able
Ffor a fols man þat he be cawth. (24,89-96)

However, if he does not condemn her they will accuse him of breaking the law of Moses:

Ffor moyses doth bydde in oure lawe
that Euery Advowterere we xuld qwelle
and 3itt with stonys thei xulde be slawe
Ageyn moyses if þat he drawe
þat Synful woman with grace to helpe
he xal nevyr skape out of oure Awe
but he xal dye lyke a dogge whelpe.
(24,106-112)

Thus the conflict is set up. The basic story comes from the Bible (John 8) but Ludus adds some interesting details.

When the three break in upon the lovers, with great bravado,
 "hic juuenis quidam extra currit indeploydo calligis non
 ligatis et braccas in many tenens" (24, after 1.124).

Furthermore Juuenis displays a most belligerent character
 as he out-threatens them and wins his way free:

3iff Any man stow me þis nyth
 I xal hym 3eve a dedly wownde.

I Any man my wey doth stoppe
 or we departe ded xal [I] be
 I xal þis daggare putt in his croppe
 I xal hym kyllle or he xal me. (24,127-132)

To which Phariseus can only reply, "Grett goddys curse mut
 go with the/ With suche a shrewe wyll I not melle"
 (24,133-134).

The woman's case is very different. The tone of
 the play, for the modern reader, seems to change from
 slapstick to outright cruelty, but to the medieval audience
 this part may have been just as funny. She is called out
 with the vilest names (and with intense alliteration):

Come foth þou stotte com forth þou scowte
 com forth þou bysmare and brothel bolde
 com forth þou hore and stynkyng bych clowte
 how longe hast þou such harlotry holde.
 (24,145-148)

This is another great part for an actor, and the woman,
 too, had an opportunity for histrionics in making her
 pitiful pleas (which may not have been played as pitiful
 but as burlesque):

Serys my wurchep if 3e wyl saue
 And helpe I haue non opyn shame
 bothe gold and sylvyr 3e xul haue
 So þat in clenness 3e kepe my name.

Stondynge 3e wyl not graunt me grace
 but for my synne þat I xal dye
 I pray 3ow kyllle me here in þis place
 and lete not þe pepyl up-on me crye
 (24,161-173)

At the end, after Christ has resolved the dilemma as in Scripture--"Loke which of 3ow þat nevyr synne wrought/ but is of lyff clenner þan she/ Cast at here stonys and spare here nowght" (24,229-231), he promises the audience that sinners can be saved:

What man of synne be repentaunt
 of god if he wyl mercy craue
 God of mercy is so habundawnt
 þat what man haske it he xal it haue . . .
 Whan man is contrite and hath wonne grace
 God wele not kepe olde wreth in mynde
 (24,285-290)

The woman taken in adultery is sometimes included in visual programs, for instance in the fresco by the Master of Campanis, a district in Italy at the end of the eleventh century, but the incident is not in the bosses nor in the Biblia Pauperum. The marriage at Cana, probably because of the typology involved, is emphasized instead by its central position, C51. It is equally Biblical (John 2) in origin and as a type of the last supper it appears in Giotto's cycle at the Arena Chapel and many others also. Only Christ and Mary are present (Plate 30), seated behind a small table on which are a chicken, bread and perhaps a dish of salt.¹¹⁵ The bird's-eye perspective permits a clear view and we see them turned toward each other with

¹¹⁵Dean Goulburn's opinion, p. 250.

Mary's hand on Christ's arm. Three wine containers are in front of the table, and on the side bosses, N and S 51, a servant fills the jars with water and another servant serves wine.

The supper in the house of Simon the Leper takes place on another center boss, C54. Christ sits at table again but alone; a woman is serving him and another kneels, embracing his feet. A plate with a chicken on it, a cup, knife and loaf are on the table; a large wine vessel is nearby on the floor. The kneeling woman is undoubtedly the repentant Magdalen anointing Christ's feet with the ointment that provides the motive for Judas' betrayal; apparently she has been brought into and combined with the scene of the supper.¹¹⁶

The story of Lazarus is part of both the sculpture and the play. In the sculpture the miraculous aspect of the event is what is stressed, but in Ludus the main idea is once more the gift of salvation. The author begins to build up to that from Jesus' statement that Lazarus' death is intended to demonstrate God's power:

Dedly syknes lazare hath non
but for to shewe goddys grete glorie
Ffor þat syknes is ordeynyd a-lon
þe sone of god to gloryfie. (25,201-204)

Following the Scripture (John 11) but making it much more dramatic as in Lazarus' death bed scene:

¹¹⁶Ludus combines the episode of Mary Magdalen with the last supper.

My wynde is stoppyd gon is my breth
 And deth is come to make myn ende
 to god in hevyn my sowle I gwoth
 Ffarewll systeryn ffor hens I wende.

(25,105-108)

the play also contains hints of contemporary practice in the funeral scene: "Bothe heed and ffoot now is he wounde/ in a chete bothe ffayr and clene" (25,145-146). It is realistic too in that the three Consolaters have difficulty in removing the heavy stone from the grave.

The resurrection is accomplished with great effect. The anticipation is heightened as the action is slowed while Jesus makes a little speech thanking God for granting his prayer that "þis pepyl þat stondyth about/ And beleue not þe power of þe and me . . . this day oure myght thei all xul se" (25,417-20). Two rubrics in this section are unusual. One describes Jesus, "eleuatis ad celum oculis" (25, after 1.412) when he is addressing the Lord, and the other directs him when calling Lazarus, "hic Jhesus clamat voce magna dicens" (25, after 1.420). These are the only rubrics in Ludus that tell the performer how to do anything. Towards the end of the play Lazarus, upon rising, makes a statement again delivering doctrine as happens so frequently through Ludus: "hevyn helle And erthe 3oure buddyng must obeye . . . Of lyff and of deth 3e haue both lok and keye" (25,426-428).

The raising of Lazarus, depicted in the Biblia Pauperum (Didron, p. 410), by Giotto and in many other

cycles, takes place in the sculpture on C53 (Plate 32). Only the two figures of Jesus and Lazarus are to be seen, Jesus bending over Lazarus who is sitting up in his coffin. Jesus is making a gesture of blessing with his right hand and opening the shroud with his left. Lazarus' hands are raised together as in prayer. Two men witness the event on N54; they may be apostles or, because they wear the typical Jews' hats, may be neighbors or friends. Martha and Mary also watch on S54.

Two things are unusual about the raising of Lazarus. One is that Lazarus is in a coffin; usually he is shown in the mouth of a cave, for instance in the Arena Chapel. This may be an example of contemporary custom, perhaps used in some theater productions, causing a change in iconography, or perhaps the sculptor was influenced directly by the type of burial he was familiar with. But the influence did not come from Ludus where once a "pytte" (25,161) and a "cave" (25,165) are referred to.

The second original feature is that Jesus is opening the shroud. In the earliest versions of the raising of Lazarus in the catacombs no human assistance was required; the event was portrayed as a miracle. Lazarus was wrapped from head to toe in narrow bands of cloth like an Egyptian mummy and, if one thinks of how the part of Lazarus would have to be handled on stage, it is immediately clear that an actor wrapped in such a fashion

could not rise and leave the tomb. The change to a more realistic type of presentation also included a change of garment, for a shroud would give more freedom of movement. The use of the shroud on the boss might therefore indicate dramatic influence on art, unless, as above, the sculptor was once more influenced by contemporary practice. But, as to the opening of the shroud, Mâle cites some examples where St. Peter leans over and unties Lazarus' hands,¹¹⁷ but none where Christ does this. In Ludus, where Lazarus rises "ligatis manibus et pedibus ad modum sepulti" (25, after 1.428), Jesus as in Scripture, directs the disciples to help Lazarus: "Goo forthe bretheryn and lazare 3e vntey/ And all his bondys losyth hem asundyr" (25,429-430).¹¹⁸ Ludus, then, was not the model for the sculpture; perhaps it was an original idea of the sculptor's to transfer the action of St. Peter or the disciples to Christ to reduce the number of figures.

At this point, with the raising of Lazarus, both Ludus and the bosses complete the public life of Christ and, all the groundwork having been laid and everything explained, begin on the most significant part of the story.

¹¹⁷De la fin, 3rd ed., p. 56.

¹¹⁸Towneley also has these directions.

The Passion of Christ and the
Salvation of Man

Ludus commences its treatment of this phase of human history in play 26 with a prologue by Demon who has a superb part, strutting, boasting and threatening by turns. He has a chance to display his vanity: "I am 3our lord lucifer þat out of helle cam/ Prince of þis werd . and gret duke of helle" (26,1-2); but demands respect: "I am Norsshire of synne . to þe confusyon of man/ To brynge hym to my dongeon . þer in fyre to dwelle" (26,5-6). To give an idea of his power he says, "To gete A thowsand sowlys in an houre . me thynkyth it but skorn" (26,23). Through him Ludus sets forth some explanation of the crucifixion; Demon will arrange that "His discipulis xal for-sake hym . and here mayster denye/ In-novmberabyl xal his woundys be . . . A tretowre xal countyrfe his deth" (26,53-55).

In the balance of his long introduction Demon parodies Christ's discourse to the people. He promises rewards which consist of the kind of clothing often condemned from the pulpit: "A goodly peyre of long pekyd schon . . . A shert of feyn holand . . . Cadace . wolles . or flokkys . . . to stuffe with-al þi dobbelet, and make þe of proporcyon/ two smale legges . And a gret body . . . syde lokkys . . . to þi colere hangyng down . . . An hey smal bonet" (26,69-87). Continuing the parody he proposes

some new commandments. One is "lete pride þer be present/
 And all þo þat repreff pride, þou sette hem at nowth;"
 another says, "And all beggerys and pore pepyll . haue hem
 on dyspyte/ On to þe grete Othys . And Lycherye gyf þi
 delyte/ to maynteyn þin astate lete brybory be present;"
 but he also urges, "Lete no membre of god . but with othys
 be rent" (26,75-95). He carries on in this way, turning
 all the commandments upside down and promising that they
 will "In evyr-lastyng peyne . with me dwellyn" (26,120).

As antithesis to this John the Baptist comes on with
 a message of penance. It is put in the form of a metaphor
 as we have noted the author of Ludus is fond of doing:
 walking in the path of the Lord "Neyther to fele . on ryth .
 nor on left hande . . . be þe ryth syde 3e xal vndyrstonde
 mercy/ And on þe lefte syde . Lykkenyd dysperacion/ And
 þe patthe be-twyn bothyn . . . xal be hope and drede . . .
 to þis blyssyd enherytawns" (26,13-33).

The actual plot begins with the council of the
 Jews. In this play the stage is used masterfully; in a
 small area both space and time are dealt with convincingly.
 In the beginning Annas and his two doctors, worrying about
 Christ, send a messenger for Cayphas.¹¹⁹ Annas first

¹¹⁹The costumes of Annas, the doctors and Cayphas
 are described in detail in the rubrics: "annas . . . be-
 seyn after a busshop of þe hoold lawe in a skarlet gown .
 and ouer þat a blew tabbard fyrryd with whyte and a mytere
 on his hed after þe hoold lawe" while one of the two doctors
 holds his staff of "A-stat." Cayphas is "Arayd lych to
 Annas savyng his tabbard xal be red." Descriptive rubrics

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shows himself in his "stage" and, when the messenger sets out, Cayphas "shewyth him-self in his skafhald" (26, after 1.44). While the messenger talks to Cayphas, Rewfyn and Leyon appear in the "place" ready to meet with the messenger after he leaves Cayphas. Following that meeting the messenger returns to Annas, who comes down as the messenger approaches. These two then move to the "myd place" and Rewfyn and Leyon join them in "a lytil oratory with stolys and cusshonys" (26, after 1.124). Four locations are thus arranged, appearing as needed, perhaps with the aid of curtains that closed and opened.

Two bosses of bay 10, N and S 56, may possibly reflect this plotting; each has two men walking side by side, apparently engaged in conversation. An alternate theory is that they are apostles, perhaps accompanying Christ on his entry into Jerusalem--the center boss of row 55. There is no center boss in row 56, nor ever has been, the only omission in the whole cycle. Instead there is a hole almost two feet in diameter, whose use is not known. Dean Goulburn, on the basis of some entries in the Sacrists' Rolls and some descriptions of childish memories (pp. 276-277), concludes that a censor was lowered from the opening on special days of celebration.

like these are found throughout the Passion play but in none of the plays before it. This upholds Miss Block's theory that the Passion play was originally separate, in fact independently created.

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The entry into Jerusalem, C55, depicts Christ on a donkey, riding on a grassy area. On N and S 55 the townspeople watch the arrival. The traditional tree is there but no one is in its branches as is usually depicted and may be seen in, for example, the Biblia Pauperum (Didron, p. 412) or the Arena Chapel. The Biblical story (Matthew 21) as rendered in play 26, where it follows the council of the Jews, has almost all the features customarily found in paintings on the subject: the joyful citizens, "goynng barfot and barelegged and in here shyrtys" (26, after 1.285), spread their clothes before his donkey while the children bring flowers. The entry is the first step towards the climactic scene of the crucifixion and Christ indicates this to the people who naturally do not understand him, an instance of dramatic irony: "The trewthe of trewthys xal now be tryede" (26,302).

The preparations for the Passover are described in both Ludus and the bosses. On the bosses Peter, John and Christ are standing together on C57, probably indicating Christ dispatching them as he does in Ludus in play 27: "Serys goth to syon and 3e xal mete/ A pore man in sympyl A-ray/ Beryng watyr in þe strete" (27,346-348), for on N57 a man carries a pitcher of water and meets one of the apostles. Four other bosses are concerned with the preparations for the Passover, N and S 58 and 59, where the disciples are collecting fragments of food in large

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Judas listens to her say, "blyssyd be þe tyme þat I hedyr sowth/ and þis oynement þat I heydr brought" (27,510-511), and complains, "Lord me thynkyth þou dost ryght ylle" (27,514) and is motivated toward the betrayal. To the meager information in the Gospels the element of theater has been added, and this is even more true of the incident where Christ says, "On of 3ow here syttyng my treson xal tras" (27,530).

The boss of the last supper is the chief boss of the tenth bay (Plate 36). Although many versions of the scene exist the Norwich boss depicts the scene quite differently from such well known examples as the one in the Biblia Pauperum (Didron, p. 414) or by Giotto. Only eight apostles are seated around the rectangular table; all are easily seen because of the bird's-eye view again used by the sculptor.¹²⁰ John leans against Christ whose arm is around him, while Peter on Christ's other side holds the key.¹²¹ One of the other apostles holds a very large knife and several have round loaves of bread. In the

¹²⁰The other apostles preparing the feast on N and S 58 would bring the number to twelve.

¹²¹On S57 (Plate 35) Christ is depicted giving him the key, an incident not included in Ludus and out of its place in the public life of Christ here in the tenth bay. As it happens bay 9, where most subjects dealing with the ministry are placed, is rather full. Another boss C83, right next to the last judgment, has St. Peter again, holding the keys as guardian of the gates of heaven.

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(27,839-840). Christ makes his point though, and further elucidates it:

A memory of þis haue 3e xall
 þat eche of 3ow xal do to othyr
 With vmbyl hert submyt egal
 As eche of 3ow were otherys brother.
 (27,853-856)

The scene of Christ washing the disciples' feet is not found in the Biblia Pauperum but it is in Giotto's Arena Chapel. In the bosses it occupies a central boss at the bottom of the tenth bay (Plate 37). Peter is seated but leaning forward as if uneasy, while Christ kneels holding Peter's feet in a basin. Another apostle waits his turn in the background and on C59 two more are seated, one of whom has already removed one boot and is pulling off the other. N and S 60 each depict an apostle, or perhaps a prophet, holding a scroll (Plate 38). Nothing can be read on the scrolls now but formerly they may have been legible. Since the scroll is a common device in painting and sculpture for indicating a revelation, it must be that the scrolls were meant to convey the message Christ expressed in words in the play. In this way the incident is completed visually.

At the very end of play 27 Christ, ready to lead the way to Mt. Olivet, has the familiar conversation with Peter in which Peter claims he never will forsake Christ, "Nor for no perellys fro þe fle" (27,878). Christ gives him the answer as it is in the Bible (Matthew 26.33):

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"þat promese loke þou not make/ For or þe cok hath twyes crowe/ Thryes þou xal me for-sake" (27,882-884). This subject, although represented in art from Early Christian times, is not in the bosses.

On Mt. Olivet, "a place lych to A park" (28, after 1.908) according to Ludus, Jesus retreats to pray and the disciples fall asleep as described in Scripture. He thus has the opportunity to display a little human weakness:

Petyr petyr þou slepyst fast
A-wake þi felawys and sclepe no more
Of my deth 3e Are not Agast
3e take 3our rest and I peyn sore. (28,925-928)

As Jesus talks to the angel who brings the chalice the author takes advantage of an opportunity to remind the audience of the plan that was arranged with the four daughters of God. Jesus expresses his fear: "My flesche qwakyth in ferful case/ As þow þe joyntys A-sondre xuld schake" (28,935-936), and the angel gives him the message from the Lord: "He bad þat þou xuldyst not drede/ But fulfyllle his intent/ As þe parlement of hefne hath ment" (28,947-949). The author often as here, reveals his concern for plot. Although working within predetermined subject matter, he has nevertheless the desire to tie the various strands of the story together and to emphasize the logical relationship of events. In the outcome he presents the material as if what had actually happened was as he would have had it happen.

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In the sculpture the disciples are sleeping on N and S 61 while Jesus adores the chalice on the center boss (Plate 39). Kneeling on a rocky hill surrounded by palings, Jesus holds his hands together and looks up at the footed chalice standing on a ledge above him, from which a wafer protrudes. This is one of two typical renditions of the scene, the other having an angel hold the chalice as it is done in Ludus. Following a tradition which began in the thirteenth century, the metaphor employed by Jesus--"let this cup pass from me" (Matthew 26.39)--is transformed into an actuality. Furthermore, also in the tradition, the cup by association with the mass becomes a chalice, and the wafer is added. The meaning of the episode has been completely altered from the original in the gospel, but in terms of the sacrament of communion it now has great relevance to the church and the people. It also is a prophecy of Christ's sacrifice which is about to take place.

The sculpture of this scene is the first central boss of the eleventh bay--where almost every scene represented in Ludus from the agony in the garden to the crucifixion is to be found. In the bosses, however the scenes are arranged without chronology. The betrayal, the next subject in Ludus, is at the bottom of the bay on C66 (Plate 42), with the scene of Judas leading the conspirators *in* on N62. In this version of the betrayal six figures

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huddle around Jesus and Judas. Judas clutches at Christ's arm but does not give him the usual kiss. On the right side of the boss is a figure with a sword--either a soldier or St. Peter; in the background three soldiers hold axes over their shoulders. The remaining figure on the left seems to cling to Christ and is probably one of the apostles.

In Ludus the rubrics describe "x personys weyl be-
seen in white Arneys and breganderys and some dysgysed in
odyr garmentys with feyr and lanternys and torchis lyth"
(28, after 1.972), led by Judas who greets Christ and
kisses him. Then "Alle þe jewys come A-bowth hym and ley
handys on hym and pullyn hym as þei were wode and makyn on
hym A gret cry" (28, after 1.996). The action of Peter
cutting off Malchus' ear is presented and concluded with
Jesus' reproach: "he þat smyth with swerd . with swerd xal
be smete" (28,100). Malchus is represented in the bosses
too on S66; he has a sword in his left hand and a lantern
in his right and Peter's sword has already severed his ear.
The head of Christ appears in the background.

As the drama continues in Ludus there are frequent
touches that make an impression because of their psycho-
logical perceptiveness. When Christ is arrested and led
away the rubric reads: "þe jewys lede cryst outh of þe
p~~l~~ace with gret cry and noyse some drawyng cryst forward
and some bakwarde and so ledyng forth with here weponys

A-lofte and lytys brennyng" (28, after 1.1040). This must result from the playwright imagining himself into the scene, asking himself how this would have to be.

The second passion play opens with a monologue by Contemplacio, informing the audience that they will see Christ tried. This play had been performed alone before being incorporated into Ludus (see text, p. xxxii), and an intimation of this fact is found in Contemplacio's speech: "The last 3ere we shewyd here how oure lord for love of man/ Cam to þe cety of jherusalem . . ." (29,9-18). It also indicates that shorter presentations of the passion were customary.

Herod is the first speaker in play 29. He is his usual self: boisterous, vain and proud to be an infidel. It is part of his wickedness that he flaunts his allegiance to Mahounde and hates Christians: "To kyllle a thowsand crystyn . I gyf not An hawe/ to se hem hangyn or brent . to me is very plesauns" (29,13-14). He is very curious about Christ and is introduced here as a prelude to the time in play 30 when he will have a chance to try him. The rest of play 29 is devoted to the trial before Annas and Cayphas. It is headed by another dramatic rubric directing that the announcement of Jesus' arrest be made in this fashion: "her xal A massanger com in-to þe place rennyng and cryng Tydyngys tydyngys . and so rownd Abowth *pe* place . jhesus of nazareth is take . Jhesus of nazareth

is take" (29, after 1.69). The trial takes place, the same accusations are made and at the end Christ is beaten. The final action of the play is the denial of Peter, picking up the motif mentioned previously.

Play 30 briefly covers Judas' return of the thirty pieces of silver and his subsequent suicide. He is no longer important and it is glossed over matter of factly: Judas says, "I judas haue synyd (30,229), returns the money and "goth and hangyth hym-self" (30, after 1.236). No more attention than this is paid to Christ's betrayer, but neither is more attention given to it in the Scripture (Matthew 27). The bosses have a scene which may represent Judas returning the money to the high priest, N66. Dean Goulburn calls it Pilate's wife and a messenger although admitting the messenger's headdress is far too grand, and the woman doesn't look very feminine (p. 322).

The main business of play 30 is the trial before Pilate. His position, between the pressures of Annas and Cayphas and his own doubts as to Jesus' guilt, is depicted with some understanding. He says, "I fynde in hym . non obecyon" (30,285), but Annas and Cayphas insist:

Sere we telle þe al to-gedyr
Ffor his evyl werkys . we browth hym hedyr
And yf he had not An evyl doere be
we xuld not Abrowth hym to þe. (30,295-298)

Pilate is happy to find that Jesus should be judged by Herod and immediately sends him off to Galilee.

Herod, who has been wanting to see him, is delighted and grateful to Pilate: "Now be Mahound my god of grace/ of pylat þis is a dede ful kend" (30,369-370). Nothing happens, however, Christ will not perform and Herod becomes furious: "What þou on-hangyd harlot . why wylt þou not speke/ hast þou skorne to speke on to þi kyng" (30,425-426). At the end of the play Christ is returned to Pilate beaten and bloody.

Ludus interpolates the scene of the devil and Pilate's wife at this point. It is a total change from the grim and pathetic scene of Christ's scourging to the devil, both comical and terrifying, who opens play 31. Again the alliteration is marked as he boasts and threatens: "ho so serve me sathan . to sorwe is he sent/ with dragonys in doungeyns . and develys fu derke" (31,470-471). Pilate's wife wakens from her dream and "makyn a rewly noyse . comyng and rennyng of þe schaffold and here shert . and here kyrtyl in here hand . and sche xal come beforn pylat leke A mad woman" (31, after l.522), to warn Pilate, "deme not jhesu . but be his frende" (31,524). The author is building anticipation, creating tension and providing dramatic entertainment all at the same time, making real drama of the few words in the Scripture.

This subject is not presented in the cycle of the bosses (neither is it in the Biblia Pauperum) but both Ludus and the bosses have the trial before Pilate. Ludus

develops the conflict between Pilate and the doctors to a keen pitch; Pilate reiterates his failure to find any fault, and "Ne herowdys nother" (31,555), he claims. Attempting to evade the crucifixion he offers to let Jesus go free in honor of the Passover, according to custom, but the doctors will not hear of it and demand Barrabas be set free instead. Pilate's next tactic is to examine Jesus privately, but Jesus gives him no way out either:

On me poer þou hast ryth non
 but þat my fader hath grawntyd be for
 I cam my faderys wyl to full-fylle
 þat mankynd xuld not spylle
 he þat hath betrayd me . to þe at þis tyme
 his trespas is more þan is þine. (31,596-601)

Pilate is further constrained by the threats of Annas:
 "þou xalt Answere for his trespas/ and tretour to þe
 emperour we xal þe kalle" (31,621-623). Finally, the action
 having been drawn out and much tension created, Pilate
 delivers his sentence:

fyrst his clothis 3e xal of don
 and makyn hym nakyd . for to be
 bynde hym to A pelere . as sore as 3e mon
 þan skorge hym with qwyppys . þat al men may se
 Whan he is betyn . crowne hym for 3our kyng
 and þan to þe cros 3e xal hym bryng
 And to þe crosse þou xalt be fest
 And on thre naylys þi body xal rest
 (31,658-665)

In the sculptural program Christ before Pilate is the central scene of bay 11 (Plate 40). A scene often presented--depicted in the Biblia Pauperum too (Didron, 417)--this version shows Pilate seated, a canopy attached to the back of his throne projecting over his head. Christ



stands meekly before him with hands crossed on his breast, and a crowd of soldiers huddles close. Pilate holds his hands cupped in front of him but the pitcher of water is not visible; either it is part of the shadowy background or perhaps has been lost in restoration. The position of his hands, however, does strongly suggest the scene as typically depicted. It is interesting to speculate about why this boss should be the central one for the whole bay; the three center bosses preceding it are Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, the crowning with thorns and Christ brought before Pilate. The two following are the blindfolding of Christ and the betrayal by Judas. It is one of an important group of bosses then, but what message or what action is being pointed up here? One can see why the treachery of Judas should not be enshrined as the most important event in the bay, but if the idea intended is the meekness of Christ or his self-sacrifice, the crowning with thorns or the blindfolding would show it better. But if it is Pilate's conviction that Jesus should not have been crucified and that he, himself, is not really responsible, then the sculpture seems to imply that the crime of crucifying Christ belongs all the more to the Jews.

Another possibility is that the boss is saying something about the relationship between church and state, and the sovereignty of the state. Finally, the most simple interpretation, the scene may refer to the ablutions of the

priests during the service of the Eucharist, and be emphasized for its liturgical significance.

The blindfolding is represented on C65 (Plate 41); Christ sits with bandaged eyes between two men whose raised arms indicate that they are beating him. Ludus does not present the incident in this order but directs that it take place in a rubric following the trial before Annas and Cayphas (29, after 1.160). Both cycles include the crowning with thorns; it is mentioned in a rubric at the end of play 31 and is depicted on boss C62. Additional bosses that fit with this part of the story are N63 and N66, men with scourges, S63 and S64, men with swords, and S65, soldiers with axes. Still one more boss is important here with a scene not dramatized in Ludus. This is S64, where Pilate stands with two others, holding a scroll with five seals dangling from it--the writ of Christ's execution. This non-Scriptural subject informs us that Pilate is a legitimate officer of the Roman government, and puts the crucifixion within the context of Roman law.¹²²

¹²²William Loerke traces the scroll and its connotations back to the Early Christians, specifically the Codex Theodosianus, 380 A.D., in "The Miniatures of the Trial in the Rossano Gospels," Art Bulletin 43:171-95 S '61.

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Infrequently rendered, the subject once again shows respect for the state and its law.¹²³

Bay 12 opens with a scene of Christ being led away by several men (C67). He wears the crown of thorns and is probably on the way to take up the cross. It is very odd, however, that such a portrayal should be included when the actual bearing of the cross is not, particularly because the bearing of the cross is so often represented (in both the Biblia Pauperum [Didron, p. 418] and the Arena Chapel). In Ludus they "leyn þe crosse in hese necke to berynt and drawyn hym forth with ropys" (31, after 1.677) after the scourging. Play 32, following Scripture closely, goes on to describe the way to Calvary, using it to have Christ teach a lesson:

Dowterys of hierusalem . for me wepyth nowth
but for 3our-self wepyth . and for 3our
chyldyr Also . . .
here synne and here blyndnesse xal turne hem
to wo . . .
þan to þe hyllys and mownteynes . they xal
crye and calle
oppyn and hyde us from þe face . of hym syttyng
in trone
or ellys ovyr-throwyth . and on us now come
falle
þat we may be hyd . from oure sorweful mone.
(32,686-697)

In the sculpture only two elders are shown following Christ on N67, and neither Simon nor Veronica is depicted.

¹²³The scroll undoubtedly indicates the appearance of a writ of execution in the fifteenth century. Dean Goulburn discusses the writ and the differences between attached and hanging seals and their history, p. 319.

Jesus encounters both in Ludus; no particular point is made about Simon but for Veronica, because of her love for Christ and her charity, "I xal þem kepe from all mys-ese/ þat lokyn on þi kerchy . and remember me" (32,724-725), Jesus tells her.

Events happen much more quickly in this part of Ludus than in earlier parts: the tempo is faster and there is less conversation about things and more doing. After the very brief interludes of Simon and Veronica the soldiers nail Christ to the cross. The characters who crucify Jesus are designated simply as i, ii and iiij judeus, and they carry out their task in the cruelest fashion: "Cast hym down here in þe devyl way/ how long xal he standyn on his fete . . ." "gyf me his arm in hast/ And A-non we xal se/ hese good days þei xul be past . . ." "Ffest on A Rop . and pulle hym long/ and I xal drawe þe A-geyn/ spare we not þese ropys strong/ þow we brest both flesch and veyn" (32,728-745). This is not only good theater, full of action and excitement, but also stresses what Christ endured to save man.

In the sculpture the crucifixion, a scene invariably included in any cycle like that of the bosses or the Biblia Pauperum (Didron, p. 419), is broken into several parts: two executioners with hammer and nails, S67; two soldiers conversing, S68; two soldiers with axe and spear, S69; two soldiers observing, N70. The nailing to the

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cross, C68 (Plate 43), is presented again from the overhead view; we see Christ stretched out, ropes attached to his hands, surrounded by six soldiers. Christ wears a loin cloth and the crown of thorns; blood streams from the hand being nailed. The soldiers are pulling so hard on the ropes that several figures lean right back off the edge of the boss. The sculptor has posed the figures ingeniously in the small space, conveying an impressive sense of action.

Throwing dice for the garment of Christ is mentioned in a rubric in Ludus, right after setting up the cross "þer whylys xal þe jewys cast dyce for his clothis and fytyn and stryvyn" (32, after 1.769).¹²⁴ The bosses have the subject too on C69 (Plate 44), where two soldiers and three very large dice are placed on the robe of Christ which is very large also. This is another boss with the bird's-eye view.

The crucifixion is the main boss of the bay (Plate 46). Many of the incidents recounted in Ludus are included in this carving and the ones that accompany it. Ludus begins with the arrival of Mary and the three Maries. Mary is a character well enough developed to display a variety of emotions. At first she speaks with great pathos: "A deth . deth . deth . why wylt þou not me kyll"

¹²⁴In the same rubric it is directed that two more crosses be erected and the two thieves hung. The sculpture has only one cross.

(32,777) but she becomes reproachful when Christ will not answer her:

A my sone my sone . my derlyng dere
 what haue I defendyd þe
 þou hast spoke to alle þo . þat ben here
 and not o word þou spekyst to me. (32,810-813)

At the end, however, her only thought is for Christ; when they want her to leave she says:

I pray 3ow Alle lete me ben here
 and hang me up here on þis tre
 be my frend and sone þat is so dere
 ffor þer he is þer wold I be (32,838-841)

Mary can be seen at the very bottom of the boss behind the legs of Christ, wearing a crown.

Pilate is next on the scene in Ludus with Annas and Cayphas. He writes and "þan gon up on A leddere and settyn þe tabyl abovyn crystys hed" (32, after 1.853). Cayphas objects, "3e wryte hym to be kyng of jewys/ perfore we wolde þat 3e xuld wryte þus/ þat he namyd hymself kyng of jewys" (32,855-857), and Pilate answers, "þat I haue wretyn . wretyn it is"--that is, Pilate once more states his belief in Christ's innocence. In this the play is following the Scripture (John 19.21). The sculpture may be also; the legend is there above Christ's head, I.N.R.I.,¹²⁵ and Pilate may be one of the group of ten figures around Christ although it is impossible to determine this.

¹²⁵We must recall the restoration of the bosses which may have changed some features. Goulburn mentions one restoration in his time (p. 353) and only a few years ago they were cleaned and repainted again.

The bosses and the play continue along the same path as Christ expresses his misery in Ludus: "for thrust a-sundyr my lyppys crake/ for drynes þei do cleve" (32,873-874). The soldiers give him gall to drink and ask, "is not þis drynk of good tast" (32,881). Similarly the boss shows us a soldier on Christ's left holding up his lance with a sponge on its point, a sponge dipped in vinegar and gall. Another boss near-by depicts the preparation of the drink, N69 (Plate 45). Two soldiers are busy with a large container standing on the ground; one man is pouring into it the contents of a large tube, part of the entrails of an ox (cf. Goulburn, p. 351), that is he is adding gall, while another man stands by with a sponge (another example of overhead perspective here). Returning to the crucifixion boss, we find that it portrays another incident, Longinus stabbing Christ with his lance, which is not presented in Ludus until after the descent into hell. This at least is what the subject ought to be, but it is presented in an unfamiliar way. What we actually see is the figure of a priest touching his left eye with the fingers of his left hand, and holding up a staff, with an unrecognizable round object on the end of it, to Christ's side. Longinus, a soldier not a priest, is usually represented as stabbing Christ's side with a spear; blood flows from the wound healing his blind eyes. The confusion might result from the restoration of the



boss. The incident is presented correctly in Ludus; "blynde longey's" says after his sight is restored: "þis thretty wynty'r I myth not se/ and now I may se I wote nevy'r hoe" (24,1121-1122). Mary and John have a tender farewell at the foot of the cross in Ludus (also in the sculpture, they stand together on a boss near the crucifixion, S72), and the action turns to the harrowing of hell. In Ludus this has a short play all to itself, play 33. The spirit of Christ speaks of his purpose: "now wole I go streyth to helle/ and feche from þe fendys felle/ all my frendys þat þer-in dwelle" (33,990-992); he speaks also of his power against hell: "Aþens me it wore but wast/ to holdyn or to stondyn fast/ helle logge may not last/ Aþens . þe kynge of glorye" (33,1010-1013). This is the message of salvation again, in another form.

The gates of hell which he attacks are not described in Ludus, but the common representation was the type used in the bosses, the huge animal mouth on C72 (also on C80, Plate 53). The open jaws, huge teeth and large bulging eyes are a literal rendition of the metaphor which goes back to the Carolingian period.¹²⁶ In this example Christ is about to exit from it carrying the banner of the

¹²⁶ Some examples: in Didron, pp. 160-161, two 14th century MS.; one even earlier in B. Myers, Art and Civilization (New York, 1967), p. 164; the motif was used several times by Breughel, see M. Friedlander, From Van Eyck to Breughel 2 (London, 1969), plate 293.

resurrection. A little nude man, probably Adam, and several other figures are following him.

One incident follows quickly after another now, and the burial of Christ takes place next. The action starts in play 34 with the request by Joseph of Arimathea, "heyl sere pylat þat syttyth in sete . . . I pray þe of A bone . . . to bery jhesu is body" (34,1063-1067). Of course the burial must be presented strongly so that the resurrection may be more impressive. It is probably Joseph of Arimathea on N72 in the bosses, an aged man kneeling in worship. The arguments with which he supports his request are interesting (none are given in the Scriptures); they are designed to convince Pilate psychologically that it would be better for him if Jesus were buried:

And yf we lete hym hange þer styлле
Some wolde seyn þer of A-now
þe pepyl þer-of wold seyn ful ylle
þat nother xuld be þour worchep not prow.
(34,1071-1074)

Joseph of Arimathea assisted by Nicodemus, brings Christ down from the cross and "joseph leyth hym in oure ladys lappe" (34, after 1.1139). Strangely this subject is not depicted in the bosses nor in the Biblia Pauperum, although it was familiar from the early thirteenth century on, having been developed in the north, perhaps as a corollary of the madonna and child. The entombment is, however, portrayed in the bosses on C71 (Plate 47). There two men are lowering the body of Christ into the coffin.

He is a small and rigid figure in comparison with the other two--in fact he appears to be a mannequin as he was in the scene of the nativity. (The entombment is one of the scenes in the Biblia Pauperum [Didron, p. 420] flanked by scenes of Joseph in the well and Jonah in the whale.) In Ludus the event is treated quite simply; Joseph says, "I gyf þe þis syndony þat I haue bowth/ to wynde þe in whyl it is new" (34,1156-1157).

After the burial Cayphas advises Pilate, following Scripture, to have the tomb guarded in case "hese dyscyplys come serteyn/ and out of his graue stele hym away" (34, 1184-1185). Pilate summons his knights and they relieve the sad and anxious mood with some buffoonery, bragging and boasting, one trying to outdo the other:

3a and An hunderyd put hem in pres ij miles
þei xal dey I make A vow

And han honderyd fy on An C. and an iij miles
C. per-to
þer is non of hem xal us with-stonde.

3a and þer com An hunderyd iiij miles
thowsand and mo
I xal hem kyllle with myn honde.
(34,1218-1223)

Ludus interjects a play at this point in the beginning of play 35 which continues the action of the harrowing of hell. Christ calls Adam and Eve and their friends to come forth "to paradys . . . in blysse for to dwelle/ þe fende of helle þat is 3our ffoo/ he xal be wrappyd and woundyn in woo" (35,1346-1349). After this

re-statement of his power to save, Christ returns to his body, according to the rubric, "Tunc transiet anima christi ad resuscitandum corpus quo resuscitato . . ." (35, after 1.1415). This may have required two actors to do. Mary is with Christ in this scene; he tells her what awaits her: "All þis werlde þat was forlorn/ Shal wurchepe þou bothe evyn and morn" (35,1448-1449), and they say their farewells. Although Christ showing his wounds and saying farewell to his mother had already been painted by Roger van der Weyden and others, it was not one of the common subjects and it is not in the bosses. We do see another familiar treatment though, Christ stepping forth out of the tomb, C74 (Plate 48). In this presentation he apparently steps right through the closed lid, holding the staff topped by a cross with the banner flying from it. With his right hand he blesses the people. The heads and shoulders of two soldiers appear on the right and left of Christ in the upper half of the boss watching Christ step forth.¹²⁷ (We have here a combination perspective: Christ is seen at eye level, but the soldiers are depicted from overhead.) In Ludus the soldiers are asleep when the resurrection occurs. They wake to all sorts of unnatural phenomena: "hillis gyn qwake/ And tres ben shake . . . Stonys clevyd/ wyttys ben revid" (34,

¹²⁷ This boss gives us definite proof of the changes caused by restoration because Dean Goulburn describes the soldiers as having their eyes closed, p. 393.

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1481-1485), following the Scriptural description of the unnatural phenomena that accompanied Christ's death on the cross (Matthew 27.51); Ludus does not use it in that scene. The dramatic effect of these descriptions must have been great, and Pilate's reaction when informed must have once more provided comic relief and a chance to relish the defeat of the wicked:

What What What What
 Out upon the why seyst þou þat
 Ffy vpon the harlat
 how darst þou so say
 þou dost myn herte ryght grett greff
 þou lvest vpon hym fals theff
 how xuld he rysyn ageyn to lyff
 þat lay deed in clay. (35,1312-1319)

He refuses to accept any explanation, dismissing them:

now all þour wurchep it is lorn
 And euery man may þow scorn
 And bydde þow go syttyn in þe corn
 And chare a-wey þe revyn. (35,1548-1551)

In other words they are fit only to be scarecrows.

The visit of the three Maries to the tomb is the subject of play 36. This is a Scriptural subject and was originally the means by which the resurrection became known. Since the scenes of farewell with Mary and Pilate's meeting with the soldiers have been added, there is a certain amount of repetition--but each scene presents the subject in a different manner. In this last version Maria Magdalen, Maria Jacobi and Maria Salome go "with salvys ffor to leche/ Cryst þat tholyd wounde" (36,3-4), but find him gone. It tells the story very much as in the

Scripture, including John saying, "removyd Away we saw þe ston" (36,152), i.e., Christ did not go through it miraculously as he did in the sculpture. The three Maries are pictured on two bosses; two of them on N71 and Mary Magdalen on S71.¹²⁸ She appears again soon; Ludus in the next play (37) presents the first of Jesus' appearances after the resurrection. Taken from the Gospel of John 20.11, Mary mistakes Jesus for a gardener at first, and, when she realizes who He is, attempts to kiss his feet and is told in the incident known as the *Noli me tangere*: "Towche me not As 3ett Mary/ Ffor to my fadyr I haue not Ascende" (37,42-43). Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalen is in the sculpture on S74 (Plate 49). She kneels before Christ holding her jar of ointment conspicuously; Christ stands, holding the staff, not the spade as is sometimes portrayed.

Two more scenes take place in Ludus before the ascension in play 38; one is the appearance of Christ to Cleophas and Luke, commonly referred to as the supper at Emmaus. The other is Christ's appearance to Thomas. Cleophas and Luke are not portrayed in the bosses, nor are they in the Biblia Pauperum. Ludus treats the story comically in part; for instance, when Jesus asks the two, "3our myrthe is gon why is it so" (38,48), Cleophas

¹²⁸But the often used image of the angel sitting on the empty tomb with the cover askew is not depicted in the bosses.

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responds, "sere me thynkyth þou art a pore pylgrym" (38, 49). Furthermore they will not accept Christ's word that the resurrection took place. "How xulde A ded man evyr A-ryse" (38,106), "he bled owt All his herte blood/ hoe xulde he thanne ryse with myght" (38,127-128). Christ finally becomes exasperated: "why be 3e so hard of truswe" (38,145). When they are finally convinced they do not want to part with him, the source of their joy, and actually become unruly in their insistence:

Trewly from vs 3e xal not go
 3e xal abyde with us here styлле . . .
 lete us hym kepe with strenth and myght
 Sett on 3oure hand with good entent
 And pulle hym with us . . . (38,169-180)

The slapstick mood becomes sober later; Christ blesses the bread and "subito discedit christus ab oculis eorum" (38, after 1.216), leaving Cleophas and Luke amazed.

This incident runs immediately into the next in Ludus as Cleophas and Luke meet Peter and tell their wonderful news. Of all the disciples only Thomas does not accept their story: "Be in pes petyr þou gynnyst to rave" (38,301). The incident of Doubting Thomas permits Christ to make a statement about faith: "Ffor þou hast me seyn þer fore þi ffeyth is good/ but blyssyd be tho of þis þat haue no syght/ And beleve in me they ffor here meke mood" (38,349-351). In the bosses, on N74, Christ, holding the staff in his left hand, pulls the hand of the kneeling

Thomas to his side. The Biblia Pauperum has the scene also (Didron, p. 424).

Christ's final appearance occurs at the time of the ascension. The rubric at the beginning of play 39 reads "cum maria et vndecim discipulis et duobus angelis sedentibus in albis" (39, after 1.1). This description makes the play similar to the sculpture where the heads of Mary and the eleven disciples surround the top of the mount from which Christ rises, C76 (Plate 50). Furthermore, on N and S 76, the bosses on either side, are angels--one on each--but these angels are garbed in feathers from neck to foot, and kneel rather than sit. The most interesting part of the main boss is the figure of Christ ascending; only his bare feet and the lower part of his gown are visible, the rest being obscured by the cloud into which he is ascending.¹²⁹ This boss employs a perspective based apparently on the optical perception of the bystanders as far as the figure of Christ is concerned, but at the same time uses an overhead view of Mary and the disciples--an intriguing compromise. Compared to the presentation of the ascension in more usual style, as in the left tympanum of the west facade at Chartres, the Norwich boss shows Christ taking a more active role: he rises into the cloud by himself--in the instance at Chartres he stands on the

¹²⁹Meyer Schapiro, "The Image of the Disappearing Christ," Gazette des Beaux Arts S6 v23:135-52 Mr. 43, gives the history of the motif which he believes developed in England.

cloud; it supports him. An earlier example of the Norwich design is by Fra Angelico in the Academy at Florence, and a later example is in Durer's Small Passion.

In Ludus Christ calls the disciples together. The play has three purposes: one, to direct the disciples to stay in Jerusalem to await the Pentecost for they "In þe holy goost xul baptyzid be" (39,29); two, to leave his final message with them:

lovyth no wrath nor no wronge
but levyth in charyte with mylde stevyn
With myrthe and melody and Aungell songe
now I stey streyte ffrom 3ow to hevyn.
(39,44-47)

and immediately "hic ascendit ab oculis et in celo cantent" (39, after 1.47). The angel carries out the third purpose which is to choose another disciple to replace Judas; Mathias is the one elected. The angel does give them an important piece of information: "In a clowde As 3e hym seyn/ Steyng vp so xal comyn A-geyn" (39,54-55). This perhaps informs us also of the way in which Christ appeared at the last judgment.

In the bosses the time between the resurrection and Pentecost is filled with representations of Mary at prayer, C77, and the apostles also, N and S 78. The Pentecost is on the last central boss of the bay, C78 (Plate 51). Mary, symbol of the church, is seated in the center with three apostles on each side. Above them is the dove of the holy

spirit, very large, from which golden rays stream forth.¹³⁰ The emblematic character is very strong in this boss and also the appeal to contemplation of the mystery. Mary is traditionally present from the sixth century on visual treatments of the subject, but she is not in play 40, the play of the Pentecost.¹³¹ It begins with a rubric directing that the apostles speak kneeling as "Spiritus sanctus descendat super eos" (40, before l.1). Perhaps the cloud was used again here. The speeches of the apostles, each naming an attribute of Christ,¹³² create a hymn in his praise.

The assumption of Mary is omitted from the sculptural program (also from the Biblia Pauperum); in Ludus (41) it is one of the plays that had existed separately before being incorporated into this manuscript. This can be judged by the introduction which offers a summary of the life of Mary, and then describes her life after the ascension: "alle the holy placys in erthe . that criste duellyd on/ devouthly sche went hem . honouryng the

¹³⁰Professor Molly Smith suggests that Mary implies the continued transmission of the holy spirit through the church, i.e., Mary, to man.

¹³¹See The Ingeborg Psalter in A. Martindale, Gothic Art (New York, 1974), p. 66.

¹³²The names of the apostles, each with the attribute of Christ that he will say, are listed like a cast of characters at the head of the play. This is the only occasion in Ludus where this happens.

godhed" (41,16-17). The different spelling of Christ's name and the constant use of "the" instead of "þe" also indicate a different origin. In a later quote it will also be noticed that the letter 3 changes to y. The climax of the play is the coronation of the Virgin, and the beginning is a plot by Episcopus and his henchmen to steal, burn and hide the ashes of Mary's body when she dies. In between Mary asks to have the apostles with her when an angel tells her she will die in three days and they begin to appear, startled at finding themselves there. John the Evangelist says, "In pheso I was prechyng . a fer contre ryth/ and by a whyte clowde . I was rapt to these hyllys" (41,164-165). Peter is equally surprised when he arrives: "A holy brether wyth grace . be ye met here now/ lord god what menyth . this sodeyne congregacyon" (41,206-207). Paul appears too and in conversation with Peter says, "the keyes of hevene peter . god hath you betake" (41,216). There is a link with the bosses here for Peter stands holding two very large keys on C83 (Plate 56), an unusual representation.

When Jesus appears at Mary's side, the author, wanting her to appear modest and humble, has her say, "an aungyl wold a ssuffysed me hye kyng at this nede" (41,287), and as they converse another bit of sophisticated stage-craft appears: "hic exiet anima marie de corpore in sinu dei" (41, after l.301). Through the attempt of Episcopus'

man to seize Mary's coffin, her divinity is made clear; the man's hand is stuck fast on the bier and he is only cured by expressing his belief in her.

At Chartres, in the central tympanum of the north portal, and at Notre Dame in Paris, in the left tympanum of the west facade, the triumph is represented, as well as in the Biblia Pauperum (Didron, p. 426), but we do not find it among the bosses at Norwich. As we have noted before the bosses are closer to Scripture than the plays.

The cycle of the play and the cycle of the bosses both end with Doomsday. Play 42 reiterates the constant themes of the whole of Ludus: punishment and reward, or salvation for the good and damnation for the wicked. The play makes it clear that this applies to everyone: "Bothe pope prynce and prysste with crowne/ Kynge and caysere and knygtys kene" (42,14-15). The play begins with Michael calling, "Surgite. All men Aryse/ venite Ad iudicium" (42,1-2) and they do: "Omnes resurgentes subtuus terram clamauit ha aa . ha aa . ha aa" (42, after 1.26). To the worthy souls God extends his hand: "my blyssynge burnyschith 3ow as bryght as berall/ As crystall clene it clensyth 3ow clere" (42,46-47), and for them Peter opens the gates of heaven where "to myrth and joye welcum 3e be" (42,65). Of the damned souls, craving mercy, Deus demands, "How wolde 3e wrecchis Any mercy haue . . . What haue 3e wrought 3oure sowle to saue/ to whom haue 3e don

Any mercyful dede" (42,70-73), and the devils join in condemning them for the sins written on their foreheads: "þou wore so stowte and sett in pryde/ þou woldyst not 3eve a pore man breed/ . . . if a thursty man com any tyde/ Ffor thrust þow he xulde be deed/ drynk from hym woldyst evyr hyde . . . In wrath þi neybore to bakbyte . . . eveyr-mor on Envye was All þi mende" (42,93-105) and so on to the end, the last page of the manuscript being lost.

The first row of bosses in bay 14 represents the power of good over evil. On the N and S bosses in row 79 we see a figure scourging a demon and on the center boss is a scene of exorcism--a demon is emerging from the mouth of one figure while the other kneels in prayer. The main boss of the bay, C82, represents Christ judging (Plate 55); in every way it is typical of the Gothic tradition in art. He sits on the rainbow between two angels blowing trumpets with the moon at his feet and golden rays spreading out on either side. His hands are raised to show the stigmata. At the bottom of the boss two figures are rising from their graves, one actually climbing out of his coffin. Both are nude but one wears the papal crown and the other the crown of state. Here we have again an emblematic design, one which the viewer may contemplate and consider the meaning of life. On either side of this boss N and S 85 have angels blowing trumpets also; two more angels are represented on N and S 85, kneeling and swinging censers.

The worthy souls are represented climbing out of their graves on N81; on S81, N and S 84 they are being led to glory by an angel (Plate 57). The scenes of the damned souls are far more interesting. On S80 (Plate 52) the devil leads souls to hell; he has a huge red face, the ears of a bat, claws and hoofs. Three figures with agonized expressions are confined by a heavy rope he is pulling. On C80 (Plate 53) the devil is pushing souls into hell, which is a huge monster head with tremendous open jaws lined with sharp teeth. Three little souls are within, the devil (hard to see in this illustration) at the left. On N80 and S83 other damned souls are dragged along by demons. All this is fairly common and reflects Gothic style as portrayed in many manuscripts and tympana, but on C81 (Plate 54) a demon is wheeling a man, fearfully hiding his face, in a wheelbarrow. More interesting even, on the demon's back a woman rides astride, holding up a jug or pitcher with one hand and grabbing the demon's head with the other.

The last of this bay contains two center bosses with subjects not in Ludus. One is the Trinity, C84 (Plate 58), another emblematic type of composition. The three are seated with gold and red rays behind them, each holding his right hand up in blessing. The two on the right wear

crowns, Christ on the left wears the crown of thorns. He is half nude, revealing the stigmata.¹³³

The very last center boss, C85, contains the portrait of Bishop Lyhart who was responsible for the erection of the bosses. It is possible that he exercised some control over the program as well, but more likely it was delegated. At any rate, looking back over the programs of Ludus and the bosses we can conclude that they are most alike in their general tendency, i.e., their message and effect, and appear more different the more closely they are examined. The bosses certainly are more carefully kept within Scriptural limits, while the plays are influenced by the need to meet the requirements of secular entertainment. To better perceive what is happening in these two works, let us turn to an analysis of their attributes and techniques.

¹³³Professor Molly Smith believes the Trinity is introduced to make the statement that God reigns forever in heaven. The subject is not usual in such a cycle although it is found in many manuscripts.

IV. MEDIUM AND TECHNIQUE IN LUDUS COVENTRIAE AND THE NORWICH BOSSES

As we have compared the cycles of the bosses and plays in the previous chapter, it has become apparent that, when artists treat the same subject in different media different effects are imposed by those media. Some of these are due to the natural capabilities and limitations of the medium: the drama, for example, proceeding in time as well as space, does not permit contemplation. It presents doctrine under the guise of entertainment, often having to rely on some character's narration of events. We are told what is happening or has happened off-stage, action we never actually see; then the drama moves on. The sculpture, on the other hand, necessarily static, offers the viewer the opportunity to observe repeatedly, and moreover to think and to be uplifted. Rather than bluntly stating the tenets of Christianity, it permits the viewer to bring doctrine to it as he meditates upon the image before him. It is in this respect that the bosses inspire comparison with seventeenth century emblem books, which present symbols picturesquely designed rather

than narrative.¹³⁴ Such a characteristic accords well with the more rigidly Scriptural nature of the bosses--as opposed to the plays which reflect many influences in addition to Scripture--and with the bosses' tendency to often dwell on the liturgical aspect of a scene. Furthermore, the sculpture often stems from an entirely different tradition and has already formulated compositions to follow.

Technically the difference in medium allows one discipline to render a scene the other cannot. In the sculpture Pharoah really drowns in a literally red sea (Plate 17); Ludus does not even try to deal with this.¹³⁵ On the other hand, in some parts of Ludus, usually its least dramatic but most informative parts, a long exposition may be delivered. One example is Moses' explication of the ten commandments (6, 49 ff.) which he could never offer in stone, even with the aid of a scroll. Scrolls do enrich meaning by adding language to the sculpture, although in a minimal way, as we have noted in a couple of examples in

¹³⁴ Professor John Yunck suggested the comparison and pointed out that the overlarge swords etc. are also similar to emblematic devices. Still another similarity is that the viewer must be able to recognize the subject from his familiarity with it, i.e., his previous knowledge.

¹³⁵ But marvels were presented on some medieval stages. See J. Mortensen, Le théâtre français au moyen age (Paris, 1903), pp. 179-181), and G. Wickham, Early English Stages 1300-1660 (London, 1959), p. 4, for accounts of flying angels, fire breathing dragons, rainfall, walking on the water, scenes of flaying and burning, etc.

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the bosses; however, sometimes they merely reflect their models, illuminated manuscripts, paintings or stained glass windows. At any rate in Norwich nave the scrolls are at such a distance above the heads of the viewers that they cannot be informative,¹³⁶ but if they tried they could never match the ability of Ludus to convey specific information and, more than that, to broaden the drama by implication, when it chooses not to render it with actions. In the creation scene, Ludus needs only a few verses to cover the subject:

Now hevyn is made ffor Aungell sake
 þe fyrst day and þe fyrst nyth
 The secunde day watyr I make
 The walkyn also ful fayr and b[r]yth
 The iij^de day . I parte watyr from erthe
 tre and every growyng thyng
 both erbe and floure of Suete smellyng (2,83-89)

It is the easiest thing to bring in an extra idea, such as God giving Adam the privilege of naming all God's creatures:

both ffysche and foulys þat swymmyn and gon
 to everych of hem a name þou take
 Bothe tre and frute and bestys echon
 red and qwyte bothe blew and blake
 þou 3eve hem name be þi self alon (2,102-106)

The writer can fully render the prohibition against the tree of knowledge, so essential to the plot of the Corpus Christi play:

¹³⁶ Some scrolls are held by the prophets in bay 7, an angel in bay 8, Mary and Joseph in bay 9. Also in 9 the demon of the temptation holds the only scroll that now has a legend on it, but it cannot be read from the floor. The other scrolls might have had texts originally.

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but towche nowth þis tre þat is of Cunnyng
 All thyng saff þis ffor þe is wrought
 here is all þynge þat þe xulde plese
 All redy made on to þin ese
 Ete not þis frute ne me dysplese
 ffor þan þou deyst þou skapyst nowth

(2,120-125)

All this the play communicates through simple, direct statements in a short space of time. In the sculpture the subject has to be broken into segments and each segment presented individually. In the creation, therefore, separate bosses throughout the first bay represent fish, animals, foliage, man, woman--taking up much more space proportionately than time is taken in Ludus--and all these have to be put together by the spectator into a whole.

Ludus benefits in another way from the fact that it is not only visual but verbal when a figure like Contemplacio can come on to introduce and describe the play that is next to be seen, the first of her several functions. In the introduction to the parliament of heaven she operates on several different levels; as a choral figure she makes a dramatic plea for mercy for the poor souls who "ly and sobbe ffor syknes and sorwe" (11,20), and have been in that condition for "Ffowre thowsand . sex vndryd . foure 3ere" (11,1) in hell.¹³⁷ Here she speaks for the people, but then she acts allegorically too, as a wise and all-knowing spirit she reminds God of the prophecy of

¹³⁷This is the commonly accepted length of time between the fall of man and the incarnation.

Isaiah, thus giving a hint of the solution which the four daughters of God will devise. As part of her choral function she supplies necessary information to the audience, but as we read her emotional statements we can imagine the dramatic gestures which would accompany the spoken words on stage--making her one of the acting company not merely an announcer:

A quod Jeremye . who xal gyff welllys to myn
 eynes
 þat I may wepe bothe day and nyght
 to se oure bretheryn in so longe peynes
 here myschevys Amende . may þi mech myght
 As gret as þe se lord . was Adamys contrysyon
 ryght
 Ffrom oure hed is falle þe-crowne
 Man is comeryd in synne . I crye to þi syght
 Gracyous lord . Gracyous lord . Gracyous lord
 come downe. (11,25-32)

Another introducer-actor is Demon who opens the passion play. Like Contemplacio he has information to offer, but unlike her he does not speak for the people--that is, he does not act as chorus. But he contributes to the exposition of cause and effect in the plot by giving his history: "Ffor I began in hefne synne for to sowe . . . And þer fore was I cast out . . ." (26,13-15), and also reveals his purpose,

I am Norsshire of synne . to þe confusyon of
 man
 To bryng hym to my dongeon . þer in fyre to
 dwelle
 Ho so evyr serve me so reward hym I kan
 þat he xal syng wellaway . evyr in peynes
 ffelle. (26,5-9)

[illegible]

Granted then that sculpture and drama can each do some things better than the other, nevertheless there are very few subjects which cannot be presented in some way in both media. It is not because it is impossible to render, that the woman taken in adultery is missing from the bosses or the marriage at Cana from the plays. In fact, the marriage at Cana would make a very good play, with a marvelous and dramatic climax, while the woman taken in adultery could have been sculpted by using the familiar narrative device of incorporating several actions in one scene. The sculptor of the bosses knew of this technique--while Isaac blesses Jacob in the foreground, Esau leaves for the hunt in the background (Plate 10). In general, however, the sculptor of the bosses seems uninterested in pictorial narrative. Several factors work against the effectiveness of narrative in this cycle: the small scope of the boss especially presents a problem, but more than that, they are necessarily subordinate to the building as a whole and this must affect the very nature of the program. Finally, the distance from the spectator makes narrative hard to follow.

There were, moreover, models for the presentation of the woman taken in adultery in the visual arts,¹³⁸ but--and this seems to be the significant factor--the

¹³⁸Mâle cites some examples at Verneuil and in the chapel of the Virgin d'Evreaux in De la fin, p. 40.



examples cited are from fifteenth century cycles while the Norwich bosses seem to follow thirteenth century traditions. In these the life of Christ takes only a small part of the design, and the public life of Christ was limited to scenes of the baptism, the marriage at Cana, the temptation and the transfiguration.¹³⁹ (Norwich has three: the baptism, Plate 31; the marriage at Cana, Plate 30; and the temptation, Plates 23 and 34.) In the fifteenth century cycles the number of subjects was expanded and included such scenes as the good Samaritan, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and the money lenders chased from the temple as well as the woman taken in adultery. The Biblia Pauperum has the money lenders chased from the temple (Didron, p. 412); other scenes including Christ teaching and healing are in a fifteenth century fresco cycle in the church of Sant' Anastasia, Verona. Some entire fifteenth century windows were filled with scenes of the public life of Christ, notably in the chapel of the Virgin at Evreux, and the window dedicated to the Madeleine at Verneuil. The Norwich sculptor shows a conservative tendency in following a thirteenth century model in the fifteenth century,¹⁴⁰

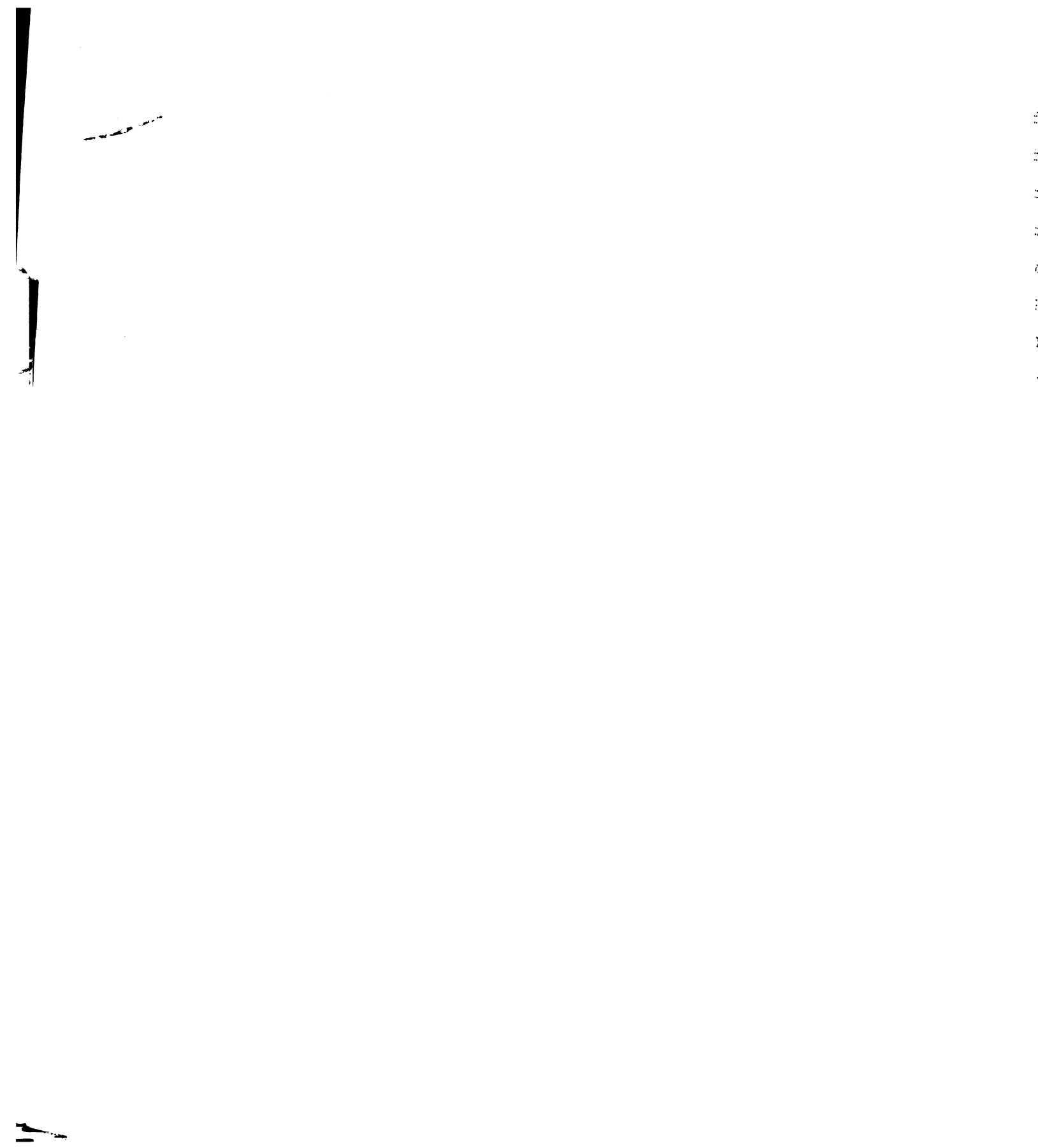
¹³⁹ Mâle points this out in The Gothic Image (New York, 1958), pp. 176-177; he also indicates it is rare to find all four incidents together as representations of the public life were usually limited to one or two in a cycle.

¹⁴⁰ Although he felt free to add to the program by introducing the portrait of Bishop Lyhart, which was not an uncommon thing to do.

only making one exception by including the feast in the house of Simon, C54.

Ludus was following tradition too in presenting the woman taken in adultery; it is also in the cycles from Chester and York. And the marriage at Cana, not in Ludus, is not in any other English cycle play either, even though this was the scene of Christ's first public miracle. Tradition, once set, is a powerful force.

Even when the two disciplines deal with the same subject their varied traditions may produce quite different effects on the message. For instance, Ludus in the prophet play and the bosses in rows 40-43 deal with the transition from the Old Testament to the New, following the basic Christian teaching that the Old and New Testaments are parts of one truth, that in the Old Testament are the seeds of the New. But the play and the sculpture make different points. The play, a more developed prophet play than is found in any other English cycle, relates the predictions of Christ's birth by the prophets and the royal ancestors. Chester, considered the oldest English cycle, does not have a separate prophet play but at the end of the play on Balaam and the ass Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Jonas, Joel and Michael appear with an Expositor and David, who speaks as a prophet not a king (V, 361 ff.). In the York cycle the prophets themselves do not appear but are quoted by a character called Prologue at the beginning



of the Annunciation. Amos, Isaac, Isaiah, Joel, Jacob and, from the New Testament, John the Baptist and Luke are the ones who are mentioned. The royal ancestors have no parts but David is referred to: "On dauid sege þore sall he wonne" (XII,67). Towneley did have a whole play, the *Processus Prophetarum*, from which only the parts of Moses, David, the Sibyl and Daniel have survived. From any of these it is quite a leap to the thirteen kings and thirteen prophets of *Ludus*, each one designated "rex" or "propheta," all of whom prophesy the birth of Christ.

The sculpture instead puts most emphasis on the ancestry of Christ and his subsequent right to be recognized as the Messiah. Prophets were often part of the sculptural decoration of medieval churches: the north transept of Chartres, the west facade of Amiens, inside the west facade of Rheims. Individual prophets often appear in windows too, cf. the chevet clerestory of Bourges. Kings can also be seen: the jamb figures on the west facade of Chartres, the north rose and its lancets; also in the gallery of kings at Chartres and Notre Dame, Paris.¹⁴¹ Kings and prophets together occupy the space above the north portal of the west facade of Notre Dame, Paris. In the Norwich bosses kings and prophets are also combined into one presentation: David, Solomon and an unidentified

¹⁴¹The kings were taken by the people to be the kings of France.

king occupy center bosses in rows 41, 42 and 43 (Plates 21 and 22), but prophets are in subordinate positions on either side, N and S 41, S42, N and S 43. Moreover they are unidentified too, which takes some strength from the prophetic announcements. It seems, therefore, that the bosses point more emphatically to Christ's royal heritage and minimize the prophets.¹⁴² The medium, then, and its traditions do in some way affect the artist's handling of the subject; even though a discipline is capable of presenting a subject, the choice of presenting that subject, and the method of presentation, may be finally controlled by established convention.

Another question concerning medium, that arises with each work we examine, is how skillfully it is used, how the artist develops it and to what end. In this respect Ludus and the bosses are not equal. Ludus, created at the close of the long development of the cycle plays, is sophisticated in its use of medium, employing the most advanced techniques of the time in staging, props and costumes and also in its intelligent construction of plot. In addition the script was probably updated every time it was performed.¹⁴³ The bosses, also dating from

¹⁴² Another motif expressing Christ's ancestry was the tree of Jesse used in windows at Chartres and Ste. Chapelle, in sculpture at Laon, Chartre and Amiens, and in the Biblia Pauperum.

¹⁴³ Crossings out and additions written in bear this out.

late in the Gothic period but looking back to thirteenth century models, are technically imaginative--especially in the handling of perspective--and full of charm, but they tend in a different direction from most fifteenth century pictorial work. To compare them with contemporary Italian sculpture which is already Renaissance would be unfair, but the conclusion is still valid when comparing the bosses with the Germans, Hans Multscher and Nicholas Gerhaerts, or such great Flemings as Jan van Eyck and Hugo van der Goes,¹⁴⁴ that the bosses were not primarily designed to be powerful or expressive or advanced. In very few instances do they attempt an emotional effect and then it falls short of the intensity of Multscher, or the poignancy of van der Goes' shepherds. On the other hand the bosses do, infrequently and less dramatically, portray the casual simplicity of Gerhaerts but not the elegant grandeur of van Eyck.

The decorative qualities of the bosses, however, are highly significant. They make the building more beautiful while they impress the viewer with the meaning of the church, for in the medieval view every part of the church was interpreted mystically and symbolically. Several thirteenth century texts are systematic glossaries of the

¹⁴⁴ See H. Hofstatter, Art of the Late Middle Ages (New York, 1968) for illustrations: van Eyck, Ghent Altarpiece, p. 169; Multscher, Man of Sorrows, p. 184; Gerhaerts, Self-Portrait, p. 214; van der Goes, Portinari Altarpiece, p. 177.

subject, one of which is the Rationale divinorum officiorum by William Durand.¹⁴⁵ In one paragraph he states, "The material [church] typifieth the spiritual church," which may explain the function of the bosses in the designer's eyes, that is, that the material rendition of the biblical story in the bosses typifies the spiritual story of salvation.

The presentation of subject matter in the bosses has enough variety, however, so that exceptions may be found to the placid air that generally prevails; Cain brandishing the jaw-bone does communicate a sense of action and feeling (Plate 6), although Jacob wrestling the angel is as formal as a dance (Plate 12).¹⁴⁶

The very charm of the bosses rests on their simplicity, on the fact that the sculptor usually chooses the familiar image rather than the monumental one; compare, for example, the tympanum sculpture of the central portal on the west facade of Chartres where the figure of Christ exudes an air of grave and serene authority. The designer of the bosses wanted instead to make the Bible stories as "real" as possible, i.e., human and understandable. In

¹⁴⁵ Selections from Durand's text are included in Teresa Frisch, Gothic Art 1140-1450 (New Jersey, 1971), pp. 33-37.

¹⁴⁶ Depicting Herod's fury and his unbalanced state of mind, the sculptor resorts to the strange pose we see on C48 (Plate 27).

carrying out his purpose he renders some scenes as very ordinary, every day events. Samson carrying the gates of Gaza (C37) looks like a workman going along to his daily task; comfortably and quite casually he walks along with a gate under his arm. None of the angels from the creation or from the stories of Abraham or Jacob, are depicted as flying; they walk--as they probably did on the stage. The angels and demons from the last judgment also walk, and in addition the demons are sculpted looking as if they are dressed in costumes (Plate 34). An especially appealing example is Mary in the scene of the nativity, wearing a golden gown but with a white napkin tied about her waist as an apron.

This is not to say that the sculptor of the bosses was inadequate, for all these effects were the result of his deliberate choices, determined in the first place by his goals. But to more completely understand the workmanship of Ludus and the bosses, let us take one part of each and examine it more thoroughly from this point of view.

Play 20 in Ludus, which dramatizes the massacre of the innocents, the flight into Egypt and the death of Herod, exemplifies many of Ludus' best features. It has both humor and horror, music, spectacular effects and dramatic tension. The staging of Ludus is rather complicated as a whole and in the course of this play the setting changes several times. The rubrics do not indicate how

the play was staged but we can assume that the means employed in other parts of Ludus would be used here as well. Therefore in the opening scene of the play, Herod, to be informed by Senescallus that the "kyngys iii . stelyn away full styll" (20,3), could appear either on the stage, or on a scaffold as Cayphas does in the council of the Jews when he "shewyth him-self in his skafhald" (26, after 1.44). Another possibility is that Herod was stationed somewhere in the area in front of the pageant wagon. The use of such an empty space or "place" is indicated several times in Ludus; for example Christ rides out of the "place" in the entry into Jerusalem (26, after 1.220), and Judas goes into the "place" in the last supper (27, after 1.589). Sometimes it is more than a vacant spot: in the betrayal Christ leads his disciples to Mt. Olivet and "he comyth a lytyl þer be-syde in a place lych to A park" (28, after 1.389). Props must have been used to create the park setting. Simon, in the last supper, "comyth . . . owt of his hous to welcome cryst" (27, after 1.389) and Christ enters Simon's house to eat the pascal lamb. This house must have been a simple structure, perhaps a roof supported on a pole at each corner, because it would be necessary to see into it from all sides. More elaborate was the "lytil oratory with stolys and cusschonys clenly be-seyn lych as it were a cownsel hous" (26, after 1.124) which was the scene of the meeting between the bishops and the

Pharisees in the council of the Jews. The direction calls for this to be in the mid-place, and it remained there during the last supper with the curtains drawn until it would "sodeynly onclose" (27, after l.397), revealing the conference still going on. We can conclude then that several different spots in the "place" might be used in one play.¹⁴⁷

If Herod acted his part from the stage--and this is the way it was done in the Coventry play where "Erode ragis in the pagond and in the strete also" (after l.783)--the massacre of the innocents could have been acted in the place. Undoubtedly there was a great deal of running around in that scene which could be suitably done on the place, as it was in the passion play where the messenger was to come into the place "rennyng and cryng Tydyngys tydyngys . and so rownd Abowth þe place" (29, after l.69).

The next part of the play, the flight into Egypt, would need still another locale. A short bit, it is dealt with in a few verses in Ludus: the angel gives Joseph the warning message and Joseph tells Mary they must go. He does mention the donkey: "I 3our clothis ley on hepe/ and trus hem on þe asse" (20,84), so this little scene must have been on the place also. The play would have ended on the pageant wagon though, where Herod would be standing to

¹⁴⁷ The fact that the setting remains from one play into another is an indication of its stationary presentation.



receive the reports about the massacre of the innocents from the soldiers and would then tell them, "come up to me" (29,128). They were probably standing in the place below the wagon.

Although there are rubrics calling for hymns to be sung in several parts of Ludus, play 20 contains the rare mention of a minstrel.¹⁴⁸ At the end of the play when Herod is rejoicing and "þe tabyl is redy dyght" (20,151) Senescallus orders, "now blowe up mynstrall with all 3our myght" (20,153), and shortly after Herod also commands, "þerfore menstrell rownd a-bowte/ blowe up a mery fytt" (20,231-232). The music, added to the elaborate staging would certainly create an impressive effect, even though in this play there are none of Ludus' supernatural phenomena such as its burning bush or star of Bethlehem, or an apparently magical act such as its ascension or, the most spectacular effect it achieves in the whole play, the conception. In that scene "here þe holy gost descendit with iij bemys to oure lady . the sone of þe godhed nest with iij bemys . to þe holy gost . the fadyr godly with iij bemys to þe sone . And so entre All thre to here bosom" (11, after 1.292). How that could be managed is something

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¹⁴⁸ A minstrel is again mentioned in the adoration of the magi where Herod also plays a part. Obviously the minstrel was connected in the mind of the playwright with courtly situations.

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to wonder about; perhaps tin stars traveled down wires?
At any rate the audience must have been amazed.

Another factor which would have helped to create spectacle is costuming, and this part of Ludus has no rubrics concerning it. We can, however, again make assumptions based on the guides that were given in other plays in Ludus and what we know of general dramatic practice.¹⁴⁹ Herod was surely dressed like a great lord in velvet and fur with jewels added, as were Annas and Cayphas in the council of the Jews (26, after 1.40 and after 1.124). Two other characters in this play who must have looked impressive are Mors and Diabolus. About death we can merely guess that he may have been dressed like a skeleton since he was portrayed that way by Bosch, Breughel and Holbein; in this case he might have worn a black leather suit painted in white. Another possibility is that he was dressed as a monk in a black habit with a skull type of mask, like the German limewood carving from the end of the fifteenth century.¹⁵⁰ The devils usually wore leather suits in black or dark red (Adam and Eve wore white leather), and they were decorated as fearsomely as could be devised: tails, horns, scales added, animal faces in

¹⁴⁹See Phyllis Hartnoll, The Concise History of Theater (New York, n.d.), pp. 45-47.

¹⁵⁰Illustrated in Hans Hofstätter, Art of the Late Middle Ages (New York, 1968), p. 202.

unexpected places such as the buttocks or stomach (see Plates 34 and 52), and huge masks as well. As a whole costumes were elaborate and, judging by civic records, recognized as worthy of expense.

The plot of play 20 is simple. Here, as in every play in Ludus, great care is taken to make motives clear and actions logical and consistent, and to demonstrate the cause and effect relationship of all incidents. Play 20 follows after the purification of Mary and begins with Senescallus' announcement to Herod that the three kings have escaped him. The conflict begins at once then: Herod, high and mighty, but threatened by the birth of Jesus, is frustrated because the Magi, who could have told him where Christ was, are beyond his reach. His reaction is outright fury. He is the chief character in the first part of the play and has several marvelous speeches full of alliteration, expressing violence at first and later his delight. His solution to the problem is to eliminate any child at all who could remotely be the Christ child and since he is a thorough villain, delighting in blood, his instructions are full of gore: "Rybbys fful reed with rape xal I rende" (20,10), "hewe þe flesch with þe bon" (20,26), and so forth. Actually through the first part of the play only Herod's part is of any length; in response to his commands the two soldiers each speak eight lines promising to carry out his wishes, as:

barnys 3onge
 they xul be stunge
 thurwe levyr and lunge
 we xal hem styngre. (20,69-72)

After their speeches the angel and Joseph each have eight lines to say also. In rather business-like fashion the angel delivers his message: "The fadyr of hevyn hath to be sent/ In to Egypte þat þou be bent" (20,77-78). Joseph doesn't even answer but speaks directly to Mary: "Awake good wyff out of þour slepe/ and of þour childe takyght good kepe . . ." (20,81-82), and the play moves on to the massacre where two women lament, each in eight lines, and then the two soldiers speak again--once more in eight lines. Although short the mothers' expressions of sorrow are quite touching; one says:

Longe lullyng haue I lorn
 Alas qwhy was my baron born
 With swappynge swerde now is he shorn
 þe heed rygth fro þe nekke

Shanke and shulderyn is al to torn
 Sorwyn I se be-hyndyn and be-forn
 both mydnyth mydday and at morn
 of my lyff I ne recke. (20,89-96)

Using very simple language, the author of Ludus manages to create a dignified and graceful expression of emotion.

In contrast, the soldiers, talking about the cruel deeds they have done, talk as if they had just carried out some routine and harmless little task like cutting the lawn:

Lord we han spad
 as 3e bad
 barnis ben blad
 and lyne in dych
 Fflesch and veyn
 han tholyd peyn
 and 3e xul reyne
 euer more rych.

(20,113-120)

Actually they are mere extensions of the character of Herod and function as his attributes. He answers them in thirty lines (his first speech was forty-seven lines long), rewarding the soldiers for their good work: "3e xul haue stedys/ to 3our medys/ londys and leydys" (20,121-123). He also explains how he feels:

In sete now am I sett as kynge of myghtys most
 All þis werd ffor þer loue to me xul þei
 lowt . . .
 þer is no lord lyke on lyve to me wurth a toost
 nother kyng nor kayser in all þis worlde abought
 If any brybour do bragge or blowe a-3ens my bost
 I xal rappe þo rebawdys and rake þem on rought
 With my bryght bronde

(20,129-137)

Full of pride and satisfaction he invites his "jentyll and curteys knyghtys" (20,142) to dinner, and demands the very best of everything:

Smertly þerfore sett a tabyll a-non here fful
 sownde
 Couerid with a coryous cloth and with rych
 wurthy fare
 Servyse ffor þe lovelyest lorde þat levynge
 is on grownde
 Beste metys and wurthyest wynes loke þat 3e
 non spare
 þow þat a lytyl pynt xuld cost a Ml. pownde
 brynge alweye of þe beste for coste take 3e
 no care

(20,144-149)

This is a fine preparation for the irony of the climax and when all is ready and he is at his happiest--

"in joy I gynne to glyde" (20,167), he tells his soldiers--
Mors appears, at the most effective moment. He has come
for Herod because he is so full of pride:

Ow I herde a page make presyng of pride
all prynces he passyth he wenyth of powste
he wenyth to be þe wurthyest of all þis werde
wyde
kyng ovyr All kyngys þat page wenyth to be
(20,167-171)

He goes on to talk about his power, in a speech as long as
Herod's, saying in part,

I am sent fro god deth is my name
All thyng þat is on grownd I welde at my wylle
both man and beste and byrdys wylde and tame
Whan þat I come them to . with deth I do them
kylle
(20,181-184)

In conclusion he relates his intention to kill
Herod and "so cast down his pride" (20,206). The message
of the play, that pride is a sin and will be punished, is
delivered with great artistic effectiveness by a character
who must have made the viewers shiver a bit, marking the
climax of the action. The ending is a happy one for good-
ness is triumphant--Jesus has escaped and evil is punished
right before the eyes of the audience as Mors kills Herod
and the two soldiers and hands them over to Diabolus. His
part is short but must have been quite exciting. Ironically
he makes sly insinuations in a mixture of the comical and
the terrifying: "I xal hem teche plays fyn/ and showe such
myrthe as is in helle/ It were more bettyr Amonges swyn/
þat evyr more stynkyn þer to dwelle/ ffor in oure logge
is so gret peyn/ þat non erthely tonge can telle" (20,

235-241). Mors has the last word in the play and in a serious tone, free of bluster and comedy, reiterates the moral in several different ways:

Off kynge herowde all men beware
 þat hath rejoycyd in pompe and pryde
 Ffor all his boste of blysse ful bare
 hy lyth now ded here on his syde . . .
 Now is he as pore as I
 wormys mete is his body
 his sowle in helle ful peynfully
 of develis is al to-torn . . .
 Ffor be a man nevyr so sownde . . .
 I come sodeynly with-in a stownde . . .
 of my comyng no man is ware . . .
 3it loke 3e drede me nyth and day (20,246-274)

Sermon-like speeches such as this occur throughout Ludus: Jesus in the woman taken in adultery (9-28, 229-232), Jesus again in the raising of Lazarus (25,305-310), Peter in the entry into Jerusalem (26,242-253), to name a few examples of this aspect of Ludus.

The tenor of other plays is as tragic as the massacre of the innocents or as comic as the devils or as splendidly histrionic as the blustering and swaggering of Herod. Variety is one of the virtues of Ludus and competency, enriched by intelligence, one of its chief characteristics. This is especially to be noted in its use of medium.

Turning to the sculpture, let us consider the story of Moses which takes up most of bay 6. Four episodes of his life are depicted: Moses in the bulrushes, Moses and the burning bush, the exodus from Egypt and, by implication, the receiving of the tablets with the ten commandments

which were later carried in the ark. The second and third episodes have several parts and twelve bosses in all are used. The most important is Pharoah and his men drowning in the Red Sea (Plate 17). This one is about two feet in width; some of the others are about a foot wide and a few are only about eight inches. In these small spaces various numbers of figures are carved; the smaller bosses usually have the smaller number of persons--Moses and the burning bush, and two priests carrying the ark (Plates 16 and 19) are examples showing only two people. These smaller bosses are as full of detail as the larger but less background is depicted. In this bay the boss with the largest number of figures is the center boss of Pharoah drowning--it has four, but other bosses in the nave have many more. The ascension, for example (Plate 50), presents Mary and eleven disciples, and Christ (in this case we see only his feet whereas in other scenes like Pharoah drowning we see only heads). Noah in the ark has four people plus eight or nine large animals and fifteen birds.

The problem of presenting so many people in a small space is solved in the bosses through changing the perspective view. This offers one of the most distinctive features of the sculpture. Varying his approach to meet each challenge, the sculptor has achieved some original presentations. (It is convenient to refer to "the sculptor" but actually there must have been a group of workmen

involved.) The scene of Pharoah drowning is presented as if observed from overhead; the boss is covered with the crimson waves of the Red Sea, and from this emerge two heads on one side and one on the other, looking up with rather expressionless faces. Pharoah lies across the center on his side, wearing his crown and his fifteenth century plate armor. The only other feature now to be seen,¹⁵¹ is the side of Herod's chariot, a two-wheeled type with a railed side and a long pole in the front where the horse would be attached. In various other bays in the nave this type of perspective is used. To name a few: the nativity (Plate 24), the last supper (Plate 36), nailing Christ to the cross (Plate 43) and Isaac blessing Jacob (Plate 10) in which the figure of Esau leaving for the hunt is presented with extreme foreshortening. Usually there is good reason for employing such a view; in all the bosses mentioned above, the scene requires a feeling of depth--that is, some figures are perceived as being closer to us and in front of other figures. Fifteenth century artists had learned to handle this problem through the device of linear perspective but the sculptor of the boss chooses to avoid it. Yet he is still able to present the scene realistically by adopting the bird's-eye view, and

¹⁵¹Before restoration a leg and foot wearing a black shoe were part of the scene. See Goulburn, p. 157.

he does not have to adjust the size of the figures as he would when using linear perspective.

Most bosses are designed so the spectator has the feeling he is on the same level as the subject, standing in front of it. Moses in the bulrushes, C32, is constructed this way. A young woman, standing on green land, places a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes in an ark which looks like a cradle. The river rises in the background. In another example on C35, two priests are carrying the ark of the covenant (Plate 19). Moses and the burning bush presents a combination: we see Moses from in front and the bush with the head of God protruding from above (Plate 16). Moses parting the Red Sea is a combination, too (Plate 18); the figure of Moses stretching his rod over the water and his three companions are at eye level, but the pattern of the water is seen from above. This mixture of perspectives is used also in the crucifixion where Christ appears to be directly in front of us but the other figures seem to be below him, so that we look down on them (Plate 46).

There are even some examples of perspective based on a view from below the subject, the worm's-eye view. Cain and the jawbone (Plate 6) is designed this way; another example may be the demon from the temptation (Plate 34).

Another aspect of the handling of medium is creating the effect of plasticity. The Norwich sculptor works impressively in differing degrees of relief, resulting in varying amounts of projection and recession. In some bosses the back plane retains its identity, as in the scene of Pharoah drowning (Plate 17). The heads jut upward from the water and Pharoah is submerged only halfway all along his length but the red waves form a single or unified surface or plane. In contrast other bosses lose the appearance of a back plane altogether. In Moses and the burning bush (Plate 16) the head and shoulders of God thrust forward while Moses seems to lean back; the directional movement of our eyes is forward and back in the space of the boss rather than side to side as in the scene of Pharoah drowning, and we are not conscious of a back plane at all. Other bosses in the nave show even more plasticity, such as Isaac blessing Jacob (Plate 10); all parts of this scene move out from the center and the background is even cut away between Isaac and Jacob.

In other bosses the foremost plane is maintained across the whole boss, as in two priests carrying the ark of the covenant (Plate 19) and in Noah in the ark (Plate 7). In the latter all the heads--of people and animals--are even with each other on the front plane. The heads still seem three dimensional, and, as in all the sculptures, give a sense of mass and density. But the sculptor is

more interested in projecting an image than in action; this is one of the bosses where the emblematic character of the treatment reveals that typology is paramount in the sculptor's mind. Comparing this boss with the creation of Eve (Plate 4) we find the latter has no single front plane. Each part of the boss projects and recedes separately according to the subject: Adam's stomach and thigh (looking quite unreal) are closest to the front but the upper part of his figure leans into the background. God and Eve appear in the same plane just behind Adam's thigh, and in the background foliage represents the garden of Eden. Some of the variety in style found in different bosses may be due to the fact that a number of sculptors were employed and worked on different bosses; some may be due to the divergent problems posed by the subjects.

The human figures throughout the bosses are for the most part in the same style, rather short and stocky--not classical in proportion but fairly realistic; that is they are unlike the figures sculpted by the ancient Greeks with their slender bodies and small heads, but they are similar to average people although the heads are a little large for the bodies. Any of the bosses in the story of Moses illustrate this. Another characteristic they have in common is a certain stiffness or rigidity; they are like

mannequins, lacking the sense of life.¹⁵² If the sculptors used pattern books it might have caused such an effect, and the restoration of the bosses undoubtedly contributed too; for instance when the eyes that had been closed were repainted as open (the soldiers in the resurrection, Plate 48) it reduces the authenticity of the scene. The flat coloring and generalized and simplified modeling also take away from the sense of reality and makes the figures seem more like mannequins.

In many scenes in the sculpture the relative sizes of the figures have been adjusted for the purpose of the design or to make a point. In the boss with Jacob peeling the rods (Plate 13), he is very much larger than he should be in relation to the animals; thus he becomes a symbolic figure, typifying Christ before Pilate, as he, under the protection of God, peels the rods by which he will overcome Laban. In the scene of the baptism Christ is the larger figure and John the Baptist is too small (Plate 31). In this case if Christ had been the same size as John, since only half his figure appears he would have seemed smaller. Enlarging the half figure gives a very different effect but this is preferable to diminishing the image of Christ.¹⁵³

¹⁵²The Christ child of the nativity, undoubtedly represented by a doll on stage, actually looks like a doll in this boss.

¹⁵³Also perhaps influencing the portrayal: the statement of John the Baptist that Christ was mightier than he (John 1.30).

When Pilate washes his hands with Christ standing before him (Plate 40), several size discrepancies may be observed. Christ and Pilate are both larger than the crowd of soldiers standing around the edges of the boss; quite simply, more space is given to more important figures. In another example, however, this is reversed; in the scene of nailing Christ to the cross (Plate 43), he is the smaller figure and the executioners pulling on the ropes and pounding in the nails seem larger than he with their large heads protruding from the boss. Here it seems that the sculptor wanted to emphasize the actions of the soldiers for this is the message of the boss, that Christ suffered for mankind, and it should not be diminished even by the image of Christ himself--although he does dominate the scene by his central position. As with his handling of perspective, the sculptor varies proportion and size in order to create the most effective design.¹⁵⁴

The colors of the bosses are limited. Gold is by far the most important. Some scenes are only decorated with gold, and a little flesh color, against a dark green background. Examples are Moses and the burning bush (Plate 16), Jacob wrestling with the angel (Plate 12), or the annunciation (Plate 23). Red is the second most widely used color; Pharoah drowning (Plate 17) and Moses parting

¹⁵⁴The scene of David and Goliath might have been more effective if the difference in size were greater (Plate 20).

the Red Sea (Plate 18) show this strong, unmodulated color used. Other good examples are God the Father (Plate 4) and the tower of Babel (Plate 8). Small touches of white are used here and there: Isaac's bed sheet (Plate 10), Mary's apron in the annunciation (Plate 24), Herod's ermine collar (Plate 27). Green is present mostly as a background color; the fall of man is a good example (Plate 5). Blue is quite rare¹⁵⁵ but one instance of its use is in the baptism (Plate 31). One of the most natural bosses in terms of color is the crucifixion (Plate 46) where there is a minimum of gold, but one of the most imposing is the Trinity boss where gold is dominant, with some red and a little green adding richness and variety, and where the stiffness of the figures this time serves the design, supplying strength and adding to the timeless quality. One must remember, however, that the colors might have been different originally and changed by the subsequent restoration.

The sixth bay offers a good example of how subject matter is arranged in the sculpture. A variety of incidents concerning Moses are presented (see Figure 5):

¹⁵⁵Blue pigments were hard to acquire and difficult to use. See Baron Joseph van der Elst, The Last Flowering of the Middle Ages (Garden City, New York, 1946), p. 38.

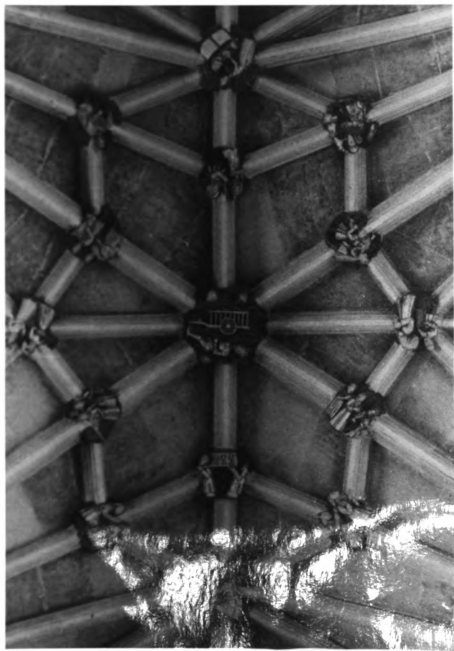
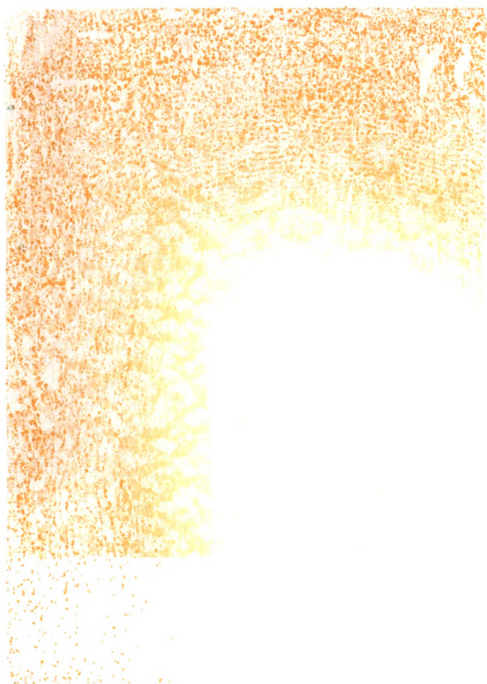


Fig. 5.--The Sixth Bay.



	N	C	S
Row 32	Moses putting off his shoes	Moses in the bulrushes	Moses with the flock of Jethro
Row 33	Musicians of the exodus with lute and harp	Moses and the burning bush	Heralds of the exodus with trumpets
Row 34	A woman of the exodus	Pharoah and his men drowning	Israelites of the exodus
Row 35	Moses dividing the Red Sea	Two priests carrying the ark	Aaron and Moses before Pharoah

The orientation of the bosses to the bay is typical of the scheme of the whole nave. In the center the bosses in the eastern half of the bay face east, and those in the western half face west. In the north and south rows no strict rule is followed, they face in all different directions. The subjects are arranged by importance with the most important scenes in the center, that is to say, by their importance to the designer. Moses in the bulrushes is in the center while Moses dividing the Red Sea is not. Moses in the bulrushes may be taken as a prototype of Christ in the manger, but the miraculous parting of the Red Sea is also made less important than the punishment of Pharoah. The implication is that the church would rather focus on the need for obedience than the cleansing nature of the sacrament of Baptism which is typified by the crossing of the Red Sea (Didron, p. 408).

Of the incidents pictured here only the burning bush and the crossing of the Red Sea are pictured in the

Biblia Pauperum, the burning bush being a type of the nativity. But the Biblia Pauperum has other scenes not utilized in the bosses: Moses receiving the ten commandments, portrayed as a type of the Pentecost (Didron, p. 425); Moses striking the rock, a type of the crucifixion (Didron, p. 420); Moses breaking the golden calf, a type of the flight into Egypt (Didron, p. 406). The carrying of the ark is a substitute for Moses receiving the ten commandments and also forms a parallel to the Corpus Christi Day procession,¹⁵⁶ but the other scenes have been omitted in favor of presenting Moses with the flock of Jethro, possibly as a type of the good shepherd, and Moses putting off his shoes as a type of the priest who officiates on holy ground in the church, where the sacraments are performed and the word of God is spoken. The relationship between the bosses and the Biblia Pauperum (as two cycles) is exemplified in this bay: the subject matter is not identical, nor, compared to the illustration in Chapter III (Figure 4), are the compositions, but the typological manner of presentation propounded by the Biblia Pauperum and made so popular by its success is the basis of the

¹⁵⁶In the left tympanum of the west facade of Notre Dame, Paris, the ark is used to symbolize the Old Testament and the church. (See A. Katzenellenbogen, The Sculptural Programs of Chartres Cathedral (Johns Hopkins, 1959), p. 61. Moreover the ark, which held within it the commandments, the Old Law, may be understood as a symbol of Mary, who carried within her body the New Law, Christ, who also symbolizes the church.

program of the bosses. The intention, too, to represent the history of the church, to impress on the viewers the lessons of the church and to inspire contemplation of what cannot be seen with the physical eye--this is the same.

The comparison of the bosses to Ludus, however, is not well exemplified by using this bay. Our analysis has shown that bay 6 contains a quality of work equal to any of the best parts of the sculptural cycle, but to only compare this bay with the subject of Moses in play 6 would not do justice to Ludus. For in that play, although there is the spectacle of the burning bush which had to be very exciting, the rest of the play is without dramatic action, being merely a recitation of the ten commandments. The cast is very small, God and Moses at first and then only Moses, and the play has none of the emotional appeal, none of the humor, none of the use of metaphor, alliteration or other literary embellishment that are found in other plays. What it does have is a more than usual amount of the didactic.

To consider a subject where the bosses and the play are both executed at their very best we must turn to either the fall of man or the crucifixion. We will discuss the fall of man as the simpler subject, artistically speaking, of the two. Play 2 presents a very dramatic scene: beginning with God's gift of Paradise to Adam: "ther xalt þou haue all maner thyng/ bothe flesch and ffysch and

frute of prys/ all xal be buxum at þi byddyng" (2,114-116), delivered in graceful, alliterative language. The plot develops through the cunning of the serpent which must have had its comic aspect: "Ete þis Appyl and in certeyn/ þat I am trewe sone xalt þou se" (2,197-198), a ploy whose irony must have made the audience laugh. Deeper emotion is to be found in the repentance of Adam and Eve: "Lord I haue wrought aþens þi wyll/ I sparyd nat my sylf to spylle I walke as werm withoutyn wede/ A-wey is schrowde and sho" (2,285-292). It has a moral message, that punishment awaits those who disobey the Lord, but the didactic quality is not overwhelming--the play makes the statement, but the movement of the plot and the dramatic quality hold the attention. It is above all entertainment constructed with dramatic action, suspense, humor, pathos and a message, all expressed in carefully ordered and selected language.

The boss (Plate 5) offers, on the other hand, a symbolic composition. The three figures are grouped in a triangular arrangement; Adam and Eve kneel in the lower foreground and are seen slightly from above, the semi-human serpent from in front. All are holding apples and the scene, so solemn and rich with gold, arouses recognition both of Adam's sin and the need for Christ's sacrifice. At the same time there is some feeling for the human condition in the tense way Adam and Eve stare at

each other. We do not see the actual fall but perceive the significance of it. The sculpture is not attempting to narrate, only to present an opportunity for contemplation.

The boss and the play, then, achieve very different purposes. Ludus gives us action, interesting costume and stage props in the serpent who may be in the tree at first, but later, on God's command, "Vpon þi gutt þou xalt glyde" (2,343) would have to crawl off stage, perhaps again raising laughter. The boss is not concerned with any dramatic or humorous aspect of the scene, nor in the development of story. It cannot be separated from its position as part of the decoration of the church, presenting the essence of the scene, but more abstractly, partly typological, partly moral and partly historical in meaning.

Émile Mâle's claim that the presentations of the mystery plays caused radical changes in the visual arts in the fifteenth century, i.e., that one medium strongly influenced another, was one of the starting points for this paper. It was, in part, to examine this theory in relation to the Norwich bosses and Ludus that this comparison was begun. Mâle based his theory on his observations of some new features that appeared in fifteenth century art. Tending to oversimplify in his enthusiasm, he stated that before the fifteenth century persons depicted in art were dressed in simple clothing unadorned with fur or jewels,

usually wearing no hats--in other words clothing of a timeless nature. But, he stated, in fifteenth century works the soldiers wear plate armor, the shepherds wear the ordinary costume of contemporary shepherds and respectable figures like Joseph of Arimathea and Longinus wear the costumes of wealthy merchants. Royal figures also wear clothing much richer than before, and the dress of the angels becomes much more elaborate and fanciful. Examples of these claims can be found in the bosses, for example those represented in Plates 17, 22, 23, 25, 27 and 46. However, a study of manuscripts and other work done in the fourteenth century reveals that these various types of clothing had already appeared in art before the time Mâle claimed the practice began.¹⁵⁷

Another change Mâle points out, again speaking generally, is that in fifteenth century works the backgrounds began to reflect the architecture and furniture of the time. We can find examples of this contention too in the bosses: trestle tables appear in the stories of Jacob and Esau (S18), and Joseph, son of Jacob (S30). A contemporary building forms the background of the scene

¹⁵⁷For Mâle's discussion of costume changes, see De la fin, pp. 54-60. Earlier examples: Nahash the Ammonite . . . from the St. Louis Psalter and David and Goliath from Master Honoré's Prayer Book of Philip the Fair, both in Janson, p. 267; also Simone Martini's fresco of the knighting of St. Martin in the lower church of S. Francesco, Assisi, in A. Martindale, Gothic Art (New York, 1974), p. 209.

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where Rebekah is putting the skins on Jacob (N14), and the Gothic castle representing the tower of Babel has a boss all to itself (Plate 8).¹⁵⁸ Here again earlier examples exist, refuting Mâle: a Gothic castle in La Somme le Roy by Master Honoré and Gothic town architecture in Giotto's Peruzzi chapel fresco of the raising of Drusiana.¹⁵⁹

Mâle finds a more important distinction between works done before and after 1400: new subjects appear in the later programs such as the marriage at Cana, the temptation, the feast in the house of Simon, the entry into Jerusalem, and nailing Christ to the cross. All these are sculpted at Norwich, but again Mâle's theory will not apply. First, he is wrong about the entry into Jerusalem being a new subject; it has been used in art since the Early Christian period (sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, 359 A.D.) and by Duccio in his *Maestà* Altarpiece to name two examples. Second, none of the English cycle plays has a play on the marriage at Cana, although Chambers thinks one may have been lost from York (p. 322), so there was no model in an English play for the Norwich sculptor to follow. We must conclude, then, that the drama, specifically Ludus, could afford only a partial precedent for the bosses.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 61-65.

¹⁵⁹ In Martindale, pp. 128, 193.

¹⁶⁰ New subjects are discussed on pp. 4-40.

Mâle also has a long discussion on new ways of presenting subjects that were in common use before the fifteenth century.¹⁶¹ He mentions the annunciation, crucifixion and soldiers dicing for the robe of Christ as examples where the iconography was altered. The specific changes he sees are that the angel of the annunciation was depicted as kneeling to Mary in the fifteenth century whereas in earlier art they had both stood facing each other; that, contrary to earlier examples of the crucifixion where only Mary, John and personifications of the church and synagogue were in attendance, a whole crowd of spectators is portrayed; that the scene of the soldiers dicing was added to the presentation of the crucifixion and had not been used before. Although all these events are depicted in the Norwich bosses (Plates 23, 44 and 46) they can be found in fourteenth century and earlier cycles too, which Mâle did not recognize: Nicola Pisano, Pisa baptistery pulpit; Duccio, Maestà; Simone Martini, Annunciation; Pietro Lorenzetti, Crucifixion in the lower church of S. Francesco, Assisi.¹⁶²

Another of Mâle's observations is that fifteenth century art includes many objects which imitate stage props. The huge swords of Goliath and Solomon in Plates

¹⁶¹pp. 5-38.

¹⁶²All in Martindale, pp. 155, 197, 206, 214.

20 and 22, and the very large chalice in the agony in the garden (Plate 39), display the kind of exaggeration expected in stage props. On the other hand the animals in the nativity scene are too small in comparison with the figures (Plate 24), perhaps reflecting stuffed or cardboard animals from the stage--but they had also been painted and sculpted that way throughout the Christian era: in the Arena chapel and on the two pulpits by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano at Pisa in the baptistery and in the cathedral.¹⁶³

The boss of the fall of man may exhibit stage influence: the serpent, with human face, body and arms (Plate 5) might be standing in a property tree, to which the serpent tail is attached, that covers the actor from the waist down. Miss Anderson has observed that the tree seems to stand on a round base which would bear out the theory.¹⁶⁴ A similar example is the creation of Eve (Plate 4). Here we see Eve coming up from Adam's stomach, not his side in the usual way, and the stomach has the appearance of a kangaroo pocket. Perhaps Adam's own legs are hidden from us and what we see as the lower part of his figure, including the capacious stomach, is an elaborate artifice arranged to permit Eve's spectacular entrance. This would work very well if a trap door were

¹⁶³Janson, p. 261.

¹⁶⁴Drama and Imagery, p. 144.

just underneath. A last example is the burning bush (Plate 16); the tree looks three dimensional so that an actor might stand inside it. Perhaps it was done this way on stage and copied by the sculptor.

Some subjects which Mâle claimed changed in fifteenth century art do not show this change in the bosses. The baptism (Plate 31) for example reveals the ceremony taking place in the river, although Mâle states this form was no longer used after the thirteenth century. The panel by Andrea Pisano from the south doors of the baptistery in Florence, cast in the 1330s, illustrates the new mode. Christ kneels on the ground while John pours water over his head from a basin. Mâle also says that in the fifteenth century the annunciation to the shepherds is extended to include the adoration of the shepherds at the nativity, which was not represented before that time. This is true of Ludus but not of the bosses. Another instance where the bosses fail to follow Mâle's theory is in Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalen (Plate 49). On the boss Christ carries the staff of the resurrection; this is the way the subject was presented in earlier centuries while the fifteenth century type portrayed Christ as the gardener, carrying a spade. The theater had been using this motif from the time of the liturgical drama but it had not been adopted by artists until the age of the mystery

plays, and not even then by the Norwich sculptor though it is found in Ludus (play 37).

Possibly the greatest discrepancy between what we see in the bosses, and what should be there according to Mâle's theory, is in the scene of the sacrifice of Isaac (Plate 9). The most important and profound change Mâle points to is one of the spirit, a change from the presentation of the otherworldly or supernatural to the more human and tender, addressing the heart rather than the mind.¹⁶⁵ But on the boss where Isaac is seated on the altar, so obviously a type of the sacrifice of Christ, the symbolism is still predominant, not the humanism. In Ludus, however, the typology is lost as the play develops the emotional side of the subject.

The factor that Mâle lost sight of is that sculpture and drama in the fifteenth century have a commonplace of motifs between them which come from the life around them. Mâle was looking for bits and pieces in art which he surmised were the result of theatrical influence, and when he found them he never stopped to question whether they could have come from any other source than theater. They did often originate in what artists saw of the Gothic world, and also in manuscripts, and, perhaps first of all, in stained glass windows or other sculptures. Deliberately contemporizing their works was a way of transmitting meaning

¹⁶⁵De la fin, p. 8.

more effectively, allowing characters to be identified more quickly, thus combatting the limitations of the stage or the visual arts. For example in the Devil's prologue to the passion play the author uses a simile drawn from English life: "And now hath he xij dysypulys . to his Attendauns/ to eche town and cety . he sendyth hem as bedellys" (26,33-34).¹⁶⁶ E. Martin Browne comments on the cycles, "In fact the whole story is conceived in terms of the English climate, English life in a feudal age, and the English countryside . . ."¹⁶⁷ and this is true of the sculpture also. Whatever either started with, i.e., doctrine, Biblical or clerical specifications, the authors and artists worked away from, and towards, more dramatic and artistic goals.¹⁶⁸ In sum, what Mâle did not observe is that what was a commonplace of the time could appear in different disciplines without indicating influence or dependency.

Mâle could have avoided some of the criticism his theory encountered if he had been more careful about the chronology of the texts and monuments he was using. He was apparently so excited about his explanation of fifteenth century art that he selected and arranged materials

¹⁶⁶Emphasis added.

¹⁶⁷Religious Drama 2 (Cleveland, 1958), p. 14.

¹⁶⁸Williams, pp. 683-684.

according to assumptions he had made, without checking dates. In the second edition of L'Art Religieux de la fin du Moyen Age en France he admitted that he had given too much importance to the influence of religious theater on art. His change of mind was due to the discovery of some ancient frescoes in Cappadocia and his study of Byzantine works. In both of these, themes appeared in the ninth and tenth centuries that French artists did not use until the fourteenth century, and which he thought were just invented.

It seems then that Ludus and the Norwich bosses are much alike and yet have important differences between them not only because of medium but simply because they are so thoroughly Gothic, each in its own way.

V. SUMMARY

To summarize the comparison we have been making of the bosses in Norwich Cathedral nave and Ludus Coventriae, we must first point to the general purpose and content of both cycles, which more than anything is the foundation of whatever relationship exists between them. Both are programmed to relate the history and salvation of man and, in the course of it, to instill the lesson that God is master of the world and everything in it, and that He will mete out both punishment and reward on Judgment Day. The second part of the lesson is that salvation is possible for everyone through Christ's sacrifice. Over and over the point is emphasized; in Ludus it is expressed verbally, in the bosses through typology. At the same time the program of the bosses is somewhat self-serving, stressing incidents where the functions of the church enter into the significance of the scene, i.e., the baptism of Christ.

A very great difference between the two cycles is that the plays do have a secondary purpose which sometimes moves into the fore; not only do they instruct but they must also entertain. Therefore, the dramatic features are uppermost, aided by narrative, linguistic tools and stage

devices. The bosses, while decorating the church, have a simpler purpose and ignore the dramatic and narrative in favor of symbol. They present images which, through their visible qualities, inspire contemplation of the invisible--physically they are part of the building but spiritually they are the story of salvation. Since their appeal is to lead to a more spiritual level of thought, most of the bosses, in spite of the homey little touches required by Gothic style, seem rather to keep their distance. But the plays, with more fully developed characters and motives, have a closeness, an immediacy, and appeal on a more emotional level. Moreover, since the plays take place in time (which is of no importance in the viewer's relation to the bosses--they are always there), the plays will make use of any emotion-arousing feature or any means such as shock, comedy or spectacle, to reach for the viewer's attention, and to communicate. The bosses, perhaps because they remain in one place while time passes by, are more passive; the viewer must approach them with his own ideas and resources. Undoubtedly the need for the sculpture cycle to conform to an artistic scheme larger than itself, i.e., the cathedral, also imposes a subdued character on the bosses.

The bosses tend to confine their subjects to Scriptural material, and divide the space equally between the Old and New Testaments. Such a narrow range of

subjects was not the usual thing in the fifteenth century; the cycle of the bosses must, therefore, be judged as rather old-fashioned in that respect. The subject matter is not used to inform, but rather to celebrate Christian beliefs, and the viewer must derive from his own prior knowledge the meaning of what he sees. The bosses tend to represent more parts of the story than do the plays; the effect is of scattered scenes, and the narrative line is diffused. The plays, leaving out much that is beside the point, are shaped and focused to deliver a more precise meaning; they intend, always, to be explicit. Altogether there is much more information in the plays than in the bosses.

It is interesting to note that, although the program of the bosses was presumably designed by one man (although carried out by a workshop of carvers), and Ludus was compiled partly of plays written by other authors, indeed an accumulation of plays, the program of the bosses is less efficient than that of the plays. Too many bosses are decorated only with foliage carvings, in the earlier style, which take up spaces that could have been used to include more of the Bible story. This is especially noticeable because there are a number of surprising omissions of usually-depicted subjects: the expulsion from Paradise, Jonah and the whale, Daniel in the lion's den, the giving of the tablets of the law (the ten

commandments) to Moses, Christ offering bread and wine to the disciples, the denial of Peter, Christ bearing the cross, the pietà, the road to Emmaus and the assumption and coronation of Mary.¹⁶⁹ There is also the repetition of the scene of the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac. If this distortion of the program is not to be attributed to the designer, then it must be the responsibility of the master of the works--we have noted before that there are instances of bosses placed incorrectly according to chronology.

The program of the plays is full of discrepancies resulting from the compilation.¹⁷⁰ Some are matters of fairly minor detail: Mary says she will remain with Elizabeth and then leaves, for example; but the discrepancies of style are much more significant. Some plays, mostly those dealing principally with Mary, are very refined in their tone; many hymns and prayers are part of

¹⁶⁹Ludus is lacking in some plays too, which are found in other cycles: York has the exodus, Towneley has Jacob and Esau, and Jacob and the angel. However, these are all Old Testament scenes and Ludus could be considered more modern for omitting them.

¹⁷⁰Father Timothy Fry suggests that Ludus is unified by a particular theory, a Patristic theory of the Redemption. Known as the abuse-of-power theory, it holds that when Satan caused Christ's death because he was deceived by his human nature, he abused the power given him after the fall of man to bring men to death and hold them in hell. Because Christ was free of sin, it was an abuse to make him die, and so Satan could no longer hold souls in hell. See Timothy Fry, O.S.B., "The Unity of Ludus Coventriae," Studies in Philology XLVIII (1951), p. 529. Plays, however, are presented which have no relation to the Redemption.

the dialogue and the conversations are carried on with sweet and tender expressions: "I am not wurthy Amonge hem to be/ Swete systerys to 3ow All I knele" (9,185-186), Mary says when taken to the temple. Some plays, though, are as coarse and laden with low humor as the others are refined. The trial of Mary and Joseph is one such play, where one detractor says of Mary, "Sum fresch 3onge galaunt she loveth wel more/ þat his leggyes to here hath leyd" (14,54-55) and so on. Most of the plays follow a different style and avoid both these characteristics, using some humor such as the Bishop's exasperation with Joseph, "offyr up 3our rodde sere in goddys name/ why do 3e not as men 3ow pray" (10,240-241), or developing the characters and having them express feeling. "I thanke 3ow frendys ffor 3our good chere/ myn hed doth ake as it xulde brest" (25,281-282), Magdalyn tells Martha after Lazarus' death, striking quite a realistic note. In terms only of the subject matter, however, Ludus has a more cohesive program than the bosses.

With respect to medium we have examined Mâle's theory that the drama strongly influenced the art of the fifteenth century. It was soon apparent that it had little that applied to the comparison of the bosses and Ludus, not only because no positive interaction between the two programs can be detected, but also because the theory takes no account of the huge number of common motifs used

by all the arts, motifs which originated in the daily life of the Gothic period, and whose use becomes commonplace. In the final analysis Mâle's theory has validity only when applied with the most careful attention to the dates of the works, and then, in addition, other factors must be considered such as the presence of the familiar or commonplace, borrowings from manuscripts and other arts, the patronage and so forth.

As for Eccles' contention that Ludus originated in Norwich because of the linguistic characteristics, nothing in this study can either support or destroy it. If some inescapable correspondence between the bosses and Ludus had been demonstrated by this comparison, it would not have provided proof of Eccles' idea but would have increased the likelihood of his being right. As it is the problem remains as much of a puzzle as it has been.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹The large east window of the Church of St. Peter Mancroft in Norwich has a program much closer to Ludus than that of the bosses. The glass is presumed to date from 1455 and was originally in various windows around the church but in 1741 all the pieces remaining of the original were gathered together in the east window. There are no Old Testament scenes but the life of Christ is presented almost in entirety and there are scenes especially devoted to Mary. The rest of the window has scenes of St. Peter and other saints. Incidents about Mary found in Ludus, but not in the bosses, are St. John telling the apostles about her death, and the story of the Jew who laid hands on her coffin. Besides narrative scenes some of the openings are decorated with familiar Gothic motifs: a heraldic shield, with the keys of Peter, angels, historical figures of kings, bishops and, of course, Becket. Mâle's theory applied to this window and Ludus might produce an entirely different result, more favorable to his

The fact is that in comparing two different art forms we have to deal with two different aesthetic rationales. For, once the subject has been chosen by or given to the artist or writer, then in either art he must proceed by using the tools he has been taught--for every artist begins in any discipline by learning certain techniques and also the established and acceptable traditions. In other words, the artist's or writer's concern is for finding the best visual or literary equivalent for the subject, which will be created by combining artistic elements in a structural relationship--and not only is this true for bringing out the meaning of the subject, but also for creating an emotional effect. The tools are symbols--words, colors, gestures, shapes--each used according to tradition and each contributing to the whole composition. Thus for the artist or writer the subject is overlaid with the problems imposed on it by artistic or literary theories of composition and technique. Therefore, even when the subject is similar in sculpture and drama, the area which allows comparative analysis is a small part of the whole of each work.¹⁷² In the case of the bosses and Ludus one

contention. See Christopher Woodforde, The Norwich School of Glass Painting in the Fifteenth Century (London, 1950), pp. 16-27.

¹⁷²G. Giovanni, "Method in the Study of Literature in its Relation to the Other Arts," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism VIII (Mar. 50), p. 194.

such area is the Gothic milieu they both share. Founded on the new perception of reality which is the basis of Gothic works, they are equally contemporized wherever possible in order to communicate more quickly and easily, that is, to help the viewers recognize characters and their functions by their familiar clothing and settings. Then they are both made complete with every detail and presented in as beautiful a manner as possible, conveying within their particular context the story of salvation with the culture and aura of the fifteenth century.

In conclusion, although the origin of Ludus Coventriae remains a secret, as long as we have the manuscript of it and as long as the cathedral at Norwich proudly stands, the Gothic spirit will continue to shine brightly from that far off time.

APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF THE SUBJECT MATTER IN LUDUS
COVENTRIAE AND THE BOSSES IN THE
NAVE OF NORWICH CATHEDRAL

APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF THE SUBJECT MATTER IN LUDUS

COVENTRIAE AND THE BOSSES IN THE

NAVE OF NORWICH CATHEDRAL

<u>Bosses</u>		<u>Plays</u>
	Bay 1	Proclamation
C	Creation	Play 1 Creation of heaven and angels
		Play 2 Fall of Lucifer
C	Fall of man	Creation of the world and man Fall of man
		Play 3
C	Death of Cain	Cain and Abel
	Bay 2	Play 4 Noah building the ark Cain's death
C	Cain with the jawbone	
C	Noah uncovered in his tent	
C	Noah and the ark	Noah and the ark
	Bay 3	Play 5
C	Tower of Babel	
C	Abraham and Isaac	Abraham and Isaac
C	Isaac and Jacob	
C	Isaac and Esau	
	Bay 4	
C	Sarah laughing	
	Jacob--the rest of the bay	
	Bay 5	
	Joseph--the whole bay	
	Bay 6	Play 6
C	Moses in the bulrushes	
C	The burning bush	The burning bush
C	Pharoah drowning	
C	The ark of the covenant	The ten commandments
C	Samson and the lion	

Bay 7	
C Samson and the gates of Gaza	
C David and Goliath	Play 7
C Coronation of David	The prophets
C Solomon and the temple	Play 8
	Conception of Mary
	Play 9
	Mary in the temple
	Play 10
Bay 8	
N The betrothal	The betrothal
	Play 11
	Parliament of heaven
C Annunciation	Annunciation
	Play 12
	Joseph's return
	Play 13
	Visit to Elizabeth
	Play 14
	Trial of Joseph and Mary
C Presentation in the temple	
	Play 15
C Nativity	Nativity
	The punishment of Salome
	Play 16
S Annunciation to the shepherds	Adoration of the shepherds
	Play 18
N,S The Magi	The Magi
C The visitation	
	Play 19
	The purification (Presentation)
	Play 20
N,C,S Massacre of the innocents	Massacre of the innocents
Bay 9	
C Flight into Egypt	Flight into Egypt
	Death of Herod
	Play 21
C Christ and the doctors	Christ and the doctors
C The baptism	The baptism
C Wedding at Cana	
	Play 23
N.S The temptation	The temptation
	Play 24
	The woman taken in adultery
	Play 25
C Raising of Lazarus	Raising of Lazarus
C Feast in the house of Simon	
	Play 26
	Council of the Jews

Bay 10

C Entry into Jerusalem
 S Pharisees consulting
 S Christ giving Peter the keys

C Last supper

C Christ washing the disciples' feet

Bay 11

C Agony in the garden
 C Crowning with thorns
 C Christ bound
 C Pilate washing his hands
 C Blindfolding of Christ
 N Judas returns the thirty pieces
 S Peter cutting off Malchus' ear
 C Betrayal

Bay 12

C Nailing Christ to the cross
 C Dicing for Christ's robe
 C The crucifixion

C The burial

Entry into Jerusalem

Play 27

Last supper
 Conspiracy of the Jews
 Mary Magdalen
 Last supper
 Conspiracy of the Jews and Judas
 The Eucharist
 Christ washing the disciples' feet

Play 28

Agony in the garden
 The betrayal
 Peter cuts off Malchus' ear

Play 29

Trial before Annas and Cayphas

Play 30

Death of Judas

Trial before Pilate
 Trial before Herod

Play 31

Pilate's wife's dream
 Christ and the thieves before Pilate

Pilate washes his hands

Play 32

Procession to Calvary
 Simon
 Veronica

Nailing Christ to the cross

The crucifixion
 Mary at the foot of the cross
 Pilate inscribes I.N.R.I.
 Jesus drinks gall

Play 33

The descent into hell

Play 34

The burial
 Longinus
 The guarding of the sepulchre

C Harrowing of hell	Play 35 Harrowing of hell Christ's farewell to his mother
N,S Maries at the tomb Bay 13	
C Resurrection	The Maries go to the tomb Announcement to John and Peter
S Noli me tangere	Appearance to Mary Magdalen Play 38
N Doubting Thomas	Supper at Emmaus Appearance to Thomas Play 39
C Ascension	Ascension Play 40
C Pentecost	Pentecost Play 41
	Assumption of the Virgin Play 42
Bay 14	Doomsday (The judgment)
N,S Souls in hell	
N,S Souls going to Paradise	
C Christ judging	
C Peter and the keys	
C The trinity	
C Bishop Lyhart	

PLATES



Plate 1. The City of Norwich Today



Plate 2. Norwich Cathedral





Plate 3. Interior of the Nave



Plate 4. S4, The Creation of Eve



Plate 5. C4, The Fall of Man



Plate 6. C7, Cain with the Jawbone



Plate 7. C10, Noah in the Ark

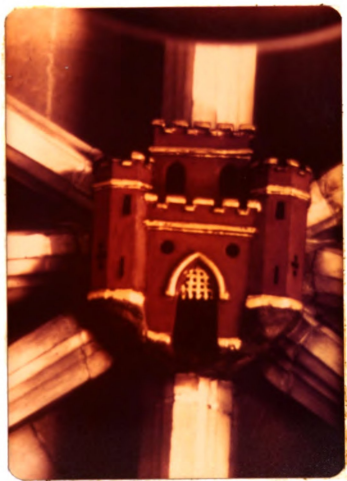


Plate 8. C14, The Tower of Babel

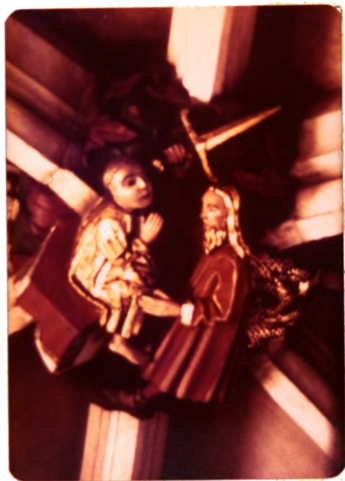


Plate 9. C16, Abraham and Isaac



Plate 10. C17, Isaac Blessing Jacob



Plate 11. C19, Sarah at the Tent Door



Plate 12. C21, Jacob Wrestling with the Angel



Plate 13. C22, Jacob Peeling the Rods

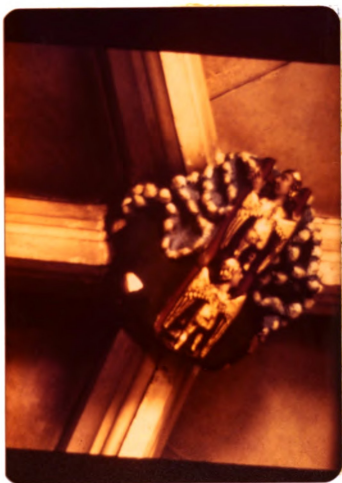


Plate 14. C23, Jacob's Ladder



Plate 15. C28, Joseph in the Well



Plate 16. C33, Moses and the Burning Bush



Plate 17. C34, Pharoah and His Men Drowning in the Red Sea



Plate 18. N35, Parting the Red Sea



Plate 19. C35, Ark of the Covenant



Plate 20. C39, David and Goliath



Plate 21. C40, David

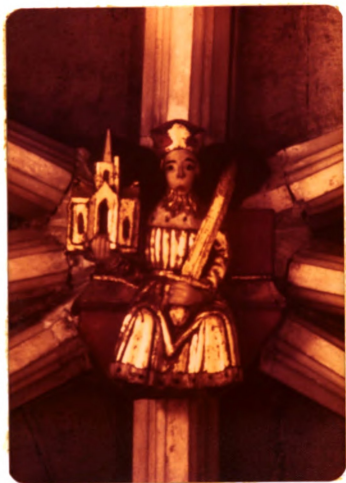


Plate 22. C42, Solomon



Plate 23. C44, The Annunciation



Plate 24. C46, The Birth of Christ



Plate 25. N47, The Annunciation to the Shepherds





Plate 26. C47, The Visitation



Plate 27. C48, Herod



Plate 28. C49, The Flight into Egypt

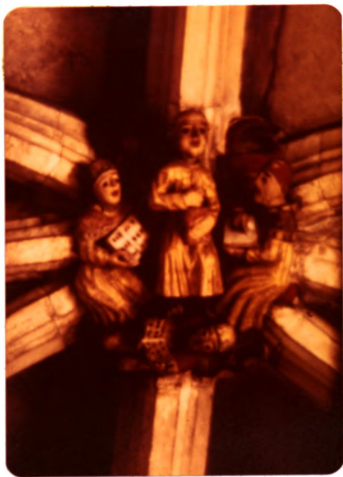


Plate 29. C50, Christ with the Doctors in the Temple



Plate 30. C51, The Marriage at Cana



Plate 31. C52, The Baptism



Plate 32. C53, The Raising of Lazarus



Plate 33. N53, Christ, the Temptation



Plate 34. S53, The Demon, The Temptation



Plate 35. N57, Christ Giving Peter the Keys

1



Plate 36. C58, The Last Supper



Plate 37. C60, Christ Washing the Feet of the Apostles

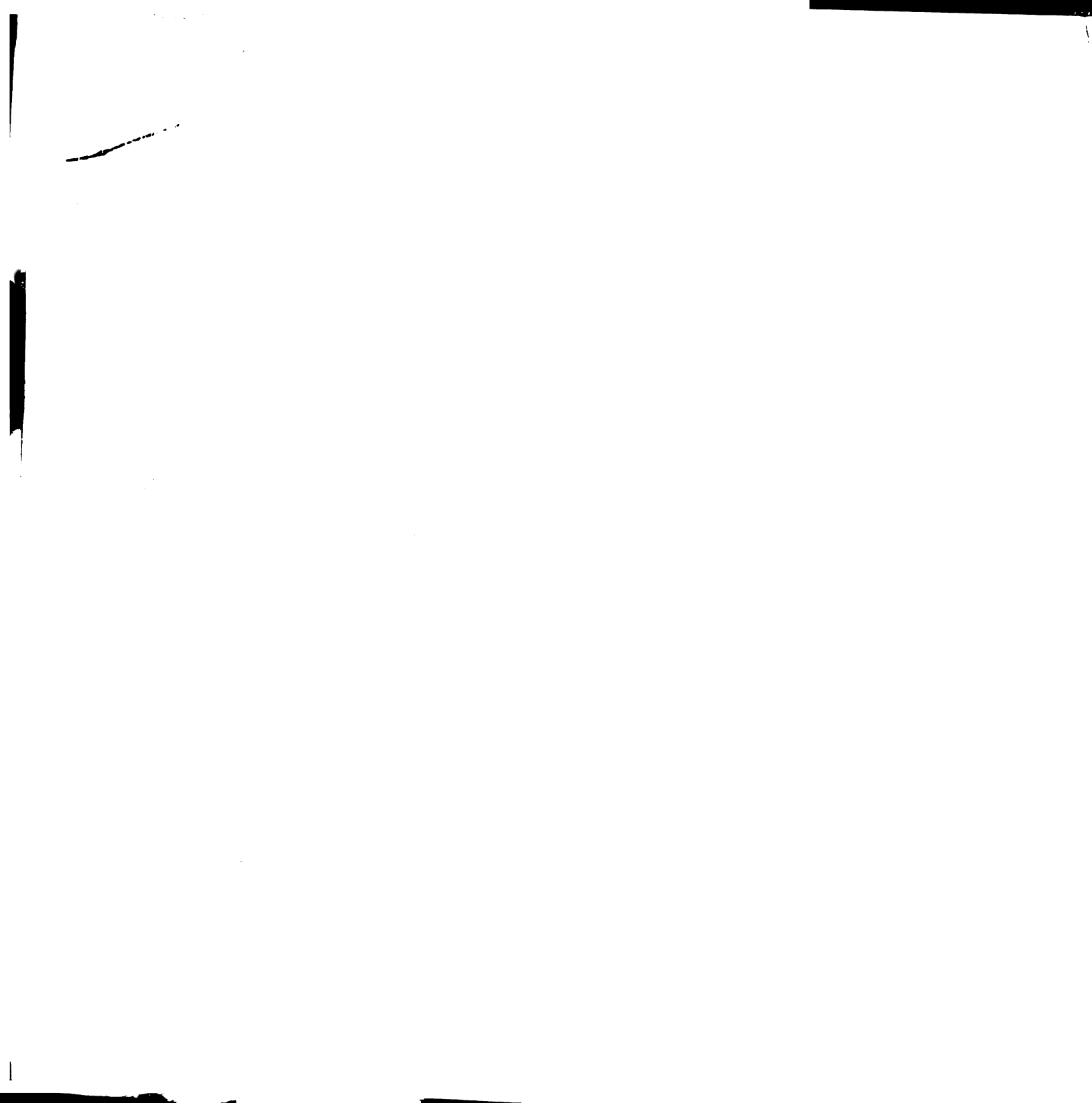




Plate 38. S60, A Prophet with a Scroll



Plate 39. C61, The Agony in the Garden



Plate 40. C64, Pilate Washing His Hands



Plate 41. C65, The Blindfolding

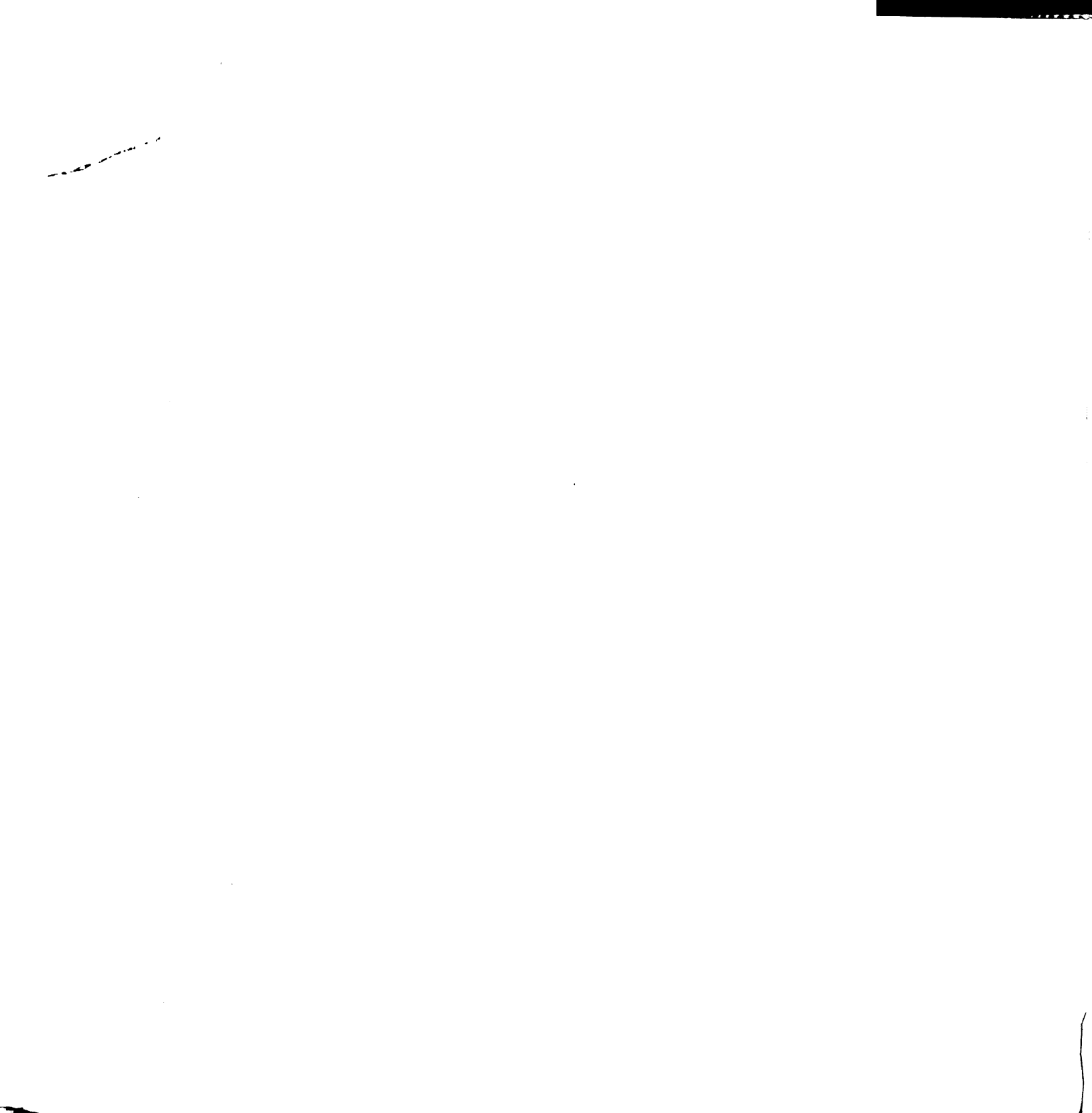




Plate 42. C66, The Betrayal



Plate 43. C68, Nailing Christ to the Cross

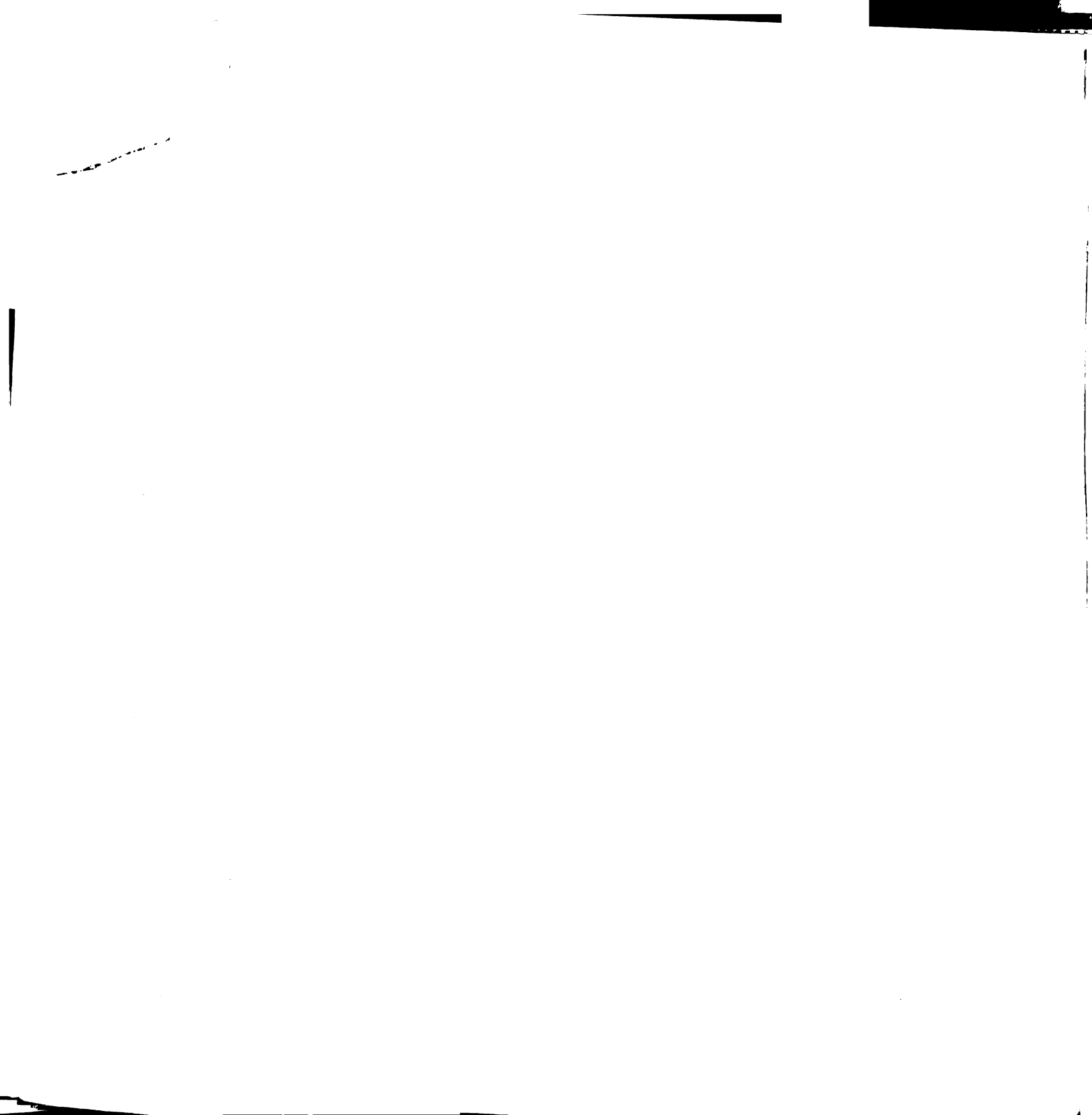




Plate 44. C69, Dicing for Christ's Robe

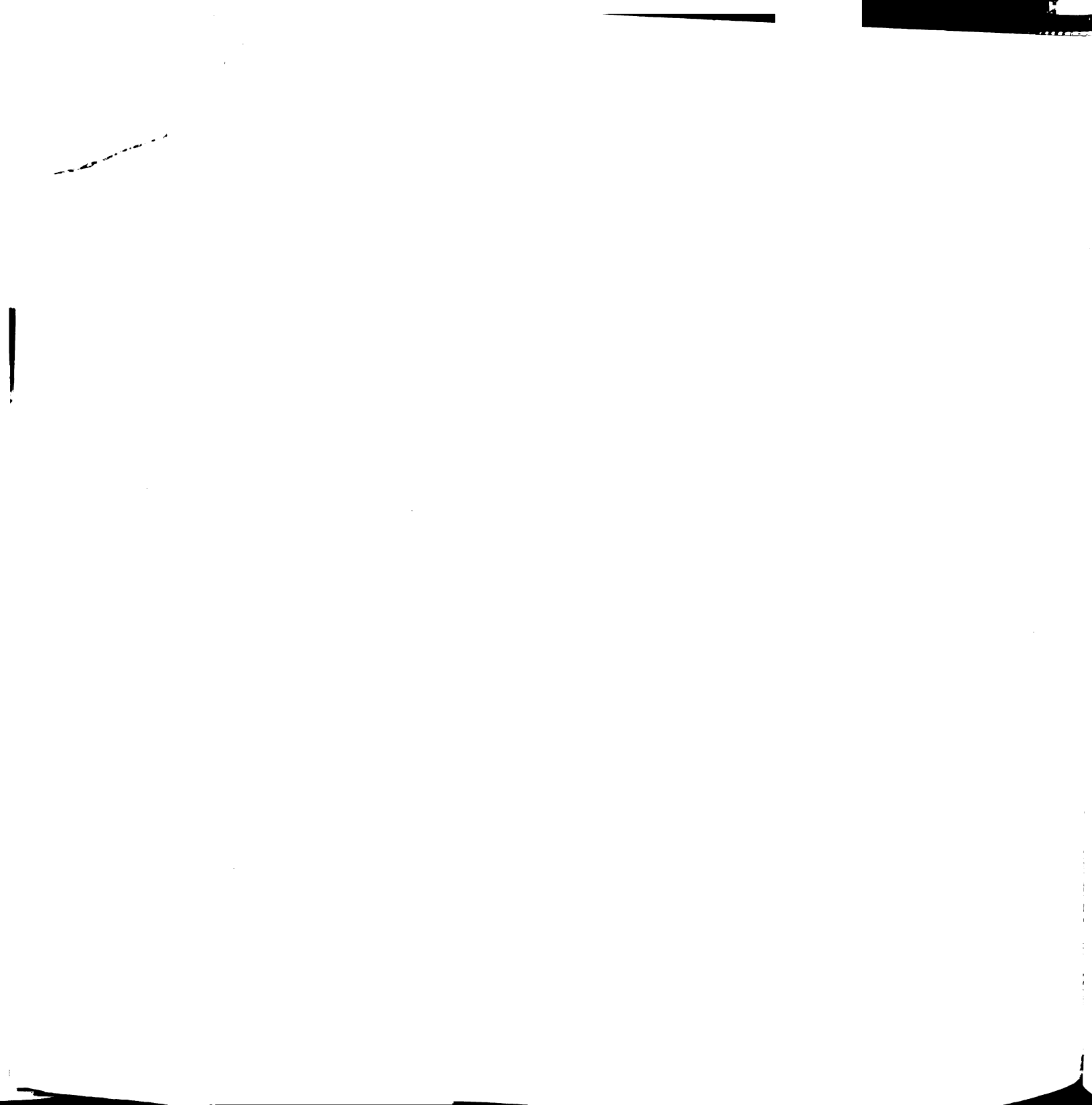
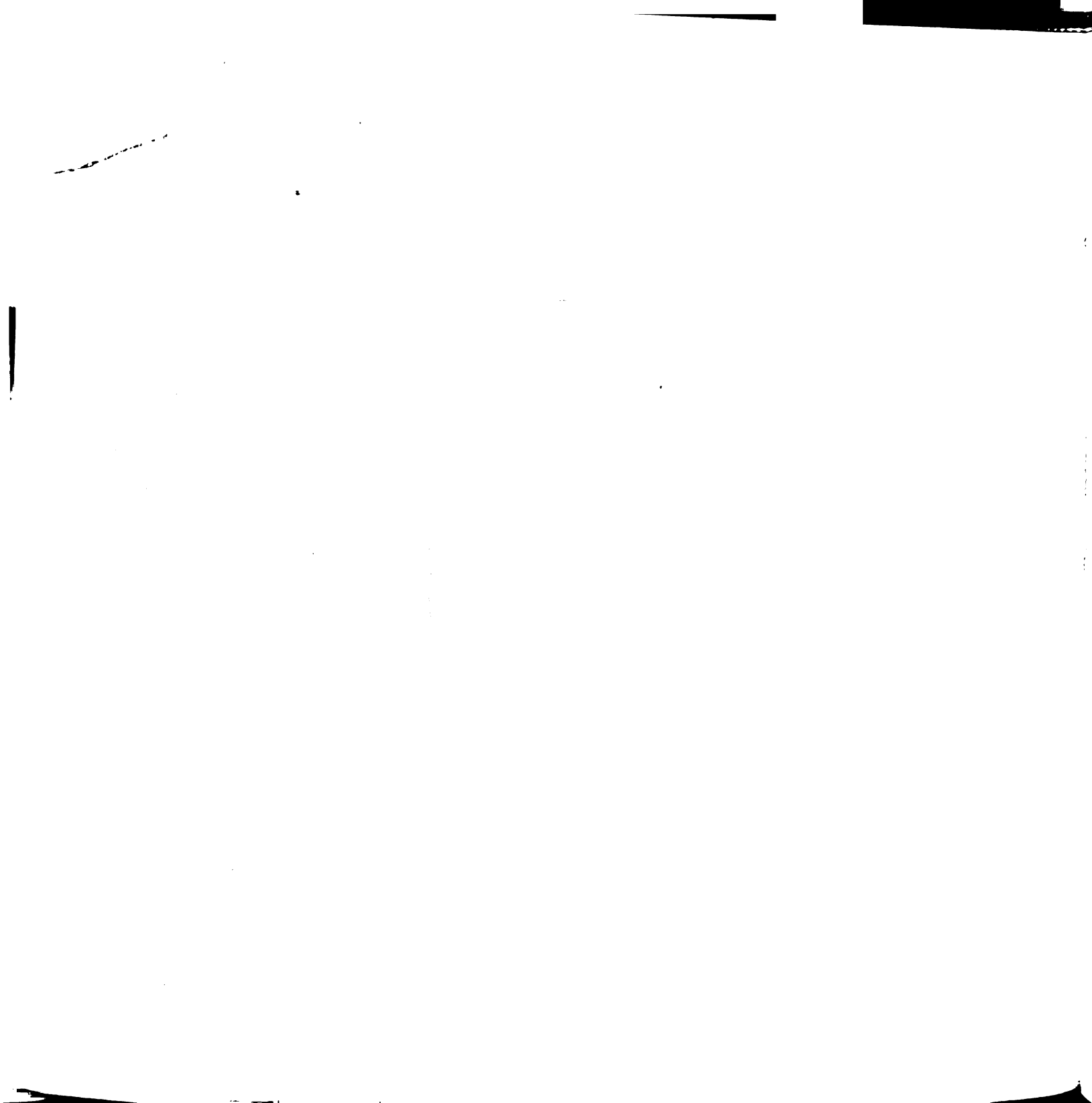




Plate 45. S69, Preparing the Sponge



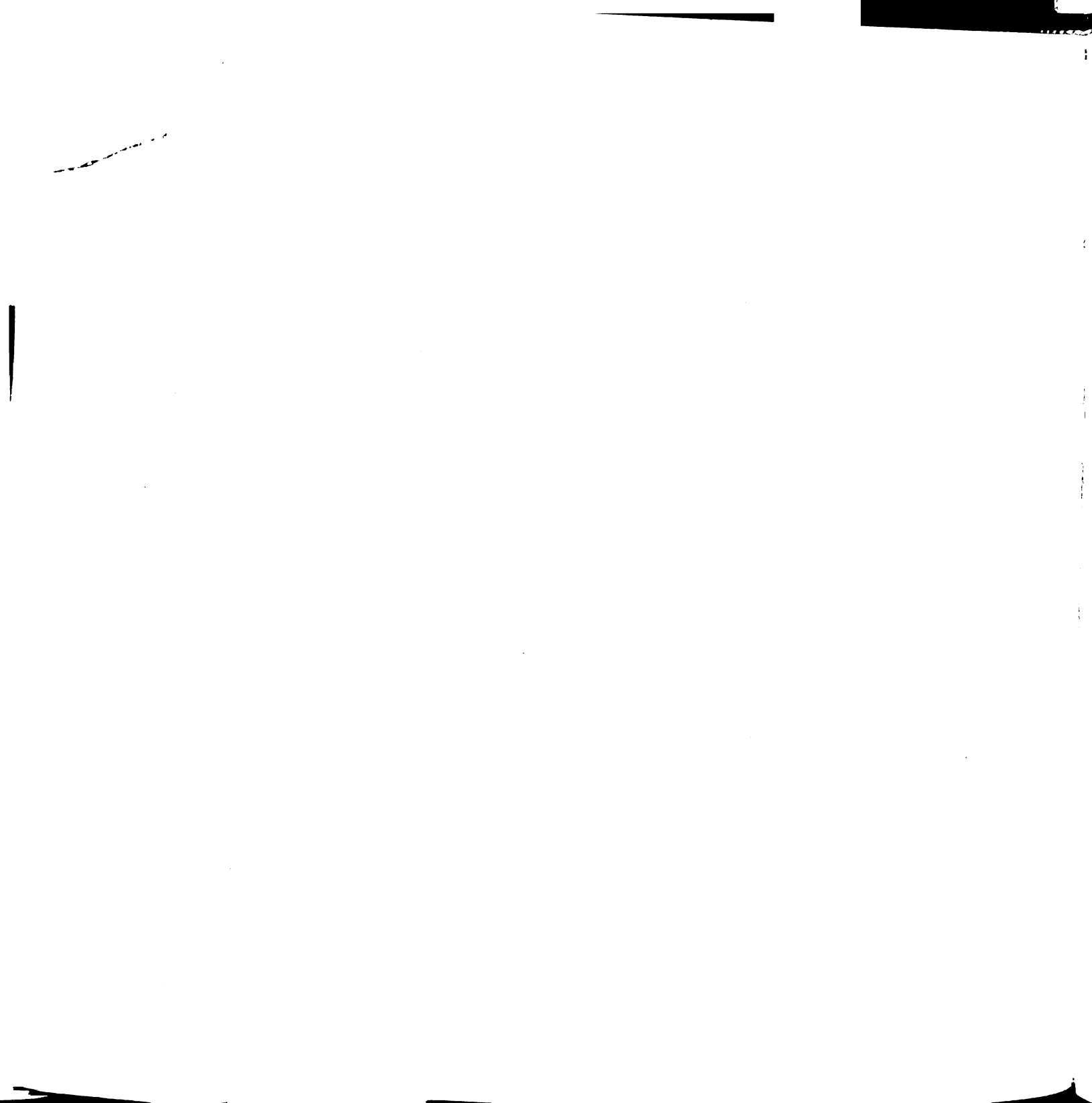




Plate 46. C70, The Crucifixion



Plate 47. C71, The Entombment



Plate 48. C74, The Resurrection



Plate 49. N74, Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalen



Plate 50. C76, The Ascension



Plate 51. C78, Pentecost



Plate 52. N80, The Devil Taking Souls to Hell



Plate 53. C80, The Devil Putting Souls in Hell



Plate 54. C81, A Demon Wheeling a Man in a Borrow With the
Ale-Wife on His Back



Plate 55. C82, The Last Judgment



Plate 56. C83, St. Peter



Plate 57. S84, Souls Being Led to Paradise



Plate 58. C84, The Trinity

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