Staging Christianity:
How Religion Theatricizes the Divine

by

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## CONTENTS

*Acknowledgements*  
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*Introduction*  
*Take Center Stage*  
1

*CHAPTER 1*  
Divine Acting  
6

*CHAPTER 2*  
Reenacting the Gestures  
24

*CHAPTER 3*  
Elevating the Body  
40

*CHAPTER 4*  
Extending the Movement  
56

*CHAPTER 5*  
Mankind’s Fall  
83

*Epilogue*  
*Take a Bow*  
108

*Bibliography*  
117
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THESE
SHEETS OF PAPER
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AND TO YOU,
IF YOU MAKE IT TO
THE
VERY

END.
INTRODUCTION

Take Center Stage

...suit the action to the word, the
word to the action; with this special o'erstep not
the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is
from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the
first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the
mirror up to nature; to show her virtue her own feature,
scorn her own image, and the very age and body of
the time his form and pressure.

—Hamlet in Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, Act 3, Scene 2

IN RENAISSANCE ENGLAND, an actor playing the role of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,
instructs fellow players how vocal expression is entwined in the very nature of action.
Nearly fifteen hundred years before this play set stage, three men traveled from the
exotic East, bringing gold, frankincense, and myrrh, to a baby boy as an act of worship.
These acts of non-verbal communication, ranging from a subtle facial glimpse to a
downward plunge of the entire body, are just as important to the texts as the texts are to
the performance. As this thesis will prove, Christianity is one of the most direct links to
nearly all forms of drama precisely because both its stories and rituals are theatrical in
nature.

The first chapter of this thesis, Divine Acting, will interpret central biblical
passages with this performative aspect in mind. Rather than attempting to construct a
chronological account of each Gospel narrative, Chapter One will narrow its scope and
analyze the most theatrical stories of Jesus' life. By focusing Jesus' life on the most
visually dynamic accounts, readers will see how each Gospel presents a different performance of the Son of God. This first chapter will include the following stories: the visit of the Magi (Matthew); Jesus’ baptism (Matthew); the temptation of Jesus (Matthew); the Last Supper (Luke); the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke); the Passion narrative, concluding in Jesus’ final crucifixion scene (Mark). When a person views these biblical stories as a playbook, requiring a re-imagination of spatial and visual terms, new textual meanings will often be uncovered. Chapter One will conclude by reflecting how certain biblical stories, such as Jesus’ baptism and his institution of the Last Supper, were imitated and enacted by subsequent Christians.

The second chapter of this thesis, Reenacting the Gestures, analyzes how Jesus’ baptism and the Last Supper continue to be performed by all who believe in the Christian doctrine. When a person is submerged in the cleansing waters of God’s mercy and forgiveness, he is initiated into a full communion with Christ. This allows him to dine at the Lord’s Table and take part in the Eucharistic service. When discussing the Eucharist, the chapter will be split into five parts, each analyzing an important element of the service. The five sections will be: 1. the Eucharistic altar, the place of the Lord’s sacrifice; 2. the kiss of peace (Pax), a visual demonstration of the symbolic unity of the church and brethren; 3. bringing gifts to the altar, which is one of the first instances of dramatic liturgical embellishment; 4. elevating the Host, which takes on more dramatic properties when the liturgical year falls on Easter Triduum; and 5. receiving the Host, the final act of communion. Chapter Two will conclude by demonstrating how the Host’s lack of visibility helped develop new forms of medieval drama.

The third chapter of this thesis, Elevating the Body, will begin by discussing the most important act of the Eucharistic ceremony: the elevation of the Host. This act
alone is at the heart of the doctrine of transubstantiation. The moment the bread rises to the appropriate height, it transforms into the body of Christ. Chapter Three will argue that since the Church was so concerned over the “correct” type of elevation, they began to lose perspective on the spiritual foundations of Christianity. These barriers caused one pope to take measures into his own hands. He created a new liturgical holiday, which gave the people an opportunity to see the body of their beloved Christ. The third chapter will focus on one particular aspect of this holiday, the liturgical procession of the Host, in relation to a socially and politically changing society. Chapter Three will conclude by acknowledging that when the Feast and Procession of Corpus Christi were evolving, other liturgical embellishments also were developing within the Church.

The fourth chapter of this thesis, Extending the Movement, will analyze how liturgical embellishments developed into new forms of medieval drama, which in turn, helped develop later morality plays. Rather than attempting to create an historical chronology of this development, which has proven to be controversial, Chapter Four will focus on texts that exemplify the most theatrical aspects of dramatic performance. The following Easter texts will be discussed: an early medieval trope from the monastery of Saint Gall; one of the earliest extant versions of the Quem quaeritis dialogue from Saint Gall (ca. 950); the Regularis Concordia (ca. 965), compiled by Bishop Ethelwold at Winchester; a text from Aquileia, Italy (ca. 1100), which introduces the disciples John and Peter; a text from Saint Lambrecht (ca. 1100), which includes an expansion known as the Victimae Paschali; a text from the nunnery of Origny-Sainte-Benoîte (ca. 1200), which prominently features Mary Magdalene; and a final text from the Fleury playbook (ca. 1200), a developed work which still preserves the traditional Quem quaeritis dialogue.
Chapter Four will continue by comparing how medieval Easter drama provided the framework for the rapidly expanding Christmas drama. The Christmas Fleury play of Herod (ca. 1100) will be discussed. This elaborately staged play encompasses a full cast of shepherds, Magi, Herod, Herod’s son (a character not found in any Gospel), and scribes. Although non-Christian characters are given more flexibility with their acting styles, the play itself is still liturgical in nature. The final text discussed, the Anglo-Norman play *Jeu d’Adam* (ca. 1100), shows its independence from the Latin liturgy. Performed on the outer steps of the church, this vernacular play includes scaffolds for God and other Old Testament characters, as well as an elaborately constructed hell-mouth for the devils of Hell. Although *Jeu d’Adam* stands as the single most successful dramatic version of the “fall” story, it is still rooted in biblical stories. The fourth chapter will conclude by introducing a fourteenth century genre that reached beyond the confines of the Bible and created a new form of theatre: the morality drama.

The fifth and final chapter of this thesis, Mankind’s Fall, will analyze the longest English morality play, *The Castle of Perseverance* (ca. 1405-25), in relation to a Renaissance adaptation of morality drama, Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (ca. 1604-1616). Of the various medieval morality plays, *The Castle of Perseverance* is the only one with a surviving stage plan. The protagonist, Mankind, undergoes a spiritual struggle—a struggle that is portrayed as a conflict between abstractions representing good and evil (the *psychomachia*). Mankind succumbs to temptation, but he is granted mercy on his deathbed and sits at God’s right-hand-side once he dies. Although Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* is not a morality play in the strictest sense, it does follow a similar pattern of temptation and fall, building up to a pivotal scene of divine judgment. In this play, the religious ritual of the Eucharist, and its blasphemous substitutes, are
given center stage. Chapter Five analyzes three of the most pivotal scenes of Doctor Faustus, in light of their Eucharistic undertones: 1. the opening scene, which includes a dialogue between the Good and Evil Angel; 2. Faustus signing a demonic contract with his own blood; and 3. the final scene, which includes Faustus re-signing his contract and being condemned to hell. The end of the chapter will conclude by discussing what happens when a person becomes one with what he worships.

The conclusion of this thesis, Take a Bow, is written as an epilogue. It looks at one lasting piece of Renaissance drama, William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, in relation to its scenes of public violence. Whereas Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus inverts traditional aspects of the Eucharistic ceremony, Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar inverts the act of baptism. Because of these comparisons, this epilogue will further argue that Caesar’s body becomes analogous to Christ’s. The epilogue will conclude with a final reflection on the corpus of this thesis, and will suggest that although the Bible and its history is highly theatrical, it is up to individuals to treat the Bible like a playbook and be players for the world’s stage.
CHAPTER 1

Divine Acting

The three earliest Gospels of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels. The Synoptic Gospels share a common set of stories about the birth, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; yet, each also has a distinct emphasis for a particular audience. Written with the hope of moving the Jewish community towards the belief in the resurrected Jesus of Christianity, the Gospel according to Matthew\(^1\) was written just one decade after the destruction of Jerusalem’s Temple.\(^2\) At a time when Messianic opinions varied greatly, Matthew attempts to prove that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies that had been established in the Hebrew Bible. Although Luke’s Gospel was contemporary with Matthew’s, his collection of stories emphasize that Jesus is the Savior of all people. By presenting Jesus as someone who is a divinely authorized agent of universal salvation, Luke stresses that salvation is available and offered to all, and is not limited simply to those within the tradition of biblical monotheism. Thought to be a source for both Luke and Matthew, the Gospel according to Mark is identified by some scholars as a Passion narrative with a long introduction.\(^3\) Composed between 65 and 70, the Gospel according to Mark identifies Jesus as the Messiah who has to suffer and die before his glory can be attained.

\(^1\) Although the specific authorial identities of each Gospel are disputed, I will continue to refer to each Gospel by their “attributed” authors for the sake of convenience.

\(^2\) Most scholars agree that Matthew’s Gospel was written between 80 and 85 CE. The destruction of Temple occurred in 70 CE. All dates will be in the Common Era, unless otherwise noted.

\(^3\) This idea is expressed in Martin Kähler, The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1980) 125-27.
Despite these thematic variations, the Synoptic Gospels share a common language of visual performance—a culture of performance that reaches back to the Classical past of Greece and Rome, and spreads to the Far East and into the Persian Empire.

An ancient audience would not have been interested in the historical problems that Matthew’s Visit of the Magi raises, but would have understood the Magi as astrologers from the East—perhaps Assyria—who could read the course of human events from the movements of the stars. Working within a tradition that told of legendary birth-stories of great men like Alexander the Great and Moses, Matthew begins Jesus’ nativity scene with “wise men” journeying from afar. Once the Magi arrive in Bethlehem, Matthew describes: “καὶ ἐλθόντες εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν εἶδον τὸ παιδίον μετὰ Μαρίας τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ, καὶ πεσόντες προσευχήσαν αὐτῷ [And when they came into the house, they saw the young child with Mary, his mother, and fell down and worshipped him]” (2:11). The phrase “προσευχήσαν αὐτῷ,” or “worshipped him,” is the climax of Matthew’s nativity story. The verb, the aorist of the verb προσκυνέω, is a

4 Problems such as, “If each man came from a different country, how did they meet and see the Christ-child together?”

5 Herodotus is one of the chief authoritative sources for believing that the Magi were the sacred caste of the Medes. Textual support is found in Herodotus, The Histories, trans. A.D. Godley, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1960) 1.101. After the downfall of Assyrian and Babylonian power, the religion of the Magi primarily governed and provided priests to Persia. At the time of Jesus’ birth, the Magi were still flourishing under the Parthian dominion. Biblical evidence (Acts 8:9; 13:6; 2; Daniel 1:20, 2:2; 2:27; 4:4; 5:7, 5:11, 5:15) often uses the word magoi, which is translated as “magicians” or as “wise men.” Matthew’s audience would have taken for granted that spiritual men came from the East—Babylon, Iran, and India—since those in the West often had looked to the East for wisdom. This textual support is found in Dio Chrysostom, Dio Chrysostom: Discourses 31-36, trans. J.W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1940) 35.22. All New Testament citations are taken from The Greek New Testament, eds. Barbara Aland et al., 4th ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 2007). All Hebrew Bible citations are taken from Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament, trans. John R. III Kohlenberger (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).

6 Tales of Solomon and Alexander spread throughout various regions, and the Jews were—as merchants—great circulators of such tales. Contemporaries of the apostles were also aware of the ubiquity of the myth of the escaping child/future king (Sargon, Moses, Perseus, Oedipus, Cyrus, Romulus). See Dio Chrysostom, Dio Chrysostom, I: Discourses 1-11 (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1932) 6.53. The two themes of a supernatural impregnation of the mother by a deity and the search for wisdom and immortality in the Far East gives the impression that Jesus is greater than Moses, Abraham, and Alexander combined.
compound of the verb κυνέω and the preposition πρός, which translates as, “to kiss the hand towards one [as a token of reverence].” It is significant to mention that in both the King James Version and the New American Standard, Matthew uses the English translation (“to worship”) of the verb (προσκυνέω) thirteen times. Compared to the other Synoptic Gospels like Mark’s (2), and Luke’s (3), Matthew seems determined to illustrate the importance and necessity of this face-to-face act of “worship.” For Matthew, the Magi—persuaded that the newborn infant is destined to be king—pay him the adoration customary in their own country.

Throughout the Far East—especially the Persian Empire—it was expected that this act of “worshipping” would be completed with a final act of bending to one’s knees. This act of kneeling has three primary visual functions: 1. It illustrates an

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7 This act of kissing becomes important during the development of early Christianities. The Liturgy of the Blessed Apostles, or Order of the Sacraments, instructs priests to “bow three times before the altar, the middle of which he kisses, then the right and the left of the altar; and bows to the Gospel side” during Mass (The Creed 8). After more prayers, the priest “bows himself and kisses the altar, first in the middle, then at the two sides right and left,” and gives another prayer (The Creed 13). Before the Eucharist, the priest once again “kisses the altar in the middle, and receives with both hands the upper oblation” (The Creed 14). During the beginning of the Eucharist, the priest “kisses the host in the form of a cross; in such a way, however, that his lips do not touch it, but appear to kiss it,” and gives a prayer of thanks (The Creed 16). All references to the Liturgy of the Blessed Apostles, hereafter cited as LBA, are taken from William Fletcher, From Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 7, ed. Alexander Roberts et al. (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing, 1886).


9 In his process of adopting Persian customs, Alexander may have wished to introduce a form of the proskynesis—one with the prostration—among his Greek and Macedonian subjects. See Plutarch, Lives, VII: Demosthenes and Cicero. Alexander and Caesar, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1919).

10 This gesture of bending to one’s knees is also mentioned in the Apostolic Constitutions (ca. 375), which is a Christian collection of eight treatises. The Apostolic Constitutions, hereafter cited as AC, were written by an unknown author. It is generally believed that the AC were written in Antioch, which was a major center of Hellenistic Greece, and was the third-most important city of the Roman Empire. For detail of this city’s importance, see F.L. Cross, “Antioch,” in The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Oxford:
allegiance to the one who is worshiped, that is to say, a duty of loyalty; 2. It acknowledges the superiority of the one who is worshipped (that is to say, a worshipping by the inferior of the superior); and 3. A dependence of the worshipper on the one who is worshipped, that is to say, the worshipper acknowledges that he is not sufficient without the one who is worshipped. These three hermeneutical variations point to the relationship between a visual, concrete sign of worship and Jesus’ identity as the one who is intended to be given this type of reverence. This kinetic verb carries with it a sense of motion, and with that motion, an implied change of behavior—a literal change of stance. This final act of kneeling describes the most important decision a person can make during his lifetime, that is to say, to “change himself” from serving his own desires, to yielding to God’s desires. As Shakespeare would later write in King John, when you rise from this position, you “rise more great” (1.1.163).

The Magi fall down before Jesus and worship him: “ἀνοίξαντες τοὺς θησαυροὺς αὐτῶν προσήνεγκαν αὐτῷ δώρα, χρυσὸν καὶ λίβανον καὶ σμύρναν [and when they had opened their treasures, they presented him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh]” (Matthew 2:11). This presentation of gold, frankincense, and myrrh are

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Oxford University Press, 2005). When describing the Prayer for Penitents, the text reads, “All we of the faithful, let us bend our knee: let us all entreat God through His Christ; let us earnestly beseech God through His Christ” (8.2.9). See Liturgy of the Eighth Book of “The Apostolic Constitutions,” trans. and intro. Rev. R.H. Cresswell, M.A. (London: Early Church Classics, 1900). In LBA, priests are also instructed to kneel before the altar and say a secret prayer (The Creed 8 and 9).

Before this scene, King John has overseen a land dispute between Robert Faulconbridge and his older brother Philip, “the Bastard,” the illegitimate son of King Richard I. The Queen, mother of John, suggests that Philip renounce his claim to the Faulconbridge land in exchange for a knighthood. While Philip kneels, John knights him and tells him to “rise more great.” The act of knighting makes Philip “more great,” but his “rising” is a visual display of that knighthood.

In the Bible, gold represents divinity—that which is like God. Gold is first mentioned at the beginning of Creation in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:11-12). Also, as Moses had the Tabernacle in the wilderness built, he was instructed to construct the Ark of the Covenant out of acacia wood and to overlay it with gold (Exodus 25:10-21; Hebrews 9:4).

In the Bible, frankincense is Hebrew for “white,” which speaks of holiness and righteousness. It is first used in Exodus 30:34-36, when it is placed upon the golden Altar of Incense by the High Priest to be burned before the Lord. Just as frankincense is gathered by cutting the bark of a tree, Jesus would later be crucified on the wood from a tree.
significant not just because of the symbolic connotations associated with each element, but also because they serve as extensions of the “worship” previously described. In a similar manner to the history of the verb προσκυνέω, the giving of gifts as an extended form of “worship” also has Classical roots. As a demonstration of worship, Alexander, when deep in Asia, sent quantities of frankincense and myrrh to Leonidas, his old teacher. The Magi—representative of people from “all nations”—give their own gifts in the region of Jerusalem, an Asian city on the edge of the Western world.

Immediately following this scene of “worship,” Matthew writes of an adult Jesus who receives his conviction, call, and consecration to the Messianic life. Jesus goes from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized (βαπτισθῆναι) by John the Baptist (3:13). While Jesus shares John’s passion for righteousness and appreciates the symbolic significance of his own baptism, John hesitates to perform this act. John questions Jesus: “Ἐγὼ χρείαν ἔχω ὑπὸ σοῦ βαπτισθῆναι, καὶ οὐ ἔγραμεν πρὸς με; [I need to be baptized by you, so why are you coming to me?]” (3:14). This recognition scene entirely changes the character of the baptism. John’s response presupposes a degree of knowledge of the sinlessness and of the superiority of Jesus. When John acknowledges that it is he who needs to be baptized by Jesus, his reaction amounts to a Christian

14 Myrrh is derived from the Arabic murr, which means “bitterness.” It was used in perfumes, but also when embalming the dead. Unlike the other two gifts, myrrh is a gift for Jesus in both the beginning and the end of his life. Often, myrrh carried connotations of suffering, as noted with the name of the church of Smyrna (“Suffering Church”).

15 “κατέπεψε καὶ Λεωνίδη τῷ παιδαγωγῷ τάλαντα λιβανωτοῦ πεντάκοσια και σμύρνης ἑκατόν, ἀναμνησθεὶς παιδικῆς ἔλλιπος [he sent also to Leonidas, his tutor, five hundred talents’ weight of frankincense and a hundred of myrrh, remembering the hope with which that teacher had inspired his youth].” See “Alexander” in Plutarch (1919) 25.4.

16 The word “baptize” is derived from the Greek, βαπτίζω, which means “to wash” or “to immerse.” It is used both literally and metaphorically—literally when designating a laving with water, as noted in the Christian Sacrament of Baptism (cf. Hebrews 6:2; Mark 7:4); and metaphorically where the abundance of the grace of the Holy Ghost is signified (Acts 1:5).
confession. In a sense, Matthew makes a Christian of the Baptist at the Jordan River; however, he does not go so far as to make him a disciple of Jesus.

After John’s initial question, Jesus responds: “Ἄφες ἄρτι, οὕτως γὰρ πρέπον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν πληρῶσαι πάσαν δικαιοσύνην [Let it be done, for we must do everything that is right].” (3:15). This response implies that Jesus simply submits to John’s baptism—a compromise and condescension on Jesus’ part. For a clearer understanding of Jesus’ response, it is important to highlight one word: δικαιοσύνην [right]. While John the Baptist has a passion for righteousness, his conception of righteousness is narrow, legal, and severe. For Jesus, his baptism by the hands of John is an act of religious consecration to what the Baptist represented. Jesus does not antecede to John’s view of righteousness; rather, he redefines it. Despite the various interpretations of Jesus’ own baptism, it is important to understand that the act and experience must have been of central importance for Jesus; otherwise, he would not have come to John at all.

Once he ascends out of the water of “holy sacrament,” the heavens open and Jesus sees the Spirit of God descending like a dove onto him (3:16). Just as a messenger angel has previously told Joseph that the Holy Spirit has given Mary a child (1:20), a descending dove now signifies the birthplace of Jesus’ Messianic consciousness. This image of the Holy Spirit is interesting because of the ways subsequent Christians reacted to it. After newly baptized converts came up out of the cleansing waters, they would be

17 It seems that Matthew was not the only early Christian writer to feel this theological problem in connection with Jesus’ baptism. When Jesus approaches John to be baptized, he does not hesitate. However, the author of the Gospel of Hebrews, one of the earliest and most important of the apocryphal Gospels, has Jesus come to the Baptist only under protest. See “Against Pelagius” in Jerome, Dogmatic and Polemical Works, trans. John N. Nitzu (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1981) 3.2. See also The Apocryphal New Testament…Apocalypses, ed. Montague Rhodes James (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924) 6.

18 The Old Testament basis of the dove as a symbol of God and of the Holy Spirit is found in Genesis 8:9, 10.
anointed with the unction of “heavenly glory.”” In this respect, the dove became a visual analogue to the anointing, which symbolically denotes the descending Spirit from God. Once this Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus, a voice from heaven declares his identity: “Οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν φί εὐδόκησα [This is my beloved son, in whom, I am well pleased]” (3:17). Unlike in Mark’s Gospel, the voice does not speak to Jesus in the second person; rather, it uses the pronoun Οὗτος (Mark 1:11). This pronoun makes a public declaration about Jesus’ Messiahship, which seems to benefit others more than Jesus himself. Additionally, Matthew’s use of Οὗτος signifies that everyone, and not just Jesus’ disciples, should know that he is God’s beloved Son.

One of the most common theological explanations for subsequent baptisms is that the regenerating properties of the water wash the pre-Christianized old life away, and bring forth a new, resurrected, Christian life. However, later baptismal perceptions should not be imported onto Jesus’ own baptism. While later theologians, such as Martin Luther, would write how baptism “is actual death and resurrection,” occurring simultaneously once a person surfaces from the water, this is a subsequent interpretation of Jesus’ baptism. Jesus’ baptism, on the other hand, illustrates what the idea of the Messiahship meant for the early Christian faith. During the first century, those who

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19 This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Two. Chapter One focuses on the theology behind Jesus’ baptism, whereas Chapter Two will highlight its significant gestural and spatial movements.
20 This statement is a conflation of Psalms 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. The reference from Psalms refers to Jesus’ role as the Messianic King, while the reference from Isaiah suggests his role as the Spirit-anointed Servant.
21 Mark’s voice from heaven addresses Jesus in the second person, Σὺ, which implies that Jesus alone hears the Messiahship dedication.
22 The Jordan vision does not occupy a place in Jesus’ later life as it does for the experience of Paul’s baptism. Jesus does not refer to it as the moment when he received his call and commission. This leads to the interpretation that the event is not pivotal in Jesus’ life as it becomes for Paul (cf. Acts 22:6-11; 26:13-19; 1 Corinthians 9:5, 15:8; 2 Corinthians 4:6, 12:1; and Galatians 1:16-17).
23 Luther’s The Babylonian Captivity of the Church describes and gives examples of the many benefits, gifts, and effects of baptism. See “Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper” in Luther’s Works, 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961) 36:68. Luther uses many biblical images of regeneration (John 3:5), cleansing, and washing (Titus 3:5), as well as death and resurrection (Romans 6:1-11) in his theology. For more detail, see Jonathan Trigg, Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) 75-81.
believed in God thought that the Messiah was someone who would bring the nation together through a cleansing rite of baptism. In this light, Jesus’ baptismal act sets the stage for subsequent Christians. Whereas Jesus is baptized to visually demonstrate his Messiahship, everyone else—through the powers of grace and mercy—can be forgiven of their sins and should imitate Christ’s first act of ministry if they want to follow Jesus’ life of righteousness. If Christian followers look to Jesus’ new form of righteousness, in light of John’s representation of the old, they are one step closer to understanding Jesus’ identity as the Messiah.

In light of the Old Law and the New, the Temptation of Jesus attempts to establish and solidify the relationship between Jesus’ role as the Son of God and as the Messiah of Israel. Transitioning from the baptismal declaration to Jesus’ Temptation with the simple adverb, τότε, Jesus is brought into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tested by the Devil. The Spirit has been active in Jesus’ birth and his previous baptism, but it is Jesus alone who has to prove his Messiahship. As Jesus is brought to the desert—a foodless, demon-inhibited place—Matthew makes an effort to reveal the true nature of the Messiahship. In order to highlight the gravity of this point even further, Jesus is tested only after he has fasted for forty days and forty nights (4:2). After this submission to divine will has passed, the Devil—or tempter—makes his first appearance.

Knowing that Jesus is in a state of hunger, the Devil comes to Jesus and says: “Εἰ νῦν ἐί τοῦ θεου, εἰπὲ ἵνα οἱ λίθοι οὗτοι ἄρτοι γένωνται [If you are the son of God, change these stones into bread]” (4:3). Significantly, the Ei does not imply doubt; rather, it links the previous baptismal scene to Jesus’ current test. This point is emphasized by

24 This notion goes back to Old Testament descriptions of the Messiah-role (Ezekial 36:25, 26; Isaiah 52:15).
25 A lengthy fast is also found in the experiences of Moses (Exodus 34:28) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8).
which immediately follows. Jesus’ Sonship is not questioned; rather, the first temptation is designed to appeal to Jesus’ state of hunger. Part of what makes this test sinful is that it would mean Jesus doubts the Father’s ability and willingness to provide for his Son. Jesus’ confirmation in Scripture confirms this notion: “Οὐκ ἐπὶ ὀρθῷ μόνῳ ἔχει ἀνθρώπος, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ πάντῃ ὑμαι ἐκποιηθείσῃ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ [Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God]” (4:4). Jesus repeals physical hunger by affirming that the Scriptures themselves provide a type of spiritual nourishment. Jesus, the one who has a full understanding of the Old Law, answers from Deuteronomy 8:3. If Jesus had performed a transformation miracle, it would have illustrated his doubt in God in his hour of crisis.

Having failed to get Jesus to doubt God, the Devil takes Jesus to the holy city of Jerusalem and places him on the highest point of the Temple (4:5). The Devil appeals to Psalms 91:11-12 in an effort to persuade Jesus to jump down from the height (4:6). This proposal is appropriate for two main reasons: 1. In the first test, Jesus affirmed his complete trust in God and his willingness to have the Father fill his hunger; and 2. Jesus’ previous response to the Devil now becomes the basis for his second test. In this trial of worship, Jesus is tested to see whether he will question God’s presence as Israel did at Massah (Exodus 17:7). However, Jesus responds from Deuteronomy again and states: “Οὐκ ἐκπειράσῃς κύριον τὸν θεόν σου [You shall not tempt the Lord, your God]” (4:7). In this test, the Son of God emerges as the one who refuses to confuse confidence in God with challenging God. Thus, the Messiah will not put God on the spot by reckless ventures in the name of faith.

The Temptation scene culminates with the third and most significant test. Initially, the Devil brings Jesus to a high mountain and shows him the nations of the
world (4:8). In exchange for the world’s glorious kingdoms, Jesus is asked to bow down and worship—προσκυνέω—the Devil (4:9). Jesus has been worshipped as a King of the Jews by the wise men just two chapters earlier (2:2, 8, 11), and is now tested concerning whom he will worship (and in turn, whom he will forsake). Significantly, this is the first time that the Devil has become personally involved in the test itself. While the Devil is relatively detached in the first two tests, he now tries to position himself as an object of adoration. This final test—this gesture—is the climax of Matthew’s Temptation scene. If Jesus is prepared and willing to forsake God by this one gesture, the Devil will use his own power and relinquish the nations of “all the world” to Jesus. For the first time in the Temptation scene, Jesus addresses the Devil as Satan and commands: “Υπαγε, Σατανά: γέγραπται γάρ, Κύριον τὸν θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις [Get away, Satan! For it is written that you shall worship the Lord, your God, and serve only him]” (4:10). For the third time, Jesus’ response is rooted in the Deuteronomic Torah (Deuteronomy 6:13), but it now carries a heightened sense of indignation. Although Jesus Christ—Son of God—has refused to compromise his Messiahship at any cost, his harsh rebuke does not defeat Satan. This decisive moment comes after the Last Supper scene and in the Garden of Gethsemane—finally to be completed when he dies on the cross and is resurrected three days later.

Against the somber background of the plot against Jesus, Luke recounts how Jesus prepares to celebrate his last meal, the Last Supper, with his disciples (22:7-13). Following Mark and Matthew’s Gospels for detail, Luke relates the story of the preparations in some length. Differing from the other Synoptic Gospels, Luke stresses that the Last Supper is a mixture of an Old Testament Passover celebration, and the
New Testament’s institution of the Lord’s Table.\textsuperscript{26} This subtle blending of two great symbolic remembrances is highlighted by the structure of the narrative itself.

Once Jesus sends Peter and John to obtain and prepare a room for the Passover feast, Luke describes: “\textit{Καὶ ὅτε ἐγένετο ἡ ὥρα, ἀνέπεσεν καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι σὺν αὐτῷ} [And when the hour came, Jesus and the twelve apostles sat down together at the table]” (22:14). Although the verb \textit{ἀνέπεσεν} is often translated as “sat down,” it is important to realize that this verb denoted the act of reclining or lying down. Not only were meals eaten in a recumbent posture, but if the Last Supper was arranged according to the Roman fashion, there would have been three couches on three sides of a square table.\textsuperscript{27} Although three persons usually occupied each couch, in this instance of thirteen people (twelve apostles and Jesus), four people probably occupied two couches, and the last couch occupied by five. It is also important to mention that in antiquity, the guest of honor—in this narrative, Jesus—would have “reclined” on the far left corner of the couch.\textsuperscript{28} Since Jesus previously chose Peter and John to find and furnish the room (22:8), they probably would have reclined on this same left couch.

After Luke describes this initial posture of reclining, he structures the rest of his episode in two parts. The first part includes verses 15-18, the second verses 19 and 20. In the first grouping, verse 15 relates to Jesus’ desire to eat the Passover with his disciples before his \textit{πάσχα}, his “suffering” begins, while verse 16 explains the

\textsuperscript{26} Significantly, the Passover feast, commencing the Feast of Unleavened Bread, recalls and celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people from Egypt’s pharaoh. Especially in days of oppression and foreign occupation, the Passover could be liable to stir up messianic expectations, which could spark subversive activities against Rome. Ironically, the feast also commemorates the occasion when Yahweh killed all the first-borns of Egypt, but spared those children of Israel (as he had earlier spared Abraham’s son on the same mountain where the paschal lambs would be slaughtered; Genesis 22 and 2 Chronicles 13).


\textsuperscript{28} ibid.
eschatological meaning of his desire. Verses 17 and 18 are of particular importance because although Mark’s Gospel uses τοῦτο to refer to the wine in the cup, Luke uses τοῦτο to refer to the ποτήριον, the cup itself. As Jesus explains in verse 18, he will not take up “this cup” and drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has been established.

Fraught with religious controversy, the second part of the Last Supper scene, verses 19 and 20, echoes Pauline liturgy found in 1 Corinthians 11:24. Once Jesus has finished drinking the first cup of wine—symbolic of one of the four cups associated with the Passover celebration—he takes a loaf of bread, gives thanks for it, and says: “Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον: τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν [This is my body which is given for you: do this in remembrance of me]” (22:19). The pivotal word in this verse is the verb ἐστιν, or “is.” This verb is particularly significant for subsequent Christianity because Roman Catholicism takes each “remembrance” of Jesus’ death—that is to say, each Eucharistic meal—as a reenactment of the sacrifice of Christ. For Roman Catholicism, the bread becomes the literal flesh of Jesus. For other religious groups, such as Lutherans, Jesus may be present during the Eucharist; however, the relationship between Jesus and the bread is confined to the sacramental action.

Significantly, Jesus speaks of his body as “given for you,” and of his blood in the second cup of wine—the “new covenant”—as “pouring out for you” (22:19-20). While the bread signifies the earthly body and the sinless life of Jesus, the wine is a visual symbol of his shed blood and the violent death he will “suffer” on the cross. Of the two

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31 This second cup represents the new covenant, which was prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34). It should also be noted that one of the Greek manuscripts omits the last half of verse 19 and all of verse 20. This thesis does not attempt to argue for or against the existence and use of these passages. This thesis concentrates on the theatrical aspects of the surviving verses, which is why the longer text is referenced.
cups mentioned at the Last Supper, it is the second cup that has the descriptive and kinetic participle, ἐχυννόμενον, or “pouring out” attached to it. Interestingly, by end of the speech, the final statement is not the “pouring out” action, but the phrase, “ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν [for you]” (22:20). In Jesus’ own words, the first cup is “shared amongst” the apostles; the second cup, however, is pouring “for you.” Like the loaf of bread, this is the first time that Jesus’ audience hears a direct word about his suffering for others. In this moment, Jesus is not a hapless victim of hostile forces—he is fulfilling God’s determined plan and will “suffer” and die on behalf of those whom he loves.

After he predicts Peter’s denial (Luke 22:31-38; Mark 14:27-31), Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with him to Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). The entire power of Gethsemane—a story about prayer and temptation, as much as betrayal—derives from the fact that audiences witness a struggle between the will of Jesus and the will of God. However, it is important to consider that there is not just one account of Gethsemane, there are three—all three illustrating different theologies, and all three presenting radically different characters of Jesus. In the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus is presented as someone who does not act upon others; rather, God acts upon him. In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus wants his cup of suffering to be taken away if it is possible. In the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus asks that his cup of suffering be taken away if it is God’s will. Although the accounts of Jesus’ actions in Gethsemane differ, the most important similarity is that Jesus equates the cup—the chalice that established the New Covenant between God and his people—with the impending suffering attached to his crucifixion scene. This becomes important when Eucharistic services begin to develop in late antiquity and in the Middle Ages, because the ways in which Jesus
responds to his “cup of suffering” are carried through and provide a type of “pathos framework” for Eucharistic practice.

One of the first aspects to note of Jesus’ performance in Mark’s Gospel is the importance of the passive voice. Mark is not only interested in the inner world of his main characters, he seems to be invested in portraying Jesus as someone who is not acting himself. In the beginning of the narrative, Mark describes: “καὶ ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημοσεῖν [and he began to be violently disturbed and deeply distressed]” (14:33). The word ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι, or “violently disturbed,” is an unusually intensive, and passive verb and reinforces how radically alone Jesus is. He journeys a little further and, ἐπιπτεν, or “falls down” on the ground (14:35). It is no coincidence that immediately after this prostration, Jesus prays to God: “Αββα ὁ πατήρ, πάντα δυνατά σοι: παρέσχετε τὸ ποτήριον τούτο ἀπ' ἐμοῦ: ἀλλ' οὔ τί ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλὰ τί σὺ [Abba, Father, all things are possible for you: take this cup away from me, but I want your will, not mine]” (14:36). The preservation of the Aramaic Αββα, or “father,” serves as an expression of the Son’s obedient surrender to God, the Father. The following Greek noun, ὁ πατήρ, also translates as “father,” and intensifies the entire meaning of Αββα. However, whereas Matthew and Luke both have Jesus address God personally in the vocative (Πάτερ), in Mark’s Gospel, Jesus addresses his God as mysteriously distant: “Abba, the Father.”

After stating, “All things are possible for you,” Jesus asks that “this cup” be taken away from him (14:36). As previously mentioned, every Synoptic Gospel writer qualifies the request differently. For Luke, the conclusion is that Jesus’ Father did not wish to take this suffering cup away (“Father, if you will, take this cup away from me” [Luke 22:42]). For Matthew, the implication is rather that the cup cannot be avoided
(“My Father, if it is possible, take this cup from me” [Matthew 26:39]). Mark, by contrast, has Jesus state that “all things are possible” for the Father; however, Jesus’ prayer is answered with silence (Mark 14:36). In the garden of Gethsemane, Satan returns in full force as Prince of this world. As Jesus learns through God’s silence, it is one thing to contradict and withstand the tempter—it is quite another to fulfill his role as the suffering Messiah. It should also be noted that at the beginning of his life Jesus was baptized and heard a voice from heaven declaring his identity as the Father’s “beloved Son” (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Nearing the end of Jesus’ life, no such heavenly voice is forthcoming. However desperately Jesus might want God to act and take his cup of suffering away, the only instance of independent action comes from Judas, the disciple who is to betray Jesus.

Judas was present for the Last Supper and the “cup of wine” discourse, and he is now decisively present in Gethsemane’s “cup of suffering.” The appointed sign of betrayal is a kiss, the token of homage with which disciples customarily greeted their rabbi.32 Ironically, when Judas calls Jesus, Ῥαββί and kisses him, both the title and gesture declare Judas’ respect for Jesus. The subversive meaning behind these words and action serves to present Judas’s gesture as a dramatization of betrayal. By dramatizing the act of betrayal, Mark presents one polarity of evil. The other polarity, Jesus’ performances of endurance, is at the heart of Mark’s message. For Mark, following Jesus means experiencing his Fate—requiring each individual to shoulder his own cross to the end of his life. As will be seen in Chapter Five, Judas is analogous to the personified Vice of the later medieval morality tradition, a character which also inverts conventional gestures of reverence for demonic purposes.

32 For more detail, see August Wunsche, Die Schönheit der Bibel, Talmud und Midrasch (Breslau, 1911).
Once Jesus is betrayed by Judas (14:45), he is arrested by the leading priests and teachers of religious law (14:46). After Jesus’ trial before Pilate, he is turned over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified (15:15). The soldiers lead him away inside the praetorium and clothe him in a purple robe and make a crown of thorns for his head (15:17). Purple, the most expensive and prestigious of ancient colors, symbolized royalty. The crown, normally leafed with gold, signified royalty or military valor. After the soldiers mock him, beat him, and spit on him, they perform one last act of mockery: “τιθέντες τὰ γόνατα προσκύνουν αὐτῷ [bowing onto their knees, they worshipped him]” (15:18-19). The verb, προσκυνέω, which was previously used in Matthew’s Magi and Temptation narratives, is now a gesture of mockery. Whereas Judas subverts the act of kissing one’s dearest friends in order to betray Jesus, the soldiers’ insincere prostrations break all outward signs of genuine physical worship. Once the soldiers finish their act of insincere homage, they remove the purple robe and lead him out to be crucified at Golgotha, or “Place of the Skull” (15:20).

Mark’s Jewish audience would have been familiar with this hill, since it was also the burial place of Adam’s skull. Significantly, the soldiers offer Jesus wine mixed with myrrh, but he refuses it (15:23). Just as the soldiers’ fake prostrations remind readers of the Magi and Temptation narratives, the presence of myrrh specifically echoes the last gift given to Jesus by one of the Magi (Matthew 2:11). Once Jesus has been nailed to the cross, a sign is placed above Jesus’ head, which reads: “Ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων [The King of the Jews]” (Mark 15:26). As a final act of mockery, the leading high priests and teachers of religious law command Jesus to come down from the cross and save himself (15:32). By resisting one last temptation and choosing to stay nailed to the cross, Jesus is fulfilling his role as the suffering “King of the Jews.” The leading priests further add
that if Jesus comes down from the cross, they will “believe” that he is the Messiah (15:32). Whether this statement is interpreted literally or sarcastically, the previous chapters of Mark’s Gospel demonstrate that there is no direct correlation between “seeing” and “believing.” The numerous miracles Jesus has performed have not resulted in unquestioned faith.

At noon, darkness falls on the entire land until three o’clock (15:33). At this time, Jesus shouts: “Ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι; [My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?]” (15:34). Rather than using Αββα, as in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus uses the more distant Ελωι. It is also interesting to point out how precisely Jesus’ prayers in Gethsemane correspond with his final words while he is nailed to the cross. As mentioned earlier, Luke’s Gethsemane prayer is: “Father, if you will, take this cup away from me” (22:42). In Luke’s Crucifixion, Jesus finally accepts God’s will and dies on the cross after pronouncing, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (23:36). In Matthew’s Gethsemane prayer, Jesus prays: “My Father, if it is possible, take this cup from me” (26:39). In Matthew’s Crucifixion, Jesus concludes that it is impossible for God to take the cup away because like the performance of a dramatic script, Jesus’ role is to simply enact the directions, not question the director’s intent. However, in Mark’s Gethsemane, Jesus affirms that “all things are possible” for the Father, and yet the cup is still not taken away from him (Mark 14:36). As in the garden of Gethsemane, there is no voice from heaven to offer any words of comfort, encouragement, or confirmation to Jesus. Jesus’ will is set in contrast to the Father’s will, and it is ultimately the father’s that endures.

This conflict of will is not unique to the narratives found in the New Testament. Long before men from the Far East kneeled down to worship Jesus, Greek poets had
already discovered that the conflicting will of an individual, set against a god’s, gives a type of overwhelming power to a performance. However, what is unique to the New Testament is the way in which subsequent communities imitated Jesus’ life. As men and women gathered in houses, they were not content simply to hear the biblical stories performed: they chose to reenact and participate in the Jesus *mythos* itself. In particular, there are two episodes that flowed into the consciousness and fed the appetites of later Christians: Jesus’ baptism, and his institution of the Last Supper.
Reenacting the Gestures

The events of Jesus’ life, such as his baptism and the institution of the Last Supper, were imitated and reenacted by later Christian followers. When the Church began widespread building after the Edict of Milan (313), the baptistery typically was a separate building. Baptisteries were usually constructed to the northwest of the church, to the west to symbolize the entrance into the Kingdom of God, and to the north to symbolize that catechumens were coming from the darkness of paganism into the light of Jesus. On Palm Sunday, the catechumens, Christian converts under instruction before baptism, became neophytes, or “new converts,” once they renounced their former religion and were baptized under new Christianity during the Easter baptismal ceremony. Neophytes were allowed to be part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist for the first time, and in turn, enter in a full communion with the Church.

Since baptism and Eucharist are linked in this way, this chapter will focus on the performative aspects of these two rites. The chapter will open with the baptismal setting and how a neophyte’s ritualistic gestures and movements were designed to reenact and

33 The Latin term baptisterium was also applied to the vessel which contained the water for baptism. Although there is no knowledge when the first baptisteries were built, one of the earliest known baptisteries is at Dura-Europus (c. 232). The baptistery is a room at the entrance of the house-church, and has an elaborate civory surmounting the font. This alludes to both the frigidarium (cold pool) of the public baths by its arrangement, and to a tomb by its sarcophagus-shaped quadrilateral font. This association with death is most likely the explanation for baptismal fonts found in the catacombs, which were cut into the soft tufta. This is seen in the catacombs of Saint Priscilla and Saint Pontianus. For more detail about the relationship between baptistery fonts and catacombs, see Émile Mâle, trans. David Buxton, The Early Churches of Rome (London: Benn, 1960). Additionally, baptisteries were similar to bathing apartments in the termae. Pliny the Younger uses the word baptisteria in this context. See Pliny, Selected Letters of the Younger Pliny, ed. Elmer Truesdell Merrill (University of California Libraries, 1903) 2.17.49.
imitate Christ’s own baptism. A brief account of Western baptismal rites will be given first, and then an explication of more generalized baptismal performance will follow. The remainder of the chapter will focus on key aspects of a post-ninth century Eucharistic ceremony. The main points of dramatic focus will be: 1. the altar itself; 2. kiss of peace (*Pax*); 3. bringing gifts to the altar; 4. elevation of the Host; and 5. receiving communion. The Eucharist, a performance reenacting the Last Supper, would produce a new register of formulaic gestures to help form a Christian mode of visual expression. However, in order to enter this ceremony of sacred delivery, a person first had to be physically baptized.

Evidence for Western baptismal rites primarily comes from Ambrose of Milan (c. 337-397). According to Ambrose, baptismal candidates assembled on a Saturday night. The bishop touched the candidate’s ears and nostrils, echoing one of the miracles found in Mark’s Gospel. Ambrose explains that the nostrils are substituted for the mouth because women are present. The candidate renounced Satan, and then “the bishop exorcized the water. He then uttered an invocation and a prayer that the water may be sanctified and that the eternal Trinity may dwell there.” Ambrose supports a threefold immersion, and a post-baptismal anointing with chrism, a mixture

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34 The term “Host” is used in English when the bread has been consecrated by the priest. “Host” is not an early patristic word, nor is it a spiritual word for θύσια.
36 Mark 7:31-37. In this miracle story, Jesus heals a deaf and mute man by “laying his hands” on the man. Jesus “put his fingers into the man’s ears” and spat onto his own fingers, using the spittle to touch the man’s tongue (Mark 7:33).
37 Although it is unclear why the presence of women would cause the bishop to use the nostrils instead of the mouth, perhaps this was done because the mouth could lead to impure thoughts of kissing the baptismal candidate. Kissing was a common gesture in the liturgy, which will be analyzed later in this thesis, but it could also lead to sinful thoughts.
of oil and balsam.\textsuperscript{39} Contrary to baptismal descriptions found in the \textit{Apostolic Constitutions}, a primary source for early Christian baptism, Ambrose notes that there was also a ceremony of foot washing at Milan.\textsuperscript{40} It is important to remember that this is simply one account of baptismal rites. As previously mentioned, the \textit{Apostolic Constitutions} provides another description of a fourth century baptism—a description that provides a better framework for visual and performative aspects of the baptismal process.

As a baptismal candidate approached the baptistery, he would have entered the building and walked down a flight of steps, which descended into a round or polygonal pool (\textit{piscina}).\textsuperscript{41} The pool was sunk beneath the level of the floor, and sometimes was surrounded by a row of columns, which supported curtains to insure the privacy of the candidate.\textsuperscript{42} As the candidate stepped into the cold “living water,” he renounced the works of darkness facing west, and would turn eastward to confess the Sun of Righteousness.\textsuperscript{43} The Holy Spirit “immediately supervened from the heavens, and rested over the waters” until the priest prayed to God: “Look down from heaven, and sanctify this water, and give it grace and power, so that he that is to be baptized, according to the

\textsuperscript{39} ibid.  
\textsuperscript{40} Ambrose. \textit{De sacramentis}. 3.4. Translation found in Edward Yarnold, \textit{The Awe-inspiring Rites of Initiation} (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994) 122.  
\textsuperscript{41} Thomas Poole, “Baptistery,” \textit{The Catholic Encyclopedia} 22 March 2011 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02276b.htm>. It should be noted that as Christianity spread, the need for pools, designed for adult conversion, became outdated. Once infant baptism became more common, only a large baptismal font was needed.  
\textsuperscript{42} Though, it should also be remembered that curtains are regular in late antique ceremony.  
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{AC}. 2.7.58. The directional explanation is found in Lactantius’ \textit{Divine Institutes}: “Of these the east is assigned to God, because He Himself is the foundation of light, and the enlightener of all things, and because He makes us rise to eternal life. But the west is ascribed to that disturbed and depraved mind, because it conceals the light, because it always brings on darkness, and because it makes men die and perish in their sins. For as light belongs to the east, and the whole course of life depends upon the light, so darkness belongs to the west: but death and destruction are contained in darkness.” See Lactantius, \textit{Divine Institutes}, trans. Anthony Bowen and Peter Garnsey (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004) 2.10. Lactantius (c. 240-320 CE) was an early Christian author who became the advisor to Constantine I. The \textit{AC} further describe that Eden was located towards the east (8.2.12). Another source for ancient baptismal practice is Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem (\textit{sed.} 349-87). Spinks notes, “Cyril stresses the image of dying and rising (Romans 6)...this was not the typical image emphasized.” See Spinks (2007): 604.
command of Thy Christ, may be crucified with Him, and may die with Him, and may be buried with Him, and may rise with Him to the adoption which is in Him, that he may be dead to sin and live to righteousness.”

As baptismal accounts in Acts describe, candidates could be immersed in sanctified water; however, it is not until the priest “laid their hands upon them,” that they could receive the Holy Spirit. This final gesture illustrated that although the waters cleanse the body and soul, they alone do not bring someone into the Christian faith. However, when the priest acted as the mediator between God and the candidate, the Holy Spirit acted through the priest and initiated the candidate into Christianity.

Once the waters had been sanctified, the priest anointed the head of the baptismal candidate in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins. The priest then fully submerged the candidate into the water, naming the Trinity as he performed the baptism. To seal this bond of “worthy initiation,” a priest finally anointed the neophyte with chrism. The “new convert” stood up, and made one last prayer towards the east. After this prayer, the newly baptized Christian was then kissed on the mouth by both the bishop and by the brethren in the congregation, and was given a white garment to wear as a final symbol of initiation into the Church.

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44 AC. 7.3.43. See also chapter 4 of Tertullian, “On Baptism,” Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 22 March 2011 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.toc.html>. Tertullian (c. 160-220 CE) was an early Christian author from Carthage who was the first to write an extensive corpus of Latin Christian literature.

45 Acts 8:14-20; Acts 8:38-40.

46 AC. 3.2.16.

47 AC. 7.2.22. Matthew 28:19. Although a complete submersion recalled the Jordan River and Jesus’ own baptism, the Didache (7.1) does give an alternative of pouring water three times (symbolic of the Holy Trinity) over a candidate’s head.

48 AC. 7.3.41.

49 AC. 7.3.44.

50 See Stephen Benko, Pagan Rome and the Early Christians (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 82. For theological explanations of this act, see N.J. Perella, The Kiss Sacred and Profane (Los
allowed new converts to recall and reenact Jesus’ own baptism, but it also allowed them to physically participate in Jesus’ death and resurrection. Since baptism incorporated the neophyte into the body of Jesus—that is to say, into the Church—it seems fitting that once a person cleansed himself from his former life of sin, he would be given the opportunity to become one flesh with Christ. This full communion was enacted on Easter Sunday, which was a time when both current Christians and new converts could take part in the liturgy of the Eucharist.

The earliest account of the Eucharistic service, and the significance which the first Christians attached to it, is found in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians.\textsuperscript{51} Paul’s advice on conducting the service of the Eucharist points to a community who still shared a communal meal, similar to Jesus’ own Passover. Yet, by this time the ceremony was being enacted in Greek, rather than Hebrew, and the Eucharist had transformed into a process designed to save all men, not just Jews.\textsuperscript{52} By the fourth century, the Latin Mass had gradually taken over from the Greek Eucharist in many parts of the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{53} During the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great made strenuous efforts to establish a common visual protocol for the Catholic Mass. As the Mass acquired

\textsuperscript{51} 1 Corinthians 11:23-7.
\textsuperscript{52} The ceremony was being spoken in Greek because it was currently the most “international” language in the eastern Mediterranean. For more detail, see Bart Ehrman, “Misquoting Jesus: Scribes Who Altered Scripture and Readers Who May Never Know,” Heyns Lecture at Stanford University, 27 April 2003.
\textsuperscript{53} There was a basic simplicity in the early Greek Eucharist. The important parts of the service were: the essential account of the Last Supper, the blessing, and the distribution of the bread and wine. The shift from the Greek Eucharist to the Latin Mass happened surprisingly slowly, considering that the Latin services had existed since the second century, and that Constantine had made Christianity the official religion of Rome in 312. For more detail, see Josef A. Jungmann The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development, vol. 1, (New York: Benziger Brothers Inc., 1986) 44-60. There are differences between the Greek Eastern Orthodox and the Latin Roman Rites, but rather than attempting to reconcile these differences, this thesis will focus on the performative aspects of the Roman Rites.
elements of formulaic representation and enactment, the Eucharistic meal was centered on five visual aspects of ceremonial importance: 1. the altar itself; 2. kiss of peace (Pax); 3. bringing gifts to the altar; 4. elevation of the Host; and 5. receiving communion.

Within the category of “elevation of the Host,” it will be important to distinguish the theatrical nature of this action when it is Easter Triduum—particularly Easter Sunday—from that in a non-Easter Eucharistic ceremony. Before this distinction occurs, it is important first to have a clear visualization of the sacrificial meal’s location—that is to say, it is important to visualize the placement of a church’s altar in relation to the congregation.

As previously mentioned, the Lord’s Table is a primary focal point because this was the altar, the “place of sacrifice,” on which the Eucharist was offered. Although the Eucharist may be celebrated outside a sacred place, it is never done so without an altar. John Chrysostom (c. 349-407), Patriarch of Constantinople, writes that the altar “is an object of wonder: by nature it is stone, but it is made holy when it receives the body of Christ.”

According to Amalarius, a liturgical writer of the last quarter of the eighth century, the altar signifies the Table of the Lord (mensa Domini), which refers to

54 In this thesis, I will not discuss all elements of the Catholic Mass; rather, I will focus on the Eucharist—the sacrificial “Last Supper” meal of bread and wine—itself. For this reason, I will refer to the meal as the Eucharist, or Eucharistic meal.

55 The Easter festival does not only consist of Easter Sunday; instead, it is a commemorative day of Christ’s passion and death. Easter embraces the Triduum from Good Friday until Easter Sunday. This Triduum was a development of the fourth century. However, in Roman liturgy, this one Triduum has become two: the Triduum of the passion is Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday; the Monday and Tuesday following Easter Sunday is included in the second. For more detail about the Easter Cycle, see chapter 20 in Josef Jungmann, The Early Liturgy (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1959).

56 This point is emphasized in Sacred Congregation of Rites. See Sacred Congregation of Rites…on the Sacred Liturgy, 26 September 1964, no. 91: AAS 56 (1964).

57 In ecclesiastical history, the only exceptions are: Saint Lucian (312 CE) celebrating the Eucharist in prison, and Theodore Bishop of Tyre celebrating the Eucharist on the hands of his deacons (Mabillon, Praef, in 3 saec., n. 79).

both the Last Supper and the Cross.\textsuperscript{59} Aside from the various connotations that the altar and its location signify, the thread that stitches these meanings together is the altar being a place of action, as well as the center of clerical performances in the Eucharistic liturgy.

At the beginning of a Eucharistic service, the bishop would walk up to the altar, face the congregation, and offer the blessing: “The peace of the Lord be with you [\textit{Pax Domini vobiscum}].”\textsuperscript{60} Although fairly simple in vocabulary, this blessing was incredibly important because it carried the thought that all blessings are exclusively for those in Christ, that is to say, for those who have been baptized. In this case, “you [vobis]” does not refer to everyone in the church; rather, to those who had been initiated into Christianity through the sacrament of baptism. Since baptism initiated a person into the Christian Church, only these select could be welcomed with the Lord’s “peace.”\textsuperscript{61} Accompanying the blessing, the bishop kissed the first priest to his right, and then the priest to his left. Rather than representing a form of unbridled carnality, this mouth-to-mouth kiss of peace, or \textit{Pax}, was an “actualization and realization of the Christians’ hope to overcome separation and to find union in and with God.”\textsuperscript{62} Not only does Paul command the Thessalonians, Corinthians, and Romans to: “\textit{Ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς πάντας ἐν φιλήματι ἁγίῳ [Greet all brothers with a holy kiss]},” but God himself created man with earth and a kiss, or “breath of life.”\textsuperscript{63} Significantly, the Greek noun for “kiss,” \textit{φιλήμα}, is derived from the verb \textit{φιλέω}, which means, “to love.” This ritual kiss of peace, as a physical and outward manifestation of a person’s internal love, is a bodily expression of social interrelationship. When the bishop kisses the priests in the

\textsuperscript{60} See John Wesley Harris, \textit{Medieval Theatre in Context} (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 25.
\textsuperscript{61} This blessing originated in the Old Testament (Genesis 43:23 and Judges 6:23) and was quoted by Jesus in the New Testament (Matthew 10:13; Luke 24:36).
\textsuperscript{62} Benko, 1984: 91.
\textsuperscript{63} 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; Romans 16:16; Genesis 2:7. After Paul, Justin Martyr is the first Christian writer to refer to this \textit{Pax} again in his first apology, Ch. 46.
beginning of the Eucharistic service, he not only cements a relationship through a fusion of souls—he performs an action that visually illustrates the symbolic unity of the Church.

This unity is being performed in the name of Jesus Christ, which includes his forgiveness of sins, and most importantly, his enduring love for humanity.

After the bishop kisses the priests, the Pax is spread to the members of the choir. Once it reaches them, they stop singing Old Testament texts and burst into a hymn of praise to the Holy Trinity. When the choir sings, “Sicut erat in principio [As it was in the beginning],” the deacons rise up from prayer and kiss the altar. When the choir repeats the verse, the pontiff arises from prayer and “kisses the Gospel-Book which lies on the altar, and goes from the right side of the altar to his throne, the deacons being with him on either side, standing and facing eastwards.”

As the Pax made its way to the congregation—split between women on the right side and men on the left—only a priest could transmit the kiss from the last choir member to the first woman. A priest alone could “blend his soul” with another woman without prompting carnal thoughts. The concern over the sacredness of the Pax had already been noticed by a second century Christian writer, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c.215). Clement notes, “There are those that do nothing but make the churches resound with a kiss not having love itself within,” which indicate that this mouth-to-

64 For an extended analysis of the Pax and its associations with breathing, see: Benko. 1984: 80.
65 Amalarius, “Ordo Romanus,” Patrologia Latina, ed. Tom Migne (1844-1855) 2.2. This selected passage is a Roman Ordo found in a manuscript at Saint Amand, dating from the ninth century. It is significant because it gives an impression of how the ninth century Roman Liturgy was performed.
66 Amalarius. “Ordo Romanus.” 2.2
67 Harris, 1992: 25.
mouth kiss was abused by some members of the church.\textsuperscript{69} The \textit{Apostolic Tradition}, a church order written around 380 in Constantinople or Syria, further states that during the liturgy, men in the laity could only kiss other men, and women kiss only other women.\textsuperscript{70} Despite the potential for sin, the unifying \textit{Pax} established the subsequent tone of the Eucharistic service, and physically demonstrated that the Holy Spirit was the active agent between the men and women, and between the clergy and laity.

As the Eucharistic service progressed, motifs of the Epiphany—a commemoration of the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles in the persons of the Magi—were “remembered” and enacted by both the clergy and congregation.\textsuperscript{71} In medieval liturgical practice, there was a distinction between an offering of the people (\textit{oblatio populi}) and an offering of the clergy (\textit{oblatio sacerdotalis}). Before the Eucharistic service began, the \textit{oblatio populi} took place, which consisted of a procession of the people carrying gifts, such as food, wax, oil, clothing, ornaments, or money, to the altar.\textsuperscript{72} The \textit{oblatio sacerdotalis}, on the other hand, took place right before the bread and wine were consecrated.\textsuperscript{73} Initially, this procession of bread and wine was used for the Eucharist, given by people who expected to take part in the subsequent communion. However, as time went by, clerics were assigned this duty. This \textit{oblatio sacerdotalis} developed even further and became a type of embellishment of liturgical performance. In Ravenna, an important location of Byzantine influence, an early association was made between the

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{AC.} 2.7.57.
\textsuperscript{71} A nice illustration of this is found in the church of San Vitale. Justinian I (527-565), the Emperor of Constantinople, commissioned two famous mosaics (dedicated in 548) of both himself and Empress Theodora. On the left side of the sanctuary, Justinian is represented as participating in the offertory procession by carrying a bowl. On the right side of the sanctuary, Theodora is pictured carrying a liturgical chalice. The artist deliberately tied this double offertory procession into the Epiphany because he worked a representation of the Magi into the hem of Theodora’s mantle.
\textsuperscript{73} ibid.
journey of the Magi and the offertory procession. Three individuals dressed as Magi would come from the front door of the church, bearing gifts of bread and wine for the Eucharist. The Magi would carry the bread on a paten, or in a ciborium, as well as a chalice of wine. As Eucharist gift-bearers, the Magi became a vivid symbol of the gift-bearers of all Christians who would soon take part in the Eucharistic meal.

Once the oblatio sacerdotalis had been brought to the altar, the priest would rise up and prepare the elements. As the congregation waited, a priest prepared the bread and wine facing the people (versus populum), or with his back to the people (ad orientem). As an ivory diptych in Frankfurt illustrates, the early Middle Ages created artistic renderings of the officiating priest facing towards the people. However, if a priest did face the laity, his face could have constituted another focus of interest. Thus, a priest versus populum could have been visually distracting. On the other hand, if a priest faced away from the people, as depicted in Andrea Pisano’s “Eucharist,” his body position visually separated him from the laity. Thus, the ceremonial act is literally and figuratively distanced from the people. In any case, the movement of the priest’s body, in relation to the people, the altar, and the elements, had “a distinctive potential for performative imagination.” While his body position could influence the congregation’s reception of the Eucharist, it was more important that he gave the meal the proper reverence that Jesus originally had given to it.

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75 Schloeder. 1990: 69-70.
76 “The Bishop Officiating at the Mass.” Part of an ivory diptych. Frankfort am main, Museum Staedel. Date unknown.
This devotion can also best be seen in Easter Triduum. During this time, there were three Hosts—each of which prolonged the Eucharistic service until Easter Sunday. Two unblessed hosts, that is to say, two hosts “empty” of Jesus’ presence, were given to the laity on Good Friday. The last Host, which had been “blessed” on Maundy Thursday, would be given to the congregation after the Easter Vigil concluded on Easter Sunday. These Hosts gained an extended performative role of receiving admiration (adoratio)—a role not seen in Mass during other parts of the liturgical calendar.

During Passion Week, the clergy darkened the interior of a church by slowly stripping the church of its ornamentation and candles. On Good Friday, the brethren removed the crucifix from the altar and exchanged it for a temporary cross. The clergy sang praises of the cross in Latin and concluded the Adoratio Crucis with: “Let the abbot come before the holy cross and prostrate himself thrice with all the brethren of the choir on the right hand, that is, seniors and juniors; and with deep heartfelt sighs let him recite the seven penitential psalms together with the prayers in honor of the holy cross [Veniat abbas ante crucem sanctam ac tribus vicibus se prosternat cum omnibus fratribus dexterioris chori, scilicet senioribus ac junioribus, et cum magno cordis suspirio septem poenitentiae psalmos cum orationibus sanctae cruci competenibus decantando peroret].”

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79 Harris, 1992: 29. It is difficult to say how far back this practice goes. It might have been inspired by the Jewish custom of lighting a lamp at the conclusion of the Sabbath, but this is not certain.
80 This ceremony is found in the Regularis Concordia of Saint Ethelwold. This description of the adoration of the cross, or Adoratio Crucis, is taken from David Bevington, Medieval Drama (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975). Bevington’s text is based on London, British Museum, MS Cotton Tiberius A. III, Regularis Concordia saec. Xi, fol. 18v-19r, checked against Karl Young, Drama of the Medieval Church, vol. 1, 118-19, and Dom Thomas Symons, ed., Regularis Concordia: The Monastic Agreement (London, 1953), 42-43. Symons also collates against two other manuscripts, Cotton MS Faustina B. III, fols. 159a-198a, and Cotton Tiberius A. III, fols. 177a and b; see that edition for variants. The Regularis Concordia, or Monastic Agreement, was compiled by Ethelwold around 970. Ethelwold’s Regularis is often considered a model of performance because he was one of the leaders of the tenth century monastic reform movement in Anglo-Saxon England; thereby, giving his work credibility.
81 ibid.
Once the brethren finished venerating the cross, the same two deacons who carried the temporary cross into the church wrapped it in a linen cloth, symbolizing the gravecloths placed on Jesus. The deacons took the cross away, singing the antiphons: “In peace, therefore; He will dwell; and My flesh shall rest in hope [In pace in idipsum; Habitabit; item Caro mea requiescet in spe].” These antiphons were sung until the deacons “come to the place of the sepulchre. From this point, at least two members of the church were appointed to represent the soldiers guarding Jesus’ tomb, and watched the “body” while chanting psalms throughout the night. During this “Easter Vigil,” one large candle—the Paschal Candle—was the only source of light for those in the church. The candle was placed on the ground in front of the altar to represent hope at its lowest point. This low position symbolized that Jesus—the Light of the World—needed to be fully man in order to sacrifice his life for the sins of humanity.

At 2:00 a.m. on Easter morning, the abbey’s bells were joyfully rung. The Paschal Candle was lifted to the altar, and six smaller lighted candles—three on each side—were added to it. While a procession formed at the altar and stretched around the church, the bells continued to ring. Two acolytes dressed in white led the procession—each carrying candles—followed by two more acolytes with thuribles.

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82 This “Interment of the Cross in the Sepulchre,” or Depositio, immediately followed the Adoratio Crucis in the Regularis Concordia manuscript. The description of the Depositio will be taken from Bevington. 1975: 14-15. It is also important to realize that both the Adoratio Crucis and the Depositio had regional variations.

83 ibid. The sepulchre, a container or small building that had been designed in the likeness of Christ’s sepulchre, was often richly adorned with paintings and carvings of the Passion and the Resurrection, engraved with both Easter texts and sleeping knights. For more detail see E.K. Chambers, The Medieval Stage, vol. 2. (Toronto: General Publishing Company, 1996).

84 ibid. Chambers notes: “It is an example of the irrepressible medieval tendency to mimesis that [the soldiers] were sometimes accounted like the knights of Pilate” (Chambers. 1996: 23).

85 Chambers. 1996: 23. As Chambers notes, “this light might be provided by one of the innumerable guilds of the Middle Ages, whose members, perhaps, also undertook the devout duty of keeping the two nights' vigil before the sepulchre.”

86 Harris. 1992: 30.

87 ibid. This also returned the number of candles used for the Eucharistic ceremony to seven, which was usual for the Mass.
Behind them walked two silent deacons, and behind them walked two more deacons chanting. When the procession reached the sepulchre, they met two acolytes, representing the angels at the tomb, who had been concealed inside the structure. The “angels” sang: “Whom do you seek, do you seek Jesus? He has risen already [Quem quaeritis, an Jesum quaeritis? Iam surrexit].”\textsuperscript{88} As the angels entered into the choir, a priest dressed in a white alb emerged from the sepulchre, carrying the special Easter chalice that contained the pre-consecrated third Host, or the “Body of Christ.”\textsuperscript{89} Four additional acolytes, who had been standing beside the sepulchre while holding a canopy raised on staffs, moved so the canopy covered both the priest and Host. The two acolytes bearing candles moved in front of the canopy, and those holding thuribles flanked the priest on both sides.

At this point, the chanting deacons proclaimed: “Christ has risen and has given light to his people, whom he ransomed with his blood, alleluia! [Surrexit Christus et illuxit populo suo, quem redemit sanguine suo, alleluia].”\textsuperscript{90} As the rest of the clerical procession proceeded to the middle of the church and turned to face the altar, the usual crucifix had been reinstated. More antiphons and verses followed, which concluded with the words, “Because he lives, he lives in God [Quod enim vivit, vivit Deo].” The priest advanced and placed the chalice—containing the Host—upon the altar. The bells, which had been silent during the singing, rang out once more. The bishop, standing by

\textsuperscript{88} This is from a breviary of the eleventh century from St. Gall and was to be performed at the end of matins. This description of the “Raising of the Host from the Sepulchre,” or \textit{Elevatio}, is taken from Bevington. 1975: 17. Bevington’s text is based on St. Gall, Stifsbibliothek, MS 387, Brev. Sangallense saec. xi, p. 55, edited in Karl Young, \textit{Drama of the Medieval Church}, vol. 1, 130-131.
\textsuperscript{89} Harris, 1992: 30.
\textsuperscript{90} Bevington. 1975: 19.
his throne, began the Easter Mass, which culminated in the Elevation of the Host—the final physical act that blessed the Host for communion.\textsuperscript{91}

The actions just described are to one specific Easter Triduum; however, both an Easter and a non-Easter Mass followed the subsequent pattern during Holy Communion. Once prayers had been administered, the priest seemed to kiss the Host itself.\textsuperscript{92} After this “kiss,” the priest would say, “Glory to Thee, O Lord; glory to Thee, O Lord, on account of Thine unspeakable gift to us for ever.”\textsuperscript{93} The priest then “[drew] nigh to the fraction of the Host,” and with both hands, named the Trinity, and broke the Host.\textsuperscript{94} He laid the piece in his left hand down on the disk, and “sign[ed] the chalice” with the Host in his right.\textsuperscript{95} After giving thanks to the Trinity once more, the priest dipped the Host into the chalice, and “sign[ed] with it the body which is in the paten.”\textsuperscript{96} As he united the two pieces, he spoke of the completed, perfect, and life-giving “divine mysteries,” and placed one piece of the Host into the chalice “in the form of a cross.”\textsuperscript{97} At the moment of consecration, those in the congregation who were about to receive communion knelt out of respect.\textsuperscript{98} Once the Host had been consecrated, the four sides of the chalice were touched by the Host, showing that the body of Christ reunites the

\textsuperscript{91} The power and importance of the \textit{Elevatio} is demonstrated in illuminated medieval manuscripts. The \textit{Elevatio} is the chosen image for the initial ‘I’ of the third book of the \textit{Decretals (“Incipit liber tercius de vitæ et bonæstatæ clericorum”). In a thirteenth century miscellany of canon law, two priests are shown at a draped altar (BL Royal 10 d vii, fol. 165ra), and a Bolognese manuscript of 1241 shows the elevation with attendants and an audience of four men (Oxford Bodleian Th.b.4, fol.101ra). By the fourteenth century, the \textit{Elevatio} became a favorite choice for the illustration of canon law texts that dealt with liturgical practice, taking up half or even a full page.

\textsuperscript{92} In \textit{L.B.A}, the writer describes that the priest’s lips do not touch the Host, but only appear to kiss it (7.16). See “Liturgy…and Constitutions, Homily,” 23 March, \textit{Christian Classics Ethereal Library}, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07.toc.html>.

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{L.B.A} 7.16.

\textsuperscript{94} ibid.

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{L.B.A} 7.16.

\textsuperscript{96} ibid.

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{L.B.A} 7.17.

\textsuperscript{98} Apart from the biblical passages of “worshipping” already analyzed in the first chapter of this thesis, additional acts of kneeling are seen in: Acts 7:60 by Stephen; Acts 9:40 by Peter; Acts 20:36 by Paul; and a hymn to Christ in Philippians 2:6-11 (bending to the knee in the name of Jesus).
entire human race. After the priest signed both himself and the deacons on the forehead, the priest bowed, rose, and said a final prayer: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all.”

When members of the congregation finally took communion, they came straight to the altar and received the Host into their hand and were handed the cup of wine, or “blood,” to drink. This physical and highly visible bond between the most holy of sacraments—the Holy Eucharist—and the laity, demonstrated a type of symbolic system that depended upon word, sound, and image. The spoken words of the priest, complemented by the visible image of the Eucharistic transubstantiation, culminated in a ritual that was meant to be uniform and universal—present at every Christian altar. The Host’s visible presence became increasingly important for the clergy because it was soon perceived as embodying the essence of clerical office, as well as the epitome and justification of clerical privilege. For the common people, the Host’s presence became equated with achieving grace here on earth.

In the middle of the ninth century major procedural changes would occur in the Eucharistic service. Soon, altar-rails visibly distanced the people from seeing the Host. This lack of visibility caused an entire shift in the Mass. Seeing the Elevatio as often as possible became extraordinarily important, especially on Easter Sunday, to the point where the act assumed new levels of mystery and grace. People began starting lawsuits to ensure that they obtained pews which would provide a favorable view of the altar. It was not until the fourteenth century that the Church adopted a feast entirely devoted

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99 L.B.A 7.18.
100 Harris. 1992: 25.
to the visible presence of the Host, a feast that would act as a catalyst for both sacred and secular drama: the feast and procession of Corpus Christi.
Elevating the Body

As a celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist, the feast and procession of Corpus Christi were added to the liturgical calendar in 1311 by Pope Clement V in the midst of fierce philosophical-theological debates. During a time when the Church questioned whether the laity should receive both the bread and the wine, or simply the bread alone, the establishment of a new public religious holiday helped organize the spread of the increasingly urban populations by having a large civic procession. Since the new feast was a visual manifestation of the body of Christ, the festivities surrounding Corpus Christi provided a focus for Jesus’ presence in the Eucharist.

Before going into detail about this new festival, it is necessary to develop a clear understanding of what led to its founding. The previous chapter of this thesis primarily dealt with the visual and performative qualities of the Eucharist. This chapter will focus on one particular aspect of the Eucharist: the Host. It will first be important to understand how the interior architectural developments in churches—the structures that either revealed the Host or hid it from the congregation—emerged in tandem with the Church’s doctrinal changes. As will be seen, these changes resulted in a new kind of theatricality in the Mass, which presented the Eucharist as a remote spectacle, veiled in layers of mystery. At a time when craning necks and turning faces struggled to see the Host, its visibility; or rather, lack thereof, caused congregations to perform the scandalous act of rushing from church to church just to see the *Elevatio*. The first
movement towards finding a remedy would occur in 1264; however, nearly half a century would pass before the body of Christ would be exhibited outside the walls of the church and on the public stage.

By the time Amalarius took steps to revitalize the Mass in the ninth century, the pronounced distinction between the clergy and laity was beginning to be reflected in church architecture. A physical line of separation began to be drawn between the altar and the congregation, which was expressed in the architecture of gothic cathedrals. Rather than remaining at the front of the apse—the large semi-circular recess in the eastern end of the church—the altar got pushed back to the church’s rear wall. This meant that the choir, which previously sat behind the altar, was now placed in front of it. Although the altar could still be seen from the nave—the main body of the church—the distance between the priest and his congregation significantly increased. Since the priest could no longer stand behind the altar, he was forced to perform the Eucharist only from the altar’s front. This implied that he did not identify with Jesus by taking part in the Lord’s Table; rather, he appeared as a humble servant who could only mediate between his fellow sinners and Christ himself.

The middle of the ninth century brought about more procedural developments would further distance the people from the Eucharist. The type of bread had changed from leavened bread, which spoiled too quickly, to unleavened bread. This change of bread—which appeared as small circular wafers—probably took place because of the growing reverence that both the clergy and the laity had towards the Host. Since both

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102 Harris. 1992: 71.
103 The growing emphasis on the Trinity, and on Jesus’ sacrifice, resulted in an entire shift of the Mass. What had once been a meal that celebrated hope for all Christians, had turned into a “remembrance” of Jesus’ Passion, or sufferings. This shift centered on the crucifixion, an act that only Jesus had experienced, and was not something the people could share in.
104 Harris. 1992: 71.
groups of people cared more about the Host, they would not want to eat a moldy “body” of Christ. As the priests became more convinced of the doctrine of the Real Presence, their behavior verged on fanaticism. Obsessed over the potential for both lost crumbs and spilt wine, the priests feared that the “common person” would lose part of Jesus’ body. So that no un-cleansed hands would even touch the holy mystery of the consecrated Host, priests decided to place the wafer on the communicant’s tongue themselves.105 However, because those who received communion still did so while standing, this act of placing the Host on a person’s tongue became extremely difficult. To make it easier for the priests, the laity now had to kneel, look up to the priest, and open his or her mouth to receive the blessed sacrament.106 Prior to this act, a person received the Host in his or her hand. A nice description of this former act is found in a fourth century account given by Cyril of Jerusalem, a distinguished theologian of the early Church:

When you come forward, do not draw near with your hands wide open or with your fingers spread apart; instead, with your left hand make a throne for the right hand, which will receive the King. Receive the Body of Christ in the hollow of your hand and give the response: ‘Amen’…Draw near also to the cup of his Blood. Do not stretch out your hands, but bow in adoration and respect, and say: ‘Amen’…And while your lips are still wet, touch them with your fingers and sanctify your eyes, your forehead, and your other senses. Then, while waiting for

105 ibid 72.
106 See Lucien Deiss, The Mass (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992) 98. See also Jungmann, vol. 3. 1986: 314. On pp. 306-325, there is more documentation relative to the history of communion. It should be noted that neither the Roman Missal nor the Code of Canon Law prescribed this changed behavior. For this thesis, it should also be noted that in the middle of the ninth century, the priest no longer shared his bread with the communicants. He used a paten, or bread-plate, which fitted over the mouth of the chalice. The wafers, intended for the congregation, were transferred to a new vessel called the ciborium, or “bread basket.” This can be seen as an act striving to present the Eucharist as an experience removed from the sinning members of the laity.
the prayer, give thanks to God who judged you worthy of such great mysteries.\(^{107}\)

Just as procedural changes occurred with the bread, so too with receiving the wine. Earlier in the eighth and through to the ninth century, communicants began to drink the wine with a type of straw, known as a *calamus* or *fistula*.\(^{108}\) This tube physically stopped those with “profane” lips from touching the sacred cup. By the twelfth century, clergy began to think that Jesus’ command, “Do this in remembrance of me [τὸ υτό ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν],” no longer applied to the congregation.\(^{109}\) One century later, theological debates raged over whether the laity should receive both the bread and the wine, or simply the bread alone. The main objection to taking the cup away from the people was that the body of Christ worked through the species of the wine, and therefore, only giving the Host was not sufficient.\(^{110}\) However, in 1281, the Council of Lambeth ruled that wine was to be received by the priest alone.\(^{111}\)

When these sacramental changes threatened to distance the people from the meaning of the Eucharist itself, architectural arrangements followed suit. With the priests now standing in front of the altar, and the communicants now kneeling to receive the Host alone, it became inconvenient to have the people walk to the altar itself. And with this inconvenience, came the altar rail. In due course, the dividing line between the holy choir and the profane nave of the building turned into an actual dividing wall—the

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111 See Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. W.G. Henderson (Surtees Society 63: Durham, 1875) 24.405. However, it should be noted that it is impossible to say exactly when this new custom became universal.
latticed rood screen. As Mass became even more distanced from the people, and treated as a mystery to be adoringly wondered at from afar, the priests recognized that they were the object of keen observation. Their vestments became more magnificent and began to have symbolic colorings: white vestments were worn for festive occasions, red was worn for martyrs’ days and Pentecost, black was for days of penance and masses for the Dead, and green was for days without any specific character.

By the late Middle Ages, this new type of theatricality increasingly focused the gaze of the laity—now distant spectators—upon a specific object. Although architectural additions, such as the latticed rood screen, made the Elevatio—already a performative feature of the Eucharistic service—difficult to see, its lack of visibility created a psychological point of interest and concentration. For the people, the Elevatio evolved into the climax of the Mass precisely because they had been deprived of any vital participation in the Eucharistic ceremony. To look upon the sacred Host became equivalent to the act of communion itself. Arguably, it became more important than the act of communion, because at the Elevatio the Host had become the actual body of Christ nailed to the cross. To see the Host—the body of Christ—was to be saved.

When the simple act of the Elevatio became more meaningful to the people than the Eucharistic meal—and in consequence, the Last Supper itself—two more narratives attest to the increased significance of the Host: the legend of the Holy Grail in popular Arthurian romances, and miracle stories surrounding the moment of Elevation. The stories surrounding King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, questing for the Holy Grail, illustrate how the spiritually starved laity found religious expression in domains outside the realm of the Church. Paralleling similar to the Eucharist, the Grail

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112 Harris. 1992: 72.
113 ibid 73.
legends had an underlying framework of both Jesus’ Last Supper and his crucifixion. Like the Eucharistic meal, the Grail, a symbol of the ineffable, was something that could never be deserved. By the end of the twelfth century, these stories began to take poetic expression. Probably written between 1181 and 1191, *Perceval: The Story of the Grail*, is the unfinished fifth romance of the French poet Chrétien de Troyes. This romance legend has its hero, Perceval, witnessing a strange procession—a procession that centers on a grail that contains a mass-wafer. Although Chrétien never finished this story, other Grail stories began to flourish by the thirteenth century.\(^\text{114}\)

Written by a Cistercian monk around 1220, the *Queste del seint graal* developed the narrative of the Grail as a quest for the vessel that had been used at the Last Supper—a vessel that had later contained Jesus’ blood, supposedly collected by Joseph of Arimathea after the crucifixion.\(^\text{115}\) As was similar for Chrétien’s *Perceval*, the Grail itself—like the very Eucharist—continued to be seen as both symbol and object. Above all else, the Grail was the romantic idealized extension of the Eucharistic Host—it was an object that tantalized those who longed to find it, see it, and be abundantly filled with grace at the mere sight of the mystery.

The same emphasis on the Eucharistic presence that fueled the twelfth century Grail legends also inspired the circulation of miracle stories, which had allegedly occurred at the moment of the *Elevatio*. One of the popular themes for these miracles was seeing the Christ child in the hands of the priest, or on the consecrated Host itself. The child on the altar was a powerful image, one that occurred with increasing frequency by the thirteenth century. This association between altar and child had previously been

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\(^{114}\) See Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 139.

\(^{115}\) It is important to understand that the Holy Grail has no Scriptural basis, even though the series of Grail stories connected the cup Jesus had used in the Last Supper to Joseph of Arimathea.
seen in the Abraham and Isaac story. The Old Testament prototype of a father sacrificing his son was a way to link Jesus, a figure of the Passion, to the New Testament Eucharistic meal. Significantly, the Eucharistic image of the Christ-child stressed the presence of Jesus as a man who suffered on the cross and sacrificed his life for the sins of all mankind. The use of the Christ child in the miracle stories linked the Nativity to the Passion, birth to death, in order to evoke an emotional response otherwise absent from a staged and distant Eucharistic service.

However, the mystery surrounding the *Elevatio* began to alarm bishops. Fearing that the congregation would commit an act of idolatry by adoring the unconsecrated bread—that is to say, the bread before it was completely raised in the air to complete the ritualized *Elevatio*—a 1210 decree of the Bishop of Paris introduced a regulation that instructed every priest to elevate the Host only after the words of the consecration had been spoken. The priest then needed to raise the Host high enough to unambiguously demonstrate the completion of the *Elevatio*. However, this one act did not stop the impetus of the growing Host cult. As Jungmann notes, in the cities, “people ran from church to church, to see the elevated Host as often as possible, since rich rewards could be expected from such a practice. People even started lawsuits to ensure their getting a favorable view of the altar. There are examples of congregations where the majority of the faithful waited for the sance-bell signaling the approach of the consecration before

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116 A link between the sacrifice of a child and the institution of the Mass is displayed in an early thirteenth century German psalter (London BL Add 18144, fol. 12r). The chalice and a Christ child are laid out on the table where Christ and his Apostles were seated for their Last Supper. Perhaps more significantly, an illumination in a Flemish manuscript of the *Queste del saint graal* of 1351 displays the Apostles, who are flanked by keeling angels, around the table of the Last Supper. See R.S. Loomis, *The Grail: From Celtic Myth to Christian Symbolism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) plate 341 [Paris Arsenal 5218 fol. 88r]. On top of this table is a chalice, which contains the nimbed Christ child.

117 Jungmann. 1986: 120.
they entered the church. [Once the Elevatio occurred], they rushed out as quickly as they had come in.”

This scandalous behavior greatly troubled the Church authorities. In 1246, and at the suggestion of Juliana of Mont Cornillon (also in Belgium), Bishop Robert de Thorete of the Belgian diocese of Liège convened a synod and instituted a feast celebrating the Host, in which the Host was carried through the town and publicly displayed to all the people. In 1263, Pope Urban IV investigated claims of a Eucharistic miracle at Bolsena-Orvieto, in which a consecrated host began to bleed. Supposedly prompted by this miracle, Pope Urban IV issued the Transitus papal bull in order to officially sanction this feast in 1264. At the request of Pope Urban IV, Saint Thomas Aquinas composed the office—the official prayers of the Church—some time after 1261 for the feast. Unfortunately, Pope Urban IV died before he could put this plan into effect. Nearly half a century later, Pope Clement V realized how necessary this festival was for both the Church and its congregation. Finally, at the Council of Vienne in 1311, the feast was formally adopted as the feast of Corpus Christi—the feast of the Body of Christ.

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118 ibid 121.
120 To read the Transitus de hoc mundo in its Latin entirety, see Bullarum, Diplomatum, et Privilegiorum sanctorum… Taurinensis Edition, vol. 3, ed. Aloysius Tomassetti (Turin 1858) 705ff.
121 See “The Feast and Its Founder” in Barbara R. Walters, The Feast of Corpus Christi (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006) 34. However, it should be noted that this attribution is a modern scholarly conjecture. Lambot notes that when the feast of Corpus Christi was reaffirmed in 1311 by Pope Clement V, there was no specific attribution of authorship to Aquinas (Lambot, “L’Office de la Fête-Dieu”). However, when the Dominicans adopted the office in 1324, the authorship of the liturgy was attributed to Aquinas.
122 The papal bull instituting the feast in 1311 specified that it was to include a procession honoring the sacred Host, although detailed arrangements for the procession were left up to local communities. See Bevington. 1975: 230.
This feast was religious in nature; however, it was deliberately located outside the busiest part of the liturgical year.\footnote{The liturgical year, or the church year, consists of cyclical seasons that determine when feast days are to be observed, and which parts of Scripture are to be read. The Western liturgical calendar consists of: Advent, the time of preparation for Jesus’ birth that lasts until 24 December; Christmastide, beginning with the first Vespers on the night of Christmas Eve and ending with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord; Ordinary Time, which are “common weeks” that do not belong to a proper season; Lent, the “purification” period that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Thursday; Easter Triduum, which includes Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday; Easter season, a seven-week period climaxing at Pentecost; and concluding with another period of Ordinary Time. (It should be noted that this is a rough sketch of the Western Christian liturgical year. This thesis will not discuss the various changes popes have made to the cycle, nor will it expand the differences between the calendar based on the Western Roman Rite of the Catholic Church, and year in the Eastern Orthodox Church.)} In order to make the feast of Corpus Christi memorable, Clement V realized that it would need to be scheduled at a time when there were no other important religious events to distract the worshippers’ attention. This suggests a time after Pentecost, when the yearly story of Jesus’ birth, teachings, death, and resurrection had been brought to its natural conclusion. A date in the summer, a time when the weather would encourage public, civic, celebrations, was chosen. Determined by the full moon and corresponding to the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, the feast falls anywhere between 4 June and 6 July.\footnote{In some texts, the feast of Corpus Christi is assumed to fall somewhere between 23 May and 24 June—this is incorrect. Bevington was first to note: “Corpus Christi falls between 23 May and 24 June, depending on the date of Easter; because of inaccuracies in the old calendar during the late Middle Ages, however, the original dates were actually equivalent to 4 June-6 July on a modern calendar” (Bevington. 1975: 230).} The liturgical celebration began around 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday afternoon with the singing of the first Vespers of the feast. On Thursday, Matins and Lauds were sung shortly after dawn and ended around 6:30 a.m.\footnote{See Douglas Cowling, “The Liturgical Celebration of Corpus Christi in Medieval York,” Records of Early English Drama 2 (1976): 6.} The various chantings masses filled the interval until Prime at 9:00 a.m. The main capitular mass of Corpus Christi followed Terce and ended before noon. High
mass was followed by a solemn procession, which over time, evolved into an elaborate civic parade that overshadowed the religious nature of the festival.\(^{126}\)

A hundred years after its foundation, the festival of Corpus Christi was being celebrated throughout all of Europe. Sponsored by both religious and non-religious guilds,\(^ {127}\) the lavish and dramatic celebrations surrounding the festival of Corpus Christi visually publicized the enduring popularity of the Eucharistic cult. During the feast, two processions led the parade of festivities: the first was a pageant procession of lively forms of entertainment; and the second was a liturgical procession, which included the Corpus Christi Guild, a group who carried the sacred Host throughout the city. Since York evidence is more extensive than that which is found in other cities,\(^ {128}\) the following pages in this chapter will primarily make use of York records.\(^ {129}\) Once a general description of the York parade route has been given, the shrine of the Host will provide a focal point for the remaining discussion of the Corpus Christ Feast. Since none of the later York plays—plays that would have been performed near or on the Feast of Corpus

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\(^{126}\) Although it is not known when the feast and procession was first introduced into England, Thomas Sprott's *Chronicles* (1851) records that by 1318, the festival had been carried from Rome to other parts of the Christian world. See Thomas Sprott, *Thomas Sprott's Chronicle of Profane and Sacred History* (Liverpool: David Marples, 1851) and M. Lyle Spencer, *Corpus Christi Pageants in England* (New York: The Maker & Taylor Company, 1911) 11.

\(^{127}\) Although not central to this thesis, it should be noted that the Black Death (1348-1350) created the wealth that allowed the guilds—the corporations of arts and trades—to produce this type of civic drama. As Harris asserts, those who survived the plague prospered because the resulting shortage of manpower favored both skilled and unskilled workers. See Harris. 1992: 90. The older feudal slavery was destroyed by the new demand for laborers, who could now claim both greater independence and higher wages. Within the towns, craftsmen could now put a premium on their products, which provided the guilds with a much stronger bargaining position in their negotiations with the corporation. As a consequence, the guilds flourished and, in return for the town’s protection of their local monopolies, were prepared to undertake civic responsibilities like producing pageants for the Corpus Christi festival. For more detail on the structure of merchant and trade guilds, and its relation to medieval social structure, see *Dictionary of Political Economy*, vol. 1, ed. Sir Robert Harry Inglis Palgrave (London: Macmillan and Co., 1901) 428.

\(^{128}\) The other three virtually complete English mystery play cycles are known as the Chester Mystery Plays, the Towneley/Wakefield plays, and N-Town plays.

\(^{129}\) A York manuscript survives at the British Library (MS Additional 35290). This thesis will use Records of Early English Drama, hereafter cited as *REED*, as its primary source for York records.
Christi—focus on the Host directly, this thesis will not go into detail about the surviving drama. Instead, the focus of the remaining chapter will be on the Host itself, and how it provided a direct link from the outer and public life of civic engagement, to the inner and sacred sphere of liturgical performance.

Most of the dates attributed for the civic parade are only approximations based on the foundation dates for the Corpus Christi guilds. In York, as in other cities, the establishment of the Corpus Christi Guild was intended to publicly praise and honor the body of Jesus, which would in turn, enhance civic piety. Members of the Corpus Christi Guild were tasked to regulate the festival’s processions, and to exercise a supervisory control over the later subject matter of the plays. As the York Records describe, the Corpus Christi members were, “bound to keep a solemne procession, the sacrament being in a shryne borne in the same through the city yerely the Fryday after Corpus Christi day, and the day after to have a solemne mass and dirige.”

As a visible display of the adoration reserved for the Eucharist, the seal of York’s Corpus Christi Guild had an image of the consecrated Host, which was marked with the

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130 Scholars are divided between the relationship of plays and the Corpus Christi parade. This thesis will not take a position on this issue. Rather, it will analyze the parade itself, and will focus on the English town that has the most surviving evidence, that is to say, York. Evidence that gives an organic development of procession to play can be found in both France and Spain. In 1437, when the French King Charles VII entered Paris, the Confrérie de la Passion (an association of the citizens of Paris formed in 1402 specifically to present religious plays) offered a show in which its actors used gestures to portray Christ’s Passion and the treachery of Judas. See Alan E. Knight, Aspects of Genre in Late Medieval French Drama (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983) 123.

131 In 1424, a parade in Barcelona involved 108 various “displays,” which included several Scriptural tableaux, along with banners and crosses from the local parish churches. See Max Harris, Aztecs, Moors, and Christians: Festivals of Reconquest in Mexico and Spain, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1949) 43. Although France and Spain provide examples of how their parade’s simple banners and entertainment helped give way to the evolution of Corpus Christi plays, curiously, there is no surviving evidence of this development in England. However, it is clear that the festival of Corpus Christi did attract itself to a cycle of plays during the late fourteenth century in northern England.

132 York’s Corpus Christi Guild was one of the most prestigious and from 1408 to its dissolution in 1547, enrolled more than 16,850 members of both sexes. See The Register of the Guild of Corpus Christ in the City of York, ed. Robert H. Skaife, Surtees Society 57 (Durham: Andrews, 1872) 5-7.
letters “IHC,” indicating the orthodox late medieval belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation that had been promoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas. It should be noted that clerical fraternities, like the Corpus Christi Guild, were a mixed group of both elite citizens and members of the clergy. York’s Corpus Christi Guild might have been founded by a group of priests, but as a whole, fraternities had little or limited space for members of the clergy.

Before the parade took place, York Records indicate that there was extensive civic preparation. As the greatest public feast day in England, the Corpus Christi festival had to be arranged and planned months in advance. On the day of the parade, the streets needed to be cleaned, and “beddes and Coverynges of beddes of the best that they can gytt” hung out on buildings along the route. This York Record also describes that people were to: “Strewe before ther doores resshes and other suche flowers and Strewing as they thynke honeste and clenly for the honour of godd and worship of this Cittie.” Once flowers were strung throughout the city, religious guilds, like the Corpus Christi Guild, were responsible for overseeing the rest of the festivities, like the parade itself.

For the most part, both the pageant and liturgical procession followed a similar parade route. Both processions begin at the same place, Holy Trinity Priory, and followed the same path across the Ouse River to the junction of Coneystreet and Castle

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133 The abbreviated Greek “IHC” is often interchanged with the later Latinized “IHS [Iesus Hominum Salvator].” The ‘c’ is not the Latin ‘c,’ but the Greek ‘C,’ meaning sigma, or ‘S.’
135 REED. 1:283.
136 ibid.
137 Spencer. 1901: 21.
138 This route is found in James F. Hoy, “On the Relationship of the Corpus Christi Plays to the Corpus Christi Procession at York,” Modern Philology 71.2 (1973): 166-68. However, it should be noted that there are alternative routes. The one used in this thesis is simply the likeliest.
Gate. At this gate, the processions would split. The pageant procession would continue throughout the city of York and would end at the Pavement, whereas the more solemn liturgical procession—the one with the enshrined Host—would end at Saint Leonard’s Hospital, which was where the Host was deposited. Although the York records do not state this, it is likely that the Host and its shrine were placed at the high altar as a way for the people to venerate the Host. The Host and shrine would then be returned to Saint William’s Chapel for the following year.

Before detail is given about the Host and its shrine, it is important first to mention who participated in this procession. Unlike the pageant procession, the liturgical was exclusive rather than inclusive, for it was dominated by the elite, and by the clergy when they were hired in as chaplains by the Guild.¹³⁹ Non-citizens—the majority of the city’s population since free-of-the-city status was very restrictive—and women could only watch.¹⁴⁰ The feast that celebrated the Eucharist, the most powerful symbol of Christian culture, and which came to be associated with public processional displays, focused on privilege and status. As patrician fraternities, like the Corpus Christi Guild, came to be integrated into the procession, their own civic authority was enhanced through their proximity to the Host. In spite of the underlying civic “unifying” intention of the guild, the procession often caused other guilds to be jealous over who should be in the most honorable position—the position nearest to the shrine and its Host.¹⁴¹

Carrying flaming torches, ten Corpus Christi Guild members would lead the liturgical procession. Behind the Guild’s elite members were the alderman, who was the president of the Guild, and the city mayor. In 1432, the Guild was also assigned the task of carrying the shrine, which was built with wood and was ornamented with silver and gold. By 1449-51, a new shrine was a “baudekyn” and was carried by four deacons. Over time, this shrine became an eye-catching method of self-advertisement for some of the guild organizations, such as the goldsmiths. Created in 1546, an inventory of this shrine suggests that the richness of jewels and gold began to accumulate over the years. Interestingly, this inventory also describes that this “all Gilte” shrine now included a steeple, a silver bell within it, complete with a weathercock. The space for the sacrament was made of “berall” so that it could be seen along the processional route. The shrine, which was surrounded by a company of clerical and civic authorities, visually marked the people’s manipulation of the Eucharistic symbol in order that the feast’s sponsors could publicize their wealth.

Developed in the secular sphere, the Corpus Christi processions, both pageant and liturgical, extended the impulse to legitimate hierarchies by the supernatural power of the Eucharist. Corpus Christi processions enshrined the practice of Eucharistic display, which culminated in the final viewing of the Host and its shrine. When the Host

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142 This might not be true of all liturgical processions. However, this seems to be the basic form, based on the York Records from 1417-22.
144 *ibid* 378.
145 The Oxford English Dictionary defines “baudekyn” as: “A rich embroidered stuff, originally made with warp of gold thread and woof of silk. In later application, the word described a rich brocade, usually silk.”
146 *REED*. 1:79. Payments for carrying the “Bawdkyn” appear in 1477 and subsequently (1:116)
147 Producing the pageants was extremely beneficial for the trade guilds, since their products would be seen—i.e., advertised—in the Corpus Christi procession.
149 *ibid*.
was shrouded from view within the confines of a church, it had generated a sense of mystery and awe; when it was moved to the outdoors and given a parade of public display, it became a suggestive symbol of elite civic power. This civic power greatly limited involvement for both poor citizens and visitors alike. Although the wealthy could take part in the liturgical procession, they could do no more than be near the Host. There is no evidence to suggest that people actually received the “body of Christ” during the processions. Therefore, it cannot be emphasized enough that this festival was above all, a “remembrance,” a communion for the eyes only.

Pope Urban IV and Clement V may have recognized a problem in popular reactions to Christ’s body, but they did no more than apply a bandage to a wound. To procure a remedy would have meant allowing the people to take a greater role in physically receiving the body and blood of Christ. The feast of Corpus Christi began as an attempt to stamp out and prevent idolatry during the *Elevation*; however, by the mid sixteenth century, the extravagance of the Corpus Christi celebrations, like York’s bejeweled and dazzling shrine, created a spectacle that attracted even more peering eyes. Christ’s Real Presence might have been on display, but it had become encased in crystal and gilt with gold—a display so ornate that the majority of the people were still distanced from Christ’s body. The Feast did not move viewers to be devout worshippers, it converted them into audience members. The Corpus Christi Feast, celebrated on the streets of York, continued to expand simultaneously with intra-ecclesial liturgical embellishments. These developments reveal a continuing affinity between medieval religious drama, and the ritual service from which it had originated. This affinity redefined boundaries between indoor and outdoor performances—
boundaries that would transform sacred liturgical embellishment into secular theatrical drama.
CHAPTER 4

Extending the Movement

THE ORIGIN OF MEDIEVAL DRAMA—the seed that would take root, develop, and flourish in Renaissance plays by Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare—can be traced back to pious religious observances performed in the cloisters of monasteries. This process from liturgical ceremony to public stage was a gradual one, and will be analyzed in a few central texts. Rather than attempting to create an historical chronology tracing the later complex morality plays to the early liturgical embellishments—an enterprise which has proven to be controversial—this chapter will focus on texts that exemplify the most theatrical aspects of dramatic performance. With this in mind, this chapter will analyze: literary embellishments of the liturgy, dramatic tropes of the Mass of Easter, scenes from various *Visitationes Sepulchri* (the name for the largest single category of medieval Latin church drama), plays associated with Christmas, and finally, the morality plays of the High Middle Ages. However, in order to understand how the richly dynamic and complex morality plays helped shape the playwrights of the Renaissance, it is important to find the first moment when liturgy begins to deviate from the Scriptures, and adds a new layer of dramatic performance.

From the ninth up to the tenth century, gestures, movements, and vocal usage derived directly from the conduct of ecclesiastical ceremony. As previously stated in Chapter Two, the liturgy itself long employed dramatic techniques, like movement from one symbolic location to another, as well as the use of props, such as bringing gifts to
the altar during Eucharistic services. However, as Young notes, “The effectual beginnings of medieval religious drama are to be found not in the elaboration of elements present in the traditional forms of worship, but in certain deliberate, and perhaps unsanctioned, literary additions to the authorized liturgical text.” The development of these literary embellishments is expansive, though the entire grouping of them may be referred to as *tropes*. Tropes had begun as wordless musical sequences with which the singers in the choir would embellish the vowel sounds of certain important words in the service. These amplified liturgical passages would normally be announced by the deacon in the words, “Ite, missa est [Go, this is the dismissal],” to which the chorus would respond with, “Deo gratias [Thanks be to God].” In the monastery of Saint Gall, an enthusiastic monk inserted sixteen words of his own, in the form of the following trope:

_Ite nunc in pace, spiritus sanctus super vos sit, iam _**missa est**_.

_Deo_ semper laudes agite, in corde glori _am_ et _gratias_.

Although this relatively simple example may not appear like a dramatic addition, this expansion adorns the liturgical text, enforces its meaning, and enlarges its emotional appeal. This notion of enhancing the liturgy’s emotional appeal will become important

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150 See Young, vol. 1. 1933: 178. However, it should be noted that this thesis will not follow the tradition of Karl Young and John Matthews Manly. These men argue that the *Visitatio Sepulchri* developed from earlier tropes. For more detail on tropes, see Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972) 871.

151 Bevington. 1975: 21. Cf. Young, vol. 1. 1933: 178. Two monks of Saint Gall, one of them being Notker Balbulus (c. 840-912), the other being Tuotilo (d. 915), are credited with being the first composers of tropes.

152 Young, vol. 1. 1933: 178.

153 The bold indications are my own, which indicate the original concluding words addressed to the people in the Mass. Text is found in Young, vol. 1. 1933: 178.
in subsequent trope developments, such as the Easter trope “Quem quaeritis [Whom do you seek?]”.\footnote{154}

During the course of the tenth century, the monastic brethren who sang the Easter services (ordinarily, a public congregation was not present) attempted to dramatize their renditions of the *Quem quaeritis* dialogue in various ways.\footnote{155} This dialogue is between the three Marys (the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, Mary the sister of Lazarus) and an angel at the sepulchre. The earliest extant version of the *Quem quaeritis* dialogue is usually attributed to the monastery of Saint Martial at Limoges, and dates between 923-34.\footnote{156} This trope is an introduction for Easter mass, and ends with the first words of the Easter introit.\footnote{157} However, the Saint Gall text (ca. 950) is the simplest extant version of the dialogue. The dialogue is as follows:

*Interrogatio* [Question]:

*Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, Christicole?*

[Whom do you seek in the sepulchre, O followers of Christ?]

*Responsio* [Response]:

*Iesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o caelicae.*

[Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, O heaven-dwellers.]

*Non est hic, surrexit sicut praedixerat; ite, nuntiate quia surrexit de sepulchro.*

[He is not here, he has risen as he had foretold; go, announce that he has risen from the sepulchre.]


\footnote{155}{For detail about how *Quem quaeritis* could have been influenced by the liturgical processions of Corpus Christi, as well as other Church processions, see Roger E. Reynolds, “The Drama of Medieval Liturgical Processions,” *Revue de Musicologie* T.86e, No. 1er (2000): 127-142.}

\footnote{156}{Bevington. 1975: 24. In a similar manner to almost all *tropes*, this one also has musical notation in the original manuscript.}

\footnote{157}{The Oxford English Dictionary defines “introit” as: “An antiphon or psalm sung while the priest approaches the altar to celebrate mass or Holy Communion. Also, the first two or three words of the office appropriated to a particular day and formerly sometimes used to describe or denote it.”}
As is the case with the Saint Martial text, the concluding *Resurrexi* begins the introit of the Easter mass. Saint Gall’s text is not remarkable for its boldness of conception, but for its dramatic potential.

The omission of an angelic *Responsio* before the third sentence might textually suggest that the second and third utterances were delivered by the same person. However, the performance of the Angel and Marys would indicate that the third sentence was spoken by the angelic-cleric. The source of this small composition is the Gospel stories themselves (Matthew 28:5-10; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-6); however, none of the Gospels recount the visit of the Marys in the form of a dialogue. Only Luke’s account describes an angelic interrogation, but Luke’s is far from identical to the *Quem quaeritis* trope. Since the writers did not feel bound by fidelity to the Gospels, the absence of dialogue gave them a certain amount of liberty to craft their own script. Even if this was sung with no lay congregation present, this trope can be conceived of not simply as a mimetic presentation, but as a realization of the dramatic potentialities of biblical and non-biblical passages. However, these potentialities would only be realized when the *Quem quaeritis* was withdrawn from Mass altogether, and was given a new place in the Canonical Office. This new position would give the dialogue a generous amount of freedom for elaboration—enough for it to develop into an authentic Easter play.

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158 This text is quoted from Bevington. 1975: 26. Bevington bases his text on Saint Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 484, Trop. Sangallense saec. x, p. 111.
159 In the Catholic Church, the Canonical Office consists of seven set periods of devotion: matins and lauds, prime, terce, sext, none, evensong or vespers, and compline.
160 Subsequent Easter plays that have the *Quem quaeritis* trope as its heart will be referred to as *Visitatio Sepulchri*. For detail about the placement of *Quem quaeritis*, see Timothy J. McGee, “The Liturgical Placements of the ‘Quem quaeritis’ Dialogue,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 29.1 (1976): 1-29.
In the tenth century clergy began to act out the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, employing a gesture and vocal display that had long been practiced in the celebration of the Eucharist. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the *Visitatio Sepulchri* developed into an Easter drama of some length and complexity. Although most of the growth appeared at the end of the twelfth century, there is one tenth century text that gives an expansive treatment of how the *Visitatio Sepulchri* was to be performed. Compiled by Bishop Ethelwold (d. 984) at Winchester in some time between 965 and 975 for English Benedictine use, the *Regularis Concordia* is much more specific than the previous *Quem quaeritis* tropes in detailing methods of “imitation.” Whereas the previous *Quem quaeritis* was mostly limited to dialogue, the *Regularis* specifies exactly how the dialogue, and in turn, the performance, is to be enacted. Bevington notes that the *Regularis* is the “culmination of earlier ceremonies on Good Friday by which the cross had been adored [*Adoratio*] and buried [*Depositio*]. The text is designed for performance following the third lesson of Easter matins, and ends accordingly with the singing of the *Te Deum.*

In the *Regularis*, Bishop Ethelwold gave instructions for a dramatic performance, which was meant to be enacted in different churches. This helps explain why he includes rather full descriptive materials describing how the clergy should act. Leading up to the *Quem quaeritis* dialogue, the opening rubric states:

> While the third lesson is being recited, let four brethren vest themselves; of whom let one, wearing an alb, enter as if on other business, and go

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161 Such as: bowing, kissing, kneeling, extending the arms, folding the hands, and raising the Communal chalice. These gestures have previously been analyzed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three.


unobtrusively to the place of the sepulchre, and there, holding a palm in
his hand, let him sit quietly. While the third responsory is being sung, let
the remaining three follow, all of them vested in copes, bearing in their
hands thuribles with incense; and haltingly, in the manner of seeking for
something, let them come before the place of the sepulchre. These
things are done in imitation of the angel seated on the tomb and the
women coming with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. When therefore
the seated one will see the three approaching him, wandering about as it
were and seeking something, let him begin to sing in a sweet and
moderate voice: ‘Whom do you seek?’

In this selection, the role-words in the rubric of the drama, such as: “enter as if on other
business,” “go unobtrusively,” “sit quietly,” “in the manner of seeking for something,”
“done in imitation,” and “wandering about,” seem to signal an awareness of the
imaginary “make-believe”—a common element to all drama. The slow, searching steps
described by Ethelwold for the Marys as they approach the sepulchre is not simply a
visual performance: the slowness denotes the Marys’ inner state of sorrow and
bewilderment. Furthermore, the role-words hint at a distinction between the imitation
of an action—that is to say, the play—and the act itself, the dialogue found in biblical
passages.

After more dialogue has been exchanged, the angel commands, “Come and see
the place [where the Lord has been laid]” (l.5). Immediately after this, the angel removes
the sepulchre’s veil. The Marys hold up the shroud and “spread it out before the clergy”
to prove the miracle of the risen Christ. This moment, along with the preceding “Come
and see,” creates a turning point from religious ritual to drama. Not only does the
display of the graveclothes invite spectators to witness the miracle of the risen Christ,

\[164\] The following references to the *Regularis* will be taken from Bevington. 1975: 27. Bevington bases his
Latin text from the *Regularis*, on London, British Museum MS Cotton Tiberius A. III, *Regularis Concordia*
sae. xi, fol. 21r-21v. It is edited by Young, vol. 1. 1933: 249-50.
but the imperative, “Come and see,” engages the entire community to become participants in the performance. Whether performers were monks and the monastic community were worshipping by themselves, or whether they were singing in front of the laity, Bishop Ethelwold establishes a performer-onlooker relationship in an act of dramatic involvement.

When the play finishes, the Marys sing the antiphon, “The Lord has risen from the sepulchre” (l.6), and the elder has the entire assembly engage in an act of worship by singing the traditional *Te Deum*. The antiphon acts as an invitation to become a congregation once again and sing at the end of matins. Actors become celebrants again, and spectators become worshippers again. Although the ritual of matins has the language of response already built into it, the audience-worshippers invest the old hymn with new meaning. Appropriately, Ethelwold finishes the event by having all the church bells ring out in a joyous sound of peace on earth, and good will to men.

Just as the *Regularis Concordia* built upon the *Quem quaeritis* trope for the purposes of dramatic enhancement, so too did later renditions. A text ascribed to Aquileia, Italy (ca. 1100), introduces the disciples John and Peter, who display the empty graveclothes as the angel had previously done in the *Visitatio Sepulchri* from *Regularis Concordia*. As in the *Regularis*, this action of display is not based on the Scriptures; however, it soon became a familiar action in the *Visitatio* sequences because it offered additional visual proof of the resurrection. Unlike the cloistered *Regularis*, the Aquileia text was performed in an Easter sepulchre that had been modeled on the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.165 As well as incorporating additional characters, the Aquileia text indicates

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165 Imitations of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem were erected in numerous European churches during and after the era of the Crusades, and most of them were used for the ceremonies of Easter. After the fall of Jerusalem in 1099, the Pope founded the Order of the Holy Cross in 1113, and the following years the
that the chorus moved out of the choir and into the body of the church.\textsuperscript{166} Interestingly, this elaboration also includes a race to the sepulchre, which becomes an often-repeated motif in later dramatizations of the resurrection. The choir sings the antiphon, “Two ran together,” presumably while Peter and John raced in pantomime (s.d.6).\textsuperscript{167}

Deviating from the Regularis, two Marys take part in this \textit{Visitatio}, rather than the usual three, and two angels instead of the usual one. Significantly, the Marys are also described as turning “ad Populum et ad chorum [to the people and to the choir],” while saying, “We came mourning to the tomb, we saw an angel of the Lord sitting there and saying that Jesus has risen” (l.5).\textsuperscript{168} They address the “Populus,” singing “Kyrieleison” after the \textit{Te Deum}. This temporal framework is significant because the Aquileian text is concerned explicitly with communication with the laity.

This relationship between the clergy and the congregation is also seen in the Saint Lambrecht \textit{Visitatio}, which is the only text from the twelfth century to include the congregation singing in the vernacular. However, this did not necessarily mean that the Church authorities were happy about this introduction of the vernacular. As Bevington notes, “The scribe who wrote the manuscript speaks of this congregational singing condescendingly, as though he regarded it as an intrusion.”\textsuperscript{169} In a manner similar to the

\textsuperscript{166} Ogden. 2002: 55.

\textsuperscript{167} All stage directions will be abbreviated \textit{s.d.} and will be given the following line’s number.

\textsuperscript{168} The following references to the Aquileia text will be taken from Bevington. 1975: 34. Bevington bases his Latin text on Udine, Bibl. Arcivescovile, MS 234 (\textit{olim} 38), Ordin. Aquegliense (?) saec. xi, fol. 1v-1r.

\textsuperscript{169} Bevington. 1975: 32. Further references to Lambrecht text will be taken from Bevington’s \textit{Medieval Drama}. Similar to Young, Bevington bases his Latin text on the first of the three surviving Lambrecht
Aquileia text, the disciples Peter and John act out their race to the tomb while a chanted antiphon describes their action. The younger disciple, John, arrives first and waits for the elder.

A notable expansion is found in this scene, which is known as the *Victimae Paschali* (ll.7-12). In this Sequence, all members of the choir (*totus conventus*) ask Mary Magdalene what she saw on her way to the sepulchre. The Marys’ performances, especially that of Mary Magdalene, will be examined in particular detail since the three women often exemplify issues of acting that are common to other Easter liturgical plays. In particular, Mary Magdalene’s heightened dramatic presence seems appropriate since she was the one whom the resurrected Jesus first appeared to (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10). In relation to liturgical drama, Mary Magdalene is central because her unique relationship to Jesus—a sinner given a special blessing—represents the sinning congregation as a whole.

While the earliest texts of the *Visitatio* are found in the tenth century, the earliest texts with Mary Magdalene as a prominent character are not found until the twelfth century. Significantly, Mary Magdalene’s role can be augmented with features ranging from a simple hand gesture, to a whole scene, such as her recognition of the risen Christ. In certain manuscripts, the rubrics, dialogue, and music make her gesture of reaching out to touch the risen Jesus seem deeply emotional, whereas in other manuscripts, her repeated acts of prostration illustrate the reverence she has for Jesus. The earliest example of Mary prostrating herself in front of the risen Christ—the most extreme

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\[^{170}\textendnote{170}{For more detail on Mary Magdalene’s role in relation to her performance space, see Susan K. Rankin, “The Mary Magdalene Scene in the ‘Visitatio Sepulchri’ Ceremonies,” *Early Music History* 1 (1981): 227-55.}^{170}\]
physical position reserved for moments of particular emotional appeal—occurs in a twelfth century *Visitatio* from Einsiedeln.\(^{171}\) At Christ’s pronouncement of her name, Mary Magdalene falls down before him (*procidens*) and remains prostrate (*adorans in terra*) for perhaps a twenty-line exchange, though lack of exact line notations make the length of the dialogue unclear.

In these plays, and in almost every one of the subsequent Easter plays with Mary Magdalene as a prominent character, something unusual occurs. A unique gestural pattern, a new ceremonial moment, a fresh musical composition—these are all reactions to Mary Magdalene’s prominent role and dynamic character. Of the many performative variations, it seems that one common attribute is a desire to show an outward expression of human feeling. The inner state of Mary Magdalene is revealed more frequently, and more insistently in each performance of *Visitatio* plays, accounting to a type of character development. This can be seen most clearly in the thirteenth century *Visitatio* at the nunnery of Origny-Sainte-Benoîte. This dramatization is composed upon a distinctly more ample scale, showing a considerable increase in the length of the dialogue, advancement in literary elaboration, and fresh intrusions of the vernacular.\(^{172}\)

At the nunnery of Origny-Sainte-Benoîte, the apostles come and ask what Mary Magdalene has seen, singing the traditional “Dic nobis, Maria [Tell us, Mary]” (l.153).\(^{173}\) At Origny, the French stage direction reads: “Et li doi Apostre viennent deuant les Maries,

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\(^{171}\) Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 366.

\(^{172}\) Young notes: “These enlargements, indeed, are so conspicuous as to raise the question whether such plays could still have been performed as genuine Church plays. Some modern writers emphatically maintain that the dramatic pieces about to be considered [i.e., compositions from Origny-Sainte-Benoîte, Klosterneuburg, Benediktbeuern, and Tours], along with some of those already reviewed, could not have been presented in close association with authorized worship within the church itself. These critics undertake to distinguish rather sharply between plays which are explicitly attached to the liturgy and are partly identical with it in content, and those which, through literary sophistication and amplitude, seem alien to Church worship…It may fairly be urged, however, that so sharp a distinction between ‘plays’ and ‘dramatic offices’ is hardly justified by the pieces now under consideration.” See Young, vol. 1. 1933: 411.

\(^{173}\) The complete text of Origny-Sainte-Benoîte’s *Visitatio* is found in Young, vol. 1. 1933: 413-419.
et prendent le manche le Magdelainne vn peu de lons, et dient: ‘Dic nobis, Maria?’ [And
the two apostles [Peter and John] come before the Marys, and taking Mary Magdalene a
little aside by the sleeve, they sing [in Latin]: ‘Tell us, Mary’ (s.d.152-1.153). The majority
of the text is written in French, but when the dialogue directly concerns Jesus, the early
Quem quaeritis seems incorporated into the Latin dialogue.

Perhaps even more significantly, nowhere else in the entire canon of the liturgical
drama does the gesture of the apostles grabbing Mary’s sleeve occur. It is a moment of
intimacy, an expression of urgency, and is perhaps designed to illustrate a desire for
secrecy. In any case, this single gesture flickers a fleeting glimpse of intense human
feeling, simultaneously moving away from the stereotyped movements of liturgical
gesture and towards the realm of realism. Interestingly, as soon as the apostles catch
Mary Magdalene’s sleeve and ask her where Jesus is, she points toward the sepulchre,
and at “spes nostra [our hope],” she places her hand on her breast (s.d.159). This simple
gesture of pointing towards the tomb of Jesus, and then placing her hand over her heart,
forms a relationship between the hope that the risen Jesus brings to humanity, and
Mary’s own inward state of reverence. This addition presents Mary Magdalene as
someone who is wholly devoted to Christ and makes an outward expression of piety,
and encourages the viewers to react to this outward expression and feel the same way as
her.

The Visitatio from the Fleury playbook,174 a composition of the late twelfth or
possibly early thirteenth century, is another remarkably finished literary achievement.175

174 The Fleury playbook is an important manuscript and is usually associated with the monastery of Saint
Benoit-sur-Loire, at Fleury. In the manuscript, this play immediately follows the Fleury Herod. For a
variety of critical scholarship, see The Fleury Playbook: Essays and Studies, eds. Thomas P. Campbell and
Clifford Davidson, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, Western Michigan University, 1985). C. Clifford
Flanigan discusses the entire tradition of medieval Latin drama, Thomas P. Campbell and Kathleen M.
It was performed at the end of Easter matins, when the three Marys enter (possibly) the monastery of Saint Benoit-sur-Loire, and go in procession through the nave, singing until they reach the choir. At the sepulchre near the altar the angel already awaits them. It should be noted that the sepulchre must be large enough to permit the entrance of Peter and John, and to have enough space for two angels to sing within it. As in the Aquileia and Saint Lambrecht’s texts, at the conclusion of Peter and John’s race to the tomb, in which the younger man, John, arrives first, Peter and John enter the sepulchre to examine the empty graveclothes. As Mary Magdalene weeps over the empty tomb, she cries out: “My heart is burning with desire to see my Lord [Ardens est cor meum desiderio videre Dominum meum]” (l.56). In this scene, Mary’s tears are not enough to consume her anguish—she cries out over her “burning heart,” in a state of complete despair. The following rubric and dialogue reads: “Meanwhile let one come made up in the likeness of a gardener, and, standing at the mouth of the sepulchre, let him say: ‘Woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek? [Interim veniat quidam praeparatus in similitudinem hortulani, stansque ad caput seculeri et dicat: ‘Mulier, quid ploras? Quem quaeris?’] (s.d.57-l.58). After Mary mistakes Jesus for a gardener, he shouts her name, upon which she “prostrates herself at his feet” (s.d.59) and calls him “Master [Raboni]” (l.60). The following rubric and speech read: “And let him draw himself back, and, as if avoiding her touch [quasi tactum eius devitans], let him say: ‘Do not touch me [Noli me tangere], for I have not yet ascended to my Father, and to your Father, my God, and your God’” (s.d.60-l.61).

Ashley discuss the plays from a theological point of view, David Bevington and Cynthia Bourgeault discuss its staging and production, Miriam Anne Skey discusses the representation of Herod in light of art history, Clyde W. Brockett analyzes its musical coherence, and Fletcher Collins Jr. looks at the manuscript in relation to its provenance.

175 The following references to the Fleury manuscript will be taken from Bevington. 1975: 39-44. Bevington’s text is based on Orleans, Bibl. de la Ville, MS 201 (olim 178), Miscellanea Floriacensia saec. xiii. This manuscript has been edited by Young, vol. 1. 1933: 393-97.
In this comparatively developed work, there seems to be a fidelity to biblical sources and preservation of traditional elements, such as Jesus’ dialogue to Mary from in the *Quem quaeritis*. However, the performance in the Fleury playbook takes a new turn because it refers to *populus* and to *plebs*. When the women leave the sepulchre, they turn “to the people [ad populum] with news of the resurrection, after which Mary Magdalene sings the *Congratulamini michi* “to the people [ad populum]” (s.d.69). All the Marys then depart from the sepulchre singing “Surrexit Dominus” *ad plebem*, and finally, when they lay out the gravecloth on the high altar, they sing *ad plebem* the words: “Cernite, vos socii, sunt corporis ista beati / Linthea, quae vacuo jacuere relict a sepulcro [Behold, you companions, here is the shroud of the blessed body, / Which lay abandoned in the empty tomb” (l.71). At this moment, the congregation becomes directly involved. They are even given a role as the original Jerusalem community that first received the news of the resurrection from the women. Whether this Easter play was performed in front of a monastic community or a lay congregation, the viewers become contemporary with the events that are being performed.

Although Easter drama expanded throughout the Middle Ages, other liturgical plays developed as parts of the office of other feasts. The Christmas season was the most productive; which extended to include plays for the Epiphany (6 January). A tenth century Christmas drama, the *Pastores*, commemorating the visit of the shepherds, grew out of a Christmas introit-trope, which was modeled on the Easter *Quem quaeritis*? The essential aspects of this play are: the visit of the shepherds, a crib with images of the

176 It should be noted that similar to the *Visitatio*, the name *Pastores*, as well as the later mentioned *Stella*, refer to the type of play being produced. It is not a single play performed in only one location. The names *Pastores* and *Stella* refer to—using a more modern term—a genre of play. For detail about *Quem quaeritis* and how it influenced later medieval plays, such as the Christmas *Pastores* and *Stella*, see Norma Kroll, “Power and Conflict in Medieval Ritual and Plays: The Re-Invention of Drama,” *Studies in Philology* 102.4 (2005): 452-83.
Virgin and Child, the announcement of the birth of Christ by a boy “in similitudine angeli,” the singing of the “Gloria in excelsis” by the angels and a hymn by the shepherds, a dialogue between the shepherds and two priests “quasi obstetrices,” the adoration of the shepherds, and a final hymn. However, the more common form of Christmas drama was the *Stella*, a play on the visit of the Magi, which originally consisted of: antiphons and a simple prose dialogue, the following of the star, the visit to the Child, the offering of gifts, and the warning to the Magi.177

As already noted, the earliest dramatic ceremonies of the Christmas season bear a striking resemblance to those of Easter. This resemblance can be seen most clearly in an eleventh century text from Limoges.178 This example is not a full-scale drama; rather, it is a trope—an embellishment of the liturgy—intended to precede the introit of the third mass of Christmas. As in the familiar Easter dialogue between the three Marys and the angel, the shepherds are asked, “Quem quaeritis [Whom do you seek],” but rather than centering on the sepulchre—the place of the resurrected Christ—the Christmas trope adds “in praesepe? [in the manger?].” As with Easter’s *Quem quaeritis*, the position of this composition is immediately before the introit. Once again, the theme is a human witnessing a divine miracle. In its antiphonal form, the Christmas composition resembles those liturgical responsories and antiphons from which the *Visitatio Sepulchri* drew its material.

Unlike Easter drama, Christmas drama expanded with great rapidity. Although scholars debate the possible reasons, it seems likely that the resurrection—with its association with the Passion—was viewed as too sacred to be treated freely by

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178 Since the simplest forms of the Christmas dramas are found at Limoges and Rouen, it is believed that these are the earliest examples of the plays.
dramatists. Stories surrounding Jesus’ birth could feel more like folk-tales, and would be emotionally different and distant from the somber accounts of the Passion. By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Christmas plays began to appear surprisingly ambitious in their scope. However, few liturgical plays involving solely the shepherds—as opposed to the shepherds and Magi—survive. It was more common to combine two separate biblical narratives, one possible explanation being that Christmas day was too liturgically crowded to allow any lengthy play. Christmas morning had to provide for matins before daybreak, followed by three masses. The early tropes, such as that from Limoges, were fitted easily enough into the introit of the third mass. However, the shepherds’ play, which was sung at the end of matins, will have seemed more of an intrusion. A solution to this was to stage the shepherds’ visit as part of a larger Christmas play on another important day, Epiphany. As the last of the twelve days of Christmas and the celebration of the coming of the Magi, Epiphany was an appropriate time for a festive drama.

The Fleury play of Herod, sung presumably at the end of matins on Epiphany, illustrates the rapid expansion of twelfth century Christmas drama. As will be seen in the following pages, it is usually the evil or non-Christian characters, such as Herod, who use gestures differently from liturgical contexts. That is to say, non-Christian characters employ less ceremonial behavior and gestures, and instead, reveal an individualized and dramatized personality of the character they portray. Non-Christian characters, such as Herod, do not embellish their gestures and movements according to the limitations of liturgical practice; instead, their movements create a new spatial relationship between themselves and viewers.
In the Fleury Playbook, the shepherds become frightened at the sight of the angels “on high [in excelsis]” (s.d.1), but are told that they will find a child in a manger in the city of Bethlehem. Presumably, the multitude of angels appear from some elevated vantage point in the church. After the angels appear, the rubric reads: “And let them [the shepherds] thus proceed to the manger, which will have been readied at [one of] the doors of the church [et sic procedant usque ad praesepe, quod ad januas monasterii paratum erit]” (s.d.2). When the shepherds reach the manger, they fall on their knees and worship the Child (Tunc pastores procidentes adorant infantem) (s.d.6). After they rise, they invite the people, the populum, to worship God (l.7). As with Fleury’s Visitatio, this drama has its performers address the people (ad populum). The conclusion of this scene is unique in that after adoring the Child themselves, the shepherds invite the congregation to do the same and become worshippers. For this invitation, they use a slightly modified form of an antiphon, which has already appeared in one other version of the Epiphany play.

As this is happening, the Magi appear from the choir, “as if from their own land,” and come together before the “rising-place of the star” (s.d.9). As they comment on the star’s splendor, they administer the Pax (Kiss of Peace) to each other (s.d.10). After each says, “Peace be with you,” they all exclaim “Behold the star! [Ecce stella]” (l.13). The following rubric and speech read: “As the star goes forward, they will

179 The following references to the Fleury manuscript will be taken from Bevington. 1975: 57-66. Bevington’s text is based on Orleans, Bibl. de la Ville, MS 201 (olim 178), Miscellanea Floriacensia saec. xiii, pp. 205-14. This manuscript has been edited by Karl Young, See Young, vol. 2. 1933: 84-89.
180 According to Young, the phrase ad januas monasterii does not mean “at the doors of the monastery,” but of the church itself, possibly the door at the south or west. See Young, vol. 2. 1933: 84-89. In any case, the players are using part of the nave and the aisles.
181 It should also be noted that this play is followed immediately by previously mentioned Fleury Visitatio.
182 The other version is the simplest extant version of the Officium Stella, which seems to represent the Norman-French liturgical custom current in the kingdom of Sicily in the twelfth century (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, MS 289 [olim C. 153], Trop. Ad usum ecclesiae Siculorum saec. xii, fol. 107v-110r).
themselves follow the star leading the way, saying: ‘Let us go therefore and seek him, offering him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh; for we are acquainted with that which is written: ‘All kings will worship [adorabunt] him, all nations will serve him” (s.d.14-l.14).

A star rises from the vicinity of the altar—presumably guided by wires and pulleys—and leads the Magi to the manger—located near a door in the nave—by way of the entrance to the choir.

The Magi then address the bystanders as citizens of Jerusalem and ask, “Where is the hope of the nations?” (l.15). As is the case when the shepherds address the people, this question also includes the viewers as role-players. Interestingly, the address to the people of Jerusalem—that is to say, the congregation—is the first instance in any Epiphany play that the Magi’s movement from the altar through the choir is meant to represent their journey from the East to Jerusalem. Compared to other Epiphany plays, it should also be noted that Herod’s emissaries’ treatment of the Magi is highly amplified. The introductory rubric, “Let Herod send to them a man-at-arms,” (s.d.15) is significant because it shows that—as in the biblical narrative—the king himself takes the initiative in arranging that the Magi be questioned. Once the Magi have left the altar in the east and enter the church’s nave, they come first to Herod’s throne (see figure 1).
When the Magi meet Herod and show him the gifts that they will give to the Christ child (s.d.50), Herod calls for the “bearded” (i.e., costumed) scribes (l.53), interrogates them, and demands if the prophecies foretell this new “king of kings.” The rubric reads: “Let Herod, having seen the prophecy, inflamed with rage, fling the book to the ground” (s.d.60). When the star finally appears before the departing Magi and the raging Herod, both Herod and his son “make threatening gestures with their swords” (s.d.79).

Not only does Herod’s language indicate his rage, but his inability to understand why a baby should be preferred in worship over himself results in an outward display of violent actions. Although the dramatists could have confined Herod’s performance to language and used invective to express his animosity, they chose to present this emotion in a form of embodied performance. On one hand, Herod and his son come together in a shared expression of anger; on the other, the violent display alienates them both from the Magi and the congregation. This violence foreshadows the fate of the Christ child,
but perhaps most significantly, the enactment of violence is the exact opposite of what all the people (*populus*) should do before the Christ child—namely, worship. The two primary acting locations, Herod’s luxurious throne, and across from it, Christ’s humble manger, spatially represent the conflict between a corrupt tyrant and the defenseless baby who will save mankind. Prince of this world, Herod, is spatially separate from the prince of Heaven, Jesus Christ.

Once the Magi approach the manger, they prostrate themselves and make their offerings of gold, the token of a king; of myrrh, the token of burial; and of frankincense, for one who is truly God (*s.d.*95). After the Magi fall asleep in front of the manger, an angel warns them to return to their country by another way (*s.d.*99). Avoiding Herod’s station in the nave, the Magi’s “other way” brings them back to the choir from which their journey began. After a Christmas antiphon, the cantor begins *Te Deum*, and the play concludes (l.105). As seen in this dramatic work, the shepherds’ opening scene dramatically sets the stage for the Eastern Magi and their star-guided journey. This play also illustrates the amalgamation of the Christmas season—the *Pastores* and the *Stella*—in a single large composition. Within this play, Herod is the central character, whose prominence dominates the stage, magnified by his violent outbursts and bold gestures. As a whole, the Fleury’s large-scale staging and highly theatrical characters, such as Herod, demonstrate the expanding development of liturgical plays. New forms of drama go beyond the early dialogues like the *Quem quaeritis*, and present visually realized didactic pieces of performance.

The evidence cited so far has presented Easter and Christmas church dramas that had been acted and sung during the intervals in their respective services—usually at the end of matins—and that concluded with a return to the liturgy. Although it derives its
religious subjects from Gospel readings, a later Anglo-Norman play deviates from this pattern. *Jeu d'Adam* is no longer performed as part of the service itself, nor is it simply a liturgical embellishment. The Latin rubrics indicate not only a complex setting, but great care in stage management—extending to the gestures and voices of the actors. In certain places, the rubrics become so extensive that the text becomes more of a prompt-book than just a play. Written in the twelfth century (and quite possibly produced in England, where Norman French was still the official language at court), the vernacular play shows its independence from the Latin liturgy, despite the occasional use of liturgical responsories. Performed on the outer steps of the church, *Jeu d'Adam* demands an elaborate multi-level stage, and makes little use of clerical costuming. As a whole, the play is appropriate to Advent—the four Sundays before Christmas—or to the period immediately preceding Lent. Although incomplete in its ending, *Jeu d'Adam* makes explicit connections between the Old and the New Testament, presenting Adam and Eve’s loss of grace, which is restored by Jesus Christ.

Despite its title, *Jeu d'Adam* does not limit its subject to the Genesis account of creation (Genesis 1:1-3:24). This drama has three primary scenes: 1. the fall of Adam and Eve, the introduction of sin to all mankind; 2. Cain’s murder of Abel, the unavoidable sinfulness of man; and 3. an *Ordo Prophetarum* (Procession of the

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184 *Jeu d'Adam* offers little support for the previously widely-held belief that vernacular drama began simply as a translation from the Latin. Instead, *Jeu d'Adam* offers a vernacular type of experiment that may have exerted a strong influence on the development of Latin Church drama.

185 The Gospel readings for Advent are taken from the Old Testament prophecies of the coming of Christ. Accordingly the four weeks of Advent were often associated in medieval thought with the four-thousand-year span of the Old Testament history that supposedly extended from Adam to Christ. On the other hand, the appointed readings for Sexagesima (the second Sunday before Lent, or seven weeks before Easter) were, in the Middle Ages, taken from the first chapters of Genesis. As O.B. Hardison Jr. has shown, the author of *Jeu d'Adam* was directly indebted to the *Liber Responsalium*, or Book of Responses for Sexagesima. See O.B. Hardison Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965).
Prophets), a promise of eternal salvation. Designed for production immediately in front of a church, with audience members standing at the bottom of the west façade, the exterior architecture presents the central entrance of the church as a type of celestial paradise. Two worlds, that of the audience and of the church, stand on either side of the playing area. This area is itself divided between them: paradise stands adjacent to the church doors, while the fallen world stands level with the audience. Since the play is performed in this symbolically divided “universe,” the building is not simply the mise-en-scène of the play, as it was in the indoor liturgical drama, it stands as the play’s subject.

Beginning with the creation of Adam and Eve and continuing through to their expulsion from Eden, the rites of public penance determine the form and scope of the play. After opening rubrics describe paradise as a “prominently high place,” curtains and silk drapes are placed around “heaven” “at such a height that those persons who will be in paradise can be seen from the shoulders upwards” (s.d.1). Surrounded by a low

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186 Spoken by Abraham, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Balaam, Daniel, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Nebuchadnezzar. Scholars used to speculate that the Ordo Prophetarum was the ancestor of the Old Testament performances in the cycle plays of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; however, this theory seems inadequate because the list of figures in the procession is quite different from that found in the Corpus Christi plays.

187 The source for Ordo Prophetarum, as Bevington notes, is a famous medieval sermon called the Sermo contra Judeos, Paganos, et Arianos de Symbolo, which has “wrongly been ascribed to Saint Augustine. In the sermon, numerous Old Testament figures are introduced by the speaker in order to denounce faithlessness by showing that even Jewish and pagan prophets proclaim the truth of Christ’s divinity. The sermon was widely known, and was often read on the fourth Sunday of Advent, on the day before Christmas, on Christmas itself, and on the Feast of the Circumcision, January 1.” See Bevington. 1975: 78. This thesis will primarily focus on the first two sections of Jeu d’Adam.

188 The presence of the church’s entrance doors reasserts how the physical building represents a terrestrial heaven.

189 The platea, or “place,” is a large open acting space at the foot of the church’s steps. The Devil and his demons periodically make forays across this platea and among spectators, who are evidently gathered on the periphery of this space.

190 The following references to Jeu d’Adam will be taken from Bevington. 1975: 80-121. Bevington’s text is based on MS 927 in the Bibliotheque Municipale de Tours. Bevington’s edition has been closely checked against the editions of Paul Aebischer (Geneva and Paris, 1963), Paul Studer (Manchester, 1918), and
pallisade, which conceals the actors from the chest downwards and which facilitates costume changes on stage, Adam is “robbed in a red tunic,” whereas Eve wears “a woman’s white garment with a wimple of white silk” (s.d.1). As he stands by “Figura,” or God the Father, Adam is described as being “somewhat nearer, with peaceful countenance,” whereas Eve stands “not quite sufficiently humble” (s.d.1). Although it is unclear who acted these roles, it is significant that the characters have strikingly different physical presences. Adam’s proximity towards Figura illustrates how the biblical Adam was created in the likeness—the image—of God. This close proximity presents Adam as a character who will obey his creator. However, Eve’s stance as someone “not quite sufficiently humble,” presents viewers with a woman whose very body foreshadows the eventual fall of man.

After these opening descriptions of set construction, costuming, and characterization are given, the opening stage direction continues to read:

And let this Adam be well coached when he must give answers, lest in answering he should be either too hasty or too slow. Nor him alone, but let all persons be coached thus, so that they may speak in an orderly manner and make gestures appropriate to the things of which they speak; and, in their verses, let them neither add nor subtract a syllable, but pronounce them all steadily, and speak those things that are to be spoken in their due order.

Not only are the characters instructed on their physical performances (“gestures appropriate to the things of which they speak”), but their manner of delivery (“lest in answering he should be either too hasty or too slow,” “orderly manner,” and “steadily”) are equally important. As illustrated, the rubrics provide a wealth of information about

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191 Bevington notes that, “Figura,” the mysterious name for God, “suggests a figural interpretation, foreshadowing God’s incarnation as the savior of mankind.” See Bevington. 1975: 80.
the possibilities for medieval acting, and this is seen most clearly by the contrast between
the frigid respectability of God, and the cultural smoothness of the Devil.

Figura, or God the Father, opens *Jeu d’Adam* by addressing Adam: “I have given
you a worthy companion: / Your wife, Eve by name. / She is your wife and partner; /
You ought to be entirely faithful to her…Let her be subject to your commandment, /
And both of you to my wish” (ll.9-12, 15-16). This speech’s commanding tone prevents
any form of open conversation between Figura and Adam, in order to establish Adam’s
duty of obedience. In contrast, the Devil speaks to Adam in an open conversation.
Once other devils “run to and fro through the *platea*, making appropriate
gestures…showing Eve the forbidden fruit, as if tempting her to eat it,” the Devil walks
up to Adam and the two converse:

Devil: How are you doing, Adam? Que fais, Adam?
Adam: I live in great delight. Ci vif en grant deduit.
Devil: Are you well? Estas *tu* bien?192
Adam: I feel nothing that annoys me. Ne sen rien que m’enoit.
Devil: Things could be better. Poet ester mielz.
Adam: I don’t know how. Ne puis saver coment.
Devil: Would you like to know? Ne puis saver coment.
Adam: I’d like that! Bien en iert mon talent (ll.111-117)

Although Adam resists temptation, the Devil’s following actions are compellingly
dynamic. After he tells Adam that he is a fool for not tasting the forbidden fruit (l.138-
140), the Devil meets the other demons, whereupon they all “make a foray through the
*platea*; and, after a short delay, cheerful and rejoicing, he [returns] to the tempting of
Adam” (s.d.73). Even though he has a “cheerful” face, Adam resists the second

192 My italics. This pronoun usage is interesting. Although *tu* can be the singular case for “you,” in
French, *tu* can also be used in more informal settings. *Vous*, on the other hand, would be used in more
formal and rigid settings.
temptation. This is an exceptional moment in the drama of the church: a character, the Devil, masks his real emotion and presents a fictitious façade. Interestingly, when Adam resists the second test, the Devil leaves “sadly and with downcast countenance” and goes “to the gates of hell” (s.d.205). This, unlike his previous animated cheerfulness, appears to be sincere.

This change of location, the gates of hell, is interesting because the Devil goes below heaven (i.e., the elevated platform in front of the church’s doors) and mimes his action among the spectators. At this lowest point, the Devil would have acted in front of an elaborately constructed hell-mouth, which serves two purposes: 1. it provides a specific location from where the demons emerge, and 2. it is the location where Adam and Eve will later enter after being expelled from Eden. From this hell-mouth, the Devil holds “a conference with the other demons...Thereupon he will draw near to paradise, on the side where Eve is, and with a joyful countenance,” approaches her and crafts a flattering scene of temptation (s.d.205).

Eventually, a new form of the Devil, the serpent, brings both Eve’s and Adam’s downfall. The characters who had previously walked in paradise “virtuously taking delight” in a mood of composure and wonder, eat the fruit and rise in shame from their hiding place to confront Figura (l.112, 387). However, the rubric states that they stand before Figura “not fully upright...[and stand] forward and extremely sad” (s.d.387). In this instance, their physical posture indicates a change in their spiritual condition.

Driven from the garden, now guarded by an angel dressed in white who bears a flaming sword, Adam and Eve rise up from being bent over, and leave paradise “sad and confused” (s.d.516). Although they leave paradise, paradise still remains visible for audience members, even if it is void of occupants. In continued misery, Adam and Eve
beat their breasts and prostrate themselves even more (ll.516), though these acts of worship do nothing to sway Figura’s judgment. As their wretchedness grows, their physical expressions of sorrow also increase. Although Adam is “overcome with shame toward God” and hopes to be rescued by his “creator,” both he and Eve are chained and taken away by three or four devils (ll.572, 590). Some of the devils push—the Latin stage direction being impellent—and drag (trabant) the unhappy sinners, while others “make a great dancing and jubilation over their damnation” (s.d.591). Adam and Eve not only symbolically fall from God’s grace, but their physical descent, dramatically enacted when they descend the steps towards the audience, illustrates a literal fall. As the scene concludes, each of the devils “point at them as they come, and take them and put them into hell” (s.d.591). When Adam and Eve approach the hell-mouth, “a great smoke arises” and the devils “bang together their pots and cauldrons” so spectators can both see and hear the elaborate stage effects of damnation (s.d.591).

Once Adam and Eve have been taken to hell, Cain—dressed in red garments—and Abel—dressed in white—come onto the stage to cultivate the ground that Adam and Eve have “made ready.” At, presumably, the same platea where Adam and Eve have sowed their fields, Cain and Abel offer sacrifice. Abel offers “his lamb and incense, from which smoke arise[s]” (s.d.666). Cain offers “a handful of his harvest” (s.d.666). Figura appears and blesses Abel’s sacrifice, while disdaining Cain’s (s.d.666). Cain makes “a savage face against Abel; and, when their oblations have been completed, they [go] to their own places” (s.d.666).

After some time, Cain finds Abel and seeks “cunningly to lead him forth in order to kill him” (s.d.666). When they both reach “a place,” the platea, Cain “like a madmen, rush[s] upon Abel wishing to kill him.” Lifting up “a menacing right hand” against Abel, Cain’s gesture constitutes a threat. Scornful words of bitterness and exaggerated gestures of hate communicate Cain’s emotional pain. As he prays to God to grant him mercy, Abel kneels “to the east” (s.d.722). As already seen, this is the same direction baptismal candidates would face when receiving God’s grace. This is also the direction Eucharist participants would face when receiving Holy Communion. Since this production is being performed at the west door, it should come to no surprise that Abel turns east, praying toward the church. He turns away from the sinful nature of his brother and audience’s world, and positions himself to a place where divine perfection resides.

The rubric continues: “Abel [has] a pot concealed in his garments, which Cain strike[s] violently, as though killing Abel. Abel lie[s] prostrate as though dead.” Meanwhile, Figura comes from the church to Cain, and when the choir finishes singing a responsory, Figura curses Cain for the murder of Abel (l.737). Figura tells Cain, “For such a misdeed, such is the reward…Your brother died in my faith; / Your penance will be grave” (l.l.738, 739-40). Figura returns to the church, while the devils lead Cain to hell, “beating him often” (s.d.745). The nostalgia for the lost paradise remains unfulfilled in the penitent Adam and Even, and in the righteous Abel.

Given the play’s characters, performative action, and setting, there is one possible resolution: a journey from the bottom of the church stairs, to the heavenly paradise of the church’s interior. However, none of the characters can make this journey. The possibility of this resolution is left to the audience, the populus, itself. Fulfilling the narrative promise of returning to a life free of sin is not the responsibility
of the characters, it is the audience’s. As a whole, *Jeu d’Adam* should not be interpreted as simply an interesting development paving the way for later treatments of the fall of man; rather, it stands as the most successful dramatic version of the “fall” story that has survived from the Middle Ages. Although *Jeu d’Adam* presents one instance of how later drama surpassed and outgrew the simplicity of the *Quem quaeritis*, its narrative is still rooted in biblical stories. However, in the late fourteenth century, a new type of play would develop that had virtually no precedents in the earlier church drama. While the Corpus Christi cycles and saint’s plays found themselves increasingly under attack by the Reformation Church, a new genre for the stage proved to be fairly adaptable. For this reason, this new type of play—the morality—survived to become a formative influence on subsequent Renaissance drama.
First seen in the late fourteenth century, the morality play had virtually no precedents in earlier church drama, and was essentially a new genre for the stage. Moralities such as *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Mankind* dramatized Christian morals by having actors personify allegorical characters. The morality play flourished during the fifteenth century, when the Corpus Christi cycles and saints’ plays were also enjoying considerable popularity. Unlike contemporary cycles and saints’ plays, which increasingly found themselves under attack by the Reformation Church, the morality’s allegorical stories proved to be more adaptable to new ideologies and social conditions during the later sixteenth century than other kinds of medieval drama. Thus, the moralities survived to become an important source of influence for later Renaissance drama.

Perhaps most significantly, the morality served as a way to dramatize philosophical and psychological questions, such as: How do men know truth? How can men define, and most importantly, visualize concepts such as reason, will and fleshly appetite? Before substantiating detail is given, it is important first to establish the

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194 *The Castle of Perseverance* is found in the Macro Manuscript, named for a previous owner of the manuscript, the Reverend Cox Macro (1683-1767). Now housed in the Folger Library, Washington, D.C., as MS V.a.354, the volume contains two other plays, *Wisdom* and *Mankind*. However, the volume does not represent a single manuscript; the three separate plays were first bound together in 1819. This thesis will cite *Perseverance* from Bevington, 1975: 799-900.

195 Although both of these plays are of merit, this thesis will only deal with *The Castle of Perseverance*. *Perseverance* is the longest English morality play, and rather than highlighting important sections from other contemporary morality plays, this thesis will give a thorough analysis of just *Perseverance*. 
morality’s basic form, and the common elements found throughout the various morality plays. Given a name that stressed his relationship to all living men and women, such as Mankind or Everyman, the mankind figure, the central protagonist in these plays, usually underwent a spiritual struggle, which was portrayed as a conflict between personified abstractions representing good and evil (the *psychomachia*). By illustrating how a representative mankind figure succumbs to vice, but is eventually restored to grace, the morality plays’ plot consciously parallels the story of Adam’s fall from grace and of Christ’s redemptive sacrifice. One play whose structure represents these concepts, *The Castle of Perseverance*, imitates this cosmic scope. Later playwrights would show a similar scope but different in form, using the cosmic dimensions of a morality but creating a central figure who was not restored by grace. In order to fully appreciate how morality drama influenced these subsequent authors, such as Christopher Marlowe, this chapter will conclude by analyzing Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*. In an epilogue, this thesis’ conclusion will demonstrate how the dramatic elements in the liturgy of the Church continued to influence later Renaissance playwrights and their plays.

As with other morality plays, such as *Mankind* and *Everyman*, *Perseverance* has no significant precedents in the drama of the medieval Church. The earliest morality play to survive nearly intact, *Perseverance* (ca. 1405-25) consists of 36 players delivering 3,649 lines, which encompass several distinguishable plots joined in sequence. The play can

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196 However, many non-dramatic sources and analogues can be found. The allegorization of spiritual conflict in the form of a chivalric tournament or assault on a castle was common throughout medieval literature. Some instances are: *Psychomachia*, Prudentius’ (ca. 345-405) and *Chasteau d’Amour, Grosseteste’s* (c. 1175-1253). The battle between the seven Deadly Sins and the seven Virtues is mentioned in other works, including *La Bataille des Vices contre les Vertues*, Rutebeuf’s (ca. 1245-1285) and *De Pugna Spirituali contra Septem Vitiæ Capitaliæ*, Bonaventura’s (ca. 1221-1274). The conception of the Four Daughters of God goes back to Psalm 85. Of these instances, Prudentius’ fourth-century *Psychomachia* has been a popular source text for scholars like E.K. Chambers (1903), W. Roy Mackenzie (1914), Bernard Spivack (1958), and David Bevington (1962).

197 The following plot sequences are my own creation and are not actual divisions found within the text.
be divided roughly into three acts, which consist of: 1. *Humanum Genus* (Mankind) entering the world, favoring earthly pleasures over divine rule. *Paenitentia* (Penance) pierces Mankind with a lance, whereupon Mankind confesses his sins and then enters the Castle of Perseverance. 2. Preparations are made for the battle of Mankind, whereupon the Sins assault the Castle in two battles. After the second attack, Mankind leaves the “virtuous” Castle. 3. *Avaritia* (Greediness [*World’s treasurer*]) gives Mankind riches, but he craves even more worldly gain. *Mors* (Death) enters the *platea*, and kills Mankind. Mankind’s *Anima* (Soul) emerges and is beaten in hell, though it is rescued by God’s Four Daughters—*Misericordia* (Mercy), *Veritas* (Truth), *Justitia* (Justice), and *Pax* (Peace)—and is granted mercy. 198 The play concludes with *Pater* (God) giving a final speech to the audience from his throne. 199

Of the various medieval morality plays, Perseverance is the only pre-sixteenth century English dramatic text with a surviving stage plan (see figure 2). 200

Although some aspects of this drawing are ambiguous, the characters’ locations are not. Situated at the outskirts of the platea are five “scaffolds,” four of them at compass points and each assigned to a major character in the play. *Deus* (God) is assigned the East scaffold (Jerusalem being east of England) and *Mundus* (World) in the West. These two points replicate the orientation of the parish church, with its altar in the East and the nave in the West. *Caro* (Flesh) is given a scaffold in the South, *Belial* (the Devil) is in the North, and *Coveytyse* (Greed) is in the North-east—situated halfway between the scaffolds of God and the Devil. The placement and preeminence of Coveytyse’s scaffold effectually illustrates the central moral weakness of Mankind: it acts as a spatial

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201 Written to the right and left of the castle, the position of Greed’s cupboard is given, although it is not entirely clear what “at the ende of the castel” means.

202 Although the stage plan refers to God as *Deus*, it should be noted that the list of players’ names—found in the manuscript at the back of the play—lists God as *Pater*, “the Father.” It seems that when God speaks in general terms, he is referred to as *Deus*. However, when he acts as a “judge” or “father” to his Four Daughters, he is given the Latin *Pater*, along with a relevant qualification (e.g., *Pater sedens in trono* [The Father sitting on his throne]).
expression of the inevitability of man’s fall into sin, and therefore, the absolute necessity of Christ’s Passion and continuing mercy.

On the outskirts of this diagram lie two concentric circles, with the interior text reading: “This is the water about the place if any ditch may be made where it shall be played, or else [see] that it be strongly barred all about; and let not over many stytelerys be within the place.” The primary problem in interpreting the stage plan has been the position of the ditch, which surrounds the castle. According to Richard Southern, who has written a book-length study of the staging of *Perseverance*, the circular arena used for this play must be around 3,810 centimeters (125 feet) in diameter. Southern suggests that the arena was surrounded by a moat, with the scaffolds erected on an earth mound just inside the moat. The spectators, he argues, sit on both this mound, and fill part of the *platea*. If this were true, the “stytelerys” would be people who controlled the crowd and kept passages clear for the entrance and exit of players. In any case, the diagram itself clearly states that no one is to sit in the castle’s center, where much of the action takes place.

The placement of the crenellated castle at the center of the acting area is made clear both by the stage diagram and its accompanying text. The castle would have stood on legs so that the bed beneath it would be visible to audience members, with the upper part enclosed by stonework, perhaps painted on canvas. In size, the castle must have had room for nine people: seven Virtues, Mankind, and the Good Angel. The castle’s accompanying stage direction reads: “Mankind’s bed shall be under the Castle and there shall the soul lie under the bed till he shall rise and play.” In *Perseverance*, the castle forms

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204 This is because during the *psychomachia*, the Virtues, Mankind, and Good Angel are all inside the Castle of Perseverance, while the seven Sins are outside.
the central image, while directly beneath this central image, is the bed upon which Mankind expires. This directly juxtaposes perseverance in virtue to the wretched fate of a sinner—eternal life to spiritual death and damnation. As Scherb describes, “metaphorically, they realize the conflict at the heart of the play, while iconographically [sic], they powerfully symbolize spiritual and temporal life; and psychologically, they function as a mnemonic image for the play’s doctrine.” Thus, the central set acts as a powerful mnemonic image, embodying the themes and tensions at the heart of the play.

This mnemonic image goes beyond the moral character of theatrical space in *Perseverance*. The central mnemonic image, the five scaffolds, and four cardinal points intriguingly suggest a literal *mappa mundi* and a symbolic *mappa moralitatis*—the central castle becoming analogous to Jerusalem, and Mankind becoming analogous to Adam. For Christians, Jerusalem was regarded as the center of the world—explaining why it is mapped this way by cartographers—but Golgotha, the location of Adam’s creation and burial, was the epicenter. Thus, when Jesus is nailed to the cross, and his blood falls on Adam’s skull (Adam representing all of mankind), which is buried precisely at the foot of the cross, man is granted mercy and is redeemed. As the opening and concluding scenes of *Perseverance* will illustrate, the playing space is the world, from “Rodys [Roads]” to

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206 The oldest known *mappa mundi*, or world map, dates back to ancient Babylonia from the ninth century. See Kurt A. Raaflaub and Richard J.A. Talbert, *Geography and Ethnography: Perceptions of the World in Pre-Modern Societies* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 147. However, the best-known Babylonian map is the *Imago Mundi* of the sixth century BCE. On this map, Babylon is surrounded by a “bitter river” (Oceanus), with seven islands arranged around it in the form of a seven-pointed star. In the Middle Ages, T and O maps—T being the Mediterranean, dividing the three continents Asia, Europe, and Africa; and O being the surrounding Ocean—showed Jerusalem as the map’s center. Drawn on a single sheet of vellum and measuring 158 cm by 133 cm, the Hereford *Mappa Mundi* is a detailed map based on the T and O may style, and dates to ca. 1300. Jerusalem is drawn at the center of the circle, showing the Garden of Eden at the edge of the world near the bordering ocean.
“ryche Rome” (l.178)—a theatrical stroke that allows the dramatist to explore the place of the world within the divine cosmos.

The stage plan’s resemblance to a *mappa mundi* is reinforced by the prominence of *Mundus*, whose words open the play. Mundus boasts dominion over all languages and all geographic places (ll.157-95), his worldly influence is dramatized when the seven Deadly Sins enter and step onto their respective scaffolds (*s.d.*196, 235). After Mankind is born and baptized, he rises from his bed under the Castle (*s.d.*275) and “stoned and stodye, al ful of thowth [stands still as stone, completely perplexed/bewildered]” (l.292). Mankind’s stance prefigures the significance of his—as well as other characters’—stage movement and its relation to spiritual states. As soon as he takes sides with *Malus Angelus* and turns away from *Bonus Angelus* (*s.d.*447), Mankind begins to make essentially circular movements around the *platea* to the various scaffolds of Vices. Just as Mankind has referenced his own “walking and wending” path in his opening speech (l.277), his physical aimlessness and wandering movements are guided not by himself or the Virtues, but by the Vices.

Beguiled by *Malus Angelus*’ initial promise to make Mankind rich (l.392), when Mankind finally reaches *Mundus*’ scaffold, *Mundus* commands Mankind to forsake God (l.593-6). When he agrees (l.597-8), *Mundus* tells Mankind to go to his treasurer, *Avaritia*, to be given worldly luxuries (l.764-7). As he descends from the *Mundus*’ scaffold,

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207 The play’s actual opening words are the “Banns” (consisting of 156 lines), which were festive preliminary announcements made several days before the actual performance.

208 The belief of the seven Deadly Sins is linked to the works of fourth century monk Evagrius Ponticus, who listed eight “evil thoughts” in Greek as follows: 1. Γαστριμαργία, 2. Πορνεία, 3. Φιλαργυρία, 4. Λύπη, 5. Ὀργή, 6. Ἀκηδία, 7. Κενοδοξία, 8. Ὑπερηφανία. This list can be found in Evagrio Pontico, trans., Felice Cornello, *Gli Otto Spiriti Malvagi* (Marma: Pratiche Editrice, 1990) 11-12. In 590, these “evil thoughts” were revised by Pope Gregory I to form the more commonly known seven Deadly Sins, which are: 1. Luxuria (lechery/lust), 2. Gula (gluttony), 3. Avaritia (avarice/greed), 4. Acedia (acedia/discouragement), 5. Ira (wrath), 6. Invidia (envy), 7. Superbia (pride). This list can be found in Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job* (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1844-1850) 31, 45.
Mankind meets Detractio\textsuperscript{209} and together, they walk across the platea to Avaritia’s scaffold (s.d.788). As soon as he makes a vow to Avaritia (l.877), Mankind—for the first time in the play—begins to call other Vices to draw near and sit by him (ll.1142, 1197, 1231). In anticipation of audience reactions, Mankind interestingly adds:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
We have etyn garlek everychone.\textsuperscript{210} & We have eaten garlic everyone. \\
Thou[gh] I schulde to helle go, & Though I should go to hell, \\
I wot wel I schal not gon alone, & I know well I shall not go alone, \\
Trewly I tell the[e]. & Truly I tell you. \\
I did nevere so evil, trewly, & I never did so much evil, truly, \\
But other han don as evil as I. & But others have done as much as I. \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

(ll.1369-74)

By implying that others, such as audience members, have also sinned (“But others have done as much as I”), Mankind’s remarks implicate the audience as one of the play’s characters. When Mankind deflects his own sinful deeds by acknowledging those of others, the spectators, as characters, are indirectly asked: “Do you deny that you, too, have committed sins?” If members answer: “No,” they acknowledge their own sinful flaws. If they answer: “Yes,” they elevate themselves to Christ’s pedestal of perfection and commit a blasphemous act.

This relationship is heightened by the following scene, which has Paenitentia pierce Mankind with a lance (s.d.1403). This metaphorical puncture provokes sorrow from his heart, whereupon Mankind cries, “Mercy!” (l.1408). Mankind descends to Schrifte (Confession) from Avaritia’s scaffold and kneels down “Bothe with bede and oriso[u]n, / And aske min[e] absolucio[u]n, / Sir Schrifte, I you pray [Bo

\footnotetext{209}{Vice has no character by name, since the term did not come into use until the sixteenth century (see “Vice” in Oxford English Dictionary). However, Detractio (translated as Backbiter) can be recognized to have qualities of resourceful malice that identifies the Vice of later morality plays.}

\footnotetext{210}{As Bevington notes, eating garlic was a medieval analogy to being marked by sin. See Bevington. 1975: 837.}
and prayer, / and ask my absolution, / Sir Confession, I pray to you]” (ll.1490-93). After Schrifte speaks of Mankind’s sins in Latin (ll.1502, 1506), Schrifte restores Mankind “the sacrament / of penauns [penance]” (l.1511-12). Mankind is asked to stand in remission for his previous sinful deeds (l.1531). He then looks around and asks where he can “dwelle” (s.d.1533, l.1534). Schrifte tells Mankind he can live in the Castle of Perseverance (l.1549), and is told by Bonus Angelus: “Therfor, spede now thy pace / Pertly to yone preciouse place [Therefore, speed your pace / Quickly to your precious place]” (ll.1594-95). In contrast to Mankind’s wandering trajectory with the Vices, this implicit stage direction instructs Mankind to make a straight, rapid course to the center castle. This, in turn, contrasts Mankind’s previously aimless and wandering path to his direct and purposeful course when influenced by the Virtues.

After a Latin reference to Psalms 18:25-26 (Cum sancto sanctus eris, et cetera [With those who are holy you will be holy, and so on]), a rather terse yet crucial stage direction immediately follows, which reads: “Tunc intrabit [Then he will enter]” (s.d.1696). The moment Mankind crosses the symbolic threshold to the castle, Humilitas tells him to “Stonde hereinne, as stille as ston; / Thanne schal no dedly sinne the[e] spille [Stand here, as still as stone; / Then shall no deadly sin befall you]” (ll.1697-98). Whereas Mankind’s opening stance of stillness signified his uncertainty, his current stance carries virtuous connotations of fidelity and solidity. However, as the second part of this play will illustrate, Mankind’s virtuous “perseverance” will not last. While the Virtues solemnly advised Mankind to abstain from sin; the Sins, on the other hand, are ludicrously comic figures whose comedic physical abuse could appeal to Mankind and the audience more than serious moral instruction.
Before the *psychomachia*, a small “battle” ensues between Belial and the Vices, whereupon Belial—furious that the Vices have lost Mankind to the Virtues—beats them to the ground (*s.d.*1776). *Avaritia* cries “Mercy, mercy!” and pleads that he can persuade Mankind to come out of the Castle of Perseverance freely (ll.1864, 1873-74). Belial then has the other Vices make preparations for the *psychomachia*, culminating in a heroic hoisting of banners (*s.d.*1938). For Belial’s performance, the stage diagram reads: “He that shall play Belial, look that he have gunpowder burning in pipes, in his hands, and in his ears, and in his arse, when he goeth to battle.” Since this battle probably took place on the *platea*, presumably in the midst of the spectators, this accentuated display of pyrotechnics ensured that audience members were visually drawn to the most important “vice” figure.

While the Vices prepare their “armes” for battle, the Virtues strengthen both themselves and the Castle. *Humilitas* raises a banner of the Passion (*s.d.*2083), where *Patientia* then shouts to the Vices: “If thou fonde to comyn alofte, / I schal the[e] cache fro this crofte / With these rosys swete and softe, / Peyntyd with Paciens [If you try to come aloft, / I shall drive you from this croft / With these roses, sweet and soft, / Painted with Patience]” (ll.2143-46). Interestingly, this speech implies that the Virtues will toss down the roses at the Vices. This, presumably, means that the Virtues are not only symbolically detached from the world, but that they are literally standing in the upper portion of the Castle. They are above the level of the *platea*—associated with the world—and presumably walk near the Castle’s upper crenulations. Although they remain within the world’s sphere of influence, they spatially and spiritually remain above it. The Virtues, as opposed to the Vices, act as if they are restricted to the Castle and do not join Mankind when he walks around the *platea*, as *Bonus Angelus* has done
Their refusal to join the world signals their divine nature, and Mankind succeeds in imitating the Virtues as long as he stands still, and allows the water of grace to fill his spirit.

Repulsed by a fusillade of flowers—symbolic of the Passion—Belial’s lieutenants, *Superbia* (Pride), *Ira* (Wrath), and *Invidia* (Envy), are driven off the battlefield by *Humilitas*, *Patientia*, and *Caritas* (Charity) (s.d.2199). During the second assault, Accidi[a] (Sloth) digs at the castle’s wall with his spade, and is able to literally and symbolically penetrate Perseverance and spill the water of grace (s.d.2328). Once this breach occurs, *Avaritia* then steps forward and calls to Mankind: “Cum and speke with thy best frende, / Sir Coveytysse! Thou knowist me of olde [Come and speak to your best friend, Sir Greed! You know me of old]” (ll.2429-30). An aged Mankind appears on the battlements of the Castle and tells *Avaritia*: “Coveytysse, thou seyst a good skil. / So grete God me avaunce, / Al thy biddinge don I wil. / I forsake the Castel of Perseveraunce [Greed, you speak well. / May great God prosper me (an oath), / All your bidding I will do. / I forsake the Castle of Perseverance]” (ll.2531-4). Although *Bonus Angelus* asks the Virtues why they allow Mankind to leave the Castle, *Humilitas* answers that Mankind will do what he will since *Deus* has given him free will (ll.2559-60).

Although *Abstinentia* tells audience members that they know Mankind is a fool (l.2596), Mankind leaves the Castle in order to re-enter the worldly sphere of the Vices’ influence, which carries the possibility for sin and damnation. *Mors* soon enters the *platea* and strikes Mankind with his lance (s.d.2841). At this blow, Mankind turns and sees *Mors* for the first time (s.d.2841). As *Mors* turns and walks out of the *platea*, Mankind asks *Mundus* for help (l.2852). *Mundus* coolly responds: “I servyd here befor / A hundryd

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211 For instance, this is previously seen at ll.1594-5.
212 Although the manuscript has the character *Avaritia* speak, *Avaritia* refers to himself as “Coveytysse.”
Mankind repents his sins and tells the audience to use his life as an example for their own behavior (ll.2995-3000). He takes his last breath and cries, “I putte me in Goddys mercy [I put myself in God’s mercy]!” and dies (l.3007).

Mankind’s soul emerges from under his bed (s.d.3007) and is beaten in hell by the Vices (s.d.3115). The Four Daughters of Deus emerge\(^\text{213}\) —Misericordia dressed in a white mantle, Veritas in “sad” green, Justitia in red, and Pax in black—and cross the platea to Deus’ scaffold (s.d.3129).\(^\text{214}\) This movement draws the audience’s attention to this East scaffold for the first time in the play. Quoting the Scripture in Latin, each daughter makes a compelling case for the fate of Mankind’s soul (ll.3129-3560). Each daughter questions the other, until they make the decision to ascend to Deus’ throne (s.d.3228). As the Daughters appeal to Deus, each visualizes a different aspect of the process of judgment, and act as a foil to Deus’ transcendent wisdom. As soon as they finish walking up the scaffold and draw near to Deus, the entire tone of their spoken discourse changes. Rather than speaking to each other, they directly address Deus. In relation to the play’s stagecraft, this means that their gaze, as well as the audience’s, has shifted to Deus.

After a reference to Psalms 33:5 (Misericordia Domini plena est terra [The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord]), Deus sides with Misericordia and orders his Daughters to release Mankind’s soul from the clutches of Belial (ll.3560-81). After Malus Angelus releases him (l.3597), Mankind’s soul is brought up to Deus’ knees. While seated in judgment, God the Father grants Mankind mercy and asks him to be seated at his right


\(^{214}\) These colors are given on \textit{Perseverance}’s stage diagram.
hand, the traditional placement of Christ (l.3599).215 After speaking to Mankind, the actor who plays the Father removes his mitre and mask and gives the lasting words to the audience:

Thus endith oure gamys. Thus ends our games.
To save you fro sinninge, To save you from sinning,
Evyr at the beginninge Ever at the beginning
Thinke on youre last endinge! Think of your last ending!

(ll.3645-48)

In essence, the figure of God, represented on earth by a man, demands that the audience interpret the play’s action and apply it to their own lives. The moral structure of the play reinforces its mnemonic power since Mankind is—in some sense—identical with every individual audience member. Mankind’s experiences are the audience’s experiences, and Perseverance’s playwright seems to go to considerable lengths to make sure that the audience visually sees how the virtues and vices can lead each individual through a similar pattern of fall and repentance.

The pattern of morality drama—temptation and fall, building up to a pivotal scene of divine judgment—continued in early Renaissance plays.216 However, a changing social structure—a collapsing feudal system—along with Eucharistic controversies within the Church, led to the prohibition of religious plays in Europe. At the same time as England’s ruling monarchs separated themselves from the Roman Catholic Church, Germany’s Martin Luther (1483-1546) was a primary initiator of the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant Reformation brought to the Mass; specifically, to the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, a revolutionary change. In the Catholic

215 This placement of Christ is mentioned in: Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69; Matthew 22:44, 26:64; Acts 2:34, 7:55.
216 For more detail about the continuity between morality plays and Renaissance writing, see David Bevington, From “Mankind” to Marlowe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).
Mass, the sacrifice of Christ was understood as something that happened again in the
consecration. In other words, the sacrifice happened in the present moment, and Jesus’
body was physically present during the Eucharist. Protestants, however, believed that
the Eucharist only symbolized Christ. It was a difference between Protestants’ “spiritual”
interpretation of the Eucharist, and Catholics’ “magical” enactment.

Within this religious framework, in 1587 a certain Johann Spies (1540-1623)
published a small chapbook—a pocket-sized booklet—titled Historia von D. Johann
Fausten. This little German book was translated into a flood of different languages, and
underwent a complete metamorphosis when Christopher Marlowe picked up the story.217
Given the context of sixteenth-century religious thought and ritual, Marlowe’s The
Tragicall History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus—commonly referred to as Doctor
Faustus—seems to dramatically present Catholic and Protestant debates over the
Eucharistic meal.218 Since London had an active secular theatre—not dependent upon
liturgical seasons or other religious observances—Marlowe could expand upon the story
of Doctor Faustus. In the play, religious ritual, the Mass and blasphemous substitutes for
that ritual, magic and witchcraft, are given center stage. Marlowe did not simply follow
the limited tradition of morality drama, where the triumph of good over evil was
celebrated, he crafted his protagonist as someone who could dramatize blasphemy as a
heroic endeavor. Exit: the allegorical figure. Enter: the tragic hero.

217 For more detail about Marlowe’s source materials, see chapter 8 of John Bakeless The Tragicall History
of Christopher Marlowe, 2 vols., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942); Philip M. Palmer and
Robert T. More, The Sources of the Faust Tradition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966) 87; and Sara
218 There are two versions of Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus, the “A-text” (a 1604 quarto, reprinted in 1609), and
the “B-text” (a 1616 quarto, reprinted in 1619, 1620, 1624, 1631, and 1663). References to Doctor Faustus
will be to the A-text, found in David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, Doctor Faustus: A-and B-texts
In Marlowe’s play, Faustus is a learned scientist and theologian who aspires to higher forms of knowledge and craves for more than his current life can give. Unsatisfied with his worldly accomplishments, Faustus conjures a devil, Mephistophiles, and commands him to offer Lucifer a deal. Craving magical powers, Faustus is willing to sell his soul in exchange for 24 years of Mephistophiles’ service. When these 24 years have passed, Faustus laments over his blackened soul, and although he hopes for one drop of Christ’s merciful blood, he is condemned to damnation. Within this plot, there are three primary points of dramatic interest in which Faustus repeatedly seals the pacts that bring about his own misery: 1. the opening scene, along with the appearance of the Good and Evil Angel; 2. Faustus signing the bond with his own blood; and 3. the final scene, which includes Faustus re-signing the contract and being condemned to hell. An undercurrent of Eucharistic debate informs these moments, and will provide a focus for the remainder of this chapter.

From the beginning of Doctor Faustus, Marlowe carefully presents his hero as someone who consciously aims to soar higher than God’s imposed limitations, resulting in the dramatic rise and fall of his soul. The Chorus’ opening lines have implied that Faustus’ flight will be Icarian: “His waxen wings did mount above his reach, / And melting heavens conspired his overthrow” (Prologue 21-22). As he sits in his study, Faustus “levels at the end of every art,” reaching for and surveying successive volumes (1.1.4). This climactic tension breaks every time he puts each book aside, admitting that he is still “Faustus” and “a man.” However, when Faustus finally picks up the necromantic works (s.d.1.1.50), he becomes enchanted by their power: “These metaphysics of magicians / And necromantic books are heavenly, / Lines, circles, signs, letters, and characters— / Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires” (1.1.51-54).
The vertical dimension of this passage—the hovering position of “heavenly” shapes—contrasting to the downward plunge of Faustus’ imminent fall, is dramatized even further when Faustus declares: “O, what a world of profit and delight, / Of power, of honour, of omnipotence, / Is promised to the studious artisan! / All things that move between the quiet poles / Shall be at my command” (1.1.55-59).

Faustus’ own language soars impressively, validating his hyperbolic leaps to mastery over low, earthly disciplines. The language not only echoes the actions of Christ in the Gospels, Faustus’ craving for God’s “omnipotence” points to his desire for a kind of divine power. Faustus’ very wish to be God would have been recognized by Marlowe’s audience as the primal sin: the ur-aspiration of Lucifer himself. As Faustus falls into this trance-like demonic aspiration, Marlowe is careful to present his hero in the conscious act of choice.219 Faustus is ready to commit a particular action that is morally horrifying, but this very act is ennobling because it illustrates man’s capacity to aspire. Against this tragic irony, the Christian paradox of man’s fall and free will, brought about by Adam and Eve’s sin, coalesce: Faustus is destroyed by what makes him most human. As Waswo reflects, “Not only is the hero destroyed by his finest qualities, but it is these very qualities which are the most thoroughly destroyed.”220

As Faust begins to turn towards the dark recesses of magic, the Good and Evil Angel appear in the study (s.d.1.1.72). These figures, one entirely good and the other entirely evil, echo the allegorical figures found in previous morality plays. Although the Good Angel might command Faustus to “lay that damned book aside / And gaze not on it,” the Evil Angel persuades Faustus to reach forward “in that famous art / Wherein all


220 ibid 81.
nature’s treasury is contained” (1.1.72-73, 76-77). By opening the play with an inner conflict, externalized by the appearance of the Good and Evil Angels, Marlowe dramatically visualizes the possibility of both redemption and damnation. After each makes his respective case, the Angels leave Faustus alone to decide his own fate. As he holds a book of magic (s.d.1.3.1) and draws a circle (s.d.1.3.8), Faustus embraces magical rituals and begins his demonic incantation.

In order to understand why Faustus turns to magic, it will be helpful to consider the religious tensions which act as an undercurrent throughout this scene. For Marlowe, as well as the Elizabethan church, understanding the act of Holy Communion became central for daily life. From the perspective of English Protestants, Catholic Mass and its transubstantiation doctrine began to be interpreted as “magic.” Bishop Bale went as far as to call the Roman priests’ consecration of the elements, “such a charm of enchantment as may not be done but by an oiled officer of the pope’s generation.”

In 1549, an Order of Council under Warwick refers to “their Latin service, their conjured bread and water, with such vain and superstitious ceremonies.” Although the Anglican Church maintained the basic ritual of the Mass, the new theology on the issue of transubstantiation questioned how Christ’s body and blood are consumed. Marlowe seems aware of these “magical possibilities” in the changing attitudes towards transubstantiation, and uses blasphemous black magic as a type of parody of Christianized formulaic worship.

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222 ibid 142. For more detail about the transformation the theology of the liturgy underwent during this period, see chapter 16 in Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy, intro. Simon Jones (New York: Continuum, 2007). This book continues to be an authoritative text for the development and history of the liturgy.
If this is not clear enough, Marlowe has Faustus finish his demonic incantation in Latin—the language of the Church. The Latin intensifies the psychological effect of the play on its audience, and is used as a way to further mock the Christian rituals that were practiced throughout the English Reformation. As a final act, Faustus sprinkles holy water and makes the sign of the cross (s.d.1.3.24). Conjured by this inversion of Christian rituals, Mephistopheles appears before Faustus and says: “I am a servant to great Lucifer /...For when we [the Devils] hear one rack in the name of God, / Abjure the Scriptures and his Savior Christ, / We fly in hope to get his glorious soul, / Nor will we come unless he use such means / Whereby he is in danger to be damned. /...abjure the Trinity / And pray devoutly to the prince of hell” (1.3.41, 48-52, 54-55).

Remarkably, Marlowe has the Devil, the minister of lies, tell the truth to Faustus. As Cole mentions, this was an “unheard-of tactic for any representative of evil in the morality tradition. That Faustus should proceed to his own damnation in the face of such testimony sets him at an infinite distance from any of the beguiled human victims of the Vice in the moralities.”

The most striking element in Faustus’ prideful and insolent questions is the traditional religious imagery that is evoked. After he answers Mephistopheles and says that he has already prayed to Lucifer (1.2.56-57), Faustus begins a new exchange with Mephistopheles:

_Faustus._ Was not that Lucifer an angel once?

_Mephistopheles._ Yes, Faustus, and most dearly loved of God.

_Faustus._ How comes it then that he is prince of devils?

_Mephistopheles._ O, by aspiring pride and insolence,

For which God threw him from the face of heaven. (1.3.66-70)

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In this passage, the face—a conventional religious image—is further used to recall the “aspiring” and upward flight of Lucifer, as well as the downward plunge (“God threw him”) he took because of that very aspiration. As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, once a person had been baptized, the gift of the Holy Spirit was “breathed” into a neophyte’s mouth by the bishop. Before a person participated in the Eucharist and entered into a Holy Communion with God, he would give the kiss of peace to other Christians to reenact this “breathing” spirit of life. When Mephistopheles personifies heaven and gives it a face, it directs the audience to look upward. Since heaven was thought to be physically above a person, the facial imagery provides a tangible place for man to reach and aspire to, as well as to be thrown down from.

After learning more detail about Lucifer and hell, Faustus asks:

*Faustus.* Where are you damned?

*Mephistopheles.* In hell.

*Faustus.* How come it then that thou art out of hell?

*Mephistopheles.* Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.

Think’st thou that I, who saw the *face* of God

And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,

Am not tormented with ten thousand hells

In being deprived of everlasting bliss? (1.3.75-82)

When Mephistopheles first responds: “This is hell, nor am I out of it,” the blurring of earthly reality with Lucifer’s infernal realm of suffering foreshadows Faustus’ fate. The previously mentioned “face of heaven” is transformed into the “face of God,” intensifying the personal connection between Mephistopheles and God, as well as

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224 The idea of heaven being above the earthly world is an idea that goes back to the ancient two-sphere universe. For a complete history of astronomy, from Ptolemy’s two-sphere universe to Newtonian principles, see Thomas Kuhn, The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957). Detail central to the Renaissance and Reformation is on pp.124-128.

225 The italics for *face* have been my emphasis.
elevating the danger Faustus is about to “face” if he continues his current path of blasphemous black magic. By the time Mephistopheles finishes his speech, the contrast between the “face of God,” and the lower “ten thousand hells,” leaves audience members with an interesting point: as soon as Faustus sells his soul to the Devil, the contract will be a binding document that ratifies the absence of God in Faustus’ life.

When Faustus finally signs the bond, giving him 24 years of life on Earth during which time he will have Mephistopheles as a servant, two omens indicate that Faustus is in danger of damnation. After he stabs his arm, using his life’s blood to sign the contract (s.d.2.1.53), Faustus’ blood congeals, indicating the first instance when his body rejects this demonic bond. The bloodletting is a hideous parody of the expiatory suffering of Christ which Faustus is rejecting, which will reappear symbolically in the final scene as a way to intensify the ironic futility of Faustus’ own suffering. By signing this demonic contract with his own blood, Faustus plays the role of Jesus and establishes a New Covenant between himself and Lucifer. Eucharistic imagery is fully inverted, causing his own body to respond by rejecting this very act.

The Book of Common Prayer (1549) warns about the abuse of Holy Communion in a way which strikingly illuminates Marlowe’s dramatization of blasphemy: “…consider what S. Paul writeth to the Corinthians, how he exhorteth all persons diligently to try and examine themselves, before they presume to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup…so is the danger great, if we receive the same [Holy Communion] unworthily. For then we be guilty of the body and blood of Christ our Saviour. We eat and drink our own damnation, not considering the Lord’s body.”

Faustus’ actions seem to go beyond what the Book of Common Prayer imagines.

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Faustus’ very flesh cringes to close the self-inflicted wound, indicating that his body—if not Faustus himself—rejects this type of inverted Eucharist. As his blood congeals from the open wound, Marlowe brings together deep implications about becoming one with Christ. To make this point clear, after Mephistopheles fetches a chafer of coals to make Faustus’ blood flow freely (s.d.2.1.70), Faustus declare, “Consummatum est [It is finished]” (2.1.74). In this declaration, Faustus compares his shedding of blood to Christ’s, for in John’s Gospel, these are the last words Jesus says while dying on the cross (John 19:30).

Faustus’ second omen of damnation appears immediately after this declaration. The inscription, “Homo, fuge [Flee, man]!” appears on Faustus’ arm (2.1.77). The blood, a visual analogue to his internal soul, symbolizes the eternal nature of Faustus’ pact, while this Latin inscription is an external realization of Faustus’ conscious choice of damnation. Christ might have died on the cross—shedding his own blood—for the sins of humanity, but Faustus inverts this sacrifice for his own demonic purposes. When Faustus chooses to act against his body’s rejection, he becomes incapable of repentance. This is not because God or Christ is unwilling or unable to forgive, but because Faustus’ “New Covenant” with the Devil destroys the very image of God. In Adam, man is a rational creature and is made in the likeness of his creator. In Christ, man is reborn in the likeness of his Redeemer. Faustus’ contract with Mephistopheles cancels redemption, and by submitting to Lucifer, the original adversary, Faustus inverts creation itself.

As Faustus’ 24-year contract comes to a close, Faustus enacts a second blood-letting ritual. Cursing himself over his own fate, Faustus declares: “I do repent, and yet I do despair. / Hell strives with grace for conquest in my breast. / What shall I do to shun
the snares of death?” (5.1.64-66). After Mephistopheles reproaches him, Faustus declares that he will draw his blood to confirm his former vow he made to Lucifer (5.1.72-73). Faustus cuts his arm, writes with his own blood once more, and re-signs the infernal Covenant (s.d.5.1.76). If Faustus had established a demonic New Covenant, a type of Black Last Supper scene, in the first contract scene, the meaning of that Covenant is deepened in this renewal scene. The inverted Covenant becomes equivalent to a blasphemous communion; or, to use more modern terminology, a Black Mass. The entire episode is a darkly ironic confirmation of Faustus’ complete enslavement by evil.227

During the Black Mass, Faustus asks Mephistopheles to call forth Helen of Troy, “Whose sweet embracings may extinguish clean / These thoughts that do dissuade me from my vow, / And keep mine oath I made to Lucifer” (5.1.86-88). Mephistopheles answers that his wish shall be “performed in twinkling of an eye” (5.1.90). Conjuring up a spirit from the past, Mephistopheles “performs” one last spectacle to astound Faustus. With Faustus’ request, comes an effort to find carnal satisfaction in an inverted Incarnation. When Helen appears, Faustus delivers the immortalizing lines: “Was this the face that launched a thousand ships / And burnt the topless towers of Illium? / Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss” (5.1.91-93). Marlowe’s Helen is described only in terms of her face and lips, reducing her physical presence to the parts that ensnare Faustus. The moment he kisses the lips of the beauty that had sparked the misery of the Trojan War, Faustus lives and dies in the same heroic and tragic pattern of fallen men. Faustus enacts this “immortal” kiss as if he was a devout man taking communion. By inverting the kiss’s intended Eucharistic purpose, Faustus’ misguided

and misplaced worship does not lead to his immortality of salvation; rather, it leads to his everlasting damnation. Helen’s kiss, an inverted Pax—traditionally given after baptism and immediately before new converts take their first communion—provides a visual performance of Faustus’ fall from grace. Rather than breathing in the Holy Spirit, her kiss sucks the remaining wisp of goodness out of Faustus.

With a gasp, Faustus whispers, “Her lips sucks [sic] forth my soul. See where it flies!” (5.1.94). As his soul takes flight, viewers are reminded of the first meeting between Faustus and Mephistopheles. Mephistopheles had told Faustus that when a person is in danger of being damned, the devils “fly in hope to get his glorious soul” (1.3.50). At this point of the play, Faustus’ Icarian wings, which had raised him to new heights of splendor, have melted. As he kisses Helen, Faustus flies too close to the sun, consigning to Mephistopheles his “flying” soul. In this image, the extraordinary blend of irony and ecstasy transfigures the most fleshly of sins into a spiritual act—an ultimate form of blasphemy.

After they kiss once more, Faustus declares, “Here will I dwell, for heaven be in these lips” (5.1.96). Faustus may not realize it, but audience members see that Faustus has not found “heaven” in Helen’s kiss; he has found hell in Helen’s lips. His constant desire for spiritual ascension leads Faustus to tell Helen that she is fairer “than the evening air, / Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars” (5.1.104-105). By reaching to the stars for a worthy comparison, Faustus stretches and expands his own sin if by aspiring to “ten thousand stars.” In his final agonizing moments of life, Faustus is haunted by the idea of a salvation just beyond reach and exclaims, “Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven / …That Faustus may repent and save his soul! /… O, I’ll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down? / See, see where Christ’s blood streams in the
firmament! / One drop would save my soul, half a drop. Ah, my Christ!” (5.2.68, 73, 77-79).

Faustus’ would-be leap to heaven’s “face” in the stars proves unrealizable.\textsuperscript{228} Faustus tries to leap up by his own powers—without faith, and without the assistance from grace. Faustus’ agony reaches its height when he imagines himself drinking Christ’s blood (“One drop would save my soul, half a drop”). This focus on just half a drop contrasts with the quantity of Faustus’ blood that was wastefully spent during the initial contract scene. This image of “half a drop” of blood is strengthened by previous miracle stories from the late Middle Ages. These accounts, as seen in Juliana of Mont Cornillon’s visions that supposedly led to establishment of the Feast of Corpus Christi, depict an awareness of how transformative the Real Presence could be. Such a Holy Communion is denied to Faustus, who instead sees a vision of God’s body: “God / stretcheth out his arm and bends his ireful brows!” (5.2.82-83). This dreadful face of God with “ireful brows,” towers above him in fury. Faustus may hope that his soul will ascend to the celestial sphere (5.2.95), but when the clock strikes twelve (s.d.5.2.116) amidst a thundering storm (5.2.118), Faustus is taken down to hell by Lucifer, Mephistopheles, and the other Devils (s.d.5.2.121). Just as the twenty-fourth hour ends Faustus’ life, Marlowe ends his play with a reflection on the fate of those who practice “more than heavenly power permits” (Epilogue 1.8).

Faustus’ sin is Adam’s sin—he seeks knowledge first to be like God, and then to be God himself. For Faustus, magic provides the model for omnipotence through omniscience. Faustus’ New Covenant with Mephistopheles, in light of the Spiritual

\textsuperscript{228} The immense distance away from the blood—streaming in the sky—embodies the Protestant who believes that transubstantiation is merely “symbolic,” rather than a literal embodiment of Christ’s blood and body. For more detail, see Waswo. (1974): 95.
Presence of Protestant and Real Presence of Catholic Eucharistic services, provides a ritualized perspective on an individual experience. As seen in later Shakespearean plays, tragedy is often the framework for ritualistic or ceremonial acts. And yet, in the final throes of his suffering—an ultimate moment of damnation—this hero often commands tragic sympathy. Faustus might come to know only evil, and therefore, be denied forgiveness, but Marlowe shows audiences what it feels like to be damned. As the hero aspires to the highest reaches of the divine, both the audience’s and the hero’s desires are extended. All take an Icarian journey, hoping to grasp what we know we should not dream to reach. By the end of Doctor Faustus, the play, created for the enjoyment of spectators, has shown what happens when a person becomes one with what he worships. Right before the curtain closes, the hero becomes as great as Lucifer. The tragedy of knowledge is complete.
“SUIT THE ACTION TO THE WORD, the word to the action.” In a single sentence, Shakespeare’s tragic hero, Hamlet, summarizes the heart of all performance literature. While dramatists like Christopher Marlowe (1564-93) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616) were greatly indebted to the previous morality tradition, each also reached back to the world of antiquity for other forms of dramatic expression. Although Marlowe’s own career—and life—was cut short by a barroom brawl, he and his work still influenced Shakespeare’s early plays, particularly his histories. This epilogue will look at one lasting piece of performance, Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, focusing on its displays of public violence. Just as Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* has many moments that invert traditional gestures of the Eucharist, Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* also inverts another biblical enactment: baptism. Slain by the hands of his friends and foes, Caesar’s body becomes analogous to the body of Christ. This epilogue will focus on the properties, the *props*, which act as the instruments that take Caesar’s life. The final pages will demonstrate how Caesar’s death conflates the conventional waters of baptism with the sacrificial blood of redemption in order to subvert traditional forms of biblical enactment.

A single prop, a blade with a hilt, is a physical object that connects the language of *Julius Caesar*’s characters to their gestures of performance. To heighten the connection between prop and actor, the play’s actors seem acutely aware of how to hold

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their weapons. When Casca explains that Caesar is going to be made a king by the Roman Senators (1.3.88-89), Cassius—the leader of the conspiracy against Caesar—contemplates suicide and announces: “I know where I will wear this dagger then; / Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius” (1.3.92-3). As Sohmer notes, “In Shakespeare’s era unsheathing a weapon was a threatening act; drawing a sword in the presence of the monarch was punishable as treason.” When he is thinking of suicide, the implication of the language is that Cassius is holding his cruciform dagger by the blade in order to emphasize the threat to himself. In a later instance of implied performance, Casca describes, “Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises” (2.1.116). In this example, Casca would need to hold his sword by the hilt, which would imply that Caesar would not be physically present during the scene (if he was, it could be considered a treasonable act in Renaissance England). It should come to no surprise that when Caesar is murdered by the conspirators’ hands, each would hold his weapon by the hilt.

Caesar’s assassination scene is fraught with Christianized gestures and sweeps of movement. After each of the conspirators kneels before Caesar, an act that would ordinarily denote a hierarchal relationship of subservience and worship, Casca declares: “Speak, hands, for me!” (3.1.84). Immediately after transferring the power of words to the power of action, the stage direction reads: “They stab Caesar” (s.d.3.1.85). In this instance, strong passions require vivid physical realization. Most importantly, the gesture of cutting Caesar down absorbs the emotion of the conspirators with more immediacy.

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230 See Steve Sohmer, *Shakespeare’s Mystery Play: The Opening of the Globe Theatre 1599* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999) 125. In his book, Sohmer argues that Julius Caesar can be read as a mystery play. This thesis will not take a side on this argument. Sohmer provides crucial information about staging Julius Caesar, which will be the focus of this epilogue.

231 Alternatively, he could also hold it by the hilt and point it toward himself.
and impact than words alone can deliver. By reducing the gap between body and words, the immediacy of the action intensifies, creating a heightened theatrical effect.

In the aftermath of Caesar’s assassination, Brutus becomes emboldened to suggest that he and his fellow Romans should: “stoop, / And let us bathe our hands in Caesar’s blood / Up to the elbows and besmear our swords” (3.1.117-9). It should be noted that in Elizabethan England, the word “stoop” had a homonym, “stoup,” which was a vessel that contained holy water. This basin of holy water allowed worshippers to sprinkle themselves as they entered a church, a gesture which reenacted the rite of purification through baptism. By stooping down to cleanse their hands in Caesar’s blood, the conspirators must bend their bodies forward as a type of bow. In order for the conspirators to fully “bathe” their hands in Caesar’s blood—a type of inverted baptism—they must first kneel.

This idea of inverted cleansing and purifying is sharpened when Cassius adds, “Stoop then, and wash,” upon which the conspirators smear their hands and swords with Caesar’s blood (3.1.124). This rite of purifying their hands—the part of the body that committed the murder—and their swords—the weapon used for the murder itself—echoes the biblical cleansing and washing in the blood of Christ (1 John 1:17; Revelation 1:5). In a way, this blood baptism becomes an analogue to the Blood Curse in Matthew 27:24. When the angry crowd demands that Jesus be crucified, Pilate washes his hands before the crowd and responds: “Ἄθωδός εἰμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τούτου: ὑμεῖς ἀπέστειλας [I am innocent of this man’s blood; the responsibility is yours.” This biblical example, read alongside Caesar’s murder, present men trying to use a liquid substance to
try to dissolve the past. However, Caesar is not Christ, nor have the conspirators taken
the necessary steps before this “baptism by blood” to cleanse their souls.

As the play concludes with the Battle of Philippi, Cassius shouts to Pindarus:
“Now be a freeman, and with this good sword, / That ran through Caesar’s bowels,
search this bosom. / Stand not to answer. Here, take thou the hilts, / And, when my
face is covered, as ’tis now, / Guide thou the sword” (5.3.44-9). Just as the stage
direction is implicit in the line “take thou the hilts,” Brutus’s own death echoes much of
the violent action of Cassius’s. Brutus asks his friend Volumnius, “Hold thou my sword
hilts whilst I run on it” (5.5.32). Although Volumnius answers, “That’s not an office for
a friend, my lord” (5.5.33), Strato, another Roman soldier, says, “I held the sword, and
he did run on it” (5.5.71). This awareness of both excessive violence through
Christianized gestures—be that the blood of baptism or cruciform-raised swords—
creates a performance that draws attention to its own theatricality. While later plays
would acknowledge this theatrical relationship and redefine what it means to “act,” it is
important to remember that some of the most important gestures and their significance
have already been refined within the previous tradition of biblical performance.

As the Magi approach the manger of the Christ child and give him precious gifts,
they kneel to give outward expression to their reverence. This gesture of worship, an act
that denoted the highest form of adoration imaginable, is a movement that the Magi
enact, as well as a ritual to be performed by later Christians. Although Jesus performed
many miracles, all demonstrating God’s influence and power, his baptism is his most
significant act. As he is submerged into the initiating waters of the Jordan River and
resurfaces with the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sets the stage for an action that can be
imitated by future generations. Faced by the Devil’s snares and temptations, culminating
in the final act to bow down and “worship” Satan, Jesus perseveres and maintains his path of righteousness. After eating a final meal with his beloved disciples—an act that could also be replicated by subsequent generations in the memory of Christ—Judas betrays the Messiah by subverting one of the holiest tokens of love and kisses Jesus’ cheek. After the soldiers fall down in insincere acts of worship, Jesus is led to Golgotha to be crucified. Resisting the ultimate form of temptation, Jesus remains nailed to the cross and dies in the final throes of suffering.

In an attempt to reenact Jesus’ performances, especially the baptism and Last Supper, subsequent generations attempted to emulate Jesus’ life. Buildings were built to house cleansing waters, initiating new followers into the Christian community. Once members of the clergy kissed newly baptized Christians, they were given the “breath” of life of the Holy Spirit. After this act of initiation, they could walk up to the Lord’s Table and experience their first Eucharistic meal. As congregations approached the altar—the table of sacrifice—with their own gifts of devotion, clergy dressed as Magi would also approach and give their “gifts” of bread and wine for the Eucharistic meal. Through this liturgical enhancement, imitating the actions of biblical figures, a performative dimension was added to the service.

As the leading church authority prepared the “elements,” he would raise the bread—Christ’s body—and the chalice of wine—Christ’s blood—toward the high rafters of the cathedral for all to see. During Easter Triduum, a time in the liturgical calendar to remember Jesus’ life and death, further dramatic enhancements were added to the service. Church interiors were darkened, a low Paschal candle was placed at the foot of the altar, which denoted the despair the disciples felt as they believed their Lord was dead. Finally, the bells rang out on Easter morning, joyously pronouncing that
Christ was risen—he has risen indeed! The candle was raised up to the altar, a curtain was pulled away to reveal a crucifix, and both priests and worshippers finally shared a Holy Communion on Easter Sunday.

But, as time went by, the people became emotionally and visually distanced from the divine mystery of the Eucharist. As Gothic style churches began to be constructed, both the priest and his congregations were relocated. The long nave of the church housed the sinful congregation, whereas the priest conducted the Eucharistic service in front of the altar. The priest no longer imitated Jesus behind the table of the Last Supper and ate alongside fellow believers; he merely became a servant who performed the Eucharistic ceremony. Fearful of losing even a single crumb of Christ’s body, the Church exchanged the traditional paschal bread for the wafer. Hesitant to allow profane lips to touch the sacred chalice of blood, the Church took away Christ’s wine from worshippers. As the Church continued to distance the people from the Eucharist, both figuratively and literally, a new frenzy began to develop over the Host’s “mysterious” properties. Since the elevation of the Host became the climax of the Eucharistic ceremony, worshippers would rush to a church to see an elevation, and would flee the moment the elevation occurred, in their hurry to observe the *Elevation* in other churches and acquire still further grace. To satisfy the people’s urge to see the Host, and to prevent such scandalous acts, the Church established the Feast of Corpus Christi—the Feast of the Body of Christ.

As the feast’s processions paraded through the town—one being strictly liturgical with people carrying the enshrined host, the other a pageant displaying guilds’ crafts and producing lively entertainment—jealousies began to emerge. Once fraternities, like the Corpus Christi Guild, came to be integrated in the liturgical procession, their own civic
authority was enhanced by their proximity to the Host. As civic hierarchies were constructed around the liturgical procession of the Eucharist, there was also a simultaneous development of biblical drama.

Simple literary embellishments of the liturgy began a process of enhanced visual performance. Dramatic tropes of Easter Mass, such as the Quem quaeritis, did not have dialogue rooted within the Gospel stories; therefore, clergy were not following a strictly biblical script, such as baptism or the Eucharistic meal. Clergy were beginning an entire new wave of medieval dramatic development. As scenes surrounding Easter themes began to develop, they helped set the stage for Christmas drama. The Quem quaeritis dialogue formed the underlying foundation for Christmas drama, such as the nativity scene and the Magi’s meeting with Herod. The different seasonal mood—emotionally distant from the somber Easter Mass—allowed for greater performative possibilities. Within these seasonal plays, the liturgical gestures and movements were taken from the Eucharistic celebrations and were given a new dramatic framework. Viewers could recognize the Eucharistic system of spatial relationships, but more importantly, they could now associate them with non-liturgical plays.

When drama began to develop outside the church, allegorical figures of virtue and vice were presented on this new “morality” stage. Morality plays allowed philosophical and psychological questions to be dramatized, presenting visually alternatives of good and evil. Spectators were subtly brought into the play’s action when the characters’ speeches prompted audience response. Viewers were not to be passive onlookers who allowed action to simply happen in front of them; rather, they were expected to partake in Mankind’s own journey and see where their own virtues and vices
led them. As this genre of morality developed, playwrights used the morality tradition as a starting point for expansion.

When he wrote *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe presented a tragic hero who followed the pattern of morality drama—meeting the various personifications of good and evil. However, Faustus himself is not simply defined by his choice between polarized good and evil. His actions are heroic, and tragedy is found in his own choices. Whether he prays devoutly to Lucifer for greater worldly knowledge, or demonically plays the role of Christ and inverts the sacred acts of the Eucharist itself, the entire idea of damnation is given its fullest scope when it has a secular, public stage. Theology intensifies the tragic irony of Faustus, but it also sets the stage for some of Shakespeare’s historical tragedies.

As the fallen Caesar lies on the ground, pools of his blood lie at the murderers’ feet. When the conspirators approach Caesar’s corpse, they stoop and kneel—not as a ritualized gesture of respect—but to dishonor their leader. They cleanse their sin-stained hands with Caesar’s blood in an attempt to enact a communion, an avowal of shared complicity. Betrayed by his closest of friends and slain by those whom he pardoned, Caesar’s death becomes analogous to Christ’s life.

For Christians and non-Christians alike, the most important events of Jesus’ life were alive with theatrical possibilities. As people became familiar with the Bible and saw its dramatic potential, the New Testament narratives were expanded for liturgical performance, adapted for secular entertainment, and even inverted for demonic purposes. On Christianity’s stage, performers could reach beyond conventional displays of action, defy expectations, and create new forms of spectacle. Christianity not only theatricizes the divine, it gives audience members the playbook for their own stage directions: *Enter—They approach and kneel—He sleeps—[awakening]—They kiss—Exeunt*. It
only takes a moment for a person to supply his own dialogue; and when he does, new performative possibilities begin to surface. And before we become silent spectators, simply viewing the action happening before our eyes, we would do well to remember that we are not limited to a pew or a seat, for “All the world’s a stage, / And all the men and women merely players.”
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