The Southern Version of Cursor Mundi, Vol. V

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In undertaking to complete the work left unfinished by our late colleague, Dr. Sarah M. Horrall, we have been conscious of the high scholarly standards she set for herself and her collaborators. In her absence we have tried to set and observe comparable standards for ourselves. As we divided the editorial tasks between us, primary responsibility for work on the manuscripts was undertaken by L.M.E.; the Glossary and Index were prepared by A.L.K.; the revisions to Dr. Horrall’s drafts were undertaken jointly.

On her death in 1988 Dr. Horrall left drafts of the Introduction, the Text itself, the Explanatory Notes, and Appendices C, on the Finding of the True Cross, and D, on the Legend of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Our general principle has been to allow as much of her work as possible to stand without amendment, changing only those bits where additional scholarship made updating necessary and the few places where error had uncharacteristically crept in. We have also tried to maintain the unspoken editorial assumptions that have informed both the earlier volumes of this edition and the drafts that Dr. Horrall left when she died.

Specifically, the General Introduction is almost wholly as Dr. Horrall left it, our contribution being to reconstruct the stemma according to her account of the manuscripts, to fill in missing line numbers, and to supply the bibliographical details. Likewise the text of MS H is very nearly as Dr. Horrall left it, we having supplied only the portions taken from MS T where H was defective. Of course we verified her readings of H against the manuscript and have made one or two minor changes. Having found no draft of the Textual Notes, we have added these.

The Explanatory Notes to the Text here edited, lines 21845–23898, as well as those in Appendices C and D, have been thoroughly
checked and brought up to date with current scholarship, but essentially they represent notes on lines that Dr. Horrall thought deserving of annotation. Since earlier volumes in this edition have contained an appendix with corrections of Morris' readings of the manuscripts in his edition and another appendix, where necessary, giving the portions of B that follow the text of the Prike of Conscience rather than that of Cursor Mundi, we have maintained consistency with our Appendices A and B.

Had Dr. Horrall lived to see this final volume through the press, we have no doubt that it would have appeared in the early 1990's. In the event, our later arrival on the editorial scene has delayed publication until, ironically enough, scholarly progress has in some instances overtaken the assumptions on which this edition is based. Recent work in codicology and early book production, perhaps best exemplified in this instance by John J. Thompson, The Cursor Mundi: Poem, Texts and Contexts, has questioned the notion of an authorial final text mutilated by a succession of wretched scribes. In its place Thompson has proposed a more amorphous and difficult manner in which the poem might have been compiled, with drafts of early versions cobbled together, revised, augmented, edited, and so forth—thus challenging significantly the place of the southern version of Cursor Mundi in the poem’s textual history.

Ironically again, Dr. Horrall was during her lifetime at the forefront of codicology studies, having cofounded, with Professor Martha Driver of Pace University, the Early Book Society. Had she found herself at this juncture in the editorial process and at this date, later than envisaged, we do not doubt that her work would have reflected fully all the advances that have been made. As it is, however, we are the ones charged with seeing her work through to completion, and we do not think it possible or just for us to formulate a more recent editorial position on her behalf. What follows is, as far as we can determine, what Dr. Horrall wanted to say about Cursor Mundi in 1988.

Of course, in a work of this magnitude one consults many people along the way for help. In gathering together all that Dr. Horrall left, we are especially grateful to her widower, Stanley Horrall, for allowing us unlimited access to all Dr. Horrall’s drafts, and to the subeditors of previous volumes: Roger Fowler, Henry Stauffenberg, and Peter Mouss.
We have also relied upon the advice of colleagues and friends, especially J.P.S. Ferguson, Tony Hunt, George Keiser, C.W. Marx, Douglas Moffat, Jean-Pascal Pouzet, Glyn Redworth, William Schipper, Richard Špaček, Mary Swan, and R.C. Yorke. We have taken their advice where we could, ignored it when we thought we had to, and take full responsibility for the errors that may remain in our work.

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L.M.E.
Oxford, 1999

A.L.K.
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