INTRODUCTION TO THIS VOLUME

LIST OF MANUSCRIPT SIGLA

H  Arundel LVII, College of Arms, London
T  Trinity College, Cambridge, R.3.8
L  Laud Misc. 416, Bodleian Library, Oxford
B  Additional 36983, British Library, London
C  Cotton Vespasian A iii, British Library, London
F  Fairfax 14, Bodleian Library, Oxford
G  Göttingen University theol. 107e
E  Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians
Add  Additional 31042, British Library, London
STRUCTURE OF THIS SECTION

In his edition of CM, Richard Morris established the following textual divisions for this section. With the exception of the parenthetical notation for ll. 12713-12751, the wording employed for the following sub-sections is his.

12713-12751 (Introduction to the “sexta elde”)
12752-12915 Of John the Baptist and Christ’s Baptism
12916-13001 The Temptation
13002-13241 The Death of John the Baptist
13242-13265 The Beginning of Christ’s Ministry
13266-13358 Christ Chooses the Apostles
13359-14383 The Miracles and Sayings of Christ
14384-14775 The Obstinacy and Contrariousness of the Jews
14776-15384 The Jews Plot against Christ’s Life
15385-16016 The Betrayal and Last Hours of Christ
16017-16664 The Trial before Caiphas and Pilate
16665-17082 The Crucifixion and Burial
SOURCES

Both the generally derivative nature of *CM* and the pivotal theological significance of II.12713-17082, in particular, render it virtually impossible to complete an exhaustive survey of the poet's source-materials. In fact, few medieval writers, major or minor, failed to comment upon the events recounted in this section.

Despite the foregoing comments, several works may be cited with certainty regarding their influence upon this segment of the poem.

The Vulgate Bible

In her introduction to *OTSCM*, Dr. Horrall makes the following statement: "The *CM*-poet seems to use [the Vulgate] only occasionally, sometimes to correct his other sources." This observation, however, does not apply to II.12713-17082. On the contrary, the author evinces considerable fidelity to his canonical New Testament materials. Moreover, it should be noted that whenever apocryphal incidents do occur, they are of a supplementary, illustrative nature, clearly intended to enhance the intrinsic value of the gospel narrative—not to supplant it.

Haenisch supplies a listing of the *Cursor*-poet's biblical sources. Although reasonably accurate, this table is not wholly satisfactory. For instance, while he cites *Luc.* 3:23 as the source for the detail that Christ was baptized when "annorum trigenta," Haenisch fails to attribute the prophecy of Symeon (II.17051-4) to the same evangelist (2:23); instead, he includes these lines under the vague category "Reflections of the Poet." Unfortunately, many of his textual divisions reflect a conscious striving for what might be termed "architectonic convenience."

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1. *OTSCM*, p. xxi, n. 62. A List of Abbreviations is included in the Explanatory Notes. Full bibliographical details are found in the Bibliography at the end of this volume.
2. *CM*, pp. 35*–39*. 
Herman’s Bible

Herman de Valencienne’s OF Bible has long been acknowledged as a major source for both the Old and New Testament sections of *CM*. The relationship between the two works is especially evident, e.g., in such instances as their respective accounts of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem (II.14937-15112) and their lengthy scriptural recapitulations (II.14398-14451).

The Old French Cross Story

Contained in MS BN fr. 763 (fols. 267-273), this 1783-line poem was initially recognized as a source for *CM* by A. S. Napier. Several sections furnish material for the Old Testament portion of the *Cursor*, but the OF work’s influence upon the present New Testament text is principally reflected in the following episodes: 1.15691ff. (Judas and the “scalded cock”), 1.16543ff. (the Crucifixion), and 1.16861ff. (the “humatio” of the three crosses).

Vita Prothoplausti Ade

This work, more commonly known as the *Legende*, was also established as a source by A. S. Napier. Its contribution to *CM* 12713-17082 is chiefly evident on the basis of details not contained in the OF Cross Story in *Trad. anon.*, such as the “mira fragrancia” associated with the cross-wood (16561-2).

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Historia Scholastica Evangelica

Petrus Comestor's monumental work\(^6\) was originally accorded source-status by Haenisch.\(^7\) Apart from supplying a broadly authoritative exegetical structure for many medieval religious texts, the Historia also cautiously transmitted such non-canonical notions as John the Evangelist's identification with the bridegroom at Cana (II.13424-30; 13438-9). In some cases, Comestor may have inspired the southern redactor of \(CM\) to depart from the original northern reading in such significant details as the substitution of palm for pine in the composition of the rood-arbor (I.16565). Few scholars, however, would now agree with W. H. Schofield's opinion that "Comestor was the chief source of the Cursor Mundi." \(^8\)

Le Chateau d'Amour

The poet himself mentions "sent Robert bok"\(^9\) at line 9516, thereby attributing a canonically unsubstantiated status to the venerable Grosseteste.\(^10\) Haenisch discusses this source at length with reference to II.9514-11594.\(^11\) Regarding \(CM\) 12713-17082, the influence of the \(Chateau d'Amour\) is most apparent from I.16949 onward.\(^12\)

Legenda Aurea

This well-known synaxarial compilation\(^13\) is discussed by Haenisch, but only as a source supplementing Isidore's \(De Vita et Morte Sanctorum.\) More specifically, he limits the Golden Legend's influence to the apostolic narrative inaugurated at I. 20849. Voragine's work,
nevertheless, has been used elsewhere by the *Cursor*-poet (e.g., in his explanation of Mary’s genealogy). Although frequently cited in the accompanying notes, the principal value of the *Legenda* in terms of the present edition is to demonstrate the currency enjoyed by numerous elements of apocryphal lore during the Middle Ages.

EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES

The editorial principles for this volume are the same as those outlined in Volume I, pp. 25-27.

In addition to the text of *Cursor Mundi* from MS H and variants from MSS TLB, this volume also contains, as Appendix B, a transcription of the hitherto unpublished Thornton fragment of *Cursor Mundi* (MS Add). Furthermore, MS B does not copy CM, II.14916-17288, but instead substitutes 1140 lines from the *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord*. A transcription of these lines from MS B appears here as Appendix C.

A NOTE ON THE PRESENTATION OF THE PASSION NARRATIVE

Lines 14933-17082 inclusive depart in several significant ways from the bi-columnar format employed in other sections. The account of the Passion is, for example, inaugurated by a large, lavishly decorated capital “O” balancing six short lines. Its elaborate ornamentation divides the two columns of text vertically, and continues horizontally across the entire top of the folio, giving the effect of a floriated “T”.

From line 14967 through folio 100v (17082), the columnar transcription of the text is abandoned in favour of long lines divided internally by medial punctuation. To facilitate the preparation of this volume, as well as to correspond to the numbering of the four Morris texts, the hemistichs have been reproduced as individual units.

The scribe’s original system of punctuation (incorporating the symbols //, *, and ·) has been retained in conformity with the MS.

15. LI.12733-51.
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