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## Old Testament Adaptation in *The Stonyhurst Pageants*

*This article examines the relationship between the Douay-Rheims translation of the bible and The Stonyhurst Pageants preserved at Stonyhurst College in northern Lancashire. Going beyond Carleton Brown's recognition of that relationship in his 1920 publication of the pageants, it details the ways in which the Stonyhurst playwright adapted the biblical text by combining scriptural verse and critical apparatus, thus demonstrating the playwright's consummate familiarity with his source and his skill in adapting it to serve his needs. Additionally, the close relationship between biblical translation and pageant text connects The Stonyhurst Pageants with the concerns of English Catholics in the seventeenth century rather than with the suppressed religious play-cycles of Henrician and Elizabethan England.*

What little scholarship exists on *The Stonyhurst Pageants* identifies them as an incomplete cycle of thirteen biblical plays comprising some 8740 lines. The single manuscript that preserves the pageants — ms. A. VI. 33 — is held, where it was discovered, in the library of Stonyhurst College, Lancashire. Despite their name, the pageants bear little resemblance to the biblical plays surviving from elsewhere in England. Where the cycles from York and Chester cover the very basics of the Pentateuch before moving on to the New Testament, all of the surviving *Stonyhurst Pageants* tell Old Testament stories and most of these come from Joshua, Judges, and the other books of Jewish history skipped in the drive towards the Incarnation.<sup>1</sup> As the text now stands, the pageants are:

- |                        |             |
|------------------------|-------------|
| 6. Jacob (fragmentary) | 10. Gideon  |
| 7. Joseph              | 11. Jephthe |
| 8. Moses               | 12. Samson  |
| 9. Joshua              | 14. Saul    |

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15. David

17. Elijah

16. Solomon

18. Naaman

In addition to missing the Creation, Fall of Man, and Noah plays which might have been the subjects of plays one to five, the ms also lacks play thirteen, possibly the story of Ruth.

Linguistic markers point toward a northern composition,<sup>2</sup> and circumstantial evidence places the text in Lancashire since at least the latter half of the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> No precise composition date exists, though the plays were probably written before the end of the 1630s.<sup>4</sup> While we cannot be sure of the *terminus ad quem* for the pageants, Carleton Brown provided as clear a *terminus a quo* as one might wish for when he published his transcription of them in 1920. His 'happy discovery' (as Hardin Craig puts it<sup>5</sup>) that the plays borrowed heavily from the Douay-Rheims translation of the bible means that the pageants could not have been composed before the publication of the two-volume Old Testament in 1609 and 1610.

The essay that follows explores the ways in which the Stonyhurst playwright undertook this borrowing from scripture. Although Brown identifies the connection between pageant and bible translation, he seems most interested in what it can tell him about the identity of the playwright and how his work might be connected with the cycle plays of the preceding century. In pursuing the identity of the playwright, however, Brown never fully explores the methods used in adapting the biblical text into dramatic form or the broader implications of those methods. For nearly 150 years, the Douay-Rheims was the Roman Catholic bible in English and no other work of English literature from the seventeenth century draws so heavily on that bible as do *The Stonyhurst Pageants*. As such, they deserve our consideration as distinctive representations of post-Reformation English Catholic piety. Before turning to the pageants, however, it might be useful to give a brief description of the version of the bible upon which it so heavily depends.

The bulk of the translation for the Douay-Rheims, the English Catholics' answer to the Bishop's bible of 1568 and 1572, had actually been completed by 1582, thanks largely to the herculean efforts of Gregory Martin and Richard Bristow under the encouragement of Cardinal William Allen, founder of the English College and leader of the English Catholic expatriates and recusants. The Douay-Rheims New Testament was published that same year, but thanks to complications with the Latin Vulgate, thirty years would pass before the publication of the Old Testament.<sup>6</sup> The translation

itself retains a heavily Latinate vocabulary and scholars often accuse it of sacrificing coherence for fidelity to its original. Regardless of its literary quality, it remained the English Catholic bible until Bishop Challoner began to publish his revision of the text in 1749.

Despite the pageants' clearly established debt to the Douay-Rheims, most reviewers of Brown's transcription took this borrowing simply as further proof of the playwright's ineptitude and focused most of their attention on the contrast between the civic pageants of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the cycle of thirteen Old Testament plays found at Stonyhurst. Harold N. Hillebrand calls them 'the latest and longest and dullest of the Old Testament play cycles'.<sup>7</sup> W.W. Greg speaks of their debt to the Chester cycle,<sup>8</sup> and Craig suggests that the plays might be a post-Reformation redaction of a now-lost cycle of traditional plays, though no such original has come to light.<sup>9</sup>

Poor reviews, it seems, can bury a piece of historic drama as quickly as they close a modern play. Even the most positive reviews of Brown's book fault the playwright for a slavish devotion to the biblical text, a leaden ear for dialogue, and a complete lack of humour, and since this initial reception, the text has remained almost untouched by scholars. In the ninety-odd years since Brown's reproduction of the pageants, the handful of studies treating them has addressed only the Naaman and Jephthe sections. Helen Weiand Cole published her inquiry into the influence of Latin drama on the Naaman pageant in 1923, concluding that the playwright 'had more than a casual and superficial knowledge of Plautus and Terence'.<sup>10</sup> Her argument was superseded by Craig's identification of the pageant as a translation from a Latin play by the Dutch priest Cornelius Schonaeus.<sup>11</sup> Finally, Sister M. Audrey O'Mahony's treatment of the Jephthe play for performance included her own evaluation of the play's connection to Renaissance (as opposed to medieval) drama.<sup>12</sup> No one has attempted a larger study or definitive edition of the plays. Basing the comparison on the other English cycles, however, when no clear line connects *The Stonyhurst Pageants* with these earlier dramas — save the name 'pageant' — betrays an assumption about the nature of both.

The pageants' appropriation of biblical language presents a much clearer and, in many ways, more interesting subject for study. In his introduction to the pageants, Brown bases his conclusions about the playwright's religion (Roman Catholic) and occupation (probably clerical, possibly Jesuit) on this use of biblical language.<sup>13</sup> But his interest in the practice of that appropriation limits itself to the dramatic flaws he sees in the playwright's 'fidelity' to

scripture and the ‘wearisome and irrelevant detail’ such fidelity produces.<sup>14</sup> His reviewers, as can be seen above, agreed with him. But the fidelity of which Brown and his reviewers complained deserves a closer examination. While it is certainly true that the playwright has made heavy use of the Douay-Rheims bible in producing his text, his adaptation also includes evidence of careful and sometimes quite surprising decisions.

The vast majority of the playtext connects to its biblical counterpart almost identically. As Brown notes, ‘The relationship between the two texts is so close, indeed, that in some cases obscurities in the Stonyhurst text are cleared up by referring to the corresponding passage in the Douay version’.<sup>15</sup> Corresponding lines number in the thousands, but a couple of examples will here suffice. Near the beginning of 3 Kings (or 1, if the first two are called 1 and 2 Samuel), King David’s son Adonias approaches Bathsheba, the queen’s mother:

Bible

Thou knowest, quoth he, that the kingdom was mine, and al Israel had purposed to make me over them to be their king: but the kingdom is transposed, & is made my brothers: for it was appointed him of our Lord. Now therefore I desire one petition of thee ... I pray thee speak to Solomon the king (for he cannot denie thee any thing) that he give me Abishag the Sumamite to wife.

(3 Kgs 2:15–17)<sup>16</sup>

Pageant 16, ‘Salomon’

ADONIAS Lady you know the kingdom was by me possessed  
 & for to have made me their kinge all Israel had determined.  
 But now the kingdome is transported unto my Brother Salomon  
 your sonne as god appointed had: wherefore make this petition  
 for me unto the king my Brother (who can deny you nothing)  
 that I may take Abisag to wife. (16.3–8a)<sup>17</sup>

The playwright substitutes ‘transported’ for the slightly less concrete ‘transposed’ and adds an honorific for addressing Bathsheba, but the pageant omits only a small interchange between the two characters<sup>18</sup> and keeps the meaning and most of the language intact, reorganizing it into the plays’ standard septenary line.

The plays transfer the bible's narrative passages into the mouth of a chorus character even more often than they appear in lines of dialogue, as with the following lines spoken by the Chorus near the beginning of the story of Gideon:

Bible

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of our Lord: who delivered them into the hand of Madian seven years, & they were sore oppressed of them ... and they [the Midianites] left nothing at al in Israel that pertained to man's life, not sheepe, not oxen, not asses. For they and al their flockes came with their tabernacles, and like unto locustes filled al places. (Judg 6:1, 4b–5a)<sup>19</sup>

Pageant 10, 'Gedeon'

CHORUS Israel agayne in our lords sight hath sin'd & ys delivered  
 To the hands of the Madionits, by whom for seven yeares' space  
 They have bene sore opprest, & all they had consumed was  
 Both corne, oxen, & sheepe: still lyke Locusts they do swarme  
 In every place, & do unto the Israelits much harme.

(10.110–14)<sup>20</sup>

Like the previous example from pageant sixteen our playwright here exerts a slight yet noticeable editorial hand, substituting corn for asses and omitting several verses and a line. What changes have been made from verse to script merely condense the message of the scripture. Throughout the majority of the text, the playwright's approach remains similar to the examples above: he retains the sense of the words and most of their forms, changes the word order to meet the needs of his verse, and makes minor substitutions and deletions.

But the playwright does make decisions about when and where he will versify. We can see in the passage above how he summarizes or skips over passages or exchanges within passages only to take up his rewriting at a different point. He is just as willing to do the same on a larger scale however; the story of David and Bathsheba in pageant fifteen begins with David's view of Uriah's wife from his palace roof, discusses Bathsheba's pregnancy, completely ignores David's multiple attempts to cover up the pregnancy during Uriah's return visits from the battlefield, and moves directly into David's plan to have Uriah killed, skipping all over 2 Kings 11, borrowing one verse

or another to get the story across. (Another stretch in theatrical imagination involves the story's near-complete narration by David.)

The most dizzying example of this practice can be found in Moses's final address to the Israelites near the end of pageant eight. The address itself runs to over a hundred lines after an initial set-up taken from Deuteronomy 31, but shows remarkable proficiency with the text of the Pentateuch as a whole. Moses's speech begins with Deuteronomy 23:21–3 and then skips back to verse nineteen. From there the speech jumps to 24:14–15 and from there to 25:13–16. The text now leaps back to 19:15, and then further to 17:8–13, then leaves the book entirely to pick up a discussion in Numbers 33:51–3, 55, then back to Deuteronomy 7:18–19, 8:2–4, and so on. (Please see the appendix below.) That the playwright would do this when several chapters quoted straight from Deuteronomy have all the admonition he might have wanted is not nearly so interesting as the fact that he could do this, moving between chapters and even books of the law with ease and proficiency, snatching a verse here and there to suit him.

The confident ease with which the playwright makes changes, whether adjusting a few lines or compiling a smorgasbord of verses from across several books, suggests a mind comfortable with adaptation on many levels, yet the plays' maddeningly close adherence to the plot argues almost the opposite. This combination of conservative plotting and expansive compilation contradicts Craig's argument for an unknown cycle of the sort found elsewhere in England. Had such a cycle been part of the Stonyhurst pageants' make-up, traces of their looser approach would be visible in the movement of the play. Lacking such traces, it seems likely that the only real source for the pageants (with the obvious exception of the 'Naaman' pageant) is the Douay-Rheims bible.

If the *Stonyhurst* playwright felt enough at home with the Douay-Rheims translation to pick and choose his individual verses, he felt equally at home performing the same operation on the biblical text's apparatus. This apparatus, comprised of marginal notes and (sometimes extensive) annotations detailing Catholic doctrine and providing patristic interpretations for Old Testament incidences, was written by Thomas Worthington sometime after Gregory Martin completed the translation work in the 1580s. The most obvious and awkward of these marginal inclusions provide basic factual information and have already been noted by Brown.<sup>21</sup> I include them here as a basis for comparison. The 'Moses' pageant includes both kinds of

annotation, as we can see in the following lines describing the eighth Egyptian plague:

Bible (marginal note)

The 8 Plague innumerable locusts, litle flying beastes with long hinder legs that destroy graine, grasse, & fruit.<sup>22</sup>

Pageant 8, 'Moyses'

GOD I will Locusts to morow sende, which are litle flying beastes  
 Having longe hinder legges, & grass & fruites & grayne anoy.  
 Which all the face of th'earth shall cover, & all there on destroy  
 (8.619–21)<sup>23</sup>

The inclusion feels almost accidental, as if the playwright-copyist, in working through the plagues, simply copied the marginalia as he moved from one line to another. The other inclusion like this occurs just 160 lines previously, in the description of the third plague, for which the Douay-Rheims chooses the obscure Greek loan-word 'sciniph' to describe the insects which the Authorized King James Version designates simply 'lice'.

In addition to borrowing the notes beside the scriptural text, the playwright also borrows from the longer annotations placed at the end of chapters. When Pharaoh promotes Joseph to serve directly under him the biblical text provides us with the detail: 'And he [Pharaoh] turned his [Joseph's] name and called him in the Egyptian tongue the Saviour of the World' (Gen 41:45). Pageant seven places the words directly in Pharaoh's mouth, expanding on the verse from the annotations:

Bible (annotation)

In the original text the new name and title given by Pharaoh to Joseph is expressed by these two wordes, *Saphnath pahanaach*; the former *Saphnath* in Hebrew signifieth a secrete or hidden thing, of *Saphanto* hide: but the signification of the other word *pahanaach*, is more uncertaine, being found no where els in the holie Bible. The Rabins do commonly interprete them both together, *the man to whom secretes are reveled*, or the *reveler of secretes* and so this name agreeth wel to Joseph, in respect of the gift of interpreting dreames. But besides his interpreting, he also gave most wise counsel, that tended to saftie of manie, which it is like, Pharaoh ment to expresse by this new name.<sup>24</sup>

## Pageant 7, 'Joseph'

KING PHARAO Saphnath pahanaach shall thy name here after called bee  
 which in the Ægyptian tongue the saviour of the world doth signify  
 But a secret & hidden thinge in hebrew yt importeth,  
 & by the Rabins ys expund'd, one that secrets revealeth.  
 (7.365–8)<sup>25</sup>

Here the playwright condenses a long scholarly explanation into its essence and works that information into the verse. Although unnecessarily parenthetical, that explanation provides crucial information for interpreting Pharoah's naming of Joseph.

Not all uses of the marginalia and notes jar so with dramatic form. A line from Moses in the latter half of his expansive pageant illustrates this:

## Bible (marginal note)

He meaneth that he cannot exercise the office of a captain general, and bring the people into the promised land.<sup>26</sup>

## Pageant 8, 'Moyses'

MOYSES Especially sith our lord said I should not passe this Jordan  
 Meaning I should not exercise the office of a captain.  
 (8.1427–8)<sup>27</sup>

The line expands the biblical text which reads simply 'especially as the Lord also hath said to me, "Thou shalt not pass over this Jordan"' (Deut 31:3).<sup>28</sup> Since it is addressed to the assembled Israelites, the line makes a certain dramatic sense, as Moses is in the process of handing over leadership to Joshua.

Other such inclusions are even more organic, providing not just amplification but clarification. The thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis, which begins the story of Joseph, contains this ambiguous phrase: 'and he [Joseph] accused his brethren to his father of a most wicked crime' (7:2).<sup>29</sup> No further information from the biblical text is forthcoming, but the marginalia provides this gloss: 'That for ill life they were infamous, the Hebrew word *dibba* signifieth infamy'.<sup>30</sup> The seventh play 'Ioseph' presents its titular protagonist in the act of accusation, wherein he says to Jacob, 'my brothers grow scandalous to many, being become licentious livers' (7.15–16).<sup>31</sup> Although the line and the marginalia do not precisely match up, the playwright has adapted the



gloss, accepting the identification of the ‘most wicked crime’ as some form of dissipation and placing it within Joseph’s accusation.

Similarly, Samuel’s call from God in the fourteenth pageant (‘Saul’) occurs ‘before the lamp of God was extinguished’ according to 1 Kings 3:3, which the Nuncius kindly clarifies as ‘for almost morninge it’s now’ (14.105–6a),<sup>32</sup> drawing from the marginal note on the verse: ‘This vision happened early in the morning, before the dressing of the lampes, when some were out and others light’.<sup>33</sup>

Beyond these clarifying additions to the text, the playwright also plumbs the annotations and marginalia to provide moral and spiritual interpretations of the Old Testament stories he tells. Pageant fourteen, ‘Saul,’ moves through the first book of Kings (1 Samuel) and when it describes the death of the old priest Eli upon receiving word that the Ark of the Covenant has been captured by the Philistines (1 Kings 4), the playwright has one of the soldiers declare the safety of the old priest’s soul over his body. No such military exegete can be found in the Douay-Rheims text, but the margins provide us with a source for the soldier’s assurance:

Bible (marginal note)

This zele of religion in Heli toward the arke, is a great signe that he died in good state though he was temporally punished for not correcting his sonnes.<sup>34</sup>

Pageant 14, ‘Saul’

NERIO This Zeale of his towards god’s arke a great signe’s that he dyed  
in good state, though for not punishing his sonnes he be thus  
punished  
with temporal affliction. (14.181–3)<sup>35</sup>

The twelfth pageant, ‘Samson,’ provides a similar interpolation from the Nuncius’s description of Samson’s death as he pulls down the temple of the Philistines with his newly returned divine strength.<sup>36</sup>

Bible (marginal note)

He desired to be revenged, not of rancour of mind but of zele of justice. And so al the elect & glorified Sainctes desire revenge.<sup>37</sup>

## Pageant 12, 'Samson'

NUNCIUS And then layinge his hands vpon the pillers, the right on th'one  
 & the lefte on the other sayde of zeale & not of passion:  
 Lord let me with the Philistines dye, & there with shookey pillers.  
 (12.375–7)<sup>38</sup>

In Exodus, Pharaoh charges the midwives to kill the boys born to Hebrew women. The bible narrates the response of the midwives as follows: 'But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded but saved the men-children' (Exod 1:17). The pageants give this piety a voice. When Pharaoh leaves them, the midwives of the eighth pageant discuss the situation, but the Douay-Rheims notes provide the basis for their decision:

## Bible (annotation)

In commendation of the midwives not obeying the kings commandment, Moy-  
 ses opposeth the feare of God, to the feare of Princes; shewing therby that when  
 their commandments are contrarie, the subjects must feare God and not do that  
 the Prince commandeth. So did our Saviour himself teach, and that for feare of  
 damnation.<sup>39</sup>

## Pageant 8, 'Moyses'

SEPHORA Happ after as hap may, & let's excuse it as wee can,  
 for it's more daunger to offend Almighty god then man.  
 for man can only hurt our bodyes if that we do not well,  
 But god's of power to bring both soul & body unto hell.  
 (8.35–8)

Much like the interpretive annotations, the teaching in the preceding examples provides a sort of moral clarification to difficult Old Testament passages. With Eli and Samson, the manner of their passing presents some difficulties regarding the disposition of their souls, and the notes exonerate these patriarchs from a death (by despair for Eli or suicide for Samson) contrary to their status. As for the midwives, the lesson to fear God above earthly rulers may certainly be derived from the bare passage, but the note makes that derivation explicit. In no place does the included teaching deviate appreciably from the interpretations of the fathers or provide new teaching or new direction.

I hope that the preceding examples, while not exonerating the playwright for his faults as a dramatist, have done something to show the inordinate care and intimate biblical knowledge he used to accomplish his task. He is not, as a first encounter with his work might suggest, merely a kind of versifying plagiarist, but rather a patient adaptor of scripture. And if we consider him not slavishly copying his text, but rather whole-heartedly engaging with it, then describing his work as ‘a curiously belated survival of an earlier form of drama’<sup>40</sup> becomes somewhat problematic, for none of the full cycles ties itself so intimately to a specific translation of the bible. His faithful exploitation of this tie grounds him not in the civic tradition of Corpus Christi or Whitsun plays (even if he might have wished otherwise) but, along with his bible, in recusant England in the early-sixteenth century.

Fixing the playwright in time, however, has the curious side-effect of setting his project adrift. If the pageants are cycle drama, even bad cycle drama, they belong to that tradition and can be explained as part of it.<sup>41</sup> Prioritizing the pageants’ connection to the 1609 Douay-Rheims bible complicates their connection to a romanticized Catholic past without providing further insight as to their purpose. As Brown claims,<sup>42</sup> there is little overtly proselytizing about them and little humour or incident (save the Naaman play)<sup>43</sup> to recommend them as entertainment, though the Chorus’s exhortations to attend suggest an audience of some sort.<sup>44</sup> I believe that the interactions between bible and pageant that I describe above provide some sense of that purpose, and I shall conclude this essay by offering some of these impressions.

The playwright’s careful selection of scriptural passages suggests concern for an audience in need of instruction. Had he simply followed the biblical text in the eighth pageant, for instance, Moses’s announcement of his death and nomination of Joshua as his successor would have been followed by instructions to re-read the law after seven years and a prophecy about the Israelites’ descent into idolatry (Deut 31: 5–30). Instead, the cherry-picked verses from elsewhere in the Pentateuch contain more moral instruction than plans and prophecies on the ancient Jewish conquest of Canaan. Seventeenth-century Christians may not have needed advice on when to approach Levites (1468–71), but exhortations to keep vows (1444–5) or to employ the poor (1453–6) ought not to have gone unheeded by Christians of any stripe.

Moses’s speech could have taken a very different tone, however. Though the injunction to bring cases before the Levites for judgment comes from Deuteronomy 17, the pageant declines to include here the annotations which declare a ‘Council of Priestess’ instituted by God ‘[f]or a ful and assured

decision of al controversies' and take protestants to task for their 'frivolous evasion' of the Apostolic See's authority.<sup>45</sup> For the playwright to consciously include the biblical text and yet ignore the Catholic interpretation raises questions about the nature of his instruction. The declamations of the biblical apparatus are present here only by implication — but then what is the audience to take from Moses's exhortation to 'burst' in 'filters' (l. 1481) the statues of the Canaanites? The line seethes with iconoclasm, yet no clarifying remark is given, though the biblical notes gloss the passage as warning to destroy 'infidelitie'.<sup>46</sup>

The playwright does consistently seek information in the notes of the 1609/10 Douay-Rheims text to supplement the scripture, however. Considering the sometimes obtuse syntax of the Douay-Rheims, these explanations need not involve religious controversy. In his review of the pageants, Greg suggests that the plays were a kind of school exercise.<sup>47</sup> Yet if the plays were no more than an exercise, the intended recipient of the painstaking explanations and clarifications remains a mystery. The playwright's care in his adaptation seems especially strange if the 'school exercise' was undertaken only for other educated Jesuit readers who, one assumes, were already comfortable with the particularities of Latin and Greek. Linguistic interpretation suggests a wider audience than seminary-educated clerics and a playwright comfortable with explanation but not exegesis.

The Stonyhurst playwright thus walks a fine line between Martin's text and Worthington's critical apparatus. By doing so, in point of fact, he highlights that line or fissure between the two texts. Martin's translation is abstruse and difficult at times but it is not confrontational. Worthington's notes and commentary, almost certainly completed after Martin's death, fairly burst with zeal for addressing and correcting the manifold errors perpetrated by the Reformation heretics. Although the 1609 bible presents them as a unity of sacred text and orthodox exegesis, the playwright neither leaves the former intact nor wholly embraces the latter. He creates a text comfortable with Roman Catholic scripture but unwilling to embrace anti-Reformation propaganda.

Brown's puzzlement over the purpose of the pageants ignores the fissure between texts that the pageants exploit. A cleric may well have written the plays, but that cleric seems devoid of the missionary zeal which motivated so many young expatriate seminarians. Without these controversial elements there seems little benefit for the clergy or the recusant (who would have approved of the pageants) or the apostate (who would have been challenged

by them). But a text that avoided controversy might do well before an audience which included both protestants and Catholics and hoped to avoid seriously offending either.

The desire to avoid controversy combined with religious instruction returns these plays to the site of their discovery (northern England in general and Lancashire in particular) and the rough date of their composition. The Douay-Rheims bible certainly belongs in the conservative north described by John Bossy<sup>48</sup> and Haigh.<sup>49</sup> Yet the playwright goes out of his way to avoid giving that bible the interpretation demanded by its apparatus. If the pageants were performed at all, the work of Margaret Spufford and, more specifically, William Sheils suggests the more probable scenario for their performance; both scholars are interested in the way that Catholic and protestant neighbours deal with one another at the local level. As Sheils says of seventeenth-century Egton in North Yorkshire, ‘Pragmatism dictated that, where there were significant numbers of Catholics and no strong protestant leadership, “getting along” was vital, not only to Catholics but also to their protestant neighbors, in order to maintain the local institutions of government, whatever official policy may have desired’.<sup>50</sup> After the suppression of the cycle plays,<sup>51</sup> the Stonyhurst pageants could not have been part of the local institutions of government Sheils describes, but they may have benefited from the same necessity for ‘getting along’ with one’s neighbours. Furthermore, this impulse towards compromise suggests resistance to missionary efforts, perhaps even within the ranks of the Catholic clergy. If a cleric is willing to carve up, as it were, the orthodox scripture in pursuit of piece of ecumenical theatre, certainly there is more to be learned about the complicated social situation in the ‘Catholic’ north.

Even this suggestion goes too far without corroborating evidence. Nonetheless, the Stonyhurst pageants belong among the investigations of historians and literary scholars of the early seventeenth century rather than with antiquarian interest in the civic religious drama. The pageants, like their biblical source, are a product of their time and deserve to be treated as the works of post-Reformation Catholic piety they demonstrate themselves to be.

#### **Appendix: Moses’s last sermon, lines 1443–94**

Wherefore obserue my words, which our lord by my mouth commands  
you

When thou unto the lord thy god hast sworne or made a vow

Frustrate make not thy word, nor slackly do the same fulfill 445  
 For the same at thy hands require be sure our lord god will.  
 And yf thou breake thy vow, he'l yt repute to the as synne.  
 In not promising there's no offence: but yf thy word have byn  
 Without thy lipps, thou shalt observe, & do what thou has promised  
 & spoken with thy proper will, & from thy mouth delivered. 1450  
 For usery thou shalt not lend unto thy brother money  
 But thou may put thy money out for gayne unto thyne enemy.  
 Deny not the hyer of the pore, but see that the same day  
 That he hath done his worke, his wages thou unto hym pay.  
 Before the sunne be sett: for there there with his lyfe ys preserved 1455  
 Lest he cry out unto our lord, & thou for yt be punished  
 Both just & true let thy weights be: & have not in thy purse  
 A lesser & a greater: nor two bushels in thy house,  
 A greater where with for to measure the corne which thou shalt buy  
 & lesser for the corne thou sells, but let them equall bee. 1460  
 Agaynst none shall one witnesse serve for any kind of wickedness  
 But every word shall stand in the mouth of two or three witnesses.  
 Yf that the judgment thou perceiue doubtfull & hard to bee  
 Twixt bloud & bloud, & cause & cause, & leprosy & leprosy  
 & thou see that the Judges words with in thy gates do vary 1465  
 Aryse & go up to the place chosen by god almighty  
 & to the priests of the Leviticall stock go, & unto  
 The Judge that shall be at that tyme, & aske them what to do  
 Who shall shew & declare unto thee the truth of the judgments.  
 And thou shalt do what s'ever they that of the place are presidents 1470  
 Which our lord god hath chosen shall unto thee say & teach thee  
 According to his law, & thou his sentence shalt obey  
 & neyther to the right hand nor the lefte thou shalt decline.  
 And he that shall be proud, & at the priests judgment repyne  
 That ministreth then unto our lord thy god, by the decree 1475  
 & sentence of the Iudge against hym geuen, that man shall dye  
 & in so doinge the evill thou shalt take away from Israell  
 With heard, the people will feare, & in pryde none after swell.  
 When you have Iordan past, & the land of chanaan entred  
 See that th'Inhabitants of that land by you be all destroyed. 1480  
 Their Titles breake, statues in filters burst, waist their Excelses,  
 & cense the land, that there in dwell you may, & yt possesse.

But yf you kill them not, The remayne shall be to your eyes  
 As yt were Nayles, speares in your sydes, & your most deadly enemyes.  
 Fear not but to remembrance call what god hath done to pharaoh 1485  
 & the Ægyptians ere he would permit you thence to go.  
 What grievous plagues he layde on them, & how he you protected  
 & in a stronge hand brought you thence, & his whole army drowned.  
 Thinke on how god did fourty yeares in wilderness afflicte thee  
 Triall to make yf unto hym thou would obedient bee 1490  
 & all that while to thee he manna for to eate did geue  
 To make thee know that in bread only a man doth not lyue  
 But lyves in every word that from the mouth of god proceedeth.  
 And the rayment which thou this fourty yeares hast worne, yet lasteth.

### **Douay-Rheims verses, 1609 version**

When thou hast vowed a vow to our Lord thy God thou shalt not slack to pay  
 it: because our Lord thy God will require it and if thou delay, it shall be reputed  
 to thee for sinne. If thou wilt not promise, thou shalt be without sinne. But that  
 which is once gone out of thy lippes, thou shalt observe, and shalt doe as thou  
 hast promised to our Lord thy God, and hast spoken with thy proper wil and  
 thyne owne mouth. (Deut 23:21–3)

Thou shalt not lend to thy brother money to usurie, nor corne, nor any other  
 thing: but to the stranger. (Deut 23:19)

Thou shalt not denie the hyre of the needie, and poore man thy brother, or the  
 stranger, that dwelleth with thee in the land, and is within thy gates: but the  
 same day thou shalt pay him the price of his labour, before the going downe of  
 the sunne, because he is poore, and there withal susteyneth his life: lest he crie  
 against thee to our Lord, and it be reputed to thee for a sinne.  
 (Deut 24:14–15)

Thou shalt not have diverse weightes in thy bagge, a greater and a lesse: neither  
 shall there be in thy house a greater bushel and a lesse. Thou shalt have a weight  
 just and true, and thy bushel shall be equal and true: that thou mayest live a long  
 time upon the Land, which our Lord thy God shall geve thee.  
 (Deut 25:14–15)

One witness shal not stand against any man, whatsoever sinne, or wickedness it be: but in the mouth of two or three witnesses shal everie word stand.

(Deut 19:15)

If thou perceive that the judgment with thee be hard and doubtful between blood and blood, cause and cause, leprosie and not leprosie: and thou see that the wordes of the iudges within thy gates doe varye: arise, and goe up to the place, which our Lord thy God shal choose. And thou shalt come to the priestes of the Levitical stocke, and to the iudge, that shal be at that time and thou shalt aske of them, ‘Who shall shew thee the truth of the judgements’. And thou shalt do whatsoever they, that are presidents of the place, which our Lord shal choose, shal say and teach thee, according to his law; and thou shalt follow their sentence: neither shalt thou decline to the right hand nor to the left hand. But he that shal be proude, refusing to obey the commandement of the Priest, which at that time ministreth to our Lord thy God, and the decree of the iudge, that man shal die, and thou shalt take away the evil out of Israel: and the whole people hearing shal feare, that none afterward swell in pride.

(Deut 17:8–14)

Command the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you shal have passed Jordan, entering the Land of Chanaan, destroy al the inhabitants of that Land: breake their titles, and burst to filters their statues, and wast al their excesses, cleansing the Land, and dwelling in it, for I have given it you in possession ... But if you wil not kil the inhabitantes of the Land: they that remaine, shall be unto you as it were nailes in your eyes, and speares in your sides, and they shal be your adversaries in the land of habitation’.

(Num 33:51–3)

Fear not, but remember what the Lord thy God did to Pharao and to al the Ægyptians, the exceding great plagues, which thyne eies saw, and the signes and wonders, and the strong hand, and the stretched out arme, that the Lord thy God might bring thee forth: so wil he doe to al peoples, whom thou fearest.

(Deut 7:18–19)

And thou shalt remember al the iourney, through the which the Lord thy God hath brought thee fourtie yeares by the desert, that he might afflict and prove thee, and that the thinges that were in thy hart might be made knowen, whether thou wouldest keepe his commandementes or not. He afflicted thee with penurie, and gave thee for meate Manna, which thou knewest not nor thy fathers: for to shew unto thee that not in bread only a man liue, but in everie word that procedeth from the mouth of God. Thy rayment, wherewith thou wast covered,



hath not decayed for age, and thy foote is not worne, loe this is the fourtieth  
 yeare. (Deut 8:2–4)

## Notes

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- 1 Continental pageants do not so ignore the biblical books of history. For an example see Alan E. Knight (ed.), *Les Mystères de la Procession de Lille*, 3 vols (Paris, 2001, 2003, 2004). While comparison between this French cycle and *The Stonyhurst Pageants* may prove fruitful, that project lies outside the connection to the Douay-Rheims translation discussed here, and thus outside this essay's scope.
- 2 See Carleton Brown (ed.), *The Stonyhurst Pageants* (Baltimore, 1920), 13\*–16\*. All references to Brown's preface are given using his original pagination, which uses arabic numerals followed by an asterisk instead of roman numerals: for example 13\*–16\* instead of xiii–xvi here.
- 3 Brown, *The Stonyhurst Pageants*, 8\*–10\*.
- 4 Brown argues for a date of composition not later than 1625 based on the presence of the possessive form *it*, found four times in the ms, and no sign of the newer *its*. Greg doubts the value of the evidence since the work is in manuscript form and noticeably affected by dialect. I am willing to assume only that the plays were composed before the outbreak of hostilities in 1642. See Brown, *The Stonyhurst Pageant*, 12\*, and W.W. Greg, 'The Stonyhurst Pageants by Carleton Brown', *Modern Language Review* 15.4 (1920): 443 [440–6]. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3714627>.
- 5 Hardin Craig, 'The Stonyhurst Pageants by Carleton Brown'. *American Journal of Philology* 42.3 (1921): 280 [280–3]. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/289589> .
- 6 The Clementine Vulgate of 1590 removed or reordered several books in the Old Testament canon. Changes appeared again in 1593 and 1598, and the English College delayed printing their translation until they were sure all textual issues had been settled. For more information see Swift Edgar (ed.), *The Vulgate Bible: Douay-Rheims Translation* (Harvard, 2010), vii–xxx; ix.
- 7 Harold N. Hillebrand, 'The Stonyhurst Pageants by Carleton Brown', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 20.4 (1921): 574–7; 574.
- 8 Greg, 'Stonyhurst Pageants', 443.
- 9 Craig, 'Stonyhurst Pageants', 283.
- 10 Helen Wieand Cole, 'The Influence of Plautus and Terence Upon the Stonyhurst Pageants', *Modern Language Notes* 38.7 (1923), 393–9; 399. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2914699> .

- 11 Hardin Craig, 'Terentius Christianus and the Stonyhurst Pageants', *Philological Quarterly* 2 (1923): 56–62.
- 12 M. Audrey O'Mahony, 'Materials for an Edition of the Jephthe Play in the Stonyhurst Pageants', MA thesis (Catholic University of America, 1967).
- 13 Brown, *Stonyhurst*, 20–1\*.
- 14 Ibid, 22\*.
- 15 Ibid, 16\*.
- 16 English College at Douay, *The Holie Bible Faithfully Translated into English out of the authentical Latin* (1609) EEBO, 691. I have regularized the long s and vocalic v into modern spelling here and in all subsequent transcriptions.
- 17 Brown, *Stonyhurst*, 224.
- 18 'Now therefore I desire one petition of thee: confound not my face. Who said to him: Speak. And he said ...' (3 Kgs 2.15).
- 19 English College at Douay, *Holie Bible*, 527.
- 20 Brown, *Stonyhurst*, 118.
- 21 Ibid, 17\*.
- 22 English College at Douay, *Holie Bible*, 182.
- 23 Brown, *Stonyhurst*, 64.
- 24 English College at Douay, *Holie Bible*, 127–8.
- 25 Brown, *Stonyhurst*, 17.
- 26 English College at Douay, *Holie Bible*, 459.
- 27 Brown, *Stonyhurst*, 90.
- 28 English College at Douay, *Holie Bible*, 459.
- 29 Ibid, 116.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Brown, *Stonyhurst*, 16.
- 32 Ibid, 152.
- 33 English College at Douay, *Holie Bible*, 578.
- 34 Ibid, 580.
- 35 Brown, *Stonyhurst*, 156.
- 36 Brown notes that the annotations to Judges 16 contain a longer discourse on this theme. See *Stonyhurst*, 13\*.
- 37 English College at Douay, *Holie Bible*, 552.
- 38 Brown, *Stonyhurst*, 148.
- 39 English College at Douay, *Holie Bible*, 156.
- 40 Brown, *Stonyhurst*, 30\*.

- 41 'These plays, written after Shakespeare's work had already been completed, bear witness to their author's continued interest in the religious cycle plays and to his belief that it was possible to revive them for his own generation'. Brown, *Stonyhurst*, 30\*.
- 42 Ibid, 21\*.
- 43 See note 10, above.
- 44 Brown, *Stonyhurst*, 30\*.
- 45 English College at Douay, *Holie Bible*, 433–4.
- 46 Ibid, 392.
- 47 Greg, *Stonyhurst Pageants*, 445.
- 48 John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570–1850* (Oxford, 1976).
- 49 Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975).
- 50 William Sheils, "'Getting on" and "getting along" in parish and town: Catholics and their neighbors in England', in *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands ca 1570–1720*, ed. Benjamin Kaplan, et al (Manchester, 2009), 67–83; 70.
- 51 The last of which did survive into early seventeenth-century Lancashire. See the testament of John Weever in David George, *REED: Lancashire*, (Toronto, 1991), 29.