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Mittelalterliche Dreikönigsspiele: Eine Grundlagenarbeit zu den lateinischen, deutschen und französischen Dreikönigsspielen und -spielszenen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts by Norbert King

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These occasional faults, however, in no way detract from the overall substance of the edition. Carley has rendered a great service to students of later medieval English history, not only in making John of Glastonbury's *Cronica* more accessible, but also in resolving for the first time the many crucial textual and other problems attending the *Cronica*.

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NORBERT KING, *Mittelalterliche Dreikönigsspiele: Eine Grundlagenarbeit zu den lateinischen, deutschen und französischen Dreikönigsspielen und -spielszenen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*. (Germanistica Friburgensia, 3A, 3B.) Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1979. Paper. Pp. ix, 264; 5 plans and drawings.

THIS STUDY started out as an investigation of a unique and most interesting dramatic document: the *Freiburg Epiphany Play*. Dr. King, a student at the University of Freiburg (Switzerland), was, so to speak, on home ground. Yet in order to come to the roots of his topic King had to probe the liturgical forms of religious drama and examine the possible relationship of the Latin liturgical documents to the later *Volksdrama* in the vernacular. So unintentionally and perhaps against the will of the author the originally limited piece of research grew into a vast observation of medieval dramatic life. Avoiding all verbosity, sticking strictly to the topic, King manages to treat this large and complicated field in 264 pages, of which a third are taken up by tables, notes, and a bibliography.

From the very beginning King cautions the reader that he really does not offer new findings or solutions, that he is mainly gathering all the material and adding a few documents not generally known at the time of Karl Young, while refraining from any new deductions. This, in a way true, is actually an amazing understatement of the value and importance of King's study.

His topic is one that has stirred much emotion. Can we still accept the time-honored views of Du Meril, Lange, Creizenach, Young and, for the Epiphany plays, Anz that medieval drama was a gradual growth from the simple liturgical forms of the church to the large vernacular folk festivals on the marketplace? Or can we ignore this "positivistic Darwinism" and see in the simpler forms a "Rückbildung" rather than an origin? King wisely avoids dealing with this problem in an abstract, deductive fashion. Still he points to the fact that Hardison did not offer any new material, but simply manipulated well-known facts to fit his hypothesis. No, King stays close to the documents.

Among the liturgical Epiphany plays King clearly delineates two types: A and B. B, more closely attached to the mass, is represented in Besançon, Sitten, Freiburg, and Geneva, and in a way in Limoges. More numerous documents, representing the A form, are freer in their development. But, although simpler, B does not constitute the "earlier" form as Young had implied. Both forms stand side by side. Still the occurrence of B seems to be limited to the Western Alpine region.

King can further disprove the generally held assumption that the Epiphany and Christmas plays in the vernacular grew out of the Latin liturgical plays. In Freiburg, to be sure, a Latin piece in the mass is directly connected to vernacular presentations on the marketplace. But King shows that the folk drama was simply attached to the

liturgical tradition; it did not grow out of it. These findings are doubly interesting. The Christmas tradition stands in stark contrast with the Easter tradition. At Easter direct contacts between liturgical forms and vernacular folk dramas can be established at least in some localities. To be sure, vernacular Epiphany and Christmas plays are very limited in number compared with the great mass of Easter and Passion plays. Yet if in the Christmas season *Volksdramen* could develop on their own without a liturgical matrix, why could this not be the case for Easter? Would this explain such an interesting but in its position tantalizing document as the play of *Muri*?

King's study forces us to rethink many of the problems of medieval drama.

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JOHN LANGELYTH, *Outposts of Christianity and Civilization*. Copenhagen: Forlaget Kühnwein APS, 1978. 2 microfiche, 7809-1746, 1747. 108 exposures.

THIS study of early Christianity in Ireland and Iceland attempts to clarify some suggestions made in the author's earlier work, *A Critical Examination of the Source Material to the History of the Introduction of Christianity in Iceland* (Reykjavik: The Anglo-Nordic Observer, 1974). Among the issues raised in this earlier work, Langelyth reopened the question of how great a contribution, if indeed any at all, did the Norse-Irish, and by implication Celtic Christianity, make in the establishing and fostering of Christianity in Iceland. Langelyth in the present essay examines this issue more closely. His study is divided into two parts: Celtic Christianity in Ireland, and Origin and Development of Christianity in Iceland.

The first section deals with the following issues: monasticism in Western Europe; monasticism in Ireland; the Pelagian heresy; Celtic versus Roman Christianity (largely a summary of Books III and IV of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*); the Celtic church from the eighth to the twelfth centuries; and the reform of the Celtic church — especially the role of the Norse-Irish in this reform. None of this to my mind breaks any new ground, and Langelyth's dependence on Bede leads him to obscure some of the differences which remained between Celtic and Roman Christianity even after the settlement of such issues as the Easter question, which had been largely taken care of by the middle of the eighth century. It was not until 1152 that the Irish church was organized upon Roman lines, and a number of important reforms were initiated then and in subsequent synods in the hectic years prior to the English invasion. During the tenth and eleventh centuries the Irish church had markedly declined in intellectual quality. One of the casualties of this decline appears to have been the use of Latin. This is not a question Langelyth pursues, but only thirty-eight pages are allotted for this entire section, and there is room for only a brief summary of the most important material.

The remainder of the essay deals with early Christianity in Iceland. The opening chapters in this section cover the same ground which Langelyth investigated more thoroughly in his earlier monograph. In that study he raised many provocative issues. Among them is an investigation of the implications of the closing words in *Landnámabók*, that the entire country was completely heathen for a hundred years (i.e. during the tenth century). This statement, in so far as it has any validity at all, can refer only to the religious convictions of the leading chieftains. The strong