

There you shall be without ending.
Michael, lead these men singing
To joy that lasteth ever.

Michael. Lord, your will done shall be.
 Come forth, Adam, come with me!
 My Lord upon the crucifix
 Your sins hath atoned for.
 Now shall you have pleasure and protection,
 And be restored to your degree,
 That Satan with his subtlety
 From bliss to hell hath brought.

(Then Michael shall lead Adam and the saints to Paradise; and let Satan say:)

Satan. Out, alas! Now goeth away
 My prisoners and all my prey;
 And I might not stir one step,
 I am so strictly confined.
 Now comes Christ, sorrow I may
 For me and my company
 Never, since God made the first day,
 Have we been so unfairly treated!

(Let there be a clamour and burning of pitch as Satan goes into the hell mouth with his demons around him, and let the hell-mouth close on them with great loud noise.)

excerpted from *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays*, edited by A. C. Cawley (London, JM Dent & Sons Ltd. , 1956)

2nd Demon. Go hence, hypocrite, from this place,
 Or thou shalt have a sorry grace!
 For all thy boast and thy menace,
 These men thou shalt fail to get.

Satan. Out, alas! What is this?
 Saw I never so much bliss
 Toward hell come, indeed,
 Since I was prince here.
 My dominion now fares amiss,
 For yonder a stubborn fellow is,
 As if wholly hell were his,
 To strip me of my power.

3rd Demon. Yea, Satan, thy sovereignty
 Fails clean; therefore flee,
 For no longer in this throne
 Here shalt thou not sit.
 Go forth! Fight for thy rank,
 Or else our prince shalt thou not be;
 For now passeth thy power,
 And hence thou must depart.

(Then let them hurl Satan from his throne.)

Satan. Out, alas! I am ruined;
 My might fails, truly;
 This prince that is now present
 Will rob from me my prey.
 Adam, by my enticement,
 And all his blood, through me were deceived;
 Now hence they shall all be taken,
 And I in hell to stay.

Jesus. Open up hell gates, yet I say,
 You princes of torment that be present,
 And let pass the King of bliss this way,
 That he may fulfil his intent.

(Let the hell-mouth open at his command, fire and smoke within as he enters the gates of hell.)

Satan. Say, what is he, that King of bliss?

Jesus. That Lord, the which almighty is.
 There is no power like to his;
 Of all joy he is king.
 And to him is none like, indeed,
 As is certainly seen by this,
 For man, that sometime did amiss,
 To his bliss he will bring.

(Then Jesus shall take Adam by the hand.)

Jesus. Peace to thee, Adam, my darling,
 And also to all thine offspring
 That righteous were in earth living;
 From me you shall not be parted.
 To bliss now I will you bring;

Therefore that boaster look that you bind
In torment of the reek of hell

2nd Demon. Sir Satanas, what man is he
That should thee deprive of thy power?
How dare he act against thee,
And dread his death to die?
Greater than thou he seems to be;
For degraded from thy degree
Thou must be soon, well I see,
And deprived of thy prey.

3rd Demon. Who is this, so stalwart and strong,
That masterly comes us among,
Our fellowship that he would capture?
But thereof he shall fail.
Reproach he us with any wrong,
He shall sing a sorry song;
But Satanas, it is due to you,
If his will avails at all.

Satan. Against this rascal that comes here
I tempted the folk in foul manner;
Vinegar and gall to his dinner
I made them to prepare,
And hang him on a crucifix.
Now he is dead right so through me;
And to hell, as you shall see,
He comes anon in haste.

2nd Demon. Satan, is not this that sire
That raised Lazar out of the hell fire?

Satan. Yea, this is he that will conspire
Anon to rob us all.

3rd Demon. Out, out! Alas, alas!
Here I conjure thee, Satanas,
Thou suffer him not come to this place,
For aught that may befall.

2nd Demon. Yea, and if he comes here,
Passed is clean our power;
For all this fellowship together
He may take away when he would,
For all be at his commandment:
Lazar, that was with us dwelling,
In spite of our teeth away he went,
And him might we not hold

(Then shall come Jesus, and a clamour shall be made, or a loud sound of things striking together, and let Jesus say: 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.)

Jesus. Open hell gates anon,
You princes of pain, every one,
That God's Son may go in,
And the King of bliss!

The Harrowing of Hell

The Chester Pageant of the Cooks and Innkeepers

Introduction: This episode of Christ's descent into Hell is based on a widespread and popular medieval legend: it has no roots in any of the Biblical gospels. Basically the story is a simple one: in the three days after Christ's Crucifixion and before His Ascension into Heaven, He descends into Limbo where the prophets and people of the Old Testament and unbaptized children dwell. He breaks open the gates of Hell and has Satan bound, and leads Adam, Eve and the other righteous souls into Heaven with him. It is dramatized in all the English cycles, represented in sculpture and stained glass, and used again and again in sermons throughout the Middle Ages and across Europe.

Dramatically it must have been a powerful piece--the devils' fear of God's arrival, their attempts to keep some of the souls for themselves and their later attempts to repopulate Hell were expressed in quite comic scenes, while the gratitude of the released souls was emotionally presented. In the earliest 13th century version, Muri, an Easter play, Jesus says to the devils as he liberates the souls, "You have destroyed them in a wretched and horrible fashion through the fire and fierce agonies of Hell." -- and the souls reply that they called for the Saviour "in the fierce agony of hell." Typically in the cycle plays the part of Satan was played by someone from another town, or a professional actor-- as no guild really wanted to have a member directly associated with Satan.

The Cooks and Innkeepers of Chester who acted out this pageant no doubt enjoyed themselves, rushing in and out of the monstrous jaws of Hell-mouth and clashing their pots and kettles-- but given how seriously medieval people took the devil and his works, the merriment of the spectators was probably fairly tense!

Scene I, lines 81-212

(This scene starts near the beginning: Christ has just arrived in Limbo and Adam, Isaiah, Simeon, John and Seth have spoken-- then David speaks as they all kneel)

David. Ah, high God and King of bliss,
Worshipped be thy name, indeed!
I hope that time now coming is
To deliver us of danger.
Come, Lord! Come to hell anon,
And take out thy folk, every one,
For those years are fully gone
Since mankind first came here.

(Then let Satan, sitting on his throne, say to the demons)

Satan. Hell hounds, all that be here,
Make you ready with clamour,
For to this fellowship together
There comes a fearsome man.
A noble morsel you have mun:
Jesu, that is God's Son,
Comes hither with us to dwell;

On him now ye can avenge yourselves!

He is, in truth, nothing but a man
For greatly death he dreaded to die,
And these words I heard him say:
'My soul is thirsty unto death.'
Such as I made halt and blind,
He hath restored them to their natural state;