

A HOMILY FOR THE NATIVITY OF THE VIRGIN MARY

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This paper offers an edition of the previously unedited anonymous Old English homily contained in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 367 part II fos 11-16. I have highlighted the more interesting or ambiguous areas of the text in the commentary, and noted the more significant conclusions to be drawn from an extensive comparison of this homily with the two other extant versions. An *en face* translation into modern English is also provided for ease of study.

The Manuscript

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 367 part II is a composite manuscript containing Old English homiletic fragments on fos 3-6 and 11-29.¹ The anonymous homily here edited appears on fos 11-16 of this manuscript and is an account, in a twelfth-century hand, of the birth and early life of the Virgin Mary. This is one of three extant copies of a homily based on the first twelve chapters of the *Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew*, an apocryphal infancy gospel. It bears the title *nativitas sancte marie virginis* in the manuscript, and henceforth will be referred to as the **M** version.

Extant Versions

The three extant versions of this homily are as follows:

M Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 367, part II, fos 11-16. (The text here edited — dated by Ker to the twelfth century.)² Since the quire wants leaves seven and eight, this version ends imperfectly part way through chapter XI.

J Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 114. (Dated by Ker to the third quarter of the eleventh century.)³

¹ For further information about the manuscript see N.R. Ker, *Manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), 103-10. See also M.B. Butcher, 'An edition of the anonymous Old English homily contained in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 367 part II, fos 11-16' (University of Manchester M.Phil. thesis, 1994). (Henceforth referred to as Butcher, 1994.)

² See Ker, *Manuscripts*, 63.

³ *Ibid.*, 393.

N Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 343. (Dated by Ker to the second half of the twelfth century.)⁴

J and N were edited in the last century and an in depth linguistic comparison of all three versions can be found elsewhere.⁵ Below are summarised the main conclusions to be drawn from such a comparison, but first the homily will be considered in its contemporary context.

Contemporary Use

The *Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew* was composed in Latin in the eighth or ninth century. It is based on the first text to attempt to outline the birth and early life of the Virgin Mary, the *Protevangelium of James*. The latter was written in Greek in the second half of the second century, and in Hilda Graef's words was an attempt 'to supply what was missing in the sober accounts of the gospels'.⁶ The fact that three extant versions of this homily survive today would suggest that in Anglo-Saxon England this need to 'fill in the gaps' was just as pressing.

The homily would have been used on the anniversary of the Virgin's birth and, I suggest, would come as a welcome aid to a homilist facing the perennial ordeal of preaching about a subject not covered by the canonical gospels. It would certainly have been less tedious for the congregation than an exegesis based on the prescribed text for the day, a complicated passage describing the genealogy of Christ through Joseph! (Matt. 1: 1-16)⁷ Our homily evidently had some appeal in twelfth-century England, indicating that more than one religious superior felt that Old English was still the most effective method of written and oral communication in his area.

Conclusions from the Comparison of the Three Extant Versions

Line numbers refer to the text here edited.

An analysis of the contents, lexis, orthography and accidentence of all three versions reveals that N complies with the conventions that we would expect to surround the copying of an Old English text in the latest part of the twelfth century.

In terms of content there is very little difference between the three versions. It seems that the J version, the earliest of the three, pays more attention to detail, suggesting that the other redactors were rather less meticulous or felt that their audiences were simply

⁴ See Ker, *Manuscripts*, 291.

⁵ For J and N versions see B. Assmann (ed.), *Angelsächsische homilien und heiligenleben*, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa, iii (Kassel: Georg H. Wigand, 1889), 117-37. For full linguistic analysis of all three texts see Butcher, 1994, 46-57.

⁶ H. Graef, *Mary: a history of doctrine and devotion* (London and New York: Sheed & Ward, 1985), 35.

⁷ M. Clayton, *The cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, ii (Cambridge: University Press, 1990), 204.

not interested in whether it was an angel or an archangel who appeared to Mary (line 324).

In cases where the choice of words varies between versions it is almost always the **N** version that differs. Most notable is the **N** redactor's refusal to use the verb *gewitan*, opting instead for *gan* or *faran* (lines 52,82,125,142,350). The word *lage* (line 203) is a late Scandinavian loan that eventually supercedes *æ*.⁸ The redactor has also borrowed *seruedæcn* from the French (line 30). Such changes indicate that the redactor was aware of the vocabulary that would be understood by his particular audience and altered the text to fit in with the dialect of his scriptorium or the lexicon in use in the later part of the twelfth century.

Since **M** agrees much more frequently with **J** than **N** we can speculate that **M** had an exemplar that had more in common with **J** than **N**.

The orthographical evidence from a comparison of the three versions suggests that the redactor of **N** favoured spelling conventions of the late Old English and early Middle English periods and had some preference for the Anglian dialect. Below is a selection of the more notable examples reflecting this. Except where I have stated otherwise, all features referred to are contained only in **N**.

a usually appears as *o* before a nasal, giving *nome*, *longe*, *strong* and *londe*, **M** and **J** have *a* consistently. The Anglian dialect favours the *o* spelling, which was also the form preserved into the Middle English period in the West Midlands.⁹

æ has fallen together with *e* in both its long and short forms: *e* is favoured giving forms such as *femnen* and *del*.

ch is used where *c* might be expected, a late Old English change influenced by 'continental practice'.¹⁰

d is omitted twice from the group *and-* giving *answerden* and *answyrde*.¹¹

h is lost before *l* and *r* giving *luttre*, *laford*, *læfdi*, *lisan*, *lot* and *rife* etc.¹²

In the late Old English period the prefix *ge-* frequently became *i-*. In **N** there are very few instances where this is not the case.

As regards accidance, in **N** *e* and hence *æ* are often used to replace the unstressed vowel in an inflectional ending. For example *nama* becomes *nome*, *hyrdas* becomes *heordæ*, *fruman* becomes *frumen* and *sunu* becomes *sune*.

⁸ A. Campbell, *Old English grammar* (Oxford: University Press, 1959), 220-1, para. 566 and B.M.H. Strang, *A history of English* (London: Methuen, 1970), 316, para 176.

⁹ F. Mossé, *A handbook of Middle English*, trans. J.A.Walker (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1952), 19-20, para. 25.

¹⁰ See Mossé, *Handbook*, 11, para. 12.

¹¹ See Mossé, *Handbook*, 42, para. 49.7.

¹² See Mossé, *Handbook*, 42, para. 49.11 and D.G. Scragg, *A history of English spelling* (Manchester: University Press, 1974), 19.

The weakening of the dative plural ending *-um* is also notable, giving *yðan*, *isceftæ*, *eagan* and *femnen*, where **M** and **J** retain *-um*.

Another distinctive feature that demonstrates that the redactor of **N** uses inflections typical of the period of transition between Old and Middle English is the increasing lack of distinction between strong and weak adjectives. In addition to this there appears to be less emphasis on the need to distinguish the subjunctive from the indicative mood, hence there are many instances where the vowel in a verbal inflection is levelled to *e*.

Whilst the content of **J** differs where that of **M** and **N** agrees, it is clear that with regard to orthography and accident **J** and **M** are much closer to each other than either is to **N**. Since the lexical evidence highlights the fact that **M** has only very few words that do not appear in the other two versions, we can say that the exemplar of **M** preceded these two versions and that **M** remained closer to it than **J** or **N**. Given Ker's palaeographical evidence,¹³ combined with the above, I would suggest that **M** can be dated before **N**, or at least, that the scribe of **M** was more faithful to the exemplar and conservative than that of **N**. The latter was clearly more concerned with ensuring that the homily would be understood by his contemporary audience.

The Translation from the Latin Account

A comparison with the Latin account indicates that the homily may have been altered slightly in order to cater for an audience less aware of the rubrics of the Jewish tradition. For example Anna goes to greet her husband, rather than waiting for him at the Golden Gate, and Mary is given white cloth to weave rather than purple for the veil of the temple. This last alteration may have been made to emphasize Mary's purity.

The Translation into Modern English

The translation is an attempt to recreate the message that the twelfth-century Anglo-Saxon audience would have heard. Since this is a translation of a translation, the particular style of the homilist is difficult to convey. However, I have attempted to give some indication of his style in translating the introductory passage. Elsewhere I have sought to retell the tale accurately and have had recourse to many modern day turns of phrase that I feel reflect the mood of the piece faithfully.

Editorial Procedure

The edition is a conservative one. Editorial additions and emendations have been kept to a minimum, appearing only where I can be reasonably certain of what was intended. The more

¹³ See Ker, *Manuscripts*, 63, 291 and 393.

problematic cases are discussed in the commentary, hence, for example, *stlæpe* (line 139) and *fol* (line 284) have been altered, but *belðce* (line 89) and the erasures (line 106 and line 143) remain. The nature of the corrections made under this policy is in line with that of those already effected by the scribe or contemporary redactor. This seems fitting for an edition that aims to present a reading of the text as close to that of the manuscript as is acceptable within the realms of modern scholarship.

Punctuation, capitalization and word division are all modern, as the manuscript, like most of this period, is inconsistent in all of these areas. The titles of the deity have been capitalized and words written in red rustic capitals appear in block capitals.

I have taken the chapter divisions from the Latin source. These coincide with those of Assmann's edition and therefore provide a useful point of reference for comparative work.¹⁴ Foliation has been noted in the right hand margin and shown in the text by an oblique line.

Editorial additions and emendations are indicated by square brackets. Deletions are noted in the apparatus but not in the main body of the text. Erasures are indicated by round brackets. Abbreviations are expanded in italics, except for the Tironian nota 7 and P for *þæt* which stand.

In word division I have followed Scragg in the assumption 'that the first element of a compound will be uninflected, and that an inflected form is an independent word'.¹⁵ Hence *sæsteorra* (line 5) and *hellewite* (line 16) but *godes webbes* (line 308) necessitating *god web* (line 306).

The signs listed below are used within the main body of the text to indicate the following features:

/	foliation
()	erasure
[]	editorial addition or emendation
' '	text added suprascript
ʳ ʳ	text squeezed in below line or added in margin
:	one illegible character or space

¹⁴ See Assmann, *Angelsächsische homilien*, 117-37.

¹⁵ D.G. Scragg (ed.), *The Vercelli homilies and related texts*, The Early English Text Society, o.s. ccc (Oxford: University Press, 1992), lxxx.

The Text

Sexta idus Septembris. NATIVITAS SANCTE
MARIE VIGINIS.

fo. 11r

Men¹⁶ þa leofestan, weorðiat we nu, on andweardnysse,
þa gebyrtide þære eadian femnan *SANCTA MARIAN!*
3 Seo wæs cennestre ures drihtenes hælendes Cristes. Nu
is hyre nama gereht hlæfdige, oððe cwen, oððe
sæsteorra.¹⁷ Heo¹⁸ is hlæfdie gecweden for þam þe heo
6 cende þone hlaford heofenas 7 eorðan. And heo is cwen
for þon þe heo com of þam æpelan kinne 7 of þam
cynelican sæde *Dauides* cynnes. Sæsteorra heo is
9 gecweden, for þam þe sæsteorra on niht gekyþeð
scypliðendum mannum hwider bið east 7 west, hwider
sup 7 norð. Swa þonne wearð þurh þa halgan fæmnan
12 gecyþeþ se rihtes pæt to þam ecan life þam þe ær lange
sæton on þeostrum 7 on deopes scuan 7 on þam
unstillum yþum þære sæ þisses middaneardes. And a
15 sibban wistan ealle halige þone fruman middan 'eardes'
7 ende 7 heofena rices wuldor 7 hellewite. Nu wille we
eow secgan be þære gebyrde þære eadigan femnan
18 *SANCTA MARIAN*, hu seo geworden wæs.

[IIWe habbað geræd on bocum þ wære sum æpele wer
on *Hisraheliscum* folce. Þæs nama wæs *Ioachim*. Se
21 wæs of *Iudan* mægþe 7 he wearð geboren on
Galileiscere scire, on þære byrig þe is gehaten *Nazareth*.
Se wæs heorda his sceapa. He wæs gotforht man an
24 bilewytnysse 7 on fremfulnysse an'd he næfde 'nenige'
opre gymene buton his eowde. Of þam eowde he fedde
ealle þa þe him *Drihten* ondredon 7 of þam wæsmum
27 he Gode "þreo"¹⁹ lac gebrohte 7 ealle his æhta on þreo
todælde. Anne dæl he sealde þearfum 7 wudewum 7
steopcildum 7 ælþeodigum mannum and operne dæl he
30 sealde þam þe Gode anum þeowedon. Þone þridan dæl
he heold him sylfum 7 his hirede big to lyfigenne. Ða
mid þam þe he þas þing wæs donde þus, / þa mycclade fo. 11r
33 God his woruldæhta þ on þa tid næs nan wær him gelice
on *Israhælum*. Ðas þing he ongan don þa ða he wæs
fyftyne wintra 7 mid þam þe he hæfde XX wintra þa
36 onfeng he wif him to gemæccan, seo wæs "ge"haten²⁰
Anna, 7 hyre kyn wæs on þære byrig *Bethleem*. Seo

¹⁶ Men] **M** enlarged and decorated in red.

¹⁷ sæsteorra] MS sæ steorra. (See Editorial Procedure.)

¹⁸ Heo] **H** enlarged, breaks into left margin.

¹⁹ þreo] appears in right margin, position indicated by three dots.

²⁰ gehaten] ge squeezed in below line level, probably by scribe.

The sixth ide of September. THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

Most beloved of men, let us honour at this present time the anniversary of the birth of the blessed virgin, Holy Mary! She was the mother of our lord and saviour, Jesus Christ. Now her name is proclaimed as Lady, or Queen or Star of the Sea. She is called Lady because she begot the lord of heaven and earth. She is called Queen because she comes from that noble line and royal house of David. Star of the Sea she is called because the guiding star tells seafaring men at night whether they are going east or west or south or north. Likewise, it is through this holy woman that the correct path to eternal life is shown to those who have existed for a long time in darkness and in the shadow of death and on the restless waves of the sea on this earth. And hereafter, all the holy ones from the creation of the earth to the end will know the wonder of the kingdom of heaven and the torment of hell. Now we will tell you of the birth of that blessed virgin, holy Mary, and how she was born.

[I] We have read in books that there was a certain excellent man amongst the Jewish people. His name was Joachim. He was of the tribe of Judah and he was born in the region of Galilee, in that town that is called Nazareth. He was a shepherd. He was a godfearing man who lived a life of simplicity and kindness and he had no other care except that of his flock. From this flock he supported all those who feared the Lord, and from his earnings he brought three offerings to God, and he divided all his possessions into three parts. One part he gave to beggars, widows, orphans and exiled men and the second he gave to those who served God alone. The third part he kept for himself and used to support his household. Then, when he was managing affairs in this manner, God increased his wordly possessions so that there was no man like him in all of Israel at that time. He began to live like this when he was fifteen years old and when he was twenty he took a wife, she was called Anna, and her kin were in the town of Bethlehem. Anna was Achar's daughter, of

- Anna wæs Achares dohtor of his agenum kynne, Ð is
 39 þone of þam æbelan kynne Davides þæs kyninges. Hi
 þa wæron samod drohtinende æt somne XX wintra swa
 hi nan bearn on worulde ne begeaton.
- 42 [II]Þa gelamp hit sume dæge Ð he eode to þam Drihtnes
 temple, 7 he þa Io‘a’him gestod betwux þam mannum
 þe to Gode onsægennæsse brohton, 7 he gearwode his
 45 gyfe on Godes gesihþe. Him þa to genealæhte þære
 bocera sum, þæs nama wæs RUBEN, 7 cwæð him to:
 ‘Nis þe alyfed Ð þu stande betwux þam þe Gode
 48 onsægednysse bringað, for þam þe Godes bletsunge ofer
 þe ne com, Ð he þe ænig bearn asende’. He þa þæs wæs
 mycclle scame þrowiende beforan þam folce for þysum
 51 wordum, 7 he þa swa sceamiende ut of þam temple
 wepende gewat, 7 nolde þa eft hweorfan to his agenum
 hame. Ac he gewat on westenum to his sceapum 7 þa
 54 heordas nam mid him, 7 þær wunode V monþan fæcc.
 Swa þær nænig ærendraca betweonan ne ferde him 7
 his gemæccan. Ða ongan Anna hyre gemæccan bewepan
 57 7 hire to Drihtene gebiddan 7 þus cwæð: ‘Min Drihten
 Israhela God, þu þe eart strang 7 mihtig ofer ealle
 gesceafta 7 þu me noldest næfre bearn ofer eorþan
 60 syllan 7 þu minne wer æt me gename 7 ic nat hwæþer
 his lif is ofer eorþan 7 gyf he forðgewiten is þonne ne
 gegearwode ic him byrgenne’. Ða heo þas word
 63 gecweden hæfde, þa eode heo eft on hyre cafertun 7
 hyre eadmodlice to Drihtene gebæd 7 æfter þam þe heo
 hæfde hire gebeden gefyllede, þa ahof heo / hyre eagan fo. 12^r
 66 up to Drihtene 7 þa geseah heo spearwan næst on anum
 lawertreowe. Heo þa wependre stemne clypade to
 Drihten 7 cwæð: ‘Drihten þu ælmihtiga God þu sealdest
 69 eallum ‘ge’sceaftum byorþor 7 hi on þon gefeop. Ic þe
 nu þanc sette Ð þu me ana ute atyndest fram þinne gyfe
 þære fremsumnyse. Hwæt þu min Drihten canst 7 wast
 72 mine heortan, hwæt ic þe fram fruman mines scinscipes
 gehet, gyf þu me sealdest sunu oððe dohtor Ð ic hy
 wolde þe gebringan to þinum temple’. Þa heo þas word
 75 gecweden hæfde, hwæt, þa hyre æteowde Godes engel
 7 þus cwæp: ‘Nelt þu þe ondreadan, Anna, for þan þin
 þrowung is on Godes geþeahte. Ð Ð of þe acenned byþ
 78 Ð bið on wundra eallum mannum oððæt worulde ende’.
 Ða mid þam þe he þas word gecweden hæfde, þa wæs
 he fram hira eagan ahafen. Ða wæs heo swiþe forht
 81 geworden for þæs engles gesihþe 7 heo hire gewat into
 heora cleofan 7 þær awunode þone dæg 7 þa niht on
 hire gebedum. Ða wæs on morgen geworden þa

his own line, that is of the noble line of King David. They lived together for about twenty years, yet they did not bring a child into the world.

[II] Then it happened that on a particular day, Joachim went to the temple of the Lord, and stood amongst the men who were bringing offerings to God, and he prepared his gift in the sight of God. Then, a certain scribe, whose name was Reuben, approached him and said 'It is not permitted for you to stand amongst those who bring offerings to God, because God's blessing has not come upon you, he has not sent you a child'. He suffered great embarrassment before the people because of these words and thus ashamed, ran weeping out of the temple and did not return to his home. Instead he went into the wilderness to his sheep and dwelt there for five months without his shepherds. And there was no communication between him and his wife. Then, his wife, Anna, began to weep bitterly and prayed to God saying 'My Lord God of Israel, you are strong and powerful over all creation and you have never seen fit to give me a child on this earth and you have taken my husband away from me, I do not know whether his life is ended, and if he has died I have not been able to prepare the funeral'. When she had spoken these words, she went back into her chamber and prayed humbly to the Lord, and after she had completed her prayers she lifted her eyes up to the Lord and caught sight of a sparrow's nest in a laurel tree. Then she cried to the Lord in a weeping voice saying 'Lord God almighty, you gave offspring to all of creation and they are glad. I now give you thanks that you have excluded me alone from your gift of kindness. Surely, my Lord, you know and understand my heart. Indeed, from the start of my marriage I promised that if you gave me a son or a daughter I would bring them to your temple'. When she had spoken these words, behold, God's angel appeared to her and said, 'Do not be afraid, Anna, for your suffering is part of God's plan. The daughter that you are to bear will be the wonder of all creation until the end of the world'. Then, when he had spoken these words, he was lifted up from her eyes. Then, she was so terrified from seeing the angel that she went into her chamber and remained there all that day and night in prayer. When the morning

84 gelaðede heo hire þinene to hire '7 hire' to cwæð: 'Hwæt
þu me gesawe on minum wydewum hade beswicene 7
on mycclre nearunysse gesette 7 noldest me to frofre
87 cuman?' Þa 7swarode heo hire ungeþwærlice 7 hire
cwæð to: 'Þeah God þinne wer æt þe name 7 þinne
innoð belðce, hwæt sceal ic þe þæs don?' Ða þa heo
90 An[n]a²¹ þas word gehyrde, þa ongan heo wepan
biterlice.

[III]Hwæt, þa on þære ylcan nihte him æteowde sum
93 swiþe wlitig wer on þam westene þær þær he wæs mid
his heordum 7 him cwæð to: 'For hwam nelt þu ham
hweorfan / to þinum gemæccan?' Ða cwæð he Ioachim: fo. 12^v
96 '.XX. wintra ic wunode mid hyre 7 me God nan bearn
of hire ne sealde. Ac ic swiþe geæswicode ut of þam
Drihtenes temple, for þon ic nelle eft ham gehwyrfan.
99 Ac ic wylle her wunian þa hwile, þe Drihten wile 7 þa
Godes gyfe for Drihtenes naman dælan swa ic ær dyde.'
Ða 7swarade him se iunga 7 þus cwæð: 'Ic eom
102 Drihtenes engel 7 nu todæg ic me æteowde þinum
gemæccan 7 hi gefrefrode þa þa heo hy wepende 7
geomeriende to Drihtene gebæd 7 wite þu þæt heo is
105 of þinum sæde geacnod swa þu na ne wistest. Ða þa þu
hi(:)²² ane forlæte 7 heo þe cenneð dohter 7 seo byð on
Godes temple fulfremed 7 se Halga Gast resteð on hire
108 7 hire eadignysse oferstigeð eall wyfa cynn 7 hire ne bið
gelic ænig þære þe ær wæs oððe æfter cymð. Gecyr nu
to þinum gemeccan 7 þu gemetest hi geeacnode 7 þu
111 þæs Gode þanc secge, for þan hire sæd bið gebletsod 7
heo bið modor þære ecan bletsunge gesetteð.' Ða
weorðade hine Ioachim 7 him to cwæþ: 'Gyf hit þus
114 gewurþan scyle swa þu cwist, site mid me on minum
huse 7 gebletsa þinne þeow'. Ða cwæð se engel to him:
'Hwi wylt þu cweþan Þ þu si min ðeow ac þu eart min
117 efenþeow for þon wyt synd anes Godes þeow 7 ic þe
secge Þ min mete 7 min drenc ne mæg beon fram
mannum gesewen. Ac swa hwæt swa þu me to gyfe
120 tihhige bring Þ Gode to sægednysse'. He þa Ioachim
Gode brohte unwemme lac 7 to þam engle cwæð: 'Næs
ic na gedyrstig Þ ic Gode sacerdlice onsægennisse /
123 brohte gyf þu me ne hete'. Ða cwæð se engel: 'Na ic þe fo. 13^v
ne hete Gode sacerdlice onsægednysse²³ bringan for þam
þe ic Godes willan to þam ne ongeate'. Þa gewat se

²¹ Anna] MS Ana

²² hi] followed by an erasure; possibly the remains of a minim.

²³ onsægednysse] g altered from d probably by scribe.

came she summoned her maid to her and said, 'Surely you witnessed me in my widowed state, betrayed and in great distress, yet why did you not come to console me?' She answered her hostilely saying, 'God has taken your husband away from you and made your womb barren, what can I do about it?' When Anna heard these words she began to weep bitterly.

[III] Indeed, on that same night, an incredibly radiant man appeared to him (Joachim) in the wilderness where he was with his flocks, and asked him 'Why do you not return home to your wife?' Then Joachim replied, 'For twenty years I dwelt with her and God did not send me a child through her. Moreover, I exiled myself from the temple of the Lord because I did not want to return home again. And I will dwell here meanwhile, as God wishes, and divide God's gifts in the Lord's name, as I did before'. Then the young man answered him saying, 'I am the angel of the Lord, and today I appeared to your wife, and I consoled her as she prayed to God, weeping and mourning. Know that she has conceived, as you wished. When you left her on her own she conceived a daughter and she will be perfect in God's temple and the Holy Ghost rests upon her, and her holiness exceeds that of all female kind, and she is not like anyone who was before, or who will come after her. Go home now to your wife and find her pregnant, and give thanks to God, because her fruit is blessed and she is the mother of him who gives eternal blessings'. Then Joachim honoured him and said, 'If it is like you say it will be, sit with me in my house and bless your servant'. Then the angel replied, 'Why do you say that you are my servant? On the contrary, you are my fellow servant, because we are both servants to God alone, and I tell you, my meat and drink cannot be seen by men. But what you intend as a gift for me, take to God as a sacrifice'. Then Joachim brought the unblemished offering to God and said to the angel, 'I would not be as bold as to bring a priestly offering to God if you had not instructed me to do so'. Then, the angel said, 'I did not instruct you to bring a sacrifice to God, but I understood that it was God's will'. Then, the angel,

- 126 engel samod mid þam stence þære onsægednysse into
 heofenum. He þa Ioachim gewearð to þam forht þ he
 feoll on eorþan 7 læg swylce he dæd wære. Fram þære
 129 sixtan tide þæs dæges oððæt æfen wæs. Him þa to
 genealæhton hys hyrdas 7 hi hine þa gesawon licgan 7
 nyston þone intingan on him. Ac hofon hine up 7 hi
 132 cwædon þ he wolde hine sylfne acwellan. Ða ahof he
 his heafod up 7 he heom asæde þa his gesihðe þe he
 geseah. Ða wurdon hi sona afyrhte 7 eac wundredon
 135 oððæt he hit hi[m]²⁴ eall asæd hæfde 7 hi þa ealle hine
 trymedon 7 lærdon þ he gehyrsum wære þæs engles
 wordum 7 þæt he hraþe gedwyrde ham to his
 138 gemæccan. He þa Ioachim þreodode on his mode hwæt
 he ymbe þ dyde, þa gewearð he færinga on slæpe²⁵
 gehwyrfed. Him þa ætywde se ilca engel eft on slæpe 7
 141 him to cwæð: ‘Ic eom Godes engel 7 fram Drihtne ic
 eom þe to heorda geset. Ac gewit nu ham orsorh to
 þinum gemæccan 7 eower mildheortnysse þe (:)²⁶
 144 geworhton beforan Godes gesihðe²⁷ 7 eower nama wæs
 geræded beforan Drihtenes gesihðe on his þrymsetle 7
 he eow sylleð swa mycele grownysse on eowran beorþre
 147 swa he næfre nænigum haligran ær ne sealde, ne nu
 næfre eft ne sylleþ’. He þa Ioachim of þam slæpe aras 7
 his s[w]efan²⁸ sæde his heordum. Hi þa ealle hine bædon
 150 7 halsodon þ he gehyrsumode þæs engeles wordum 7
 rycene ham gecyrde. Ða wæs he ær gegan for his
 unrotnysse on þam / westene to þam feor þ he for XXX fo. 13^v
 153 daga fæc ne mihte ham to his ‘ge’ mæccan gehwyrfan.
 Heo þa Anna wæs æt hyre gebæde, ða æteowde hyre
 Drihtnes engel 7 hyre gekyde þone hamsið hire
 156 gemæccan 7 heo þa mid hire hærenne him ongean eode
 mid mycclum gefean swylce eac hire magas 7 eall
 Israhela bearn mycelne gefean hæfdon be his hamcyme
 159 7 be þam hlysan hyre geeacnunge.

- [IV] Ða acende Anna hyre dohtor 7 hyre naman gecigde
 MARIA 7 heo hi þa fedde III winter æt hyre breostum.
 162 Ioachim þa 7 Anna læddon þ cild mid heom to þære
 halgan ceastre 7 þa lac brohton mid him an to þam
 Drihtnes temple þe Iudea wuna wæs 7 hi þa sealdon þ
 165 cild on gemanan þære fæmnena þe dæges 7 nihtes on
 Godes lofe wunoden. Heo up eo‘de’ mid þam oþrum

²⁴ him] MS hi man

²⁵ slæpe] MS slæpe

²⁶ þe] followed by erasure of one or possibly two characters.

²⁷ gesihðe] ð altered from t, probably by scribe.

²⁸ swefan] MS sfefan

together with the smoke of the sacrifice, went up to heaven. Joachim was afraid and fell to the earth, and lay as if he were dead from the sixth hour until it was evening. Then his shepherds approached him and saw him lying as if dead, and they did not know what was the matter with him. They lifted him up and concluded that he must have killed himself. Then he lifted up his head and told them about the vision that he had seen. Directly, they were afraid, and moreover, they were astonished until he had told them everything and they all comforted him and persuaded him to be obedient to the angel's words and return home quickly to his wife. Then Joachim turned over in his mind what he should do and was suddenly sent back to sleep. That same angel appeared to him again in his sleep and said, 'I am God's angel, and I am sent by the Lord to guide you. Go home, now, to your wife without any concern and demonstrate your loving generosity in the sight of God. Your name was read out in the presence of God on his throne, and he granted you such great prosperity in your offspring as he never gave to any holy person before, nor ever will again'. Then Joachim arose from his sleep and explained his vision to his shepherds. They all prayed and implored him to obey the angel's words and return home instantly. Then he went into the remote wilderness for his contrition for the space of thirty days, before he might return home to his wife. When Anna was at her prayers the angel of the Lord appeared to her and announced her husband's homecoming and she and her household proceeded with great joy, and likewise, her kinsmen and all the children of Israel experienced great joy due to his return and the glorious nature of her conception.

[IV] Then Anna gave birth to a daughter and called her Mary and she fed her at her breast for three years. Then Joachim and Anna took the child with them to the holy town and brought an offering with them to the Lord's temple, as was the Jewish custom, and they gave the child into the care of the community of virgins who dwelt day and night in the praise of God. And with the other virgins she ascended the fifteen steps of the temple without looking back, and

fæmnum on þa XV stæpas on þam temple swa heo ne
 168 on bæc ne beseah, ne heo na ne taltrade ne æfter hyre
 yl drum ne myrde swa swa cilda gewuna wæs. Ac heo
 171 wynsuman men þe hæfde XXX wintra, 7 heo geornlice
 7 eadmodlice þurhwunode on hire gebedum, oððæt þa
 bisceopas 7 eall þ folc wundrade on hire gebærum.

174 [V]Heo Anna þa 'wæs' gefylled mid þam Halgan Gaste
 7 witegode þa beforan þam folce 7 þus cwæð: 'Drihten
 ælmihtig God wæs gemyndig his worda, þe he sylfa
 177 cwæð, þæt he wolde his folc geseccan haligre neosunge
 7 þa þeode þe wið us arison he wolde geeadmodigan þ
 hi gecirdan to heora selfran heortum 7 heora earan
 180 ontyndon to urum benum 7 þa bismornysa ura feonda
 fram us acyrran. On þam unbeorþrum ecere blisse
 tuddor forgefean on Israhelum swa me min Drihten
 183 forgeaf þ ic mot Gode gecweme lac bringan, ær me
 mine fynd / ascufon fram þære halgan onsægednysse for fo. 14f
 minre unberednysse. Drihten min acyrde hi fram me 7
 186 me forgeaf ecne gefean'.

[VI] Ða heo þas word gecweden hæfde þa cyrdon hi ham
 mid þam 7 þæt cild forleton æt þam temple mid oþrum
 189 þam fæmnum, 7 heo þa weox 7 wearð fulfremed on
 godra mæгна heanyssum 7 heo þa sona godum
 towcræftum onfeng 7 swiðor þone ænig þæra þe heora
 192 bearn wæron wifa 7 fæmnæna. 7 heo gesette hyre sylfre
 haligne regul, swa þ heo wolde beon fram þære ærestan
 tide þæs dæges on hire halgum gebedum wuniende
 195 oððæt þa þridan tid 7 fram þære þridan tide oð ða
 nigoðan ymbe hire webgeworc 7 eft fram þære nygoðan
 tide heo þurhwunode standende on hire gebedum oððæt
 198 Godes engel hire æteowde 7 hire gebrohte heofenlice
 swetnysse 7 heo þære byrigene of his handa 7 heo
 syððan wæs betere 7 swiþre on Godes lufon 7 on
 201 gastlicre mægena heahnysse, 7 heo yl dran fæmnan lærde
 to Godes willan 7 heo wæs getydre 7 snotere on þære
 Godes æ þonne ænig þæra þe hire beforan wæs. Heo
 204 wæs eadmodre 7 on Godes lufon glædre 7 on geþohtum
 clænre 7 on þam Davitidiscum sangum wærligre þonne
 ænig wære, 7 heo wæs þolomod 7 gestæðpig on hyre
 207 gebærum 7 ne geseah hi nænig man yrre, ne tælan, ne
 wyr gian ne nænig gehyrde yfel word of hyre muðe gan.
 Ac hyre word wæron Godes gyfe fulle 7 heo wæs on
 210 hyre heortan smægende þone wisdom Godes boca, 7 þa
 fæmnan þe mid hyre / wæron heo trymode þ hi on fo. 14f

she did not stumble or long for her elders as is the habit of a child. Her progress and speech and all her other behaviour was that of a kindly person of thirty years of age and she pursued her prayers diligently and humbly until the bishops and everybody else wondered at her behaviour.

[V] Anna was filled with the Holy Ghost and went out before the people and said, 'The Lord God Almighty was mindful of his words when he himself said that he would visit his people in a holy vision and humble the people who rose up against us and they would convert in their own hearts, and he would bend their ears to our prayers and turn away the insults of our enemies from us. To the barren he gave the eternal bliss of children in Israel. As my Lord forgave me, so I must bring acceptable offerings to God. Previously my adversaries drove me out from the place of holy offerings because of my barrenness. Lord, turn them from me and give me eternal joy!'

[VI] When she had spoken these words, she returned home with them and left the child at the temple with the other virgins; and then she (the child) flourished and was perfect in the virtues and excellence of good deeds and she soon undertook excellent spinning, much more so than any who were children of wives or virgins. And she set herself a holy rule so that she would remain in holy prayers from the first hour of the day until the third hour, and from the third hour to the ninth hour she did her weaving, and from the ninth hour she remained standing at her prayers until God's angel appeared to her and brought her heavenly sweetness and she tasted from his hands, and afterwards she was better and stronger in the praise of God and in the spiritual excellence of good deeds and she taught the older women God's will and she was more learned and wiser in God's law than any who went before her. She was more obedient and more joyous in the love of God and purer in thought and more meticulous about David's psalms than anyone was, and she was patient and serious in her prayers, and no man witnessed her being angry or insulting or blasphemous, and nobody heard an evil word come out of her mouth. But her words were full of God's grace and she would meditate in her heart on the wisdom

heora gebedum þurhwunodon, 7 on Godes lofe, 7 nænig
 213 heora stefne up ahofe on idelum leahtre, ne hi on heora
 tungan teonan ne cwædon, ne nænig yfel word of heora
 muðe ut ne eode. And of hire aras ærest se gewuna Ð se
 216 man se þe oþerne grette mid lufan wordum Ð he him
 godcunde bletsunge ongean sette. And dæghwamlice
 heo onfeng mete of þæs engles handa 7 mid þig
 219 gereordod wæs 7 þæne mete þe heo æ[t]²⁹ þam biscope
 onfeng on þam temple heo þone gedælde þearfendum
 mannum 7 swa hwylc man swa hi untrum gesohte eft
 222 he eode hal fram hyre.

[VII] Ða gelamp hit Ð Abiathar se sacerd brohte mycele
 gyfe þam biscope 7 bæd hine [Ð hine]³⁰ Ð he sealde
 225 MARIAN his sunu to gemeccan. Ða styrde MARIA him
 7 cwæð anrædlice: ‘Ne gewurþeþ Ð næfre swa Ð ic wer
 grete oððe wer me’. Ða 7swaradon hyre þa biscopas 7
 228 hire magas ealle þe on þam temple wæron 7 cwædon:
 ‘God wæs on bearnum begangan 7 in eaforen weorðeð
 swa Ð gewunelic wæs on Godes folce Israhelum’. Ða
 231 7swarode MARIA 7 heom to cwæð: ‘Næs nan rihtwis
 man ne halig ær Abel 7 hine arleaslice unwis ofsloh he
 brohte twifealde gyfe drihtene hluttre onsægdnysse 7 his
 234 lichaman clænnysse. Eac swilce Helias wæs of þissere
 worulde alæded on lichaman for þam þe he his clænnisse
 geheold.’

237 [VIII] Wæs heo swilce heo wære feowertyne wintra. Ða
 gedemdon Phariseas Ð heo siððan wunian sceolde on
 þam Godes temple. Hi þa geþeahodon Ð hi Israhela folc
 240 gelapodon to þam Godes temple þy þridan dæge / þa fo. 12^v
 hi þa þyder gesamnod wæron þa astah se heahbisceop
 Isachar up on þone ytemestan stæpe 7 clipode þa hludre
 243 stefne 7 þus cwæð: ‘Gehyrað nu, Israhela bearn, min
 word. Hwæt, gewiton, Ð Salomon þis temple
 getimbrade, 7 her wæron syþþan inne kyninga bearn 7
 246 witegena and heahsacerda, oððæt hi becomon to ælcere
 ylde. 7 hi gelimplice heora yldran wæron æwfæston 7
 heora bearn eft Gode gecweme lac brohton to þam
 249 Godes temple 7 heora yldrena endebyrdnysse Gode
 gecwemdon. Nu is þone gemeted þæt MARIA hæfð
 niwe endebyrdnysse ongunnen Gode mid to cwemenne,
 252 cwæþ, Ð heo wile Gode hyre mægðhad bringan. [Ut]e
 secan þa 7sware to Gode sylfum ure axunge Ð ‘God’ us

²⁹ æt] MS æ

³⁰ Ð hine] crossed through with a single line (probably same ink as main text).

of God's books and the virgins who were with her were encouraged by her and continued their prayers in God's favour and none of them lifted up their voices in worthless sin and they spoke no injury with their tongues and no evil words came out of their mouths. And it was from her that the custom first arose that one person greeted another with loving words and received back again a blessing sent from God. Each day she received meat from the angel's hand and she was sustained by this and she divided the meat that she received from the bishop amongst the beggars, and each infirm person who met her was well again before leaving her.

[VII] Then it happened that Abiathar the priest brought many gifts to the bishop and asked him to give Mary to his son for a wife. But Mary corrected him and said resolutely, 'It is never to be that I associate with a man, nor a man me'. Then the bishops and all her kinsmen who were in the temple answered her, saying, 'God was honoured through children and worshipped through heirs as was customary for the people of God in Israel'. Then Mary answered them, saying, 'There was no more righteous or holy man than Abel and he was unwisely and wickedly slain and he brought twofold gifts to the Lord, pure sacrifices and the chastity of his body. Also, Elijah was lifted out of this world in his body because he guarded his chastity'.

[VIII] She lived like this until she was fourteen years old. Then the Pharisees debated whether she should remain in God's temple any longer. They agreed that they would summon the people of Israel together on the third day. Then, when they were there together, the archbishop, Isachar, stood on the uppermost step and cried out in a loud voice, saying 'Hear now my words, children of Israel!' Indeed we know that Solomon built this temple and afterwards the sons of kings and wise men and high priests were here, until they each reached old age. And they were fittingly devout to their elders, and their children after them brought acceptable offerings to God's temple and their elders abided by God's rules. Now it is apparent that Mary has devised new rules by which to serve God, and she has said that she will bring her chastity to God. We should seek the answer to our question from God himself that he will guide each man and we trust him as to how we should behave. Everyone

gekyþe hwylcum were we hi befeston sceolan to
 255 healdenne. Ða licode Ð word ealre þære gesamnunge 7
 þa sendon hlot ofer þa XII cynn Israhela bearnum. Ða
 gefeoll þæt hlot ofer Iudean cynn Iacobes sunu'. Ða
 258 bebead se sacerd Ð Ð Iudan cynn come þæs mærgennes
 to þam halgan temple, ælc þæra þe wif næfde, 7 hæfde
 heora ælc gyrda on handa. Ða wæs þanon geworden Ð
 261 Ioseph wæs gehaten sum gewintrod man 7 eode þyder
 mid geongum mannum 7 his gyrd þider bær. Ða genam
 se sacerd ealle þa gyrdan 7 bær þa into *sancta sanctorum*
 264 7 bebead Ð hi comon on mergen 7 name ælc his gyrde
 7 þonne sceolde culfre fleogan of þære gyrde
 forewyrð'r'e up inn on þone heofon. Þonne sceolde se
 267 wer beon hyrde þære fæmnan. Ða wæs geworden on
 mergen / þæs æftran dæges, ða comon hi ealle on þa tid fo. 15'
 þære onsægdnyse 7 þa in iude se bisceop Abiathar inn
 270 to *sancta sanctorum* wæs Ð haligra halignys ealra 7 þa
 nam þa gyrdan 7 sealde anra gehwylcum him onsundran
 wæs þæra manna þreo þusenda 7 þa of nan þæra gyrda
 273 seo culfre ut ne eode. Ða gegyrede hine Abiathar se
 bisceop mid þi heahsacerdgageylan 7 inn eode on þa
sancta sanctorum 7 onbærnde þa onsægdnyse 7 his
 276 bene to Drihtene sende. Ða ætywde him Drihtenes
 engel 7 him to cwæð: 'Seo seleste gyrd is gyt æfter seo
 þu for nawiht ne tellest. Nim þa 7 syle ðonne cymð Ð
 279 tacn of hire Ð þu þær secst.' Wæs Ð Iosepes gyrd. Ða
 næs heo na soht for þam þe Ioseph wæs eald 7 utemest
 stod. Þa cleopede se bisceop mycelre stemne hine 7 hine
 282 cigde 7 him his gyrde sealde 7 þa sæmninga fleah þær
 culfre ut swiþe hwyt 7 geond fleah þa hwæmmas þæs
 temples 7 þa gewat on þone heofen. Ða wæs Ð fol[c]³¹
 285 swiþe gefeonde 7 cwædon Ioseph: 'Eadig eart þu on
 þinre yldre. Nu þe God swa gewurpode Ð þu scealt beon
 hyrde þære clænan fæmnan.' Eac swylce þa bisceopas
 288 cwædon: 'Onfoh hire nu, Ioseph, for þam þe þu eart ana
 gecoren on þinum kynne hyre to hyrde fram Gode.' He
 þa Ioseph cwæð bifeigendre stemne: 'Nis min gemet
 291 swilcum cilde to onfonne, for þon ic hebbe feala bearna
 7 þa synd ealle ylðran þonne heo.' Ða cwæð se bisceop
 to him: 'Gemun ðu hu gelamp Dathan he forwearð, 7
 294 monige eac mid him þa þe / Godes willan forhogodon.' fo. 16'
 Ða cwæð he Ioseph: 'Ne forhicge 'ic' na Godes willan,
 ac hi gehalde, oððæt ic ongyte Godes willan on hire 7
 297 God þone gekyðeþ hwylc iungra manna on minum
 cynne hyre wyrþe byð. Ac ic onfo þære clænan fæmnan

³¹ folc] MS fol

present was satisfied by these words and they cast lots amongst the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. The lot fell on the tribe of Judah, the sons of Jacob. Then the priest commanded that each member of the tribe of Judah who did not have a wife was to come to the holy temple in the morning, each carrying his staff in his hand. And so it happened that a certain aged man called Joseph went there with the young men carrying his staff. Then the priest took all the staffs and carried them into the *sancta sanctorum* and instructed them to return in the morning and each claim his staff, and then a dove would fly up into heaven from the best one. Then that man should be the guardian of the virgin. When the following morning came they all gathered at the hour for sacrifices and the bishop, Abiathar, went into the *sancta sanctorum* (that was the holy of holies) and he took the staffs and returned them to each person individually, and there were three thousand men there, and no dove flew out from any of the staffs. Then Abiathar, the bishop, put on the robe of the high priest, and went into the *sancta sanctorum* and burnt a sacrifice and sent his prayers to God. Then God's angel appeared to him and said 'The best staff still remains, the one that you disregard. Take it and you will receive the sign that you are looking for.' It was Joseph's staff. He had not sought for it because Joseph was old and stood at the back of the crowd. Then the bishop cried out to him in a loud voice and named him and gave him his staff, and immediately a very white dove emerged and flew around the corners of the temple and then went up to heaven. Then the people were very glad and said to Joseph 'Blessed are you in your age. Now that God has honoured you, you shall be guardian to the chaste virgin'. Likewise, the bishop said 'Receive her now, Joseph, for you alone are chosen by God from your tribe to protect her'. Then Joseph said in a trembling voice 'It is not in my power to receive such a child, because I have many sons and they are all older than her.' Then the bishop replied 'Remember how Dathan passed away, and many with him in the same way because they rejected God's will. Then Joseph said 'I do not reject God's will, but I hesitate until I understand God's will concerning her, and until God indicates which younger man of my tribe is worthy of her. But, I

Ð heo wunige mid me oððæt heo hæbbe æli[c]e³² ylde.
 300 Ða cwæð se bisceop: 'Fæmnan beoð mid hire on
 fultume oð þone dæg incra gemunga, 7 ne mæg hi
 nænig oþer wer onfon.' Ða onfeng Ioseph MARIAN
 303 mid oþrum V femnum þe hire wæron on fultume geseald
 to Iosepes hame. Ða wæron hatene þus: ærest Becca,
 Sephira, Susanna, Abugea an[d]³³ Sehel, 7 se bisceop
 306 sealde h[im]³⁴ eallum god web to wefanne of seolce³⁵ 7
 of mistlicum hiwum wahryft to þam temple. Ða onfeng
 MARIA hwites godes webbes to wefanne 7 þa oþre
 309 mistlices hiwes. Ða spræcon hi heom betweonan on
 gleow 7 þus cwædan: 'Þu eart ure gingast, þu miht
 wefan Ð hwite god web 7 þu miht beon ure cwen.' Ða
 312 hig þas word spræcon, þa æteowde heom Drihtenes
 engel 7 cwæð: 'Ne sceal eower word beon idelnysse, ac
 hit sceall beon mid soðe gecyþed for þam witegan
 315 geogeara sædon Ð heo sceolde beon middaneardes
 cwen.' Ða weron hi ealle swi[ð]e³⁶ forhte for þæs engel
 gesihðe 7 his worde 7 ongunnon hi weorþian 7 hire
 318 eadmodlice hyran.

[IX] Ða gelamp hit sume dæge Ð heo stod big sumere
 wyllan. Ða æteowde hire þær Drihtenes engel 7 hire to
 321 cwæð: 'Eadig eart þu MARIA for þam on þinum mode
 þu gearwodes Drihtenes eardunghus, 7 leoht cymð of
 heofenum on þe 7 Ð lihteð ofer ealne middanearð.'
 324 An[d]³⁷ eft þæs þy þridan dæge Drihtenes engel hyre
 æteowde mid secgendlicere / beorhtnesse 7 heo þa wæs fo. 16'
 swiðe afirhtet 7 abreged for þæs engles gesihðe. Ða
 327 cwæð he to hire: 'Ne þearft þu þe ondrædon MARIA.
 Drihtenes gyfu is mid þe. Þu scealt cennan kyning. Se
 ah andweald heofonas 7 eorþan 7 his rices ne byþ nan
 330 ende.'

[X] On þa tid þe þis gelamp, wæs Ioseph on þam lande
 þe Capharnaum hatte ymbe his cræft. He wæs smið, 7
 333 mænigtæw wyrhta. Ða he þanon cyrde to his agenan
 hame, ða gemette he hi bearn hæbbende on hire hryfe.
 Ða wæs he sona swiþe forht 7 sorhfull 7 þus cwæð:
 336 'Drihten, Drihten min, onfoh minum gaste. Me is deað
 selre þonne lif.' Ða sædon him þa fæmnan þe mid hyre

³² ælice] MS ælite

³³ and] MS an

³⁴ him] MS hnn

³⁵ seolce] MS sceolce

³⁶ swiðe] MS swide

³⁷ and] MS ant

will receive the chaste virgin and she can remain with me until she reaches the legal age.' Then, the bishop said 'Virgins will be with her for protection until the day of her marriage and no other man will touch her'. So Joseph took Mary and the other five virgins, who were with her for protection, to his home. These were their names: first Becca, then Sephira, Susanna, Abugea and Sehel. The bishop gave them all fine cloth to weave of silk and of various hues for the veil of the temple. Mary received fine cloth in white to weave and the others various hues. They spoke between themselves in jest and said 'You are the youngest, you can do the white weaving and you can be our queen'. When they had spoken these words, the angel of the Lord appeared to them and said 'Your words shall not be in vain, but they shall be uttered in truth, because wise men of old have said that she will become queen of the earth.' They were all very much afraid because of the vision of the angel and his words, and began to honour her and to obey her meekly.

[IX] Then it happened one day that Mary stood by a certain well. Then the angel of the Lord appeared to her and said 'Blessed are you Mary, because in your heart you have prepared a dwelling place for the Lord and light comes from heaven upon you and lights the whole of the earth. Again on the third day the angel of the Lord appeared to her in indescribable brightness and she was very afraid and petrified at the sight of the angel. Then he said to her 'Do not be afraid, Mary! The grace of the Lord is with you. You shall bear a king. He will have power over heaven and earth and his kingdom will be without end'.

[X] At this time Joseph was in the district called Capernaum, attending to his work. He was a carpenter and a skilful worker. When he returned to his own home he discovered that Mary had a child in her womb. Then he was very frightened and anxious and he said 'Lord, my Lord, take my spirit! For me death is better than life'. Then the women who were with her said that they had remained

- wæron Ð hi wæron Ð hi gearo wiston Ð hyra nænig 'wer'
 339 ne onhran, ac heo wære onweales mægðhades 7
 ungewemmes. '7 we witon Ð heo wæs dæges 7 nihtes
 on halgum gebedum 7 Godes engel hyre wið spræc, and
 342 heo dæghwamlice of þæs engles handa mete þigde. Hu
 mæg Ð gewurðan, Ð Ð swa sy, for þam we witon þæt hit
 mann ne dyde, ac Godes engel'. Ða cwæð he Ioseph:
 345 'Nis Ð na swa nat ic þeah heo beo beswicen þurh þæs
 engles hyw'. 7 he þa weop biterlice 7 þus cwæð: 'Mid
 hwylcere byldo mæg ic æfre gan to Godes temple, oððe
 348 hu mæg ic geseon þa onsyne þæra sacerda for sceame'.
 Ða he þus cwæð, ða þohte he digollice Ð he wolde hi
 forlætan 7 gewitan *him* on oþer land.
- 351 [XI] Ða on þære ylcan nihte, þe he þis þohte, þa
 æteowde him Godes engel on slæpe 7 him to cwæð:
 'Ioseph, ne ondræd þu þe þu eart Davides kynnes,
 354 onfoh þinne gemæccan, hire geeacnung is of þam
 Halgan Gaste 7 heo cenþ sunu 7 þæs nama is hælend.
 For þam þe he gedep hal his folc' fram heora synnum.'
 357 He þa Ioseph aras of þam slæpe swyþe ge ...³⁸

³⁸ ge] followed by hyphen in margin.

with her and that they were positive that no man had touched her and that her virginity was complete and that she was free from stain. (They said) 'And we know that she spent all day and night in holy prayer and that God's angel spoke with her and that she took meat each day from the angel's hands. How could it have happened since we know that man was not responsible, but God's angel?' Then Joseph said 'I know that she cannot have become pregnant through the appearance of an angel'. Then he wept bitterly and said 'How might I ever hold my head up in God's temple again, or see the face of the priest for shame?' Then he said that he thought daily that he would leave and go to another country.

[XI] Then, that very same night that he was thinking this, God's angel appeared to him in his sleep and said to him, 'Joseph, do not be afraid, you who are of the line of David, accept your wife, her conception is through the Holy Ghost, and she will bear a son and his name is Saviour because he is to save people from their sins'. Then Joseph arose from his sleep ...

Commentary

The title appears in red rustic capitals.

1. **weorðiat.** **J** has *weorþian* and **N** has *wurðie*. It is possible, though unlikely, that the final *t* signifies the fricative *ð* of the present plural indicative.³⁹ However, given that the scribe appears to have lost concentration in writing the first part of this word, using a small capital *eth* so that it appears as *weorðiat*, it is likely that the presence of *t* is merely a palaeographical slip.

12. **pæt.** Again it is possible that *t* signifies *ð* (see note to line 1), but here it seems probable that its presence is the result of assimilation with the following sound in *to*. **J** and **N** both have *siðfæt* and it is just possible that the scribe of **M** intended to follow suit and for some reason omitted the first syllable. However, the palaeographical evidence does not support this.

23. **gotforht.** The *t* here where we would expect to find *d* is probably the result of assimilation.

an. This is a rare variant of *on*. It appears throughout *Vercelli III*. We should note its occurrence especially at line 18 of *Vercelli III* where it can be found in a construction of striking similarity to that of line 23 of **M**, *oððe an gepohte oððe on spræce oððe on worce*.⁴⁰

24. **fremfulnysse.** **J** has *fremsumnysse* and **N** has *fremsumnesse*. It is likely that *fremsumnysse* was intended, but that the scribe confused what was probably a low insular *s* in the exemplar with *f*. In completing the word he may have then chosen to alter *m* to *l*, or simply not have noticed it. It is just possible that the *m* of the exemplar was obscured in some way and that the first minim resembled the lower part of an *l*, the ascender of which was not visible. It is possible that the scribe was also confused about the difference in meaning between the two words. *Fremsumnys* can mean both *benefit* and *kindness* and *fremfulnys* usually refers to *profit*. It is perhaps the case that the scribe knew that his word referred to profit and felt that this fitted the context.

43. **betwux þam mannum þe to Gode onsægennæsse brohton.** We should note here that Dathan (see note to line 293) was cast out of the company of the elders and that Moses asked God not to respect any sacrifice offered by him (Num. 16:15). Zechariah, also, was amongst those offering sacrifices when the angel appeared to announce that his wife was to bear a son (Luke 1:8-13).

³⁹ See Campbell, *Grammar*, 25, para. 57 (7).

⁴⁰ See Scragg, *Vercelli*, 74. I am grateful to Professor Scragg for drawing my attention to this point.

48. **Godes bletsunge ofer þe ne com.** This would have reminded an Anglo-Saxon audience of the plight of Biblical figures such as Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18:9-15) and Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:11-13).

85. **wydwum hade.** The *-um* ending here looks as if it is the result of the scribe carrying over the dative singular ending of the preceding word *minum*. **wydwum** is clearly not dative plural and should perhaps lose the *-um* to form the first part of the compound.

89. **belðce.** **J** has *beluce* and **N** has *biluce*. The *ð* here has more in common palaeographically with *o* than *u*, hence, I would suggest that the scribe anticipated the participle *belocen*, being influenced by the preceding construction, but failed to complete the word. Another explanation is that the exemplar may have been unclear here and the *o* or *u* may have been obscured, causing the scribe to assume *ð* had been written.

106. (:). The text here makes sense as it stands. The correction must have been made subsequent to the writing of the following words as the space has not been written over.

143. (:) **geworhton.** **J** has *gyt worhten* which is consistent with the dual pronouns used elsewhere in this version. **N** has *ge wrohton*. It is possible that the scribe had used the verbal prefix *ge-* in conjunction with the plural subject pronoun *ge* and the corrector has decided that this is not necessary, therefore erasing the latter. However, the *ge* that remains was clearly intended to form part of the verb as it is connected to it by the ligature used in many other cases. In this instance it seems that the corrector may have been a little overzealous.

156. **hærenne.** **J** has *hyrede* and **N** *hinenne*. It is possible, palaeographically, that *r* here has been written for *n* and that *æ* replaces *i*.

181. **unbeorþrum.** Probably intended to be the converse of *byrðre* meaning *mother*, found in *Vercelli X* (line 22). The dative singular weak ending *-an* might well have been written as *-um*. Alternatively it could be adjectival.

182. **forgefean.** Probably intended to be the preterite singular of *forgiefan*. The scribe may have confused it with the noun *gefea* which appears with *forgeaf* at line 186. His eye may also have been distracted by *forgeaf* at line 183 and the confusion may be due to the layout of the exemplar.

205. **Davitidiscum sangum.** The Psalms.

218. **ig.** This should probably be the instrumental pronoun *his*. **J** and **N** have *ham* and *han* respectively. The scribe was probably anticipating the initial *g* of the following word *gereordod*. We must also note the palaeographical similarity between low caroline *s* and *g*. (See for example fo. 11^r line 27 where the *s* of *wæsmum* and the *g* of *gode* are strikingly similar.)

232. **Abel.** Cain slew his brother Abel after the latter had offered a more perfect sacrifice to God. (Gen. 4:3-8)

234. **Helias.** Elijah was taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot. (2 Kgs. 2:11) This detail may serve to prefigure the Assumption.

274. **heahsacerdgyrlan.** It seems likely that this compound, though somewhat unwieldy, is what was intended here.

293. **Dathan.** Dathan rebelled against Moses, being impatient to reach the Promised Land. He and his followers were punished by being separated from the other tribes and were eventually devoured by an earthquake. The Latin source mentions Core, a ringleader of the rebellion, beside Dathan, but it seems that the translator felt that his audience would be familiar with the story and would not require the added reminder.

322. **gearwodes.** The final *t* of the present second person indicative appears to have been lost through assimilation.