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Old English Biblical Verse

Paul G. Remley



OLD ENGLISH BIBLICAL VERSE

STUDIES IN *GENESIS, EXODUS* AND *DANIEL*

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Preface

The appearance of three publications in 1980 and 1981 – *A Bibliography of Publications on Old English Literature* by Stanley B. Greenfield and Fred C. Robinson, *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English* by Antonette DiPaolo Healey and Richard L. Venezky and 'A Preliminary List of Manuscripts Written or Owned in England up to 1100' by Helmut Gneuss – initiated a crisis of sorts in the area of Old English studies. For the first time since the inception of work in their field, scholars of the literature of the Anglo-Saxon period were in a convenient position to consult the bulk of existing research and lexical data pertaining to any topic that engaged their interest and, if they managed to find the time, to strike out for new discoveries in neglected manuscripts. The availability of this wealth of bibliographical, lexical and codicological information had an immediate effect that was somewhat stultifying. The quantity of material available for review on a given point frequently threatened to preclude the completion of an introductory paragraph, let alone an entire project. Greenfield and Robinson, in their endeavour to include every book, note, article and review relating to a given literary concern, had included much that was second-rate, as they seemed to acknowledge with their prefatory quotation from the Old English rendition of the *Disticha Catonis*: 'feola writað menn ungelyfedlices' ('people write many things which one ought not believe'); the unlemmatized *Microfiche Concordance* would frequently distract users with misleading homographs; and prospective consultation of a manuscript described by Gneuss as containing, say, 'Vitae sanctorum; Liturgica' stood an even chance at best of turning up anything of note on a particular devotional point.

An attempt has been made nonetheless in the course of the present study to read as much of the existing research as possible, published and

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unpublished, relating to *Genesis A*, *Genesis B*, *Exodus* and *Daniel*, and to the Junius manuscript itself, while surveying a wide range of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts for treatments of the biblical matter reflected in the conventional titles of these engaging poems. Completion of this project thus would not have been possible without the help of the following librarians: Madeline Copp, Alison Sproston, D. J. McKitterick, Roger Norris, Mildred Budny, Timothy Graham, Gill Cannell, Nicholas Bennett, Peter McNiven, Martin Kauffman, Gary Menges, P. S. Morrish and Suzanne M. Eward, among many others whose names I have failed to note.

My single greatest debt is to the following scholars whom I have known as teachers: the late Sherman M. Kuhn, Claiborne W. Thompson, Peter Clemons, R. I. Page, Michael Lapidge, Patrick Sims-Williams, Simon Keynes, H. R. Ellis Davidson, D. H. Green, Geoffrey Cubbin, James J. John, Joseph Harris, Arthur Groos, Thomas D. Hill, the late R. E. Kaske, Frans van Coetsem, Lee Patterson, G. Thomas Tanselle, Robert Hanning, Joan Ferrante, Margaret W. Ferguson and Howard Schless. Special thanks are due to D. N. Dumville, my Director of Studies at Emmanuel College, Cambridge (1978–81), and to my Dissertation Supervisor at Columbia University, David Yerkes (1986–90). When I read through this list of names, I recall that ‘wyrd bið ful aræd’ – but I vacillate in my interpretation of this aphorism (borrowed from *Wanderer*, line 5b). It is true that things often turn out much as they should – ‘wyrd bið . . . aræd’ (‘fate is well-planned’) – but I would hate to think that the scholarly approaches championed by my mentors will ever be exhausted fully (‘. . . *ful aræd*’).

I am delighted to acknowledge the continuing support and encouragement of my colleagues in the Department of English at the University of Washington – above all, Robert D. Stevick, David C. Fowler, Míceál F. Vaughan, John C. Coldewey and Sally Mussetter and to the University of Washington, which provided a generous award to assist in the typesetting of a complex manuscript. I would also like to thank my early colleagues at University College, Cork, for their camaraderie and advice during my residence in Ireland from 1984 to 1986: Éamonn Ó Carragain, Elisabeth Okasha, Pádraig Ó Riain, M. C. Seymour, Donnchadh Ó Corrain and Máire Herbert.

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Abbreviations

<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
abbr.	abbreviated
AbhGött	Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen: philologisch-historische Klasse, 3rd ser.
<i>ABR</i>	<i>American Benedictine Review</i>
abstr.	abstract
Acad.	Academy
ACC	Alcuin Club Collection
Act. SS	Acta Sanctorum
AF	Anglistische Forschungen
AIUON	Annali, Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli: Sezione germanica
<i>ALMA</i>	<i>Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi</i>
<i>ALW</i>	<i>Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft</i>
Amer.	America(n)
Amiat.	Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Amiatino 1
Apc.	Apocalypse, as ed. Weber, unless noted
Archaeol.	Archaeology, -ical
AS	Anglo-Saxon
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
<i>ASNSL</i>	<i>Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen</i>
ASPR	Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, ed. Krapp and Dobbie
Assoc.	Association
Az	<i>Azarias</i> , as ed. Farrell, unless noted
BAPr	Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa, ed. Grein <i>et al.</i>
BGDSL	<i>Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur</i>

List of abbreviations

BL	British Library (London)
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris)
Brit.	British
Bull.	Bulletin
<i>Bull</i> JRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands (University) Library (of Manchester)</i>
<i>cap.</i>	<i>capitulum, -a</i>
CBL	Collectanea Biblica Latina
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CCCC	Parker Library, Corpus Christi College (Cambridge)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (Turnhout)
<i>CL</i>	<i>Comparative Literature</i>
<i>CLA</i>	Lowe, <i>Codices Latini Antiquiores</i>
<i>CLLA</i>	Gamber, <i>Codices Liturgici Latini Antiquiores</i>
Comm.	Commentary
I, II Cor.	I, II Corinthians, as ed. Weber
Crit.	Critical, -icism
<i>CMCS</i>	<i>Cambridge (later Cambrian) Medieval Celtic Studies</i>
<i>CSASE</i>	<i>Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England</i>
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (Vienna)
<i>CSIC</i>	<i>Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Barcelona)</i>
<i>CUL</i>	<i>University Library (Cambridge)</i>
<i>DACL</i>	<i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie</i> , ed. Cabrol, Leclercq and Marrou
<i>DA(I)</i>	<i>Dissertation Abstracts (International)</i>
<i>Dan</i>	<i>Daniel</i> , as ed. Farrell, unless noted
Dan.	Daniel, as ed. in <i>Liber Danihelis</i> , unless noted
Dept.	Department
Deut.	Deuteronomy, as ed. Weber, unless noted
<i>EB</i>	<i>Estudios bíblicos</i>
Eccl.	Ecclesiastical
Ecclus.	Ecclesiasticus, as ed. Weber, unless noted
<i>EEMF</i>	<i>Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile</i> (Copenhagen)
<i>EETS</i>	<i>Early English Text Society</i> original series
<i>EL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Liturgicae (Analecta Historico-Ascetica)</i>

List of abbreviations

ELN	<i>English Language Notes</i>
Eng.	England, English
ES	<i>English Studies</i>
Ex	<i>Exodus</i> , as ed. Lucas, unless noted
Ex.	<i>Exodus</i> , as ed. Weber, unless noted
Ez.	<i>Ezekiel</i> , as ed. Weber, unless noted
FS	<i>Frühmittelalterliche Studien</i>
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte
Gen.	<i>Genesis</i> , as ed. Weber, unless noted
GenA	<i>Genesis A</i> , as ed. Doane, unless noted
GenB	<i>Genesis B</i> , as ed. Doane, unless noted
GR	Greenfield and Robinson, <i>Bibliography</i>
Hab.	<i>Habakkuk</i> , as ed. Weber, unless noted
HBS	Henry Bradshaw Society
Heb.	Hebrew; Hebrews, as ed. Weber, unless noted
Hist.	History, -ical
HS	<i>Hispania Sacra</i>
Inst.	Institute
Int.	International
IP	<i>Instrumenta Patristica</i>
Isa.	<i>Isaiah</i> , as ed. Weber, unless noted
<i>Jahrb.</i>	<i>Jahrbuch</i> , -bücher
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEGP	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
Jer.	<i>Jeremiah</i> , as ed. Weber, unless noted
JMH	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
JMRS	<i>Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies</i>
Jnl	Journal
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
JWCI	<i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i>
Lang.	Language(s)
Lat.	Latin
Lib.	Library
Ling.	Linguistic(s)
Lit.	Literature, -ary
Liturg.	Liturgy, -ical

List of abbreviations

LQF	Liturgiegeschichtliche Quellen und Forschungen
LSE	<i>Leeds Studies in English</i>
LXX	Septuagint(a), as ed. Ziegler <i>et al.</i> , unless noted
M&H	<i>Medievalia et Humanistica</i>
MÆ	<i>Medium Ævum</i>
Matt.	Matthew, as ed. Weber, unless noted
Med.	Medi(a)eval
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
Auct. Antiq.	Auctores Antiquissimi
Capitular. Reg.	Leges II: Capitularia Regum Francorum
Epist.	Epistolae Aevi Carolini
Epist. Select.	Epistolae Selectae
Poet. Lat.	Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini
SS. Rer. Germ.	Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in Usum Schol- arum
MHS	Monumenta Hispaniae Sacra: Serie litúrgica
MitJ	<i>Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch</i>
Mitt.	Mitteilungen
MLN	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
MLQ	<i>Modern Language Quarterly</i>
MLR	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
mm	millimetre(s)
Mod.	Modern
monog., Monog.	monograph, Monograph(s)
MP	<i>Modern Philology</i>
MS	<i>Mediaeval Studies</i>
N&Q	<i>Notes and Queries</i>
NachrGött	Nachrichten von der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen: philologisch-histor- ische Klasse
Nat.	National
Neophil	<i>Neophilologus</i>
NM	<i>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</i>
NMS	<i>Nottingham Medieval Studies</i>
ns	new series
OE	Old English
OEN	<i>Old English Newsletter</i>
om.	omitted

List of abbreviations

OT	Old Testament
I, II Par.	I, II Paralipomenon, as ed. in <i>Biblia Sacra</i> , ed. Weber, unless noted
PBA	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
Philol.	Philology, -ical
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. Migne
PLL	<i>Papers on Language and Literature</i>
PLS	Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum, ed. Hamman <i>et al.</i>
PMLA	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
PQ	<i>Philological Quarterly</i>
PRIA	<i>Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy</i>
Proc.	Proceedings
Ps(s).	Psalms(s), as ed. Weber, <i>Le Psautier romain</i> , unless noted (see p. 177 with n. 25)
ptd	printed
publ., Publ.	published, Publication(s)
R.	Royal
RB	<i>Revue bénédictine</i>
RED	Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta, series maior: Fontes
repr.	reprint(ed)
RES	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
Res.	Research
Rev.	Review
RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
S&T	Studi e testi
SC	Madan <i>et al.</i> , <i>A Summary Catalogue</i>
SE, SE	<i>Sacris Erudiri</i> , and associated monograph series
sect.	section, sectional division (in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11)
SEP	Studien zur englischen Philologie
ser., Ser.	series, Series
SettSpol	Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo (Spoleto)
SM	<i>Studi medievali</i>
SN	<i>Studia Neophilologica</i>

List of abbreviations

Soc.	Society
SitzWien	Sitzungsberichte der österreichischen (kaiserlichen) Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien: philoso- phisch-historische Klasse
SP	<i>Studies in Philology</i>
Spicil.	Spicilegium, -ii
ss	supplementary series
Stud.	Study, -ies
supp.	supplement
TAPS	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Society</i>
TE	Textos y estudios
Theol.	Theology, -ical
TOES	Toronto Old English Series
TPL	Textus Patristici et Liturgici
TPS	<i>Transactions of the Philological Society</i>
Trans.	Transactions
TuA	Texte und Arbeiten (Beuron)
Univ.	University
unpubl.	unpublished
VT, VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i> , and associated monograph series
YWES	<i>Year's Work in English Studies</i>
YWOES	<i>Year's Work in Old English Studies</i> (annually in OEN)
ZAW, ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> , and associated monograph series
ZDA	<i>Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur</i>
ZDP	<i>Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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1

Introduction

The Junius manuscript offers verse without context. The biblical emphasis of the Old English poetry in the collection is clear enough: the verse of *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Daniel* is indeed given over in bulk to renditions of passages from the Old Testament books that lend these compositions their modern names. The final item, *Christ and Satan*, treats apocryphal and New Testament episodes. But far from certain are the origins, authorship, dates, sources, intended uses and transmission-histories of these vernacular biblical poems, or reflexes of poems, which have come down to us joined in a medieval leather binding, their texts copied out in a regular script and enlivened at times by dramatic scriptural illustrations. Their single surviving witness is Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11 (s. x/xi; later provenance ?Christ Church Cathedral, Canterbury) – here cited as ‘Junius 11’ or, less precisely, the ‘Junius manuscript’.¹ Junius 11 was produced in

¹ See SC II.ii, 965 (no. 5123). For a complete facsimile of Junius 11 with a useful if in some respects outdated introduction, see *Cædmon Manuscript*, ed. and introd. Gollancz. For bibliographical treatments, see Cameron, ‘List’, p. 29 (items A.1–A.1.4); GR, pp. 21–2 (nos. 225a–235a), 23–4 (no. 261) and 242 (no. 3895); and below, pp. 18–19, n. 26. A discursive review of scholarship on Junius 11 and its verse (to 1975) has been issued by Greene, ‘Critical Bibliography’. Additional critical summaries appear among the columns of *YWOES*, published annually since 1967, and in the annual volumes of *YWES*. The manuscript receives its modern press-mark and familiar name as a result of its former inclusion in the library of the younger Francis du Jon (1589–1677), known as Franciscus Junius, whose interest in vernacular texts emerged in the course of a study of the work *In Canticum Canticorum* of William of Ebersberg, a bilingual (Latin–Old High German) treatment of the Song of Songs that remains a monumental source for the study of early Germanic languages. Du Jon issued the first edition of the Junius poems in 1655: *Cædmonis monachi paraphrasis poetica Geneseos ac præcipuarum Sacrae Paginae historiarum, abhinc annos MLXX* (Amsterdam, 1655). A transcript of verse in Junius 11, made by William Somner in the course of preparing

the later Anglo-Saxon period, in all probability around the year 1000, but the composition of the verse that it preserves is often dated to *c.* 700 or earlier.² Whatever conclusions are drawn regarding the specific chronology of the verse and its exemplars, the evident breadth of the gulf separating the composition of the Junius poems and the execution of their surviving copy, taken together with the fact that no comparable collection of Old Testament poetry has survived to the present day, may justify the statement that the verse of Junius 11 has no known literary-historical context before *c.* 1000.

THE LOST TRADITIONS OF THE JUNIUS POEMS

The consensus of modern scholarship holds that the Junius poems were composed by different poets, or different schools of poets, most probably over many decades and at a number of geographically dispersed Anglo-Saxon centres.³ As I have noted, we have no assurance that the configu-

his *Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-Anglicum: Voces, phrasisque praecipuas Anglo-Saxonicas*, ed. W. Somner (Oxford, 1659), preserved among the lexicographer's papers in the Cathedral Library at Canterbury, remains unstudied. See further *The 'Later Genesis'*, ed. Timmer, pp. 3–5 and 8–9.

- ² A. N. Doane is inclined to date the composition of *Genesis A* to *c.* 650–900, adding that '[a]ny date in the eighth century seems reasonable' (*Genesis A*, ed. Doane, pp. 36–7). Edward B. Irving, Jr, acknowledges outer limits of *c.* 650–1000 for the composition of *Exodus*, personally favouring a late seventh- or eighth-century date and a Northumbrian provenance (*Exodus*, ed. Irving, pp. 23–5); cf. also Irving's '*Exodus* Retraced', p. 209. Irving advances similarly early dates for *Genesis A* in his study 'On the Dating of the Old English Poems *Genesis* and *Exodus*', *Anglia* 77 (1959), 1–11. *Exodus* is dated to *c.* 700–800 (or 'between the time of Bede and the time of Alcuin') by Peter J. Lucas (*Exodus*, ed. Lucas, pp. 69–72, cited here from p. 71). Kemp Malone, in his survey 'The Old English Period', p. 66, suggests that '*Daniel A* presumably goes back to early Northumbria (*c.* 700?)'. Robert T. Farrell, the most recent editor of *Daniel*, ventures no specific range of dates for the poem's composition (cf. *Daniel*, ed. Farrell, esp. pp. 10–13). Only *Genesis B*, whose composition has been seen to postdate the completion of the *Heliand* *c.* 821 x 840, is generally assigned a date after the eighth century (see *The Saxon Genesis*, ed. Doane, p. 46). For some new approaches to the problems surrounding the dating of Old English verse, see the recent, provocative essay by Wilhelm G. Busse, 'Kriterien zur Erstellung des chronologischen Systems', in his *Altenglische Literatur*, pp. 17–140, esp. 17–39.

- ³ As C. L. Wrenn has remarked, 'examination of the four poems of the Junius Manuscript makes it clear that they are each by different authors . . . [T]hey all differ . . . in tone, method and treatment very markedly' (Wrenn, *A Study*, p. 98).

ation of verse preserved between the boards of Junius 11 reflects the processes of the poems' composition rather than those of their transmission. The questions of dating and authorship will be discussed in greater detail below. But we can say here that in all probability the compilation of the Junius collection was preceded by undocumented traditions of biblical versification that extended across three or more centuries. The frequently intriguing manuscript contexts of the poems must thus be regarded with caution. We have no assurance, for example, that the versification of the apocryphal legend of the Revolt of Satan preceding the commencement of the Genesis-based verse of Junius 11 was invariably accompanied in earlier documents by a striking illustration of the sort we see now on the third page of the manuscript, depicting the fanged hell-mouth of 'a huge monster, or Leviathan, with jaws extended', in which Satan, 'with snaky locks and animal claws' is ensnared, 'while his associates are seen plunging into the burning gulf'.⁴ Nor is it possible to say for certain that the poetic treatment of the fall of Satan and the rebel angels always served to introduce a narrative on the six days of Creation, as it now does through its juxtaposition with the versification of Genesis I–XXII attributed to *Genesis A*. In view of our lack of knowledge regarding the processes of composition and transmission of Old English biblical verse, I believe it is indeed unwise to attribute originary authority to any context arising out of the juxtaposition of episodes in the Junius poems without first supplying convincing critical justification. The point is worth stressing, because, as we shall see, many critical inferences regarding the meaning of the biblical poetry of Junius 11 have already been founded on the organization of its texts. The presence in the volume of plausibly co-ordinated reflexes of Genesis, Exodus and Daniel has been seen to recall the medieval reading of passages from these three books in the liturgy of the Easter Vigil, observed on Holy

⁴ The phrases are those of Ellis, 'Account of Caedmon's Metrical Paraphrase', p. 336, and Broderick, 'The Iconographic and Compositional Sources', p. 93. The present comments are not intended to discourage exploration of the often intriguing interactions between the iconography of the illustrations in Junius 11 – as well as the blank space set aside for illustrations that were never completed – and the received narratives of its verse. See Lucas, 'On the Blank Daniel-Cycle', and L. Amtower, 'Some Codicological Considerations in the Interpretation of the Junius Poems', *ELN* 30.4 (1993), 1–10. My thanks to Prof. Amtower and other members of my 1991 seminar on Junius 11 (particularly James I. McNelis, Leslie A. Donovan and Robert Costomiris) for helpful discussion of many points bearing on the codicology and palaeography of the manuscript.