

16

A Translator's Problems (Ælfric's preface to his translation of Genesis)

The Bible almost universally used in the medieval period was the Latin Vulgate, a name which denotes the version accepted by the *vulgus*, or common people. A recurring source of contention among many church writers and clergy was the question of whether one should or should not make its narratives directly available to the ordinary person – and to priests unable to read Latin – by putting them into vernacular languages. The problem would persist right up until the Reformation, when it was finally resolved in favour of the translators, though not before several of them or their supporters had suffered martyrdom in the cause of vernacular scripture. The Vulgate itself had originally been a 'vernacular' version, made for a Latin-speaking world, but soon its language was considered to be as sacred as the Hebrew and Greek in which the Old and New Testaments, respectively, had been written. Those dedicated to communicating the word of God had two main concerns: first, whether tampering with the 'original' language at all might be sacrilegious, given that the words and the very structure of the sentences (so it was believed) had been dictated by God; and, second, whether it might be dangerous anyway to allow direct access to the text of the Bible to people untrained in the complexities of scriptural history and interpretative disciplines such as 'typology' (the method by which events in the Old Testament are interpreted as prefiguring those in the New).

Both of these concerns are expressed by Ælfric in the preface he wrote to a translation of the first twenty-two chapters of Genesis (see Text 13). We learn that Ælfric's translation had been made at the request of his patron Æthelweard (*d. c. 998*), ealdorman of the western provinces (presumably Devon, Somerset and Dorset; see also p. 4). However, Ælfric declares that he will do no more such translation (though in fact he did); he fears that ignorant men will not realise the symbolic significance of Old Testament events but will take them as offering the standards of behaviour for all ages. As for his method of working, although Ælfric claims that he dare not tamper with sacred scripture but will translate it literally, word for word, he crucially makes an exception for those cases where differences between Latin and English idiom do not allow meaningful literal translation – and thus (like translators before and after him) he permits himself in practice to adopt a more pragmatic approach, by translating sense for sense, not word for word.

The preface survives, attached to the translation of Genesis itself, in three manuscripts, though one version is incomplete and another is very badly reproduced. The text here is taken from Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud misc. 509, a manuscript copied in the second half of the eleventh century. The late WS language shows some levelling of the dative *-um* inflection to *-on* (12, 17 and 65); late *hig* is written in the latter part of the preface (36, 37, etc) but *hit* in the former (23, 24, etc), and *sig* occurs for *st* (67 and 105). The unstable stressed vowel in the word for 'Latin' will be noted (3, 88, 89, etc). Owing to damage to the edges of the first folio, some letters are now lost, but their restoration (effected silently below but noted in the list of emendations, p. 349) is straightforward.

Further reading

- J. Wilcox, ed., *Ælfric's Prefaces*, Durham Medieval Texts 9 (Durham, 1994)
 H. Hargreaves, 'From Bede to Wyclif: Medieval English Bible Translations', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 48 (1965), 118–40
 A. E. Nichols, 'Ælfric's Prefaces: Rhetoric and Genre', *ES* 49 (1968), 215–23
 B. F. Huppé, 'Ælfric: a Study of Two Prefaces', in *The Old English Homily and its Backgrounds*, ed. P. E. Szarmach and B. F. Huppé (Albany, NY, 1978), pp. 119–37
 M. Griffith, 'How Much Latin Did Ælfric's *magister* Know?', *Notes and Queries* 244 (1999), 176–81
 M. Griffith, 'Ælfric's Preface to Genesis: Genre, Rhetoric and the Origins of the *ars dictaminis*', *ASE* 29 (2000), 215–34
 M. J. Menzer, 'The Preface as Admonition', in *The Old English Hexateuch: Aspects and Approaches*, ed. R. Bamhouse and B. Withers (Kalamazoo, MI, 2000), pp. 15–39

Incipit prefatio Genesis Anglice.

ʳÆlfric munuc° grēʳ° Æðelweard ealdormann eadmōdlīcē°. þū bāede° mē,
 lēof°, þæt ic sceolde ðē° āwendan° of Lydene° on Englisc þā bōc Genesis. Ðā
 'þūhte mē' hefigūme° 'þē tō tīþienne þæs' and þū cwæde° þā þæt ic ne þorfie°

2 (the) monk greets humbly asked 3 sir for you translate Latin 4 burdensome said had to

- 1 Lat. '(Here) begins the preface to Genesis in English'.
- 2 *Ælfric munuc*...*eadmōdlīc* A formulaic beginning; see also the opening of Alfred's preface to his trans. of Gregory's *Cura pastoralis* (Text 5). On Ealdorman Æthelweard, see headnote.
- 4 *þūhte mē* impers. vb. with dat.: '(it) seemed to me' (compare ModE. 'methought'). See also 6 and 41. *þē tō tīþienne þæs* 'to grant [inf. inf.] that to you'; *tīþian* takes a gen. obj.

5 nā° mære° āwendan þære bæc° būton° ƿō ƿsaace°, Abrahāmes suna. ƿfor þām þe sum oðer man þē hæfde āwend fram ƿsaace þā bōc op° ende. Nū þincō° mē, lēof, þæt þæt weorc is swiðe plēolic° mē° oððe ānigum men tō underbegimenne°, ƿfor þan þe ic ondrēde° gif° sum dysig° man þās bōc rēl° oððe ƿrædan gehyrp°, þæt hē wille wēnan° þæt hē mōte° lybban° nū ƿon þære nīwan æ° swā swā þā ealdan fæderas° leofodon þā on þære tīde ær þan þe sēo ealdr æ gesett° wære, oþþe swā swā men leofodon under Moyses æ°.

Hwilon° ic wiste° þæt sum ƿmæssepreost°, sē° þe mīn magister° was on þām tīman, hæfde þā bōc Genesis and hē cūðe° ƿe dæle° Ljyden understandan. ƿÞā cwæþ hē° be° þām hēahfædere° Iācōbe þæt hē hæfde ƿfower wif, twā geswustra° and heora twā þīnena°. Ful sōð° hē sæde ac hē nyste°, ƿne ic þā gif°, hū micel tōdāl° ys betweohx° þære ealdan æ and þære nīwan. On anginne° þisere worulde nam° se brōþer hys swuster tō wīfe and hwilon° ēac se fæder tūmde° be° his āgenre dehter and manega° hæfdon mā° wīfa tō° folces ēacan° and man ne mihte þā æt fruman° wīfian° būton on° his sibringum°. Gyf hwā 20 wyle nū swā lybban æfter Cristes tōcyme° swā swā men leofodon ær Moises æ

5 no more (of +g) book *gs* except 6 until (it) seems (to +d) 7 dangerous for me undertake 8 fear lest foolish reads 9 imagine may live law 10 patriarchs established 12 At one time knew he master 13 could 14 about patriarch 15 sisters maidservants truth *as* did not know [*ne wyste*] 16 distinction between beginning 17 took sometimes 18 propagated with many more +g for increase 19 beginning take a wife among siblings anyone 20 coming

5 tō ƿsaace i.e. as far as Gen 22, the chapter in which, in a key test of faith, Abraham obeys God's command to offer his only son Isaac as a sacrifice.

5–6 for þām þe conj. phr.: 'because'; also 43, etc. and the variation for þan þe in 8, 50, etc. sum oðer man This 'certain other man' (or simply 'person') has not been identified, but a trans. of the rest of Genesis is included in an early eleventh-century compilation of substantial parts of the first six OT books in OE (see 13/headnote).

8 rædan gehyrp inf. of duration [§G6d.i.3]: 'hears read'.

9–11 on þære nīwan æ... Moyses æ The 'new law' is the NT and the 'old law' is the OT, or more specifically the first five books of it (the Pentateuch), traditionally said to have been written by Moses. The sexual licence alluded to was prevalent during the era of the earliest patriarchs, such as Abraham and Jacob, before the time of Moses. ær þan þe conj. phr.: 'before'. swā swā double conj.: 'just as', or simply 'as'; also 20, etc.

12 mæssepreost A 'mass-priest' was qualified to celebrate the eucharistic mass, in which bread and water are consecrated as the body and blood of Christ.

13 be dæle 'in part' or 'to some extent'. It has been argued that this is understatement, i.e. that the priest in fact understood Latin very well.

14 Þā cwæþ hē The priest talked of events related in Gen 29.16–30.13.

14–15 fower ... twā ... twā ... Both numerals are used as adjs., twā (from *twēgen*) agreeing with the nouns, *geswustra* and *þīnena* (acc. pl. fem.) [§E3d].

15–16 ne ic þā git 'nor I then yet', i.e. 'nor I up to then'.

oþþe under Moises æ, ƿne byð se man nā° Cristen ne hē furþon° wyrðe° ne byð° þæt him ænig Cristen man mid etc°.

Dā ungelæredan° ƿrēostas, gif hī ƿhwæt litles° understandō of þām Ljydenbocum, þonne þingð him sōna° þæt hī magon° mære° lārēowas° ðeon, ac hī ne cunnon° swā þeah° þæt gāstlice° andgīt° þærtō° and hū sēo ealdr æ wæs 25 getānung° tōweardra° þinga oþþe hū sēo niwe gecyþnis° æfter Cristes mennisc-

nisse° wæs gefillednys° ealra þæra þinga þe sēo ealdr gecyðnis getānode° tōwearde° be Criste and be hys gecorenum°. ƿHr cwepaþ ƿac oft be Pētre; hwī° hī ne mōton° habban wif swā swā Pētrus se apostol hæfde, and hī nellað° 30 gehīran° ne witan° þæt se ēadiga° Pētrus leofede æfter° Moises æ oþ þæt Crīst,

þe on þām tīman tō mannum cōm, began tō bodienne° his hālige godspel and gecēas° Pētrum ærest° him tō° gefēran°. Þā forlēt° Pētrus þærrihite° his wif and ealle þā twelf apostolas, þā þe wif hæfdon, forlētōn ƿægþer ge wif ge æhta° and folgodon Cristes lare° tō þære nīwan æ and clænnisse° þe hē silf þā ārerde°. 35 ƿrēostas sindon gesette tō° lārēowum° þām lārēowum° folce. Nū gedafnode

him° þæt hig cūpon þā ealdan æ gāstlice° understandan and hwæt Crīst silf tæhte° and his apostolas on þære nīwan gecyðnisse, þæt hig milton þām folce wel° wissian° tō Godes gelæfan° and wel bismian° tō° gōdum weorum.

Wē segað ƿac ƿforan tō° þæt sēo bōc is swiþe dēop gāstlice tō under- 40 standenne and wē ne wriþaþ nā mære būton þā nacedan° gerecednisse°. Ponne

21 not at all even worthy 23 ignorant 24 at once can great teachers 25 know spiritual meaning pertaining to it 26 prefiguration future testament 27 incarnation fulfilment signified 28 in advance 'chosen ones' (i.e. disciples) 29 why may will not 30 'hear' (i.e. accept) understand blessed according to 31 preach 32 chose first for himself as companion abandoned at once 33 possessions 34 teaching purity established 35 as teachers lay 36 spiritually 37 taught 38 properly guide +d faith (in +g) set an example in 40 bare narrative

21 ne byð ... ne byð A series of double negs.: 'that man is no Christian at all and is not even worthy'.

22 him ... mid etc The syntax separates the prep. from its pron. obj.: 'should eat with him'.

23 hwæt litles lit. 'something of a little (thing)', i.e. 'something' or 'a little'.

25 swā þeah adv. phr.: 'nevertheless' or 'however'.

28 Hī cwepaþ ƿac oft be Pētre 'They speak also often about Peter ...'. In the following two sentences, we hear how ignorant priests, wanting to be married, cite the example of the apostle Peter; but Ælfric points out that it was only until he received the word of Christ that Peter lived according to the 'old law' of Moses; afterwards he abandoned wife and home. The opening of the first sentence could be paraphrased, 'They often raise the subject of Peter, asking why they [the priests] may not have wives'. In the manuscript, *Pētre* had been erased and *Paul* written above, erroneously, in a modern hand.

33 æþer ge ... ge 'both ... and ...'.

35–6 gedafnode him The impers. vb. is pret. sbj.: '(it) would befit them'.

39 foran tō 'beforehand', i.e. 'by way of introduction'.

þincþ^o þām ungelæredum þæt eall þæt andgīt bēo belocen^o on þære ānfealdan^o gerecednisse ac hit ys swiþe feor^o þām^o. Sēo bōc ys gehāten^o Genesis, þæt ys “gecyndbōc”, for þām þe hēo ys firmest^o bōca and spricþ þe ælcum gecinde^o, ac hēo ne spricð nā be þære engla gesceapnisse^o. Hēo onginð þus: *In principio creavit Deus celum and terram*^o. Þæt ys on Englisc, ‘On andginne gesceop^o God heofenan and eorþan’. Hit was soðlice^o swā gedōn þæt God ælmihtig geworhte on anginne, þā þā ‘hē wolde’, gesceafta^o. Ac swā þeah æfter^o gāstlicum andgite þæt anginn ys Crist, swā swā hē sylf cwæp tō þām Iudæiscum^o: “Ic eom angin^o þe tō ēow sprece^o. Puri þis angin worhte God fæder heofenan and eorþan, for þan þe hē gesceop ealle gesceafta purh þone sunu, sē þe was æfre^o of him accenned^o, wīsdōm of þām wīsan fæder^o.”

Eft^o stym^o on þære bēc on þām forman^o ferse: *et spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas*^o. Þæt is on Englisc, ‘and Godes gāst was gefered^o ofer wæteru’. Godes gāst ys se hālga gāst, purh þone^o geliffaste^o se fæder ealle þā gesceafta þe hē gesceop purh þone sunu, and se hālga gāst fierþ^o geond^o mamma heortan and sillp^o ūs synna forgifnisse, ærest purh wæter on þām fulluhte^o and syþþan purh dætbōte^o. And gif hwā^o forsihð^o þā forgifnisse þe se hālga gāst sylp, þonne biþ his synn æfre unmyltsiendlic^o on ēcnysse^o. Oft ys sēo hālige þrimnys^o geswutelod^o on þistre bēc, ‘swā swā ys^o on þām worde þe God cwæp: “Uton^o

41 (it) will seem (to +d) contained simple 42 far from that called 43 the first species 45 created 46 truly 47 wanted created beings according to 48 Jews 50 eternally 51 begotten 52 Then again stands first 53 carried 54 whom brought to life 55 passes through 56 gives baptism 57 penance anyone rejects 58 unforgivable eternity Trinity 59 revealed Let us

43 **gecyndbōc** Strictly speaking, Ælfric here translates Lat. *genus*, ‘origin’, ‘kind’ or ‘species’ (‘book of origin’), not *genesis*, which signifies ‘generation’, ‘birth’ or ‘creation’.

44 **þære engla gesceapnisse** ‘the creation of the angels’. The problem of when and how they were created greatly exercised medieval writers, but Ælfric avoids discussion here.

44–5 **In principio . . . terram** Lat. ‘In the beginning, God created heaven and earth’ (Gen 1.1).

47 **þā þā** double conj., ‘when’; lit. ‘then when’.

48 **Ic eom angin** See Rev 1.8, 21.6 and 22.13. Understanding the theological puzzles and paradoxes presented in the next dozen lines depends on an awareness of the Christian belief that God, his son Christ and the Holy Spirit are unified in the Trinity (the ‘three-in-one’) and that God exists eternally outside the framework of mere human time.

51 **wīsdōm of þām wīsan fæder** The Son (Christ) is seen as a manifestation of the Father’s (God’s) wisdom.

52–3 **ferse** ‘section’ or ‘paragraph’ are better renderings than ‘verse’, for the biblical verse-division used today was not known in Anglo-Saxon times. **et spiritus . . . aquas** Lat.: ‘And the spirit of God was carried [i.e. moved] over the waters’ (Gen 1.2).

59 **swā swā** ys subj. pron. unexpressed: ‘just as (it) is’; similarly, *was beboden*, 81, *is ēac to witenne*, 93, and *hine siþne gewyrð*, 99–100.

60 **wircean** ‘mannan tō^o ure ānlicnisse^o’. ‘Mid þām þe^o hē cwæð ‘uton wircean’ ys sēo þrimnis gebēnod^o; mid þām þe hē cwæð ‘tō ure ānlicnisse’ ys sēo soðe^o ānnis^o geswutelod. Hē ne cwæp nā^o menifealdlice^o, ‘tō ūrum ānlicnissum’, ac ānfealdlice^o, ‘tō ure ānlicnisse’. Eft cōmon ‘þri englas’ tō ūrum ānlicnissum’, ac hē spræc tō him eallon þrim^o swā swā tō ānum. Hū clipode^o ‘Abēles blōd’ tō Gode būton^o swā swā ælces mannes misdæda^o wrægap^o hine tō Gode būtan^o wordum^o. Be þisum līlum^o man mæg understandan hū dēop sēo bōc ys on gāstlicum andgite, þeah þe^o hēo mid leohtlicum^o wordum āwriten sig^o.

Eft Iosēp, þe was gesæld^o tō Ēgipta lande, and hē āhredde^o þæt folc wið^o þone miclan hunger, hæfde Crīstes getācnunge þe^o was geseald for ūs tō cwale^o and ūs āhredde^o fram þām ēcan hungre helle sūsle^o. Ðæt micle ‘geteld’ þe

70 Moises worhte mid wunderlicum crafte on þām wēstene^o, swā swā him God sylf gedihre^o, hæfde getācnunge Godes gelāþunge^o þe hē silf āstealde^o purh his apostolas mid menigfældum frætwum^o and fægerum^o þēawum^o. Tō þām geweorce^o brōhte þæt folc gold and seolfor and dēorwirþe^o gimstānas and

75 menigfælde mārþa^o; sume ēac brōhton gātehær^o, swā swā God bebēad^o. Ðæt gold getācnode ūmē gelēafan and ūre gōde ingehið^o þe wē Gode offrian sceolon. Þæt seolf for getācnode Godes spræca^o and þā hālgan lāra þe wē habban^o sceolon ‘tō Godes weorcum^o. Ðā gimstānas getācnodon mislice^o fægernissa^o on Godes mannum. Ðæt gātehær getācnode þā stīpan^o dædbōte þære manna þe heora

80 sinna behrēowsiað^o. Man offrode ēac ‘fela cinna ort’ Gode tō lāce^o binman^o

60 make in likeness 61 signified true 62 unity not in the plural 63 in the singular 64 three d cried out 65 except sins accuse without 66 small (things) 67 lucid is sbj 68 sold saved from 69 who (i.e. Christ) death 71 desert 72 instructed church established 73 adornments pleasing customs 74 construction precious 75 fine things goat’s hair commanded 76 intention 77 utterances keep 78 various excellent features 79 resolute 80 repent offering within

59–60 **Uton . . . ānlicnisse** See Gen 1.26. **Mid þām þe** conj. phr.: ‘When’.

63 **þri englas** See Gen 18.1–5.

64 **Abetes blōd** Ælfric rather abruptly abandons his allusions to the Trinity in order to add an unconnected further example of a biblical event with deep spiritual meaning. How else, he asks, are we to interpret the incident when Abel’s blood, shed by his killer (and brother) Cain, ‘cries out’ to God (Gen 4.10) other than as a prefiguration of the way our own sins silently condemn us before the all-knowing God?

67 **þeah þe** ‘even though’ (lit. ‘through that’).

70 **fram . . . helle sūsle** ‘from the eternal hunger of hell’s torment’. **geteld** ‘tabernacle’ (or ‘tent’); on its making, see Ex 35–9.

78 **tō Godes weorcum** ‘for the works of God’, i.e. ‘in order to do God’s works’.

80 **fela cinna ort** ‘cattle of many kinds’. Here *fela* is an adj., describing gen. pl. *cinnas*. On the ritual sacrifice of animals, see Ex 29 and Lev 3, but Ælfric draws on patristic sources as well.

pām getelde, 7be pām 7ys swi7pe menigfeald getacnung. And wæs beboden 7æt se tægel sceolde beon gehāl 7æfre on pām n7ytene 7æt 7ære offrunge, for 7ære getacnung 7æt God wile 7æt wē simle 7el dōn on ende 7res l7ifes; 7onne biþ se tægel geoffrod on 7rum weorcum 7.

85 Nū is s7eo foresēde 7ōc on manegum stōwum 7swi7pe nerolice 7 gesett 7 and 7ēah 7 swi7de deōplice 7 on pām gāstlicum andgite, and hēo is swā geendebyrd 7 swā swā God silf hig gedine 7 pām writere Moise, and wē ne durron 7 nā mære awritan on Englisc 7onne 7æt Liden hæfþ, ne 7ā endebirdnisse 7 āwendan, 7 būton pām anum 7æt 7æt Lēden and 7æt Englisc 7 nabbað nā āne wisan on 7ære spræce fadunge 7. 7æfre sē 7e aweni 7 opþe sē 7e tæcþ 7 of 7 Lēdene on

90 Englisc, 7æfre hē sceal gefadian 7 hit swā 7æt 7æt Englisc hæbbe his āgene 7 wisan, elles 7 hit biþ swi7pe gedwolsum 7 tō rēdenne 7 pām 7e 7æs Lēdenes wisan ne can 7. 7s ēac tō witanne 7æt sume gedwolmen 7 wæron 7e woldon awurpan 7 pā ealdan 7 and sume woldon habban pā ealdan and awurpan pā n7wan, swā swā 7ā Irdēiscan dōð. Ac Crīst sylf and his apostolas 7s tæhton 7 ægþer 7 tō healdenne pā ealdan gāstlice and 7ā n7wan sōþlice mid weorcum 7. God gesceōp 7s twā ēagan and twā ēaran, twā nospiriu 7 and twēgen weleras, twā handa and twēgen fēt, and hē wolde ēac habban twā gecyðniissa on pissere worulde geset 7, 7ā ealdan and 7ā n7wan, for þan 7e hē dēp 7 swā swā hine silfne gewyrð 7 and hē nænne 7 rēdboran 7 næfō 7 ne nān man ne þearf him cweþan tō, 7Hwī dēst þū swā? Wē sceolon āwendan 7me willan tō his gesetmissum 7 and wē ne magon gebigean 7 his gesetniissa tō 7rum lustum 7.

100 Ic cweþe nū 7æt ic ne dearr 7 ne ic nelle 7 nāne 7ōc 7æfter pissere of Lēdene on Englisc āwendan. And ic bidde 7ē, lēof caldorman, 7æt þū mē 7æs 7 nā leng 7

81 commanded 82 whole beast 83 always 85 aforementioned places concisely

composed 86 yet profoundly set out 87 dictated dare 88 order change

90 translates interprets from 91 arrange own 92 or else confusing read

for him 93 know heretics 94 discard 95 taught 96 both deeds 97 nostrils

cheeks 99 composed does 100 pleases no adviser has not 101 laws 102 bend

desires 103 dare will not 104 longer

81 be pām The pron. is rel.; 'concerning which'.

83–4 þonne biþ se tægel... weorcum 'then the tail will be offered among our works'. The tail will signify the continuation of our good works for God.

89 būton pām anum 'except in the one (case)'.

89–90 nabbað nā... fadunge 'do not have a single way in the arrangement of the language'; i.e. they do not have the same syntax. The 'Laud' manuscript (see headnote) has *fandunge*, 'test' or 'testing', but *fadunge* is in the two other witnesses and is preferable, especially in view of Ælfric's use of the related vb. *gefadian* in the next line.

93 Is ēac tō witanne infl. inf. with pass. sense: '(It) is also to be understood'.

100 ne nān man... tō multiple neg.: 'nor need (or must) any person say to him'.

104 þes The gen. pron. is the obj. of *bidde*: 'for that'.

105 ne bidde, 7 7 lās 7e ic bēo 7ē ungeh7isum opþe lēas gif ic dō 7. God 7ē sig milde 7ā on ēcnisse 7. Ic bidde nū on Godes naman, gif hwā 7ās 7ōc awritan 7 wylle, 7æt hē hig gerithe 7 wel be 7 7ære bysne 7, for þan 7e ic nān 7eweald 7 7ēah 7e hig hwā tō wōge bringe 7 þurh lēase 7 wri7eras 7 and hit byð 7onne his 7lēoh 7, nā mīn. Mycel yfel dēð se unwri7ere 7 gif hē nele 7 hys wōht 7 gerihtan.

106 copy 107 correct from exemplar have not control 108 lax scribes responsibility 109 bad scribe will not errors

105 7 7 lās 7e... gif ic dō Ælfric envisages himself in a double bind: 'lest I should be (*h7eo*, sbj.) disobedient to you (if I disobey your command to translate again) or false (to my vow to do no more translating) if I do (translate again)'.

106 ā on ēcnisse 'ever in eternity', i.e. 'for ever more'.

107–8 7ēah 7e... bringe 'even if someone (*hwā*) brings it (*hig*, acc. sg. fem. [i.e. the book]) to error', i.e. 'even if someone corrupts it'. Cf. Ælfric's similar remarks in 4/23–8.

17

Satan's Challenge (*Genesis B*, lines 338–441)

The 'Junius' manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11), named after the Dutch scholar who studied it and published its contents in the seventeenth century, contains three OE poems on Old Testament themes, *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Daniel*, along with a fourth called *Christ and Satan*, which develops some of these themes from the perspective of the New Testament (but which may not have been part of the volume's earliest design). Together, these poems explore some of the major themes of Christian history. The manuscript was compiled in the second half of the tenth or the early eleventh century and the text is interspersed with line drawings, some embellished with coloured inks. *Genesis*, the longest of the poems with its 2936 surviving lines, presents an imaginative paraphrase of the first twenty-two chapters of *Genesis*. In fact, however, it is a hybrid work, for interpolated in it are over six hundred lines of a different origin from the rest, though they fit well into the narrative (lines 235–851, or thereabouts). The interpolated lines are known as *Genesis B* (formerly the *Later Genesis*) to distinguish them from the larger poem, *Genesis A*, into which they fit. *Genesis B* describes the fall from heaven of Lucifer and his followers, the temptation of Eve, the fall of her and Adam, and finally the expulsion of the pair from Eden. The poem is unique in the surviving literature, as far as we can tell, in being a close OE translation of an original work in Old Saxon. This was the language, nearly related to OE, spoken by the inhabitants of Saxony (part of present-day Germany), to whom the Anglo-Saxons sent Christian missionaries during the seventh and eighth centuries. Twenty-five lines of an Old Saxon version of the poem are preserved in a manuscript in the Vatican Library.

The story of the fall of the angels as a result of the subversive pride of Lucifer, God's brightest and most favoured angel (whose name means 'light-bearing one'), is not told in the Bible. For many church writers, however, it provides an explanation of the origin of sin and, according to some interpretations, gives a rationale for God's decision to create humankind – namely, to replace the expelled rebel angels. It also sets up the causal framework within which the temptation and subsequent fall are played out. Without the constraints of a canonical biblical version to curb his imaginative power, the poet of *Genesis B* has turned Lucifer's story into a human drama driven by psychological realism. Satan (the name given to Lucifer

once he has fallen) is a vaunting warrior-chief in the heroic mould, who reminds his retainers of their obligations to him. Though shackled in the abyss, he is gripped by the self-delusive but magnificent rhetoric of defiance and revenge. It is not surprising that he has been compared with the Satan of *Paradise Lost* (1667) by the English poet John Milton, a contemporary of Junius. But the significance of the parallels may have been overstated, for this is an old and powerful story and Satan's character is a perfectly logical part of it. In the extract given below, Satan reviews his vain struggle with God, vents his anguish that Adam and Eve are now to share what was once 'his' kingdom, and promises a special reward to any of his followers who succeeds in persuading Adam and Eve to rebel against God's commands.

The language of *Genesis B*, like that of the other 'Junius' texts, is predominantly late WS in character, but a number of earlier forms have aroused speculation that the poem was translated from its Old Saxon original during the reign of Alfred, who brought over at least one scholar from Saxony to help him in his programme of educational renewal (see p. 36n). Examples of such forms are *nīobedd* (6; not *nēobed*) and *ānægum* (72; not *ānigum*, but cf. *ānige* in 54). There are also several words which either occur uniquely in *Genesis B* or never occur elsewhere with the meaning they have here. Some of these are modelled on Old Saxon words and include *rōmigan* (23; Old Saxon *rōmon*) and *harmscæaru* (95; Old Saxon *harmskara*). But others have no known Old Saxon equivalent. These include the verb *rīdan* used in a special sense (35; see note), the noun *grindlas* (47), and the verbs *ōdendan* (66) and *āhwettan* (69). Particularly notable is the variety of verb-forms used by our scribe (though metrical needs dictate some of the variation): *syndon*, *synd* and *synt* (52, 83 and 84), *gȳman* and *gȳman* (9 and 12) and (for the present tense third-person singular of *weorþan*) *weorð*, *wurðep* and *wyrð* (68, 93 and 94). The lines of the extract are numbered here from 1, but their numbering in the *Genesis* poem as a whole is also indicated.

Further reading

- B. J. Timmer, *The Later 'Genesis'*, rev. edn (Oxford, 1948)
 A. N. Doane, *The Saxon 'Genesis': an Edition of the West Saxon 'Genesis B' and the Old Saxon Vatican 'Genesis'* (Madison, WI, 1991)
 R. Woolf, 'The Devil in Old English Poetry', *Review of English Studies* n.s. 4 (1953), 1–12, repr. in her *Art and Doctrine: Essays on Medieval Literature*, ed. H. Donoghue (London, 1986), pp. 1–14
 T. D. Hill, 'The Fall of Angels and Man in the Old English *Genesis B*', in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation for John C. McGalliard*, ed. L. E. Nicholson and D. W. Frese (Notre Dame, IN, 1975), pp. 279–90

Pā spræc se ofermōda° cyning þe ær wæs° engla
 scýnosf°
 hwīost° on heofne ond his hearran° lēof°
 drihtne dýre° oð° hie° tō dole° wurdon°
 þæt° him for° gālscipe° God sylfa wearð
 mihitig on mōde yrrē. Wearp° hine° on þæt morðer°
 °inman°.

10 niðer° on þæt niðbedd°, ond scēop° him
 naman siððan°:
 cwæð se hēhsta° hātan sceolde°
 Sātan siððan, hēf° hine þære sweartan° helle°
 grundes° gýman° nalles° wið God winnan°.
 °Sātan maðelode°; sorgiende° spræc,
 sē° ðe helle forð° healdan° sceolde

15 gīteman þæs grundes. Wæs ær Godes engel,
 hwīt on heofne, oð hine his hyge° forspēon°
 ond his ofermēto° ealra° swīðost°,
 þæt hē ne wolde wereda° Drihtnes
 word wurðian°. Wēoll° him oninnan°
 hyge ymb his heortan, hāt wæs him ūtan°
 wrāðlic wite°. Hē þā° worde cwæð°:

20 'Is þæs° ænga° styde° ungelic° swīðe
 þān oðrum° þe wē ær cūðon°
 onlāg°, þe mē mīn hearra
 onlāg°, þe mē mīn hearra

3 hre 'they'; i.e. the angels of I.

4–5 him... on mōde yrrē The adj. *militig*, like *sylfa*, qualifies *God*, but is separated and given an emphatic position at the head of the next half-line; the dat. pron. is rfx.: 'mighty God himself became angry at heart'.

5 hine i.e. Satan. *innan* adv., either repeating the sense of *on*, 'into', or meaning 'within', i.e. within hell, anticipating later lines.

7 hātan sceolde (that he) must be called'. 'Satan' is from a Hebrew word meaning 'adversary'.

10 Sātan maðelode A formula much used in OE heroic poetry (e.g. *The Battle of Maldon*, 30/42 and 309); Satan does not in fact begin to speak until 19.

17–18 hā... wrāðlic wite Both adjs. describe *wite*: 'there was hot and cruel punishment'. *worde cwæð* lit. 'spoke with (this) utterance'.

20 þān oðrum 'the other (place)'. The half-line needs an extra syllable to be metrically complete, and in the Old Saxon poem from which the OE was apparently translated (see headnote), the equivalent of *þān oðrum* does in fact have that extra syllable: *thesero oðrum*. Some editors add *hām*, 'home', to the OE version.

þeah wē hine° for° þām alwaldan° āgan° ne
 mōston°,
 rōmigan° ūres rīces. Næfð° hē þeah° riht gedōn
 þæt hē ūs hæfð befelld° fýre tō botme
 helle þære hātan°, heofonrīce benumen°. 25
 Hafað hit gemearcod° mid moncynne
 tō gesettanne°. Præt mē is sorga° mæst
 þæt Ādam sceal°, þe wæs of eorðan geworht°,
 minne stronglican° stiðl° behealdan°,
 wearn° on wynne° ond wē þis wīte bolien°
 hearman° on þisse helle. Wālā°, āhte ic mīnra handa
 geweald°
 ond mōste āne tīd° ūte° weorðan°,
 wesam° āne winterstunde°, þonne ic mid þýs werode° –
 ac līegað mē ymbe° irenbenda°,
 fīrdeð racentan sāl°. Ic eom rīces lēas°;
 habbað mē swā° hearde helle clommas°
 fæste° befangen°. Hēr is fýr micel
 ūfan° ond neoðone°. Ic ā° ne geseah°
 lāðran° landscipe°; līg° ne āswāmað°
 hāt ofer° helle. Mē habbað hringa° gespong°
 slōðhearda° sāl° siðes āmyrred°,
 savagely cruel halter

30 it because of almighty possess could *sbj*
 extend +g Has not however struck down deprived (of +d) designated of sorrows is to made mighty throne occupy

35 such fetters *np* tightly clasped above below ever saw more hateful region fire (will) cease throughout of rings fastenings savagely cruel halter

40 double dat. construction: 'to the fire, to the bottom', i.e. 'to the bottom of the fire'. **helle þære hātan** dat. phr. parallel with 24b (the inflection of the adj. is weak dat. sg. fem.): 'to hell the hot', i.e. 'into hot hell'.

30 **wesam him on wynne** The rfx. dat. pron. is best not trans.: '(and is) to be in bliss'; **wē... bolien** (28) still understood: 'we (must) suffer'.

31–2 **āhte... mōste** Both pret. vbs. are *sbj*. in mood (though in both cases the pret. indic. forms would be the same); 'had I... could I...'; i.e. 'if I had... if I were able to...'; **āne tīd** acc. of time: 'one time', or 'just once'.

33 **āne winterstunde** acc. of time: 'for (just) one winter's hour'; i.e. the briefest of periods. **mid þýs werode** – *mid* here takes the instr. case. The poet has Satan break off his yearning for rhetorical effect.

34 **līegað mē ymbe** 'lie around me', i.e. 'encircle me'. See also 45.

35 **rīdeð racentan sāl** The vb. suggests a ship 'riding' at anchor, but the action is being done to Satan and so an obj. pron. is needed; perhaps, 'a loop (or halter) of chain swings (me)', or, following a popular interpretation, 'chafes me'. The vb. is used to signify swinging on a gallows in *Beowulf* (2445).

40–1 **Mē habbað... siðes āmyrred** The dat. pron. ('for me') is best seen as possessive: 'have hindered my movement' (*āmyrred* takes a gen. obj.). Similarly in 42 (though here 'from me' is also a possibility). The 'fastenings of rings' are presumably a chain.

āfyrrēd° mē° mīn fēðe°; fēt synt removed from me
 gebundene°, fettered
 handa gehæfte°. Synt ʿpissa heldora
 wegās forworthe° ʿswā ic mid wihite ne mæg shackled
 of ʿpissum liðobendum°. ʿLicgāð ʿmē ymbe obstructed
 heardes irenes hāle° gesfegene° ʿlimb-bondsʼ (i.e. fetters)
 grindlas° grēate°. ʿMid þȳ ʿmē God hafað hotly struck (i.e. forged)
 gehæfted be þām healse°, swā ic wāt° hē mīnne bolts huge
 hige cūðe° neck know
 ond ʿpæt wiste° ēac, weroda Drihten, knew
 pæt sceolde° ʿunc Ādame ʿyfele° gewurðan° (it) must evilly turn out
 ymb° pæt heofonrice, ʿpær ʿic āhte° mīnra handa geweałd. concerning had
 Ac ðolliap° wē nū prēa° on helle: pæt syndon suffer punishments
 þȳstro° ond hæto°. darkness heat

[390] ʿgrīmmē° grundlēase°. Hafað ūs God sylfa fierce boundless
 forswāpen° on þās sweartan mistas. Swā° hē ūs° swept away
 ne mæg ānige synne gestālan°, impute
 pæt wē him ʿon þām lande ʿlād° gefremedon°, hē hæfð harm did
 ūs þeah° þæs lēohites bescyrede°, yet deprived (of +g)
 beworpen° ʿon ealra wīta mæste°. Ne magon wē þæs° cast (us) for that
 wrace° gefremman, vengeance
 gelēanian° him ʿmid lāðes wihite ʿpæt° hē ūs hafað repay because
 þæs lēohites bescyrede°

[390] ʿgrīmmē° grundlēase°. Hafað ūs God sylfa fierce boundless
 forswāpen° on þās sweartan mistas. Swā° hē ūs° swept away
 ne mæg ānige synne gestālan°, impute
 pæt wē him ʿon þām lande ʿlād° gefremedon°, hē hæfð harm did
 ūs þeah° þæs lēohites bescyrede°, yet deprived (of +g)
 beworpen° ʿon ealra wīta mæste°. Ne magon wē þæs° cast (us) for that
 wrace° gefremman, vengeance
 gelēanian° him ʿmid lāðes wihite ʿpæt° hē ūs hafað repay because
 þæs lēohites bescyrede°

55 pæt wē him ʿon þām lande ʿlād° gefremedon°, hē hæfð harm did
 ūs þeah° þæs lēohites bescyrede°, yet deprived (of +g)
 beworpen° ʿon ealra wīta mæste°. Ne magon wē þæs° cast (us) for that
 wrace° gefremman, vengeance
 gelēanian° him ʿmid lāðes wihite ʿpæt° hē ūs hafað repay because
 þæs lēohites bescyrede°

43–4 **pissa heldora wegās** ‘the ways of [i.e. through] these gates of hell’.

44–5 **swā ic mid wihite ne mæg of A** vb. of motion is om. after the modal vb.: ‘so (that) I cannot escape at all from . . .’.

45 **Licgāð** The subj. of the vb. is the phr. *grindlas grēate* (‘huge bolts’) in 47, as defined by the two half-lines in 46.

47 **Mid þȳ** conj. phr., correl. with *swā* in 48: ‘Because . . . (so . . .)’.

49 **pæt** correl. with *þær* in 50 and best left untrans.

50 **unc Ādame** There are parallels in other OE poems for this awkwardly elliptical expression. Here *unc* is the dat. dual pron., ‘for us two’. The ‘me’ of this pair is understood but the second party is defined by his name in apposition (i.e. parallel) and is so also in the dat. Thus, ‘for us two, (me and) Adam’, or simply ‘for me and Adam’.

51 **pær** As the clause introduced here is the second part of a conditional statement set up by *sceolde*, *þær* (here the conj. ‘where’) is best trans. ‘if’: i.e. ‘it must have turned out . . . if I had . . .’.

53 **grīmmē grundlēase** The adjs. may describe *prēa*, *helle* or *þȳstro ond hæto*, or indeed all of them.

55 **on þām lande** i.e. in heaven.

56 **on ealra wīta mæste** ‘into the greatest of all torments’.

57 **mid lāðes wihite** ‘with anything of harm’, i.e. ‘with some harm’.

Hē hæfð nū gemearcod ānne middangeard° ʿpær hē hæfð mon world
 geworhtne

ʿæfter his onlīcnesse°; mid ʿpām hē wīle eft° image through him again
 gesettan° settle

60 heofona rice mid hluttrum° sāulum°. Wē þæs° sculon pure souls about this
 hycgan° geome°: think earnestly

þæt wē on Ādame, gif wē æfre mægen,
 ond on his eafrum° ʿswā some, andan° descendants (our) grudge
 gebētan°, make good *stȳ*

ʿonwenden him þær willan sīnes ʿgif wē hit mægen wihite° at all
 āþencan°: contrive

[400] Ne ʿgelyfe ʿic mē° nū þæs ʿlēohites ʿfurðor° ʿþæs þe ʿfor myself any more
 hē him° þenceð lange nōtan°, for himself enjoy +g

65 ʿþæs ēades, mid his engla cræfte°; ne magon wē þæt ʿon aldre ʿstrength
 gewinnan° bring about

þæt wē mihtiges Godes mōd° onwæcen°. Uton° will weaken *stȳ* Let us
 oðwenden ʿhit nū ʿmonna bearmum, take away

þæt heofonrice, nū wē hit habban ne mōton, ʿgedōn þæt ʿfavour loose *stȳ*
 hīe his hyldo° forlāeten°, ordered

þæt hīe þæt onwendon° þæt hē mid his worde bebēad°. disregard *stȳ*
 Ponne weorð° hē him° wrād° on mōde, will become against them angry
 āhwet° hīe from his hyldo: þonne sculon hīe þās° (he) will reject this

helle sēcan depths
 70 ond þās grimman grundas°: þonne mōton we hīe ʿūs tō

grongrum ʿhabban, grip Let us begin
 ʿfira beam ʿon þissum fæstum cloomme°. Onginnad° campaign
 nū ymb þā fyrdē° pencean.

59 **æfter his onlīcnesse** See Gen 1.26.
 62 **swā some** ‘in the same way’, or ‘likewise’.

63 **onwenden him þær willan sīnes** ‘upset for him in that respect (*þær*) his (God’s) will’, i.e. ‘frustrate his will in this’.

64 **gelyfe** The vb. is used in the sense of ‘hope for’ and governs the gen. **lēohites** The noun (‘light’ or ‘splendour’) is here a synecdoche for heaven. **þæs þe** ‘which’, in concord with *lēohites*.

65 **þæs ēades** ‘the blessedness’; a var. for *lēohites*, and hence in grammatical concord.

66 **monna bearmum** ‘from the children of men (or people)’. This is a stock epithet for ‘humans’; see also 71.

67 **gedōn þæt** Like *oðwenden* in 66, this infin. is governed by *uton*: ‘(and) let us act so that’, or ‘bring it about that’.

70 **ūs tō grongrum** ‘to us as subordinates’, i.e. ‘as our subordinates’.

71 **fira bearm** ‘the children of men’, parallel with *hīe* in 70 (‘them’). Cf. 9b/35n.

- [410] 'Gif ic ǣnegum^o þegne^o þēodenmādmās^o to any follower princely treasures
 gēara^o forgēafe^o, þenden^o wē on þan gōðan riçe once gave while
 gesēlige^o sēton^o ond hæfdon ūre setla^o gewewald, happy dwelt thrones *sp*
 75 þonne hē mē nā^o on lēofran^o tīd 'lēanum^o ne meahte^o never better could *sbj*
 mīne gife^o gylðan^o — 'gif his gfen wolde gift *as* repay
 mīnra þegna hwilc gepafa wurðan^o,
 þæt^o hē ūp heonon^o ūte mihte (namely) that from here
 cuman^o þurh þās clūstro^o ond hæfde cræft^o mid^o go barriers strength in
 him
 80 þæt hē mid fēoðerhoman^o flēogan meahhte, 'feather-dress' (*i.e.* wings)
 windan^o on wolcne^o 'þær' geworht^o stondað circle sky created
 Āðam ond Ewe on eorðriçe
 mid welan^o bewunden^o, ond wē synd prosperity surrounded
 [420] āworpen^o hider cast down
 on þās dēopan dalo^o. Nū hīe Drihtne synt more valued by +*d* much for themselves
 wurðran^o micle^o ond mōton him^o
 þone welan āgan valley
 85 þe wē on heofonriçe habban sceoldon, benefit allotted (to +*d*)
 'riçe mid rihte'. Is se ræd^o gescyred^o painful
 monna cynne. Þæt mē is on mīnum mōde swā sār^o, (it) grieves (me)
 on mīnum hyge hrēowed^o þæt hīe heofonriçe of you
 āgan tō aldre. Gif hit ēower^o ænig mæge bring about
 gewendan^o mid wihte þæt hīe word Godes, (his) teaching abandon *sbj* at once
 lāre^o, forlāeten^o, sōna^o hīe 'him þē lāðran bēoð'.
 [430] Gif hīe brecað^o his gebodscipe^o, þonne hē him^o breach authority with them
 ābolegen^o wurðeþ; enraged

72 **Gif ic...** In the first part of this long sentence (which ends in 84), *Gif* is correlative with *þonne* in 75: 'If ..., then ...'; and the main statement finishes with *gylðan* in 76a. The rest of the sentence – a series of subord. clauses instigated by another *gif* clause in 76b – is merely an extension of that statement, describing in conditional tenses what action the followers of Satan might take to repay him.

75 **lēanum** dat. of instrument: 'with returns'.

76–7 **gif his... gepafa wurðan** *his* is the gen. of *hit*, governed by *geþafa* in the next line: 'if now (*gfen*) any of my thanes would turn out to be (*wurðan*, *sbj.*) consenting to it', *i.e.* 'would consent to it'.

81 **þær** '(to) where': Some editors prefer to start a new sentence here, thus translating 'There...'

87 **riçe mid rihte** '(our) kingdom by right'.

92 **him þē lāðran bēoð** 'will be the more loathsome to him' (*þē* is instr.).

- siððan bið him se wela onwended^o ond wyrd him wīte overturned
 gegarwod^o, prepared
 95 sum heard hearmscearu^o. 'Hyegað his^o ealle^o punishment all (of you)
 hū gē hī beswīcen^o. Siððan ic mē sēfte^o mæg may deceive more easily
 restan on^o þyssum racentum gif him^o þæt riçe losað^o. in to them is lost
 Sē þe þæt gelæstede^o, him bið lēan^o gearo^o achieves reward prepared
 æfter tō aldre 'þæs wē' herinne magon (by way) of benefits gain
 100 on þyssum fyre forð fremena^o gewinnan^o.
 'Sittan læte ic hine^o wið mē sylfne 'swā hwā swā
 þæt' secgan cymeð
 on þās hātan helle, þæt 'hīe' heofoncynninges
 [440] unwurðlice^o wordum ond dædum dishonourably
 'lāre...'

95 **Hyegað his** The vb. takes the gen.: 'think about it', or 'give thought to it'.

99 **þæs wē** Construed with *lēan* (98): '(the reward) of what (*or* whatever) we...'

101 **Sittan læte ic hine** 'I shall allow him to sit'. **swā hwā swā** 'who(so)ever'. **þæt** correlative with *þær* in 102 and best om. in trans.

102 **hīe** *i.e.* Adam and Eve.

104 **lāre** Construed with *heofoncynninges*. The sentence breaks off here at the bottom of a manuscript page and the text restarts on the next page at a later point in the narrative, owing probably to the loss of two leaves. Evidently the sentence would have been completed by a vb. conveying the sense of 'rejected' ('in word or deed'), with obj. *lāre* (see also 92).

18

The Drowning of Pharaoh's Army
(Exodus, lines 447–564)

The story told in *Exodus*, the second poem of the Junius manuscript (see p. 130), is at the heart of Jewish history, for it tells of the very survival of the race. The biblical version of the events covered in the poem is given very concisely in Ex 13.20–14.31. After a long captivity in Egypt, the Israelites have finally been allowed by Pharaoh to leave and are led away by Moses. But Pharaoh changes his mind and gives chase until he corners the fugitives at the Red Sea, whereupon Moses, at God's command, causes the waters to part so that the Israelites can pass safely across. When Pharaoh and his troops try to follow, the water returns and they are all drowned.

The extract given here comes from the dramatic climax of the poem. The terrified Egyptians have tried to follow the Israelites, only to find the sea overwhelming them. With impressive verbal virtuosity, the poet presents their destruction in a repetitive pattern of visual images of almost cinematographic intensity – using fourfold variation, for instance, to tell how the walls of water have come crashing down on the doomed army. There is an apocalyptic tone to all this, a clear allusion to the terrors of Judgement Day for the unrighteous. God's adversary, the poet declares, has found that God was greater than he was; the pride of the Egyptians has been smashed and such is the completeness of their annihilation that there is not even a messenger left to take the news of defeat back home. After the action, Moses spells out to the Israelites the nature of God's covenant with them (lines 108–18), but first there is a homiletic digression apparently by the poet himself, who is clearly well versed in biblical exegesis (lines 77–102). He exhorts his audience to be open to the lessons of scripture, to recognise the ephemeral nature of life on earth, and to prepare for Judgement Day. Deliverance from this exile on earth will be the reward of the righteous.

Syntactically, *Exodus* presents the modern reader with special challenges. It is not always clear, for instance, whether certain half-lines complement the previous half-line (or even the one before that) or anticipate the next, and the interpretations and punctuation given below are necessarily subjective. But there is no reason to doubt that much of the ambiguity of the poem was intended. As for vocabulary, the poet draws freely on his OE wordhoard to produce a bewildering number of more or less synonymous words for the sea, ocean, water and currents. Although the language of *Exodus* is predominantly WS in form, the sporadic appearance

of forms generally considered to be non-WS (such as *genēop* not *genēap*, 30, and uncontracted *demeð*, 97, and *laedeð*, 98 and 109) has been sufficient to raise speculation about an earlier Anglian recension of the poem, and a possible origin in Northumbria, but the evidence is not conclusive. There is little doubt that the version of the poem that has come down to us is far removed from the poet's 'original'. It contains many apparent errors, the most obvious of which have been corrected in the extract below, but no attempt has been made to 'improve' the text simply on the grounds that difficulties of translation might be (though they cannot be proved to be) due to further corruptions or because the metrical scheme appears to be defective. The lines of the extract here are numbered from 1, but their numbering in the poem as a whole is also indicated.

Further reading

- P. J. Lucas, ed., *Exodus* (London, 1977; rev. edn. Exeter, 1994)
 E. B. Irving, ed., *The Old English Exodus*, Yale Studies in English 122 (repr. with suppl. bibliography, Yale, 1970)
 E. B. Irving, 'New Notes on the Old English *Exodus*', *Anglia* 90 (1972), 289–324
 'Exodus Retraced', in *Old English Studies in Honor of John C. Pope*, ed. R. B. Burlin and E. B. Irving (Toronto, 1974), pp. 203–23
 R. Frank, 'What Kind of Poetry Is *Exodus*?', in *Germania: Comparative Studies in the Old Germanic Languages and Literatures*, ed. D. G. Calder and T. C. Christy (Wolfeboro, NH, and Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 191–205
 R. Marsden, 'The Death of the Messenger: the *spelboda* in the Old English *Exodus*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 77 (1995), 141–64
 P. G. Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse*, CSASE 16 (Cambridge, 1996), ch. 3

Folc was aīfæred°, flōdegsa becwōm° terrified
 gāstas° gēomre°, geofon° dēaðe hwēop°. spirits^{ap} miserable ocean^{ns}
 Wæron° beorhhlīðu° blōde bestēmed°, bedewed (with +d)
 [450] holm° heolfre spāw°. Hrēam° was on yðum°, sea^{ns} Shouting (the) waves

- 1 **flōdegsa becwōm** The vb. is here used transitively, with obj. *gāstas gēomre*: 'flood-terror [*i.e.* (presumably) terror of the water] overcame . . .'. In 10, *becwōm* has its more usual sense of 'came'. The element *cwōm* is an earlier, uncontracted form of *cōm*.
- 2 **dēaðe hwēop** 'threatened (them) with death' (dat. of instrument).
- 3 **beorhhlīðu** The 'hill-slopes' or 'hillsides' are the walls of water drawn up on each side of the dry passage as ramps or fortifications, allowing the Israelites to escape. See 18, 38 and 41 for variations.
- 4 **heolfre spāw** 'spewed (or spat) with gore (or blood)'. Water turning to blood is a sign of Judgement Day, as predicted in Ex 7.17 and described in Rev 8.8 and 16.3.