THE APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS OF MARY IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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THE APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS OF MARY IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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N	London, British Library, Cotton Nero E. i
P	Cambridge, Pembroke College 25
R	Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reginensis lat. 537
f^a	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 367, Part II, fols. 3–6, 11–29

Abbreviations

AB	*Analecta Bollandiana*
ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
BT	Bosworth, J., and Northcote Toller, T., *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (London, 1898)
CC	Corpus Christianorum
EEMF	Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile
EETS	Early English Text Society
MCOE	*A Microfiche Concordance to Old English*, ed. R. Venezky and A. Healey (Toronto, 1980)
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
RES	*Review of English Studies*

Editorial conventions

In the Old English texts edited here, punctuation, word-division and the capitalization of proper and sacred names are modernized.

Abbreviations have been expanded without notice. The following signs are used:

[[ ]] encloses letters or words that a scribe has deleted or subpuncted in the manuscript

/ indicates a page break in the manuscript

ˇˊ indicates insertions by scribes

om. indicates omitted

1

The birth and childhood of Mary: the development of a tradition

The bible contains nothing on the origins, birth and childhood of Mary, or on her last days and her death, but from a very early period a wish to know more about the mother of Christ, both in relation to her son and in her own life, is evident. Of the gospels only Matthew and Luke contain infancy narratives: Matthew has Mary's pregnancy by the Holy Spirit, Joseph's wish to put her away, his dream with its promise of the birth of Jesus, the chaste marriage of Mary and Joseph until after the birth, then a description of the visit of the Magi, the murder of the innocents in Bethlehem, the flight into Egypt and the return to Nazareth; while Luke recounts first the conception of John the Baptist, then the Annunciation to Mary, with her response referring to her virginity, the reference to the Holy Spirit coming upon her, Elizabeth's witness, Mary's *Magnificat*, the birth in Bethlehem, the tidings to the shepherds, the Circumcision, the presentation in the temple, the prophecies of Simeon and Anna and the episode of the twelve-year-old child Jesus in the temple. Mary naturally features in these chapters of the gospels, but then, as in Mark and John, almost drops out of sight as the account of Jesus's adult ministry gets under way. These biblical infancy narratives are chiefly concerned with christological issues, particularly with Christ's divine nature, which they 'prove' by means of the conception by the Holy Spirit and the virgin birth, with Joseph viewed as the adoptive, rather than natural, father. They seek too to show Jesus's fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy: both Matthew and Luke include genealogies tracing Jesus's ancestry back to David through Joseph, and Luke's accounts of the presentation and of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple emphasize the fulfilment of the

priesthood in him. The importance of agreement with the Old Testament is evident too in the concern with establishing Bethlehem as the place of birth, even though Jesus was known to have come from Nazareth. The poverty of the circumstances of Jesus's birth in Luke is typical of that evangelist's concern with the ideal of poverty, and the story of the Magi and of the flight into Egypt is intended to show that Jesus's kingship was universal and not restricted to the Jews.[1]

THE *PROTEUANGELIUM JACOBI*

Mary is significant in these canonical accounts of the nativity only in relation to her son Jesus, and as soon as her role in his life diminishes, she ceases to feature in the gospels. Popular interest in her and in other figures who were peripheral to the gospels' accounts was not satisfied with this scant information, however, and the gospels did not suffice either to counter all of the attacks on Christian teachings in relation to Jesus in the first centuries of Christianity. Already by the second century, before the canon of the New Testament was entirely fixed, further texts were being composed, based on oral and written traditions, on the gospels themselves and on the Old Testament. As the four-gospel canon was being consolidated from the second century onwards, these texts did not become part of the canon (a term not attested as a designation for the bible until the middle of the fourth century) and were recognized as a problem for the church.[2] They were designated as apocrypha, which originally meant something 'kept hidden because of its costliness or because of the objectionable nature of its content', then 'of hidden origin'[3] and was a

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[1] On the New Testament infancy narratives, see O. Cullmann, 'Infancy Gospels', in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Schneemelcher, I, 414–16, and R. Laurentin, *Les Evangiles de l'enfance du Christ. Vérité de Noël au-delà des mythes. Exégesè et sémiotique. Historicité et théologie* (Paris, 1982).

[2] On the growth of the canon, see the general introduction by Schneemelcher in *New Testament Apocrypha*, I, 9–33, and the texts translated on pp. 34–50, and B. M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: its Origin, Development and Significance* (Oxford, 1987).

[3] Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, I, 14. For bibliography on the apocrypha, see J. Charlesworth and J. Mueller, *The New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: a Guide to Publications, with Excursus on Apocalypses*, Atla Bibliography Series 17 (Metuchen, NJ, and London, 1987); Geerard, *Clauis Apocryphorum* and 'Bibliographie Générale', *Apocrypha* 1 (1990), 13–67.

term associated especially with gnosticism. When Christian writers took over the term they associated it with the rejected gnostic texts and used it pejoratively, and by about 400 the word designated texts regarded as disreputable or even heretical, which could not be read in church. The so-called *Decretum Gelasianum de libris recipiendis et non recipiendis*, probably dating from around 500, gives a catalogue of 'apocrypha' and other rejected texts, including those dealing with the birth and death of Mary.[4]

As the apocryphal gospels describing the life of Mary grew out of a desire to fill gaps left by the canonical gospels, one of their main sources was those gospels themselves. This can clearly be seen in the earliest surviving account, the so-called *Proteuangelium Iacobi*, which is the basis for much of the later apocryphal Marian literature, profoundly influenced the development of Mariology and Christian art and gave rise to a series of Marian feasts.[5] I shall summarize it in detail here as it is of such importance for subsequent accounts.

The *Proteuangelium*, written in Greek, has been described as a midrashic exegesis[6] of the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke and it begins with

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[4] Dobschütz, ed., *Das Decretum Gelasianum*, translated in Schneemelcher, ed. *New Testament Apocrypha*, I, 38–40. See above, pp. 1–2.

[5] It was called the *Proteuangelium* because it related events before those recounted in the canonical gospels: the title is a sixteenth-century one, given by the French Jesuit Guillaume Postel who published a Latin translation in 1552. The standard edition was for a long time Tischendorf, ed., *Evangelia Apocrypha*, pp. 1–50, which is based on seventeen manuscripts, dating from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries. M. Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer V* (Cologny-Geneva, 1958), edited the earliest manuscript of the text (fourth century) and de Strycker, *La forme*, has produced a provisional critical edition based on the earliest manuscripts, on Tischendorf's collations and on early translations into other languages. It is translated by O. Cullmann using Tischendorf's and de Strycker's editions in Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, I, 426–37, and by Elliott, using Tischendorf only, in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, pp. 57–67. A valuable overview of the problems of the text is provided by E. de Strycker, 'Le Protévangile de Jacques: Problèmes critiques et exégétiques', in *Studia Evangelica* III, ed. F. L. Cross, Texte und Untersuchungen 88 (Berlin, 1964), pp. 339–59. On Postel's text, see I. Backus, 'Guillaume Postel, Théodore Bibliander et le "Protévangile de Jacques"', *Apocrypha* 6 (1995), 7–65.

[6] Smid, *Protevangelium Jacobi: a Commentary*, p. 8; Cothenet, 'Le Protèvangile de Jacques'; but see also M. McNamara, 'Midrash, Apocrypha, Culture Medium and Development of Doctrine: Some Facts in Quest of a Terminology', *Apocrypha* 6 (1995), 127–64.

details about Mary's pious parents, Joachim and Anna, who are childless. When Joachim's offering at the temple is refused on the grounds that he has no offspring, he retires to the wilderness and fasts for forty days. His wife Anna, in the meantime, laments her twofold sorrow, the loss of her husband and her childlessness. While walking in her garden lamenting that she alone is not fruitful, an angel appears and tells her that she will conceive and that her offspring shall be spoken of in the whole world, and Anna promises to dedicate the child to God. Two further angels announce the return of her husband to her, and an angel has also told Joachim that his wife will conceive (or has conceived, depending on the manuscript). When Anna meets Joachim on his return she declares that she, who was childless, will conceive or has conceived, again depending on which manuscript is followed.

After six (or seven or nine) months, Anna gives birth and the child is called Mary. At six months she walks seven steps and returns to her mother, who then vows that she shall walk no more on the ground until she is dedicated to the temple. A sanctuary is made in Mary's bedroom and the undefiled daughters of the Hebrews serve her there. On her first birthday Joachim holds a great feast where Mary is blessed by the priests and chief priests and Anna afterwards sings a song of praise to the Lord. At three years old Mary is dedicated to God in the temple, where she dances on the steps of the altar and does not look back at her parents. She receives food from the hand of an angel and, when she is twelve years old and can remain no longer in the temple, an angel appears to the high-priest Zacharias and orders him to assemble all of the widowers of the people in order to choose a husband for Mary. The high-priest takes all the widowers' rods and prays with them in the temple, but when he gives them back there is no sign from the Lord until Joseph receives the last rod. A dove flies out on to Joseph's head and the priest tells him that he has been chosen by lot to receive the virgin of the Lord. When Joseph answers that he already has sons and is old, the priest warns him of the consequences of a refusal and Joseph takes Mary as his ward. He leaves her in his house and goes away to work on his buildings, as he is a carpenter, and Mary is chosen by lot to weave the pure purple and scarlet for the temple veil, a task reserved for those descended from David.

When Mary is sixteen (or fourteen or fifteen) she goes to draw water one day and a voice says 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is

with thee, blessed art thou among women'.[7] Trembling and unable to see where the voice comes from, she returns to the house where an angel of the Lord appears and tells her that she will conceive by the word of God and that her son will be called Jesus, the son of the Most High. Mary replies, as in Luke, that she is the handmaid of the Lord, 'be it to me according to your word'. When she has finished the purple and the scarlet, she brings them to the priest, who blesses her, and then goes to Elizabeth, in whose womb John the Baptist leaps. Mary, unaccountably, 'forgot the mysteries which the archangel Gabriel had told her, and raised a sigh towards heaven and said, 'Who am I, Lord, that all the women [generations] of the earth count me blessed?'[8] She remains three months with Elizabeth, hiding herself from the children of Israel as her pregnancy becomes evident. When Mary is six months pregnant, Joseph returns and is distraught when he finds her with child. He does not believe Mary's protestations of innocence until an angel appears in a dream, as in Matthew I.20. When Mary's pregnancy is discovered by the scribes and priests, both she and Joseph are made to drink the 'water of the conviction of the Lord' and both are declared innocent in front of the entire people.

Augustus then declares a census in Bethlehem and Joseph, his sons and Mary set out, with Mary on a she-ass. On the way, she has visions of two peoples, one weeping and one rejoicing, and half-way to Bethlehem the birth begins and Joseph brings her to a cave. Leaving Mary in the care of his sons, Joseph sets out to seek a midwife. A passage in the first person follows in which Joseph describes the standstill of all nature and, when motion is resumed, he finds a midwife and brings her to the cave. A bright cloud overshadows the cave and the midwife announces that salvation is born to Israel. The cloud then disappears and a great light shines; when it withdraws the baby appears and takes Mary's breast. The midwife comes out of the cave and meets Salome, who refuses to believe that a virgin has given birth without inserting her finger to test Mary's virginity, an episode which seems to be modelled on that of the disbelieving Thomas. After Salome has tested and believed, her hand is consumed by fire and is healed only when an angel instructs her to touch the child. The Magi then come to Herod and to the child in the cave and

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[7] Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, I, 430. I quote from Cullmann as he gives the reading of Bodmer Papyrus V and of Tischendorf, where these diverge.

[8] *Ibid.*, I, 431.

the massacre of the innocents is described, with Elizabeth and John the Baptist saved by a mountain which opens for them. Zacharias, John's father, is killed by Herod's soldiers. The text ends with the epilogue: 'Now I, James, who wrote this history, when a tumult arose in Jerusalem on the death of Herod, withdrew into the desert until the tumult in Jerusalem ceased. And I will praise the Lord, who gave me the wisdom to write this history. Grace shall be with all those who fear the Lord.'[9] The text therefore purports to have been written when Jesus was still a child.

The earliest manuscript of the *Proteuangelium* is Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, Papyrus Bodmer 5 of the first half of the fourth century[10] and this already shows signs of revision and cutting.[11] Altogether 140 Greek manuscripts are known[12] and the work was translated into Syriac (fifth century), Ethiopic, Coptic (Sahidic), Georgian, Old Church Slavonic, Armenian, Arabic, Latin and Irish.[13] There is debate about the initial scope of the work and whether some parts of the text are later additions, particularly as the earliest manuscript has a shorter version in several places, but de Strycker argues convincingly that it has been abbreviated, clumsily, from the long text which we find in other early witnesses.[14]

The *Proteuangelium* probably dates from the second half of the second century and the first incontestable reference to it is by Origen (*d*. 254), but Clement of Alexandria (*d*. 215) seems to refer to it also.[15] Clement of

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[9] *Ibid*., I, 437.

[10] Its editor, Testuz, dated it to the third century, but de Strycker, *La forme*, pp. 195–7, presents good arguments for a fourth-century date.

[11] See de Strycker, *La forme*, esp. pp. 377–92.

[12] De Strycker, 'Die griechischen Handschriften'.

[13] See Geerard, *Clauis Apocryphorum*, pp. 27–9, for a list of editions of these various versions. On the Irish, see M. McNamara, *The Apocrypha in the Irish Church* (Dublin, 1975), pp. 42–7.

[14] De Strycker, *La forme*, pp. 376–92; he also argues, however, that all surviving forms of the text preserve anomalies and inconsequences which suggest that an even longer form of the text was originally composed and then abbreviated in such a way as to leave traces (pp. 404–12).

[15] See de Strycker, *La forme*, pp. 412–18; P. A. van Stempvoort, 'The Protevangelium Jacobi, the Sources of its Theme and Style and their Bearing on its Date', in *Studia Evangelica* III, ed. F. L. Cross, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 88 (Berlin, 1964), pp. 410–26; and Smid, *Protevangelium Jacobi: a Commentary*, pp. 22–4, for a summary of the evidence for the dating of the text and de Strycker, *La forme*, pp. 393–4 and p. 412, for a discussion of Origen's use of the apocryphon.

Alexandria's reference, in bk VII of his *Stromates*, is to the story of a midwife who examined Mary and found her to be a virgin; as no other text of this period refers to this episode, it is most likely with the *Proteuangelium* that he was familiar and that he was conflating the midwife and Salome. Clement also refers to the brothers of Jesus as being the sons of Joseph. Origen similarly refers to the brothers of Jesus as the sons of Joseph and attributes this to the *Gospel of Peter* or to the *Book of James*: the latter must be the *Proteuangelium*. In the earliest manuscript the title of the *Proteuangelium* is *The Birth of Mary: Revelation of James* (*Génésis Marias. Apokalypsis Jakôb*).[16] This James is presumably to be taken as the step-brother of Jesus by Joseph's supposed first marriage and the Gelasian decree identifies him with James the Less in Mark XV.40.[17] As the text describes the sons of Joseph as present at the birth of Jesus, this would make James an eyewitness. The real author is not known, but is not likely to have been a Jew as the text demonstrates ignorance of Palestinian geography and Jewish customs. De Strycker argues that Egypt was the place of origin of the text, but Smid proposes Syria as a possibility, while saying that countries other than Egypt and Syria should not be left out *a priori*.[18] Cothenet, too, argues for Syria, on the grounds that the author must have lived in a milieu close to Judeo-Christianity because of his use of midrashic techniques: in Syria there were constant contacts between Jews and Christians, and the way in which Mary's relationship with Joseph is described makes her very similar to the *uirgines subintroductae* who were common in Syria.[19] These were women who, in the period when there were as yet no monasteries, took refuge in the houses of male ascetics in order to live as virgins. Cothenet points as well to the analogies between the praise of Mary's virginity in the *Proteuangelium* and the exhortations to chastity in the apocryphal acts of the apostles, which also seem to originate in Syria.[20]

While the most important sources of the *Proteuangelium* are the New Testament infancy gospels of Matthew and Luke, from which the author

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[16] See de Strycker, *La forme*, p. 14, n. 4 and pp. 208–16, for this title.

[17] See Cullmann in Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, I, 423.

[18] See de Strycker, *La forme*, pp. 419–23, and Smid, *Protevangelium Jacobi: a Commentary*, pp. 20–2.

[19] Cothenet, 'Le Protévangile de Jacques', pp. 4267–8. On Judeo-Christianity and the *Proteuangelium*, see also F. Manns, *Essais sur le Judéo-Christianisme*, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta 12 (Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 69–114.

[20] Cothenet, 'Le Protévangile de Jacques', p. 4267.

selected to give a sequential narrative, the influence of the Old Testament is profound. Old Testament texts which influenced the author of the *Proteuangelium* include the story of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis XVIII and XXI, the story of Samson's parents in Judges XIII, the story of Hannah and Elkanah and their son Samuel in 1 Samuel I–II (this is the account on which the story of the birth of Mary is most clearly modelled), the story of Susanna in the Greek Book of Daniel, the Book of Judith and the Book of Tobias; the New Testament story of Elizabeth and Zachariah in Luke I is another analogue to the conception of Mary.[21] The name of Mary's father, Joachim, seems to come from the name of the husband of the chaste Susanna in Daniel and that of Anna from Hannah, the mother of Samuel. The work clearly aims to praise and glorify Mary in all respects and in this it can be seen to take issue with anti-Christian polemic. In Jewish circles of the second century an alternative version of the story of Jesus was circulating, which can be reconstructed from quotations from the *Logos Alèthès* of the pagan, anti-Christian author Celsus, writing *c*. 178. Celsus's arguments were explicitly quoted and combated by Origen in his *Contra Celsum*[22] (written between 246 and 248): 'But now let us return to where the Jew is introduced, speaking of the mother of Jesus, and saying that "when she was pregnant she was turned out of doors by the carpenter to whom she had been betrothed, as having been guilty of adultery, and that she bore a child to a certain soldier named Pantera . . ."' (bk I, ch. xxxii): 'For he [Celsus] represents him {a Jew} disputing with Jesus, and confuting him, as he thinks, on many points; and in the first place, he accuses Him of having "invented his birth from a virgin", and upbraids Him with being "born in a certain Jewish village, of a poor woman of the country, who gained her subsistence by spinning,

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[21] See van Stempvoort, 'The Protevangelium Jacobi', pp. 415–25, and Smid, *Protevangelium Jacobi: a Commentary*, *passim*, but also W. S. Vorster, 'The Protevangelium of James and Intertextuality', in *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A. J. F. Klijn* (Kampen, 1988), pp. 262–75.

[22] Origen against Celsus in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Fathers down to A. D. 325*, IV, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Edinburgh, 1885). See also van Stempvoort, 'The Proteuangelium Jacobi', p. 414; Smid, *Protevangelium Jacobi: a Commentary*, pp. 15–17; Cullmann in Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, I, 417; Erbetta, ed., *Gli Apocrifi del Nuovo Testamento*, I, 2, 15–17; Cothenet, 'Le Protévangile de Jacques', pp. 4257–8; and H. L. Strack, *Jesus, die Häretiker und die Christen nach den ältesten jüdischen Angaben* (Leipzig, 1910) on rabbinical anti-Christian views.

and who was turned out of doors by her husband, a carpenter by trade, because she was convicted of adultery; that after being driven away by her husband, and wandering about for a time, she disgracefully gave birth to Jesus, an illegitimate child, who having hired himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of his poverty, and having there acquired some miraculous powers, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed himself a God"' (bk I, ch. xxviii).

While Origen sets out to refute this account point by point, implicitly the same claims are countered in the *Proteuangelium*'s very detailed account of the virgin birth, the chastity of Mary and Joseph's marriage and Joseph's adoptive paternity, and by the way in which the priests and all the people witness Mary's vindication from accusations of adultery. Joseph's advanced age also seems intended as a guarantee of Mary's virginity. The emphasis on the wealth of Mary's parents, who possess herds and servants, and Joseph's work as a building contractor of some kind (unlike Luke's stress on poverty in the *Magnificat* and in the birth story) seems likewise intended to combat the view that Mary was a poor spinning girl: in the *Proteuangelium* her spinning is sacred, unpaid work on the temple veil and only those of the tribe of David are allowed do this work. This, of course, also establishes Mary's Davidic descent, so that Jesus's connection with David is no longer dependent on Joseph; this tradition is already found in the second-century theologian Justin.[23] Mary's virginity *ante*, *in* and *post partum* is emphasized. Her purity before the birth is evident from the way in which she is kept from the world in her bedroom, served only by virgins, and in her subsequent sojourn in the temple, where she is fed by an angel. The birth of Jesus, while understood as a real birth (Mary is big with child and Jesus immediately takes Mary's breast) in distinction to the docetic view that Christ descended directly from heaven, is described in such a way that Mary's virginity can be seen to remain intact, as is evident also from Salome's testing. The birth is without pain, as in other early apocrypha such as the *Ascension of Isaiah* and the *Odes of Solomon*.[24] The Salome episode provides, too, a Jewish

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[23] Cullmann in Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, I, 417.

[24] The *Ascension of Isaiah* is translated in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. W. Schneemelcher, English translation ed. R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge and Louisville, KY, 1992), II, 603–20; the Odes of Solomon are translated in *The Odes of Solomon: the Syriac Texts*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Oxford, 1973), p. 82.

witness to the virgin birth, important because this very issue was one of the most contentious between Jews and Christians.[25] The four brothers and the sisters of Jesus, mentioned in Mark VI.3, who are most naturally regarded as the children of Mary and Joseph, here become the children of the widower Joseph's former marriage, so that Mary's virginity is also maintained after the birth of Christ. The *Proteuangelium* also contains the idea of Mary as second Eve, reversing the actions of the first.[26]

All of these details can be seen to issue from a desire to defend the purity and nobility of Mary against Jewish and pagan detractors; the unknown author has drawn on Old and New Testament stories to create the fictitious *uita* of an unblemished heroine. The preservation of authentic Jewish tradition is ruled out by such un-Jewish details as the upbringing of Mary in the temple. The question of the author's view of the nature of Anna's conception of Mary, however, is a difficult and debated one. The manuscript readings differ at crucial points (indicated in the summary above) on whether Joachim has a part in this conception or not. If one accepts the reading of the oldest manuscript, and some other manuscripts, and of the Syriac and Ethiopic translations, as well as the fourth-century testimony of St Epiphanius and the later Latin adaptation, the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, it appears that the angel announces to Joachim that his wife has already conceived, presumably therefore in the absence of her husband, as the angel's announcement to Anna was that she would conceive. Other manuscripts have instead of the perfect a future tense in the announcement to Joachim, reflecting unease at the theological implications of the perfect form.[27] When Anna greets Joachim on his return, the versions just listed again have a perfect form, while the majority of manuscripts has a future tense here also. Epiphanius attempted to get around the problem of the perfect form familiar to him

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[25] See the discussion by K. Schreiner, *Maria. Jungfrau, Mutter, Herrscherin* (Munich and Vienna, 1994), pp. 415–23.

[26] *Proteuangelium*, 13.1, and see G. Kretschmar, ' "Natus ex Maria virgine": *Zur Konzeption und Theologie des Protevangelium Jacobi*', in *Anfänge der Christologie: Festschrift für Ferdinand Hahn zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. C. Breytenbach and H. Paulsen (Göttingen, 1991), pp. 423–8.

[27] See de Strycker, *La forme*, pp. 81–3, 87–9 and 409–10; de Strycker, 'Die griechischen Handschriften', pp. 581–2; Smid, *Protevangelium Jacobi: a Commentary*, p. 41; M. Jugie, 'Le Protévangile de Jacques et l'Immaculée Conception', *Echos d'Orient* 14 (1911), 16–20.

by arguing that it must have a future reference, and the differing lengths of Anna's pregnancy in the manuscripts suggest disquiet as well, but it seems fairly certain that the perfect reading was the original one and this suggests that the author meant to imply a miraculous conception. This cannot, of course, be equated with the fully-fledged doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception, formulated a thousand years later, but it does stress the author's view of the extraordinary nature of her birth: her purity seems to date for him from her very conception.

The unknown second-century author of the *Proteuangelium*, therefore, seems to have drawn motifs for his account of Mary's birth and childhood from Old Testament infancy stories, in response to anti-Christian versions of Jesus's origins; the work is polemic in the guise of biography. So passionate is his defence of Mary's virginity that even some canonical details are omitted in the interest of exalting Mary's purity: there is no account of the Purification of Mary, for example, though Luke includes this and Anna is purified after the birth of Mary.[28]

THE *PROTEUANGELIUM* IN LATIN

The *Proteuangelium* was translated into Latin, as well as the other languages listed above, but a complete Latin text has not survived. Parts, some of them very substantial, of different translations do survive, however, several of them incorporated in other texts.[29] Extracts from the *Proteuangelium* are included in the Barbarus Scaligeri, an Alexandrian compilation of the first half of the fifth century, which was translated into Latin in the fifth or sixth century.[30] About half of the text is incorporated in the Latin infancy gospel published by James from a thirteenth-century and a fourteenth-century manuscript, which draws also on the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, the *Libellus de natiuitate Sanctae Mariae*, pseudo-Augustine *Sermo* cxcv, the canonical gospels of Matthew and Luke and another unknown source; its version of the *Proteuangelium* was probably

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[28] Cothenet, 'Le Protévangile de Jacques', p. 4266.

[29] See J. Gijsel, 'Het *Protevangelium Iacobi* in het Latijn', *Antiquité Classique* 50 (1981), 351–66, for an overview of the Latin versions. Unfortunately, J.-D. Kaestli, 'Le Protévangile de Jacques en latin. Etat de la question et perspectives nouvelles', *Revue d'histoire des textes* 26 (1996), 41–102, appeared too late to be taken into account here.

[30] See de Strycker, *La forme*, pp. 39–40; the work is edited by A. Schoene, *Eusebii Chronicorum liber prior* (Berlin, 1875), Appendix, pp. 177–239.

translated in the Carolingian period.[31] Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Gene-
viève, 2787 has an almost complete Latin *Proteuangelium*, covering chs. 1,
3 to 24, 2.[32] Montpellier, Bibliothèque Universitaire, Section de Méde-
cine 55, a ninth-century legendary, contains parts of two separate
translations of the *Proteuangelium*, one of chs. 1 to 8, 1, with some
omissions, on fols. 94r–97v,[33] and the other of chs. 8, 2 to 25, 2, also
with some omissions, on fols. 179r–82v.[34] While it is, of course,
tempting to view them as two halves of the same translation, as Canal-
Sánchez thought that they were, Gijsel argues that they are parts of two
separate adaptations of an earlier translation.[35] Madrid, Real Academia de
la Historia, 78 (eleventh century) has a very short fragment of a Latin
translation and there is an even shorter one in the Fleury manuscript,
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouv. acq. lat. 453 (tenth to eleventh
century).[36] Fragments of a very free Latin *Proteuangelium* are also preserved
in the fourteenth-century breviary from Soyons, Paris, Bibliothèque
Nationale, nouv. acq. lat. 718, and of an even freer version in a fifteenth-
century Mainz breviary, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 1062.[37]
Vattioni has published a translation of chs. 1 to 7 of the *Proteuangelium*
from the twelfth-century Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana,
Reginensis lat. 537[38] and this text is also found in Karlsruhe, Badische
Landesbibliothek, K 506 (combined with *Pseudo-Matthew*)[39] and in the
English manuscript, Cambridge, Pembroke College, 25, though this last

[31] M. R. James, *Latin Infancy Gospels: a New Text, with a Parallel Version from the Irish*
(Cambridge, 1927); see also J. Gijsel, 'Les "Evangiles latins de l'Enfance" de M. R.
James', *AB* 94 (1976), 289–302, who lists further manuscripts.

[32] This text, discovered by R. Beyers, has not yet been edited; see Beyers, *Libri de
natiuitate sanctae Mariae*, pp. 132–3.

[33] J. M. Canal-Sánchez, 'Antiguas versiones latinas del Protoevangelio de Santiago',
Ephemerides Mariologicae 18 (1968), 431–73.

[34] E. de Strycker and J. Gribomont, 'Une ancienne version latine du Protévangile de
Jacques', *AB* 83 (1965), 365–410.

[35] See Gijsel's review of Canal-Sánchez's article in *AB* 87 (1969), 503–5, and his 'Het
Protevangelium Iacobi in het Latijn'.

[36] Both edited by Canal-Sánchez in 'Antiguas versiones latinas', pp. 469–72.

[37] Both fragments are edited by J. de Aldama, 'Fragmentos de una versión latina del
Protoevangelio de Santiago y una nueva adaptación de sus primeros capítulos', *Biblica*
43 (1962), 57–72.

[38] F. Vattioni, 'Frammento latino del Vangelo de Giacomo'.

[39] Signalled by Gijsel, 'Het *Protevangelium Iacobi* in het Latijn', p. 354, and in Geerard,
Clauis Apocryphorum, p. 27.

is not signalled in the literature.[40] Gijsel constructs a stemma of all these different versions, which indicates two separate Latin translations of the *Proteuangelium*, both giving rise to different adaptations.[41]

THE *GOSPEL OF PSEUDO-MATTHEW*

More important than any of these versions, however, was a new text created by reworking the *Proteuangelium* and combining it with other sources, the Latin *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*.[42] This work is probably from the period 550 to 700[43] and seems to be the work of a monastic author.[44] The oldest manuscripts, already belonging to two separate families, A and P, are from the ninth century.[45] The *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* consists of (1) a prologue, which can be either a letter from the bishops Chromatius and Heliodorus to Jerome, asking him to translate a Hebrew Gospel by the apostle Matthew into Latin (hence the title *Pseudo-Matthew*), and Jerome's reply, promising them the text, or a translation of the epilogue to the *Proteuangelium*;[46] (2) a revised version of the *Proteuangelium* (*Pseudo-Matthew* chs. 1 to 17, 2);[47] (3) an account of the miracles performed by the child Jesus on the flight into Egypt, based on a different source; and

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[40] See Clayton, *The Cult*, p. 4, n. 14.

[41] Gijsel, 'Het *Protevangelium Iacobi* in het Latijn', p. 366.

[42] A new edition of this work has recently appeared, too late to be taken fully into account here: *Libri de natiuitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Euangelium*, ed. J. Gijsel, Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum 9 (Turnhout, 1997). I am grateful to Professor Gijsel for making his texts of the A and P families available to me in advance of publication. The standard edition of the text up to now has been that of Tischendorf, ed., *Evangelia Apocrypha*, pp. 51–111.

[43] Gijsel, *Die unmittelbare Textüberlieferung*, p. 12, but he says on p. 27 'um 600'. In Gijsel, ed., *Libri de natiuitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Euangelium*, p. 67, he dates to between the middle of the sixth century and the last decades of the eighth, and says that 'il est probable qu'il a vu le jour dans le premier quart du viie siècle'.

[44] Arguments for a monastic author were advanced by Amann, ed., *Le Protévangile de Jacques*, p. 106; Gijsel, *Die unmittelbare Textüberlieferung*, p. 13.

[45] All of the manuscripts are described and discussed by Gijsel, *Die unmittelbare Textüberlieferung*, but see the reservations expressed by G. Philippart, 'Le Pseudo-Matthieu au risque de la critique textuelle', *Scriptorium* 38 (1984), 121–31.

[46] The letters occur in the oldest manuscripts of the A family, while the *Proteuangelium* epilogue occurs in uncorrupted manuscripts of two of the four subgroups of the P family. For further discussion of the letters prologue, see below, pp. 85–6.

[47] The chapter numbers here are from Gijsel's edition.

(4) a fourth section, missing in most manuscripts, based on the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and recounting various exploits of Jesus as a child. The last part is clearly not part of the original text of *Pseudo-Matthew* and is not included in Gijsel's edition, but was included by Tischendorf in his very influential edition, with the label 'Pars Altera'. It was added to the text at the stage of the Q redaction, dated probably to the eleventh century, and is not found in the earlier manuscript families, A and P.[48] Gijsel argues that the flight into Egypt did not belong to the text originally either, even though it occurs in all of the complete manuscripts: there is no satisfactory transition to this section of the text; its lack of theological care and its sensationalism are alien to the first section; stylistically and structurally it is far clumsier than the preceding section; and one manuscript has a new title at the beginning of this section, *Narratio Elysiodorii de factis Iesu Christi*, which may well be a trace of the originally different origins of this section.[49] The oldest manuscripts of *Pseudo-Matthew* have a title *De natiuitate sanctae Mariae* or something very similar and this, Gijsel argues, is probably original, again suggesting that the section set in Egypt, which is about Jesus rather than Mary, is a later addition.[50] According to Gijsel, even the A family of manuscripts, the most primitive extant, does not give us the most ancient form of the text; we lack this, but his second family of manuscripts, the P group, goes back to this older form rather than to the A family. As a text *Pseudo-Matthew* was enormously successful: Gijsel lists 135 manuscripts and its success also seems to have been responsible for the lack of impact of the Latin translations of the *Proteuangelium*. As the Anglo-Saxon text edited here corresponds only to the first section of *Pseudo-Matthew*, that based on the *Proteuangelium*, I shall concentrate on that part of the Latin text in my discussion.

In reworking the *Proteuangelium*, the author of *Pseudo-Matthew* made changes which reflect a different purpose and a different age.[51] No longer is it necessary to combat pagan or Jewish polemic and the moral question of the best forms of the Christian life is instead much more dominant, with clear influences from hagiography. There is much more emphasis on Joachim in the Latin text: his piety and his pious use of his riches in the

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[48] For the Q family of manuscripts, see Gijsel, *Die unmittelbare Textüberlieferung*, pp. 174–231.
[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 15–17.   [50] *Ibid.*, p. 17.   [51] *Ibid.*, pp. 12–15.

way in which he divides his possessions is stressed far more than was the case in the Greek source, and here the influence of the Book of Tobias is again to be felt. The monastic ideal is clearly crucial to Mary's vow of virginity, which is highlighted twice in the text (chs. 6, 2 and 12, 8) and which must be responsible for the introduction of the episode in which Abiathar offers bribes to have Mary marry his son. That Mary must have made such a vow was first suggested in the East by Gregory of Nyssa (*d. c.* 395) and in the West was deduced by Augustine (*d.* 430) from her response to Gabriel at the Annunciation.[52] This idea is not present in the earlier *Proteuangelium*, where there is no emphasis on a voluntary and resolute vow of virginity, though it is of course stressed that Mary remains a virgin. In *Pseudo-Matthew* it is crucial to that text's much more internalized view of Mary's purity: she discovers a new order of virginity for herself, as the high-priest says, 'A sola Maria nouus ordo tacendi inuentus est, quae promittit deo se uirginem permanere' (VIII, 1, A text), and she holds out against social pressure, correcting the priests and her relations by preaching that 'Deus in castitate primo omnium probatur et adoratur' (VII, 1, A text) rather than in the Jewish way of producing offspring. We can here see very clearly the cross-fertilization of apocrypha and church fathers: the earlier apocryphon had no doubt contributed to the climate of opinion which allowed the church fathers to go beyond the canonical gospels in this way and these patristic arguments then fed into the later apocryphon to idealize Mary even further.

Mary's cloistered and regular life in the temple, where she devotes herself to work and prayer, reflects this monastic background also. She in effect follows a monastic rule in her division of the day: 'Hanc autem sibi ipsa regulam statuerat ut a mane usque ad horam tertiam orationibus insisteret, a tertia uero usque ad nonam textrino se in opere occupabat. A nona uero hora iterum ab oratione non recedebat, usque dum illi dei angelus appareret de cuius manu escam acciperet, et ita melius atque melius in dei timore proficiebat' (VI, 2, A text). This is again not a feature of the *Proteuangelium*, which has almost no details about Mary's daily life in the temple, other than that she was fed by an angel. The fifteen steps of the temple which Mary climbs recall the fifteen gradual psalms, so prominent in monastic life.[53] Her inner dedication and moral

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[52] *De sancta uirginitate*, IV.4 (PL 40, col. 398).
[53] Gijsel, *Die unmittelbare Textüberlieferung*, p. 30, n. 50.

worth are reflected also in her knowledge of divine law and in her outstanding virtue: 'Denique cum a maioribus suis uirginibus in dei laudibus agere docebatur, zelo nimio bonitatis satagebat ut in uigiliis inueniretur prior, in sapientia legis dei eruditior, in humilitate humilior, in carminibus dauiticis elegantior, in caritate gratiosior, in puritate purior, in omni uirtute perfectior' (VI, 2, A text). In this part of *Pseudo-Matthew*, she is clearly being presented as a model for dedicated virgins living according to a monastic life.

Increasing Marian piety is evident in the way in which Joseph's direct reproaches to Mary are omitted; he laments her pregnancy, but she is immediately defended by the five virgins who are her companions in his home. These five companions, who are not found in the *Proteuangelium*, also allow Mary to live a communal quasi-monastic life, dedicated to virginity, even when she moves from the temple to Joseph's home. The age-gap between Mary and Joseph is increased, too, by Joseph's already having grandchildren older than Mary when she is entrusted to him. Mary's own lineage is elaborated in *Pseudo-Matthew* also; in the *Proteuangelium* she is already considered of Davidic descent, but here Joachim belongs to the tribe of Judah and Anna to that of David. The author's desire to glorify Mary is evident as well in her title *regina uirginum*, a title confirmed by an angel after having been uttered in jest by the other virgins. The virgins ask Mary to pray for them (VIII, 5) and she has miraculous powers of healing, another new feature, reflecting a model of sanctity which had become conventional by the time of the composition of *Pseudo-Matthew*: 'Si quis autem de infirmantibus tetigisset eam, saluus ab ea eadem hora reuertebatur' (VI, 3, A text). Joseph is a far more humble figure in the Latin than in the Greek, a step further towards a saintly Joseph.

Pseudo-Matthew also smoothes out some inconsistencies between its source and the canonical infancy gospels: so, for example, it has Jesus born in a cave, from where Mary moves to a stable on the third day, and three days later the family settles in Bethlehem. Whereas in the *Proteuangelium* the adoration of the Magi immediately follows the birth, in *Pseudo-Matthew* it occurs two years later, in accordance with Matthew II.16. Some episodes from the canonical gospels, which had featured in the *Proteuangelium*, are omitted from the later text, such as the Visitation, but conversely *Pseudo-Matthew* adds to the *Proteuangelium* by including the Circumcision and the Purification. Altogether, *Pseudo-Matthew* is a

much more smoothly flowing, consistent and detailed text, which witnesses to a significant growth in Marian devotion in the four or more centuries which separate it from its Greek source.

By implication, however, the nature of Mary's conception continues to cause problems. Joachim spends five months in the desert and takes another thirty days to return to Anna after the angel's announcement to him; Mary is born nine months after his return. However, the angel tells Joachim that he should know that Anna 'ex semine tuo concepisse filiam' (III, 2, A text, to which the P text adds 'quod tu nesciens reliquisti eam') and that he will find her 'habentem in utero' on his return and Anna greets Joachim with the news that she is pregnant, not that she will become so. The time-scale would seem again to rule out a normal conception, as in the case of the *Proteuangelium*. This is not commented upon in the text itself, which never announces a miraculous conception in the absence of Joachim, but it certainly goes beyond the Old Testament analogues of the simpler miracle of conception in a sterile couple.

As is evident already, the manuscripts of *Pseudo-Matthew* can be divided into groups, which are discussed in great detail by Gijsel. The two oldest families are A and P, while Q, which adds the section based on the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, as well as making numerous other changes, dates from around the eleventh century and R, which replaces parts of the text with parts of the *De natiuitate Mariae* and has a very idiosyncratic version of the miracles of the child Jesus, dates perhaps from the twelfth century.[54] Self-evidently, A and P are the branches important in a discussion of the Anglo-Saxon translation. A, which must go back to about, or before, 750,[55] seems to be closest to the original, but is not itself the original, and offers the most primitive extant form of *Pseudo-Matthew*, although brief passages are missing from all the manuscripts of this group. The oldest versions are often found in legendaries; this is no longer true of the more recent manuscripts, presumably because the apocryphal gospel was no longer considered suitable for liturgical use. The P form of the text, which also antedates 800 according to Gijsel, is a revision, not of A but of the original text, which aimed to improve the text stylistically, to change the pre-Vulgate biblical readings to Vulgate forms and to alter some details in the interest of decorum or consistency. Anna's bitter complaint about her childlessness, for example, is softened by the addition of 'tibi

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[54] For the R manuscripts, see *ibid*., pp. 232–53.   [55] *Ibid*., p. 123.

gratias ago soli quia ut uoluisti ita ordinasti' (2, 5) and the other virgins'
address to Mary in 8, 8 'cum sis ultima et humilis' becomes 'cum tu
iunior sis omnibus'. Altogether, there are about 150 changes noted by
Gijsel. None of the uncontaminated manuscripts of this group has the
epistolary exchange between the bishops and Jerome and two of the four
subgroups have a prologue based on the epilogue to the *Proteuangelium*.
Gijsel considers this prologue to be the original prologue to *Pseudo-
Matthew*, which was probably replaced by the apocryphal exchange
between the bishops and Jerome at the A stage of the text.

The early chapters of *Pseudo-Matthew* were reworked and sanitized even
further in the tenth or very early eleventh century to give the even more
theologically acceptable *De natiuitate Mariae*, which in its turn ousted its
source to a considerable degree.[56] The apocryphal exchange between the
bishops and Jerome is also found prefacing this text, transferred from
Pseudo-Matthew. Joseph is not a widower in this text but has never been
married, so making it more agreeable to orthodox views. St Jerome had
already objected to the view that Jesus's brothers in the gospels were sons
of Joseph, arguing instead that they were cousins, and here Pseudo-
Jerome is brought into line with Jerome himself.

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[56] *Ibid*., p. 13; see also Beyers, ed., *De natiuitate Mariae*, and 'De natiuitate Mariae:
problèmes d'origines', *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 122 (1990), 171–88.