

# Vernacular Religious Texts

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Biblical Translation  
& Adaptation

**The Dream of the Rood  
(a.k.a. The Vision of the Cross)**

**in the Vercelli Book and  
the Ruthwell Cross**

# The Dream of the Rood in the Vercelli Book

Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS CXVII

- Later 10th-century manuscript
- Mostly prose homilies, all Old English
- A few poems on religious themes, not biblical
- Ended up in Vercelli: carried by an English pilgrim? When?



rume. ƿeðe ƿiſ nebið ſnoctoſ ƿeapſo cƿiſteſ ƿuple  
 ƿæðe ƿton to þam beaƿian nupe cunnon hyegan ſhytan  
 þæt ƿe hæƿonſ læhte uppe mid ænglum aƿan mozon  
 gaſum to geoe þonne god ƿile æƿiðan lƿiſ ænde ge  
 ƿƿiſcan:

**H**æt ic ſƿæna cƿiſt sægan ƿille hæc mege mæce  
 to midre nihte ſyðþan ƿeapð biſið ƿeſte ƿunodon.  
 ƿihte me þæt ic ge ƿape ƿyllicre ƿæp on lƿe  
 lædan læhte be ƿunðan bæma beoƿhtofe æll þæt  
 beacn ƿæ. be goðan mid golde ſimmar ſeodon ƿæpe  
 æt ƿoldan ſeatum. ſƿylce þa ƿiſe ƿænon uppe  
 on þam æxle ge ſƿanne be hældon þa ængl dƿihte  
 næf ælle ƿæpe þuſ þoſð ge ſeapf ne ƿæf dæh hƿu  
 ƿiacoðe ſealga. æc hime þa be hældon halige gaſe  
 mæn of þi moldan ƿæll þeap maſe ge ſeapf:  
 Syllic ƿæf ge ƿiſe bæm ƿiſe ƿynnū ƿah ƿoſ ƿunðed  
 mid ƿommu ge ſeah ic ƿuldƿæf ƿæp. ƿeapum ge ƿæp  
 soðe ƿynnū ſeiman ge ƿiſed mid golde ſimmar hæfðon  
 be ƿiſe ƿeapðlice ƿældes ƿæp: hƿæðe ic  
 þuſ þæt gold on ƿiſan mæhte æapm ƿiſe  
 þæt hie æpeſt ongan ſƿætan on þa ſƿiðan hæle  
 ællic ƿæf mid ƿiſum ge ƿæf. ƿoſht ic ƿæf ƿoſ  
 þæpe ƿægan ge ƿiſde ge ƿeah ic þæt ƿiſe beacn.

ƿiðan ƿeapum ƿiſum hƿiſum hie ƿæf mid ƿætan be ſeiman beſƿyled  
 mid ſƿæte gange. hƿiſum mid ſiſce ge ƿiſed. hƿæðe ic ƿæf  
 beoðe lange hƿiſe. be hœld hƿiſe æapm hæfðe ƿæp.  
 oððe ic ge hƿiſe þæt hie hƿiſe ongan þæt ƿoſd ſƿiſe  
 ƿiðu ƿeſta þæt ƿæf geapm. ic þæt ge ƿiſe man. þæt ic ƿæf  
 æhæpð hœte on ænde æſƿyð of ſeime mæn. geapm  
 meap ſeapm ƿeapm ge ƿoſhton. hie ƿæf to ƿæf hie  
 hieon me hæpa ƿæp. hieon meap beapm.  
 on ælum. oððe hie me on bæp æpeſt geapm. neodon me  
 þa ƿeapm geapm. ge ƿeah ic þa ƿiſe man cƿiſe æſtan  
 elne mycle. þæt he me ƿolde on ge ƿiſan. þa ic þa ne doſte  
 of þi dƿihte. ƿoſd bugan oððe beapm. þa ic þiſan geſeah  
 æpðan ſeapm ælle ic mæhte ƿeapm ge ƿiſan hƿæðe  
 ic ſeſte ſeod. On ƿiſe hie þa geapm hie þæt ƿæf god  
 ælmihte ſeapm ƿiſe mod. ge ſeah he on ælzan hie  
 mod on manigra ge ƿiſde. þa he ƿolde man cƿiſe lƿan.  
 hie ƿeapm ic þa me ge beapm ymb elƿe. ne doſte ic hƿæðe  
 bugan to æpðan ƿællan to ƿoldan ſeapm. æc ic ſeſte ƿeſte  
 ſeand. Rod ƿæf ic apm. æhæp ic ƿiſe cƿiſe hie ƿiſe  
 hieapm. hieðan me ne doſte. þuſ dƿiſan hie mid  
 dæpican nælū. on me ƿiſdon þa doſ ge ƿiſe opne hie  
 hieapm. ne doſte ic hie nænig ƿeðan hie ƿiſe hie  
 me buta æt geapm æll ic ƿæf mid blode beſeimed. beoðan of  
 þa cƿiſe ƿiſan. ƿiſan he hæpe hie gaſt on ƿiſe. ƿæla  
 ic on þam bæpe gebidan hæbbe ƿiſe ƿiſe. ge ƿeah ic ƿiſe  
 god ƿiſe hieapm hieapm hædon be ƿiſe mid ƿoſum  
 ƿældes hieapm. ſeime ſeiman ſeapm ƿoſd æde. ƿann  
 undan ƿoſum ƿæp ælge ƿæp cƿiſe cƿiſe cƿiſe  
 cƿiſe ƿæf on ƿiſe hieapm þa ƿiſe ƿiſe ƿiſe ƿiſe to  
 þam ælme ge ƿeah æll be hie. Sape ic ƿæf mid geapm  
 hie ge hieapm þam ƿeapm to handa æd mod elne mycle  
 ge nænig hie þa ælmihte geod æhæp hie of þam



pyrcan:7

**H**æt ic swiðra cȳr seegan wylle hæt mege mætte  
to midre nihte syððan weorð befrind ðe ste punedon.  
huhte me þæt ic ge wære wyllicre ðæow onlȳft  
lædan lœhte be pundan beama beorhtost eall þæt  
beacen wæs be godes mid golde gimmer fædon fæðre  
æfterdan fæatum. swylce þæs fife wæron uppe





**Giuseppe Bianchini, 1748:  
“Liber ignotae linguae”**

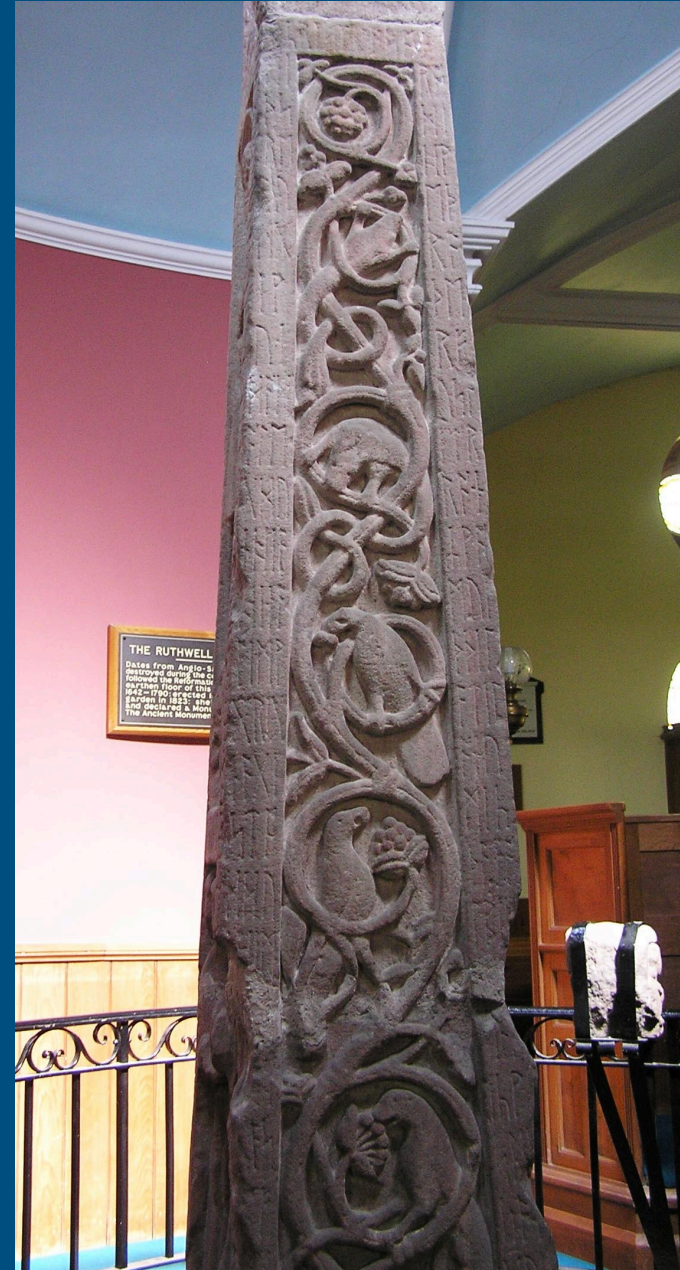


þar he leofað mærað In ealra worulda woruld abutan  
Ende amba;

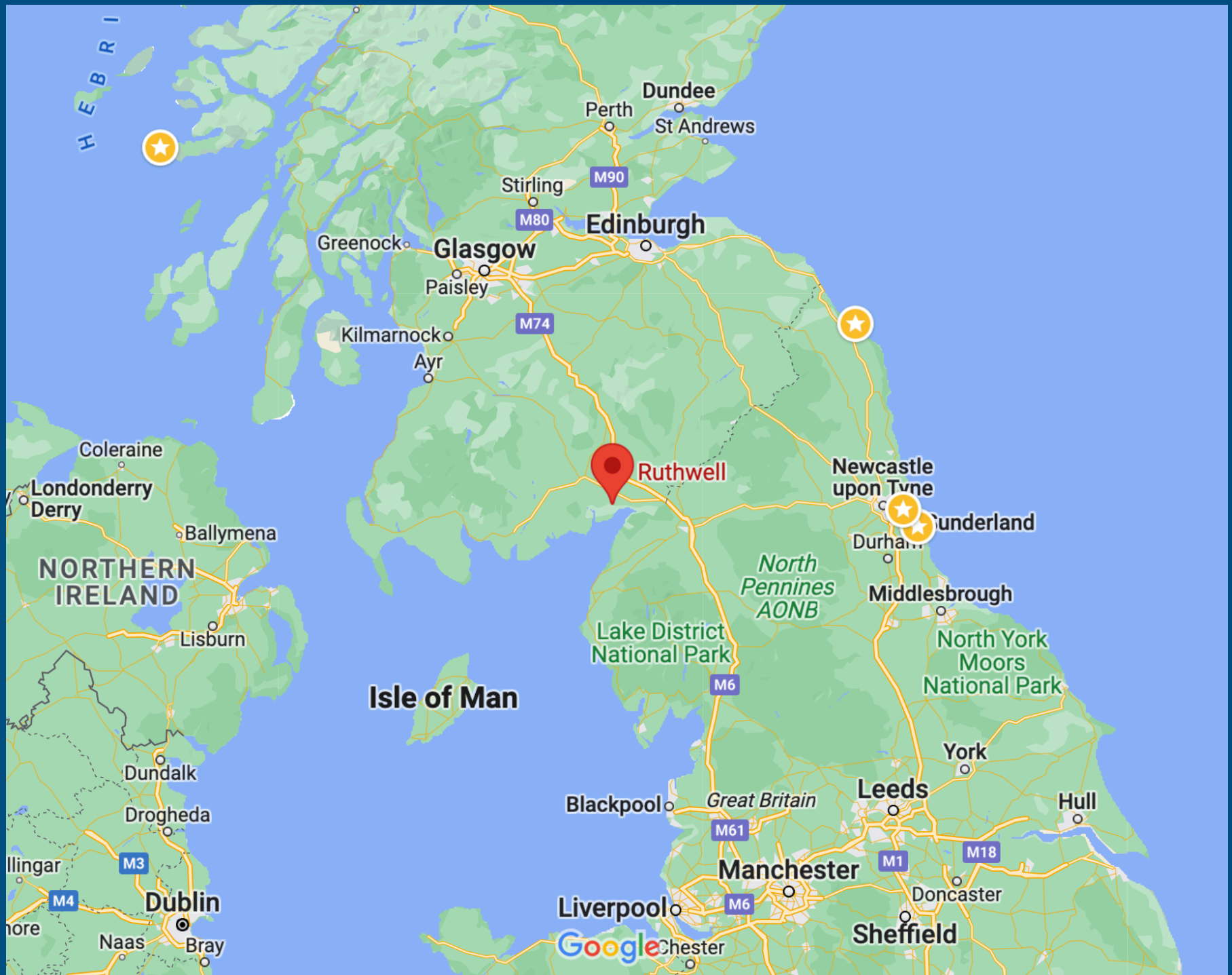
R. Adintor meus esto domine ne derelin quas me deus saluatis me us.

**Vercelli Book fol. 24v: end of homily in main scribe's hand above; neumed psalm text in 11th c. Italian hand below.**

# The Ruthwell Cross, ca. 700-750









## North face, bottom to top:

- the crucifixion
- the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary
- Jesus healing the man born blind
- Mary Magdalene anointing Jesus's feet
- industrious Martha and contemplative Mary
- St John the Evangelist – originally on the top of the north face, but reassembled incorrectly in 1823

## South face, bottom to top:

- the flight – or return – of Mary, Joseph and Jesus from Egypt
- St Paul and St Anthony breaking bread, symbolising the spiritual nourishment of monastic life
- Christ glorified
- the Apocalypse Vision
- St Matthew
- an eagle, symbolising Christ's resurrection and ascension

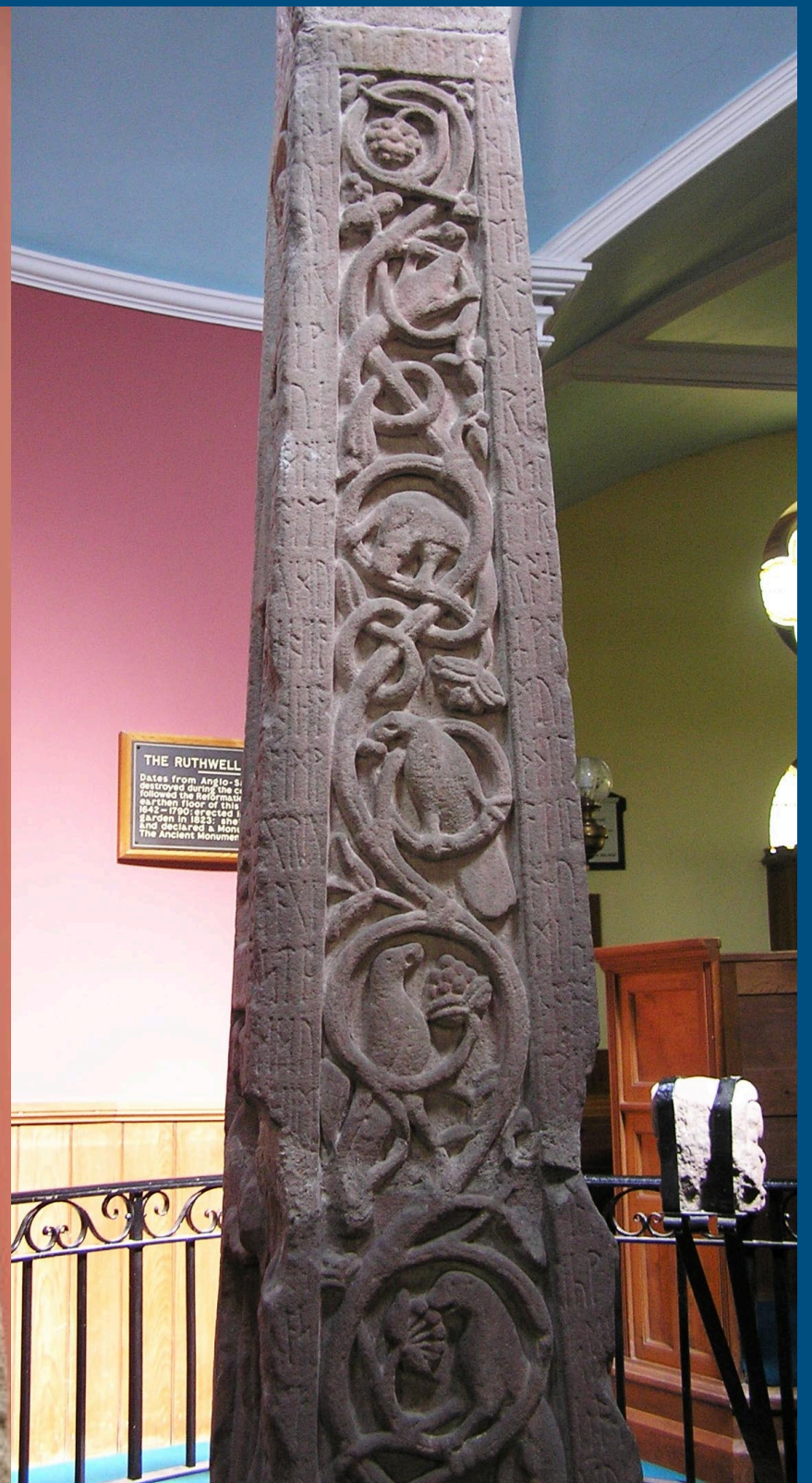












**THE RUTHWELL**  
Dates from Anglo-Saxon  
destroyed during the 16th  
century the Reformation  
floor of the  
1642-1790; erected in  
1823; the  
and declared a Monument  
The Ancient Monument



Text from the Dream of the Rood in runes on the two interlace faces of the Ruthwell Cross:

+ Ondgeredæ Hinæ God AlmeƷttig. Þa He walde on galgu gistiga modig fore allæ men buga ic ni dorstæ ac scealde fæstæ standa.

Ahof ic riicnæ Kyninc. Heafunæs Hlaford hælda ic ni dorsæ. Bismæradu unket men ba ætgadre; ic wæs miþ blodi bistemid, bigoten of þæs Guman sida sippan He His gastæ sendæ.

+ Krist wæs on rodi. Hwepræ þer fusæ fearran kwomu æppilæ til anum: ic þæt al biheald. Saræ ic wæs miþ sorgum gidrœfid; hnag ic þam secgum til handa.

Miþ strelum giwundad alegdun hiæ Hinæ limwœrignæ; gistoddun him æt His licæs heafdum bihealdun hiæ þer Heafunæs Dryctin; ond He Hinæ þer hwilæ restæ.

# Old English Translations and Adaptations of the Bible



**TYPES:**      Translation      Gloss      Adaptation

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**TEXTS:**              Old Testament

- The “Old English Hexateuch” (or Heptateuch) by Ælfric and others, late 10th c. = Pentateuch + Joshua + a summary of Judges. Several MSS, the most famous of which is the Old English Illustrated Hexateuch, BL MS Cotton Claudius B IV.
- Versified versions of Genesis (poems A and B), Exodus, Daniel, Judith (deuterocanonical)

## Psalms

*(OT, but with special status because of liturgical use)*

- 12 fully glossed psalters, 9th-early 12th c.
- Paris Psalter: Alfred's translation of 1-50 into prose + a contemporary translation of 51-150 into verse

## Gospels

- Bede's translation of John, 735 (lost, unless Michelle Brown has just found it)
- Aldred's gloss on the Lindisfarne Gospels, ca. 950-70
- Rushworth Gospels gloss on Matthew (same period)
- West Saxon Gospels, full translation ca. 990, survives in seven manuscripts
- Adaptations of the Gospel of Nicodemus: Harrowing of Hell (8th-c. liturgical play), "Christ and Satan" poem

**Junius Manuscript**  
**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11**  
**ca. 1000**

*(see separate PDF for images)*

**Contents:**      **Genesis A with Genesis B interpolated**  
*(Genesis B: translated from an Old Saxon poem; this was hypothesized in 1870 and the original was found in 1894!)*

**Exodus**

**Daniel**

**Christ and Satan**



# Old English Illustrated Hexateuch

London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius B IV, ca. 1000





Ʒod Ʒe Ʒeahða þæt hit Ʒod Ʒær . 7 Ʒær Ʒe Ʒoriden æfen . 7 mæri Ʒen .  
 Ʒe Ʒeopda dæg .



et dñr sol: qz solus lucet . i . millū  
 sabborū dñr . Sol 7 luna dñr opag  
 qñtate luminis: s; 7 corpū  
 oetiel maior tñra . et luna

cū eo:



luna: hominū una . i . pma ut una dierum . l' una  
 na luminaria . in duobus . 7 ex duob; . i . n solū pro  
 7 n tñ cōpone stellarum: s; 7 scdm se . qz sol dñr  
 etiam maior dñr terra .



ær his wifes. 7 him beoð bûta on anum flæsce. 7 his æron ða  
 bûta adam 7 his wif nacode. 7 him ðær ne secra mode.



E ac swylce seo næddre wæs gearwe donne ealle ða oðre  
 nyttenu. 7 se god 7 eowraht ofer eorðan 7 seo næddre cweð



de hege nimen pær. Ðaða he adra pær of neorxna  
 panger myrphde



In tyne. abyte damasco.  
 on ane felde.  
 adam þanon he com  
 þan cayn abel  
 of sloh. 7 beside  
 þan pær adam. 7  
 eue. bebyrig  
 de. on þan tyme  
 þealde se næfre.

Metodius episcopus. adam flep be yf yife. 7 hi ge seorinde funel.  
 7 dohtre.  
 Si qm ad cōsumebat ignis ille. vocat dei ad adā sūm ignis. si



Now soðlice. dyde ealle ða ðing ðe him god be bræd.



And god cwæð to him. Gāng into ðam aſce. ⁊ ſeal ðin hƿiſe



decima mensis sedr.  
i. d. c. l. vi.

noe





Nay nāi pūna hēi dā flode, flares co noticiā. acē hēi fypit.  
Joseph refert: posuit arcū suū in nubibz. 7 ē signū duoz. iudiciū p aq̄m p̄tina-  
ne timēt. 7 futurū p ignē: ut expectet. In ē q. duos habet colores. ceruleū: q  
aqueus ē. 7 ē exterior. qz p̄tēit. 7 rubeū: q ē igneus. q ē interior. qā futurū ē  
ignis. Et t̄. ante sc̄i. q. xl annis. ante iudiciū n̄ videb̄ arcus. Repugnare iudr  
huic qd sup̄ dictū ē. <sup>Anno</sup> d. anno Noe. natū sem. 7 sc̄c̄c̄esimo iundante diluviū. q p  
diluviū. cētenarius erat sem. 7 biennio p̄. c. 7 duoz annoz. s; mos ē septare se-  
pe limites num̄oz. ponere. paucis annis si sup̄ fuerint. tactis: potest ḡ dici qd  
sem erat. c. annoz. 7 duoz. s; duos tacuit sc̄ptura. Vel hoe cū gen̄ eū. d. 7 duoz annoz.  
Vel duo anni deerant ad sc̄c̄c̄os: cū iundavit diluviū. Vel ita legat̄ littera. Sem.  
c. annoz. erat p̄ diluviū. 7 erat biennio p̄ diluviū: qn̄ gen̄ arf.  
Siquis ḡ hunc expositioni nr̄e cōtr̄i ē: qrat aliā solutionē. Et tunc ea que  
recte a nobis dicta sunt imphabit.





...  
 .iij. tenere dicitur passim: paulatim autem angustior coartata erit: ut pondus uniuersae calis sustineat.



Hanc turrem. nembroth gigas construxit. Qui per confusionem linguarum ingruitur idem ad plas. eosque igne colere docuit.

gentes. 7 datus cernitur: factus phalee genuit reu. l. rogam. qui siruch. qui nachor. qui chare. Moyses dicitur  
 reu. l. filium cuius duos habuit filios. laba 7 dadan. ioseph u. dicitur. laba 7 nuda. quor. iudas egyptiac. gentem



reah. 7ep toþa eniht. hƿd̃t ysseman deongeān ūs gæd. þa eþ he þ hys  
 pafie hys hlaforð. 7 heo nā hƿaþe hys pafels 7 be pafde hi. Se efne  
 ysaac. xl. ear annoz.

Rebecca descendit de camelo: 7 tollens ceratrum uel pallium  
 miltrun; gñs arabici uestimenta mulierum: albū opunt se 7 cōposuit. est autē ge  
 et hic pmo legit consensus mulieris



8<sup>a</sup> requirit. et eam pro uire habuit: ut requiratur: et dimiserunt eam.

Isaac gelæode rebecca into saþman getelde hys modor. 7 in deri  
 þa he geƿorðen 7 lareow hƿas. 7 hi ƿas hys 7 d̃t ƿas. 7 þa he geƿorðen