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**THE EXPOSITORY TEMPORALE POEMS OF THE
SOUTH ENGLISH LEGENDARY**

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With the publication of Manfred Görlach's *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*,¹ the textual complexity of the most popular Middle English collection of versified saints' lives has begun to yield its secrets. Progress, too, has recently been made on the associated *temporale* narratives, that is to say, the biblically-based stories, centring on the Life of Christ.² Much work remains to be done on the collection, but meanwhile the group of expository poems on *temporale* feasts and fasts - Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and the like - can usefully repay closer study. The problems to be solved include the stage at which these poems were first associated with the *sanctorale* collection, their original and subsequent positioning in relation to it, and the reasons for their incomplete coverage of the feasts and fasts. Analysing their place in the legendary can, in addition, help us to define more precisely the early development of the *South English Legendary* as a whole.

In what follows I first describe the two main states of the *South English Legendary* (*SEL*), the *Z* and *A* versions (1). I then list the expository *temporale* poems in *A* (the standard version), and show that the peculiarities of their selection and positioning among the saints' lives are unparalleled in contemporary Latin legends (2). However, an examination of the treatment of the four poems on movable feasts in an alternative manuscript tradition, identifiable with *Z*, leads to the conclusion that these poems were originally grouped separately, outside the *sanctorale* cycle (3). Textual evidence confirms that the *A* version's treatment and texts of these poems are unoriginal (4). I then turn to the poems on the fixed feasts of Circumcision and Epiphany, showing that the combined version in the early Laud MS cannot confidently be assigned to *Z*, and that the standard texts probably originated with *A* as part of the revision on the basis of the *Legenda aurea* (5). It consequently appears that the "A redaction" (as regards the expository *temporale* poems) was very likely the work of two separate revisers, one attempting to fit *Z*'s movable feasts into the cycle, the other supplying *Circumcision* and *Epiphany* as well as much *sanctorale* material (6). "*Z*" must also have comprised two stages, for the preliminary group of movable feasts is unlikely to have been a feature of the *SEL* as first conceived (7). These factors help to explain the unusual treatment of the *temporale* festivals in *Z* and *A*. Later *SEL* manuscripts do little to fill in the gaps. The expository *temporale* poems seem never to have been regarded as of great importance: the popularity of the associated *temporale* narratives may have contributed to the lack of interest (8).

1. The Z and A versions of the *SEL*

Dr Görlach (Chapter II) has shown the early development of the *SEL* to be basically as follows. It seems first to have been compiled in Worcestershire in the 1260's, probably on the basis of a liturgical Latin legendary. The extent of this early version, Z, is uncertain, since no MS survives that preserves it independently, but it appears to have set the pattern for the great majority of *SEL* MSS, namely of a single continuous cycle beginning at January 1st. With the arrival in England of the *Legenda aurea* (written c. 1263-67)³ it was soon thoroughly revised, as is most evident from the clearly-defined A redaction made in Gloucestershire probably in the 1270's. The influence of the *Legenda aurea* is particularly marked in the 'summer' portion (July-December) where the individual lives are generally longer and further from liturgical sources than in the 'winter' portion. But certain items from Z in the first half of the year were also revised on the basis of the *Legenda aurea*, and several of Z's native saints' lives were also rewritten as part of the general A redaction. The A version became the standard recension of the *SEL*, and was printed as such from MSS Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 145 and Harley 2277 by Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill.⁴ The concept of separate Z and A versions, as here defined, has transformed discussion of the *SEL*, but Dr Görlach is aware that they represent only broad truths, and that what he has called A was possibly a succession of piecemeal revisions.

2. The expository poems in A, and contemporary Latin legends

In addition to *sanctorale* items, the A version contains six expository *temporale* poems that are at the centre of the present investigation: 1, *Circumcision*, 2, *Epiphany*, 3, *Septuagesima*, 4, *Lent*, 5, *Easter*, and 6, *Rogationtide*. These six comprise both fixed (1-2) and movable (3-6) items, but not a complete set of either: there is nothing for Christmas, on the one hand, or (for example) Ascension and Pentecost, on the other. Moreover, *Septuagesima* and *Lent* are oddly positioned in the cycle, being squeezed in between *Annunciation* and *Easter* in defiance of liturgical chronology.

Uncertainty in the selection and positioning of *temporale* items is at first sight surprising, for they were a stable part of liturgical celebration. However, some uncertainty is familiar from Latin legends contemporary with the *SEL*, and can be traced in part to the inconsistencies of medieval service-books. Thus, although principally intended to separate what varied in date from year to year from what was fixed, a liturgical *temporale* contained, for convenience, the fixed feasts of Christmas (25 December), Circumcision (1 January), and Epiphany (6 January). In a service-book such anomalies of the division into *sanctorale* and *temporale* were purely formal, as the actual celebration of services was not affected, but problems were created for those derivative literary works that drew on the content of service-books without adopting their structure. The early part of the thirteenth century saw the growth of a genre of non-liturgical legends that were not restricted to saints' lives.⁵ In order to provide a comprehensive coverage of the church year the inclusion of material on the *Festa Christi* was naturally desired, but difficulties arose in amalgamating a fixed and a movable

series of items into the required single continuous sequence. The earliest of the genre, the *Abbreviatio in gestis et miraculis sanctorum* (or *Summa de vitis sanctorum*) of the French Dominican, Jean de Mailly (c.1225),⁶ did not attempt to include more than fixed feasts among its nearly 180 items, and so Christmas, Circumcision, and Epiphany alone comprise its *temporale* material. The same practice holds for the first version of Bartholomew of Trente's *Liber epilogorum in gesta sanctorum* (c.1245),⁷ although this is introduced by a chapter on the Advent season. Not until the *Legenda aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine (c.1263-67)⁸ was the reconciliation of *temporale* and *sanctorale* achieved. Jacobus inserted the movable feasts and fasts into the cycle of saints' lives approximately at the places indicated by the church calendar, thus in effect turning them artificially into fixed feasts. Ten are so treated: Septuagesima, Sexagesima, Quinquagesima, Quadragesima, Ember Days, Passion, Resurrection, Litanies, Ascension, and Pentecost. It is confidently done, but even so the positioning of the new material remains somewhat unspecific. Passion and Resurrection take their calendar dates of 25 and 27 March (the first that of the fixed feast of Annunciation, on which day of the year the Crucifixion was also supposed to have occurred); but the three pre-Lent Sundays, Quadragesima, and Ember Days are grouped together on 28 January (the date of 'Claves Quadragesima' at which point one applies the 'key' to find the date of Quadragesima in any particular year), and Litanies, Ascension, and Pentecost are brought together in early May.

3. The position of the movable feasts in the non-A tradition

The selection and placing of *temporale* items in the *SEL*'s A version are much less understandable than the practice of these Latin legendaries. However, a study of the position of the four poems on movable feasts (*Septuagesima*, *Lent*, *Easter*, and *Rogationtide*) in all the MSS in which they occur reveals a second textual tradition different from that of A. In the great majority of the twenty MSS involved, the four poems are inserted into the cycle of saints' lives as part of the sequence: *Benedict* (21 March); *Annunciation* (25 March); *SEPTUAGESIMA*, *LENT*, *EASTER*; *Mary of Egypt* (2 April), *Alphege* (19 April), *George* (23 April), *Mark* (25 April); *ROGATIONTIDE*; *Peter the Dominican* (29 April).⁹ But in three MSS, Lambeth Palace 223 (G), St John's College, Cambridge, B.6 (I), and Egerton 2810 (M), they are grouped together, in the same order, outside the *sanctorale* cycle. M, a conflation of several different *SEL* traditions by two scribes (Görlach, pp.90-91), preserves them as an appendix in association with five other expository *temporale* poems which will be discussed below. It is unclear how they were intended to be related to the main collection. The other two MSS are more significant.

It is exceptional among *SEL* MSS in containing almost wholly *temporale* narratives; it was probably once accompanied by a *sanctorale* in a separate volume. It, too, places its movable feasts at the end, but in this case the scribe has left us a valuable clue to their proper position. The colophon, "Explicit *temporale* in Anglicis", occurs on f.79r after the last of the narratives; f.79v is blank; the four expository poems begin on f.80r; and at the bottom of f.83v, on which they end, is just legible (although largely erased), "Here

scholde folwyn nexte of ysakar of Ioachym & Anne". This phrase closely resembles the heading to the *Nativity of Mary and Christ*¹⁰ on f.25r: "Isakar Ioachym et Anna", and this poem indeed begins with the legend of Joachim and of Anne, daughter of Isachar. If the poems on the movable feasts were, therefore, meant to be read before the cycle of *temporale* narratives, we have a situation similar to that in G, where the four movable feasts actually come first in the MS (ff.1r-5r) and are followed by a sequence of *temporale* narratives before the *sanctorale* cycle begins on f.48r. The first narrative poem in I is admittedly not the *Nativity of Mary and Christ* but, as in G, the *Old Testament History* (ff.1r-21v). However, ff.22-24 are blank, and the signatures in the MS suggest that this first quire of twenty-four leaves was possibly written separately from the others.¹¹ It may at once have been mislaid or lent out, or more probably not written until later, with the result that the poems on the movable feasts (presumably not originally available) were, when added on ff.80r-83v, keyed not to the *Old Testament History* but to the *Nativity* poem.

G's positioning of the movable feasts at the very beginning of its *SEL* collection is of special interest, because in respect of its text of the saints' lives this MS is closer than most to the likely form of the original version, Z. It is an important witness for Dr Görlach's group G, which represents the later tradition of group L. L is the surviving recension closest to Z, and preserves textual features of the unrevised state of the legendary.¹² Its principal extant MS, Laud 108 (L) - the earliest surviving MS of the *SEL* - exhibits many points of agreement with G, and there is some reason for thinking that L, now acephalous, may originally have begun with the same group of four movable feasts, which in its present state it lacks.

Although its collection is greatly jumbled, L, too, seems to have grouped *temporale* and *sanctorale* material separately.¹³ It now begins (ff.1r-10v) with a fragment of the *Ministry and Passion* (a *temporale* narrative whose only other main MS is I), and this poem also ends imperfectly, leaves being missing after f.10. The pages on which it stands are each numbered '8' in a fifteenth-century hand. The non-*SEL* *Infancy of Christ*,¹⁴ numbered similarly '9', then begins at the top of f.11r, and the saints' lives, numbered '10', '11', '12', etc., commence on f.23v. It therefore seems that seven earlier items have been lost. When the enumeration was carried out leaves must already have been lost between ff.10-11, for at the bottom of f.10v the same hand has written: "Verte ad istud signum † in isto libro in principio libri et ibi inueniet[ur] plus de passione domini post assumptionem ste marie". Presumably an Assumption and another Passion were two of the now lost seven items,¹⁵ and ll.25-28 of the *Infancy of Christ* possibly indicate that a third was a *Nativity* poem:

per after þre kinges of vncoupe londe
 To þat child brouȝten heore sonde.
 Inough ȝe habbeþ þarof iheord telle:
 Ne kepe ich more of heom spelle.

But this is uncertain, because although these lines are not

paralleled in its French source,¹⁶ the *Infancy* almost certainly had an existence independent of the *SEL*. On the other hand, the *Ministry and Passion* is in I immediately preceded by the *Nativity of Mary and Christ*, and it is quite possible that the same sequence obtained in L. Both G and I begin their *temporale* narrative cycle with the *Old Testament History*, and this, too, may have been one of L's lost poems. But given the similarities with G, and the evidence for a tradition of placing the movable feasts first, before *temporale* narratives, it is not inconceivable that L's first four items were *Septuagesima*, *Lent*, *Easter*, and *Rogationtide*.

4. Textual evidence for the priority of the non-A tradition

That the separate, preliminary grouping of these four poems is the earlier of the two MS traditions is confirmed by textual evidence. The A version's unusual positioning of *Septuagesima* and *Lent* between *Annunciation* and *Easter*, even though *Septuagesima*, liturgically, is sixty-one days before *Easter*, in itself suggests that they and *Easter* once existed as a distinct group. Moreover, the couplet that in A concludes *Easter* reads as though *Rogationtide* had earlier been part of the same group, but is now being separated:¹⁷

þe Rouisons ne comeþ neuere . biuore sein Markes day
þer uore we wollep of hom telle . in þe biginnyng of May
(57-58)

These lines do not occur in GI, and nor do they occur in MSS Vernon (V) and Winchester College 33 (W) which, alone among the MSS that preserve the movable feasts within the *sanctorale*, still group all four together. These two MSS, also, are closely linked with the L and G traditions.¹⁸

The impression that *Rogationtide* is being separated is strengthened by evidence that the A redactor was uncertain where to place it. The poem deals with both the Greater and the Lesser Litanies, the first a fixed feast sharing its day with St Mark (25 April), the second equivalent to the movable season of *Rogationtide*, which occupies the three days before *Ascension Day*. Despite its awareness of an association with Mark, the couplet from *Easter* just quoted suggests that in the A version the poem was thought of as primarily about the movable Lesser Litanies, as it of course was by those MSS - GIMVW - that group it with the other movable feasts: it is to be placed "in þe biginnyng of May", i.e. where *Ascension Day* would fall if *Easter* were taken to coincide with *Annunciation* on 25 March, and where the *Legenda aurea* in fact places it. But the end of the A version's *Mark* instead associates Litanies firmly with St Mark's day, mentioning the other position only to refute it ("biuore May", l.45):

His day me fast þoru al þe lond . ac for him nis it noȝt
Ac for honur of þe baners . þat worp þanne ferst out ibroȝt
And for feste of Letanie . þat biuore May
Holy Church e halt eche ȝer . a sein Markes day. (43-46)

And this association is confirmed in practice, for in the A version *Rogationtide* then immediately follows, contradicting *Easter* 57-58.

In contrast, the conclusion to *Mark* in MSS LV (where *Rogationtide* in neither case follows) mentions both Litanies. The continuity of their version shows it to be original and A 45-46 to be a later replacement:¹⁹

his dai men fastez þoru3 al þat lond : for him-seolf nis it
 nou3t,
 Ake for reuerence of þe baneres : [þat] in þat dai beoth fort
 i-brou3t.
 For men berez heom eche 3ere a-boute : ase red is þare-of i-nome,
 to bidden for þe eorþe blede . þat it mote wel forth come.
 Men fastez, 3wane huy formest berez heom out : a-seint Marcus
 dai þare-fore,
 And þreo dawes a-3ein halewe-þoresday : 3wane huy bez forþer
 i-bore.
 (43-48)

It was presumably the mention of the Litanies at the end of this version of *Mark* that led the A redactor to place *Rogationtide* where he did. He justified his action by omitting the reference to the alternative, forgetting, it seems, his contrary decision at the end of *Easter*.

Another attempt by the redactor to justify his handling of the expository material comes at the end of *Rogationtide*, where he explicitly excludes two other movable feasts:

þe feste of Holy þoresday . & eke of Wit Soneday
 In þe gospelles wo so lokeþ . þere he it finde may
 For it nis no need wanne hi beoþ þere . to sette is here also
 Forto sette is here & eke þere . hit nere no3t wel ido
 (55-58)

These lines, though present in I, are again not found in GVW. Their unusually insistent tone suggests that the redactor is particularly unwilling to include poems on Ascension Day and Whitsunday. The reason given for their exclusion - that they are already told "In þe gospelles" - may be the true one,²⁰ but the same could have been said of *Easter*: as it is, the four extant poems on movable feasts are essentially expository and non-narrative, unlike the Gospels. It is interesting that the intention of the Z version²¹ seems to have been to include Whitsuntide and Ascension Day, but that poems on these feasts are also missing there. Firstly, Whitsunday is always included in the programme of five movable feasts set out in ll.1-6 of *Septuagesima*, the text of which varies so little among its extant MSS that its standard A form would appear to be equivalent to that of Z:²²

Festen mouable þer beoþ icluped . viue in þe 3ere
 þe veorste is to louke alleluye . oure Leinte to rere
 And supþe Leinte and supþe Ester . þat gladeþ manion
 þe Rouisons & Witesoneday . þat last is of echon
 þis beoþ vif festen mouable . þat meoueþ eche 3er
 And neuer a 3er ne bileueþ in stude . þat hi were er
 (1-6)

It would seem that the A redactor either did not notice the reference to Whitsunday in l.4, or did not bother to rewrite the passage. Secondly, a poem on Ascension Day (surprisingly not mentioned in *Septuagesima*) is apparently anticipated in the four lines that link *Easter* and *Rogationtide* in GIVW:²³

Afterward þe xl. day . þat he ros from dep to live
 he steye into heuen . wip his woundes five
 Als hit falles on holy þoresday . þat he con to heuen stye
 But firste holy chirche hit helde . þe feste of letanye
 (G f.3v)

These lines are omitted from A, primarily because *Rogationtide*, as we have seen, is there separated from *Easter* for the reason given in the couplet substituted for them (*Easter* 57-58, quoted above); but we may deduce from *Rogationtide* 55-58 that a contributory factor was the redactor's evident unwillingness to include a poem on Ascension Day. Given, however, Z's apparent failure to provide poems on the two feasts, it may be that the redactor's justification for their omission is an invention in the face not merely of unwillingness but of inability to supply them.

'Editorial' remarks by the A redactor on the arrangement and selection of poems therefore tend to confirm that A is the later of the two MS traditions. It can also be shown that the texts of *Lent* and *Rogationtide* preserved in GIMVW and several other MSS are internally more original than those of A. In the case of *Lent* some of the non-A MSS contain a text longer than the standard form by some thirty lines, made up of three separate 'insertions' (Görlach, p.156). Each one is a simile or exemplum, but whereas the first two are self-contained and therefore not necessarily original, the third continues and completes the unfinished comparison of man's desertion of the penitential habits of Lent at Easter with the dulling of the bloodhound's sense of smell in Spring:

Ac many wolleþ bigynne wel . after hore sscrift anon
 And [bileue] al hore fole þoʒtes . & to no folie gon
 Ac anon so Ester is icome . þat hy habbeþ fleiss itake
 And eteþ rape & eke late . such þoʒt hi wolleþ forsake
 Ac hi vareþ as dep þe blod hond . at bigynnyng of þe ʒere
 þe smul haþ wel of euerich best . of hare & ek of dure
 Ac wanne þe hauporn bigynneþ to blowe . al it is forlore
 For swotnesse of þulke flour . þe smul þat was biuore
 (109-16)

This is the extent of the simile in A, but it is clear that the lines 'added' in Z at this point are integral and have suffered omission in A:

þei lesyn þanne al here smel . & here cours ecchon
 & þe hunte sitt at hom . hym lest not to felde gon
 So it farith be suyche men . þat al here þoʒt don ʒeue
 for to smelle oure lordis grace . qwan þei ben wel schryue
 but anon as lente is don . þat is here soulys bote

bei etyn flesch wol hertylyche . þe smak is ful sote
 Anon ryȝt for þat smak . þat opir is al fordo
 þat þei schulde þinke on ihesu crist . & on here penaunce
 also
 þan is here smel al toward god . al clenlyche benome
 it schal selde in mynde be . til lente eftsome come
 I wene ȝif lentoun neuere come . many hem wolde schryue
 as me þinkip be semblaunt . wol selde in al here lyue
 (I f.81v)

Similarly, as Dr Görlach (p.162) has again indicated, the A version's text of *Rogationtide* needs the six lines 'added' between ll.29-30 by GIMVW and two other MSS to make sense of the explanation of the custom of blessing someone who sneezes:

29 þerfore qwan men galpid so . þei blessyd hem anon
 +1 for dred of þat sodeyn deþ . as ȝit doþ many on
 +2 also qwan men gunne to fnese . crist þe helpe men sede
 +3 and alle þat hym abouȝtte were . & þat for þis sory drede
 +4 and non opir enchesoun þer is . þat ȝit men don so
 +5 but ȝit leue ȝe not þerfore . for it is euele do
 +6 and for þese sory euelis . fellyn after Ester anon
 30 þerfore we maken oure fastyng . next holy dayȝis son
 (I f.83v)

Two lines ending in *anon* within the space of seven evidently caused omission through homoeoteleuton in the A version's archetype.

The evidence so far assembled about the four poems on movable feasts has related mainly to their positioning. In this respect it seems clear that they were first treated as in the putative Z tradition. However, the reason for the seeming existence of poems on Septuagesima, Lent, Easter, and Rogationtide alone, without accompanying ones on Ascension Day and Pentecost, remains unresolved.

5. The fixed feasts: the uncertain status of MS Laud's version, and the standard texts' probable origin in A

But let us now turn to the A version's poems on fixed *temporale* feasts which, it was noted, are similarly odd in comprising only Circumcision and Epiphany, and not Christmas. In contrast to the movable feasts, the poems *Circumcision* and *Epiphany* do not vary significantly in their nineteen or so extant MSS, and consequently internal textual evidence to help us assign them to Z or A is lacking. However, MS L contains a different, compound poem on the two feasts, which has been thought to represent an earlier form of the standard texts (Görlach, pp.134-35). The sixteen lines in question occur as part of a 26-line passage transcribed as a single item on L f.88r-v. This comprises a unique 6-line prologue to the *SEL* (hidden though it is in the heart of L's jumbled collection), different from the standard *SEL Prologue*; the Circumcision and Epiphany; and four lines on St Fabian (20 January), different from the standard *SEL* form of this saint's life. I here print them from Horstmann's text,²⁴ distinguishing the three sections by spacing:

Al þis bok is i-maked of holi dawes : and of holie mannes liues
 þat soffreden for ore louerdes loue : pinene manie and riue,
 þat ne spareden for none eiȝe : godes weorkes to wurche;
 Of 3was liues 3wane heore feste fallez : men redez in holi
 churchē.
 þei ich of alle ne mouwe nouȝt telle : ichulle telle of some, 5
 Ase euerech feste after oþur : In þe 3ere doth come.

þe furste feste þat in þe 3ere comez : we cleopiez 3eres-dai,
 Ase ore louerd was circumciset : In þe giwene lay,
 For to fulfullen heore lawe : and for cristinedom non nas
 Are longe þare-afturward : þat he I-cristned was. 10
 He was Nyne and twenti 3er : and þrettene dawes old
 Are he i-baptized were : ase þe bok us hath i-told:
 Al-so it fel a twelfte-dai : seint Iohan þe baptist
 Baptizede in þe flum Iordan : ore louerd Ihesu crist.
 In þat dai a twelf-monþe : ore louerd was at one feste, 15
 þare he turnde water to win : þoruȝ is moder heste.
 We holdez al-so þat dai feste : of þe þridde þinge:
 Ase þe þre kingues to ore louerd : presaut dude bringe;
 to him heo comen ase is moder : a-child-bedde lay,
 After þat he i-bore was : þane þretteþe day, 20
 Ase it fallez a-twelfte-dai : longe heo erore him souȝten,
 gold and mirre and An-sens : In presaut heo him brouȝten.

Seint Fabian þrettene 3er : pope was In rome;
 he turnede mani men þat lupere weren : in-to cristine-dome.
 Decius, þat prince was : of heþenesse þo, 25
 he let him martri þere-fore : and opere with him mo.

The lines on Fabian occur in four other MSS, and as these are GV and two related MSS²⁵ it would seem as if this passage certainly formed part of Z. One hesitates, however, to assign the preceding twenty-two lines to the same state of the *SEL*, for they differ from the normal run of Z texts. Firstly, no other Z text survives only in L, or in any other single manuscript: MSS that often group with L in preserving Z texts, such as G and V, contain the standard *Prologue*, *Circumcision*, and *Epiphany*. Secondly, the lines cannot be shown to be related textually to these longer equivalents.

In addition, the lines on Circumcision and Epiphany are peculiarly, not to say badly, organized. Despite the prologue's implied intention (1.6), the two feasts are not treated separately. The one merges into the other at 1.10 which, from the standpoint of the Circumcision, anticipates the time when Christ was truly christened. This results in the Baptism's exceptionally becoming the first-mentioned of the several events commemorated on 6 January, whereas these were normally arranged in chronological order beginning with the Adoration of the Magi (here placed later), as in the standard *SEL Epiphany*. The muddled organization is reflected in the repetitions and the clumsy, uncertain syntax.

There is, further, the possibility that L's Circumcision and Epiphany is derivative - a jumble of already-existing material - for it has lines in common with one of the *temporale* narratives associated

with the *SEL*, the *Abridged Life of Christ (ALC)*.²⁶ Line 9 resembles *ALC* 82:

Vorte volfulle þulke lawe . & for non oþer þing it nas;

ll.13-14, 19-20 recall *ALC* 145 and 102; and two couplets are virtually identical, 11-12 to *ALC* 143-44:

Oure lord was [nyne]²⁷ and twenti þer . & þrettene dawes old
þo he lette him baptizi . as þe bok vs hap told,

and 15-16 to *ALC* 165-66:

þe nexte twelfþeday þer after . oure lord was at one feste
þer he turnde water to wyn . þow is moder heste.

But the direction of borrowing is unclear (if it has indeed taken place), as would be the borrower's reasons for selecting, rearranging, and adapting lines from a poem of such different length and purpose. Lines 11-12 are in fact also very close to ll.283-84 of the *SEL*'s *All Souls' Day*, especially in L's text. It may be that the authors were drawing on a common stock of remembered phrases.

For a number of reasons the status in the *SEL* of L's Circumcision and Epiphany is therefore highly uncertain, and we are still left, textually, with the problem of whether the 'standard' *Circumcision* and *Epiphany* should be assigned to Z or A. Have these poems come through from Z unchanged, as seems to have happened with *Septuagesima*? Dr Görlach accepts that this was the case with a number of saints' lives that similarly exhibit no sign of revision, for example *Julian the Confessor*, *Scholastica*, *Oswald the King*, and *Faith*. Or have those MSS that otherwise preserve Z material in part - all of them mixed Z and A, for no wholly Z MS survives - happened to replace earlier poems on Circumcision and Epiphany with new ones? The criterion of style does not help, as it rarely does in distinguishing different layers of composition in the *SEL*. Dr Görlach (p.54) admits that "there seems to have been little stylistic revision between 'Z' and 'A' ". *Circumcision* and *Epiphany* are more formal in character than the poems on the movable feasts, but this could be a result of the different purposes for which the two sets were apparently written. *Circumcision* and *Epiphany* were, it seems, intended to fit as self-contained units into a cycle of predominantly saints' lives, and, as relatively minor items, were kept short. The poems on movable feasts, in contrast, were in all probability conceived as extra-cyclical material to stand before the saints' lives: there were in consequence fewer restrictions on their length, proportions, and form. A more valuable criterion is that of the poems' Latin sources. The four on movable feasts appear to derive from some "unidentified *Summa*" of liturgical information (Görlach, p.156) akin to that of John Beleth,²⁸ whereas *Circumcision* and *Epiphany* correspond to passages from the *Legenda aurea*, the use of which is a principal characteristic of the A version. The content of these two poems is too short and generalized to make the *Legenda aurea* the undoubted source, but in the circumstances the argument in favour of assigning them to A is strong.

6. The likelihood of a two-part A revision

We saw earlier, however, that the "A redactor" still grouped three of the movable feasts together when introducing them into the *sanctorale* cycle; that although he took some trouble to modify them to fit their new context, he was not wholly consistent; and that rather than provide substitutes for missing poems on Ascension Day and Whitsuntide, he attempted to justify their absence. Is the same man really likely to have supplied the extant *Circumcision* and *Epiphany*, and revised many of the saints' lives in accordance with the *Legenda aurea*? We are faced here with the probability that what we have called "the A version" comprises two distinct stages of revision by two different writers, one an innovator, responsible for much composition and recomposition, the other - who inserted the movable feasts into the *sanctorale* cycle - an amalgamator.²⁹ It is not easy to tell which of the two was active first. If the latter, we might have expected the innovator to have repositioned and filled out the sequence of movable feasts as part of his general revision on the basis of the *Legenda aurea*. That this was not done suggests that the incorporation of Z's four movable feasts into the *sanctorale* was the second stage of a two-part A redaction.³⁰ This hypothesis receives some support from those few MSS, like M and V, that contain A-version saints' lives yet still appear to treat their movable feasts according to earlier traditions. But the innovating A redactor, working with the *Legenda aurea* in mind, might also have been expected to fit the movable feasts coherently into the legendary cycle if he had come upon the extant poems outside the *sanctorale* or, indeed, not at all. We might, in addition, have expected him to provide a poem on Christmas. That he evidently did neither of these things tends to confirm what is becoming increasingly apparent, namely that in the course of the *SEL*'s development the feasts and fasts of the church year were seldom regarded as of great importance.

7. The stage of the movable feasts' first association with Z

To give MS L's 6-line prologue credence as the original prologue to the *SEL* would necessitate supposing that what we have called Z is in reality also made up of at least two layers of composition. L's prologue is clearly intended for a single collection of *holi dawes* and *holie mannes liues* beginning at January 1st, not for one with a preceding group of poems on movable feasts. The expression, "Al þis bok is i-maked", seems to rule out the possibility of any earlier matter. But even without the uncertain evidence of this prologue, it is intrinsically unlikely that the first version of the *SEL* should have been provided from the start with an extra-cyclical group of non-*sanctorale* items. The purpose of compiling the work must have been hagiographical, and its calendrical arrangement - like a martyrology, and unparalleled among contemporary non-liturgical legendaries - suggests that it was originally conceived as a collection of saints' lives pure and simple rather than as a 'mixed' legendary, with *temporale* feasts inserted, like those of Jean de Mailly, Bartholomew, and Jacobus. If this deduction is correct, much of the inconsistent treatment of the expository *temporale* material becomes more explicable. The poems on movable feasts can be seen to be early external accretions to Z, which were later brought within the cycle by the A

redactors but not regarded as sufficiently important for their place in the *sanctorale* to be properly worked out. The omission of Ascension and Pentecost from the 'external' group is still unusual - since poems on them are anticipated but not supplied, two stages of composition may also be involved here - but not as wholly unaccountable as if the movable feasts had been part of the original conception of the work.

Equally important, the peculiarities of the fixed feasts are the more easily explained. If the original impetus of the *SEL* was purely hagiographical, Z need not necessarily have contained items for Circumcision, Epiphany, and Christmas. We have seen that the lines devoted to the first two of these feasts in L cannot confidently be assigned to Z, and that the standard poems on the subjects probably belong to the A redaction. As with Ascension and Pentecost, the failure of the main A redactor to supply a poem on Christmas remains surprising, but less surprising given the evident persistence of the original conception of the *SEL* as a collection of saints' lives. Whether fixed or movable, the *temporale* feasts failed, it seems, to capture the consistent interest of the A redactors.

8. The lack of interest in expository *temporale* poems in later *SEL* redactions

Later *SEL* compilers do little to make good the incomplete coverage of the *temporale* festivals. That it was perfectly possible to compose expository poems on Christmas, Ascension, and Pentecost is demonstrated by only one, the compiler of the fourteenth-century MS Egerton 2810 (M), who seemingly went out of his way to supply poems on feasts he had not found in the standard *SEL*. At the end of his *sanctorale* cycle, on ff.171r-79v, occur five items known respectively as the *Feast of Christmas*, the *Feast of the Ascension*, the *Feast of Whitsunday*, the *Feast of the Trinity*, and the *Feast of Corpus Christi*.³¹ The last occurs also in the fifteenth-century MS Bodley 779,³² but the first four, which appear to be of common authorship, are found nowhere else. They are of poor quality, a mixture of attempted exposition and fragments of narrative. The inclusion of Trinity Sunday, a feast officially instituted only in 1334, appears to place their composition within the fourteenth century. What is more, the latter half of the *Feast of Christmas* consists of extracts from two of the *temporale* narratives, and so must considerably post-date the early versions of the *SEL*. A poem on Corpus Christi, the feast of which was first promulgated officially in 1264 and spread to England only later, is also unlikely to have been included by the early *SEL*. A few pages later in M, at the beginning of a fresh quire (ff.182r-end), follows the familiar group of *Septuagesima*, *Lent*, *Easter*, and *Rogationtide*. (The leaves between were originally blank, but were filled in with other matter in the fifteenth century.) It is notable that ll.1-6 of *Septuagesima*, describing the usual programme of five movable feasts, are omitted: the compiler may have realized that his five additional poems had now made this list invalid.

Only in M is the neglect of Christmas rectified by the inclusion of an expository poem on the subject, but several later MSS reveal

awareness of the need to mark it in some way. The standard A-version *Prologue* to the *SEL*, consisting mainly of two extended metaphors (Christ as both seed and gardener of the fruit of Christendom, and Christ, the apostles and the martyrs as warriors in the battle to establish it on earth), is often headed in the MSS, "Banna sanctorum", and is explicitly intended to introduce a legendary cycle beginning at January 1st. However, MS Tanner 17, though preserving the normal order of legends, calls it "The natiuite of oure lorde", and MS Bodleian Add. C.38 not only heads it "De natiuitate" but follows it first by the saints of Christmas week (Stephen, John the Evangelist, and Thomas of Canterbury) and only then by *Circumcision*.³³ In Add. C.38 Christmas, far from being neglected, is thus made the starting-point of the whole collection. The *Prologue* was evidently interpreted, both by it and Tanner 17, as a "Christmas allegory" (Görlach, p.133 n.11).

The fragmentary MS Corpus Christi College Oxford 431 appears also to begin at Christmas, for it prefaces the *Prologue* (which in this case is as usual followed by *Circumcision*) with the poem *Evangelium in Principio*, a translation with running commentary of the gospel for High Mass on Christmas Day.³⁴ The same combination is found in MS Pepys 2344, which is one of the two MSS (the other being Egerton 1993) to begin their *SEL* collection in Advent, with *Andrew*. MS Pepys preserves *In Principio* and the *Prologue* within its cycle (thereby illustrating that the order of the church year is manufactured, not original):³⁵ its scribe began with *Andrew, Nicholas, Lucy, Thomas the Apostle, Stephen, John, and Thomas of Canterbury*, and then emphasized *In Principio*'s connection with Christmas by first going back to *Anastasia* (25 December).

These, however, are only tentative and scarcely conscious attempts at remedying the gaps in the expository *temporale* poems. The original conception of the *SEL* clearly died hard. But the low level of interest in the feasts and fasts among later compilers is possibly also to be explained by the increasingly widespread popularity of the *temporale* narratives. The majority of these (at least in their extant form) are likely to postdate the A version.³⁶ In some cases they accompany the *sanctorale*, either as a distinct group within the same MS or, it would seem, in a separate MS (as appears to have been the case with I), but in others individual narratives are brought within the calendrical cycle and placed according to the dates of their corresponding feast-days. Thus the *Nativity of Mary and Christ* (in whole or in part) is positioned for Christmas in MSS Stowe 949, Bodley 779, and Trinity College Cambridge R.3.25, and in its eleven MSS the *Southern Passion* almost always replaces *Easter* (or, rather, incorporates it within itself) in the sequence *Septuagesima, Lent, Easter*. The *Southern Passion* also contains the stories of Ascension and Pentecost, and it is in this narrative fashion that these two feast-days are at last regularly represented within the cycle. Narrative was the original and continuing purpose of the *SEL*, and the expository poems seem never to have fitted easily into it. It is not surprising if narrative treatments of the *temporale* feasts eventually proved more acceptable.

THE POSITIONING OF THE EXPOSITORY TEMPORALE POEMS IN THE DIFFERENT MANUSCRIPT TRADITIONS

| | Z (1) (Presumed original form of SEL) | Z (2) (Possible original form of MS L) | Mixed Z and A (MS G) | Mixed Z and A (MS V) | A (Standard form of SEL) |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|
| Outside the cycle | | SEPTUAGESIMA LENT EASTER ROGATIONTIDE <i>Temporale</i> narratives* | SEPTUAGESIMA LENT EASTER ROGATIONTIDE <i>Temporale</i> narratives | | |
| Within the cycle | (? L's prologue, Circumcision, Epiphany?) Saints' lives | L's prologue, Circumcision, Epiphany Saints' lives | Prologue CIRCUMCISION EPIPHANY Saints' lives | Prologue CIRCUMCISION EPIPHANY Saints' lives | Prologue CIRCUMCISION EPIPHANY Saints' lives |
| | | | Annunciation SEPTUAGESIMA LENT EASTER ROGATIONTIDE** Saints' lives | Annunciation SEPTUAGESIMA LENT EASTER Saints' lives | Annunciation SEPTUAGESIMA LENT EASTER Saints' lives |
| | | | | ROGATIONTIDE | ROGATIONTIDE |
| | | | | | Saints' lives |

* The first *temporale* narratives to be associated with the SEL need not necessarily have been introduced at the same stage as the poems on the movable feasts. The sequence of items 'outside the cycle' in columns 2 and 3 would seem also to have been the intention of the compiler of MS I.

** At this point in MS V occurs, in fact, the *temporale* narrative known as the *Southern Passion*, which itself normally incorporates a text of *Easter*, in this case omitted (see Pickering, *Anglia*, 91 (1973), 445). The poem is otherwise principally found in certain A MSS, where it replaces *Easter* in the cycle. It never occurs outside the cycle except in extracts.

This chart, while seeking to illustrate, from left to right, the absorption of the poems on movable feasts into the SEL cycle, should not be taken as indicating a necessarily chronological development.

NOTES

- 1 Leeds Texts and Monographs, New Series, 6 (Leeds, 1974). I cite this work frequently, as "Görlach".
- 2 O.S. Pickering, "The *temporale* narratives of the *South English Legendary*", *Anglia*, 91 (1973), 425-55 (which includes a discussion of the use of the term '*temporale*' to describe these poems); "Three *South English Legendary* Nativity poems", *Leeds Studies in English*, New Series, 8 (1975), 105-119; ed., *The South English Nativity of Mary and Christ*, Middle English Texts, 1 (Heidelberg, 1975).
- 3 The date of composition is that given in T. Kaeppli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, Vol. II, G-I (Rome, 1975), no. 2154, p.350.
- 4 *The South English Legendary*, EETS, OS 235, 236, 244 (1956-59).
- 5 See A. Poncelet, "Le légendier de Pierre Calo", *Analecta Bollandiana*, 29 (1910), 5-116; also T. Wolpers, *Die englische Heiligenlegende des Mittelalters* (Tübingen, 1964), pp.197-98.
- 6 Unprinted. See A. Dondaine, "Le Dominicain français Jean de Mailly et la Légende dorée", *Archives d'histoire dominicaine*, 1 (1946), 53-102.
- 7 Unprinted. See Poncelet, pp.15-19; Dondaine, pp.80-81; B. Altaner, *Der heilige Dominikus* (Breslau, 1922), pp.84-87.
- 8 Printed by T. Graesse (Dresden, 1846).
- 9 For details, see Görlach, Chapter V ("The survey of individual items"), and pp.306-07. A chart, illustrating in simplified form the relative disposition of the expository *temporale* poems in the different MS traditions, as described in the following pages, will be found at the end of the present article (p.14).
- 10 Details of all the *temporale* narratives referred to will be found in Pickering, *Anglia*, 91 (1973), 425-55.
- 11 After their own particular numbers, the leaves of the present second gathering are signed "a.1" or simply "1" (giving, for example, "1.a.1", "ij.a.1", "iij.a.1"), those of the third, "b.ij" (e.g. "ij.b.ij"), and those of the fourth, "c.iij" (e.g. "iij.c.iij"), whereas the first gathering is itself unnumbered, the leaves being signed merely "1", "2", "3", etc.
- 12 For these relationships, see Görlach, pp.51-53.
- 13 L's saints' lives were printed by C. Horstmann, *The Early South-English Legendary*, EETS, OS 87 (1887).
- 14 L's first two items were printed by C. Horstmann in *Leben Jesu, ein Fragment, und Kindheit Jesu* (Münster, 1873). The *Infancy of Christ* was also printed in his *Altenglische Legenden* (Paderborn, 1875), pp.1-61, from which I quote.
- 15 The only extant MS that includes an Assumption poem among a group of preliminary *temporale* narratives is again G.

- 16 The *Évangiles de l'Enfance*, unprinted, but see, for example, Bodleian Library MS Selden supra 38, ff.1v-2r. The relationship of the French and English versions is discussed by P. Meyer, "Version anglaise du poème français des Enfances Jésus Christ", *Romania*, 18 (1889), 128-31, and F. Holthausen, "Zum mittelenglischen Gedicht, 'Kindheit Jesu'", *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 127 (1911), 318-22.
- 17 As with all quotations from the A version, I quote from *The South English Legendary*, Vol. I, EETS 235 (1956).
- 18 Görlach, pp.53, 103-05. In their treatment of the movable feasts VW possibly represent a third MS tradition, textually midway between the two main traditions.
- 19 I quote from L's text printed in the *Early South-English Legendary*, EETS, OS 87 (1887), p.363.
- 20 As I assume in my edition of the *South English Nativity of Mary and Christ* (n.2), p.41, when arguing that the early audience of the *SEL* may have had access to the Gospels.
- 21 On the assumption that it is the earlier, it will now at times be convenient to refer to the non-A tradition (as represented usually by MSS GIVW) as Z.
- 22 Görlach, p.156. MSS GV omit 11.9-12 of the poem, but only M, which completely omits them, significantly disturbs 11.1-6.
- 23 Görlach (p.162) unjustifiably treats these lines as an actual poem about Ascension Day. If this were so, they should, in any case, follow, not precede, *Rogationtide*. I give here the text of G: when quoting from MSS in this paper I silently expand scribal abbreviations.
- 24 *Early South-English Legendary*, EETS, OS 87 (1887), pp.177-78.
- 25 Görlach, p.137. The two related MSS belong to redactions descended from the G version. *Fabian's* extreme brevity is explained by this saint's occurrence on 20 January with the more important Sebastian, who receives a life of normal length.
- 26 Unprinted. See Pickering, *Anglia*, 91 (1973), 446-48. I quote here from MS Egerton 1993, ff.22r-23r.
- 27 [nyne]: MS *fiue*. I supply *nyne* from MS Trinity College Cambridge R.3.25.
- 28 *Rationale divinatorum officium* (or *Summa de divinis officiis*), printed by J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia cursus completus*, series latina, 202 (Paris, 1855), cols. 13-166.
- 29 If the treatment of the movable feasts in VW, where all four are grouped together inside the cycle, represents an intermediate textual layer (see above, n.18), two stages of the amalgamator's work may properly have to be distinguished.
- 30 If so, the first stage may be exemplified by the content and arrangement of MS G: see the chart below.

- 31 See Pickering, *Anglia*, 91 (1973), 452-53.
- 32 From where it was printed by C. Horstmann, "Des MS. Bodl. 779 jüngere Zusatzlegenden zur südlichen Legendensammlung", *Archiv*, 82 (1889), 307-12.
- 33 The last couplet of the *Prologue*, leading on to *Circumcision*, is in consequence omitted.
- 34 For details of this item, see Görlach, p.133.
- 35 Minnie E. Wells, "The structural development of the South English Legendary", *JEGP*, 41 (1942), 321-23.
- 36 I hope in a future article to discuss the *temporale* narratives' relationship with the *sanctorale*.