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Essays in Honour of Oliver Pickering

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The Nativity of the Virgin and St Katherine: 
Additions to John Mirk’s *Festival*

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The *Festival* is a late-fourteenth-century sermon collection by the Austin canon John Mirk.1 Mirk’s original text (extant in twelve full manuscripts) underwent an early recension (in eight full manuscripts) which resulted in comprehensive textual variation which firmly demarcates the two versions of the *Festival*. This recension was itself substantially revised and augmented (extant in two full and two partial manuscripts). In addition, *Festival* sermons and excerpts (particularly *narrationes*) were adopted, adapted, or survive in an incomplete state (of between one and nineteen sermons) in twenty more manuscripts.2

Mirk’s original text and its recension were first studied, and designated Groups A and B, by Martyn F. Wakelin.3 Although the Group B text is a rewrite of Group A, the variants are in the main insignificant: minor additions, omissions, changes of phrase, changes of lexeme, and the like. This is very different from the Revision (designated with a capital R), whose author revises, rather than merely rewrites, and produces a very different final work, augmented, moreover, by thirty extra sermons.4 This paper will focus on Group B, not on the Revision.5

The nature of variation in the recension may be indicated by a brief comparison between two passages from a single Group A and a single Group B manuscript:

i) the sermon for the Nativity of the Virgin

Group A
Pe thrydde tyme oure Lady was borne to ioy passyng. For whan scheo passed oute of þis worlde, hure Sone Ihesus was redy wyth grete multitudo (*sic*) of angellus and oþer seyntus and broght hur wyth grete worscep yp into heven and þer crownyd hur quene of heven and emperas of helle and lady of þe worlde, so þat scheo is now in blysse þat eure schal laste. *Wherefore I sette here þis ensaumpul [...]* (London, British Library,

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2 For details of manuscripts and sigla, see *Festival*, I, xiii–xiv.

ii) the sermon for the feast-day of St Katherine

Group A
Pan þis emperoure spake fayre to Katerine and behatte hure þat he wolde weddon hure and done hur alle þe worcep þat he cowthe if sche wolde forsakyn Criste and levon on hys god. But for scheo sette noghte be hym ny be hys goddys, l he made to smyton of hure hedde. Pan when þe bed was off, in stede of blode ran oute whyte mylke and anone þerwynth com angellys and tokon hur body and bere it vp into þe eyre and so forth twenty dayes iurney into þe mounte of Synay, and þere byried itte wyth grete worchep […] (MS Cotton Claudius A II, fols 116v–17r)

Group B
Pan þis emperoure spake fair to Kateryne and hiȝt here þat he would wed here ȝif sche woulde forsake Crist and l leve uppon his goddis. And sche sett nowȝt by hym ne by his goddis. And when he saw þat, he made to smyte of hiȝ[h]e hede. And þan in the stede of blode þere ran out faire mylke and þan anon come angelis and toke her soule into þe blisse and þei toeke her body and bere it² into þe aiere and so into þe mounte of Synay and þere byried it with grete worchep […] (MS Rawlinson A.381, fols 104vb–5ra)

In the first set of passages above, from the sermon for the Nativity of the Virgin, the substantive differences are minor — the Group B text omits and oper seynstus, substitutes moche ioy for

The *temporale* of the Revision were edited as my doctoral thesis: ‘A Critical Edition of the Temporale Sermons of MSS Harley 2247 and Royal 18 B XXV’ (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1980). It was as a Ph.D. student that I first met Oliver Pickering, also a postgraduate medievalist at the University of London. Shortly after his appointment at the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, I too came to Leeds as a research assistant to the Survey of English Dialects, led by Harold Orton, together with Stewart F. Sanderson and J. D. A. Widdowson. By the time I completed my Ph.D., Oliver had become Assistant Editor to the Middle English Texts series, for which he asked me to edit a selection of Revision sermons: *The Advent and Nativity Sermons from a Fifteenth-Century Revision of John Mirk’s Festial*, Middle English Texts, 13 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1981). Later we co-edited *The Index of Middle English Prose, Handlist VI: A Handlist of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Prose in Yorkshire Libraries and Archives* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989). More recently, Oliver discovered a sixteenth-century version of the Festial sermon for St Mary Magdalene in a composite manuscript in the British Library, on which we collaborated: ‘ANeglectedCopy ofJohnMirk’sMaryMagdaleneSermon’, *Medieval Sermon Studies*, 49 (2005), 59–68. We have been friends for nearly forty years now, meeting occasionally, almost always in the Brotherton, by chance or design, and keeping in touch with each other’s lives and careers. Oliver has been a good friend, one whose integrity and scholarship have been constants throughout his career — I have been lucky to know him.

Martyn Wakelin (who died prematurely in 1988) was another good friend, also with connections with Leeds (through his edition of the Brotherton Collection manuscript of the *Festial* and his editorial work for the Survey of English Dialects). He and I were happy collaborators on a project to edit Group B of the *Festial*, and it is our transcription of our planned base-text, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A.381, which is used in this paper.

-s is erased on his but not replaced.

bere it is preceded by beried it, caught by eyeskip from below.
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grete worschep, adds the familiar tag without ende, and shortens the link to the narratio. There are a few insignificant functional variants: vp, now, alle, the, pislan. In the second passage, from the sermon for the feast-day of St Katherine, variation is no more important: behatte becomes hiȝt and whyte becomes faire, the phrase forth twenti dayes iurney is omitted from Group B, while other omissions are most likely due to independent eyeskip from an Ur-text: and done hur alle be worchep bat he cowthe and when þe hed was off (omitted from Group B), and when he saw þat and soule into þe blisse and þei toke her (omitted from Group A). Again, there are minor functional variants: onlvpon, god/goddis, but forland, þerwyth/þan, vp, and the Group B text has minor lexical items not in the Group A text (And þan in the stede of bloode þere).

These variants would, of course, be sufficient to create a sizeable apparatus variorum, even for so few lines (more sizeable if the variants within Groups A and B were taken into account), but they do not suggest a revising hand at work. However, there are passages in the Festial which do suggest such a hand at work, intermittently and in a way quite different from the wholesale Revision which was the subject of my doctoral thesis. These revisions (mostly additions to the original text and mostly dependent, like the original Festial, on the Legenda aurea) are not exclusive to Group B at first, but from approximately half-way through the sermon collection they do become exclusive.8 The most substantial additions are in the sermons for the Nativity of the Virgin and St Katherine.9 These additions are the subject of the current paper.

The Nativity of the Virgin

The first passage above, from the sermon for the Nativity of the Virgin, ends with the introduction of a narratio: ‘Wherefore I sette here þis ensaumpul’ (in the Cotton Claudius manuscript which forms the base-text of my edition). In the narratio a French Jew, travelling in England, is rescued from robbers by the Virgin Mary, whose visions of hell and heaven persuade him to baptism.10 The narratio concludes the sermon: ‘and was aftur an holy man and fuldeuowtetooureLady.NowȝeschalpraytooureLady et cetera’ (MSCottonClaudius AII, fol.107v). The Group B manuscripts do not end at this point,11 but, having noted that the Jew ‘was after a fulle holy man’, continue with details of the Virgin’s marriage to Joseph (see Appendix (i)).12 When the Virgin reaches puberty, the bishop of the temple where she has

8 Festial, I, lxxvii–viii.
10 One of the Group A manuscripts, London, Dr Williams’s Library, MS Ancient 11, provides an alternative narratio about a priest, devoted to the Virgin, whose doubt about the sacrament of the altar was resolved by the appearance of Mary and her Son on the altar in place of the Host (and the Son’s subsequent metamorphosis back into the Host).
11 Nor does the Group A manuscript, Southwell Minster, MS 7, which adds an extra narratio: a monk-author traduced by his cousin suffers the punishment of having his arm cut off, but the rotting arm is restored by the Virgin (cf. Frederic C. Tubach, Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales, FF Communications 204 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1969), no. 2419), after which the monk visits Jerusalem, where a scholarly Jew asks him to draw the Virgin and is converted on seeing her suckle the Child.
12 Two Group B manuscripts are absent for this sermon, Leeds, University Library, Brotherton Collection, MS 502 and Hatfield House, Cecil Papers 280. The extant witnesses to this addition agree in the salient details of the text and in all significant readings. Textual variation is not great, with the exception of f, which expands and rewrites
been lodged by Joachim and Anna summons kings and nobles in order to find her a husband. For the right man an old worm-eaten ash rod will spring into flower. After two days no one has been successful, but on the third day an old man, Joseph, arrives in the temple and a white dove descends on his head. Despite his misgivings about taking on a young wife, he is persuaded to grasp the rod, which burgeons into life. They are married and Joseph takes Mary home with him. When the Virgin becomes pregnant, he wants to steal away from her (the assumption is that he knows it cannot be his child) but is told by an angel to return and look after her as a husband should a wife. The passage (and the sermon) ends in all the Group B manuscripts with the reminder that the continuation of the story is to be found in the sermon for the Annunciation of the Virgin.

Little of this is scriptural. Only her pregnancy (‘antequam convenirent’, that is, ‘before they had come together’) is recorded in the New Testament (Matthew 1. 18–25), together with Joseph’s desire to send her away secretly (rather than leave himself) until an angel in a dream tells him the truth of the conception, at which Joseph takes Mary as his wife but does not enter into conjugal relations with her before the birth of Jesus. The details of the marriage of the Virgin are nowhere found in scripture but have their origin in the early Greek Protevangelium of James, which was the source for the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew.

As noted above, Mirk’s acknowledged source for the Festial is the Legenda aurea of Jacobus de Voragine (hereafter LA), where brief details of the Virgin’s upbringing in the temple and her marriage to Joseph are included within the material for the Annunciation and fuller details in that for the Nativity of the Virgin. This is therefore the precedent for their inclusion in the Festial recension. The LA version of her marriage differs from that of the recension in several ways, however: the Virgin rejects marriage since she has vowed herself to God; after the prayers of the high priest and the elders of the temple, a voice announces the test for the Virgin’s husband; each unmarried man of the house of David is to place a branch on the altar (the branch will flower and a dove settle on the head of the chosen one); when this miracle does not take place after two attempts, the voice announces that the true husband has not yet come forward, at which Joseph (reluctantly because of his age) appears and the miracle is effected; Joseph then returns to Bethlehem to prepare for the marriage, while Mary returns to her parents in Nazareth with seven virgins as handmaidens.

Clearly, the recension simplifies some of the material — Mary’s reluctance is not mentioned; there is no deliberation in the temple, nor is there a voice from heaven; they are married there and then and both return to one place (Nazareth). However, the material is also elaborated by circumstantial detail, particularly in relation to the old worm-eaten ash stick which had been in the temple for many years and in the details of the test itself. (The further Festial material about Joseph’s wish to abandon Mary, which is not in LA, is scriptural.)

the Group B text (see further Festial, I, xlvii). The material is also found in two manuscripts of the Revision, London, British Library, MS Harley 2247 (fols 188v–189v) and Dublin, Trinity College, MS 428 (fols 41r–42r). On the relationships within Group B, see Festial, I, lxviii–lxxxii; on the relationship of Group B to the Revision, see Advent and Nativity Sermons, ed. by Powell, pp. 25–32.

tension of the two days during which the kings and nobles compete is built up to the third day, when Joseph arrives for the first time, gives his pragmatic reasons for staying aloof from the ceremony, but is eventually forced to submit to the test. Here are classic elements of the ‘chosen one’ topos (the *Morte Darthur* offers several examples — Arthur, Gareth, Lancelot searching Sir Urry’s wounds)\(^\text{16}\) — the most likely candidates for success in a competition fail in that test, while the most unlikely and/or most reluctant candidate succeeds. The material is presented simply and dramatically, providing a happy catharsis as the doubt and uncertainty are resolved (only for the situation to become again embroiled in doubt by the Virgin’s untoward pregnancy, also swiftly legitimated).

The question is whether the Group B redactor was personally responsible for the version in the *Festial* recension or whether one must search for another source. The *South English Legendary* (hereafter *SEL*) is the most obvious candidate, but there is no material (as edited by d’Evelyn and Mill) for the Nativity of the Virgin, and what there is on the Annunciation barely mentions the Annunciation, let alone anything else.\(^\text{17}\) The *Gilte Legende* (*GL*), on the other hand, in its Annunciation material follows the brief synopsis in *LA*: Mary was in the temple from three to fourteen years of age; she vowed chastity; the flowering rod secured her marriage to Joseph; they then left for their separate homes.\(^\text{18}\) It also includes material for the Nativity of the Virgin, again based on *LA* and so with the same differences from the *Festial* version. Indeed, the number of attempts to find a marriage partner for Mary (in the *Festial*, the number of days) is not mentioned, which distances it further from the *Festial*.\(^\text{19}\)

In 1975 Oliver Pickering inaugurated the Middle English Texts series with his edition (adapted from his doctoral dissertation) of *The South English Nativity of Mary and Christ* (*SEN*).\(^\text{20}\) Under the general editorship of Manfred Görlach (and with Oliver first as assistant editor and then full general editor), Middle English Texts has become a foremost player in the editing of medieval texts. As Oliver Pickering has said, most of *SEN* follows either the *LA* or the *Pseudo-Matthew* (*P-M*) account.\(^\text{21}\) In the details of the marriage itself it follows *LA*,\(^\text{22}\) and so agrees with *GL*, but, in its addition of material on Joseph’s reaction to Mary’s pregnancy (in origin scriptural),\(^\text{23}\) it follows *P-M* and differs from *GL* (which does not contain this material). *P-M* and *SEN* differ from scripture and from the *Festial*, however, in including the corroboration of Mary’s purity by her handmaidens and of Mary’s and Joseph’s celibacy by a trial by water (drinking holy water) at the hands of the high priest.\(^\text{24}\)

\(^{\text{16}}\) The competition for Portia’s hand in *The Merchant of Venice* is perhaps a more fitting parallel, since it includes a marriage contract. Joseph’s reluctance is, of course, unusual in such contexts.


\(^{\text{18}}\) *GL* is a close translation […] of Jean de Vignay’s *Légende Dorée* […] , which in turn is a close translation of Jacobus de Voragine’s *Legenda Aurea* (‘Gilte Legende’, ed. by Richard Hamer with the assistance of Vida Russell, 2 vols of 3, EETS o.s. 327, 328 (2006, 2007), I, xi.

\(^{\text{19}}\) *Gilte Legende*, ed. by Hamer, II. 645–46, II. 157–94.

\(^{\text{20}}\) *The South English Nativity of Mary and Christ*, Middle English Texts, 1 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1975).

\(^{\text{21}}\) *South English Nativity*, ed. by Pickering, p. 34.

\(^{\text{22}}\) *South English Nativity*, ed. by Pickering, pp. 64–68. *P-M* differs from the *LA* account in having the sticks left overnight in the Holy of Holies, where Joseph’s short stick is deliberately ignored by the priests, and in the fact that the miracle occurs when a dove issues from the successful candidate’s stick (there is no mention of the flowering stick which is essential in *LA* and English versions of the legend).


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*SEN* does not, therefore offer a precedent for the *Festial* recension (except in Joseph’s reaction to Mary’s pregnancy, which is anyway scriptural). Indeed, it gives much more circumstantial detail (perhaps partly the result of its verse medium), while the *Festial* is more focussed on conveying the basic facts with a simple lucidity that suits *ad populum* preaching. For example, both follow *P-M* (and only *P-M* of the possible sources) in having Joseph voice his thoughts about the unsuitability of his marriage to Mary, but the contrast between the loquacious Joseph of *SEN* and the taciturn Joseph of the *Festial* is marked. *SEN* reads:

‘Lokeþ’, he seide, ‘my feblenesse, and habbþ of me mylce and ore. Nam ich old wiþ many childrene? My myght is me bynome, And heo is 3ong and þat is synne to maken vs togadre come.’

‘Aþeþ Godes wille’, he seide, ‘nel ich nout be, ac whanne it mot be so nede Wedde ich er wolle, ac heo ne schal for me [her maydenehede schede]. Wardyn ichille be hire to kepe — oþer þing ne may Y do nouht — þat my sone mowe wedden hir after me, þat oure kynde [þeþ] forþ brouht.’

and the *Festial* recension reads:

And þan he said to hymself: ‘This maide is not for me.’

And Joseph said: ‘Nay, for sche is not for me. Sche is to yong, for Y miȝt not gourne her astate.’

Indeed, the *Festial*'s presentation of Joseph, muttering to himself and then speaking aloud his thoughts brusquely to the bishop, is altogether different from that in the the analogues. For example, the Mary Play in the N-Town cycle (the only play covering this material), has a Joseph who expresses much the same sentiments as the *Festial* Joseph but with less economy of speech:

‘What, xuld I wedde? God forbede! I am an old man, so God me spede, And wyth a wyff now, to levyn in drede, It wore neither sport nere game.

A, shuld I haue here, 3e lese my lif. Alas, dere God, xuld I now rave? An old man may nevyr thryff With a 3onge wyff, so God me saue. Nay, Nay, sere, lett bene! Xuld I now in age begynne to dote? If I here chyde she wolde clowte my cote, Blere myn ey and pyke out a mote, And þus oftyntymes it is sene.’

In contrast to this, the redactor appears to be merely interested in adding material that has been (to his viewpoint) neglected but with the aim of completeness, rather than asserting any literary or authorial aspirations. And, ultimately, I am inclined to say of the *Festial* addition, as Oliver Pickering said of *SEN* thirty-five years ago: ‘it could conceivably have been written from

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25 *GL* presents Joseph’s thoughts (but not his words) as he conceals his rod (*Gilte Legende*, ed. by Hamer, II. 646, ll. 177–79).


27 *The Mary Play from the N. Town Manuscript*, ed. by Peter Meredith (London and New York, Longman: 1987),
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memory by someone widely acquainted with the apocryphal legends in general (as well as with the Gospels). Indeed, I have said as much of the Festial compiler himself in relation to saints’ legends, exemplary narrationes, and Marian legends: ‘Mirk may well have been working from memory for much of this sort of material’. The same may be true of the redactor, who very occasionally added extra information as and when it struck him, but with no concerted plan or overall aim such as that undertaken on his recension in the Festial Revision.

St Katherine

The second passage above, from the St Katherine sermon, concludes the details of the saint’s life with the burial of her body on Mount Sinai, ‘where God hath wrought many grete miraclus and ȝitte doth into þis day’. The Group B text, however, continues with further material about Mount Sinai (see Appendix (ii)). Both Groups then conclude with a narratio about a man who gave up his devotion to Katherine until persuaded otherwise by a vision in which she turned her face from him.

The cult of St Katherine began c. 800 when relics of the saint were discovered near to the monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. Both the cult and a relic were brought to Europe in the 1020s by a Rouen monk who had spent several years at the monastery, and not long afterwards a Latin life (the Vulgate version, based on a late-tenth-century text attributed to St Athanasius) was composed by another Rouen monk, whence the legend reached England. In the later thirteenth century, LA has little to say about St Katherine and Mount Sinai, and Mirk, a century later, used only the LA details that milk flowed from her decapitated body and angels carried her on a twenty-day journey to Mount Sinai. He did not use the further detail (applied to many saints) that a healing oil still issues from her body.

These exiguous details were elaborated by the Group B redactor. According to the Group B text, St Katherine lies in an alabaster tomb in the crypt of a fortified abbey of strict monks at the foot of Mount Sinai. In the church above is Moses’ burning bush. Each monk has an oil lamp which dims as the monk approaches death. On the death of the abbot the Mass of the Holy Ghost is sung for him, after which a letter naming the new abbot is to be found on the altar. At the vigil of St Katherine birds arrive with olive branches, out of which the monks produce enough oil for their lamps to last all year and even to sell. (The sale of the oil is omitted in Oxford, Bodleian Library MSS Rawlinson A.381 and Oxford, University College, D.102, and Hatfield House, Cecil Papers 280 reduces the material considerably.)


28 South English Nativity, ed. by Pickering, p. 34.
29 Festial, I, xxiv.
30 One Group A manuscript, London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 392, ends at this point; the sermon is missing in its close relative, London, British Library, MSS Harley 2420 and 2417.
31 This sermon is absent from two Group B MSS, Leeds, University Library, Brotherton Collection, MS 502 and Dublin, Trinity College, MS 201.
32 The Group B text differs from Group A in offering more circumstantial detail (not from LA) in this narratio.
33 For an exhaustive discussion of the prose legends, see A. Kurvinen, ‘The Life of St Catherine of Alexandria in Middle English Prose’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford, 1960); for a brief summary, see St Katherine of Alexandria: The Late Middle English Prose Legend in Southwell Minster MS 7, ed. by Saara Nevanlinna and Irma Taavitsainen (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993), pp. 4–6. For a diffuse and extensive account of the saint and her influence, see Katherine J. Lewis, The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria in Late Medieval England (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2000), and for the texts, see Jacqueline Jenkins and Katherine J. Lewis, St Katherine of Alexandria: Texts and Contexts in Western Medieval Europe (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).
Again, comparison may be made first with SEL, which adds only one detail to LA, that the saint was martyred AD 320.34 Of other verse versions circulating at the time of the Festial recension, John Capgrave’s life of St Katherine35 and Osbern Bokenham’s Legendys of Hooly Wummen36 may be a little late (both are mid-fifteenth-century).37 Bokenham’s version is that of LA, while Capgrave has only a little more to say: angels carried the saint to the mountain where Moses received the Law, the occasion was a Friday, the healing oil fills the monks’ lamps.

However, it is when we turn to GL that we find the most elaborate details of the invention story.38 Hermits devoted to a life of abstinence had built a chapel to St Katherine near the top of Mount Sinai, close to the burning bush where God had appeared to Moses. Here an angel appeared to the hermits and offered to guide them to the saint’s body: ‘though it be so that ye see not me, the shadowe of the palme that y bere in myn honde shall neuer departe from youre sighte’. At the desolate summit they found the body, which had lain in a stone for 120 years, and brought it down, amazingly easily given the terrain, to their own chapel, where they instituted the feast of the invention (that is, the ‘finding’) of her body and where, despite the fact that the flesh had dried up, the bones exuded healing oil.

The GL version is that of all but the earliest of the four versions of the late Middle English prose legend.39 Version (b) survives in thirteen manuscripts, seven of which are of GL or contain part of GL, and versions (c) and (d) offer similar material on the invention of the saint. Indeed, version (c), which survives in only one (early sixteenth-century) manuscript, provides a unique introduction on the death of the saint and the finding of her body.40 GL does not, however, contain all the details as in the Festial redaction: the alabaster tomb in the crypt of the fortressed abbey; the abbey at the foot of Mount Sinai and the burning bush in the church above; the monks’ prescient oil lamps; the procedure at the death of the abbot; the oil for the lamps, brought by birds with olive branches in their beaks.

In fact, all these details (and more) are found in Mandeville’s Travels, first composed c. 1357 in French and based on several European itineraries together with other sources, principally Vincent of Beauvais’s Speculum historiale, but compounded with the fiction that Mandeville was an Englishman recalling a world tour made in 1322.41 The version in London, 34 South English Legendary, ed. by D’Evelyn, II, 542–43, ll. 295–310.
35 The Life of St Katherine of Alexandria, ed. by Carl Horstmann, EETs o.s. 100 (1893), pp. 401–03, ll. 1898–1981.
36 Legendys of Hooly Wummen, ed. by Mary S. Serjeantson, EETs o.s. 206 (1938), pp. 172–201, ll. 6312–7376.
37 Capgrave’s work was known to Bokenham. See too A. Kurvinen, ‘The Source of Capgrave’s Life of St Katherine of Alexandria’, Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 61 (1960), 268–324.
38 Gilte Legende, ed. by Hamer, II, 904–5, 834–77. For a discussion of Mount Sinai and the Katherine legend in text and image, see Lewis, The Cult, pp. 98–106.
39 So Nevanlinna and Taavitsainen, St. Katherine, p. 14, but a slightly different account is given for the same three versions at p. 112, note to l. 931. The legend edited by Nevanlinna and Taavitsainen is a hybrid of the first and second earliest versions with a unique addition (p. 21). The details of the invention are the same as in SEL.
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British Library, MS Cotton Titus C XVI notes ‘an abbeye of monkes wel bylded and wel closed with gates of iren for drede of the wylde bestes’ (cf. Appendix (ii), ll. 1–2). The monks are described as hermits who drink no wine except on major feasts and ‘don gret abstynence and penaunce’ (cf. l. 1) and who burn many lamps in their church of St Katherine, the oil of which comes from olives brought annually as offerings by pilgrim-birds (cf. ll. 13–15). Behind the altar is Moses’ burning bush (cf. ll. 4–5), where the monks remove shoes and stockings. Alongside the high altar up three steps is the alabaster tomb of St Katherine (cf. ll. 2–3), where a monk stirs the bones to emit a little fragrant oil to give to pilgrims. When angels carried the saint’s body to Mount Sinai (cf. ll. 3–4), it was in a cloth which is shown to pilgrims, together with the saint’s head. The bush that burns and is not consumed (cf. ll. 5–6) is also shown to pilgrims. When the prelate of the abbey dies, his lamp goes out, and when a new one is chosen, his lamp lights up. Indeed, each monk has a lamp which grows dim when they are about to die (cf. ll. 7–10). If the new prelate is unworthy, his lamp goes out at once. And when the Mass is sung for the new prelate, the priest finds the name of the new prelate on the altar (cf. ll. 10–12).42

However, while there are a few verbal parallels, the order of material and the facts both differ markedly.43 Again, it seems likely that the redactor attempted a memorial reconstruction of the story or worked through a secondary source, rather than direct from a manuscript of Mandeville’s Travels. In fact, this is not the only use of Mandeville in the Festial, and, while the other occurrence is in a passage for which there is no reason to doubt Mirk’s authorship, the material is treated similarly to the way that it is treated in the recension. The passage occurs in the sermon for the feast-day of St Thomas of India:44

Pen crystemen buryed hym in a tombe of crystal þer God wroght mony wondur myracle for hym, for þe honde þat was in Crystes cyde hyt wol neuer into þe tombe but lay euer wyouthout […] For alle þe contre cometh pedur on hys day and takun hosul of þat hond in þys wyse: þe byschop of þat cyte synguth þe masse þat day, and, when he bygynneth þe masse, er he seye hys ‘Confiteor’, he takuth a branch of a vyne and puteth in Thomas hond and so goth forth to masse. Pen þys branch burgeneth out grapus, and so, by þat þe gospel be seyd, þe byschop takû þys grapus and wrecneth into hys chalis and synyuth wyth þat wyn and hoseneth alle þe pepul þerwyth, and puteth þe ost in Thomas honde and so hoseneth alle þe pepul. But when any comuth þat ys vnworþy, anon þe hond closeth togedur and wol not opun tyl he be scryven klene, and þen hyt wol opun and hosen hym. Also when men ben in debate, þey ben brogh byfore þe tombe of Thomas and set on twyn. And when þe cause of debate ys rehersed, þen wol þe hond turne to hym þat ys in þe ryght, and so ben þey mad at on et cetera. (MS Cotton Claudius A II, fols 14v–15r)

been edited by Seymour as EETS o.s. 253 (1963), 269 (1973), 319 (2002), and 336 (2010). Of these, the most relevant here is The Bodley Version of Mandeville’s Travels, ed. by M. C. Seymour, EETS o.s. 253 (1963).

42 Mandeville’s Travels, ed. by Hamelius, I, 38, l. 27–40, l. 9. Of the two main versions (MSS London, British Library, Cotton Titus A XVI and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS e Museo 116), this has more (but not many) verbal parallels.

43 For example, ‘an abbey of monkes’ and ‘gret abstynens’ are found in both versions. The Cotton Titus MS is verbally close to ‘for wilde bestes’, ‘spake to Moyses’, ‘a gret merveile’, ‘briddes in the cuntre’, ‘quencheth his lamp’ (‘for drede of the wylyde bestes’, ‘foules of the contree’, ‘a gret meruaylle’, ‘spak to Moyses’, ‘his lampe quencheth’, EETS o.s. 153, pp. 38, l. 29–39, l. 34); the Bodley manuscript is verbally close to ‘att þe fote of his monte’ and ‘hye ywalled’ (‘at the foot of Mont Synay’, ‘with heye wallis’, EETS o.s. 253, p. 39, ll. 20–21).

44 Festial, I, 20–23, ll. 1–117, especially ll. 75–77, 97–111.
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None of this material is in the Thomas legend in *LA*, nor in *SEL*, nor in *GL*. The details of the hand’s role in judgment (in bold above) are from *Mandeville’s Travels*:

> And the arm and the hond þat he putte in oure lordes syde whan he appered to him after his resurrexioun and seyde to him, NOLI ESSE INCREDULUS, SED FIDELIS, is þit lyggyne in a vessell withouten the tombe. And be þat hond þei maken all here iuggementes in the contree, whoso hath right or wrong. For whan þer is ony dissicioun betwene .ij. partyes and euer of hem meynteneth his cause and saith þat his cause is rightfull, and þat oper seyth the contrarye, þanne bothe partyes writen here causes in .ij. billes and putten hem in the hond of Seynt Thomas. And anon he castethe awey the bille of the wrong cause and holdeþ stil þe bille with the right cause. And þerfore men comen fro fer contrees to haue iuggement of doubtable causes, and oper iuggement vse þei non þere.\(^{48}\)

Again, the *Festial* version appears to be memorial, rather than the result of direct use of this passage. Indeed, Mirk concentrates less on the role of the hand in settling disputes than on its role in providing grapes for the Eucharist wine and offering the Host to worthy communicants. This miracle has been traced to an anonymous twelfth-century tract, *De adventu patriarchae Indorum*, and is found in some manuscripts and printed editions of the Letter of Prester John, purportedly written to the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Comnenus (1143–80) by Prester (Presbyter) John, descendant of one of the Three Magi and King of India.\(^{49}\) As for the hand’s role in disputes, this is not found in the Letter of Prester John but, as we have seen, in *Mandeville’s Travels*. However, in a document associated with the Letter, it is said that once a year on St Thomas’s feast-day, the patriarch of Hulna, where his shrine was, set the saint in the pontifical chair at the high altar and put the Host in his right hand, which then closed firmly against unworthy communicants.\(^{50}\) The significance of the hand is implicit but is clearly derived from the fact that it entered Christ’s side when Thomas doubted Christ’s bodily resurrection (John 20. 24–29).

In all the passages discussed above, the *Legenda aurea* account of a saint’s life has been augmented, either by Mirk himself (in the case of Thomas’s hand) or by the redactor (for the wedding of the Virgin and the tomb of St Katherine). In each case, the details are circumstantial and not absolutely replicated in any known source. Such a source may well exist, but the freedom with which non-canonical, even non-apocryphal details attached themselves to the saints in the course of the Middle Ages is well exemplified in the *Festial* in examples such as the old ash rod in the temple (in the Nativity of the Virgin sermon), the burning bush at Mount Sinai (in the Katherine sermon), and St Thomas’s role as winepress *cum* priest (in the Thomas sermon). The vitality and ingenuity of the medieval saints’ legends is a source of wonderment to me, as I would suggest it has been to Oliver Pickering, over many years, and it is evidence of its vitality and ingenuity that the search for exact sources may so often prove unfruitful.

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\(^{46}\) *South English Legendary*, ed. by D’Evelyn, II, 571–86, II, 1–440.


\(^{50}\) Malcolm Letts, *Sir John Mandeville and his Book* (London: Batchworth, 1949), especially p. 59 and (for a manuscript image of the hand sticking out of the tomb and grasping a bill) Plate VI (facing p. 33). Letts’s statement (p. 139) that the story of the hand and the sacrament is based on chapter XXXII of Gregory of Tours’s *Liber
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Appendix

In the transcriptions below, contractions are silently expanded and modern punctuation is observed. All variants are noted with the exception of those that are merely orthographic/dialectal. Lacunae and manifest errors in the base-text are emended, where possible from d, the manuscript closest to the base-text (c). The following abbreviations are used: om. (omitted), add. (added), trs. (transposed), alt. altered, ab. l. (above line). Sigla are as follows:

a London, British Library, MS Harley 2371
b London, British Library, MS Harley 2391
c Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A.381 (the base-text)
d Oxford, University College, MS D.102 (in the Bodleian Library)
e Leeds, University Library, Brotherton Collection, MS 502
f Durham, University Library, MS Cosin V. III. 5
g Dublin, Trinity College, MS 201
h Hatfield House, Cecil Papers 280

(i) the addition to the sermon for the Nativity of the Virgin (witnesses: a fols 124v–125v, b fols 119r–120r, c fols 94va–95rb, d pp. 226–228, e fols 106r–107r (illegible readings are not noted in the apparatus), f fols 137r–138r, gh absent)

Aftyr [þe] tyme that Ioachym and Anne had offred vp oure Lady into þe temple to þe bischop to kepe her in saf warde til þat sche were of xiiij ȝere of age and more, þan þe bischope must ordeine her a husband and lete doun crye aboute in the cuntre þat kynges and oþer gentiles þat were without wifes schuld come þédur att a certayne dai for to witt who were best worþi to wedde l [col. b] þat fayre maiden þat was floure of maydenes. For riȝt as a lyly is among the brerys white, so was that maiden among alle maydenes.

And whan þei come to Ierusalem for to see this mayden that was of the best blood of alle þe world, he ordeny[d] an olde staf of asche þat had ben in the temple many ȝeres and was alle worme-eten. And he þat handelid þat tree, and þe tre burionid and bare floures, he schuld haue þe maide to his wif, and ellis nott. And alle þei wist of this ordenaunce and gedrid hem þerto.

And þan this bischop araide this maide and brouȝt her into þe temple þat alle men miȝt se her, and sche was so faire and so briȝt þat þei miȝt not loke vpon here but as it had ben þe sonne. And þan þe bischop bad bring forþe þe staf and bad hem holde it vpon hye that handelid it, and it schuld bere leves aftur hym þat schuld haue the maide. And kynges went to, but it would not be. And þan went oþer therto, but it would not be on day [ne] ij dayes.

Pan cam þe iij dai þat it most be made an end of. Pan cam þer an olde man into þe towne þat hiȝt Ioseph and had not seen of this doyng and would go þédur to se how he myȝt spede, and stode in a corner of the temple in the l [fol. 95ra] chaunsell and lokid vpon this maiden.

And þan he said to hymself: ‘This maide is not for me.’ And þan þer cam a white dowue and satt vpon his hede, þat alle in the temple see it, and summe cauȝt the dove by the leggis but þei miȝt not holde her.

And þan this bischop war þerof and bad Ioseph come vp to hym. And Ioseph said: ‘Nay, for sche is not for me. Sche is too yong, for Y miȝt not gouerne her astate.’ And þan said the bischop: ‘Handil þis staf!’ and toke him þe staf in his hande. And anon it beganne to burione

miraculorum is not correct (he references Patrologia Latina 0733A–0734A, but this handles different material).
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and was grene and bare leues and blossomed to be frute. And þan was þe bishop glad, and
Josep was hevy and sory to haue her, for he was neuer in wille to haue had wif. And þan þe
bishop weddid hem worschipfully, and bade hym take her home with hym, and so he did.

And þan, sone aftur, the Holi Gost liȝt into her þrouȝ þe gretyng of the aungel Gabriel,
and sche bygan to wex gret and be with childe. And þan Iosep lokid vpon her and þouȝt to
30  goopriuelyhis waifromeherand[soto haue]laftheralone. Andþan camþeranaungelto
hymand badhymthatheschuldnotstudyenomoreþervponbutthatheschuldkepeherwel
andþinkenomoresucheþouȝtes,forþatwasGoddisowneChildand|

1 Aftur\prec. by ffurthermore i saie þat f; þe\] þat abe, om. c; vp\] om. abef, after Lady d; into\]
vnto f; to\] om. abef; 2 to kepe\] tooke abe; in\] a add. ae, into abf; til\] to d, vnto þe tyme f;
were\] was f; of\] om. abf; xiiij xij abedef; of age\] after more abef; of\] om. d; more\] and add. f;
must\] purposed to f 3 and\] he add. abe; lete doun\] þen made to d; doun\] make a f; crye\] all
add. f; in\] om. f; kynges\] knightis f 4 þedur\] om. f; certayne\] om. f; dai\] signed add. f; for
to\] to abe; best\] more abe, om. f; worþi\] worth f; 5 to\] for to b; wedde\] haue f; þat\] this f;
þat\] which f; of\] all add. abef; a\] the abde 6 the\] all ae, om. f; brerlys\] faire and add. f; so]
right so abe; that\] this abef; hauynge most of bewte and of all vertues add. f; among\]
aboue f 7 þei\] these men f; for\] to\] to af; that\] which f; of\] om. f; best\] blesid a, roiallist f
8 ordenyd\] ordeyned abef, ordeny c; an olde\] a f; of asche\] om. f; of\] a add. bd; þat\] he add.\nabe, which f; ben\] om. abe; 3eres\] a 3ere f; and\] insomoche that it f 9 alle\] om. f; eten\nretty abe; And\] than the bishop proclamid and saide add. f; handeld\] hondeillith f; þat\] this f;
þrei rod abe, staffe f; þe … bare\] while it is in his hond bering f; þe\] that ae; tre\] rod abe,
om. d; floures\] in his hande add. abe; schuld\] shal f 10 þe\] that abe, this f; maide\] maiden
abedef; to\] tyll e 10–11 And\] … þerto\] om. f 10 þe\] that abe; and\] om. abe; gedрид\] grede d,
arraised abe 12 this(1)\] þe bdef; maide\] maydyn d; alle\] om. f 13–14 and(2) … sonne\n
in every mannis sight and in her bhoilding that thia maerueilid moche þerof f 13 vpon\non
abe; ben\] on add. abe 14 bad(2)\] comaunded to f; hem\] þat he that helde it sholde f; vpon\non
abe; vp a f; hye\] heght d 14–15 that handelid it\] om. f 15 handelid\] handyll d, schuld
handyly b, (shulde canc.) handle e; and\] yf\] add. abef; schuld bere\] bare abef; þat\] he add.\nabe, man add. b, he f; haue\] here add. d; the maide\] hir f; maide\] maydyn bd; And(2)\] þen d,
thanne add. abe 15–16 kynges … but\] than þer went moche peppe (alt. from plpplle?) and
handilliid this staffe bothe kingis and many oþer grete estatis and f 16 be(2)\] in no wise
add. f; And\] om. abe; þan … dayes\] abef; than\] to abe, om. d; but\] yitt add. ab; ne\] om. bcd
17 þan\] thaeï add. f; cam(1)\] on add. f; þat it most\] for it sholde f; most\] nedes add. abe; an\nom. b; of\] and add. f; cam(2)\] om. f; þer\] was add. f; into\] f; towne\] cite f 18 þat\] which
f; and\] that a; of\] all add. f; and\] would\] that he thought to f; se\] wete f 19 and\] so he add.;
in the chaunsell\] om. abef; vpon\] on abe; maiden\] maide f 20 And\] om. e; þan … to\] when
he sawe hir he thought within f; This maide is\] þat she was f; maide\] madyn d; me\] him f;
þan\] at þe last f; a\] faire add. f; dowewe\] culuer f 21 satt\] hir add. b; alight f; alle\] they add.
abe, men might add. f; in the temple\] om. abef; it\] om. abe; cauȝt … leggis\] made profir to
cacche it f 22 þei … her\] it wolde not be and f 23 was\] sayghge d, after bishop f; war\nom. df; þerof\] of this abe, of Josep f, om. d; Iosep\] him þat he sholde f; Ioseph\] answered and
add. f 24 for(1)\] om. aef; me\] for add. f; too\] om. f; yong\] and I am olde add. f; for(3)\nþerfore d, and abe, and also f; miȝt\] may abedef 24–25 said … him\] the bishop comaundid
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him to take f 24 the] this d 25 toke ... hande] so he did abe; in his hande] om. d; anon] as sone as it was in his hande f 26 blossomed to bere] redie to be f; blossomed] blomyd d; was(2)] after bishop f; and] but f 27 was(1)] om. b, both add. f, hevy and sory]trs. abe; to] for to d; for ... 28 worshipfully] in the most worshipful wise f; hym(1)] om. abe, that he shold be add. f; and ... did] om. f 29 some after] anone f; into] in af;  pe] om. b; Gabriel] om. abe; 30 and(1)] thanne add. abe, than anone add. f; and be] om. abe; vpon] on abdef; 31 goo] haue gon bef, haue stolen a; priuely] after awaye f; his wai] awaye af; so to haue] f, he did and abeg, om. cd; 32 not] om. abe [ervpon] per an angel] om. f 32 not] om. abe [ervpon] pe] onon abdef, such thoughtes ae, whos the childe shold be f; but] bad him add. f 32–3 kepe ... 33 þat it f; was] is ab; and] þat add. f 34 be so] trs. aef; And] so add. abe, than add. f; of] om. abe; Þo] such abef; þouȝtes fantasies f; wel] forth abe, in þe best wise f 34–35 man ... wif] woman ought to be kept f 34 man] om. c; schuld] aught to abe 35 And ... Annunciacion] seeke the remenant in thannunciacion (of oure ladie add. f) how] (þat add. f) thangell gret hir abef; And] om. d; Annunciacion] amen add. d

(ii) the addition to the sermon for the feast-day of St Katherine (witnesses: a fol. 140v–141r, b fol. 132r–v, c fol. 105ra–b, d fol. 153r–v, h fol. 67r, eg absent)

And att þe fote of þis monte þer is an abbey of monkes þat liven in gret abstinens, and this abbey is strong and hye wallyd and barrid with yrne for wildes bestes. And in þat abbey lyþ Seint Kateryne in a faire tombe of alabastre, for her bones were fet þedur for more reuener and worschip. And aboven in the chyrch is a busch þat God stood in whan he spake to Moyses and wrote þe Law in ij tables of stoun, and þat busch is as faire and as grene as it was þat same dai.

And in þat abbey is a gret merveile, and þat is þis: every monke hath a lampe brynnyng with oyle, and whan he schall dye [þeis schall wete by his lamp, for,] as he drawiþ to his deþward, so quenchþ þis lamp of liȝt, and whan he dyþ, þan goiþ out þe lampe. And when þe abbot dyþ, þan his breþer schall sing a masse of the Holi Gost and bery hym symplye. And when þe masse is donn, þeischall fynd evpon þe autera letter wounden whos schall be her abbot, and so l [col. b] makyn þei her abbot.

And also vpon Seint Kateryne niȝt alle the briddes in the cuntre come þedur and bring ychon of hem a branch of olivo into þe place, and pilgrimes þat offre þat tyme sayne þat þei make of þe branches oyle to her lampes for alle the ȝere.

1 And] ffor f, om. adh; þis] þe abh; monte] mounte bdfh; an] ab. l. f; þat ... abstinens] om. h þat] whiche f; in] ful add. f; and(2)] so add. f 2 is] ful add. f; and(1)] ful add. f; and(1) ... bestes] om. h; with yrne] om. f; for] bicause of f; þat] þis abf 3 faire] rial f; for(1) ... for(2)] bicause of þe f 3–4 reuener and worschip] trs. f 4–15 And ... ȝere] where as ouwr lord hath schewyd to his peple þorow this blesydd mene of this holy mayldyn and marter seynt kateryn many grete myraclis and dayly doth h 4 aboven] also f; the] this f; chyrch] abbey f; a] þe abf; þat] whiche that f; God stootd] oure lorde aperid f; whan] what tyme þat f 5 wrote ... ii] what tyme þat he deleyuered to him the f; in] þe add. d; stoun] and of the commandmentis f; busch] vnto þis daie add. f 6 daï] tym by, tym by þat oure lorde aperid therinne f 7 And] also f; þat] same add. f, the a; and] þat] whiche f; monke] in this abbey add. f 8 whan he] what tyme ony of hem f; þei ... for] om. c; þei] he ab; wete] haue a knowelege f; for] euyn add. f; his] þe abd, om. f 9 -ward] om. abd; quenchþ] dyrykns abd, wil derke more and more (after lampe) f; his] the a; of ... lampe] om. abf; þe] lyghte of þe add. d 10 dyþ] is
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ded bf; ðan his breþer thaiæ f; and] than add. f; symplye] sollemply abdf; 11 whan] by that tyme ðat f; is] be f; vpon þe auter] on the aultere and after letter f; vpon] on abdf; her] om. ab 12–13 and ... And] om. f 12 makyn þei] trs. ab; þei] ab. l. c 13 And] om. a; also] anothir grete merueile þer is done there add. f; vpon] on abdf; niȝt] daiewhiche is this that f; in] of abf; the] þat ab; cunte] as that daie add. f; bring] brynges (after hem) df 14 ychon] eche f; þei] þat ab; þe] abbey f; þat(1) ... tyme] om. f; þei] þe monkis f; 15 make] þam add. abdf; of þe braunches] om. f; þei] þes b, þoo d, thaire a; oyle] þerof add. f; to] serue add. f; her] þo b; for] om. f; ȝere] and so (so] som b) for to sell add. ab, and the remmaund they sille for her sustynaunce add. f