

# *Heliand*, lines 503b–535a in Three Manuscripts

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## Introduction

The classic work of Old Saxon is the *Heliand*, a six-thousand line recasting of the Christian Gospels into a single long narrative in alliterative verse. Two main manuscripts preserve substantial portions of the poem, along with four shorter fragmentary manuscripts.

**M** (for Munich) is the earlier of the two main manuscripts, probably written around or a little after 850. Since the *Heliand* was probably composed in the first half of the ninth century (likely in the reign of Louis the Pious, who ruled 813–840), this puts this manuscript within a generation or two of the poem's original date, making it an extremely valuable early witness. It is, however, incomplete: it's missing most of the first fitt,<sup>1</sup> has several missing leaves (producing gaps usually of a few dozen lines), and is missing much of the later portions of the poem (it breaks off after line 5275, except for one short fragment preserving some 15 lines from near the end).

The **C** (Cotton) manuscript was written a century or more later than **M**, in the latter part of the tenth century. This is roughly the same period that most surviving manuscripts of Old English poetry date to (including MS Junius 11, containing *Genesis B*, translated from Old Saxon), and this manuscript may well have been copied in England. Though dating somewhat later, the Cotton manuscript is notable for being nearly complete: it has no internal gaps, presenting 5968 lines of continuous verse, and provides explicit numbering of the fitts. The very end of the poem is not, however, preserved in this or any other manuscript. It also provides more explicit information about vowel length than **M** does.

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<sup>1</sup>A *fitt* is essentially a short chapter, equivalent to a canto or passus in other poetic traditions. A number of early West Germanic poems, including *Beowulf*, are divided into fitts, usually explicitly numbered in the manuscripts. In the *Heliand*, explicit fitt numbering is found only in **C**, though initial capitals in other MSS often occur at the same points.

In addition to these two long manuscripts, four shorter fragments are known. One of these, the Vatican manuscript (V), is the same source as the *Genesis* fragments, the other main poetic text preserved in Old Saxon (Doane 1991; Schwab, Schuba and Kugler 1991).<sup>2</sup> Two further short fragments, one known as Prague (P) and the other as Leipzig (L), are probably actually two remnants of the same manuscript, but are editorially treated as distinct sources. Finally, Straubing (S) stands out as the most linguistically divergent of all *Heliand* manuscripts.

To illustrate the differing linguistic and scribal characters of the various manuscripts, I give an extract from S, and set it alongside the same passage from both C and M. Though the underlying text is essentially the same in all the manuscripts, there are a number of notable differences in orthography and phonology. Some of the differences lie in superficial scribal convention (for instance, in how the sound [ð] is written), but others point to real linguistic differences, with S presenting a much stronger ‘Frisian’ colouring. It seems clear that the *Heliand* was circulated in various dialectal guises, and it is not fully clear what the poet’s original composition was like. The passage in question describes the life of a priestess named Anna who is present when the infant Jesus is taken to a temple in Jerusalem.

I have taken the texts of M and C from the wonderful semi-diplomatic edition of Sievers (1878), while the more recently discovered S is from Bischoff (1979). For reference, the texts of P and V can be found in Sievers and Schröder (1935), and L in Schmid (2006). The standard critical edition of both the *Heliand* and *Genesis* is Behaghel and Taeger (1996), which presents a synthetic text, critically combining all the manuscripts. Substantial selections from this synthetic text, amounting to roughly half the total poem, are reproduced by Cathey (2002), who adds a helpful introduction, extensive notes, and a glossary. The full text of C has also been digitized and syntactically parsed as part of the *HeliPaD* project. For a very helpful overview of all of the texts of the *Heliand*, see the table in Price (2010, 11). A convenient introduction to and survey of a number of issues relating to the poem, including an English translation of Schmid’s edition of L, is Pakis (2010).

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<sup>2</sup>MS digitally available: [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Pal.lat.1447](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Pal.lat.1447) (*Genesis* 1r, 2r–2v, 10b; *Heliand* 27r).

## Straubing

Thā cam thar *āk*<sup>1</sup> ēn uuif gongan,  
ald innan thému alahe. Anna uuas siu hēten,  
505 dohter Fanuhēles. Siu hedde ire drohtine uuel  
gi·thionad *te*<sup>2</sup> thonke. UUas iru gi·tungen uuif.  
Siu mōste ahter ire magathēdi, sīdor siu monnes uuarð,  
erles *an ēhti*<sup>3</sup> eðeli thiorne,  
sō mōste siu mid ire brūdiguman bódla gi·uualdan  
510 sībun uuinter somen. Thā gi·fragn ek that iru thar sorga  
gi·stód:  
that siu thiū mikile maht metodes ti·dēlde,  
uurēð uurdie-gi·scapu. Thā uuas siu uuiduuue ahter thiū  
at themu friðu-uuīhe fīuuuar endi hun·ahtuðe  
uuintro an ire uueraldi, sō siu nía thane uuīh ni for·lét,  
515 ak siu thar ire drohtine uuel dages endi nahtes  
gode thianade. Siu cam thar āk gongan tó  
an the seluan tíd. Sōn unt·kiende  
that hēlege barn godes, endi them heliðun cūðde,  
them uuerede ahter themu uuīhe, uuill-spell mikil:  
520 quað that im nerianðes gi·nist gi·nāhid uuēri,  
helpa heuan-cuninges. ‘Nū is the hēlega Crīst,  
uualdan selua, an thessan uuīh cumen  
ti ā·lāsianne the liudi, thi hēr nū longa bidadun  
an thesseru middil-gerd monege huīle,<sup>4</sup>  
525 *thurfi*ga<sup>5</sup> thiada. Sō nū thes thinges mugun  
mendian monna kunni.’ Moneg fegnade,  
uuered ahter themu kunni, gi·hārdun uuil-spell mikil  
fon gode seggian. That geld hedde thā gi·lēstid  
thiū idis an themu alahe, all sō it im an ira ēa gi·bād,  
530 endi an theru berhtan burg bók gi·uuīsdun,  
hēlegera hond-gi·uuerk. Gi·uuitun im thā ti hūs thonan  
fon Hierusalem Ioseph endi Māria,  
hēleg hīski, heddun im heþen-cuning  
simlun ti gi·sīðe, sunu drohtines,  
535 monegera<sup>6</sup> mund-boran...

## Cotton

Thuo quam thar ōc ēn uuīb gangan,  
ald innan them alaha. Anna uuas siu hētan,  
505 dohter Fanueles. Siu haḅda iro drohtine uuel  
gi·thienod te thanke. UUas iru gi·thuungan uuīb.  
Siu muosta after iro magathēdi, sīthor siu mannes uuarth,  
erlas an ēhti eḅili thiorna,  
sō muosta siu mid iro brūdigumen bodlu gi·uualdan  
510 sībun uuinter saman. Thuo gi·fragen ik that iro thar sorga  
gi·stuod,  
that sia thiu mikila maht metoðes te·dēlda,  
uurēth uurḅi-gi·scapu. Thuo uuas siu uuīdua after thiu  
at them friðu-uuīhe fiuuar endi ahtoda  
uuintro an iro uueroldi, so siu nio thena uuīh ni far·lēt,  
515 ac siu thar iru drohtine dages endi nahtes  
gode thionoda. Siu quam thar ōc gangan tuo  
an thia selbun tīd. Sān an·kenda  
that *hēlaga*<sup>7</sup> barn godes, endi them helithon cūthda,  
them uuerode after them uuīhe, uuil-spel mikil,  
520 quat that im neriendes gi·nist gi·nāhid uuāri,  
helpa heḅan-cuninges. ‘Nū ist thie hēlago Crīst,  
uualdand selbo, an thesan uuīh cuman  
tō a·lōsannea thia liude, thia hier nū lango bidun  
an thesaro middil-gard managa huīla,  
525 thurftig<sup>8</sup> theoda, sō nū thes thinges mugun  
mendean man-cunni.’ Manag fagonoda  
uuerod after them uuīhe, gi·hōrdun uuil-spel mikil  
fan gode seggian. That geld habda thuo gi·lēstid  
thiu idis an them alaha, so it im an iro ēuue gi·bōd,  
530 endi an thero berehtun<sup>9</sup> burg buoki gi·uuīsdun,  
hēlagero hand-gi·uuerc. Gi·uuitun im thuo te hūs thanan  
fan Hierusalem Ioseph endi Māria,  
hēlag hiuuiski, haḅdun im heḅan-cuning  
simla te ge·sīthe, sunu drohtines,  
·VII·  
535 managero<sup>10</sup> mund-boron...

## Munich

Thō quam thar ȝc ȝn uuīf gangan,  
ald innan them alaha. Anna uuas siu hētan,  
505 dohtar Fanueles. Siu habde ira drohtine uuel  
gi·thionod te thanca. UUas iru gi·thuungan uuīf.  
Siu mōsta aftar ira magadhēdi sīdor siu mannes uuard,  
erles an *ēhte*<sup>11</sup> edili thiorne,  
sō mōsta siu mid ira brūdigumon bodlo gi·uualdan  
510 sibun uuintar samad. Thō gi·fragn ic that iru thar sorga gi·stōd,  
that sie thiū mikila maht metodes te·dēlda,  
uurēd uurdi-gi·scapu. Thō uuas siu uuidouua aftar thiū  
at them fridu-uuīha fīor endi ant·ahtoda  
uuintro an iro uueroldi, sō siu nia thana uuīh for·lēt,  
515 ac siu thar ira drohtine uuel dages endi nahtes,  
gode thionode. Siu quam thar ȝc gangan tō  
an thea selbun tīd. Sān ant·kende  
that hēlage barn godes, endi them helidon cūdde,  
them uueroda aftar them uuīha, uuil-spel mikil.  
520 Quad that im neriandes gi·nist gi·nāhid uuāri,  
helpa heben-cuninges. ‘Nū is the hēlago Krīst,  
uualdand selbo, an thesan uuīh cuman  
te ā·lōsienne thea liudi, the hēr nū lango bidun  
an thesara middil-gard managa huuīla,  
525 thurftig thioda, sō nū thes thinges mugun  
mendian man-cunni.’ Manag fagonoda  
uuerod aftar them uuīha, gi·hōrdun uuil-spel mikil  
fon gode seggean. That geld habde thō gi·lēstid  
thiū idis an them alaha, al sō it im an ira ēuua gi·bōd,  
530 ændi at thera berhtun burg bōk gi·uuīsdun,  
hēlagaro hand-gi·uuerk. Gi·uuitun im thō te hūs thanan  
fon Hierusalem Ioseph endi Māria,  
hēlag hiuuiski, habdun im heben-kuning  
simbla te gi·sīda, sunu drohtines,  
535 managaro mund-boron...

## Notes

1. *S* damaged.
2. *S* damaged.
3. *S* an̄theti.
4. *S* huil.
5. *S* thurtiga.
6. *S* Monegera, with large initial capital.
7. Not in *C*.
8. *C* thurhftig.
9. *C* berehtig.
10. *C* Managero, with large initial capital.
11. *M* anthehti.

## References

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Thac am thar en uuf gongan ald innan  
 the mu alabe ma uas siu heren dohter  
 fu rubeles hedde ire drohtine uuel  
 eadha mad d onke uuf rugithungen  
 uuf sumostre ahner ire magathedi sidar  
 siu uerast uara er les anthe er edol thone  
 ne somostre siu mid ire brudiguman bodle  
 gi uual dan siu unuuner somen Thagi  
 fragnek thar iru thar sorga gistod thar  
 siu thiu mik le mabt me todes adolde  
 uuret uurdig scapu Tha uas siu uudu  
 ue ahner thar arthemu fridu uubo siu uuar  
 endi hun ahner uun tro anre uuaraldiso

Figure 1: S: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek cgm. 8840, folio 2r

siu ma thane uub nifaler ak siu thar  
 ire drohtine uuel dage sendi nahres gode  
 thianade Siu cam thar ak gongan to an  
 the seluancid son unelcende thar thelega  
 barn godes endi them helid uncuat de them  
 uierede ahner them uncuat uull spell  
 mikil Quad thar unner andes ginst gi  
 nahid uun heloaher unninges Nu  
 is thehelega crist uual dan sel ua anthes  
 san uub cumen mala siastne the ludi

Figure 2: S: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek cgm. 8840, folio 2v

lerun sihordm endi them tēharmā  
thia horian muueldan Cristes lerum  
Thusealt neh quathie kara thissain  
harm onthimon her ten thann ina he  
litho barn uuapnon uurt not thaz  
uurdit thi uuerk mikil thrim tēsi  
tholonne thy therna all forstuoed uui  
ses mannes uuord. Thuo quam thar oc  
en uuit sangan ald innan them alaha  
anna uuas siu hetan dohter fanueles  
siu habda iro drohtane uuel si thienod  
te thanke uuas iro si thumgan uuit  
si muosta after iro masat hedi si  
thor siu mannes uuarth erlas anetra  
edili thorna somuosta siu mid iro  
brudisumen bodlu si uualdan sibun  
uunter saman. Thuo si frasi ik thaz  
iro thar forsa si tuoed thaz siu thiu  
mikila maht mtoctes tedel da uurtch  
uurti si capu thuo uuas siu uindua af  
ter thiu anthim fridu uuihe fuuar  
endi abtoda. uuntro an iro uue  
roldi so siu mo thena uuit nifay lit  
ac siu thar iro drohtane dages endi

Figure 3: C: Cotton Caligula A vii, folio 23v



nahtes gode thionoda. Siu quam thar 18.  
oc sangan tuo antia selbun tid fan 22  
ankenda that barn godes endi them  
helitho euctida. Them uuerode after  
them uuihe uuil spel mikil. quat that  
im neriendes simist sinahid uuari  
helpa heban cuninges. Nu ist thie helago  
erist uualdand selbo antiesan uuih cu  
man. To alo sannea thia liude thia hier  
nulangō bidun antiesaro middil gard  
managa huila thurhtis theoda sonu  
thes thinges musun mendeā mancunni.  
Manas fuganoda uuerod after them  
uuihe sihordun uuil spel mikil fan  
gode seggan. That geld habda thuo  
gilestid thuidis antiem alaha sote  
im anro euue sibod endi anthero  
berhtis burz buoki giuuisdun. he  
lagero hand giuuerē. Giuutun im  
thuo tehus thanan fan hierusalem  
ioseph endi maria helag huiuski hab  
dun im heban cunings simla tesisthe  
sunu drohtnes. .VII.  
**M**anagero mundboron sote gio 24

Figure 4: C: Cotton Caligula A vii, folio 24r

thiorna al for stod uuisas mannas uuord. **T**hoquam thar oc on  
 uuis gangar aldinnan them alaha : anna uuis siuhetas. **A**oh tar  
 fanueles : siu habde iradrohane uuel githonod te thanca : uuis iru  
 githuungan uuis : siu mosta aftar iramagad hedi : sidor siu mannes  
 uuard erles anthebi edili thorne so mosta siu midnabrudigu  
 mos bodlo giuualdan sibun uuntar samad. **I**ho gifragne the  
 iruthar sorga gistod that sie thui milula maht merodes te delda  
 uured uardi giscapu. **T**ho uuis siu uuidouua aftar thui ac them  
 fridu uuisa fior endi antahroda uuntro aniro uueroldi so siu ma  
 thana uuis ni for let. ac siuthar iradrohane uuel dages endi abites  
 gode thionode. **S**itiquam thar oc ganganto anthea selbun tid  
 sas antkende that helage barn godes : endi them helidon cudde  
 them uueroda aftar them uuisa uuil spel mikil : quad that im neriay  
 dar ginist ginahid uuari helpa hebencuninges : siu is the helage kint

Figure 5: *M: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek cgm. 25, folio 8r, bottom*

uualdand selbo anthesan uuis cumas : te alosienne the aludi : the her  
 nulango bidun anthesara middilgard : managa huula thurftig thioda  
 sonu thes thinges mugun mendian mas cunni manag : fagonoda  
 uueroda aftar them uuisa gihordun uuil spel mikil fongode seggeaw  
**T**hat geld habde tho gilestid thuidis anthe alaha : al so it im an  
 iraeuua gibod : endi at hera berhtun burg bok giuuisdun : helagaro  
 hand giuuerk. **S**iu uuitan im tho te hus thanan : fon hierusalem  
 ioseph endi maria helag huuiski : habdan im heben kuning simbla te  
 gisida sunudrohane : managaro mundboron : so it giomari ni uuard

Figure 6: *M: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek cgm. 25, folio 9a, top*