

177. London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A. vii
"Heliand Manuscript"
[Ker 137, Gneuss 308]

HISTORY: The "Heliand" is an alliterative verse Old Saxon (continental Low German) Gospel harmony in heroic style. This copy was written in England in the second half of the 10c. The OE charm for barren land, "Æcerbot," is of the early 11c. Nothing certain is known of the origin of the manuscript, except that it was written in southern England (see Priebisch 1925: 23–27), or of its pre-Cotton whereabouts. Junius made a transcript, which is now Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 103. A copy of the "Heliand" made for Hickes (excerpts from which he published in 1703) is now London, British Library, Harley 439.

CODICOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION: [i–ii] *iii–*viii + 1–2, 11–175 [+1] 176–178 + [179–180]. Pages trimmed (corners rounded) and gilded, 218 x 136 mm. Writing area 190 x 95 mm. HFHF. 19c leather binding. There are two foliations, neither reflecting accurately the state of the manuscript. The older, in ink, begins on the first page of the "Heliand" with "5." The later foliation, in pencil, dating from 1884 (see the dated note and the handwriting on f. 179r [old 174]), begins with "11," and must count from *iii, plus the four artificial leaves of the mounted pictures (see below). The present description uses the newer foliation. (On ff. 11–13 another foliation, *13–*15, was begun, but abandoned and cancelled.)

The "Heliand," consisting of 5,980 alliterative long lines (imperfect at end), is written out continuously like prose, the text showing many OE words and forms and many Old High German spellings and inflexions. The parchment is somewhat thick and rough though variable. The manuscript is in remarkably good condition (except for some flaking of the color on f. 11r; an early but unoriginal hand has written in light ink in upper right margin *QVATVU* where the paint had flaked from the colored title). The "Heliand" is pricked and ruled on versos for 24 lines throughout.

Written by an A-S scribe imitating continental Caroline minuscule

letter forms, probably directly from a Carolingian exemplar, with occasional lapses into Insular forms (see Priebisch 1925: 13–27). The writing is in dark brown to blackish ink, using a thick nib and having a consistent ductus that varies somewhat with the quality of the parchment. The text is divided into numbered sections, probably originating with this manuscript, since continental copies of the “Heliand” are sectioned but not numbered. On f. 11r, a colored rubric on a yellow ground, **INCIPIT Q(VATV)|OR EVANGELIV(M)**; the Old Saxon text begins with a large decorated “M” and colored capitals. An early modern hand imitating Caroline script has written above, “Euangelia in lingua Danica” (the same hand that wrote item 1 of table of contents, f. *viii recto). Decorated and colored large initials, similar to those in many 10c English manuscripts (see Wormald 1945), begin sections on ff. 11r, 21v, 35, 36v, 39, 41v, and 43v, but these give way to plainer and uncolored initials (see the somewhat elaborate but uncolored initials on ff. 24r, 46r, 56v, etc.). Priebisch (1925: 39) noticed that the colored large capitals are written over erasures, indicating perhaps that they were a later addition to the design rather than from the exemplar. Frequent color highlights, green, yellow, reddish brown, on small capitals in the text. The title **PASSIO DOMINI** on f. 132r is elaborately painted in blue, white, pink, and yellow. It appears that no pages of text are missing. The early signature system (apparently by the main scribe, as the first two signatures are colored, like any small capital on these pages), beginning with “A” on the last folio of the first “Heliand” quire, tells against there ever having been a copy of the Old Saxon “Genesis” bound up with this copy of the “Heliand.” In the last quire the final three leaves are gone, probably because they were left blank; although the text breaks off in mid-sentence, the scribe seems to consider his work finished since he attempts to space the last word to fill most of the line; probably the exemplar contained no more. The Munich manuscript of the “Heliand” (Staatsbibliothek, cgm. 25) continues for 15 verse lines further but is also incomplete at the end (see Behaghel/Taeger 1984: xv–xxii for details of the “Heliand” manuscript tradition).

Latin quotations from the Bible are written in the margins of ff. 12v and 112v in square A-S minuscule and in black ink like that of main text, possibly by the main scribe reverting to his normal writing style when not imitating the letters of the Carolingian exemplar. A note in an A-S hand, “be sancta marian,” is added in brownish ink on three specially ruled lines in the margin of f. 17v/3 (Priebisch thinks by the main scribe,

Ker thinks by another of the early 11c).

The pages containing the OE “Æcerbot” charm are pricked and ruled for 22 lines, but the writing area is about the same as for the “Heliand.” The blank half-sheet preceding the charm has the same pricking as the “Heliand”-sheets and is doubtless part of the original book, perhaps one of the three sheets gone from quire XXI. In the table of contents (f. *viii recto) the charm has been added as item 2 by Richard James (17c). Ker (*Cat.*) dates the charm hand s. xi¹.

COLLATION: I–III⁸ (ff. 11–34), IV⁸ (ff. 35–42, 3 and 6 half-sheets), V⁸ (ff. 43–50, 1 and 8 half-sheets?), VI–VII⁸ (ff. 51–66), VIII⁸ (ff. 67–74, 3 and 6 half-sheets), IX⁸ (ff. 75–82, 3 and 6 half-sheets), X–XI⁸ (ff. 83–98), XII⁸ (ff. 99–106, 3 and 6 half-sheets), XIII⁸ (ff. 107–114, 2 and 5 half-sheets), XIV–XX⁸ (ff. 115–170), XXI⁸ (ff. 171–175, 6–8 gone, 1 original half-sheet after 175), XXII³ (ff. 176–178, half sheet [176] plus a bifolium).

Original signatures (.A. f. 18v, .B. f. 19r, .E. f. 50v, .H. f. 74v, .I. f. 82v); complete early modern signatures E through AA on first folio of every quire and continuing into quire XXII with BB on f. 176r and CC on f. 177r.

[Note: Formerly the manuscript was bound with eight pictures of the life of Christ from an otherwise unknown 12c German psalter, pasted back-to-back and numbered 1–4. In the 19c, the pictures were separately mounted and numbered 3–10 (and later 5–12). The pictures were removed in 1931 and are now kept separately. The photos do not reflect the present order of the prefatory pages, which is (June 1992): *i a modern parchment leaf with 1931 note about the detachment of the pictures, verso blank; *ii old parchment flyleaf, blank with two modern paper bibliographical notes pasted, one under the other, to the recto; *iii old parchment flyleaf, blank (Arabic early modern “4” scratched in upper right of verso); *iv old parchment flyleaf, blank; *v parchment flyleaf from a 14c French text that bears Cotton’s notes to the binder in the lower half, followed by an inscription of the Cotton pressmark, verso blank; *vi parchment flyleaf, “26” written on upper left and “2” on upper right, verso blank; *vii parchment flyleaf, “3” cancelled on upper right of recto, verso has formal inscription of Cotton pressmark within pencil rulings; *viii recto table of contents, pencil rulings: (1) *Quatuor Evangelia in lingua Danica cum picturis deauratis: Liber quonda(m) Canuti Regis*. In James’s hand, added, (2) *Exorcismi sacri ad reddendos agros ferti-|los. Saxonice*. Verso blank.]

CONTENTS:

1. ff. 11r–175v “Heliand” in 71 numbered sections: INCIPIT Q[VA-TV]|OR EVANGELIV(M) ‘MANEGA WARON | the sia iro

mod gespon that sia . | bigunnun uuord godes reckean' (ed. Sievers 1878; Behaghel/Taeger 1984). Followed by blank unnumbered folio (old 170).

2. ff. 176r–178r Verse charm 1, "Æcerbot": 'HER YS SEO BÓT HV ÐV MEAHT þine æceras betan' (ed. Dobbie 1942: 116–18).

PHOTO NOTES: The following italicized letters on the versos near the gutter are not visible in the photographs:

21v/10 *de* added above, by another hand? There are a number of corrections throughout the text by hands other than the main scribes.

24v/17 *rikkian* /21 *fagaro*

28v/23 *ahtean*

32v/24 *middilgard*

51v/21 *gruottean*

56v/6 *gilobeau;*

58v/17 *uuilleon*

98v/24 *hugit*

168v/17 *giuuistun*

176v/2 *circean*

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