STAFFORDSHIRE HOARD ITEM NUMBER 550, A WARD AGAINST EVIL

ITEM number 550 of the Anglo-Saxon Staffordshire Hoard is, according to Kevin Leahy, a ‘strip of gold with an inscription on both faces’; the inscription reads: ‘surge domine et disepentur inimici tui et fugent qui oderunt te a facie tua’ (‘Arise, O Lord, and let thy enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee, flee from before thy face’), which derives from Numbers 10:35 in the Vulgate. Only two inscribed items from Anglo-Saxon England are comparable for both their portability and inscriptions of biblical material: a wooden cross and a gold ring, both echoing the *agnus Dei* (‘Lamb of God’) of John 1:29.

In her preliminary analysis of the item, Elisabeth Okasha notes a parallel passage in Psalm 67:2, and suggests that ‘although it is possible that the composer of the exemplum had the text from Numbers in mind, it is more likely that the version from the Psalms would be better known to him/her as the Psalms were chanted daily throughout the year in the monastic liturgy.’ The two verses may be compared as follows, including the *Romanum, Gallicanum, and Hebraicum* versions of the psalm:

Numbers 10:35: ‘surge Domine et dissipentur inimici tui et fugiant qui oderunt te a facie tua’ (‘Arise, O Lord, and let thy enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee, flee from before thy face’);

Psalm 67:2 (*Romanum*): ‘exsurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici eius et fugiant a facie ejus qui oderunt eum’ (‘Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered: and let them flee from before his face that hate him’);

Psalm 67:2 (*Gallicanum* and *Hebraicum*): ‘exsurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici eius et fugiant qui oderunt eum a facie ejus’ (‘Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered: and let them that hate him flee from before his face’).

In addition to these versions of the passage, Old Latin variants reveal only slight departures, such as *dispergantur* in place of *dissipentur* and rendering the second half of the verse as ‘et fugiant odientes eum, a facie ejus’ (‘and let them that hate him flee, from before his face’).

The principle difference between the parallel passages is the use of the imperative verb in the reading from Numbers, but Latin translations of works by Greek authors represent alternatives to the Hieronymian versions. For example, the Latin translation of *Liturgica S. Basilii ex Coptico conversa* reads, ‘exsurge, Domine Deus, et dissipentur inimici tui et fugiant a facie tua omnes qui oderunt nomen tuum sanctum’ (‘Arise, O Lord God, and let thy enemies be scattered, and let flee from before thy face all who hate thy holy name’).
and Theodore of Mopsuestia’s *Expositiones in Psalmos* reads, ‘exsurge, Domine, et dissipentur inimici tui, et fugiant omnes qui oderunt te’ (‘Arise, O Lord, and let thy enemies be scattered, and let all that hate thee flee’), although the reading ‘et fugiant a facie eius qui oderunt eum’ (‘and let them flee before his face that hate him’) also appears in his exposition.  

Pseudo-Augustine materials also offer similar variants: in the *Liber de divinis scripturis*, ‘exsurge, Domine Deus meus, fortis meus; et dissipentur inimici tui, et fugiant qui oderunt te a facie tua’ (‘Arise, O Lord, and let thy enemies be scattered, and let all that hate thee flee’); and in the *Soliloquia animae ad Deum*, ‘exsurge, Domine Deus meus, fortis meus; et dissipentur inimici tui, et fugiant qui oderunt te a facie tua’ (‘Arise, my Lord God, my strong one; and let thy enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee from before thy face’). These few examples illustrate the convergence in the Latin West of the two parallel verses from Numbers and Psalms.

In Anglo-Saxon England, we find a social context for the gold strip and its inscription in two saints’ vitae. Throughout Athanasius’s *Vita S. Antonii* (composed c. 357, translated into Latin by Evagrius c. 370), Anthony uses psalms to repel demons, including one specific occasion in chapter 12 in which he uses Psalm 67:2: ‘ille psallebat intrinsecus: Exsurgat Deus, et reliqua; quo audito, dicto velocius eodem momento omnes daemoniorum turmae veluti fumus a facie eius evanuerunt’ (‘sang the first verse of the sixty-seventh psalm as if prophetically, “Let God arise”, etc.: when they had heard this, at the same moment, quicker than words, all the hosts of demons vanished like smoke from his presence’). The Old English prose *Vita S. Guthlaci*, closely based on the Latin, is in fact the only Old English text that quotes the biblical passage from Numbers 10:35/Psalm 67:2:  

Guthlac ‘pone sealm sang: “Exsurgat deus et dissipentur, et reliqua.” Sona swa he þæt fyrmeste fers sang þæs sealmes, þa gewiton hi swa swa smic fram his ansyne’ (‘sang the psalm: “Let God arise, and let them be scattered, and the rest.” As soon as he sang the first verse of the psalm, then they went like smoke from his sight’). These hagiographic texts, then, present the psalm as a charm for warding off evil and achieving victory over the saints’ enemies, in contrast to traditional patristic and Hiberno-Latin exegeses on this psalm verse, which provide typological interpretations—although

---


14 PL 73.134; my translation. Thanks to Jane Roberts for first pointing out this use of psalms by Anthony, especially as an influence on Felix’s *Vita S. Guthlaci* (personal correspondence, 25 October 2009).


16 Colgrave, p. 110; trans. p. 111; see the notes, pp. 110 and 185–6.


they do so not in terms of spiritual warfare but by way of Christological readings and emphasizing the psalm’s relevance for the Church and persecution. The Old Testament verses refer specifically to the need of the Israelites and psalmist for protection in warfare, and although the enemies are demons in the two vitae, they characterize both spiritual and physical threats to the saints. This convergence between human military and demonic spiritual enemies is especially prominent in the Vita S. Guthlacii, in which Guthlac’s youthful battles against the Mercians prefigure his later battles against demons. Likewise, although the exact nature of the gold strip is unclear, the cultural associations of the biblical passage point to a warrior’s need for a protective charm. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifests the appropriation of the ceremonial or magical value of the object for the one who bears it. As Lea Olsan has observed, ‘an incantation written on an amulet manifest...