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AN ETHIOPIC VERSION OF THE LIFE OF MARY OF EGYPT

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Abstract: *The Ethiopic version of the Life of Mary of Egypt, translated into Ethiopic sometime in the Medieval period, is a remarkable and understudied text that provides numerous insights into the Ethiopian hagiographical tradition, especially the narratives of female saints. An English translation of the Life from Ms. Oriental 686 from the British Library appears here for the first time, accompanied by an introduction to the text and images of the manuscript. Written primarily in a dialogue format, the Life records the journey of a monk named Zosimas into the Jordanian desert on a quest for spiritual knowledge. In the desolate wilderness he encounters Mary, a curious but holy figure, who details her transformation from a libidinous woman into a desert ascetic. Our hope is that this translation allows for wider access to the text, which might stimulate future study.*

Keywords: Ethiopic hagiography; female saints; manuscript studies; medieval literature.

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INTRODUCTION*

The *Life of Mary of Egypt* is a story that documents the spiritual journey of a monk named Zosimas via the spiritual journey of Mary, a woman with an insatiable sexual appetite turned desert ascetic. Originally written in Greek in the 7th century CE, the *Life* was one of the most popular saints' lives of late antiquity.¹ Following its translation into Latin in the 8th century by Paul, deacon of Naples, the story achieved an even higher level of popularity in the medieval period when redactions of the Latin text were translated into vernacular versions such as Old English, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and German [Kouli, 1996].² However, the popularity of the text was not limited to Western Europe as the manuscript tradition also records versions in Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, Georgian, and Ethiopic [Pereira, 1903, p. ix]. A translation of the Ethiopic version of the *Life*, following Ms. Oriental 686 from the British Library is available here in English for the first time.³

Remaining relatively faithful to the Greek original through its many translations, all versions of the *Life* subsequent to the Greek have a tripartite structure that takes the reader on a journey from the confines of civilization toward the inner desert and back out again. The text begins and ends with the exhortations and explanations of a monastic scribe imploring his audience to believe the tale he relates. The scribe's comments frame the physical and spiri-

* We are grateful to the British Library for permission to publish images from Ms. Or. 686 (see: *figs. 1–10*) and for granting us access to the manuscript during the summer of 2017. We would also like to thank Professor Alessandro Bausi for sharing his expertise in Ethiopic paleography and Professor L. Michael White for his observations on scribal citations, especially as they relate to Paul.

¹ Over 100 manuscripts of Mary's *Life* survive in Greek and Latin.

² For more on the Latin versions and their relationship to the vernacular translations see: Craddock, 1966; Kunze, 1969; Dembowski, 1977; Sargent, 1977; Magennis, 2002.

³ A translation of the Ethiopic *Life of Mary of Egypt* from Ms. Oriental 686 was rendered into Portuguese by F. Pereira in 1903. This, to our knowledge, is the only available edition and translation of the manuscript.

tual journey of a monk/priest named Zosimas. Zosimas was raised in a Palestinian monastery where, in his old age, he thought he had become perfect in all practices. Encouraged to learn more, he ventures to another monastery near the River Jordan. At this monastery tradition dictates that during Lent the monks disperse into the desert to spend time in solitude; Zosimas hopes that his wanderings will lead him to a desert father to guide his development. But instead of a father he encounters a desert mother, Mary. Zosimas's journey then becomes intertwined with Mary's narrative – an autobiographical recounting of her journey from “harlotry” to holiness.⁴

Mary's story begins in Alexandria. She describes that she left her parents' home at an early age and made a career out of her insatiable appetite for sex. In fact, Mary's appetite was so voracious that she did not even accept payment for her services, but freely and willingly gave her body to men to satisfy her own lust. One day she saw people running to the harbor to board a ship to Jerusalem to attend the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Mary decides to sail with them, engaging in licentious behavior both on the boat and in Jerusalem. When the day of the festival arrives, Mary attempts to follow the crowd into the Church of the Resurrection, but is stopped at the threshold of the door by an invisible force. Saddened that she is unable to enter the church, Mary looks around and sees an icon of the Virgin Mary. She then realizes that her lascivious lifestyle is what prevents her from entering. She petitions the Virgin to allow her to enter, promising that she will go wherever she is commanded after she has prayed in the church. Her request is granted; Mary enters and then, upon hearing a voice in the church, journeys across the River Jordan into the desert where she spends forty-seven years repenting her sins. Mary's narrative culminates with her death, and with this event the story shifts back to a focus on Zosimas's journey, and then back to the scribe's exhortation.

Most scholars classify the text as instructional, as Mary seems to offer the reader a spiritual or moral lesson. In the early 20th century, scholars asserted that the *Life* exemplified the possibility of the reformation of women who “entirely lost the modesty proper to their sex” and descended the path of vice “to the deepest degradation,” demonstrating that even the most sinful woman could exceed the most ascetic of men [Pereira, 1903, p. v]. More modern readings have likewise emphasized the didactic nature of the *Life*, but have taken a more nuanced approach to gender roles. That is, by overcoming feminine lust and promiscuousness, the figure of the prostitute could not only represent the “Everywoman,” but also the “Everyman,” since monastic authors often developed the theme of “woman-as-temptress” in recognition that men, too, sinned through lust [Karras, 1990, p. 6]. In this traditional reading, the *Life* transforms profane flesh into a vehicle of grace, and Mary's conversion “extends the hope of universal salvation to sinful humanity” [Coon, 1997, xvii; cf. Stevenson, 1996; Kouli, 1996].

The traditional reading of Mary's sublimated female desire as the focal point of the *Life* has not gone unchallenged. Other interpretations of the structure and purpose of the *Life* focus, for instance, on the presence of icons in Mary's conversion experience, suggesting that since Mary is converted to Christianity through an icon of the Virgin Mary, the text functions to demonstrate the efficacy of icons [Conner, 2004]. Others have argued that as his purpose, the author of the *Life* intended to elevate one form of monastic life over another in his praise of the eremitic life over the cenobitic [Salisbury, 1991]. More recently, Virginia Burrus has pointed out the subversive nature of the text, arguing that rather than repenting of her transgressive female sexuality, Mary's sanctity actually “inheres” in her “unrepentant – if nonetheless transfigured – seductiveness” [Burrus, 2004, p. 13].

⁴ Mary is frequently categorized as one of the “harlot saints.” See, for example, Ward, 1987.

THE GREEK TEXT⁵

The Greek version of the text likely dates to the early 7th century and is attributed to Sophronios (ca. 560–638), the patriarch of Jerusalem (634–638), although this attribution is questionable.⁶ Despite its late date of composition, the Sophronian version appropriates and reworks ascetic traditions from the 4th century, relying particularly on Athanasius's *Life of Antony* (ca. 356–362) and Jerome's *Life of Paul the Hermit* (ca. 374–375). The Sophronian version is also likely based on other, earlier versions of Mary's story, or tales that seem to resemble Mary's story. Maria Kouli points to a mid-6th century account in the *Life of Cyriacos* written by Cyril of Scythopolis as the earliest version of the story. Other earlier evidence for nascent versions of the *Life* are found in John Moschus's *The Spiritual Meadow* (early 7th century), which contains an account of a female anchorite that bears many similarities to Mary, and in the *Life of St. Eleutherius*, which claims that Pope Hormisdas brought Mary's relics to Tournai in 518, though most scholars doubt the authenticity of this reference since the *Life of St. Eleutherius* was not composed until the late 6th or early 7th century [Kouli, 1996, p. 65–68; Sargent, 1977, p. 7–9].

Despite the many literary texts that seem to purport some aspect of Mary's *Life*, the historicity of Mary's story cannot be established. Some scholars have argued that the *Life* provides an accurate portrait of monastic life [Pereira, 1903, p. v, vii], but the portrait is, in many respects, heavily idealized. Scholars have likewise noted that it is impossible to establish a chronology for the text since no specific dates are mentioned. Therefore, the scribe's claim that the events occurred in his lifetime is likely more of an effort to establish authority than a historical reality. To be sure, there were women engaged in the eremitic life during the time period in which the text was written, yet none can be pinpointed as a direct inspiration for the *Life* [Kouli, 1996, p. 68].

As to the style of the text, the writing is simple, primarily using dialogue to advance the plot. The longest episode in the text is Mary's first-person account to Zosimas of her journey from Alexandria to the desert. As mentioned above, the narrative frame of the *Life* is carefully constructed, which allows the author to shift easily between voices: the scribe to Zosimas to Mary and back to Zosimas and to the scribe.⁷ Scholars have noted that it was probably the accessible language, swift moving plot, exotic characters and locale, as well as the compelling content, that led to the *Life*'s long-lasting popularity.

THE ETHIOPIC TEXT

There are two known Ethiopic manuscripts containing Mary's *Life*.⁸ One of these manuscripts, which includes a text entitled *The Contending of Mary the Egyptian* (*Gadla Māryām Gəbsāwīt*), is located in Dabra Hayq Istifanos Iyasus Mo'a Monastery in Hayq, South Wallo. Some work has been undertaken on this manuscript by Selamawit Mecca, though no translation or images of the manuscript have been issued. More significantly, as of her 2012 article on the Ethiopic *Life of Mary of Egypt*, Selamawit Mecca believed it to be the "single manuscript" of Mary's *Life* [Mecca, 2012, p. 335].⁹ The other Ethiopic version, seemingly long forgotten since

⁵ The Greek text can be found in J.P. Minge, *Patrologia Graeca* 87.3, cols. 3697–3726. Kouli [1996, p. 70–93] notes that the *PG* translation is based on two manuscripts, one from Berlin and another from Paris, that are "sketchily identified." Kouli, while promising a new critical edition, provides an English translation of the *PG* text.

⁶ For more on the scholarly debate surrounding the authorship of the *Life*, see Sargent, 1977, p. 6–7; Kouli, 1996, p. 66.

⁷ This narrative structure was influenced by Jerome's *Life of Paul the Hermit*. For a comparison of the two hagiographies see Delmas, 1900–1901; Harvey, 2004.

⁸ An abridged version of Mary's *Life* appears in the Ethiopian Synaxarion [Colin, 1995, p. 502–507].

⁹ This manuscript has a "candid" introduction in which the scribe records that the original manuscript was destroyed during the invasion of Ahmad Grañ in the 16th century. The manuscript, therefore, is based on traditions from memory following the destruction.

it was translated into Portuguese by Francisco Pereira in 1903, is found in Ms. Oriental 686, now housed in the British Library. At the time of Pereira's publication, it was believed to be the only manuscript containing Mary's *Life* [Pereira, 1903, p. x]. The manuscript is part of the Magdala Collection, a group of manuscripts procured from the fortress of Magdala (Maqdalā) in Ethiopia after it fell into British hands in the campaign against Abyssinian King Theodore II (Tewodros II) in 1867. According to William Wright, the King had intended to build a church in honor of the Savior of the World (*Madḥāne ʿĀlam*), which would also contain a library, and was therefore collecting manuscripts to endow in his new building. The result of his effort was that a library of nearly one thousand volumes fell into the hands of British troops and landed in the collections of the British Museum on August 28, 1868 [Wright, 1877, p. iii–iv].¹⁰ None of the manuscripts in the collection date before 1400 CE, with the great majority dating to the 17th–19th centuries.

Ms. Oriental 686 is a vellum codex still in its original wooden boards, covered with stamped leather and lined with flowered silk. The manuscript records the *Acts of Saints and Martyrs* (*Gadla Samāʿiṭāt*) arranged for their commemoration for the whole year from the months of Maskarram to Nahasē. Containing a total of 286 folios with one unnumbered blank leaf at the beginning and end, the manuscript holds 62 individual texts ranging in diversity from a homily of John Chrysostom on St. John the Baptist (f. 1r) to the story of Jacob the Persian, who was cut in pieces (f. 85v), to the Discovery of the Relics of St. Stephen, written by the priest Lucian (f. 118r), to the martyrdom of Euphemia under Diocletian (f. 218v). Each folio measures about 20 inches by $15\frac{7}{8}$ inches and is organized into three columns of 37 to 39 lines with about fourteen letters per line [Wright, 1877, p. 166–169; Pereira, 1903, p. x–xi]. Each folio is neatly ruled in grids of guidelines made through the method of prickings in the outer margins. The manuscript was written during the reign of Iyoʿās, son of Iyāsu II, thus placing its date between 1755–1769 CE. The name of the King is ubiquitous throughout the manuscript, usually appearing with the name of his father and the Queen Grandmother, *Walatta Giyorgis*,¹¹ or the name of the scribe, *Walda Fasiladas*.

The text of Mary's *Life*, which was slated to be read on the 6th of Miyāzyā,¹² spans 1026 lines on folios 168v–173r.¹³ Immediately preceding it is the story of Theocritus the reader (f. 164r), celebrated on the 17th of Magābit, and immediately following it is the story of St. George (f. 173r), celebrated on the 23rd of Miyāzyā. The heading at the top of folio 168v, which indicates that the text is for the 6th of Miyāzyā, is rubricated. The name Mary – both of the saint and the mother of Jesus – is also rubricated throughout the text, as are the names of the royal family, which appear at the beginning and end of the text. The Geʿez marker for periods (also called full stops) is frequently (though not always) rubricated,¹⁴ as are the serifs of the lines above and below numerals. Most noticeable, however, are the symmetrically rubricated lines (lines 1–2, 5–6, 9–10) in the second and third columns on folio 168v. In the second column, lines 1–2 mark the beginning of Mary's story entreating the Father, Son, and Holy

¹⁰ Despite the nearly thousand volumes in the King's collection, only 350 volumes comprise the Magdala Collection in the British Museum since many were looted or privately purchased.

¹¹ *Walatta Giyorgis* is the baptismal name of the queen; she is also known by the name Məntəwṡāb.

¹² The commemoration date is sometimes listed as the 7th of Miyāzyā (as in Wright's catalogue). This is a result of a switch in the Ethiopic numerals. See n. 47, below. In comparison, the Greek Orthodox church holds Mary's feast day on April 1 and on the fifth Sunday of Lent, while the West celebrates her either on the second, third, ninth, or tenth of April [Kouli, 1996, p. 68].

¹³ Pereira provides the title *The Story of Mary the Egyptian* (*Zenāhā la-Māryām Gəḥṣāwīt*), although this is not an official title given by the text itself. Pereira takes it from the second line of the story which reads 'This is the text of the story of Mary the Egyptian' (*zəntu maṣḥafa zenāhā la-Māryām Gəḥṣāwīt*).

¹⁴ The scribe frequently seems to correct the punctuation, rendering word dividers into full stops. This tendency can be found on f. 168v, col. 2; f. 169v, cols. 1–2; f. 170r, cols. 1–2; f. 170v, cols. 1–3; f. 171r, cols. 1–3; f. 171v, cols. 2–3; f. 172r, col. 2; f. 172v, cols. 1–2.

Spirit, while lines 9–10 (and a smaller additional line, 11) highlight the favor of the saint toward the royal family. This latter group of lines is interesting because, as noted, a smaller line is added beneath the rubricated couplet. Either the scribe added this line after the text was completed or he made an error in copying or composing the text, perhaps skipping over a line or not planning out the lines properly. The rubricated lines in the third column have no special content, but serve an aesthetic value. The rubricated invocation of the royal family is matched in the concluding five lines of the hagiography on folio 173r, where the names of 'Iyo'ās, 'Iyāsu II, and *Walatta Giyorgis* are again rubricated. The text concludes with a decorative line, which consists of two rows of alternating red and black strokes that border three red full stops. A scribal colophon indicating that the text was written by *Walda Fasilidas* appears below the decorative line.

The scribe's hand, for the most part, is fine, careful and neat, and the ink is of high quality. The scribe seems to double ink every letter, so that the text is bright and bold.¹⁵ Occasionally, due to the boldness of the letters and the varying thickness of the vellum folio, the text on the verso can be seen through the recto. This is especially notable on f. 170r, col. 3 (and conversely f. 170v, col. 1). There are a handful of erasures,¹⁶ rewrites over erasures,¹⁷ and ink smears,¹⁸ but these do not detract from the beauty of the scribe's hand. There are also a small number of scribal errors in the text; these include two dittographies¹⁹ and superscript corrections of omitted letters.²⁰

It is generally assumed, no doubt correctly, that like many such texts the Ethiopic *Life* was translated from an Arabic *Vorlage*, which may have been written anywhere from the 14th–16th centuries.²¹ Selamawit Mecca, for example, mentions that only local saints' lives were originally composed in Ge'ez, while the lives of foreign saints were mostly transmitted through Arabic [Mecca, 2012, p. 334]. But the British Library manuscript of the Ethiopic *Life*, at least, shows little Arabic influence; the Ge'ez text is idiomatic, and generally excellent, with virtually no Arabic influence.²²

While the Ethiopic text generally follows the structure and plot of the Greek text, there are some significant differences between the Greek and Ethiopic versions. Most significantly, the Ethiopic version is much shorter than its Greek counterpart. In particular, the scribal introduction is highly abbreviated and the epilogue is reduced to a single sentence. Many of the descriptive elements provided in the Greek version have been cut or condensed from major episodes in the narrative. The truncation is most obvious in Zosimas's introduction where the Ethiopic scribe does not share the concern of the Greek author to distinguish *this* Zosimas from another, heretical Zosimas;²³ the description of the activity of the monks in the Jordan monastery paints them as pious men, but does not cast them as earthly angels recreating the divine paradise as in the Greek version;²⁴ Mary's ordeal at the church of the Resurrection omits much of the action between Mary and the icon of the Virgin Mary that appears in the Greek text; and Zosimas's longing for and wonder about Mary is pared down as he awaits her and receives her on the bank of the River Jordan a year after their initial meeting. In addition, the obvious refer-

¹⁵ One of the most prominent examples of double inking is the word *lā'lehu* (f. 169r, col. 1), but this habit is readily observed throughout the text.

¹⁶ Prominent examples of erasures can be seen on f. 169r, cols. 1–2; f. 172v, col. 3.

¹⁷ Prominent examples of rewrites can be seen on f. 169v, col. 2; f. 170v, col. 2; f. 171v, cols. 2–3; f. 172r, col. 1.

¹⁸ Prominent examples of ink smears can be seen on f. 169v, col. 1; f. 170v, col. 3.

¹⁹ F. 171r, col. 1; one dittography spans f. 172r, col. 3 and f. 172v, col. 1.

²⁰ F. 170r, col. 2; f. 171v, col. 3; f. 172v, col. 1.

²¹ Pereira [1903, p. xi] claims that the Arabic version was probably made in the 14th, while Wright [1877, p. iv] suggests the broader range of the 14th–16th centuries.

²² A likely vestige of the Arabic *Vorlage* is noted below in n. 47.

²³ *Life of Mary of Egypt* col. 3700, in PG.

²⁴ *Life of Mary of Egypt* col. 3701, in PG.

ences to the *Life of Antony* have been completely excised. No longer, for instance, do we read that the monks of the monastery near the river Jordan “made the desert a city.”²⁵ The explicit references to the *Life of Paul the Hermit*, however, still remain.²⁶ The scribe has also cut out all scribal interjections. In the Greek text, when Mary preforms a miracle that defies belief, the scribe often exhorts the reader to believe his story, saying things like, “[Zosimas] swore to us calling upon God as the witness of his words,”²⁷ or cites some type of empirical proof that proves the story is true: “as [Zosimas] told us, there was a full moon that night.”²⁸ These are missing from the Ethiopic version.

Despite the deletions, the Ethiopic version does add some content. Most noticeably, the text opens with the invocation of the trinity, a short description of the text to come, and an appeal that Mary’s prayer and blessing be with the souls of the royal family forever. When the scribe writes of the death of Mary, he indicates, as in the Greek version, that Mary died “in the Roman month of April,” and adds, “And in Ge‘ez, among us, on the 6th of the month of Miyāzyā.” The scribe also makes a subtle change when, in the Ge‘ez version, Zosimas asks Mary to pray for him, the members of the church, and the *king*. In the Greek version, Zosimas asks Mary to pray for him, the church, and the *empire*.²⁹ These changes, along with other minor adjustments by the scribe, localize the story, contextualizing the narrative in an Ethiopian milieu rather than an imperial context.³⁰

Due in large part to the shortened text, the Ethiopic version seems to contain fewer scriptural citations and allusions than the Greek text. Rarely does the scribe insert a citation or allusion not found in the Greek, yet when he does, the scribe highlights certain scriptural passages and biblical figures that the Greek author never mentions. For example, he explicitly pairs the wisdom of Solomon and the writings of Paul in the introduction to explain the profound power of the gift of grace of the holy spirit. The scribe’s penchant to name scripture and biblical figures important in his context continues in the body of the text, as when he describes Zosimas’s astonishment when Mary is able to present “testimony from the writings of Moses, Job, David, Solomon, Paul, and the gospel” despite her illiteracy.³¹ The list of writings in the Greek versions lists only Moses, Job, and the Book of Psalms. Paul and Solomon thus seem to be favorites of the scribe or perhaps the patrons for whom he is writing. Matthew 5:8 also seems to be a favorite verse as the scribe uses it twice (it appears once in the Greek version), but on its second occurrence, he amends the verse slightly to emphasize Christ: “Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see *the son of God*.”

The translation that follows is the first English edition of any Ethiopic manuscript containing the *Life of Mary of Egypt*. Included with our translation are images of the *Life* from Ms. Oriental 686, the folios of which are referenced both in this introduction and in the commentary of the translation. Our translation is derived directly from the manuscript itself, rather than any adherence to Pereira’s 1903 rendering of the Ge‘ez or his Portuguese translation. Moreover,

²⁵ *Life of Mary of Egypt* col. 3703, in *PG*; cf. *Life of Antony* in *PG* 26, col. 865b.

²⁶ The bowing/blessing standoff between Zosimas and Mary (f. 169v, col. 3) mirrors the same episode between Antony and Paul. Also, the lion that emerges from Mary’s desert to bury her (f. 172v, cols. 2–3) is derived from the two lions that emerge from the desert to bury Paul.

²⁷ *Life of Mary of Egypt* col. 3708, in *PG*.

²⁸ *Life of Mary of Egypt* col. 3721, in *PG*.

²⁹ *Life of Mary of Egypt* col. 3724, in *PG*.

³⁰ Selamawit Mecca [2012, p. 336] describes Ethiopian scribes tendency to localize or “Ethiopianize” hagiographies, yet she writes that the manuscript of Mary’s *Life* from Dabra Hayq “seems to have violated traditional [editorial] ways by presenting this saint’s biography without its local content.” Also see Kaplan, 1984. While in Ms. Orient. 686 the content generally mirrors the content of the Greek version and does not insert morals or ethics specific to the Ethiopian context, there is a conscious effort on the part of the scribe to personalize the narrative to make sense in his own context.

³¹ *Life of Mary of Egypt* col. 3719, in *PG*.

our method of translation diverges from Pereira in two key ways. First, whereas Pereira normalized the Ge'ez, correcting the text to what one would expect to read, our translation remains faithful to the manuscript, noting in the footnotes where textual inconsistencies are found rather than standardizing them. Second, Pereira intentionally introduced changes to the text by adding or omitting words and complete lines. Most notable is Pereira's strange removal of the names of the royal family in the scribal introduction in favor of the phrase 'with us' (*məslena*).³² Our translation, in contrast, remains as faithful as possible to the original text, yet the redundancies of connecting particles have been minimized in the English. We have also attempted to point out in footnotes any problematic, unclear, or notable aspects of the Ge'ez or the historical context of the manuscript. Additionally, significant comparisons to and divergences from the Greek text, beyond those mentioned in this introduction, are mentioned in footnotes. Direct scriptural citations are marked by italics, while scriptural references and allusions have been noted in footnotes. Bold type indicates the rubricated portions of the text and a smaller font indicates the lines that have been squeezed in (see: *fig. 1*, col. 2; *fig. 10*, col. 1).

It is our hope that this translation and reproduction of the manuscript serve as a foundation for further study of the Ethiopic version of the *Life of Mary of Egypt*. The *Life* is an indispensable tool for studying the narratives of female saints and Ethiopic hagiography more generally, as well as for the study of Medieval Ethiopian Christianity.

TRANSLATION

(above f. 168v, columns 2 and 3) **On the 6th of Miyāzya**³⁴

(f. 168v, col. 2) **In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, 1³⁵ Lord. This is the document of the story of Mary the Egyptian who contended in the Jordan desert after she had committed many sins. May prayer to her and her blessing be with³⁶ the soul of her beloved, our king, Iyasu³⁷ and his son, our king, Iyo'as, and their mother, our queen, Walatta Giyorgis** and with her servant Walatta Šəllāse³⁸ forever and ever. Amen.³⁹

*It is necessary that the mystery of kings be hidden.*⁴⁰ But Lord's activity and his wonders, when they have become known, are life for one who accepts (them) in truth. For whoever reveals the mystery of kings goes down in punishment. But whoever hides the mysteries of God's wonders – he indeed is destroyed. Therefore it would not be proper for me to hide the reports of the saints that I have heard, so that it may be beneficial to me, and also for one who

³² See n. 36, below.

³³ The scribe used the older forms of '6' and '7' in this ms., neither having a ring, and '6' somewhat shorter and wider than '7'. See Bausi and Nosnitsin, 2015, p. 290; our thanks to Prof. Bausi for directing us to this information.

³⁴ Pereira added a title that is not in the manuscript: *Zenāhā la-Māryām Gəbšāwīt* 'The Story of Mary the Egyptian'.

³⁵ Throughout our translation, we write digits ('1', '2', etc.) whenever the Ethiopic text does so.

³⁶ Pereira replaced everything from 'with the soul of ...' to '...Walatta Šəllāse' with 'with us' (*məsla nafsā fəqurā* ... *Walatta Šəllāse* replaced by *məslena*).

³⁷ Iyasu II, ruled 1730–1755; his son Iyo'as ruled 1755–1769, with his grandmother, Walatta Giyorgis (the empress Məntəwwāb, 1706–1773), as regent.

³⁸ At the end of the *Life*, another insertion after Walatta Giyorgis has 'and with her servant Aleni'. Of several women named Walatta Šəllāse, one is also named Eleni, namely, the twelfth daughter of Iyasu I (the Great), who ruled 1682–1706; she married (a) Dəgəzmač Tullu, governor of Damot; (b) Fitawrari Nathia (Naca), who was killed 1727. Could she have remained alive until after the death of Walatta Giyorgis in 1773, to inherit the manuscript?

³⁹ This introductory paragraph is not in the Greek version.

⁴⁰ Cf. Tobit 12:7, which in Ethiopic reads: 'For the mystery of the kingdom is good to hide, and the activity of God should be revealed in glory; do what is good, lest evil find you' (*'əsma məšira mangəšt šānnāy la-ḥabi'*, *wa-gəbra 'əgzi'abḥer yəksətawwə ba-kəbr*; *gəbarəwwā la-šānnāyt wa-ʾi-tərkab-kəmu 'akit*). The Greek version cites the Tobit verse more fully: 'It is good to conceal the secret of a king, but it is honorable to reveal the works of God'; it then gives a short exegesis of Tobit.

has heard it; for this report came to me from a pure and good man; the word of God was in his mouth day and night and he carried out the commandments of our savior from his youth until his old age. It was he who told me; whoever sees and reads this book, let him not doubt in his mind, and let him also understand that it is accurate, and not say, "How is it possible to be thus?" For the gift of the grace of the Holy Spirit illuminates for each one who seeks, and makes the soul spiritual, as Solomon⁴¹ (f. 168v, col. 3) and Paul⁴² said.

The old man recounted this to me without being silent in the praise of God for even an hour, while standing and sitting, **while keeping watch and serving; and many were the testimonies concerning this** old man, that the Holy Spirit would come down upon him and **worthily he would see God, as the gospel said: *Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see God.***⁴³ The name of this old monk was Zosimās; he it was who recounted to me. From when he left his mother's care,⁴⁴ he lived in a monastery and served in it until he was 53 years old. But he then became disheartened concerning a thought that had come to him, saying, "Since I have competed every activity, and I myself am not eager for learning from another, is there then an intelligent monk like me upon the earth whose knowledge is better, or who is able to do what I do not do? Or is there one to be found in the desert among the wise who surpasses me (in) service or abstinence?" As the old man was thinking like that, a voice came from the sky⁴⁵ saying, "Many are those who seek eternal life. So if you want to understand this, leave from where you are, as our father Abraham was commanded,⁴⁶ and come to a place that is at the Jordan River, whose name is La'elamun."⁴⁷

So the old man, when he heard this voice that came (f. 169r, col. 1) to him, immediately left that monastery in which he had been a monk, until he arrived at the holy Jordan, to that place that God had commanded him. Then he knocked on the door and spoke to the doorkeeper; the doorkeeper went quickly to tell the abbot, and the abbot commanded him to invite him (in). When the old man had entered, the abbot greeted him and prayed over him as the monks were accustomed (to do). The abbot questioned him, and said to him, "From where have you come, and why have you taken the trouble to see us⁴⁸ poor old sinners?"

Zosimās answered and said to him, "You might tell me where from; I am a man and a pauper of ash and dust, and my coming here is for the benefit of my soul, my father, for I have heard of you that you have an excellent practice which brings the soul close to God." Then the abbot said to him, "My brother, the Lord God is the healer⁴⁹ of all men's souls. Let me ask him to bestow his favor on us – on you and also on us – and the doing of his commandments, for a man cannot save someone else. Only let us do what is proper for us, and God will be our helper.

⁴¹ This may be a reference to Wisdom 7:27, which is missing from the Ethiopic, but cited later in the Greek introduction in reference to the Spirit.

⁴² Cf. 1 Corinthians 12. If we suppose that the Wisdom quotation from the Greek version is operating behind the scenes here, it would seem that the author of the Ethiopic text is making a theological point about trinitarian doctrine by overtly paralleling a verse about Sophia in Wisdom to Paul's discussion of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians. This is a parallel that Paul himself makes, especially in 1 Corinthians as he associates Sophia with the Spirit and Christ. The author of the Ethiopic Life, then, is, like Paul, emphasizing the exaltation of Christ through his parallel of Sophia and Spirit (with the Spirit replacing Sophia in trinitarian doctrine, thus rendering Sophia's role theologically safe). This fits well with the overall tenor of the Ethiopic version which places more emphasis on Paul, Christ, and the Trinity than the Greek version.

⁴³ Matthew 5:8, quoted verbatim.

⁴⁴ Or 'his mother's womb'; the Greek has τῶν πατρικῶν ἀγκυλῶν, which Kouli [1996, p. 72 with n. 27] corrects to τῶν μητρικῶν ἀγκυλῶν and translates 'when he was still in his mother's arms'.

⁴⁵ In the Greek version, someone approaches Zosimās and says this; it is not a divine injunction as it is here.

⁴⁶ Cf. Genesis 12:1.

⁴⁷ Pereira [1903, p. 26, n. 1] suggested that this unknown place name results from a mishearing on the part of the Ge'ez scribe of an Arabic phrase referring to the monastery of Qalamun (Calamon), which was some 5 km. from Jericho and from the Jordan. The Greek text does not have a place name here.

⁴⁸ The text has 'might you see?' (tər'ay-nu) for expected 'that you might see us' (tər'ayana).

⁴⁹ Part of this word is written over an erasure.

If you have come here on account of us, stay with us and live like us. God is the good shepherd;⁵⁰ he prepares us and sustains us and guards our paths (f. 169r, col. 2) from all wrongdoing⁵¹ and sin by his kindness and his mercy forever. Amen.”

When the abbot had said this speech to Abbā Zosimās, he prostrated himself to him and asked him to pray and intercede on his behalf. And when the abbot had prayed, and Zosimās had said “Amen,” Zosimās got right up, and remained in that monastery. Then he saw monks who in truth were holy angels worshipping God night and day, standing without idleness, and there were none among them concerned⁵² with the cares of this world at all, but rather (with) singing and praise, like angels. And more, none of them would consider himself alive, but like one who had died and become dust.

After a few days the Holy Fast⁵³ arrived, in which Christian people purify themselves from sin by worshipping and praying. The door⁵⁴ of that place was always closed, and would not be opened except so that those who were doing the business of the monks could go out. In that monastery there was a custom, and (it was) on account of that custom, I say, (that) God brought Zosimās to that monastery. And that custom was that on the first sabbath of the fast, which was holy, after they raised the Eucharist, they would bring a table near and each eat a little. Then they would gather in the church (f. 169r, col. 3) and pray a long prayer and worship for one hour. And again they would greet one another, and come to the abbot and petition him 1 (by) 1, praying that God would be a help for them in their going out and in their coming in. When they had done this, the abbot would open the door and they would go out reciting the 26th Psalm: “*God provides light for me and saves me; what can frighten me? God is my life’s trusted one; what can terrify me?*”⁵⁵

Then they would travel each on their way, but they would leave one monk in the monastery so that prayer would not cease during the time of the incense and the lamp. Each 1 would take as many provisions as he could. 1 would take bread and his fellow would take unleavened bread; some would take dates and some would take dried fig fruit. And others would take nothing at all but the torn clothing on them. When the desire for food overpowered them, they would eat desert grass. None of them wanted to be aware of another, or how his life was, or what his tolerance and his state were; so they would then separate, each from the other, into the Jordan desert. When 1 would see his fellow from a distance, they⁵⁶ would prostrate themselves to him, but turn aside to another path. And when the fast was finished, they would gather for the Feast of Hosanna.⁵⁷ Such was the custom of that abbot (f. 169v, col. 1).

Zosimās too went out into the desert according to custom. He had a bit of food, and what he had on was torn and old. He crossed the Jordan. Then he thought to himself to go even farther into the wasteland toward the east, to 1 of the pilgrim fathers whom he might encounter. He went there like someone who knew (how) from of old. Then, having traversed a 20-day journey, when it was the 6th hour,⁵⁸ he turned around and stood facing east to pray, as he was accustomed (to do). Such was his life day and night, in praise and prayer in worship, spreading his hands toward heaven.

Then he turned to his right, and saw at a distance (something) in the shape of a person. When he saw (it), he became terrified and trembled, and marveled that it was a demon. Imme-

⁵⁰ Quoting John 10:11, 14.

⁵¹ There is an erased letter between the first two letters of this word.

⁵² The ms has *yātkāz* for expected *yātekkāz*.

⁵³ I.e., the first Sunday in Lent.

⁵⁴ This word is written over an erasure.

⁵⁵ Psalm 26(27):1–2, quoted verbatim.

⁵⁶ Sic; the text switches from the singular ‘one’ in the preceding clause to plural ‘they’ here.

⁵⁷ I.e., Palm Sunday.

⁵⁸ I.e., noon.

diately it crossed its face, and then it withdrew from him⁵⁹ in fear. He saw it again, and perceived that it was going naked; the color of its body was black, and the hair of its head was white as wool⁶⁰ and went down to its shoulders. When Zosimās saw this, he rejoiced greatly, and began to go quickly toward it, for he had in those days not seen a human being, an animal, a bird, or anything. Therefore Zosimās wanted to examine what appeared to him at a distance to be the form of a person; (but) as he was approaching it, it fled⁶¹ (f. 169v, col. 2) and went into the desert.

Zosimās became like one who has cast off his old age⁶² and has forgotten the weariness that he had endured on the path. As quickly as he would pursue the vision and follow it, the vision would flee from him. When he got close enough to where it could hear the sound of his voice, Zosimās began to cry out, speaking while weeping: “O servant of the good God, why do you flee from an old sinner? I beseech you by God, for whose sake you have dwelt in this wasteland, wait for me. You who have become what you are,⁶³ I beseech you by the hope that you expect from the Lord, who gives reward on account of this hardship, be patient with me. And (even) if it is not proper for me to stand before you that you might give me prayer and blessing, I ask you by God, who is patient with sinners, wait for me.”

While Zosimās was running and beseeching and weeping thus, the 2 of them came to a certain (lit., 1) place together. Then Zosimās stopped, and added tears to tears, and implored it to answer him something. Immediately the vision spoke, and said, “O father Zosimās, forgive me for God’s sake, for I am not able to turn to see you, for⁶⁴ I am a woman and I am naked, as you see me. But if you would favor a sinner woman with prayer and blessing, throw⁶⁵ me some of the tatters that you are wearing on yourself that I may cover (f. 169v, col. 3) the shame of women that is on myself; and then I will turn to you to receive your blessing.”

When Zosimās heard her saying his name, fear and terror seized him. He knew that she (could) not have said his name except by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for there had never been any time that she had seen him.⁶⁶ Right away he removed the cloak he had on and threw (it) to her to cover up. She picked up the old cloak and covered her shame, and turned to him and said to him, “What do you want from a sinner woman, and what do you seek to know, that you have undertaken all this hardship?”

He, however, prostrated himself to her, asking her for prayer and blessing. And she again prostrated herself to him, asking him for prayer and blessing. So the 2 of them were cast to the ground, each 1 <asking>⁶⁷ the other for blessing and saying, “O Lord, bless.” After an hour, the woman said, “O righteous father Zosimās, it is proper that you should be the one to bless, because you have been granted priesthood and also you⁶⁸ perform the sacred offices in God’s house.” When Zosimās heard this, his fear and terror increased, and his voice was silent.

Then he said to her, “O spiritual woman, I myself know that the Holy Spirit has come upon you, for you said my name and you said that I am a priest, and you have never⁶⁹ seen me at all.

⁵⁹ Or, ‘he (Zosimās) crossed his face, and then he withdrew from it’.

⁶⁰ Cf. Revelation 1:14: ‘his head was white and his hair was white like wool and like snow’ (*wa-ša’adā rə’su wa-ša’artu kama ḡamr ša’adā wa-kama barad*); also Daniel 7:9: ‘his clothing was white as snow and the hair of his head was (pure) as wool’ (*wa-ləbsu šā’edā kama barad wa-ša’arta rə’su kama ḡamr (nəṣuḥ)*).

⁶¹ Pereira corrected the text’s *naḡṣa* to *naḡṣa*, which is the normal form of this verb.

⁶² The text actually has ‘his forgetfulness’ (*rəs’ənnāhu*) rather than the homophonic ‘his old age’ (*rəs’ənnāhu*), probably because of the following ‘he has forgotten’ (*ras’ā*).

⁶³ The Ge’ez is difficult here, literally, ‘you having become what you are’ (*za-konka kawinaka*).

⁶⁴ Written over an erasure.

⁶⁵ The manuscript has ‘thing’ (*nagar*); we follow Pereira’s correction to ‘throw’ (*wəḡar*).

⁶⁶ Lit., ‘there was not when she had seen him at all’.

⁶⁷ Presumably a scribal omission, in view of the preceding sentences.

⁶⁸ Correcting the text’s ‘while’ (*’anta*) to ‘you’ (*’anta*); the first letter is written over an erasure.

⁶⁹ The text has *’albo kama*, literally ‘there is not (the fact) that/because’, which is probably a scribal error for *’albo ’ama* ‘never’.

For the gift of grace is manifest among (f. 170r, col. 1) those who revere God, but not among any others. Pray over me for God's sake, for I am eager to receive your blessing." And when the old man urged her, the woman⁷⁰ said, "Blessed be the Lord who is the savior of humanity; by the abundance of his mercy may he have mercy on us." And Zosimās said, "Amen." Then the 2 of them got up together.

That woman said to him, "What urged you to come here, to a sinful woman? I am devoid of any feat of goodness. Only the grace of the Holy Spirit has led you and brought you to me that I may complete my proper task."

She began to say to him, "Tell me how the life of the Christians is, and how the manner of kings is, and how the shepherds of the Christians are." And Zosimās⁷¹ said to her in a humble voice, "By your prayer, all are safe. But what I want of you, O blessed woman, is that you intercede and pray for the whole world and for me; pray for me, that God not destroy my hope, what I hope for."

She answered him and said to him, "(That) is more seemly for you: It is proper, O Zosimās, that you intercede and pray for me and for the whole world. For the priesthood has been given to you, whereas it is proper for me to obey you and do what you have said to me."

Then, having removed herself a little, she turned to the east and spread her hands to heaven and pled in secret, weeping and asking (f. 170r, col. 2) privately,⁷² the sound of her voice unheard. Zosimās stood trembling and casting his face to the ground. And when she prolonged her prayer, he looked up and saw her elevated some two⁷³ cubits from the ground, and he swore by God that he saw her suspended in the air, praying. Seeing this, his sweat dripping on the ground, Zosimās was unable to speak, except to say, secretly, "O Lord, have mercy on me." Then he thought, wondering, "Is it then a deceiver/imposter or an evil spirit?" But she returned and raised him from the ground and said to him, "Why do you wonder in your heart whether I am a deceiver, while you are interceding and praying? Know, O man, I am just a sinner woman. I have undergone holy baptism. I am not a deceiver; rather, I am ashes and dust."⁷⁴

Then she crossed her face and chest again and said, "O Zosimās, thus it is fitting that we drive from us the forces of the Enemy and ask God to save us from him." When the old man heard her speaking like this, he prostrated himself on the ground and began to kiss her feet; he said, "I adjure you by God, who became incarnate through the holy virgin **Mary**, mother of the Lord, for⁷⁵ whose sake you have suffered (in) your body and afflicted yourself in this desert, to recount to me who you are and whence you have come, and how long (lit., when) you have stayed in (f. 170r, col. 3) this wasteland. Do not hide anything from me, that God's wonders may be revealed. For hidden wisdom is not useful and a concealed treasure is not visible.⁷⁶ By God your Lord, you must tell me all your secrets. For this is not to flatter;⁷⁷ but rather, help an old sinner man, for I say, it is God that has supported you and brought me into this desert, that your mystery may be revealed. For God does not want to hide or obscure from his flock a story like you(rs). If he had wanted to hide the mystery of your secrets, he would not have brought

⁷⁰ In a scribal lapse, the ms has *bəʔsi* 'man' rather than *bəʔsit* 'woman'.

⁷¹ The scribe here erroneously wrote *Sosimās*. The beginning of the next word, too, is incorrect, with *bə-* for expected *ba-* 'in'.

⁷² The ms has a scribal error here, with *ṣə-mə-* at the end of the first column of f. 170r., and *-mi-ta* at the beginning of the second column, for expected *ṣə-mi-ta* (*ṣəmmi-ta* 'secretly, privately').

⁷³ The ms here has *2-ʔe* for *kəʔe*; the scribe usually wrote the number '2' simply 2, without a phonetic complement. In the Greek version, the saint is only elevated one cubit.

⁷⁴ Cf. Genesis 18:27; Sirach 17:32.

⁷⁵ The preposition 'for', *la-*, was originally omitted by the scribe, then added as a superscript over the word-divider that precedes the rest of the word.

⁷⁶ Cf. Sirach 20:30: 'For wisdom that is hidden is like a concealed treasury; for what is the benefit of either?' (*ṭəbab za-ḥəbuʔ kama madfən kəbut; mənt ʔənka rabāḥomu la-kəʔehomu?*).

⁷⁷ *ʔadlawā* can also be 'to please, satisfy'; Pereira: 'isto não é para adulação' = 'this is not for flattery'.

me to you, and he would not have supported me along the way with all this hardship and affliction. And I, a very old man, would not have left the monastery at all.”

When Zosimās had said this, while prostrate, she took his hand, raised him up, and said to him, “I am ashamed to speak to you, father; forgive me. But I will reveal to you my actions just as God has shown you my naked body, lest it seem to you that I refused to tell you when you asked me before, because it was not out of boasting or seeking praise that I was hiding from you. For I say, when you have heard my actions, you will flee from me as a person flees from a serpent; for you will not be able to be tolerant when you hear the tale of shame and ignominy. Nothing at all will be concealed from you. But I want you to ask (f. 170v, col. 1) God, for me, that I might find mercy and pity before him.”

The old man, however, was weeping and shedding tears. Then she began to tell him, saying thus: “Father, my country is Egypt. When I was 12 years old, while my mother and father were (still) living, I separated myself from them—I had become so rebellious⁷⁸—and I arrived in Alexandria. But I am not ashamed to tell you and to recount to you how I disgraced myself and corrupted my body, insatiable with the lust of youth.⁷⁹ Then I remained for 16 years with no other occupation apart solely from whoring.⁸⁰ And I did not want them to give me anything at all; I would not take the pay of whoring even from someone who wanted to give (it) to me, so that there would be many who would seek to have sex⁸¹ with me. And in such conduct I remained in Alexandria,⁸² in vain satisfying my lust with them. But let it not appear to you, father, that I was becoming very rich or had a lot of property, which I did not receive from them at all. Rather, being poor, I would ask and entreat something to eat. I would still spin wool, and want whoring, so my life every day was whoring and sin; and this I considered (to be) an advantage, and a life.

“While I was behaving this way, I arrived one day at the seashore, where there were men in boats, looking to go abroad (f. 170v, col. 2). I asked them and said, ‘Where are you going?’

⁷⁸ Or ‘disobedient’ or ‘wicked’.

⁷⁹ Cf. 2 Timothy 2:22: ‘Flee the lust of youth’ (g^wayayā la-fātwa wərzut).

⁸⁰ The Ethiopic term *zammūt* and its cognates appear in the text twelve times, clearly painting an unflattering image of Mary’s promiscuity. This aligns with the language of the Greek text, which uses words and phrases like τὸ πάθος τῆς μίξεως, ἐμπαθές, εἶδος ἀσελγέες, ἀσωτίας, and ἀναίδειαν to indicate the depravity of Mary’s actions. As a result of the negative descriptors, studies of the *Life* have commonly referred to Mary’s wanton behavior as prostitution or harlotry (e.g., Ward, 1987; Koulis, 1996; Selamawit Mecca, 2012). Patricia Cox Miller, however, points out that Mary is not presented as a prostitute “in Roman legal, social, and economic terms . . .” since Roman prostitutes “had very little control over their bodies and were subject to legal regulation and disabilities.” In fact, Mary is not tied to any pimp and bluntly rejects economic income as payment for sex [Miller, 2003, p. 428]. Accordingly, in our translation we have consciously chosen not to refer to Mary’s behavior as “prostitution” or its synonym, “harlotry.” We have also chosen to jettison the stilted and archaic term “fornication” and the more modern and value-neutral term “sex work” in favor of the term “whoring.” Scholars have noted that words, like *zammūt*, that can be translated variously as “prostitution,” “harlotry,” or “whoring,” encompass a broader spectrum of meaning when understood as “whoring” [Baumann, 2003; Glancy and Moore, 2011]. In particular, as Baumann [2003, p. 46] notes of the Hebrew *zōnāh*, beyond indicating a professional who makes a living from the sale of her body, “whoring” indicates the individual agency of a woman “who seeks sexual liaisons with men on her own initiative” without remuneration. Glancy and Moore [2011, p. 555], commenting on the Greek terms ἐτάιρα and πόρνη, further note that whoring is “distinguished by anonymity and sheer number of sexual partners.” “Whoring” thus more accurately describes Mary’s sexual behavior while simultaneously echoing the text’s negative moral judgment of *zammūt*. Yet “whoring” is not a problem-free term. Modern scholars and sex workers alike have decried “whoring” and “whore” as demeaning and misogynistic slurs [Grant, 2014]. Our choice of “whoring,” however, is intended to align with the text’s depiction of Mary’s behavior as sexually deviant, as well as to emphasize the social constructedness of Mary’s conduct and the meaning of the words used to describe it, rather than to evince any type of moral judgment about modern sex work(ers).

In two places near the beginning of f. 170v, col. 3, we have translated *zammūt* as ‘sexual act’ rather than ‘whoring’. And we have translated the cognate verb *zammawa* simply as ‘to have sex’ in the two places in which it appears, about half way through 170v col. 1 and near the end of 170v col. 2.

⁸¹ The verb here is *zammawa*, from which is derived the noun *zammūt*, which we have translated ‘whoring’; see the preceding note.

⁸² ‘Alexandria’ here is written simply ᾠσκάνδερῶ, rather than the usual ᾠλλα ᾠσκάνδερῶ.

They said to me, “We are planning to go to Jerusalem for the <Fe>ast of the Cross.”⁸³ I said to 1 of them, ‘Will you take me with you?’ and he said to me, ‘If you have the fare and provisions, no one will prevent you from coming.’ I said, ‘I have, brother, neither fare nor provisions. But I want to go with you. Let me eat and drink, and in exchange for that I will lie with you.’ Father, my sin is not the boat fare that I would give them, but rather the fact that I might satisfy the lust for whoring with those many men. Forgive me, father Zosimās; I told you not to press me to recount my actions to you, for God knows that I am trembling and terrified from your greatness and dignity.”

Zosimās said to her, weeping all the while, “Tell me, woman; do not stop recounting to me.”

She said, “Father, when that young man heard the words of my speech, he laughed. And when I saw that he was laughing, I cast the wool I was spinning from my hand and went fleeing to the sea. Those boats needed to go, but then I saw 10 men in one boat, and said, ‘Those will suffice to have sex with me.’ Other young men too boarded the boat, so I, as usual, flew and joined them without shame. I said to them, ‘Take me with you.’ So (f. 170v, col. 3) they picked me up and brought me aboard the boat, and we started to go. Would that my tongue were not able to speak, nor my ear to hear! For I continued seducing them against their will. There was no sexual act⁸⁴ that I refrained from doing with those poor men; in fact I became their teacher in every sexual act and defilement. So I marvel, father, at how the sea endured my sin, and the land did not swallow my soul to send me down to Sheol, for I became a net and a trap to many people.

“While I was behaving like this, we reached the temple. Then I remained for a little while, and sinned and whored even more, which was worse than before; for although then I had seduced many young men in the boat, I now became a trap to other people of the city.

“But, it seems to me, God was waiting for my repentance, for God does not desire the death of sinners who convert and repent.⁸⁵ When the Feast of the Holy Cross arrived, I was, as was my old habit, going around ensnaring the young men. Then all the people of the city went to the Feast of the Cross, and quickly entered the church. There was a great crush by the door and I began to enter with them. When I reached the second door, a force came to me that kept pushing me and turning me back, until I was unable (f. 171r, col. 1) to enter. I could see all the people entering, but I kept being turned back, for I was unable to enter.⁸⁶ So I waited by myself until they were all on their way in, and nobody, not 1, remained by the door. I wanted to go, too, and I remained like that, wanting to enter, for a long time, but could not. When I understood that I was rejected and cast out, it being improper for me to see the cross of the wood of life, and then realized that the wretchedness of my behavior and the wickedness of my life were what was preventing me from entering God’s temple that day, I wept and sang and beat my chest, wailing from the depth of my heart.

“While in that state, I saw, in the place where I was standing, above the door, the image of holy **Mary**, mother of the Lord. Immediately I looked devotedly at her and said, ‘Our Lady, pure virgin who bore the Lord in the flesh, I know truly that it is not proper for me to look at your image, for I am defiled and unclean. Indeed I am hateful and vile. But, my Lady, the Lord whom you bore became human for this, to call sinners to repentance. Now, hear me, receive me, permit me to enter the temple, and do not prevent me from looking at the wood of (f. 171r, col. 2) the cross of your only son. For the one who shed his blood for our sake and redeemed us,

⁸³ The feast of the finding of the true cross, celebrated on the 16th and 17th of Masqaram (late September). In the ms, the scribe missed a letter, writing *la-‘āla* for *la-ba‘āla*.

⁸⁴ See n. 80, above.

⁸⁵ Cf. Ezekiel 33:11: ‘I do not desire the death of the sinner, but rather that he repent and abandon his evil way’ (ʾi-ʾəfaqqəd moto la-ḥāṭəʾ dāʾəmu kama yəḥassəḥ wa-yəḥdæg fənoto ʾəkita).

⁸⁶ The scribe here repeated ‘I could see all the people entering, but I kept being turned back’, a dittography prompted by the repetition of ‘I was unable to enter’.

permit me, my Lady, to enter and worship at the glorious cross. You, redeem me by the Lord who was born of you. From now, I swear by God that I will not sin again and will not corrupt my flesh in vain. As soon as I have worshiped at the wood of the cross on which your son was crucified, at that time I will leave the world and everything in it, and I will go where you have commanded me; I will submit to you.⁸⁷ Help me and save me, my Lady.’

“Thus I said by strength of faith in her, and I believed in the mercy of the mother of the Lord. Then I joined with those entering the church, with nothing preventing me or pressing in on me or pushing me. It came over me like a strong man; it carried me and let me reach the church. Then trembling and terror seized me, and I saw the holy mysteries of the Lord, who accepts the repentance of sinners who repent and have been counted among the saints. I marveled, and said, ‘How God has been merciful to me and increased his mercy on me, so that I became worthy to see the tree of life!’

“When I finished praying, I went outside and fell to the ground where the picture of our Lady **Mary**, mother of the Lord, is. I said to her, ‘My Lady, you, who love (f. 171r, col. 3) good, have revealed to me—and you did not hesitate to receive my request, though I was unclean and impure—truly, I have seen the glory and sanctity that sinners without repentance do not see. And while I am speaking thus, my Lady, complete my redemption and lead me where you would. Become my guide to the road of repentance.’ And I heard a voice that said, ‘If you cross the Jordan, you will find pleasing rest.’ I believed that that voice had come for my sake, and so I wept and looked up at the mother of the Lord, saying, ‘My Lady, do not leave me, do not cast me aside.’

“Having said this, I quickly left the temple, and as I was leaving, a man met me and gave me 3 pennies. He said to me, ‘Take this, blessed one.’ I took (it) and bought 3 (loaves of) bread. I asked the one selling the bread, ‘Where is the Jordan road?’, and he showed me the road. So I went that day in the 3rd hour.⁸⁸ When the sun went down, I arrived at the church of John the Baptist, near the Jordan. I worshiped, prayed, and received the Eucharist there; and I went down to the Jordan and washed myself in that water. Then I ate part of the bread that I had brought along, and drank the Jordan’s water, and spent the night there. When dawn came, I found a small boat and crossed (f. 171v, col. 1) the Jordan in it, petitioning and praying to the mother of the Lord who had redeemed me, to lead me where she wished. Then I arrived in this wasteland, hoping for the mercy of my Lord.”

Zosimās said to her, “O saint, how many years have you dwelt in this wasteland?”⁸⁹ She said to him, “47 years.” When Zosimās said to her, “How do you sustain yourself here?”, she said, “I tell you, I had two (loaves of) bread and a bit; since the time that I crossed the Jordan, it dried out and become like stone. I sustained myself with it little by little, until that bread was finished. Would then that I might tell you the greatness of God’s mercy, how he has protected me and sustained me and increased his kindness to me.”

Zosimās said to her, “Is then your mind not disturbed as before?” She said to him, “Forgive me, father, for the many thoughts, desires, and sorrows, that it is not possible to tell you about.” But Zosimās said to her, “Do not hide any of your story, for God did not bring me here for nothing, but on the contrary that I may hear your story for the benefit of many.” So she said to him, “Let me tell you, father. I remained in this desert 17 years, wandering around; as I said to you, it (my mind) was being disturbed by unclean desire, and the Enemy would keep my mind awake and remind me of eating flesh and drinking wine and all (types of) food that I had seen (f. 171v, col. 2) in the land of Egypt. Moreover, demons would remind me of whoring all the

⁸⁷ Here ‘you’ is masculine rather than feminine, a scribal error.

⁸⁸ I.e., 9 a.m.

⁸⁹ Cf. Psalm 54 (55):7: ‘I escaped far away, and dwelled in the wilderness’ (*nāhu ʾarhaqqu taḥaṭṭʾo wa-betku wasta badw*).

time. But I would keep in mind **Mary**, who redeemed me. Then I would wander around weeping and beating my chest, and my mind would be on the image of our Lady **Mary**, hoping for her to drive every agitation and evil away from me. Afterward, a great light would appear to me, which would flash around me. At that time, my evil thoughts would be removed from me, and then my heart would rejoice and my tongue exult.

“What should I tell you about thoughts of whoring? Because I kept burning, as with fire, the desire in my body until I would fall to the ground and roll in the dust like a snake and wet the dirt with my tears until I would see the one who redeemed me standing before me, admonishing me and exhorting me about desire. I would not rise from the ground until that light would appear to me. Afterward all thought of Satan would be driven from me, and I would ask my Lady/Lord⁹⁰ for power and help against the force of the Enemy. And so I kept on for 17 years. But from that time he has left me and has not come to me until this day.”

The old man, when he heard the saint’s words, praised and blessed and glorified God. He said to her, “After all this, have you not required food or clothing?”

She said to him, “The bread is gone, as I told you. Afterward, I sustained myself (f. 171v, col. 3) with the vegetation of the desert. The clothes I had on wore out, so I wear the heat of the sun during the day and the cold at night. I suffered great affliction, and for a long time would fall to the ground and become like a corpse, until my Lady who redeemed me removed all this evil thought from me, and gave me strength and perseverance. From then on, I have sustained and clothed myself with the words of God, as the gospel said, “*It is not by bread that a person lives.*”⁹¹ Then she presented testimony from the writings of Moses, Job, David, Solomon, Paul, and the Gospel, and others as well. Zosimās was astonished when she began to tell him the words of God in the writings.

Then she said to him, “Know, father, that since I left and came to this desert, I have not seen people, beasts, animals, birds, or anything. Moreover, I have not been taught the writings, nor the <rec>itation⁹² of the psalter. But I ask you by⁹³ the living Lord that you not tell anyone my secrets that I have revealed to you. But do pray for me, for I am a sinful woman.”

The old man started to prostrate himself before her, crying and weeping and shouting and saying, “Blessed is the Lord who performs great wonders without number,⁹⁴ fittingly to those who revere him. Truly, O Lord, you save those who trust in you.”

(f. 172r, col. 1) At that point she took the old man’s hand, raised him up, and said to him, “I adjure you by the Holy Trinity that gives life to all that you not recount the story to anyone until God takes my soul and I leave this world. Now go in peace and remain in the monastery. When you come here next year, you will see me by God’s grace. But I ask you not to cross the Jordan until the day of the mysteries of Christ, which is the prayer of the fifth day.⁹⁵ Then bring me the Eucharist, if I am worthy to be named to receive (it); for since the time I reached the church of John the Baptist near the Jordan, I have not received⁹⁶ the Eucharist; since then until today I have

⁹⁰ The ms has ‘I would ask her, namely, my Lord’. The last two letters of ‘I would ask her’ have been sloppily written over an erasure, which suggests that the ms originally had ‘I would ask him, namely, my Lord’, and that a (later?) scribe intended to correct this to ‘I would ask her, namely, my Lady’, but only effected one of the two planned changes.

⁹¹ Quoting Matthew 4:4 verbatim; cf. also Deuteronomy 8:3: ‘it is not by food alone that people live’ (‘i-kona ba-’akl bāhtitu za-yaḥayyu sab’).

⁹² A scribal lapse; the ms has wa-²i-nəbəbo, either for wa-²i-²anbəbo ‘nor the recitation of’ or, less likely, for wa-²anbəbo ‘and the recitation of’.

⁹³ The preposition ‘by’, ba-, was added as superscript after having been originally omitted.

⁹⁴ Cf. Job 5:9: ‘who performed great things without limit and glorious and wondrous things without number’ (za-gabra ‘abiāt za-’albo ‘asara wa-kəbarta wa-mankara za-’albo ḥi’ēlq’); similarly Job 9:10.

⁹⁵ I.e., the Last Supper.

⁹⁶ Pereira corrected the ms, omitted the negative with the first verb, which admittedly produces a smoother reading: ‘for since the time I reached the church of John the Baptist near the Jordan and received the Eucharist, since then until today I have not been given the Eucharist’.

not been given the Eucharist. Should you wish to come before that day, you will not be able to come. And Abbayon,⁹⁷ the abbot of the monastery that is in your area: say to him, 'Take care to guard your flock, for you should correct the path of those who are with you, and act on their concerns'. I do not want you to tell him⁹⁸ today,⁹⁹ but to wait until God commands you.

And having said this, she got up quickly and went to the wasteland. Then the old man turned back and returned to the monastery, and remained that year, keeping silent and not having told anyone. But he would ask God to show him that day (when), as before (f. 172r, col. 2), he would see that woman. When the Holy Fast¹⁰⁰ arrived, the monks began to leave, as they were accustomed (to do). But a serious illness took hold of Zosimās in the monastery, and he was unable to leave. Then he remembered the saint's words, who said, "If you would come before that day, you will not be able to come." After that, he remained a few days and recovered.

When the monks gathered in the monastery and it was the time of the prayer of the fifth day, Zosimās remembered what saint had commanded him, (and) immediately got up quickly and took the body of Christ and his precious blood in a chalice. He took as well a table on which were unleavened bread, dates, herbs, and lentils. Then he went and arrived at the shore by the Jordan as she had commanded, and he remained, awaiting the arrival of the pure and blessed one from the wasteland. And when she was late, Zosimās grew worried. He turned right and left, and was thinking, saying, "Did she come here, and leave when she didn't find me?" As he was thinking this, moaning and weeping, he looked up to heaven and said, "My God and Lord, do not let me go without seeing the face that you love." As he was beseeching and weeping thus, a thought came to him, saying, "What can I do (about the fact) that there is no boat in which she might cross?" And he continued petitioning and beseeching thus, saying (f. 172r, col. 3), "Woe to me; who has prevented me from seeing this good thing?"

But as he was saying this, that blessed and pure woman arrived and stood on the shore at the Jordan River from where she had come. Zosimās immediately got up, rejoicing and exulting. Then she made the sign of the cross (over) the Jordan River, and came to him quickly, walking on the water. He got up to prostrate himself to her, but she prevented him from prostrating himself, saying, "Why are you acting like this, you being a priest and having the holy mysteries?" And he said to her, "Alright," and immediately got up.

Then she said to him, "Father, bless." He answered her and said to her, trembling from the miracle he had seen, "*Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see the son of God.*"¹⁰¹ He prayed, as customary, the Prayer of Faith and the Gospel Prayer.¹⁰² When he finished praying, he gave her the Eucharist. Then she cried out and wept, and said, "*Now you may discharge your servant in peace, O Lord, as you have commanded, for my eyes have seen your salvation.*"¹⁰³

Then she said to the old man, "Go, father, (as one) protected,¹⁰⁴ in peace to the monastery, and next year you may come to me in the wasteland where you first met me. There you will see me as God has desired."

⁹⁷ Ge'ez *ʾab(b)ayon*; Pereira plausibly corrected this to *la-ʾabbā yohannās* 'to Father John', in accord with the Greek version.

⁹⁸ The text has 'I do not want speaking today'; the infinitive 'speaking' (*tanāgəro*) is probably an error for 'that you tell him' (*təngəro*).

⁹⁹ We learn below that Zosimas is able to get from the monastery to Mary in a day.

¹⁰⁰ I.e., the first Sunday in Lent.

¹⁰¹ Matthew 5:8, altered from 'they will see God'; the verse is quoted verbatim near the beginning of the text.

¹⁰² I.e., the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

¹⁰³ Paraphrasing the *Nunc dimittis*, Luke 2:29–30, the Ethiopic version of which reads: 'Now you may discharge your servant, O Lord, according to your word, in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation' (*yəʾze tāsəʾəro la-gabrəka, ʾəgzīʾo, bakama nabibəka, ba-salām, ʾəsmā rəʾyā ʾaʿyāntəya ʾadhənotaka*). The word for male servant in Luke (*gabr*) is replaced here by the word for female servant (*ʾamat*).

¹⁰⁴ Reading *ʾəqub* for the manuscript's imperative *ʾəqab* 'protect'; the Greek version reads τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ χάριτι φρουρούμενος, which Kouli [1996, p. 90], translates 'under the protection of God's grace'.

He answered her and said, “I want not to be parted from you, that I may see the beauty of your face at all times. But carry out one (f. 172v, col. 1) request¹⁰⁵ for me, an old man, and¹⁰⁶ take a little of the food that I have brought you.” Then he presented to her the table that he had brought with him that time. She took 3 sprouted lentil beans,¹⁰⁷ placed (them) in her mouth, and said, “The Holy Spirit satisfies my soul and protects it from all blemish.”

Then she said to the old man, “Remember my toil always, my father.” He prostrated himself at her feet and asked her to pray for the members of the church, for the king too, and also for him. Then he parted from her and went, weeping and wailing, and returned in sadness to the monastery. She immediately made the sign of the cross at the Jordan river, passed over, and went to the wilderness.

When that year was over, when it was the days of the fastings, Zosimās went forth to the desert as was his habit, and began to go to where he had seen the saint previously. But when he had gone all over the desert, he began to turn right and left like a clever hunter who is hunting, but he found nothing. He began to weep; he looked up to the sky, and prayed and said, “O Lord, show me the treasure that it is not proper for the world to see.” And having said this, he arrived, praying, at that place and turned from the east. He saw her from afar, and went to her.

When he arrived, he found her body where she had died, and he prostrated himself at her feet, and wept bitterly; he prayed for her and interceded for her. Amen.¹⁰⁸ Then (f. 172v, col. 2) he thought, saying, “Should her flesh be buried in the ground, or is it not the case?” While like that, he looked at the ground and found a book by her head. He picked (it) up and read, and found what it said in it, “Father Zosimās, you may bury¹⁰⁹ the body of poor **Mary** in this place; return dust to dust;¹¹⁰ and pray for me for God’s sake.” (Her death was, in the Roman month, in the month of April;¹¹¹ and in Ge’ez, among us, on the 6th of the month of Miyāzyā, on that night in which our Lord Jesus Christ suffered.) When Zosimās saw the book, he started¹¹² to think and say, “Who then wrote it?” – for she had said to him, “I don’t know (how to read) books” – and he rejoiced when he recognized her name. Then he realized that when she had received the Eucharist from him, she (then) came to (this) place and died. That road by which Zosimās had arrived was about a journey of 20 days; but she had arrived in a single hour.¹¹³

He moistened her feet with his tears, and thought, saying, “What then will I do, who have no spade with which to bury her body?” He turned and found wood strewn on the ground; he picked (it) up and (tried to) dig, but was unable to dig, because that ground was hard. The old man grew tired, and his sweat dripped; and there was nothing he was able to do at all. Then a lion came and stood by, and began licking (f. 172v, col. 3) the feet of the saint. When Zosimās

¹⁰⁵ In a dittography, the word ‘request’ (*səʾlata*) appears both as the last word of f. 172r, col. 3 (where it was erased and corrected), and as the first word of f. 172r, col. 1.

¹⁰⁶ ‘And’ (*wa-*) is written as a small superscript addition over the word-divider before ‘take’.

¹⁰⁷ The Ethiopic is unclear; the form *bəqʷəlt* is not in the dictionaries, but may be the feminine of the rare adjective *bəqul* ‘that germinates’ [Leslau, 1987, p. 100b], here perhaps ‘sprouted’, thus ‘three grains of sprouted (stuff) of lentils’. Pereira [1903, p. 41 with n. 2] translated ‘tres grãos de favas e de lentilhas’ (‘3 grains of beans and of lentils’), with reference to a similar word, *bāqʷəlā* ‘bean’. The Greek version has ‘Ἡ δὲ δακτύλοις ἄρκοις τῆς φακῆς ἀψαμένη, καὶ τρεῖς κόκκους ἀνελομένη, τῇ ἰδίῳ προσήγαγεν στόματι, which Kouli [1996, p. 90], translates ‘She touched the lentils with her fingertips, took three of the lentil beans and brought them to her mouth’.

¹⁰⁸ Or perhaps, ‘he pled “Amen” for her’. The Greek version here describes the saint’s hands being folded in the proper manner, her body facing the east, and Zosimās washing her feet and reciting the proper psalms.

¹⁰⁹ The scribe erroneously wrote ‘you remain’ (*tənabbər*) for ‘you bury’ (*taqabbər*) or ‘may you bury’ (*taqbər*).

¹¹⁰ Cf. Ecclesiastes 3:20.

¹¹¹ Thus the ms, the syntax of which is problematic here (‘her death was in the month of Rome and in the month of April; *wa-kona ʿəraftā ba-warhā rome wa-ba-warhā ʿabrəlās*). Pereira corrected the text to accord with the Greek version: ‘her death was in the month of Barmuda in Egypt, and in the month of April in Rome; *wa-kona ʿəraftā ba-warhā barmudā ba-gəḥṣ, wa-ba-warhā ʿabrəlās ba-rome*).

¹¹² The text has ‘while’ (*ʿənza*), but the following verbs are subjunctive rather than the expected imperfect; thus we have emended to ‘he began’ (*ʿahāza*).

¹¹³ The Greek version makes this clearer by noting that the saint died after receiving the Eucharist from Zosimās.

saw (this), fear and trembling seized him, but he crossed his face and had faith, so that he would be safe from it. The lion was blinking its eyes¹¹⁴ like one with whom one exchanges greetings. So Zosimās said to it, “O lion, your claws are numerous and strong; dig with your claws as much as necessary where we will bury her body, for I am old and unable to dig, and I cannot go to my monastery to bring a spade, for it is far away.” On hearing this, the lion dug with its claws as much as necessary for them to bury the saint’s flesh. The old man was weeping and wetting her feet with his tears, and praying a great deal that God would have mercy for all through prayer to her. Then he buried her flesh in the ground, naked as before without those tatters that Zosimās had given her to cover her shame.

After he had buried the saint, the lion went to the wilderness, whereas Zosimās turned around and went back to his monastery, blessing and praising God. And he began to tell the monks the story of the saint, and all the miracles she had performed, and he concealed nothing. On hearing this, they marveled at the greatness of God and his abundant mercy, and they celebrated the saint’s memorial with great joy. Then the abbot found perverse men in the place, as the blessed one had said to him.

Then Zosimas remained in (f. 172r, col. 1) that monastery until he was about 100 years old, and he pleased God with all of his work, and died in the gift of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be greatness and glory and praise – to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. May her blessing be with¹¹⁵ the soul of her beloved **Iyasu** and his son, our king, **Iyoas**, and their mother, our queen, **Walatta Giyorgis** ^{and with the soul of her servant Aleni} ¹¹⁶ forever and ever. Amen.

* * *

And its scribe is Walda Fasiladas.¹¹⁷

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¹¹⁴ There is a play on words here: ‘the lion was blinking’ is *ʿanbasā yānbasabbās*.

¹¹⁵ As at the beginning of the text, in Pereira’s edition, the Ethiopic reads simply ‘May her blessing be with us forever and ever; amen.’ (Pereira’s translation, curiously, has ‘A benção d’elle’, i.e., ‘his blessing’.)

¹¹⁶ On Aleni, see n. 38, above.

¹¹⁷ The name Walda Fasiladas also appears as the copyist of a manuscript now in the Hill Monastic Library [Macomber, 1975, p. 191, project number 182]. It also appears as the scribe of parts of another British Library manuscript, as noted by Wright [1877, p. 19a (no. XXII, *Orient*. 498)].

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 ከከሰክ፡ በተሰቀ፡ በተሰፎ፡ በ፡
 በ፡ ሕምሳክ፡ ወበቤ፡ ዓከብ፡ በከ
 ት፡ ዝገ፡ ት፡ ወሃ፡ ተዓ፡ ገደቅ
 ወእመ፡ ስኢይ፡ ልወሰነ ቅድም፡
 ቅድሚክ፡ ከሙ፡ ተሀበኒ፡ ጸሎ
 ተ፡ ወበረከተ፡ ከከሰክ፡ በከግ
 ዚከብሐር፡ ዘይተ፡ ዓ፡ ሦሙ፡
 ስኢ፡ ሰባ፡ ድንከ፡ ቆመ ዘሲማ
 ስሕን፡ ከሙ፡ ይ፡ ወውእ፡ ወ
 ይከሰ፡ ወይ፡ ከ፡ ብሰ፡ ይ፡ ሆ
 ሙ፡ ውስተ፡ ሕምሃ፡ ኅቡረ፡ ወ
 አምሃ፡ ቅም፡ ዘሲማ ከ፡ ወወሰክ፡
 ሰባ፡ ገና፡ ደቡኣ፡ በብ፡ ወእከተ
 ስኢ፡ ሰባ፡ ይ፡ ወሥኢ፡ ከ፡ ት፡
 ወሰኣ፡ ተናገረ፡ ውእተ፡ ራይ፡
 ወይራ፡ አእባ፡ ዘሲማ ከሥላረ፡ ይ፡
 ሲተ፡ በእንተ፡ እግዚኦብሔር፡ እ
 ስሙ፡ ኢይ፡ ዘሙ፡ ተሰምሎ፡ እርሻ
 ይከሰ፡ ወሙ፡ በከሕ፡ ት፡ እኒ፡ ወራሪ
 ትየ፡ ሀሎ፡ በከሙ፡ ዘተ፡ ራእየ፡
 ወወሰኦተ፡ ሰአም፡ ትይ፡ ግዋብ፡
 ከሲ፡ ት፡ ሦላም ት፡ ጸሎ፡ ወበረ
 ት፡ ገ፡ ሲተ፡ እምሐእ፡ ርታ፡
 ዘሰሰሲኩ፡ ዘተ፡ ሰባ፡ ከሙ፡

ድኑ፡ኃላረተሕንድት፡ዘላሲሲዮ
 ወእምዝ፡እትመዋጥ፡ኅቢክ፡እ
 ንሳክ፡በረከተክቀመስ፡ሰምዮ
 ዘሲሳዋስ፡እካዝ፡ወክኖ፡ኒባጥ፡እ
 ኃላ፡ኖረሃት፡ወክኖ፡ገባ፡ወእክ
 መረ፡ኅመስኪሰመዓት፡ክሞ፡ዘ
 እንባለ፡በጸፃ፡መኖረሱትዱክ
 እክመ፡ሕልዎ፡እመ፡ርእየት፡ገመድ
 ራቀውበጊዜሃ፡እውሕ፡እክረ፡
 እምሳራሴሁ፡ወወገረ፡ሳት፡
 ክኖር፡እውእምዝ፡ገሥሐ፡ት፡
 እተ፡ዳኛረ፡ገሰሉ፡ወክደ፡ት፡
 ኃላረተ፡ውመመደጠት፡ኅቢክ
 ወትቤሱ፡ምንትት፡እቲ፡ዘ
 ኅሰ፡በእሴት፡ኃላ፡ት፡ወምን
 ተ፡ተ፡ኃላ፡ት፡ውእምር፡ዘወመ
 ውክክ፡የት፡ክሉ፡ዓማቀውእት
 ፎራ፡ዓድ፡ሳት፡ወክ፡ዩክል፡ኅቢ
 ኃላ፡እት፡በረከተክቀመስ፡እት
 ኃሰ፡በረ፡ሳፊዮ፡ትሉ፡ት፡ወትክል፡
 እምሳራሴሁ፡እሱት፡ወበረከተ
 ወእም፡ገተሰ፡፪ሆመ፡ግዳ፡ፋ፡
 ውክት፡ምድር፡፩፩በኅሰ፡ካል፡
 በረከተ፡ወዩ፡ብላ፡እካንዚሉ፡
 በረከተወእምድ፡ኅሰ፡ት፡ተሳላ
 ት፡ትቤ፡ዩእት፡በእሴት፡ከላክ
 ዘሲሳዋስ፡ርቱ፡ድዩልወክክት
 ት፡ክመ፡ትግርክ፡እክመ፡ትጸፂ
 ውክ፡ክክነት፡ወዳ፡እ፡ት፡
 ቲድሉ፡ውክት፡ቤተ፡ዓፂዚሉክሐ
 ራቀውስ፡ሰምዮ፡ዘሲሳዋስ፡የት
 ተወሰክ፡ሳሲሁ፡ኖረሃት፡ወክኖ
 ገባ፡ወእርመመ፡ታለቀውእም
 ዩዬላ፡እክነሴት፡መኖረ፡ሳት፡
 መርጉ፡እክነት፡መኖረ፡ሳሲሁ፡
 መኖረሱትዱክ፡እክመ፡ሰመዶ፡
 ስምዮ፡ወትቤሱ፡ክመ፡ኅሰ፡
 ወእክልዎ፡ክመ፡ርእክ፡ኅሰ፡
 ክመ፡ሀባት፡ጸፂ፡ክት፡ት፡ዓወ

አቶ፡ምኒት፡አከነ፡ከነ፡ሱ፡ቶ፡መ
ጠነ፡፱፡ዓመት፡ወአሥመሮ፡በአን
ግዜ አግሐሮ፡በሦሉ፡ግብሩ፡ወ
አሰረ፡በሀጣት፡ጸጋሁ፡በአግዚ
እነ፡ኢየሱስ፡ከሀርስቶ፡ቀዘሎ፡ቶ፡
ሰበይ፡ወክብሮ፡ወክብሎት፡ሰ
አብ፡ወወልድ፡ወመገፈሱ፡ታዲ
ስቀበረከታ፡የሃሱ፡ምስሱ፡ነ፡ኖ
ሰ፡ኖቱ፡ራ፡ኢያሱ፡ወወልዱ፡የ
ጉሥነ፡ኢየሱስ፡ወአሞመ፡ግግ
ሥት፡ነ፡ወሰት፡ጊዮርጊስ፡ለዓለ
ነ፡ራ፡አመት፡ኢሊ፡
መ፡ሳለም፡አመገኛቀ

ወጸሐፊሁ፡ወልደ፡ቶሴልጂስቀ

በሰሙ፡አብ፡ወወልድ፡ወመገፈ
ሱ፡ቀዲስ፡፩፡አግዚአብሔር፡ገድ
ል፡ወሰምሱ፡ዘቅዱስ፡ጊዮርጊስ፡
በረከቱ፡ቀዘሎ፡ምስሱ፡ነ፡ኖሱ፡
ቀሩ፡ግጉሥነ፡ኢያሱ፡ወወልዱ፡
የጉሥነ፡ኢየሱስ፡ወአሞመ፡ግግ
ሥት፡ነ፡ወሰት፡ጊዮርጊስ፡ለዓለ
መ፡ሳለም፡አመገኛቀወነ፡በው
አቶ፡መዋዕል፡ሰደታት፡ዘአብየ
ት፡ዘርስቲያናት፡አምገግሥታ
ት፡አስ፡በመህናት፡ከመ፡ሰቡ
ዲኖ፡አኖከርት፡ሰዓነገሥታ፡ለደ
ድቅ፡አኖ፡ደሰሱ፡ለሳብዘዚ
አሆሙ፡ጣዖታት፡ወሃጌርም
ሙ፡ከመ፡ደሠውቀወበው፡አቶ፡
መዋዕል፡አገሥአ፡ሰይጣን፡ለ
የጉሥነ፡ቀርስ፡ወወሀይ፡ሥልጣ
ነ፡ሰሰሰ፡መገግሥት፡ወከመ፡
ደደሃና፡ከቀወነ፡በሮ፡ሃውዲ፡የ
ጉሥነ፡ድደሃና፡ከሰረ፡መድሐ
ፈ፡አገሱ፡ትብል፡ከመ፡ዘአከመ
በ፡ዚና፡ዘሮደ፡ውስተ፡አከኒ፡ከመ
ዘወለደት፡መርደም፡ደስግዱሎ
ቶ፡ወሰክሱ፡ሰንገወደሰደደ፡ገደወ
አርማከ፡ወደዮስ፡ወራቅሊስ፡
ዝሆስ፡ወኢዝብል፡ወአርናስ፡
ስታማድሮስቀወለአላ፡ተርቶ፡
አማልክት፡ኢያመልክምሙ፡ዘ
አገበሱ፡ከርስቶስ፡በሕቲቶ፡ዘወ
ዓልተ፡አይሁድ፡ቀተሎቀወበአገ
ተ፡ዝገታቱ፡ኢሐፍኩ፡ለአገተዘ
አከመ፡ሰበይ፡ከመ፡ትትጋብኡ፡
ነሶልክሙ፡ሳቢ፡ወናአምር፡ዘገ
ት፡ገገ፡ዘገግብር፡ወተፈነ፡ወመ
ደሰቶት፡ወከተ፡ነሶሉ፡በሐውር
ት፡ወተጋብኡ፡ነሶሉ፡ሳቢ፡፫
ነገሥት፡ወሕዝብ፡ብሁሳ፡አከነ፡
ኢያገብሮ፡መካገቀወበሰነታ፡
ሰለተ፡በረ፡ግጉሥነ፡ሳውዲ፡ደደ

ደደሃ፡ወአከነ፡ደቀርቡ፡ነሶሉ፡መ
ድኃኒት፡ሥቃይ፡ጤገናት፡ወ
መጣብኃት፡ወመኖከራሄረ፡ወ
መሳብረ፡ወመሳትራት፡ወሰደወ
ሐዲ፡ወመጣከርት፡ሐሳን፡ወ
መለያየ፡ብርክ፡ወመዳትሐት፡
ወቅትራት፡ወመዋሥርት፡ወ
ነሶሉ፡ዘተርፈ፡መታኒት፡ሥቃይ፡
ዘሀሱ፡ወከተ፡ቢት፡ግብር፡ወደ
ሴ፡ድደሃና፡ከአመሶ፡ዘረከብኩ፡
አሰ፡ኢይሰግዱ፡ለአማልክት፡አ
ርከዮሙ፡ሥርዓት፡ከሶዮ፡ወአስ
ክሶ፡ውስተ፡ሥጋዮሙ፡ጠኩሳ፡
መታኒት፡ሥቃይ፡ወአከሰ፡ውደ
መ፡ውሶደሙ፡ወአፋነትራት፡ማሳ
ፈዲ፡ዓቃቤ፡ልበሙ፡ወአወድት፡
ርአሰሙ፡ወአከሩ፡ኖሃሞ፡በመ
ታኒት፡ዘደበርትቀወአከርምሙ፡
ከመ፡ምዘርካ፡ወአከሶ፡የዋዮሙ
ሥመሙ፡በመዋሥርት፡ወአከት
ክ፡አሥራዊሆሙቀወው፡አቶ፡ዘ
ርአዮ፡መታኒት፡ባሕቲቶ፡ሞት፡
ውአቶ፡ለአሰ፡ደራከይቀወለአ
ዘጊ፡ደራዲዱ፡ደቅኩ፡ከአምፍ
ርዓት፡መታኒት፡ሥቃይ፡ከሀ፡ደግ
ብኡ፡ደሳፊሆሙቀወተአምረ፡
ከመ፡ፍርሃት፡ውአቶቀሰሙ፡አ
ልቦ፡ዘይቤ፡፫፡ወርኃ፡ወሠሎስ፡ሰ
ለት፡ውስተ፡ብሔር፡አልቦ፡ዘይ
ቤ፡ከርስቲያናት፡አነቀወዝገታሱ፡
ብር፡ጊዮርጊስ፡ከከበ፡ድባ፡
ዘማእከሉ፡ሰማይ፡ወምድር፡ወ
ዘመዱ፡አምቀደት፡ደ፡ዘደኖ፡
ሐራድ፡ውስተ፡ዘርድ፡ወደዮ፡ት
ልኢነ፡ውስተ፡ዘዋዓቤ፡ሠይ
ተ፡ትርቢዮስ፡ቀሠይመቀወአ
ምድሳ፡ዘገታት፡ሣኢ፡ወርተ፡
ብሁኃ፡ውሐረሳብ፡ደደደደ፡አ፡

Fig. 10. Ms. Oriental 686, f. 173 recto.