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**PRAISING MARY’S GIRDLE: THE ENCOMIUM *BHG* 1146M
ATTRIBUTED TO MICHAEL THE MONK AND *SYNKELLOS*¹**

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Abstract

The girdle of the Virgin, which was kept in the Chalkoprateia church, was one of the most prominent relics in Constantinople. It was praised in *encomia* by Patriarch Germanus and the *synkellos* and later patriarch Euthymius. This article focuses on a third text, which dates to the early tenth century and is attributed to the *synkellos* Michael. It offers an analysis of the content, the Greek text and an English translation.

As the self-appointed centre of Christianity and New Jerusalem, Constantinople boasted of many relics. Among the most prized items was Mary’s girdle, which was kept in the church of the Theotokos in the Chalkoprateia (the ‘Copper Market’) near St Sophia.² The church is old. Trustworthy sources report that it was built in the fifth century and refurbished in the third quarter of the sixth.³ By contrast, the historicity of accounts of the invention and translation of the girdle is more difficult to assess. In a notice in the *Synaxarium* S and in a short encomium edited by Latyshev, which both date to the tenth century, it is claimed that it was brought to Constantinople from the Anatolian city of Zela during the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-565).⁴ Unfortunately, we have no

¹ The present study was undertaken within the framework of the project 'Moving Byzantium: Mobility, Microstructures and Personal Agency' (PI: Prof. Claudia Rapp; <https://rapp.univie.ac.at/>), funded by the FWF Austrian Science Fund (Project Z 288 Wittgenstein-Preis).

² For the remains of the church see W. Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls* (Tübingen 1977), 76-78.

³ See R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin. Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique*, III: *Les églises et les monastères* (Paris 1969), 237. On the church see also C. Hennessy, 'The Chapel of Saint Jacob at the Church of the Theotokos Chalkoprateia in Istanbul', in R. Matthews and J. Curtis, eds, *Proceedings of the 7th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East: 12 April – 16 April 2010*, The British Museum and UCL (London, 2012), 351-366; and C. Mango, 'The Chalkoprateia Annunciation and the Pre-Eternal Logos', *Deltion tes christianikes archaiologikes etaireias* IV.17 (1993-1994), 165-170.

⁴ See H. Delehaye, *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* (Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris; Brussels, 1902), 935-936; and B. Latyshev, *Menologii anonymi Byzantini saeculi X quae supersunt*, II (St-Petersburg, 1912), 342-344.

contemporary evidence that would allow us to verify this information. The earliest secure evidence for the presence of the girdle in the Chalkoprateia is a speech in its honour, which was delivered by Patriarch Germanus (715-730).⁵ It is possible that it first surfaced in the seventh century, as a response to the growing cult of Mary's robe, which was kept in the church of the Theotokos in the Blachernai.⁶

In the last quarter of the ninth century a second sermon was produced, this time by Euthymius, a patriarchal *synkellos* who later became patriarch of Constantinople (907-912).⁷ At that point the fame of the Chalkoprateia and the girdle appears to have reached its zenith. The church had just been extensively refurbished by Basil I (867-886); and Zoe, the wife of Basil's son Leo VI (886-912) had the girdle placed on her and was cured from an illness.⁸ Interestingly, Euthymius and the author of the miracle account state that the girdle was brought to Constantinople during the reign of Arcadius (395-408).⁹ It seems likely that this was a case of one-upmanship. The robe was believed to have been brought to the Blachernae during the reign of Leo I (457-474). The clergy of the Chalkoprateia was evidently not satisfied with the original legend that dated to the invention of the girdle to the mid-sixth century. Therefore, they chose an emperor whose reign preceded that of Leo.

Besides the speeches of Germanus and Euthymius, we have a third encomium whose date and attribution are uncertain. The two oldest manuscripts were copied in the eleventh century but go back to an archetype from the middle of the tenth century: the most recent text is a eulogy of the martyr Agathonicus by Anastasius Traulos (late 9th-early 10th century).¹⁰ There the text appears without an author's name.¹¹ Later it is attributed to various authors: once to Patriarch Germanus, once to Theophanes of Nicaea, once to Nicetas Paphlagon and six times to the monk and *synkellos* Michael.¹² This Michael was a contemporary of Euthymius (and of Anastasius Traulos). A Stoudite monk, he became abbot of the monastery of Dalmatos and *synkellos* of Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos (901-

⁵ Germanus, *De Zona*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *S. P. N. Germani archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opera omnia* (Patrologia graeca 98; Paris 1863), 372-384.

⁶ The girdle is mentioned in a *Life of Mary*, which is attributed to Maximus the Confessor. This would mean that in the middle of the seventh century it was already in the Chalkoprateia. Yet the text has been redated to the tenth century by Ph. Booth, 'On the Life of the Virgin Attributed to Maximus Confessor', *Journal of Theological Studies* 66 (2015), 149-203 (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flv003>); and Ch. Simelides, 'Two Lives of the Virgin: John Geometres, Euthymius the Athonite, and Maximus the Confessor', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 74 (2020), 125-160 (DOI: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26979081>).

⁷ Euthymius, *De Zona*, ed. M. Jugie, *Homélies mariales byzantines*, III: *Saint Euthyme, patriarche de Constantinople* (Patrologia orientalis 16, Paris 1922), 505-514.

⁸ See Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique*, 237; and M. Jugie, 'L'église de Chalcostrateia et le culte de la ceinture de la sainte vierge à Constantinople', *Échos d'Orient* 16 (1913), 308-312.

⁹ See Euthymius, *Zona*, ed. Jugie, 511; and Delehaye, *Synaxarium*, 935.19-34.

¹⁰ See A. Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*, I: *Die Überlieferung* 1 (Leipzig 1937), 432-437. On Anastasius Traulos see M. Lauxtermann, 'Three biographical notes', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 91 (1998), 391-405. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/byzs.1998.91.2.391>

¹¹ See text and translation below.

¹² See the *Pinakes* of the *IRHT*: <https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/notices/oeuvre/4115/>.

2 Dirk Krausmüller, "Praising Mary's Girdle: The Encomium BHG 1146M Attributed to Michael the Monk and Synkellos," *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 15 (2021) 1-18; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.18573/jlarc.123>

907, 912-925).¹³ He was a prolific author of *encomia* of saints.¹⁴ Unfortunately, it is impossible to say with certainty whether he penned the speech in honour of the girdle. It contains the very rare compound *θεοπάροχος*, which appears in almost all of his other works, but the absence of further idiosyncratic features leaves room for doubt.¹⁵ Other evidence is equally weak. The text speaks of enemies threatening Constantinople, which may be a reference to the Bulgarian attacks of the 910s and 920s.¹⁶ Moreover, it presupposes that there was just one emperor. This may mean that it was written during the early reign of Constantine VII (912-959), after the death of his uncle Alexander (912-913) and before the appointment of Romanus Lekapenos (920-944) as co-emperor.

The author mentions that he has already delivered *encomia* on six other occasions: Mary's Conception, her Birth, her Presentation, her Dormition, the Annunciation, and Christmas.¹⁷ This is an almost complete list of high Marian feasts: only Candlemas is missing. Since the first four feasts were celebrated in the Chalkoprateia, we can assume that the author spoke there. A more difficult case is the Dormition. Since the major festivity was held in the Blachernai one might think that the author was also active for this church.¹⁸ Yet there was also a more low-key celebration in the Chalkoprateia. Since the author states that he has in each case addressed the same audience it seems more likely that he delivered his *encomium* in this setting. If this interpretation is correct one can posit a closer link between him and the Chalkoprateia.

In his *encomium* the author makes mention of the 'container' (*σορός*) that held not only Mary's girdle but also Christ's swaddling clothes. Both objects had already been mentioned in the speeches of Germanus and Euthymius.¹⁹ Yet unlike his predecessors, he also praises Mary's robe, lavishing on her almost as much attention as on the girdle. In one case he even states that the faithful gaze at two 'containers' (*σοροί*). This does not necessarily mean that the robe had been brought from the Blachernai to the Chalkoprateia for this occasion. It may just be the case that in the mind of the faithful the two items were

¹³ See D. Krausmüller, 'Reconstructing the hagiographical oeuvre of Michael, monk of Stoudios, archimandrite of Dalmatos and patriarchal *synkellos* (9th/10th Centuries)', *Parekbolai* 10 (2020), 1-42. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26262/par.v10i0.7633>

¹⁴ See T. Matantseva, 'Éloge des archanges Michel et Gabriel par Michel le Moine (BHG 1294a)', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 46 (1996), 97-155; D. Krausmüller, 'The *Encomium* of the Apostle Philip by Michael the Monk (BHG 1530a): edition and English translation', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 69 (2019), 223-256; and D. Krausmüller, 'The *Encomium* of the Five Martyrs Eustratius, Auxentius, Mardarius and Orestes (BHG 646b) by Michael the Monk. Edition and Translation', *Analecta Bollandiana* 138 (2020), forthcoming.

¹⁵ See D. Krausmüller, 'Vitaes B, C and A of Theodore the Stoudite: their interrelation, dates, authors and significance for the history of the Stoudios monastery in the tenth century', *Analecta Bollandiana* 131 (2013), 280-298.

¹⁶ See B. Todorov, 'The value of empire: tenth-century Bulgaria between Magyars, Pechenegs and Byzantines', *Journal of Medieval History* 36 (2010), 312-326. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmedhist.2010.09.004>

¹⁷ None of these sermons appears to have survived.

¹⁸ For the feasts and the locations see D. Krausmüller, 'Making the most of Mary: The cult of the Virgin in the Chalkoprateia from Late Antiquity to the tenth century', in M. Cunningham and L. Brubaker (ed.), *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images* (Aldershot, 2011), 219-246.

¹⁹ Germanus, *De Zona*, ed. Migne, 377; Euthymius, *De Zona*, ed. Jugie, 542.

closely linked to one another. Yet there exists another possibility. A notice in the *Synaxarium* Mc makes mention of two robes:

When our most glorious Lady Virgin and God-bearer was about to depart to the Lord who had been born by her, she commanded that her two robes be given to two poor widows. After her transitus, then, these took the robes, and each of them kept hers with herself, holding it in high esteem, secretly passing it down through the generations to other virgins. One of them also took the girdle of the God-mother, holding it in high esteem. But through the providence of God, the robe was brought from Kapernaum by Galbuis and Candidus in the reign of Leo the Great, and was deposited in the Blachernae. The girdle, on the other hand, was brought from the bishopric Zela, as it had been found there, in the reign of the pious Justinian and was deposited in the Chalkoprateia.²⁰

We can assume that the author of this text was associated with the Chalkoprateia although it needs to be stressed that he dates the translation of the girdle to the reign of Justinian and not that of Arcadius, which had become the official version by the late ninth century. He combines the traditional story with the famous account of the invention of the robe that was taken to the Blachernae. As it is preserved the story lacks coherence. It is claimed that both a robe and a girdle were kept in Zela then only the translation of the girdle is mentioned. Yet this may merely be an oversight because we have evidence that there was indeed a second garment kept in the Chalkoprateia. In the *Patria* we read that the robe and the girdle were kept in the Chalkoprateia whereas the *omophorion* (or rather *maphorion*, i.e. veil) of the Virgin was kept in the Blachernae.²¹ This suggests that the clergy of the Chalkoprateia stepped up the rivalry by inventing a second robe.

Text

The Greek text is taken from the Cod. Marc. gr. Z 360, fol. 530r-540v (Diktyon #69831), a *Zweimonats-Menologium* for July and August.²² Its version is virtually identical with that of the Cod. Paris. gr. 1177, fol. 287-292v (Diktyon #50779), which was edited by François Combefis.²³ Unlike its twin, however, has preserved the final section and a slightly fuller text.

Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὴν κατάθεσιν τῆς τιμίας ζώνης τῆς ὑπεραγίας δεσποίνης ἡμῶν θεοτόκου. Τίς ὁ φαιδρὸς σύλλογος οὗτος, τίς ὁ παναρμόνιος τῆς μελωδίας φθόγγος, τίς ἢ τῆς παγκοσμίου ταύτης χοροστασίας καὶ δοξολογίας ἀφορμή; Πῶς ὥσπερ ἐν σάλπιγγι

²⁰ See Delehay, *Synaxarium*, 935.9-19.

²¹ See A. Berger, trans., *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople, The Patria III. 147*, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 24 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 202-203.

²² See Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand*, 432.

²³ F. Combefis, *Historia haeresis Monothelitarum, Bibliothecae Patrum Novum Auctarium* (Paris, 1648), 751-786.

⁴ Dirk Krausmüller, "Praising Mary's Girdle: The Encomium BHG 1146M Attributed to Michael the Monk and Synkellos," *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 15 (2021) 1-18; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.18573/jlarc.123>

νεομηνίας ἄλλος ἀλλαχόθεν ἄωρι τῶν νυκτῶν ἐξαναστάντες πρὸς τὸν ἱερὸν τουτονὶ καὶ σεβάσμιον τῆς θεομήτορος σήμερον ἐδημαγωγήθητε ναόν; Ἡ δὴλον ὡς ἐσάλπισε μὲν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον σάλπιγγι θεοφθόγγῳ καὶ μυστικῇ, πᾶσαν δὲ φιλευσεβῆ φρένα διαναστήσαν καὶ ἀκοὴν πρὸς ὑμνησιν ἔνθεον τῆς ἀξιαγίαςτου συγκαλεῖ ζώνης. Αὐτὸ καὶ τὸν ἡμέτερον λόγον πάλαι κεκμηκότα τῷ πλήθει τῶν πειρασμῶν ἀναπερῶσαν τοσαύτης ἐνέπλησε τῆς προθυμίας ὥστε μὴ τῆς ζώνης μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς τιμίας ἐσθήτος τῶν ἐπαίνων συνεφάψασθαι. Καὶ γὰρ ἄλλως οὐδ' ὅσιον ἀπ' ἀλλήλων ταῦτα τῇ μνήμῃ διελεῖν, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἀμφοῖν ἅμα χρῆσθαι πρὸς τὴν ἐν σαρκὶ ζωὴν ἢ πανάμωμος πιστεύεται, οὕτω δεῖν καὶ ἡμᾶς οὐκ ἰδίᾳ, κοινῇ δὲ τὸν πρέποντα τούτοις αἶνον ἐξυφάνασθαι. Οὐ γὰρ ὅτι τούτων ἄψυχος ἢ φύσις, διὰ τοῦτο περιφρονητέα, ἀλλ' ὅτι τῆς ὑπερευλογημένης εὐλογητέα καὶ τὰ δηλαδή, οὐδ' ὅτι αἰσθήσεως ἄμοιρα περιοπτέα, ἀλλ' ὅτι κὰν τούτοις ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεύματος δύναμις ἐπισκιάζουσα πᾶσαν πίστει προσιούσαν εὐεργετῆ ψυχῇ, διὰ τοῦτο μακαριστέα τε καὶ ὑμνητέα, ἐπεὶπερ ὁ μακαρισμὸς αὐτῶν καὶ ἡ ὑμνησις εἰς αὐτὴν εὐθυβόλως τὴν ἐνδεδυμένην καὶ περιεζωσμένην ἀναφέρεται. Οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ νῦν ἀποθεμένη ταῦτα παντάπασιν ἀπέθετο, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ εὐωδία μύρου πολυτελοῦς οὐκ εὐθύς μετὰ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ σκεύους ἐκκένωσιν ἐξαφανίζεται τοῦ μύρου, αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ σκεύει παραμένουσα τὸ πλησιάζον κατευωδεῖ, οὕτως ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ ζωαρχικοῦ σώματος χάρις καὶ δύναμις τοῖς ἱεροῖς ἱματίοις ἐναπολειφθεῖσα τὴν τῆς ἐνδεδυμένης αὐτὰ δύναμιν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀνακηρύττει. Οὐκοῦν τιμήσωμεν σήμερον τὰ τίμια τῆς ὑπερτίμου περιβόλαια, περιπτυξόμεθα μὴ μόνους τοῖς χεῖλεσι, πολὺν δὲ πρότερον τῇ διανοίᾳ τὰ τὸ παγκόσμιον σκῆνωμα τῆς ὑπερκοσμίου κοσμίως περισχόντα. Σεβασθῶμεν ἐσθῆτα τῆς οὐρανοῦς μὲν τῇ ὑπερφυεῖ κατακαλυψάσης ἀρετῇ, ἀμηγάνῳ δὲ τὴν γῆν καταπυκασάσης εὐπρεπείᾳ. Σεβασθῶμεν ζώνην τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἀνδρείαν τε καὶ ἀλήθειαν τὴν ἡμέτεραν περιζωσάσης φύσιν καὶ τὴν αὐτῶν γνησίως ἐορτάσωμεν κατάθεσιν, μὴ τὸ φαινόμενον ἐξουθενούντες, ἀλλὰ τὸ νοούμενον ὑπερυψούντες, μηδὲ τὸ ὀρώμενον ὑπερορῶντες, ἀλλὰ τὸ κρυπτόμενον ὑπερτιμῶντες, μηδὲ πρὸς τὸ ταπεινὸν τῶν ἐσθήσεων, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ τῆς αὐτῶν χάριτος ὑψηλὸν τε καὶ θεῖον καὶ τὸ φοβερὸν τῆς ἐπισκιάζουσης τούτοις δυνάμεως ἀποσκοποῦντες, διὰ τῶν βλεπομένων ὡς δι' ἐναργῶν εἰκόνων πρὸς τὴν ἔννοιαν τῶν πρωτοτύπων ἐναγώμεθα. Καὶ ὥσπερ ἱεροῖς λειψάνοις καὶ μυστικοῖς τὸ πρόσφορον σέβας καὶ τὴν ἐκ τῶν λόγων ἀποδιδόντες τιμὴν πρὸς τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς τιμωμένην ἀλήθειαν θεωρητικῶς ἀνατεινόμεθα. Καὶ γὰρ πάσας μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ἀγίων ὁ ὑπεράγιος ἀναλαμβάνων ψυχὰς καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐκ τῆς γῆς μετατιθεὶς τὴν τιμίαν τῶν σωμάτων κόνιν καὶ τὴν στερεμνωτέραν τῶν ὀστῶν φύσιν, οἷα δὴ θησαυρὸν πολυτελεῖ καὶ ἐπέραστον ἀφήσει τῇ γῆ, ὑπόμνημα μὲν εὐσεβέσι τῆς μετὰ σώματος τούτων διατριβῆς, παντοδαπῶν δὲ νόσων ἰατήριον καὶ πνευμάτων πονηροτάτων ἐλατήριον, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐπὶ τῇ παναμιάντῳ παρθένῳ καὶ μητρὶ τὸν ἴσον τρόπον ποιῶν ὁ ἀκατάληπτος κατεΐληπται, συνόλωσ δὲ ταύτην ὡς ἀμαρτίας καὶ ῥύπου παντὸς ὑψηλοτέραν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου

μεταβιβάζων πρὸς ζωὴν καὶ ψυχὴν ἅμα σώματι πρὸς τὸ νοερὸν καὶ οὐράνιον ἀναλαμβανόμενος θυσιαστήριον, ἐπειδὴ λειψάνων ἱερῶν ἄμοιρον ἔμελλε τὴν γῆν λιπεῖν, ἵνα τι μεῖζον θαυματουργήσῃ πρὸς εὐεργεσίαν τὴν τιμίαν αὐτῆς ἐσθῆτα καὶ τὴν ζώνην φθορᾶ κατὰ φύσιν ὑποκείμενα φθορᾶς ἀποτελέσαι διανοεῖται κρείττω καὶ σήψεως ἔνοχα τυγχάνοντα πανακήρατα διατηρεῖν. Καὶ ταῦτα οὐκ ἀφορμὴν μόνον εὐσεβείας τε καὶ πίστεως, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀθανάτου δόξης ἐχέγγυα τῆς αὐτὰ δεδώρηται περιθεμένης. Ἐπεὶ γὰρ οὕτως ἡ σκιά, σκιά γὰρ ταῦτα λέγοιτ' ἂν εικότως τοῦ ζωοδόχου σώματος ἐκείνου θεοπρεπῆς τε καὶ μεγαλοδύναμος, ὡς ἔρεισμα μὲν πίστεως ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις προβεβλήσθαι, ἐλπίδος δὲ στήριγμα καὶ θείας ἐνέχυρον ἀγάπης καθεστάναι, ὁποῖαν τινὰ χρῆ νοεῖν τὴν ἐν ἀποκρύφοις ἐστῶσαν τῆς ἀληθείας δόξαν. Καὶ εἰ τὰ περὶ τὸ θεῖον τῆς θεοτόκου σῶμα οὕτω μὲν ἅγια ὡς πᾶν τὸ πιστῶς ἐγγίζον πληροῦν ἀγιασμοῦ, οὕτω δὲ πανσθενῆ καὶ μεγαλουργὰ ὡς πᾶσαν ἀνθρώπων λώβην καὶ πάθη ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος ἰᾶσθαι, ὑπὲρ λόγον ἂν εἴη πάντως ἡ πηγαία καὶ ἀγιαστικὴ τούτων ἀγιότης καὶ μεγαλοπρέπεια. Ὁ γὰρ τοῖς ἐνδύμασιν οὕτως ὑπερφυῆ χάριν καὶ εὐκλειαν καταχεάμενος, πόσῃ αὐτῇ προσεῖναι τῇ ἐνδυσασμένη τῆς ὑπερφεροῦς δόξης τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τοῖς ὀξυπεῖν δυναμένοις δίδωσι τεκμαίρεσθαι. Τῇ μὲν οὖν ὑπερυμνήτῳ καὶ παναγίᾳ κόρη τὴν πρέπουσαν ὕμνησιν ἤδη πρότερον ἀποδεδώκαμεν καὶ καθὼς οἴοι τε ἤμεν τὴν μεγαλοπρέπειαν τῆς δόξης τῆς ἀγιωσύνης αὐτῆς ἐκδιηγούμενοι τῶν αὐτῆς ἀγαθῶν ὡς ἐνῆν κατετρυφήσαμεν. Μετὰ Ἄννης ἡγαλλιασάμεθα καὶ μετὰ Ἰωακεῖμ ἐπὶ τῇ παρ' ἐλπίδα γεννήσει τῆς θεόπαιδος εὐφράνθημεν, μετὰ τῶν νεανίδων εἰς τὰ τῶν ἀγίων ἅγια ταύτη συναπηνέχθημεν, καὶ μετὰ τοῦ Γαβριὴλ εὐηγγελισάμεθα, μετὰ πλήθους στρατιᾶς οὐρανίου τὴν ἐξ αὐτῆς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου γέννησιν ἐδοξολογήσαμεν, καὶ σὺν τοῖς αὐτοῖς τὴν πρὸς τὸν ἐξ αὐτῆς τεχθέντα μετὰστασιν αὐτῆς ἐωρτάσαμεν. Καὶ χάρις τῷ ποικίλοις ἡμᾶς εὐεργετοῦντι τρόποις καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν διὰ τῆς ἰδίας αὐτοῦ μητρὸς ὑψοῦντι καὶ κατευθύνοντι. Νυνὶ δὲ πανήγυρις ἄλλη καὶ ἄλλη τῆς θεογεννήτορος ἑορτή. Οὐ στέγω τοῦ λόγου τὴν ὠδῖνα, οὐ φέρω διάνοιαν ὕμνον ἐγκυμονοῦσαν ὑπερορᾶν, ἀλλ' οὐ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἄντικρυς νῦν τὴν πανύμνητον ἀποτεινομαι τὴν ὕμνησιν, τοῖς τιμίαις δὲ ταύτης σκεύεσιν, ζώνη λέγω καὶ ἐσθῆτι, τὸν νοῦν ἐπερειαίμενος, εὐφημίας δὲ καὶ ἀγαλλιάσεως ῥήξας φωνὴν τὰ προσήκοντα τούτοις προσαγορεύων ἀναφθέγγομαι. Ὡς ζώνη τιμία τῷ ὄντι καὶ πανευκλεῆς ἡ τὴν θεῖαν ὀσφὺν περισφίγξασα τὴν τὸν Ἐμμανουὴλ κυοφορήσασαν. Ὡς ἐσθῆς, ὡς γὰρ ἐμψύχοις ὑμῖν διὰ τὴν ζῶσαν χάριν διαλέξομαι, ἡ τὸ θεοειδέστατον σκῆνωμα τῆς θεαρχίας περιβαλοῦσα καὶ κατακαλύψασα καὶ τῆς ἐξ αὐτοῦ πηγαζούσης ἀγιότητος ἀποχρώντως μετασχοῦσα. Ὡς ζώνη τὸν κατὰ τὸν Ἰεζεκιὴλ κεκλεισμένην πύλην καταδέουσα, οὐδενὶ δὲ δι' αὐτῆς διελθεῖν ἢ τῷ κυρίῳ μόνῳ συγχωροῦσα, ἀλλὰ κατησφαλισμένην αὐτὴν εἰς αἰῶνα συντηροῦσα. Ὡς ἐσθῆς μυστηρίων ἀπορρήτων φρουρός, καταπέτασμα τῆς πρώτης τῶν ἀγίων σκηνῆς, ἰλαστήριον τῆς κιβωτοῦ κυρίου, ἐξ οὗ ἢ δι' οὗ χρηματίζων ἄνωθεν ὁ νομοθέτης τὰ τῆς χάριτος τελεώτατα μυσταγωγεῖ. Ὡς

⁶ Dirk Krausmüller, “Praising Mary’s Girdle: The Encomium BHG 1146M Attributed to Michael the Monk and Synkellos,” *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 15 (2021) 1-18; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.18573/jlarc.123>

ζώνη τῆς κατὰ τὴν περιζωσαμένην παρθένον δυνάμεως καὶ ἀληθείας, σωφροσύνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἐναργέστατον τεκμήριον. Ὡ ἐσθῆς τῆς τῷ Πέτρῳ δειχθείσης ἀντίτυπος ὀθόνης, ὀθόνης ἐκείνης τῆς ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καθιεμένης καὶ τῶν ἀκαθάρτων ἐθνῶν, ἐν Χριστῷ δὲ κεκαθαρμένων τὸ πλήρωμα συμβολικῶς παραδεικνύσης. Ἀλλὰ τί ἂν τις ἐπάξιον τῆς ὑμῶν θεϊότητος ἀναφωνήσαι, πόθεν δὲ τῶν ἐπαίνων τὴν ὕλην πορισαίμεθα; Οἷς γὰρ οὐ νοῦς προηγούμενος, οὐ λόγος ἐπόμενος, οὐ προαίρεσις τῶν πρακτέων αἰρετίζουσα τὸ βέλτιον τοῖς ἐπαίνοις ὑποβάλλει τὰς ἀφορμὰς, μόνη δὲ τῇ ἐπισκιαζούσῃ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος τετίμηται, τούτοις δηλαδὴ καὶ ὁ αἶνος ἄνωθεν μόνον κατ' ἀξίαν ἐπιβάλλεται. Ἡ τιμία μὲν οὖν ζώνη πάλαι τὸν παρθενικὸν ἀνέστελλε χιτῶνα, τὸ κεχυμένον εἰκὴ διακρατοῦσα καὶ κοσμοῦσα τῆς ἐσθῆτος, νυνὶ δὲ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων παθῶν τὸ χαῦνον καὶ ῥέον περισφίγγουσα, καὶ τὰς τῆς διανοίας τούτων ὁσφῦς ἀναζωννύουσα, εὐσταλαεῖς καὶ κούφους πρὸς τὴν ἄνω παρασκευάζει τρίβον.

Ἡ ἐσθῆς δὲ τότε μὲν ἐν σῶμα τῆς θεοπρεπεστάτης περιελάμβανε νεανίδος, νυνὶ δὲ κόσμον ὅλον καὶ πόλεις περιειληφύα τῶν νοητῶν ἀνέμων καὶ ὄμβρων καὶ καυμάτων τὴν κάκωσιν ἀποσοβεῖ. Καὶ διὰ τῆς ζώνης μὲν ὁ τῆς τελειότητος σύνδεσμος, ἦτοι θεοῦ μὲν πρὸς ἀνθρώπους, ἀνθρώπων δὲ πρὸς θεὸν συνάφεια ἢ συμπλοκὴ καὶ σύγκρασις, ὡς δι' αἰνίγματος ὑποσημαίνεται, διὰ τῆς ἐσθῆτος δὲ ἡ παρὰ θεοῦ δείκνυται σκέπη τῆς ἀσθενείας τῆς ἡμετέρας, τῆς ἡμετέρας ἀσχημοσύνης ἢ συγκάλυψις. Κάκεινην μὲν ἀπόστολοι πρῶτον θεῖοι, εἶτα γενναῖοι μάρτυρες καὶ πάντες ἱεροὶ πατέρων χοροὶ διὰ πίστεως περιζωννύμενοι καὶ εὐζωνοὶ ταύτῃ τῷ διαβόλῳ συμπλεκόμενοι εἰς τέλος αὐτὸν ἀνατρέπουσι κατεδαφίζοντες, ταύτην δὲ πᾶς ὁ τῶν πιστῶν ἐνδεδυμένος χορὸς ἄτρωτος τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ διαμένει βελῶν. Οὐ μόνον γὰρ ἔστι σωμάτων φρουρητικὴ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ψυχῶν συνεκτικὴ καὶ διανοιῶν σκεπαστικὴ καὶ καρδιῶν φυλακτικὴ. Ἄμφω γὰρ τότε τὸν θεαρχικώτατον Ἰησοῦν νηπιάζοντα κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς περικαλύψαντα καὶ τοῦ ζωοδώρου ῥάνισι γάλακτος ᾧ ἐγαλακτοτροφεῖτο πολλάκις καταδιανθέντα καὶ τοσαυτάκις καθαγιασθέντα, νῦν δὴ τῆς ἀνειμένης τοῦ βίου ῥαστώνης τὸ κεχυμένον καὶ ἄσχετον διακατέχουσι καὶ τῆς ἡδυπαθείας τοῦ σώματος τὸν ῥοῦν ἀναχαιτίζουσι, καὶ σωφρονικῶς καὶ σεμνῶς ἀναπεῖθουσι βιοῦν. Ὡ σορὸς ἀφράστων ἀγαθῶν, σορὸς οὐρανίων λειψάνων καὶ μυστικῶν, σορὸς οὐ τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ παρθενικῆς ζώνης μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ σπαργάνων περιληπτικῆ τιμίῳν, σπαργάνων ἐκείνων οἷς ὁ ὑπερούσιος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν βρεφωθεὶς τὸ νηπιάζον περικεκάλυπται σωμάτιον, σπαργάνων οἷς ἐκεῖνος σπαργανωθεὶς τὰς τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος διερρήξατο σειράς. Ὡ κιβωτὸς ἀγία, κιβωτὸς τρισολβίων καὶ πανακηράτων μυστηρίων, κιβωτὸς θειοτέρων περιληπτικῆ συμβόλων ἢ ἡ κατὰ Μωσέα περιεῖχε κιβωτός. Σὺ στέφανος δόξης βασιλεῦσι, σὺ καλλώπισμα στολισμοῦ τοῖς ἱερεῦσι. Σὺ τῆς κατὰ τὸν Ἀαρὼν ἐκεῖνον ἐπωμίδος καὶ τοῦ ποδήρους καὶ τῆς ζώνης κατὰ τοσοῦτον ἱεροπρεπεστέρα κεχηματίκας, καθ' ὅσον καὶ τῶν ἐν νόμῳ λειτουργῶν ἢ τὸν ἀρχιερέα τὸν μέγαν τὸν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ διεληλυθότα γεννήσασα Χριστὸν ὑπεροχαῖς ἀνεπινοήτους

ὑπεραναβέβηκας. Σὺ ἱμάτιον σωτηρίου καὶ χιτῶν εὐφροσύνης τῷ πανευσεβεῖ πέφηνας λαῶ. Σὺ κόσμος πανευπρεπῆς τῆς βασιλείας ἀλουργίδος λαμπρότερος, μαργαριτῶν τιμαλφέστερος, τιμίων λίθων ἀπάντων τιμιώτερος. Σὺ δόξα καὶ μέγα τῆς πολιτείας κλέος, τοῦ βασιλικοῦ διαδήματος μεγαλοπρεπεστέρα, τῶν ἐκ σηρῶν ὑφασμάτων πολυτελεστέρα. Σὺ τῆς κατὰ τὸν ἀληθῆ Μελχισεδέκ ἱεροσύνης ἱερατικωτάτη στολὴ καὶ τῆς ἱερωτάτης ἐκκλησίας ἱερώτατον ἀγλαῖσμα καὶ περιφανέστατον ἐγκαλλώπισμα. Σὺ πάντων ὁμοῦ τῶν πιστῶν θησαυρὸς ἀνελλιπῆς, θησαυρὸς ἀκένωτος, θησαυρὸς οὐ φθαρτὸν ἀργύριον οὐ χρυσίον ἐντὸς περικρύβων ἀπολλύμενον, ἀλλὰ πλοῦτον ἔχων ἀκήρατον ἀμείωτον ἀμίαντον, πλοῦτον οὐρανίων καὶ πνευματικῶν δωρεῶν, πᾶσιν ἐπίσης εἰς ἀπόλαυσιν ἄφθονον προτεθειμένον, εἰ καὶ κατ' ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως ἢ μέθεξις γίνεται τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. Χρυσὸς μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἄργυρος καὶ ἡ λοιπὴ τῆς γῆς περιουσία γῆς τυγχάνοντα καρπός, εἰκότως οὐκ ἐν ἰσομοιρίᾳ τοῖς ὅλοις ἐπιχορηγεῖται, τὰ πανάχραντα δὲ ταῦτα τῆς θεοτόκου σκευῆ, ζώνη λέγω καὶ ἐσθῆς, ὥσπερ οὐκ ἐκ τῆς ἀδίκου γῆς, ἀλλ' οὐρανόθεν τὴν ἀρχὴν λαβόντα, καθὼς ἡ ταῦτά ποτε περιθεμένη κοινήν πᾶσιν ἐπίσης ἄφθονόν τε καὶ ὁμότιμον τὴν εὐεργεσίαν ἐπιδαψιλεύεται. Ὡς σκευῆ τίμια καὶ ἱερὰ καὶ σεβάσματα, παρὰ τῆς ὑπεράγνου μὲν πρότερον παρθένου παρθένοις ὡς λόγος παρατεθειμένα πισταῖς, παρθένοις ἰουδαίαις μὲν τὸ γένος, χριστιαναῖς δὲ τὴν πίστιν, καὶ ἐξ ἄλλης εἰς ἄλλην κατὰ διαδοχὴν μυστικῶς παραπεμπόμενα, μετὰ ταῦτα δὲ διὰ περιφανῶν ἀνδρῶν κατὰ πάροδον ἐκεῖ γενομένων ἀναληφθέντα κρυφῆ καὶ εἰς τοῦμφανές ἐλθεῖν καταξιώσαντα, καὶ τῆ βασιλίδι τῶν πόλεων ἔρεισμα καὶ στεφάνωμα δοθέντα, καὶ ὑπὸ βασιλέων μὲν ἐντεῦθεν ἐντίμως σεβαζόμενα, ὑπὸ ἀρχόντων δὲ καὶ ἱερέων καὶ λαῶν ἀπάντων ἀξίων ἀξιοπρεπῶς τιμώμενα καὶ προσκυνούμενα, καὶ ναοῖς οὐρανίοις ὡς θείοις ἀδύτοις ἕως αἰῶνος ἐναποθησαυριζόμενα. Ὡς σκευῆ ἀγγέλοις μὲν σεπτὰ, δαίμοσι δὲ φρικτά, καὶ πιστοῖς μὲν σωτήρια, τοῖς δὲ ἀπίστοις ἀποτρόπαια. Ὡς σκευῆ τῆς ἀγαθαρχικῆς ἀνάμεστα χρηστότητος, τῶν ποικίλοις πάθεσιν ἐταζομένων ἀλεξητήρια, νοσοῦντων ἰατήρια, βαρβάρων ὀλετήρια, ἃ δὴ πλεονάκις ἱεραρχῶν χερσὶν ἱεραῖς ὄλον πέριξ τὸ τεῖχος ἐκπεριῖόντα καὶ τὴν βασιλίδι τῶν πόλεων περικυκλοῦντα, ἀπρόοπτον ὄλεθρον τοῖς περικαθημένοις αὐτὴν ἔθνεσιν ἐπέσεισαν τῆς ὑπερμάχου δηλαδὴ στρατηγοῦ νοητῶς αὐτοῖς μετὰ νοητῆς ἐμπεσοῦσης στρατιᾶς καταγωνισαμένης τε καὶ τρεψαμένης ἀδόκητόν τε σωτηρίαν τῷ οἰκείῳ λαῷ περιποιησαμένης. Ὡς ὅπλα οὐ σαρκικά, ἀλλὰ δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τὸν ἀπόστολον πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων, ὅπλα πιστῶν ἀπρόσμαχα, πύργος ἰσχύος καὶ καρτερώτατον ἔρυμα. Ὡς θειότης ὧ χάρις ὧ δύνამις ἐνδύματος, ὧ ἱματισμὸς λευκὸς ἐξαστράπτων οἷα βολίδας θείας τὰς νοητὰς ἀκτῖνας, κατὰ τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄρους ἀστράψασαν θεανθρώπου μορφήν, ἀμαρτανόντων ἰλασμός, εὐθυμούντων ὑπερασπισμός, ἀπεγνωσμένων ἀνάκλησις, κινδυνευόντων ἀνόρθωσις, κατερρωγῶτων ἀνάστασις, ἰσχυρὰ τοῖς προσφεύγουσιν ἐπικουρία, ἀποχρῶσα τοῖς πένησιν παραμυθία. Τίς γὰρ ταῖς πανευαγέσι ταύταις ἐνατενίζων σοροῖς οὐκ εὐθὺς εἰς ἔννοιαν ἤκει σαφῆ τῆς ἐν αὐταῖς

8 Dirk Krausmüller, "Praising Mary's Girdle: The Encomium BHG 1146M Attributed to Michael the Monk and Synkellos," *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 15 (2021) 1-18; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.18573/jlarc.123>

PRAISING MARY'S GIRDLE

ὑπερτιμωμένης θεομήτορος; Τίς δὲ πρὸς αὐτὴν μόνον τείνας τὴν διάνοιαν οὐκ αὐτῇ σαφῶς παρεστάναι καὶ ἐναργῶς πληροφορεῖται; Τίς δαὶ τρόπῳ τοιοῦτῳ προσευχόμενος οὐ παραυτίκα τυγχάνει τῶν αἰτήσεων. Ὡσπερ γὰρ οἰκείοις μέλεσιν τοῖς ἱεροῖς τούτοις σκεύεσιν ἢ θεοτόκος κεχρημένη πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ἀδιακρίτῳ πίστει πελάζουσιν ἀγιάζει, καὶ παντοδαπῶς ἐν αὐτοῖς εὐεργετῆ καὶ ἀγαθύνει. Ἄλλ' ὃ δέσποινα θεογεννήτρια, πρὸς σὲ γὰρ αὐθις διὰ τῶν ἀξιεράστων σου περιβλημάτων ἀνατείνομαι καὶ σοὶ κεφαλαιώσω τὸν λόγον, ὡς ἀρχῇ καὶ τέλει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ καὶ λόγου καὶ πράγματος ἡμῖν χρηματιζούση. Ὡ μόνη τῶν σῶν ὑπερβολαῖς χαρίτων μετὰ τὴν ὑπερώνυμον ἀγιαρχίαν ἐπέκεινα πάσης κυρίας προσηγορίας γενομένη, ὥστε μηδενὶ σχεδὸν τῆς σῆς ἀγιότητος ἔχειν ἀξιώνυμῳ ὀνόματι προσαγορεύεσθαι, ἢ πολλοῖς μὲν τοῖς κατὰ τὴν παλαιὰν ὑποδείγμασιν ὡς αἰνίγμασιν ἠρέμα διασημανθεῖσα, λαμπροῖς δὲ κατὰ τὴν καινὴν γνωρίσμασιν ἐμφανισθεῖσα, οὐδενὶ δὲ τρόπῳ τρανῶς ὡσπερὶ καταλαμβανομένη. Ὡ προφητῶν μὲν διόπτρα, ἀποστόλων δὲ δόξα, μαρτύρων στέφανος, ἱερέων χάρις, ἀσκητῶν φῶς, καὶ πάντων ἀγίων κράτος καὶ κορωνίς. Κατάσπασον ὄφρῦς τῶν ἀλαζόνων ἐχθρῶν, τὴν εἰς σὲ τοῦ λαοῦ σου δυσωπηθεῖσα πίστιν καὶ ἀέναον ἱκετηρίαν, χειρὶ βασιλέως εὐσεβοῦς θραῦσον δυσμενῶν βαρβάρων γαυρίαμα, θλάσον ἀμάχους ἐν αὐτῇ στρατιάς, διασκόρπισον ἔθνη τὰ τοὺς πολέμους θέλοντα, καὶ μέχρι περάτων γῆς ἀνταναιροῦσα, τόξα σύντριψον, ὄπλα καὶ θυρεοὺς τῷ πυρὶ τῆς δυνάμεώς σου κατακαύσασα, πλῆθος εἰρήνης ἐπιχορήγησον τῇ γῆ, ἐπίσεισον αὐτοῖς ὃ πανύμνητε τὴν πανευαγῆ σου ζώνην καὶ ἐσθῆτα καὶ τῇ ἐξἄλλομένη τούτων παναλκεῖ κραταιότητι καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ τοὺς ἐπανισταμένους τῇ πόλει σου πάντας συμποδίζουσα, θὲς αὐτοὺς νῶτον καὶ ἐν τοῖς περιλοίποις σου. Ἐτοίμασον εἰς ἀπώλειαν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῶν, πᾶσαν δὲ τοῦ δυσμενοῦς καθ' ἡμῶν κακίαν ἐξαναλώσασα καὶ κατατήξασα, ἤρεμον βίον καὶ εἰρηνικὸν καὶ ἡσύχιον τῇ κληρονομίᾳ σου χαρίζου, καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἀμιάντους ἡμᾶς κληρουχίας δι' ἀμιάντου καθοδηγοῦσα βίου τῶν αἰώνιων καταξίωσον ἀγαθῶν, ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν ὃ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ προσκύνησις νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν.

Translation

Encomium on the deposition of the venerable girdle of our exceedingly holy Lady God-bearer

What is this splendid gathering? What is the perfectly harmonious sound of the chant?
What is the reason for this universal choir-singing and glorification? Why have you risen
at dead of night, as if roused by a trumpet that announces the new moon, and today have

been led from all directions to this sacred and august temple of the God-bearer? Surely it is obvious that the holy Spirit has blown a divinely sounding and mystical trumpet, rousing every piety-loving mind and hearing, and has called us together to the inspired praise of the admirable girdle. He it is also who has given wings to our speech, which had long flagged through the multitude of temptations, and has filled me with such great eagerness that I have undertaken to praise not only the girdle but also the venerable robe. For it would not be pious to separate them from one another in memory, but as the completely undefiled one is believed to have used both together in her bodily life, so it is necessary that we, too, weave a joint praise that is fitting to them. For they are not to be contemned because their nature is without soul, but they are evidently to be praised because they, too, are the belongings of the exceedingly praiseworthy one. They are not to be overlooked because they lack sense perception, but are to be blessed and hymned because the power of the divine Spirit overshadows them, too, and does good to every soul that approaches in faith, since the blessing and praise offered to them is passed on directly to her who has been clothed and girded. For it is not the case that she who has now put them down has put them down altogether, but as the fragrance of precious ointment does not disappear straight after the emptying of the ointment from the vessel, but remains in the vessel and makes fragrant whoever comes close to it, thus the grace and power of the life-giving body is left in the sacred clothes and proclaims the power of her who wore them. Therefore, let us honour today the venerable garments of the exceedingly venerable one. Let us embrace not only with lips but even before with the mind, what used to surround decorously the exceedingly decorous body of the one who is beyond worldly decorousness. Let us honour the robe of the one who has covered the heavens through her supernatural virtue and has obscured the earth through her ineffable majesty! Let us honour the girdle of her who has girded our nature with righteousness, courage and truth, and let us celebrate wholeheartedly their deposition, not despising what is apparent but elevating what is imagined, not overlooking what is visible but giving exceedingly great honour to what is hidden. By focusing not on the humbleness of the garments but on the greatness and divineness of their grace and the frightfulness of the power that overshadows them, let us be led to a consideration of the prototypes through what is visible as if through clear images. Let us reach out for the contemplation of the

¹⁰ Dirk Krausmüller, "Praising Mary's Girdle: The Encomium BHG 1146M Attributed to Michael the Monk and Synkellos," *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 15 (2021) 1-18; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.18573/jlarc.123>

PRAISING MARY'S GIRDLE

truth that is venerated in them by giving the fitting veneration and the honour from speeches to them as sacred and mystical relics. For the exceedingly holy one has gathered all the souls of the other saints and transferred them to him from the earth whereas he has left to the earth the venerable dust of the bodies and the harder nature of the bones, like a precious and lovely treasure, so that they remind the faithful of their sojourn with the body and cure manifold illnesses and scourge most evil spirits. Yet in the case of the wholly undefiled virgin and mother the incomprehensible one is not comprehended as doing the same, but he transferred her as one who is entirely above sin and filth, from death to life and gathered the soul together with the body to the intellectual and celestial altar. Since she was about to leave the earth deprived of sacred relics, he performed a greater miracle for our benefit. He decided to make greater her venerable robe and girdle, which by nature were subjected to corruption, and to preserve them undefiled, which were liable to putrefaction. And he gifted them not only as cause of piety and faith but also as securities of the one who was clothed in them. For since the shadow is thus – for they might be fittingly called a divine and powerful shadow of the life-giving body – that it has been built as a bulwark of faith for the churches, and serves as a prop of hope and pledge of divine love, how must one imagine the glory of truth, which stands in a hidden place? And if that which surrounds the divine body of the God-bearer is so holy that it fills with sanctification all that approaches in faith, so powerful and efficient that it heals all illnesses of human beings and sufferings of the soul and the body, their source-like and sanctifying sanctity and grandeur would indeed be above all thought. For he who has poured out over the garments such supernatural grace and glory lets those with sharp eyesight conjecture how great is the excess of glory of the one who wore them. We, then, have already before given the fitting praise to the girl who is beyond praise and all-holy, and as much as we could have narrated the grandeur of the glory of her sanctity, and have delighted in her goodness as far as it is possible. We have rejoiced together with Anna and felt joy together with Joachim at the unexpected birth of the divine child, we have been led with her to the holy of holies together with the young women, we have brought good tidings together with Gabriel, we have glorified the birth of the God Word from her together with the multitude of the heavenly host, and we have celebrated her transferral to the one who was born from her together with the same ones. And thanks be to the one

who has done us good in manifold ways and has elevated us and led us to himself through his own mother. But now there is another celebration and another feast of the God-bearer. I cannot bear the pangs of childbirth over my speech, I cannot bear to overlook a mind that is pregnant with praise. But now I do not extend the praise directly to the all-praiseworthy one but base my mind on her venerable vessels, I mean, the girdle and the robe, and I raise a voice of praise and joy when I utter and say what it fitting to them. O truly venerable and famous girdle that cinched the divine loins when they were pregnant with the Emmanuel. O robe – for I will address you as if you were ensouled because of the living grace – that clad and covered the most divine dwelling of the divine principle, and sufficiently partook of the sanctity that welled forth from it. O girdle that binds together Hezekiel’s closed gate, and does not permit anyone but the Lord alone to pass through it, but keeps it closed forever. O robe, guardian of ineffable mysteries, curtain of the first tent of the holies, mercy-seat of the ark of the Lord, from which and through which the lawgiver from above initiates into the most perfect things of grace. O girdle, most clear sign of the power and truth, chastity and righteousness of the virgin who was girded with it. O robe, type of the cloth that had been shown to Peter, of that cloth, which was suspended from heaven and symbolically showed the fullness of the unclean nations that were cleansed in Christ. But what might one proclaim that is worthy of your divineness, from where might one gain the material for praises? For where neither the preceding mind, nor the following word nor a moral decision, which chooses the better, gives the starting-points for praises, and there is only the honour of the overshadowing power of the Spirit, there the worthy praise evidently comes only from above. The venerable girdle, then, once tucked up the virginal dress, holding together and making decorous what was flowing haphazardly in the dress, but now cinching what is lax and flowing in the human passions, and girding the loins of their minds, making them ready and swift for the upward road. The robe once clothed the one body of the most divine girl, but now embraces the whole world and cities, and drives away the ill-treatment of wind and rain and heat. And through the girdle as through a riddle is indicated the bond of perfection, that is, the union and interweaving and mixture of God with human beings and of human beings with God, whereas through the robe is shown the sheltering by God of our weakness and the covering of our unseemliness. With the former first the divine

¹² Dirk Krausmüller, “Praising Mary’s Girdle: The Encomium BHG 1146M Attributed to Michael the Monk and Synkellos,” *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 15 (2021) 1-18; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.18573/jlarc.123>

PRAISING MARY'S GIRDLE

apostles, then the valiant martyrs and all sacred choirs of fathers girded themselves through faith and were ready when they engaged with the devil, completely overthrowing and destroying him, whereas dressed in the latter the entire choir of the faithful remained unhurt by the missiles coming from the enemy. For it does not only guard bodies but also holds together souls and shelters thoughts and preserves hearts. For both once covered as it is proper Jesus, the most divine principle, when he was a babe, and were often moistened with the drops of the life-giving milk with which he was breastfed, and were as many times hallowed, and now they hold together what is poured out and uncontrolled in the laxity and carelessness of life and stop the flow of the pleasures of the body, and persuade us to live chastely and honourably. O container of ineffable good things, container of heavenly and mystical relics, container enclosing not only the sacred and virginal girdle but also the venerable swaddling clothes, those swaddling clothes with which the infant body of the supersubstantial one was covered when he became a babe, swaddling clothes, swaddled with which he broke the bonds of humanity. O holy ark, ark of thrice-blessed and entirely undefiled mysteries, ark enclosing more divine symbols than the ark of Moses. You are a crown of glory for emperors, you are an ornament of clothing for the priests. You are so much more sacred than the shoulder-strap and the long robe and the girdle of Aaron of old insofar as she who bore the great archpriest who had passed through the heavens was unimaginably greater than the liturgists in the law. You have been shown to be a garment of salvation and a dress of joy for the most pious people. You are a most decorous adornment, more splendid than an emperor's purple dress, more precious than pearls, more valuable than all valuable stones. You are the glory and great fame of the state, more grand than an emperor's crown, more valuable than silken weaves. You are the most priestly garb of the priesthood of the true Melchisedec and the most sacred adornment and most famous gem of the most sacred church. You are the inexhaustible treasure of all the faithful together, the treasure that will not be emptied, a treasure that hides inside not silver that can be corrupted and gold that can be lost, but has a wealth that cannot be soiled, that cannot be diminished, that cannot be defiled, a wealth of spiritual gifts, that is set before all for ungrudging enjoyment, even if the partaking of the good happens according to the measure of faith. For gold and silver and the other riches of the earth, which are the fruits of the earth, are evidently not given to all in same

measure, whereas these utterly undefiled vessels of the God-bearer, I mean, the girdle and the robe, which took their beginning not from the unjust earth but from heaven, are, just as the one who wore them, ungrudgingly given as a benefit that is the common to and the same for all. O precious and sacred and venerable vessels, which were, as it is said, first given by the most holy virgin to faithful virgins, virgins that were Jewish by race but Christians by faith, and were secretly passed on from one to the other in succession, and were afterwards secretly taken by famous men who were passing through, and deigned to come into the open, and were given to the queen of the cities as a bulwark and a crown, and here were richly venerated by emperors and were worthily honoured and worshipped by officials and priests and all the worthy people, and were stored in celestial temples as in divine sanctuaries. O vessels that are venerable to angels but frightful to demons, and salvific for the faithful but ill-omened for the unbelievers. O vessels full of the kindness that is derived from the principle of goodness, antidotes for those who are tortured by manifold sufferings, cures of the sick, destroyers of barbarians, which often have gone out around the entire wall in the hands of archpriests and have surrounded the queen of cities, threatening unforeseen destruction to the peoples that besieged it, obviously because the invincible general intelligibly fought against them with the intelligible attacking army and put them to flight and provided an unexpected rescue for her own people. O weapons that are not of the flesh but powerful through God according to the Apostle so that they can pull down fastnesses, invincible weapons of the faithful, power of strength and stongest bulwark. O divineness, o grace, o power of the dress, o white mantle that sends out the intelligible rays like divine arrows, like the figure of the God-man that shone forth on the mountain, mercy for the sinners, protection for those in good cheer, respite for those in despair, a prop for those in danger, a support for those who are broken down, a strong soccour for those who seek refuge, sufficient consolation of the poor. For when somebody gazes at these most pure containers does he not immediately formulate a clear thought of the God-mother who has been exceedingly honoured in them. When somebody turns his mind towards her alone is he not reassured that he clearly and evidently stands beside her? When somebody prays in such a way does he not immediately see his wishes granted? For the God-bearer uses these sacred vessels as if they were her own limbs and sanctifies every soul that approaches with unwavering faith,

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PRAISING MARY'S GIRDLE

and in manifold ways gives through them benefits and good things. O Lady God-bearer, for I again address you through your lovely coverings and end the speech with you, since you are for us the beginning and the end of all good word and deed. O you who through the excess of your graces are alone beyond all precise appellation after the principle of goodness that is beyond names, so that you almost cannot be addressed by anyone with a name that is worthy of you, who have been dimly indicated through many examples in the Old Testament in the form of riddles, and who have been manifested through splendid characteristics in the New Testament, but have not been grasped clearly in any way. O mirror of prophets, glory of apostles, crown of martyrs, grace of priests, light of ascetics and strength and culmination of all saints. Browbeat the boastful enemies, persuaded by the faith that your people have in you and by its unceasing entreaties, crush the arrogance of barbarian adversaries through the hand of a pious emperor, break the invincible armies in her, scatter the nations that want war, and kill them in return as far as the limits of the earth. Break bows, burn weapons and shields through the fire of your power, give to the earth a multitude of peace, threaten them, all-praiseworthy one, with your undefiled girdle and robe, and hinder all those who rise up against your city, through the defensive strength and operation that leaps out from them, make them turn back with your remnants, prepare their face for destruction, make disappear and wither away all evil of the adversary against us, grant us a quiet and peaceful and calm life through your inheritance, guide us to the undefiled lands through an undefiled life and deem us worthy of the eternal goods, in Christ Jesus our Lord to whom be glory and honour and worship now and forever and in eternity. Amen.

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PRAISING MARY'S GIRDLE

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