

THE CULT OF SAINT ANNE IN ICELAND*

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While the canonical New Testament writings tell little about the Virgin Mary, they are firmly silent about her mother. No historical details are known of the woman who filled the role of mother to the Virgin Mary, but fertile fantasy soon fabricated for Jesus Christ's maternal grandmother a *vita* that would fill the gaps in the biblical narratives and satisfy the minds of the devout.

The story of the life of the Virgin Mary's mother, Saint Anne, first appears in the apocryphal infancy gospel, the *Protevangelium Jacobi* (ed. Strycker 1961: 64-191). Written originally in Greek around the middle of the second century, it supplies details about the early lives of the Virgin Mary and of Jesus Christ not contained in what was later to become the canonical Gospels. Accordingly to the *Protevangelium*, there lived in Nazareth a rich and pious couple, Joachim and Anne. When on a feast-day Joachim wished to offer sacrifice in the temple, he was barred under the pretext that men without offspring were unworthy to be admitted. Deeply humiliated, Joachim retired to the desert to pray and fast. Meanwhile Anne, too, having learned the reason for the absence of her husband, bewailed her seeming widowhood and cried to the Lord to take away from her the curse of sterility, promising to dedicate her child to the service of God. Finally, the prayers of both were answered. An angel appeared to Anne, saying: "Hannah, Hannah, the Lord has heard your prayer. You shall conceive and bear, and your offspring shall be spoken of in the whole world." The angel made the same promise to Joachim, who, full of joy, returned home. Anne gave birth to a daughter, whom she called Mary (Miriam), and it is related that when the child was three years old, she was presented in the Temple of the Lord to live in His service.

The *Protevangelium* enjoyed wide circulation. Indeed, a primary source for the adoption of the cult of Saint Anne in the West was the Latin reworking of the *Protevangelium* known as the *Pseudo Gospel According to Matthew* (ed. Tischendorf 1876: 51-112), which is dated to 550-700 (Gijsel 1981: 12).¹ Yet, the introduction of Saint Anne to the West as the mother of the Virgin Mary brought with it as well a

*This essay is in the main extracted from the introduction to my edition of *Saga heilagrar Ónnu*, which has been submitted to the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar for publication.

¹The *Pseudo Gospel According to Matthew* is extant in more than 130 manuscripts, which Gijsel divides into four main redactions, A, P, Q, and R. Of these, especially A and P, which date from before 800, circulated in the West. Q, which is essentially a reworking of P, came into existence in the eleventh century, and R, which differs considerably from the other three groups due to additions from extraneous sources, is believed to date from the twelfth century (Gijsel 1981: 6, 17-27, 350-1).

complex of issues concerning familial relationships. The New Testament references to "fratres Domini" had been explained in the *Protevangelium* simply as Joseph's sons by an earlier marriage, but, in an attack on the work in *De perpetua virginitate B. Mariæ, adversus Helvidium*, Jerome interpreted the references as being the equivalent of "filii materteræ ejus" (206). Although Jerome's solution shielded Joseph and, by extension, the Virgin Mary from possible moral taint, it nevertheless opened the way to further difficulties in the web of familial relationships, namely the relationship among three of the Marys of the New Testament and their connection with Saint Anne (Warner 1990: 348-9).

An early solution to the problem was set forth by the ninth-century Haymo of Auxerre in his *Historiæ sacrae epitome*, wherein he concludes that Saint Anne gave birth to three daughters, each named Mary, and that their children were only "fratres" in the sense allowed by Hebrew usage, that is "cognatos vel propinquos fratres" (823-4).² According to Haymo, Saint Anne first married Joachim, by whom she had Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. Upon Joachim's death, Saint Anne married again and gave birth to a second daughter, named Mary Cleophas. Since Jewish law asked the brother of the deceased to marry the widow, the conclusion to be drawn is that she married Joachim's brother and, further, that, in view of the name attached to the second Mary, he must have been called Cleophas. Mary Cleophas, in turn, married and gave birth to James the Less, who in the New Testament is called both a brother of Jesus Christ and son of Alpheus; Mary Cleophas, to whom is attributed also a second son, Joseph the Just, must, therefore, have married Alpheus. The third Mary is called Mary Salome and must accordingly have had a father by that name: Saint Anne was thus married a third time, to Salome. Their daughter, in turn, married and gave birth to James the Great and John the Evangelist, who in the New Testament are also called brothers of Jesus Christ and sons of Zebedee; the husband of Mary Salome was thus named Zebedee.

Not all biblical commentators and theologians accepted the idea of Saint Anne's three marriages, the *trinubium*;³ in fact, it was the object of much debate, especially in

²Ashley and Sheingorn (1990: 11).

³Fulbert of Chartres, for example, in his sermon "In ortu almæ virginis Mariæ inviolatae" (*Sermones*: 325-34, esp. 327), argues for the purity of the Virgin Mary's parents but maintains that their pure state is corrupted both by the presumption of multiple marriages and the idea that Saint Anne gave birth to children other than the Virgin Mary. A somewhat more accepting view of the idea of the *trinubium* is found in Peter Lombard's commentary to the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Galatians. In his exposition of Galatians 1:19, he repeats the statement of the *Protevangelium* that James was Joseph's son by a previous marriage, but adds that it is not certain "cum Joseph virgo fuisse credatur" (*In Epistolam*: 101). He then relates the story of the *trinubium*, in which he credits Mary Cleophas with having two more sons, Simon and Jude, and reiterates Augustine's explanation of the various ways in which 'brother' is used in the Hebrew Bible, showing that pertains also to first cousins, but concludes his

the late thirteenth century,⁴ but the influence of these criticisms was limited, because by this time the *trinubium* had been included in two new versions of the *Pseudo Gospel According to Matthew* (see n. 1) as well as in Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale* and Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, and against such popular works the voices of the critics were weak. Common to these later works is the extension of the holy kinship to include also Saint Anne's sister, called Esmeria, whose daughter, Elizabeth, was the mother of John the Baptist, while her son Eliud, was the ancestor of Saint Servatius.

Another contributing factor to the increased popularity of Saint Anne may have been the transfer of some of her (supposed) relics to the West, and, as a consequence, the dedication of many chapels to Saint Anne. Of the orders, the Carmelites, who had even woven the story of Saint Anne's birth into the history of their order, first kept Saint Anne's feast day (26 July) in the early thirteenth century, and other orders followed in the next two centuries. Finally, on the occasion of the marriage of Richard II to Anne of Bohemia, Pope Urban VI ordered in 1378 that the feast of the new queen's name-saint be observed in the English Church. From that time on, the celebration of the feast of Saint Anne spread through the entire Western Church. In 1584, Pope Gregory XIII raised the feast to the rule of a double, and in 1623, Pope Gregory XV even ranked it among those of precept with obligation to refrain from servile work.

It was in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that the cult of Saint Anne reached its height; this explosion in the veneration of the saint has caused modern scholars to regard her as a *Modeheilige* of the period. One reason for the popularity of Saint Anne is, of course, her close connection with the cult of the Virgin Mary, but also that in Saint Anne was probably reflected a more realistically human conception of conjugal relations than could be gained from the divinely marked and more remote relationship between Joseph and the Virgin Mary. Throughout Europe one finds from this time numerous chapels, altars, and monasteries dedicated to Saint Anne. The many liturgical prayers, breviaries, and missals, in which she is mentioned, also attest to her popularity, as does the outburst of pictorial representations from this period of the matriarchal trinity, the *Anna Selbdritt*. Moreover, numerous books were written about Saint Anne and her holy family, especially in the Low Countries and Germany, in which the lives now no longer appear as an aspect of the story of the birth of the Virgin

commentary with the noncommittal statement that "Jacobus frater Domini, vel ex filiis Joseph de alia uxore, vel ex cogatione Mariae matris ejus debet intelligi" (102).

⁴Some writers, including Peter Comestor, Hugh of St. Victor, Albertus Magnus, and Jean Gerson, accepted the *trinubium* as an explanation for the existence of the brothers of Jesus Christ. Others such as Thomas Aquinas attacked the *trinubium*, arguing amongst other things that "Salome non est nomen viri, ut etiam in Graeco appetat, sed est nomen mulieres" (*Super ad Galatas*: 427).

Mary, as had been common for a long time, but as lives of saints in their own right (see Falk 1879: 37, 86-7). Common to many of these late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century books about Saint Anne is that they add a popular dimension to the extension of the legend back to her parents, usually called Emerentia(na) and Stollanus, who were also singled out by divine prodigies. Frequently, the books also include an extensive collection of examples or miracles that reveal Saint Anne as a protector of married people, a promoter of fertility, and a patron of women in labor. In addition to the functions growing out of her *vita*, it is evident from these miracles, however, that Saint Anne also served in a variety of others areas commonly ascribed to saints in the late Middle Ages and was available also for many non-gendered purposes, such as offering protection against plague, converting property into material prosperity, weathering storms, and securing a good death, and eventually, her patronage became extended to include also miners, sailors, fishermen, merchants, lawyers, woodworkers, seamstresses, linen workers, and lace makers.

A further testimony to the popularity of Saint Anne is the establishment of many confraternities in her name, especially in Germany. A Saint Anne brotherhood in Bremen is mentioned as early as 1328 and was soon followed by brotherhoods in Hamm, Mainz, Wimpfen, and Worms, to mention but a few. Indeed, in larger cities there were often several confraternities; in Münster there were two, in Erfurt three, in Lübeck five, and in Cologne and Bremen there were no fewer than six (Kleinschmidt 1930: 138-40). One of these confraternities is of particular interest in this connection; this is the merchant's confraternity "Sunte Annen der Iszlandesfarer," which was established in Hamburg in 1500 and which, according to its charter, was founded in honor of the almighty God, the Virgin Mary, and Saints Anne, Þorlákr, and Óláfr in the Dominican monastery of Saint Johann (*DI XVI*: 457-8; cf. *XI*: 63). The charter provided among other things for a mass in honor of Saint Anne on Tuesdays (the day of the week that was dedicated to her in the Middle Ages), as well as fasts and vigils when the merchants were about to sail to Iceland.

This "Sunte Annen der Iszlandesfarer" ("Anna Islandsfari"), which was in operation into the nineteenth century long after sailings to Iceland had ceased, testifies to the close links between Germany and Iceland at the time and also serves to corroborate Bekker-Nielsen's (1964: 204-5) argument that the cult of Saint Anne in Iceland may to a large extent be traced to Germany. Although commonly referred to as the English century ("enska ðoldin"), the fifteenth and especially the early sixteenth centuries were for Iceland a period of strong German influence. German merchants in Iceland are mentioned as early as in the 1420s (*DI XI*: 84; cf. *IV*: 269, 321-4), although these may well have been Hansa merchants from Lübeck stationed in Bergen, which for a long time had monopoly on Icelandic trade. Despite scattered references to

German merchants, e.g., from Danzig (*DI* IV: 461; V: 9, 10, 15), it appears, however, that there was no large-scale sailing from Germany to Iceland until after 1468, when King Christian I granted German merchants in Bergen and elsewhere permission to trade in Iceland (*DI* XVI: 424). This privilege was used especially by merchants in Hamburg, but also Bremen, Lübeck, Danzig, Wismar, and elsewhere.⁵ Hansa merchants in Lübeck and especially Bergen merchants, who had control of the stockfish market in mainland Europe and who in order to guard their own financial interests had brought about a ban against export by other merchants of Icelandic goods directly to the mainland in 1416, were opposed to this trade by merchants from Hamburg in Iceland (*DI* VII: 399-402). But despite King Hans I's request in 1483 that Hansa merchants purchase their stockfish in Bergen instead of Iceland (cf. *DI* IX: 41), sailings continued, in particular by merchants in Hamburg and Bremen, many of whom sailed to England with their fish. This practice seems to have continued until around 1500, after which time they appear to have sailed directly to Germany with Icelandic fish, leaving the Bergen fish unsold. The interest in the Icelandic market led to competition between the Germans and the English, who had been sailing to Iceland since around 1400; indeed, the sources testify to violent clashes between the two interest groups. After protracted struggles, an agreement was reached in 1490, the so-called "Píningssömur" (*DI* VI: 702-5), which prohibited foreigners from spending the winter in Iceland as well as from fishing in Icelandic waters and hiring Icelanders; the same year it was also stipulated in a treaty between King Hans and English authorities that the English had to be given licenses for their fishing and trading in Iceland (*DI* VIII: 76). Although this treaty was broken, German trade in Iceland increased, but with many protests from the Norwegian Council of the Realm, which were shared by Hansa merchants in Lübeck. In 1515, King Christian II gave permission to Hansa merchants in Bergen while banning all other Hansa merchants to sail with Icelandic products to countries other than England (*DI* XI: 66), but this ban appears to have had little or no effect, and German trade continued, though to a lesser degree after 1547 (*DI* XI: 529-31).

It is plain that the German merchants exercised great influence on Icelandic cultural life, and owing no doubt to these German trade connections, several young Icelanders went to Europe for their studies. Among those who are known to have degrees from Germany are Guðbjartur floki Ásgrimsson, priest and for some time *officialis* at Hólar (*DI* IX: 19), Jón Einarsson, priest at Oddi, and Bishop Gizur Einarsson of Skálholt. It is not specified where in Germany Guðbjartur floki and

⁵See e.g., *DI* VI: 400; VII: 13; X: 48; and XI: 30, 36-7, 46. It is known that also Dutch merchants sailed to Iceland (the sources mention that in 1471 two ships from Amsterdam arrived in Hafnarfjörður [*DI* XI: 24]), but they seem to have had limited interest in Iceland and soon disappear from the sources.

Jón received their education, but in the case of Gizur it is recorded that he studied in Hamburg and possibly also Wittenberg. Moreover, it is known that the farmer Þorbjörn Jónsson and Jón Guðmundsson, Tómas Ólafsson, and Jón Erlendsson, who remain unknown, studied in Rostock in the period 1480-1507 (Daae 1885: 59-71 and Jónas Gíslason 1983: 10). The research on this topic is not exhaustive, and probably several other Icelanders studied in Germany.

These students most likely brought back printed materials with them to Iceland—a "sermons bok j þýsku," for example, is mentioned in the inventory of the cathedral church of Hólar for 1525 (*DI IX*: 298)—and it is believed that Bishop Jón Arason of Hólar purchased his printing house, the first in Iceland, from Hamburg. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the two major Icelandic testimonies to the cult of Saint Anne are based on (Low) German sources.

One source is the *Saga heilagrar Ónnu*, which survives in AM 238 fol. III from the second quarter of the sixteenth century and AM 82 8vo, which has been dated to the first half of the seventeenth century.⁶ As demonstrated by Bekker-Nielsen (1964: 107-8), the source is the *St. Annen Büchlein*, extant in an imprint from 1507 by Hans Dorn in Braunschweig.⁷ Neither of the manuscripts preserves the text in full, however. AM 82 8vo, consisting of 112 leaves, contains the *vita*, the prayers, and approximately two thirds of the miracle section. AM 238 fol. III, consisting of only two leaves, begins on 110r in AM 82 8vo and covers two miracles. The Icelandic translation, which is a very literal rendering of the Low German text, can probably be assigned to the first half of the sixteenth century and associated with Hólar (see n. 6).

The other source is the legend of Saint Anne contained in Stock. Perg. fol. no. 3 (*Reykjahólabók*; ed. Loth 1969-70: II,305-468) from ca. 1525, a legendary

⁶Stefán Karlsson (1978) has demonstrated that AM 238 fol. III is in the same hand as Stock. Papp. 4to no. 24, AM 153 4to, as well as six or seven letters from 1526-46, including two written in Kalmanstunga in Borgarfjörður and dated 27 June 1541 (*Rigsark.*, Isl. no. 23 and 24, the latter now in Þjóðskj. Isl.). Both letters concern Ari Jónsson, who was lawman in the northern and western districts 1529-41. Common to all of the letters is that they are associated with Bishop Jón Arason of and his circles. Stefán Karlsson has also identified the headings in AM 153 4to as being in Ari Jónsson's hand and argues that the scribe is likely to have been Ari's colleague and worked under his supervision.

⁷This work, the *St. Annen Büchlein*, has been demonstrated to be an anthology of texts related to devotion to Saint Anne, the second part of which, "Sunte Annen legend und all oerest geschlechtes," is now represented by the 1507 imprint. The "Sunte Annen legend und all oerest geschlechtes" itself is an anonymous translation of the Carthusian monk Wouter Bor's Dutch *Die historie van die heilige moeder Santa Anna ende van haer olders daer si van geboren is ende van horen leven ende hoer penitenci ende mirakelen mitten exemplen*, which appeared in Zwolle in 1499 and which in turn goes back to the *Legenda Sanciae Emerenciana et Sanctae Annae*, one of two works by the Netherlandish cleric Jan van Denemarken (Brandenburg 1987: 105; Kalinke: forthcoming).

consisting of 25 saints' lives. The scribe has been identified as Björn Þorleifsson of Reykhólar, but whether the compilation can be attributed to him or whether he was merely copying an existing legendary cannot be ascertained with certainty (Loth 1969-70: I,xxxix-xl). The legend of Saint Anne, which, like the *Saga heilagrar Önnu*, presents the legend in its fully developed form, is edited under the title *Emmerencia, Anna og Maria*. It has been analysed by Kalinke (forthcoming), who, on the basis of a comparison with the shorter *Saga heilagrar Önnu* and *St. Annen Büchlein*, concludes that the Dorn imprint is not the source, as Widding and Bekker-Nielsen (1962: 253) suggest; rather, the exemplar must have been a manuscript or an imprint of a legend of Saint Anne which was more detailed and incorporated also the complete life of the Virgin Mary.

Saint Anne appears also in late medieval Icelandic poetry. Her legend is included in *Róss*, a poem in praise of the Virgin Mary (ed. Jón Helgason 1936-8: I,2, 6-35), where, in stanzas 39-50, the story of Saints Anne and Joachim and the conception and birth of the Virgin Mary as well as her presentation in the Temple is recounted.⁸ The legend is included also in the priest Hallur Ógmundarson's *Náð*, which survives in AM 622 4to and later copies (ed. Jón Helgason 1936-8: II,4-26; see also n. 12). The story of Saints Anne and Joachim (stanzas 39-70) is followed by an account of the *trinubium* (stanzas 75-9), and Saint Anne's role as progenitor of this group of holy men and women is repeatedly emphasized. Further references to Saint Anne are found in *Ljómur* (ed. Jón Helgason 1936-8: I,2, 122-39), a poem ascribed to Jón Arason, where in stanza 8 the Virgin Mary is referred to as "Dyrre dottur Aunnv," in *Kristbálkur* (ed. Jón Helgason 1936-8: I,2, 144-56), where in stanza 18 she is said to be "borinn af Önnu" (cf. also *Salutatio Mariae* A and B, stanzas 9 and 16 respectively [ed. Jón Helgason 1936-8: I,2, 230-8] and in *Niðurstigningsvísur* and *Boðunarvísur* (ed. Jón Helgason 1936-8: I,2, 221-38, II,29-33), where in stanzas 4 and 12 respectively, the Virgin Mary is referred to as 'the child of Joachim and Anne'.⁹ Saint Anne is mentioned also in stanza 4 of *Greðarlín lyðs og landa* (ed. Jón Helgason 1936-8: II,181-95), in stanza 19 of *Márlíulykill* (ed. Jón Helgason 1936-8: II,212-28), in stanza 25 of *Pálsdiktur* (ed. Jón Helgason 1936-8: II,287-91), and in stanza 20 of *Vísur af Mártu Magdalene* I (ed. Jón Helgason 1936-8: II,386-9). In addition, a "Carmen de sancta Anna" is known to have existed in a manuscript from the

⁸A sixteenth-century manuscript (AM 622 4to) attributes the poem to a certain Sigurður blindur, although in reality his name and the title are prefixed to another poem in the manuscript, a poem properly known as *Milska*.

⁹The reference to Saint Anne does not appear in all manuscripts of *Niðurstigningsvísur*. It is found only in four of the six manuscripts of the so-called H-group (AM 104 8vo, Lbs. 953 4to, JS 265 8vo, and Lbs. 1197 8vo), and the stanza is by Jón Helgason printed separately on p. 237.

first half of the sixteenth century, which was later destroyed. Since Árni Magnússon's copy is also lost, nothing is known about its content and form.¹⁰

The exact source of the story of Saint Anne in these late medieval poems is difficult to determine, although in the case of *Rósa* and *Náð* it seems clear that the account goes back ultimately to *Maríu saga* (ed. Unger 1871).¹¹ Attributed in Icelandic tradition to the cleric Kygri-Björn Hjaltason (d. 1237/8; *Guðmundar saga in Biskupa sögur II*, 186) and thus believed to have been composed between 1216 (Kygri-Björn was in Rome at the time of the Lateran Council in 1215 [*Guðmundar saga in Biskupa sögur II*, 92]) and the time of Kygri-Björn's death, the life of the Virgin Mary is based on a number of sources of which a primary one is the *Pseudo Gospel According to Matthew*. The story of Saints Anne and Joachim and the conception of the Virgin Mary, which, according to the Icelandic version, took place in sin ("með hinni gömlu synd sem hvert annat [barn], þat er af karlmanni ok konu gezt" (6; cf. 345)),¹² has all the details of the *Pseudo Gospel According to Matthew* and is no doubt based on this work. The inclusion of the story of Saint Anne's three marriages suggests that this section of the *vita* is based on the Q- or R-redactions of the work (see n. 1), although the account of the *trinubium* is admittedly found only in Stock. Perg. 4to no. 11 from the first half of the fifteenth century; all other manuscripts

¹⁰In AM 711b 4to containing among other works *Allra kærasta jungfrú min*, Árni Magnússon writes: "Pessar Mariu visur eru uppskrifadar epter kalfskinns rullu (Rotulo membraneo) gamalle, enn eigi vel skrifadre, og bokstafadri sumstadar ódruvis enn rieft er. Skriften var, sem syndest, litlu elldre enn reformatio Religionis in Islandia, hier um de anno 1520-30-40. A sômu Rullu var og Carmen de Sancta Annâ, sem eg og þadan uppskrifad hefe. Rullan var skrifud a badum síðunum og er nu (1728) eydelögð" (ed. Jón Helgason 1936-8: II, 261).

¹¹Unger's edition of the *vita* reproduces the text of two related versions: (1) Pp. 1-62: Stock. Perg. 4to no. 11 with variants from AM 232 fol., AM 633 4to, AM 634 4to, and Stock. Perg. 4to no. 1; (2) Pp. 339-401: AM 234 fol. with variants from AM 240 fol. I, II, X, XI, and XIV. The oldest manuscript evidence for the saga dates from the second half of the thirteenth century: NRA 78 (Ira; ca. 1250-1300) and AM 240 fol. XI (Ir-v; ca. 1275-1300). The story of Saints Anne and Joachim is given on pp. 2-7 (cf. pp. 340-6).

¹²To this the saga adds: "Ok er þat fyrirþöpit at hallda getnaðartíð ennar helgu Maríu ok hins helga Johannes baptista, fyrir því at þau vóro bæði með munuð gettn. En af gipt ens helga anda var María hreinsut af enni gömlu synd í móþur kviði, fyrr en hon væri född; ok ef menn vissi, á hverri tíð þat hefði verit, er hon var hreinsut af enni gömlu synd ok getin til fagnaðar, svá sem nú er barnit getit til fagnaðar, þá er þat er hreinsat í skírnarbrunninum frá enni gömlu synd, þá mætti þessa getnaðartíð hallda henni til dýrðar, ef í þessa minning væri gert, ok vitat í hvern tíma hallda skyldi" (6; cf. 345). In stanza 66 of his poem *Náð*, Hallur Ógmundarson expresses a different opinion on the issue of the Virgin Mary's conception: "Mætuðt vaR afn munud getinn / manndoms gipt og heilags anda / j modur kudi getinn af gudj / án gomlu synd til ellfs yndis / Skírnar brunnuð j idrum Aunnu / æztur gudi og sinne modur / hrein og skíær vaR hingad borenn / af heimsens lað sem eingill spæði."

mention only Saint Anne's second husband, Cleophas. The inclusion of the *trinubium* in the so-called *Stockholm* or *Old Icelandic Homily Book*, extant in Stock. Perg. 4to no. 15 from around 1200 (ed. Wisén 1872: 200-1), however, testifies to the fact that the story of Saint Anne's three marriages was known in Iceland before the fifteenth century. The source for the *trinubium* is presumably Haymo of Auxerre, whose works have been identified as being among the sources of the text in Stock. Perg. 4to no. 15. The story of Saint Anne's three marriages appears also in the composite life of the two sons of Zebedee, *Tveggja postola saga Jons ok Jacobs* (ed. Unger 1874, 536-711, esp. 542).¹³ The saga, which is probably not much older than the *Codex Scardensis* from around 1360, appears in the case of the life of Saint John to be based on the *Passio* of Pseudo Mellitus; in the case of the life of Saint James, it seems to be essentially a reworking of the older life in Icelandic (which is based on the *Passio* of Pseudo-Abdias with excerpts from Honorius of Autun's *Speculum ecclesiae*).¹⁴ However, as demonstrated by Foote (1959: 9-10), new material has been added from other sources, including the *Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle* and the *Speculum historiale*.¹⁵ Furthermore, the story is summarized in stanza 7 of the fourteenth-century scaldic poem *Heilagra meyja drápa* (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1908-15: IIA, 528 and IIB, 584) and in AM 194 8vo from 1387, a small handbook on, for example, geography, history, computistics, natural history, and medicine; on 34v a brief description of Saint Anne's genealogy, "Ættartala Qnnu" (ed. Kälund and Beckman 1908-18: I,56), is given, based, according to Förster (1925: 121), on a Latin source.

Despite these early versions of and references to the legend of Saint Anne, there is no evidence of actual veneration of the saint until the third quarter of the fifteenth century,¹⁶ when an "avnnu likneski . . . med alabastrum" is mentioned among the possessions of the Gufudalskirkja in Gufudalur, Barðastrandarsýsla, in 1470 (*DI* V: 583; cf. *DI* IX: 197), but from then on the cult seems to have spread rapidly. Thus, in the inventory of the church at Sandfell in Óræfi from 1491-1581, the church is referred to as being dedicated to God, the Virgin Mary, Saint Andrew, and Saint

¹³Eyjólfur Björnsson's copy of the *Codex Scardensis* forms the base text of Unger's edition, but variants are given from AM 236 fol., AM 239 fol., AM 650a 4to, AM 651 4to, AM 653a 4to, and AM 653b 4to I and II.

¹⁴Foote (1959: 9) notes that "[i]t is not unlikely that the life of St John was also already available in translation when the texts were combined in the present saga."

¹⁵See also Collings (1969: 113-38, esp. 116).

¹⁶This is discounting the reference to a "lykneski Sanctæ Annæ" in the inventory for 1397 of Nikulásírkirkja in Seltjarnarnes which exists only in a later copy (*DI* IV: 109). As noted by Stefán Karlsson (pers. 1993), the reference is probably a later addition since it differs from similar references to "likneskjur" or "skriftir" in this inventory, which commonly list first the saint's name (in the Icelandic genitive form) and not the object without mention of the fact that the relevant person is a saint (e.g., "Mariuskriptter ij. Nichulas lykneski oc lykneski Sanctæ Annæ," 109).

Anne, and a "Sancte Onnu kver syngiande med messu" is mentioned among its possessions (*DI* VII: 37).¹⁷ The inventory of the Andreaskirkja in the Westman Islands covering the same period of time documents an "onnv skript" (*DI* VII: 42). Moreover, in 1493, the Skorrastaðakirkja in Norðfjörður boasts a "sancte anna likneske med íslendzkt fargan oc silke haukur" (*DI* VII: 199), and it is known that in 1495 there was a Saint Anne altar in the church of Skarð in Skarðsströnd, because in her will, written 17 January 1495, Solveig Björnsdóttir, the wife of Páll Jónsson, sheriff at Skarð, requests that she be buried in the church of Skarð "þar sem sancti onnu altari er þar firir framan" (*DI* VII: 243).

As in the rest of Europe, the popularity of Saint Anne seems in Iceland to have peaked around 1500 or in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Images ("líkneskjur") of Saint Anne are mentioned in the estimate of the church at Hjarðarholt in Laxárdalur made in 1514 (*DI* VIII: 492) and in the accounts for 1551 for the Grundarkirkja in Eyjafjörður (*DI* XII: 197). Furthermore, from the "Greinileg Frásaga um merkilegar fornaldar-leifar í Höskuildestaðar-sókn innan Húnavatns-sýslu" written 13 September 1820 by the priest Jón Pétursson, it is known that there was also in this church an image of Saint Anne: "Yfir Kórdyrum er Síði Mariu og Aunnu Líkneski fest, önnur heildur á Barni, önnur á Bók, þetta af Tré og mikil garnall" (Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 1983: II,483).

A few of the images of Saint Anne (*Selbdritt*) are, in fact, still in evidence. The most famous of these, the woodcut from the church at Holt in Önundarfjörður (Pjms. 2069), has its origin in Germany, more specifically Lübeck, where it is believed to have been crafted shortly after 1500. The picture is in relief and measures 111 x 86 cm. Both Saint Anne, who is holding a book (presumably the Old Testament) and the Madonna are portrayed sitting, the latter with the Child Jesus in her lap, who is handing his grandmother an apple. The picture was in Holt until 1882, when Sigurður Vigfússon brought it to Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (Kristján Eldjárn 1962: 20).

Examples of private devotion are found, for example, in the wills of Teitur Þorleifsson and his wife, Inga Jónsdóttir, written in 1531, who both commend their sinful souls to the keeping of, among others, Saint Anne (*DI* IX: 586, 591); moreover, it is known that this same Teitur donated his lands around Glaumbær in Skagafjörður to God, Saint Anne, and Saint John the Baptist ("teitur Þorleifsson gaf gude og sancte aunnu og sancte iohannes baptiste lordenum glaumbæ] skagafirde til æuenligrar eignar at sier fra follnum"; *DI* X: 99, cf. also Jón Arason's [1484-1500] letter of 1550 in *DI* XI: 776). Moreover, many documents from the beginning of the sixteenth century open with a reference to Christ, the Virgin Mary,

¹⁷The same church is in 1523 mentioned as being dedicated to Saint Anne only ("Aunnu kirkia j Sandfelle"; *DI* IX: 188).

and Saint Anne. Thus, the written protest against the excessive power of the bishops in Iceland, the so-called *Sampycktarbref Baendanna a moti Biskupanna ofrjíki hler j landi*, composed in 1513, begins with the following words: "Fridr oc blezan vors livfatza lausnara wors herra jehsu christi. hans milldutzu modr jumfrv mariu. allz mankynsens myking myskulifande mana oc frammfarinna. oc hennar jtrligatzu upp runninar riettelætis rotarenar. signadtrkar frv sancti aunnu stalf hinnar pridiu . ." (*DI VIII*: 431-2; cf. 437). Björn Guðnason's letter of apology to Bishop Stefán Jónasson of Skálholt begins in a similar fashion with the conventional reference to God, "hans milldustu modur mey mariu" and "fru Sancta Aunnu" (*DI VIII*: 537).

Although the scattered references to the worship of Saint Anne point to no specific area as the focal point, there are indications that her cult flourished particularly in the north, especially in and around Hólar. Thus, the inventory of 1525 lists for Munkapverárklaustr a chapel dedicated to Saint Anne ("brik god j aunnu stuku," *Sigurðarregestr*, *DI IX*: 305),¹⁸ and for Mööruvallaklaustr in Hörgárdalur and the churches at Laufás in Eyjafjörður and at Vellir in Svarfaðardalur images of Saint Anne (*DI IX*: 317, 331, 333). Moreover, from Bishop Gottskálk Nikulásson's will (*Testament Gottskalks*) dated 6 June 1520, it is known that one of the three chapels in the cathedral church of Hólar was dedicated to Saint Anne (*DI VIII*: 732, 734; *IX*: 295). Guðbrandur Jónsson (1919-29: 202) reckons that in terms of shape the chapel typically had three walls with the fourth being open into the church and that in size it was about 5 x 5 m. It is known that daily requiems and masses were said and sung at the Saint Anne altar (*DI VI*: 218; *VIII*: 732-33),¹⁹ although, as Guðbrandur Jónsson (1919-29: 205) observes, these masses do not appear to have been a priority among the clerics. Even though Bishop Ólafur Rögnvaldsson wrote in his *Skípan um sálumessur á Hólum* from 1479 that he expected the canon, who was responsible for the altar, to sing the masses "med odrum lærðum monnum þeim sem hann kann til fa," he nonetheless implied that no such 'learned men' were available ("kann hann ok onguann fa þa skal hann lesa suo hatt ath uel megi heyra

¹⁸Cf. also the mention of "aunnu likneske forgyllt" and "ðnnu alltaris brun" in this inventory for Munkapverárklaustr (*DI IX*: 305-6).

¹⁹Cf. the *Testament Gottskalks* from 1520: "ENN OSS OG ÞEIM SEM ÁTTU OG AULLUM CHRISTNUM SÁLUM TIL FRIDAR OG LIJKNAR OG MYSKUNAR. ÞA GLEFUM VLER ALLT SKRIFAD GODS LAUST OG FAST HEILAGRÍ HOLADOMKYRKIU TIL ÆFINLIGRAR EIGNAR. VNDER ÞA GREIN AD SÁLUTIÐER ÞÆR OG SALUMESSA SEM VOR FYRVERARE BYSKUP OLAF GODRAR MINNINGAR OG GUD HANS SÅL NÁÐI. SKIPADIÐ AD SYNGIÐ OG LESAST SKYLLDI J SANCTE ANNÆ STUKU. SIE ELLIFLIGA VPPI HALLDÍD SUO SEM FYRR NEFRNDUR BYSKUP OLAFUR. GUD HANS SÅL NÁÐI. HEFUR SKIPAD. ÞULAD HANN GAF ÞÆR PENDINGA THIL. SUO OG ÞÆR MESSUR TUÆR HUMILLAVIT OG AF SANCTA ANNA Á FAUSTUDAGA OG LAUGARDAGA" (*DI VIII*: 732). The inventories of 1515 (*DI IX*: 295) and 1550 (*DI XI*: 851-2) give detailed lists of the treasures found on this altar.

um kirkjuna uð sama altare firir aptansong ok synglandi messu um morgunin eptir ath hringdum kluckum til huorstuegia j stopli"; *DI VI*: 218-9).²⁰

Despite this apparent disinterest on the part of some of the members of the clergy, liturgical evidence of devotion to Saint Anne is, however, provided by the Saint Anne prayer in AM 696 4to XXVII from around 1500 (ed. Bekker-Nielsen 1961: 64). As Bekker-Nielsen notes, this prayer and its promises of indulgence is found in several languages, including Danish (ed. Nielsen 1946-82: I,318) and Low German (it is included in the *St. Annen Büchlein*), and is of the same kind as the prayers of indulgence found in prayer books in Europe from the end of the fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries.²¹ Its wide distribution is, as Bekker-Nielsen points out, also illustrated by the fact that it is included in AM 416 12mo, a Netherlandish prayer book from around 1400; the Saint Anne prayer is the last prayer contained in the manuscript (fol. 239v-240r) and is added by the scribe (from ca. 1500), who, towards, the end of the manuscript, filled in the blank spaces which the original scribe (the main hand) had left open.

A different sort of devotion to Saint Anne and one necessitated more by temporal rather than spiritual need is suggested by AM 431 12mo, a manuscript from the Vestfirðir from the middle of the sixteenth century. Most of the manuscript's 25 leaves are taken up by the text of *Margrétar saga*, but appended to this legend there are some delivery formulas in Icelandic and (garbled) Latin under the title "Lausn ifir iodsiukre konu" (ed. Kálund and Beckman 1908-18: III,86-90). In these formulas, Saint Anne's name occurs twice: "In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti, Amen. Anna peperit misericordiam, Maria peperit Christum, Elizabet peperit Johannem calma peperit siue malcus, siue uniuersus, siue semina, siue marcus, exiit foras beata virgo Maria peperit saluatorum Iesum Christum, qui natus est de uirgine Maria" (89) and "Anna peperit Marriam, Maria peperit Iesum Christum, Elizabet peperit Johannem baptistam, sic per meritum et orationem sanctissime Marie perpetue uirginis pareat haec mulier suum infantem. Amen. Pater noster. Ave Maria in nomine patris et f. s." (90).

In conclusion, it should be noted that the name Anna is known to have been used in Iceland since the fifteenth century (Guðrún Kvaran and Sigurður Jónsson 1991: 107). Indeed, in 1910, it was the sixth most common woman's name in Iceland, in 1982 the fourth, and in 1989 the third most common name. Nonetheless, Saint Anne

²⁰Cf. *DI VIII*: 732, 734.

²¹As Bekker-Nielsen (1961: 64) observes: "Rubrikken med afladsbevillingen i det islandske fragment lover i øvrigt en endnu større aflad end dens danske og nedertyske parallelle (henholdsvis 20000 og 30000 aars aflad mod 10000 og 20000), hvad der blot understreger det uhyrlige i de afladsbevillinger, som bønnebøgernes kompilatorer rundhaandet stræde om sig med."

slowly disappears from the sources during the second half of the sixteenth century (AM 82 8vo being an exception) and recedes once again, at least for Protestants, in Iceland and elsewhere, into anonymity as the nameless and unknown mother of the Virgin Mary. Catholics, however, especially in France (Brittany) and in Canada (Quebec), continue to revere her as the mother of the Virgin and grandmother of the Redeemer (as recently as 1954, Pope Pius XII recommended pilgrimage to her shrine in Brittany [Warner 1990: 30-1]), but her cult has never attracted the same widespread appeal it enjoyed just prior to the Reformation.

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