Þæt as a Conjunction Introducing Adverb Clauses in the Vercelli Homilies I-VIII

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Introduction

Throughout the history of the English language, the conjunction *that* has shown various usages, as Jespersen puts it as 'maid of all work' (*MEG*, V. 21.1₄). In Old English (hereafter OE), the conjunction *þæt* was widely and even more complicatedly used to express various relations. As a whole, functions of the conjunction *þæt* in OE are set out as follows:

1. To introduce a noun clause;
2. To introduce an adverb clause;
3. To introduce an adjective clause.

The present study, which investigates the use of the conjunction in the first eight pieces of the Vercelli Homilies, focuses primarily on the use of adverbial *þæt* clauses. Classes 1 and 2, however, are not completely separately discussed, as shown in the following example, where the *þæt* clause may be traditionally interpreted as a noun clause, or as an adverb clause expressing desired 'result'.

> I. 23   Þa eode he eft, Iohannes, to þam geatwearde 7 gespræc þætte
>   he Petrus in forlete ....

A close observation brings more difficulties in attempting to draw a line between 1 and 2, and 2 and 3. This ambiguity is indeed something that enabled the conjunction to develop its wide use. Therefore, with our

limited corpus, no systematic analysis will be made in the present study. Examples will be given that help us shape the ideas about what was possible with the conjunction.[1]   The use of *þe*, which had long been in use, functioning in some respects similarly to and in other respects differently from *þæt*, will be discussed where it is relevant. Some related problems will be referred to as we go along.

§ 1

Examples of adverbial *þæt* clauses are mostly those of final or consecutive clauses.[2]   Our corpus has few examples in which *þæt* is found accompanied by *swa*.   In one example, the *þæt* clause appears in apposition with *þæs*.

> I. 113   Hwæt, we witon þætte ealle ricu, æghwæðer ge heofonlico ge eorðlico, ge ealle gesceafto on his anwalde standaþ, ne for þon <u>þæs</u> wyrðe wæron <u>þæt</u> ricu nemned sin in þæt gemet þæs ecan rices.

This is explained in two ways which are of little substantial difference. As a rule, the adjective *wyrðe* takes a genitive object, so *þæs* is taken as a pronominal element to anticipate the *þæt* clause.[3]   But the genitive is well interpreted as an adverbial element expressing 'degree', so *þæs* can be taken as an adverbial element being used correlatively with the *þæt* clause, in the same way as Modern English '*so* ... *that*'.   The following is a corresponding example in which *þe* is used instead of *þæt*.

> VIII. 88   uton we us giorne biorgan, 7 utan giorne biddan þæt we moton <u>þæs</u> wyrðe bion <u>þe</u> he þonne cwið to his soðfæstum 7 to his gecorenum:

Þæs in VIII. 88 is likely to be an adverbial element rather than pronominal. But considering that these two examples both involve the adjective which requires a genitive object, probably *þæs* ... *þæt* / *þe* are not necessarily taken as established forms as final / consecutive conjunctions.[4]   In one example, the adjective *geornful*, which generally has a genitive object, is directly followed by a *þæt* clause.

> IV. 40   Þa þe her syndon geornfulluste <u>þæt</u> hie her oferdru [n] cene
> wyrðen, him næfre þær þurst aceled bið þære helle þrosmes.

Þæs (...) *þæt* would mean 'concerning it that', so the *þæt* clause here can be interpreted as an explanatory noun clause. But at the same time it is well taken as an adverb clause to express desired 'result'.

Another way of introducing final / consecutive clauses is the preposi-tional formula with *to*. All the examples in our corpus have *þæt* after *to þam / þan / þas*, with or without intervening elements between.

> VI. 2   ... ælmihtig dryhten sylfa þas world gesohte 7 þurh unwemme
> fæmnan on þas world acenned wæs, <u>to þan þæt</u> he eall manna cyn
> fram hellwara wite alysde 7 to heofona rices wuldre gefremede.
>
> I. 265   Wæs þis eal <u>to ðam</u> geworden - þæt hie þa his ban ne bræcon
> 7 hie hine mid þy spere in þa sidan stungon - <u>þæt</u> se witedom
> sceolde bion gefylled se ðe ær be þam awriten 7 awitegod wæs,

No examples are found in which *to þam / þan / þas* appears in combina-tion with *þe* or in which *to þam / þan / þas* serves as a conjunction without *þæt*. This means that *þæt* is indispensable to convey the notion of 'purpose' and 'result', while some other prepositional conjunctions often do without *þe* or *þæt*. The adverbial use of *to þam / þan / þas* without *þæt* is not observed, except that the following example may be taken as such if *þæt* is explained as a relative pronoun.

> IV. 8   Nis nænig medsceat <u>to þas</u> deorwyrþe on ansyne <u>þæt</u> þær
> þone dom onwendan mæge, butan he her hwæthwuga to gode
> gedo.

This, however, may well be explained as a final clause with its subject omitted, so it cannot be given as evidence for the adverbial use of *to þam / þan / þas*.[5]

In the following example, the *þæt* clause appears with *þy*.

IV. 98   7 eal engla werod 7 heahengla beoð <u>by</u> mete beforan Gode
    <u>þæt</u> hie sculon þam soðfæstu*m* sauulu*m* onfon 7 him þiniende bion.

The instrumental form *by* basically means 'therefore', 'for that', but the clause is taken as expressing 'result' by the effect of *þæt*.   What Kivimaa (p. 157) says about *for þæm* (...) *þe* and *for þæm* (...) *þæt* may apply here: 'The functions of the conjunctive phrases with *for* can roughly be outlined so that in the texts that reflect genuine OE usage, the combinations with *þe* express cause and those with *þæt* purpose.'

The conjunction *þæt* alone or *þætte* introduces a causal clause, although this is not common.   There are two possible examples in our corpus.

I. 237   7 sio sunne 7 ealle þa heofontungulu hira leoht betyndon 7
    behyddon, <u>þæt</u> hie þ[æt] mo[rð]or geseon ne woldon þæt men her
    on eorþan wið hira scyppend fremedon.

V. 14   7 þa eodon ealle, anra gehwylc on his ceastre, <u>þætte</u> hie
    onfengon þam b[eb]ode þe þa gebannen wæs þætte æghwylc mann
    sceolde þam casere gaful gildan.

The most common way to give 'reason' is the prepositional forumula with *for*.   In the following section, an analysis will be made of its use in comparison with the *to* formula.

§ 2

Hereafter will be looked at the way prepositional conjunctions are used to introduce causal / final clauses.[6]   The table below shows possible forms of the conjunctions and their frequency in our corpus.

As shown in the table and also as mentioned in the previous section, *to þam / þan / þæs* is invariably followed by the conjunction *þæt*, while *for þam / þan* appears with *þe* in the half of the examples and appears alone in the other half. Thus, the two formulae are used in marked contrast to each other. The following example, where *for þan* is followed by *þe* and *to þan* by *þæt*, shows how idiomatically they are used conforming to the basic patterns. In this example, there is no recognisable difference in meaning between *for þan þe* and *to þan þæt*.   Scragg (p. 150) refers to

for þan þe here as introducing a purpose clause, which would provide a sole example of the use of *for þan þe* to introduce a final clause in our corpus.[7]

> VIII. 54   7 ic dranc eced wið eallan gemenged, <u>for þan þe</u> ic þe dyde m[i]nre swetnesse wyrðne. 7 eac swylce þyrnenne beag ic onfeng ofer min heafod for ðe, 7 ic wæs wundum þyrel, <u>to þan þæt</u> ðu wære fram þam ecum deaðe genered, 7 mine sawle ic sende betweoh þa wælgrimman helle tintregan, <u>to þan þæt</u> ic þa þine sawle þanon generede.

About the difference in status between *þe* and *þæt* in these prepositional formulae, Mitchell (1984, p. 280) says that 'originally the two were quite distinct and that *þæt* was a conjunction introducing what we would describe as a noun clause in apposition with a preceding object governed by a preposition.'

The sole example in which *for þam* is followed by *þæt* may be explained in the same way as IV. 98 given above, where I quoted Kivimaa's remark on the effect of the conjunction *þæt*.

> I. 264   7 ic hit <u>for þa*m*</u> eow secge <u>þæt</u> ic wille *þæt* ge hit soð gelyfen.[8]

To be noted in I. 264 is that the *þæt* clause involves the verb *willan*. This construction is discussed by Mitchell (*OES*, §§ 2976-80), who refers us to

Table

	to				for	
conj.	*to þam / þan þe*	—	*to þas þe*	—	*for þam / þan þe*	33
	to þam / þan ... þe	—	*to þas ... þe*	—	*for þam / þan ... þe*	—
	to þam / þan þæt	5	*to þas þæt*	—	*for þam / þan þæt*	—
	to þam / þan ... þæt	6	*to þas ... þæt*	3	*for þam / þan ... þæt*	1
	to þæm / þan	—	*to þæs*	—	*for þam / þan*	33
adv.	*to þam / þan*	—	*to þas*	—	*for þam*	21

some previous studies which provide evidence enough to take this construction as final. Our corpus contains several examples of this kind with *to þan þæt, to þan ... þæt* and *þæt* alone.[9]

> VIII. 63 Þynum sare þe ic on minu*m* lichoman onfeng, <u>to þan þæt</u> ic wolde þæt ðu wære rixiende in heofona rices wuldre.
>
> IV. 143 Ær he wæs swiðe gebisgod mid manigfealdum geswincu*m*, <u>*þæt*</u> he wolde þæt wyt næfdon þa ecan geswinc. Dryhten hælend, he oft wæs dælende ælmessan on þinu*m* naman, <u>þæt</u> he wolde þæt me ne hingrede on ecnesse. He sealde þam þyrstendan dri[n]can, <u>þæt</u> he wolde þæt me ne þyrste on þysse worulde. He wreah þa nacodan þearfan, <u>þæt</u> he wolde þæt me ne cole on þysse worulde. He sealde þa*m* geswenctu*m* mannu*m* reste 7 are, <u>þæt</u> he wolde þæt ic ne swunce on þysse langan worulde. He wæs liðwyrde on þære tide, <u>þe</u> he wolde þæt ic næfre in ecnesse nære mid wordu*m* getyrged.

Þe in the last line but one in IV. 143 may require a mention, along with the following example.

> IV. 77 Þy us sealde dryhten þæt *and*gyt <u>þe</u> he wolde þæt we ongeaton his willan 7 ure sawle hælo.

In OE *þe* is used to introduce a causal clause as a variant of *þy*, alone or in combination with *þy*.[10] But here it is not necessary to regard IV. 143 and IV. 77 as relevant examples. In these examples, it seems *þe* appears to connect the following clause loosely to the preceding part of the sentence, with no substantial meaning of *þe* in itself.

§ 3

Another point to be discussed about the examples given in the previous section is the seemingly anacoluthic use of *þæt* after *willan*. This seems ungrammatical from the norms of Modern English, but the apparently redundant use of *þæt* is often observed in various syntactic circumstances. Most idiomatic is probably the use in the clause introduced by the particle

þe, as in III. 26.[11]

VII. 56　　<u>For hwon</u> wene ge <u>þæt</u> wif swa sioce syn of hyra gecynde ?[12]

III. 26　　þon*ne* sceal he eow geornlice ahsian mid hwylcu*m* gemete oððe mid hwylcu*m* intingu*m* syo syn þurhtogen wære <u>þe</u> he geandette <u>þæt</u> he ær gefremede, ...

The use of *þæt* like this seems quite natural, as it enables the writer or speaker to keep moving forward, giving ideas successively. Where the run of the sentence is interrupted by parenthetic elements, by the redundant use of the conjunction *þæt*, sometimes with the subject of the clause being recapitulated, the writer or speaker regains control of the complicated sentence structure. This is one of the devices employed by Anglo-Saxon speakers and writers to deal with complicated ideas.

VI. 22　　Swylce þæt eac geeode <u>þætte</u> siofon nihtum ær Crist geboren wære, <u>þæt</u> sio sunne æt midre nihte ongan scinan swa swa on sumera þonne hio hattost 7 beorhtost scinð.

VI. 48　　7 þa hraðe he abead þæt sended wære to stowa gehwylcre þara þe to his rice belumpe, 7 abeodan het <u>ðætte</u> anra gehwylc þara þe on carcern wære <u>þæt</u> se wære ut forlæten, 7 þa þe on bendum gesette wæron <u>þæt</u> ða wæron ealle onlysede, 7 þa ðe for hiora manu*m* sceoldon wesan acwealde <u>þæt</u> þam eallu*m* wære hira feorh gifen, 7 <u>þæt</u> eallu*m* scyldgum wæron hira scylda forgifene.[13]

§ 4

Lastly, three examples are given in which *þæt* seems to denote 'time' apparently in the same way as *þe* does. To be noted, however, is that in all these examples, the *þæt* clause is used referring forward to the time of fulfillment of some purpose or prophecy.

VI. 16　　Mitte þe hit þa þære eadegan tide nealæhte <u>þætte</u> dryhten lichomlice wolde wesan geboren, ...

> VI. 42   7 ic wat þæt sio tid nu ætis þæt he us wille on þas world gesecan.
>
> V. 22 . Þa hie þa to Bethlem comon, wæron þa ða dagas gefylled þæt hio bearn cennan sceolde.

This use of *þæt* contrasts clearly with that of *þe* or *þæs þe* shown in the following examples.[14]

> , VI. 29   Swylce manega oðeru wundor þær wæron gewordene ær þære tide þe he on geboren wæs, ...[15]
>
> VI. 33   Ða þæt geeode þy sylfan dæge þe gyrsandæg wæs, þæs ðe dryhten on niht geboren wæs ær morgensteorra upeode, ...
>
> . II. 69   Ac utan we beon gemyndige ussa sawla þearfe, 7 wyrcen we god on þam dæge þe we ðurhteon mægen, ...

The *þæt* clause under discussion should be interpreted as final or more likely as 'the explanatory *þæt* clauses, which serve to explain or to amplify the statement contained in the main clause' and which 'could express various relations' (Kivimaa, pp. 149-50).

§ 5

So far we have seen in what ways the conjunction *þæt* is used to introduce various kinds of adverb clauses in the Vercelli Homiles. As we have seen, it is used mostly to express 'purpose' and 'result', but *þæt* does not seem to have substantial meanings in itself. It appears in various syntactic circumstances and if we try to explain its function for each of its occurrence, we will have to say that it depends more largely (than any other form of conjunction) on the context and the mood of the verb or the type of the modal verb (if there is any) which appears in the *þæt* clause. Thus, *þæt* itself is a neutral, all-purpose conjunction, and as such it has developed its wide use.

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1   Citations made in this paper are drawn from Scragg's edition.

2   Our corpus has over 60 examples of final / consecutive clauses introduced by *þæt* alone. The accurate number is not given here because it is impossible to distinguish examples of a final clause from those of a noun clause, as already mentioned. Ambiguous examples count over 30, which means there may be about 100 examples of a final clause introduced by *þæt* in our corpus.

3   To look at patterns of anticipation in our corpus, the anticipatory pronoun is mostly in the nominative, but one example is found with the anticipatory pronoun in the accusative and one in the genitive. V. 135: *Þæt mon leornað on gewritum þæt monige arison of deaðe, hie sceoldon hwæðre eft deaðes byrgan butan Criste sylfum, 7 eft sculon arisan þy nehstan dæge.* This example is interesting in that three clauses appear after the conjunction *þæt* in order to name three things that '*mon leornað*', the second and the third clauses connecting loosely to the previous one. Other MSS have *þa þe* instead of *monige*. This may be rather paratactic use of the conjunction *þæt* being put in the way of explanation. The example with the anticipatory pronoun in the genitive fol-

lows. IV. 249: *He wende þæt his flæsc moste a lifian, 7 he wende þæt his ceole wære his hælend Crist, 7 þæs wende þæt his wamb wære his drihten God, 7 mid eallum þingum he him olyhte, swa he wende þæt hit wære his dryhten.* In this example, the *þæt* clause, though anticipated by *þæs*, stands immediately after *wende* to behave consequently in the same way as the other three *þæt* clauses. From this and also from the context, *þæs* seems dispensable in this example. There may be some stylistic factors to condition the use of *þæs* here, or this may have resulted from translating Latin. Our corpus has only one example of this kind, probably reflecting the fact that few OE verbs take a genitive object. In the following example, *þæt* clause is in apposition with *þam* after the preposition *on*. VIII. 71: *Ac hwæt druge ðu on þam, þa ic wæs unawendedlic in minre godcundnesse, 7 þa ic wæs [u]nþrowendlic, þæt ic wolde for þe þrowiende bion?* The anticipatory pronoun never refers to a *þe* clause in our corpus.

4 The functions of the genitive is sometimes quite uncertain. Mitchell (*OES*, § 1331) refers to the genitive used with adjectives meaning 'worthy' as 'genitives which describe or define'.

5 Mitchell (*OES*, § 2143) says that 'final and consecutive *þæt* clause with unexpressed subjects were idiomatic.' In the following two examples from our corpus, the *þæt* clause is taken either as an adjective clause or as a final clause with its element omitted. II. 20: *Hwæt, þonne þinceð þam synfullan þæt noht ne sie þæs hates ne þæs cealdes, ne þæs heardes ne þæs hnesces, ne þæs leofes ne ðæs laðes, þæt hine þonne mæge fram dryhtnes lufan adon 7 his willan ascadan,* V. 24: *for þan þær ne wæs oðeru stow on þam gisthuse þæt hio þæt cild meahte onasettan.* In the latter example, *þæt* may be explained either as an object of the preposition *on* or as a conjunction introducing a final clause, where *on* is explained as an adverbial element. Instead of *onasettan*, MSS. E and F have *onasettan* with *on* added suprascript and *asettan*, respectively.

6 Other than *to* and *for* formulae, our corpus contains the following formulae: *æfter þan þe, ær þan þe, mitte þe* and *mid þy þe.*

7 MSS. E and F do not have *þe* and they both have *þæt* after *ic*. The use of *for þan þe* cannot be attributed to translating Latin.

8 Cf. *Jn.* 19. 35: *et ille scit quia uera dicit ut et uos credatis.* The following example is noteworthy. III. 33 *For þam þe God wilnaþ ure andetnesse to þam þæt he hæbbe rihtne intingan us to forgifanne, for þam þe sio andetnes þe gehæleð, 7 ...,* though this may result from translating Latin: *Deus ergo confessionem nostram desiderat, ut iustam habeat causam ignoscendi.*

9 The examples not cited above follow. I. 127: *7 to þam ic wæs in woruld acenned 7 to þam cwom in middangeard, þæt ic wolde soðe gewitnesse secgan* (Cf. Jn. 18:

37 *Ergo in hoc natus sum, et ad hoc ueni in mundum ut testimonium perhibeam ueritati.*), IV. 127: *He unrotsode on þære scortan worulde, þæt he wolde þæt ic blissode unawendedlice*, IV. 135: *Æghwat godes þe wæs yðe to donne on Godes naman, þæt ðu woldest þæt ic wære in wuldre æfter uncrum gedale.*

10   Cf. IV. 215: *Þonne ic geseah þin ehtan mid sperum 7 mid swyrde oððe mid stenge, þonne fagnode ic þæs, þy me lyste þæt ic wære ute of ðe.*

11   Some other examples follow. I. 177: '*Ne hafast ðu ænige mihte wið me butan þa þe ic wille þæt ðu hæbbe wið me*', V. 178: *Þæt is se goda willa þæt man oðrum þæs unne þe he wille þæt him gelimpe*, IV. 77: *Þy us sealde dryhten þæt andgyt þe he wolde þæt we ongeaton his willan 7 ure sawle hælo*, I. 1: *for þan ne meaht ðu þa þrowunge gelettan þe fæder wolde 7 geteohod hæfde, þæt ic for mancynnes hælo geþrowian sceolde.*

12   *Þæt* in this example is not a demonstrative adjective dependent on *wif*.

13   Two more examples follow. I. 95: *Sceolde þæt word bion gefylled, þæt he, dryhten hælend, ær sylfa cwæð, þæt Iudeas, þa þe æfter his lichamlicre gebyrde his agene leode wæron, þæt hie hine sceoldon haðenum mannum to deaðe gesyllan*, V. 164: *For ðan is gedafenlic þæt swa hwylc man swa wille gefean habban þæt he hine ðyde to ðam gefean se is ece gefea, ...*

14   In our corpus *þa hwile þe* occurs 5 times and *þa þrage þe* once.

15   Cf. V. 40: *... on þa tiid þa ure hælend Crist was acenned.*