

## Article

# The *Codex Visionum* and the Uses of Greek Christian Poetry

Laura Miguélez-Cavero 

Departamento de Filología Clásica, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 28040 Madrid, Spain; lmiguel@ucm.es

**Abstract:** A systematic socio-cultural study of the uses of Christian poetry in the late antique Greek-speaking Mediterranean is still lacking. Most literary overviews restrict themselves to an overview of the extant texts and some programmatic reflections in the poetry by Gregory of Nazianzus. This paper seeks to address this matter by a combined reading of the best-known poetic forms (including the programmatic reflections by Gregory) and the poems copied in the *Codex Visionum* (now in the Bodmer Collection). Since the edition of the latter was completed in 1999, they have often featured in studies on the origin of monasticism and are well known in papyrological circles, but have received insufficient attention from literature and cultural historians.

**Keywords:** *Codex Visionum*; Christian literature; vision literature; origins of monasticism; Greek papyrology; Gregory of Nazianzus

## 1. Introduction: Topic and Methodology

Christians, like everybody else in Late Antiquity, made use of poetry. No matter what their beliefs, Greek speakers were likely to make active/productive and/or passive/receptive use of metre in a number of situations: in worship (hymns), in an epitaph when they died, for aesthetic pleasure and in displays of learning (*paideia*). The composition and reception of poetry by Christians could be guided by the same (rhetorical, aesthetic) principles that influenced their non-Christian contemporaries, with the added twist that the creative appropriation of Classical literature was done under the auspices of the Bible (and subsidiary texts) and mediated by the Christian *ethos*.<sup>1</sup>

This paper deals with two bodies of evidence, (1) programmatic passages frequently analysed to discuss the uses of Christian poetry in Greek, and (2) the poems transmitted by *Codex Visionum*, an Egyptian codex dated to the turn of the fifth century. The former can be used to enlighten our understanding of the *Codex Visionum* and in the opposite direction the evidence of the *Codex Visionum* can clarify and enhance our knowledge of the Christian uses of Greek poetry in Late Antiquity.

I will first give an overview of the known uses of Greek poetry (Section 2), focusing in particular on programmatic passages by Gregory of Nazianzus. Section 3 is an introduction to the *Codex Visionum*, both to the individual texts and the context of their copying. Section 4 will analyse the main uses of poetry as revealed by the poems of the codex. Each of the subsections will be rounded up by partial conclusions, to avoid a final overly long conclusions section.

## 2. Known Uses of Greek Christian Poetry

Early Christian writings (Eph. 5:19–20; Col. 3:16) note that (rhythmic or even poetic) hymns were central to community worship. When sung or recited by the community, they commemorated and updated its religious history; unified and homogenised the spiritual experience of past, present and future believers, who had one voice in God; praised and pleased God; and elevated aesthetically both singers and listeners. Some of the earliest were recorded in the Gospel of Luke: the Magnificat (Lk 1:46–55), the Benedictus (Lk 1:68–79) and the Nunc dimittis (Lk 2:29–32) (McGuckin 2008; Brucker 2014). Second- and third-century pieces are not numerous and yet are metrically disparate (Löhr 2014; Leonhard



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2014): *P.Oxy.* 1786, a hymn with musical notation, written in a quantitative metre; the anapaestic hymn to Christ preserved by Clement of Alexandria (*Paedagogus* 3.12.101); the iambic hymn to Christ, bridegroom of the Church, cited by Methodius of Olympus at the end of his *Banquet*.<sup>2</sup>

The *Oracula Sibyllina* include a number of Christian books that draw on the tradition of the oracular hexameter: 1–2 review the history of the human race, from the creation of the world to the Day of Judgement ([Lightfoot 2007](#)); book 6 is a hymn (28 verses); 7–8 gather heterogeneous material.<sup>3</sup> Christian oracles sought to harness past, present and future reality accommodating it to Christian belief, but Christian writers such as Eusebius, Lactantius and Cyril of Alexandria cited both Christian and non-Christian ones as confirmation of their faith ([Busine 2005a, 2005b](#); [Nieto Ibáñez 2010](#); [Tissi 2018](#)).

As for Christian inscriptions, the epitaph of Abercius ([Merkelbach and Stauber 2001, 16/07/01](#)),<sup>4</sup> dated to the late second or early third c. AD, is supposed to be the oldest Christian inscription. Christian inscriptions, often with Homeric resonances, became more abundant in the third and fourth c. AD.<sup>5</sup> All ancient epitaphs sought to preserve (and control) the memory of the deceased. When metrical, they linked with a long tradition of displays of learning and of presenting the deceased as a cultured person.

Evidence of the use of poetry by Christians in the first three centuries AD is, therefore, scanty, varied and related to different functions (remembrance, celebration, adoration, confirmation of faith) in known contexts (communal worship, cemetery or exegetical writing). In the fourth century, two historical references reflect on how Christians ‘transposed’ Greek forms and genres onto Christian content in an attempt to substitute or supersede ‘pagan’ literature, especially in connection with the reactions to Julian’s edict on Christian teachers.<sup>6</sup>

According to Socrates (*HE* 3.16), Apollinaris the elder (a teacher of grammar) transposed the Pentateuch into heroic hexameter (διὰ τοῦ ἡρωικοῦ λεγομένου μέτρου μετέβαλεν) and the rest of the Old Testament into historiography (ἐν ἱστορίας τύπῳ), poems in dactylic metre (τῷ δακτυλικῷ μέτρῳ), tragedies (τῷ τῆς τραγωδίας τύπῳ δραματικῶς) and all rhythmical metres (παντὶ μέτρῳ ῥυθμικῷ—hymns?). At the same time, his son, Apollinaris the younger (a teacher of rhetoric), transposed the Gospels and the teachings of the apostles as Platonic dialogues. Sozomen (*HE* 5.18.3–5) attributes this project to one Apollinaris who transposed the Pentateuch in Homeric-style heroic hexameters in twenty-four books (like the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*). Other books became Menander-style comedies, tragedies in the style of Euripides and lyric poetry after Pindar, each of them equivalent in spirit, diction, language and structure to their ‘pagan’ models (ἦθει τε καὶ φράσει καὶ χαρακτῆρι καὶ οἰκονομίᾳ ὁμοίᾳς τοῖς παρ’ Ἑλλήσιν ἐν τούτοις εὐδοκίμησασιν).

Socrates and Sozomen describe a project to produce a complete Greek Christian literature, successfully replicating chosen ancient models (Homer and not Hesiod, Menander and not Aristophanes, Euripides and not Aeschylus nor Sophocles, Pindar but not Archilochus or Sappho). This would suggest an understanding of epic restricted to Homer, an attempt to uphold some sort of generic purity, and the illusion that the Hebraic/Christian content of the Scriptures would not be modified by creating a new version with different metre, diction and literary dialect and structure. Additionally, the activity of Christian writers would be limited to paraphrasing the core texts of Christianity, never producing new content, although this episode is recorded by two historians who are effectively breaking new ground in recounting what happened close to their times. It is not clear how exactly we should interpret Socrates and Sozomen, but they cannot possibly be taken as the only possible explanation for the surge of Christian poetry in Late Antiquity.

Already in the fourth century and more clearly in the fifth, highly educated figures such as Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 330–90), Synesius of Cyrene (370–413) and Nonnus of Panopolis (fl. 420–50) make it much more complicated to discuss the reasons for composing Christian poetry and its uses. As Christianity became increasingly dominant, Christians began to produce new literature in Classical styles and genres, with Christian content, effectively enhancing the interpenetration of the two cultures. The old notion (if it ever existed) of replacing Classical literature with the Bible and Bible-derived texts seems to

have been abandoned. In post-Constantinian times, all areas and aspects of society were gradually Christianised and Christian poets were actively furthering this process in the cultural sphere.

Synesius wrote nine hymns, fusing Christianity, Classical culture and Neoplatonic philosophy: Christ is presented as a divine hero who rises through the spheres to show the way to immortality to his initiates. Although labelled ‘hymns’ these compositions were probably never used as liturgical pieces, and one presumes that Synesius wrote them to bring all his identities (bishop, *pepaideumenos*, philosopher) under one poetic roof, to be aesthetically enjoyed by educated Christians like him.<sup>7</sup>

Nonnus penned a 48-book *Dionysiaca* on a ‘pagan’ topic in which Christian bias is visible (Shorrock 2016). The *D.* vows to vie with the ancients (specifically Homer) and more recent poets for a place in the Classical tradition.<sup>8</sup> Nonnus was also the author of a *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John*, in which the 21 chapters of the Gospel become 21 books of Homeric-style hexameters,<sup>9</sup> not Platonic dialogues as in Socrates *HE* 3.15–16. The *P.* treats the Gospel text through the lens of the exegetical tradition, and condenses the exegesis of the gospel<sup>10</sup> in a form similar to that of the literati who read Homer with commentaries and auxiliary grammatical works.<sup>11</sup> The aim of the *P.* is not explicit,<sup>12</sup> but the poem enriches the language and theology of the Gospel text, written in very ‘simple’ *koine*,<sup>13</sup> and would have been a source of aesthetic pleasure and a means to display learning (*paideia*) for late antique learned readers. Didactic forms and a teaching intent are also visible in the form of the expansion and exploration of the figure of Jesus as a teacher and echoes of the long didactic tradition (Hadjittofi 2020a).

Additionally, the *P.* was long considered to have been written to define and uphold orthodoxy, because its first lines of the *P.* refer to the Creed (Miguélez-Cavero 2019), several characters are praised for their ‘right faith’ (ὁρθὴ πίστις)<sup>14</sup> and Cyril of Alexandria’s *Commentary to the Gospel of John* is considered by many to be its main exegetic.<sup>15</sup> It has, however, been noticed that assuming that Cyril was Nonnus’ main source actually obscures his creative combination of multiple sources (Simelidis 2016), and some of his lines seem to allow for more than one interpretation, effectively accommodating non-orthodox ones (Hadjittofi 2018, 2020b).

The poems by Synesius and Nonnus display a perfectly wielded fusion of Classical *paideia* and Christian faith, both accompanied by their own forms of erudition (historical grammar, exegesis/theology). The cultural arena had changed with the expansion of Christianity but was still very much a continuation of the pre-Christian one. These poems would not have been written for their use in communal celebrations, as part of the liturgy of the word. Their target audiences would have been reduced, the literati, who sought aesthetic pleasure in smaller communities of reference in which Christians and non-Christians, both complex categories with different sensibilities each, would probably mix. The didactic and spiritual intent cannot be considered secondary, as by giving new forms to the faith of the Bible and by incorporating theological and exegetical reflection, even if meagre, these poems would add to the spiritual formation and reflection of readers.

Unlike Synesius and Nonnus, Gregory reflected on the uses and appropriate forms of Christian poetry. His production is ample and difficult to assess: he wrote 17,000 lines, in all classic metres (hexameters, elegiacs, iambics, ionics), with complex generic labels and expected uses. For instance, *Carmina quae spectant ad alios* 2.17 ostensibly seeks to convert the pagan Nemesis, but as a poem with a pastoral aim it is also a Christian variant of the Classical didactic genre or a self-standing Christian genre with Classical connections; at the same time, although Nemesis was the recipient of the text, it was probably directed to a broader public of open-minded pagan intellectuals (Demoen 1997, pp. 9–10). His reflections on Christian poetry are indicative of the nuances of the subject.

His *In suos versus* (*Carmina* 2.1.39) is particularly relevant.<sup>16</sup> The poem begins with Gregory complaining in verse about contemporary prose authors, who despite their toil (3 ἐν πόνοις), produce only wordy, insubstantial texts (4 κενὴ γλωσσολογία).<sup>17</sup> There is

no reference to the content of their writings, but Gregory gives them the double advice of clinging to God's inspired books (9b-10) and God's inspiration, the Holy Spirit (13). Gregory himself aims to write straight-forward texts (17 Ἀναμφιλέκτους . . . λόγους), apparently in prose, but then he consigns his own toil to the writing of poetry (24 Μέτροις τι δοῦναι τῶν ἐμῶν πονημάτων). The only explicit connection between the writing of prose and poetry is the writer's effort (3 ἐν πόνοις, 24 τῶν ἐμῶν πονημάτων). The influence of the Scripture and the inspiration of the Spirit remain in the background and are suggested when he wishes "May [God's] word never leave me so alone" (32 Μή μοι τοσοῦτον ἐκπέσοι Θεοῦ λόγος). (Christian) poetry, therefore, existed in a literary continuum with prose.

Before actually accounting for his wishes on writing poetry, Gregory rules out fame (25), an empty thing (26b-27a δόξαν . . . κενήν), although other Christian writers find a way of seeking it for the right motives, the singing of God's praises in opposition with the empty vanity of 'pagan' poets.<sup>18</sup> Then he lists the four aims of his poems. The first one is to put constraints on his prolixity (35 πεδῆσαι τὴν ἐμὴν ἀμετρίαν), because the effort of writing poetry (37a καμῶν τὸ μέτρον) will prevent him from writing too much.<sup>19</sup>

Secondly, to make agreeable the medicine (of faith) by proposing convincing arguments for the most useful (39-40 Ὡσπερ τι τερπνὸν τοῦτο δοῦναι φάρμακον, /πειθοῦς ἀγωγὸν εἰς τὰ χρησιμώτερα) and to sweeten bitter commandments (41b τὸ πικρὸν τῶν ἐντολῶν). The serious content is sweetened by the use of art (41a τέχνη), none other than the appropriate metrics, which has a relaxing effect similar to that of music on the audience.<sup>20</sup> This is an intellectual appraisal of poetry, not a suggestion that poetry is expected to be accompanied by the lyre. Christian poetry should have a didactic and religious function, but this is not explicitly linked to a particular context (not school,<sup>21</sup> not specific liturgies conducted in the Church or part of a sermon). 'Didactic' and 'religious' may not be the best labels to describe what Christian poetry seeks and we would be better served by saying that late antique Christian poetry seeks the spiritual deepening of the poet and audience. This may take different forms: renovation of an ancient Biblical text, theological elucidation, advice on how to live as a Christian, celebration of God, discussion of what makes a community a truly Christian one, search for truly Christian emotions and feelings, the definition of beauty with God as the ultimate referent and so forth.

In the third place, to seek superiority with regards to pagan poets (48b-9 οὐδ' ἐν λόγοις/ Πλέον δίδωμι τοὺς ξένους ἡμῶν ἔχειν "I cannot bear that strangers should possess/the prize in letters, rather than ourselves").<sup>22</sup> Gregory specifies that the competition with them is unequal because although in form they can be superior (50 Τοῦτοις λέγω δὴ τοῖς κεχωρσμένοις λόγοις), in content Christians will necessarily be better as they offer the contemplation of real beauty in Christian faith (51 Εἰ καὶ τὸ κάλλος ἡμῖν ἐν θεωρίᾳ). The poetic form is retained because it is useful (96 χρησιμώτερον) in the greater plan of attracting audiences to God.<sup>23</sup>

Christian poetry is thus expected to abide both by the rules, methods and modes of Classical poetry and those of the Old Testament, although the specific influence of the latter is never made clear in *In suos versus* or in other poems. On the contrary, it seems that the formal link to Hebrew poetry is a notional one, condensed in the reference to model poetic figures such as David or Solomon.<sup>24</sup> Most Greek-speaking poets would not be able to read Hebrew and approached the Old Testament through the Greek translation of the Septuaginta.

Gregory's fourth aim is particularly complex:

54-7 Τέταρτον εὖρον τῇ νόσῳ πονούμενος  
Παρηγόρημα τοῦτο, κύκνος ὡς γέρων,  
Λαλεῖν ἐμαυτῷ τὰ πτερῶν συρίγματα,  
Οὐ θρῆνον, ἀλλ' ὕμνον τιν' ἐξιτήριον.

"Fourth, I have found these poems a consolation/When, weighed by illness, like an aging swan,/I make the whistling of my wings a song:/Not mournful, but a kind of parting hymn"



One can translate 55 παρηγόρημα (LSJ, s.v.) as ‘consolation’ but also as ‘remedy’. This makes poetry a φάρμακον ‘medicine’ (39) for the illnesses of soul (ignorance, lack of faith, spiritual suffering) and body (Gregory’s infirmity), in its reception and composition, akin to the production and listening to of music.<sup>25</sup> Christian poetry is not only about revisiting Christian topics (the Creation as in the Genesis, the Incarnation in the Gospel of John with subsequent exegetic and dogmatic takes on the subject, God’s salvific power), but also a form of personal introspection or spiritual reflection, which has a medicinal effect on the poet who puts his pain in God’s hands in metrical form, and in those reading and listening to the poem who can thus undergo a similar vicarious experience.

*Threnoi* (57 θρήνον) were the compositions typically sung on the death of a person in pre-Christian times, and Christian preachers sought to limit their use in Christian funerary rituals. Hymns (e.g., Psalms) should be sung instead, celebrating God in his wisdom and consoling the mourners without allowing them to lose hope and faith.<sup>26</sup> Not all forms/genres are appropriate for a Christian poet: the material (here Gregory’s pain, infirmity and parting) should be given a form compatible with the Christian faith of the poet (a celebratory hymn, not a mourning dirge).

### 3. The Codex Visionum

The *Codex Visionum* was part of a library including books in Greek, Latin and Coptic, covering Christian and non-Christian topics.<sup>27</sup> Its finding spot is unknown but assumed to be Upper Egypt, perhaps in the area of Panopolis (Fournet 2015, pp. 17–20). In this miscellaneous codex,<sup>28</sup> six hands copied ca. 400 d.C. one previously known prose text (1) and several poems (2–10) of which this is the first and only extant copy.

1. *P.Bodmer 38 The Shepherd* of Hermas, Visions I–IV. A nearly canonical prose text,<sup>29</sup> probably written in Rome in the 2nd c. AD, it narrates the five visions Hermas has, four sent by the Church, who takes the form of an old woman, and the final one by a messenger (the angel of repentance), dressed as a shepherd. A total of 12 ethical instructions (Gr. ἐντολαί, Lat. *mandata*) and 10 parables (Gr. παραβολαί, Lat. *similitudines*) follow. The *Codex* included *Visions* I–IV, but IV, copied in the central folio, is lost.
2. *P.Bodmer 29 Dorotheus’ Vision* (Ὁρασις Δωροθέου), often referred to as the *Visio Dorothei* (VD).<sup>30</sup> Dorotheus, son of the poet Quintus,<sup>31</sup> retells his vision of God’s palace where he commits two serious sins: abandoning the gates he has been ordered to invigilate, and trespassing into the palace, where he follows an old man he accuses of stealing. He is put on trial and condemned to lashing by God himself, but because he has repented he is allowed to return to his previous job, still covered in blood. He is offered baptism and chooses Andrew as his new name, upon which he is endowed with strength and valour (ἀνδρεία—a pun on the name) and dressed in new vestments.
3. *P.Bodmer 30 On Abraham* (Πρὸς Ἀβραάμ):<sup>32</sup> prelude (lines 1–3), alphabetic acrostic (4–27) and conclusion (29–31). Speeches of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac accepting Isaac’s sacrifice, after Gen. 22:1–19.
4. *P.Bodmer 31 On the Righteous* (Πρὸς δικαίους):<sup>33</sup> 164 elegiac distichs reminding just men (δίκαιοι) of the dangers of sin, especially the pull of worldly possessions, in the context of divine judgement, and advising on the importance of a complete conversion (μετάνοια), which may lead to martyrial death. In the final lines, Dorotheus becomes a model for reaching heaven.
5. *P.Bodmer 32 [Praise] of the Lord Jesus, or [Works] of the Lord Jesus* (here referred to as *Lord Jesus*) is another alphabetic acrostic. It sings Christ’s praises and refers to basic concepts such as his divine filiation, majesty and ἀρετή (virtue and power), bringing peace to earth and freeing humanity of death and sin.
6. *P.Bodmer 33 What would Cain say after killing Abel?* (Τί ἂν εἴποι ὁ Καὶν ἀποκτείνας τὸν Ἀβελ;—referred to as *Cain*) is an ethopoea,<sup>34</sup> a 10-line reconstruction of the poetic

words Cain would have said, following the cues of *Gen.* 4:9–19 and focusing on Cain's pain when he realises he has condemned himself.

7. *P.Bodmer 34 The Lord to those who suffer* (Ὁ δεσπότης πρὸς τοὺς πάσχο[ν]τας—referred to as *Sufferers*—(Berolli 2013, 2015)) begins with a three-line proem in which God addresses humanity, followed by an alphabetic acrostic with Christological content.
8. *P.Bodmer 35 What would Abel say after being killed by Cain?* (Τῷ ἀν[θ]ρωπ[ω]ν[ο]ν ὁ Ἀβελ ἀναίρηθεις ὑπὸ τοῦ Καὶν;—*Abel*) is an eidolopoea (the reconstructed speech of a dead character), which paraphrases Psalm 102 (101) on the sufferings of the just man.
9. *P.Bodmer 36* (Norelli 2002) is poorly preserved but looks like a hexametric composition that included a description of the Final Judgement, in which the importance of looking after widows, orphans and the poor, as well as of praising God are mentioned.
10. *P.Bodmer 37*: its scanty remains suggest it was a hymn.

The poems of the *C. Visionum* are extraordinary pieces of evidence. Not only do we have the text of the poems, but also know the way they looked in Late Antiquity when they were copied and read, how they were gathered next to one another and what other texts were part of the same library. While there is no guarantee that we have the whole of the library—we probably do not as, for instance, there are no copies of the Gospels—the other volumes in the library yield additional information about the categories involved in the anthologisation of Christian texts. In fact, the library included three additional miscellaneous codices,<sup>35</sup> in which Classical and Christian texts were combined.

The Susanna-Daniel-Thucydides codex (LDAB 4120) was copied in different hands but in the same quire: Susanna (*P.Bodmer XLV*), Daniel 1 (*P.Bodmer XLVI*), an alphabetic acrostic with iambic moral exhortations on virginity inspired in St Paul's writings (*P.Bodmer XLVII* (Carlini and Bandini 1991, pp. 164–65)), blank pages and Thucydides VI (*P.Bodmer XXVII*). The combination of Susanna, Daniel and Thucydides could make this a 'historical' codex, gathering together texts from the Bible and Classical tradition, but the alphabetic acrostic would not match the rest of the content, and cannot be linked to any of the three texts in an easy manner. The layout of the page on which the acrostic is copied would suggest a lack of planning.<sup>36</sup>

The Bodmer 'composite' or 'miscellaneous codex' (LDAB 2565), copied by at least three scribes, included<sup>37</sup> the Genesis of Mary (also known as *The Protoevangelium of James*, *P.Bodmer V*), the apocryphal correspondence of Paul and the Corinthians (also known as 3 Corinthians, *P.Bodmer X*), the eleventh Ode of Solomon (*P.Bodmer XI*), the Letter of Jude (*P.Bodmer VII*), Melito's *Sermon on the Passover* (*P.Bodmer XIII*), a (fragment/excerpt of a) hymn (*P.Bodmer XII*)<sup>38</sup> and 1–2 Peter (*P.Bodmer VIII*).<sup>39</sup> These could be broadly considered New Testament texts (Genesis of Mary, 3 Corinthians, Ode of Solomon, Jude, Peter), all of which could be read in liturgy. The same could be said of the hymn and Melito's homily, which presupposes the public liturgical reading of Exodus 12—if not read in the liturgy it could be used in spiritual preparations for Easter, including citations in sermons.<sup>40</sup> In his analysis of this codex, Camplani (2015, pp. 113–19) notes a doctrinal intent, particularly visible in the Genesis of Mary (defending the virginity of Mary and describing the Incarnation), 3Cor (Paul tries to solve a doctrinal crisis on topics similar to those dealt by the Genesis of Mary), Jude (against false teachers), 1 Peter (on baptism and the passion of Christ) and 2 Peter (against false teachers).<sup>41</sup> The Ode of Solomon deals with the resurrection and paradise.

The Barcelona-Montserrat miscellaneous codex (LDAB 552) is probably the work of one copyist: the first four pages are missing; pp. 5–47 Cicero *In Catilinam* 6–8, 13–30 (Latin); pp. 48–56 *Psalmus responsorius*, an acrostic hymn which the first editor considered dedicated to the Virgin Mary but which could be taken to address the question of the immaculate conception of Christ (Latin);<sup>42</sup> p. 57 a drawing, possibly Perseus with Medusa's head; pp. 58–64 Greek euchologies (including eucharistic anaphora and thanksgiving prayer,<sup>43</sup> an exorcism over the oil,<sup>44</sup> a prayer for the sick and an acrostic hymn ἀγνήν θυσίαν, on

the sacrifice of Isaac); pp. 65–71 Hexameters on Alcestis (Latin); p. 72 blank; 73–80 story about Hadrian (Latin); pp. 81–106 an alphabetic list of words (Greek).<sup>45</sup> The texts in Latin betray a lack of scribal familiarity and would be connected to the learning of Latin by Greek speakers, not to the presence of Latin speakers in the area (Fournet 2015, p. 13). In *Catilinam* and the story about Hadrian would be texts for learners everywhere, whereas the acrostic hymn would be appropriate for a Christian religious environment, in which Greek speakers would master the religious vocabulary they needed to participate in liturgy or talk to Latin-speaking Christians.<sup>46</sup> The alphabetic list of words is of educational use too.<sup>47</sup>

This particular community had, therefore, several concurrent systems to organise texts in books and Christian and Classical texts were not always separated. In fact, Nongbri (2018, p. 335, fn 111) notes, on speaking of the Thucydides of the Susanna-Daniel-Thucydides codex and the Cicero of the Barcelona codex, “they don’t really constitute a distinct grouping ... ‘classical’ versus ‘Christian’ is simply a modern heuristic shorthand. It is very likely that in terms of ownership, readership, and probably copying, these copies of Cicero and Thucydides are Christian books”. Perceived literary genre (e.g., historiography) may have been a reason for gathering texts under one roof, but so was the intended use of the codex (didactic aids, in more than one language, of different sorts—basic vocabulary, liturgical texts to be learned by heart; doctrinal). These scribes seemed to always find it appropriate to insert short Christian texts, be it an exhortation (alphabetic acrostic with iambic moral exhortations *P.Bodmer* XLVII) or hymn (*P.Bodmer* XII; Latin acrostic *Psalmus responsorius*) in a project arranged around a different organising principle.

The poems of the *Codex Visionum* are challenging in terms of materiality (some pages are very fragmentary, especially poems 9 and 10, which will not be referred to in what follows), content, interpretation and interaction with one another. Because of the recurring presence of the figure of a just man (δικαιος) who experiences conversion (*metanoia*) and commits his life to God, it has been suggested that the *C. Visionum* is the project of a masculine religious community,<sup>48</sup> who had a particular appreciation for poetry and literature in general,<sup>49</sup> and comprised at least of six members who took turns at copying texts (Crisci 2004, pp. 120–21). *The Shepherd* of Hermas was clearly written before their time, but we do not really know who (singular or plural) wrote the poems in the codex: as they are not autographs, they could have been brought from elsewhere as particularly relevant for the community or composed there using memories of the martyrdom of Dorotheus. It is, however, clear that the poems are not copied randomly: the *VD* showcases the figure of Dorotheus, picked up in the *Righteous*, and proposes a model of the suffering just rewarded by God, then developed in the figures of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac (*P.Bodmer* 30), Abel (*P.Bodmer* 33 and 35)<sup>50</sup> and the sufferers of *The Lord to those who suffer*. The connection of the poetic ensemble is highlighted through the repetition of lines of the *VD*.<sup>51</sup>

As for their dating, they would have been composed in post-Constantinian times, when martyrdom was no longer a viable means of reaching heaven but was retained in the Christian imaginary as an image of mortification and complete oblation of one’s life to God.<sup>52</sup> The risk for post-Constantinian communities was no longer opting out of martyrdom, but tepid faith, well below that of martyrs: hence the fourth century draw to ascetic rigorism (Morard 2002).<sup>53</sup>

#### 4. Uses of Poetry in the *Codex Visionum*

##### 4.1. Christian Literary Continuum

The poems of the *Codex Visionum* present themselves as part of a textual continuum with other forms of poetry and prose considered Christian in Late Antiquity: the Old Testament (with special reference to Genesis and the Psalms), the New Testament (Gospels, letters and Revelation are all the sources of relevant concepts exploited by the poems) and other Christian literary forms, in particular in this case visionary literature (*The Shepherd* of Hermas) and martyr texts.

*The Shepherd* of Hermas, the first text of the volume, casts a long shadow over the whole set,<sup>54</sup> effectively reminding readers that the first function of Christian poetry is to sit side by side with Christian prose. *The Shepherd of Hermas* and the *VD* were clearly copied one after the other because they were thought to belong to the broad genre of visions, featuring prose and poetic texts, inscriptions, Old and New Testament instances as well as Classical referents. The basic narrative of a mortal who has some personal experience of the divine and puts it in writing<sup>55</sup> underpins both the *VD*, where Dorotheus falls asleep and then composes a poem on his vision of the palace of God and *The Shepherd*.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, in the Old Testament, the prophet Habakkuk (Hab. 2:1) vows to stand watch at the rampart waiting for God's answer to his queries, and God asks him to write the vision on tablets (2:2),<sup>57</sup> and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, a Greek translation of the Latin *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* already in circulation in the early fourth century,<sup>58</sup> begins with a reference to the importance of writing down experiences for the edification of fellow Christians and honouring God.<sup>59</sup>

It is not only a case of sharing basic generic traits. *The Shepherd* touches upon a number of topics which surface regularly in other poems: the call to a complete conversion (*metanoia*); persecution, martyrdom and punishment (perhaps metaphorical, but crudely described);<sup>60</sup> the gifts, rewards and grace God gives to his faithful.<sup>61</sup> The tower as the allegory of the Church built with the stones provided by the lives of pious Christians, especially those who have undergone martyrdom, appears in *The Shepherd* and two of the poems of the *Codex*.<sup>62</sup>

This prose-poetry contiguity preempts accusations of the inappropriateness of Christian poetry in Classical style: *The Shepherd* was considered a near canonic text<sup>63</sup> and poetic texts that share visible connections with it would somehow be covered by its protective mantle. The connection is stronger in the case of the *VD* as both texts belong to the same genre, and lighter with the remaining poems, which, we have seen, also share some motifs (esp. the call to *metanoia*) with *The Shepherd*.

Then there is the visible connection with the Bible, especially with the OT. Not only does the OT record visions (e.g., those of Habakkuk and Ezechiel mentioned earlier), but Abraham, Sarah, Isaac (*P.Bodmer* 30), Cain and Abel (*P.Bodmer* 32, 34) are all foundational characters of the book of Genesis. Additionally, *P.Bodmer* 30 is a loose complement of Genesis 22:1–18 and *Cain and Abel* develop Genesis 4:9–15, with *Abel* essentially paraphrasing Ps. 101(102), appropriately “A prayer of one afflicted, when faint and pleading before the Lord”. Abel and Isaac inaugurate a vital paradigm followed by Hermas. Dorotheus, and the righteous addressed to in *Righteous* and *Sufferers*.

The poems of the *Codex Visionum* also visibly mark themselves as part of a textual continuum with Classical literature, specifically epic. The spectrum is broad both in terms of authors with whom they posit a relationship (Homer, Hesiod, Apollonius Rhodius) and forms of reference. None of this is surprising, but it is worth analysing the particular choices made in the adaptation of the epic frame.<sup>64</sup> These poems incorporate popular epic vocabulary, appropriate for certain characters (Gabriel as ἄγγελος ὤκύς ‘swift messenger/angel’,<sup>65</sup> God and Christ receive the Homeric title ἄναξ, often accompanied by the epithet αἰώνιος ‘immortal’,<sup>66</sup> the peoples as the epic *laos*)<sup>67</sup> or places (the underworld<sup>68</sup> and paradise as the island of Ogygia).<sup>69</sup> Earlier, well-known epic poems are also the source of the vocabulary for sin,<sup>70</sup> terrible images of punishment (*VD* 158, 194–5, dogs and vultures devouring entrails), and gestures such as that of supplication or grasping of the knees to make a request.<sup>71</sup> The poet(s) claim for their Christian characters the epic label of heroes (*VD* 30, 272, 308, 313; *Righteous* 75)<sup>72</sup> and their paraphernalia of valour,<sup>73</sup> might,<sup>74</sup> reward/booty,<sup>75</sup> glory and fame<sup>76</sup> and grace.<sup>77</sup> In practice, some passages are a combination of Homeric half-lines.<sup>78</sup>

Some of the borrowings are unexpected. The use of Greek names for the underworld had precedents in the Septuagint,<sup>79</sup> but what about the use of ‘Hephaestus’ as a metonym



for the fire<sup>80</sup> in *Abraham* 23, or the references to destiny (μοῖρα) in *Righteous* 52, 81? Is Christ recognisable as ἀθά[νατ]ος μῦθος (*Sufferers* 4),<sup>81</sup> when he is usually known as the λόγος after the initial hymn in the Gospel of John? Nonnus must have thought that the answer to the latter question was no, and in his *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John*, he regularly uses the unepic word λόγος for the Incarnated word (e.g., P. 1.1b ἐν ἀρρήτῳ λόγος ἀρχῇ for Jo. 1:1 ἐν ἀρχῇ ὁ λόγος),<sup>82</sup> whereas λόγος never occurs in the *Dionysiaca*. Similarly, μοῖρα and Hephaestus do not appear in the *Paraphrase*.

Additionally, the connection to Classical epics is discussed in a number of programmatic passages in the *VD*<sup>83</sup> and *Righteous*. Let us start with the Homeric connection in the *VD*

VD 1–3 Ἦ μάλα μοι τῷ ἀλιτρῷ ἀπ’ οὐρανόθ[εν θε]ὸς ἄγνός  
Χρηστόν, ἄγαλμα ἐοῖο, δῖον φάος ὥπ[ασε κόσ]μῳ,  
ἤμερον ἐν στήθεσσι διδοὺς χαρίεσσα[ν ἐπ’ οἷ]μην.  
Surely, it is for me, this sinner, that from heaven the pure God  
has sent Christ, his own image, to the world as a bright light,  
while putting in my heart a desire for graceful song.

Line 3 is composed with Homer in mind. The Homeric poems describe song as ἡμερόεις ‘exciting desire’ or ‘lovely’ (*Il.* 18.569–71, *Od.* 1.421 = 18.304 ἡμερόεσσιν αἰοιδῆν, *Od.* 17.519), the gods put emotions and resolve into the breasts of mortals (e.g., *Il.* 5.513 ἐν στήθεσσι μένος βάλε, 7.68, 13.494),<sup>84</sup> and a minstrel is moved to sing a lay (οἶμη) by the Muses (*Od.* 8.73–5), just as Dorotheus is moved to sing by God. Similarly, Hesiod begins singing from the Heliconian Muses (*Th.* 1) and says of them that their song glorifies the venerated race of the gods (43b–4), just as Dorotheus’ song will glorify his God.

Dorotheus then attributes the content and poetic shape of his words to Gabriel, featuring word by word one of the key lines discussing Hesiod’s inspiration by the Muses in the *Theogony*:

VD 176–7 τοῖα δ’ ἐνὶ στήθεσιν ἐμοῖς ποτικάμβαλες αὐδ[ήν]  
θέσπιν, ἵνα κλείοιμι τά τ’ ἐσσόμενα π[ρ]ό τ’ ἐόντα.  
“Such were the things that you have laid into my heart as subject  
of divine song, that I may celebrate all that has been and will come”.  
Hes. *Th.* 31b–3 ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδῆν  
θέσπιν, ἵνα κλείοιμι τά τ’ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ’ ἐόντα,  
καί μ’ ἐκέλονθ’ ὕμνεῖν μακάρων γένος αἰὲν ἐόντων  
“And they breathed a divine voice into me, so that I might glorify what will be  
and what was before, and they commanded me to sing of the race of the blessed  
ones who always are.” (Transl. Most 2006)

Dorotheus’ song coalesces with a particular streak of epic, didactic, presenting itself as the Christian equivalent to the foundation text of ‘pagan theology’, the *Theogony*. At the same time, the differences between the two texts are glaring enough to disavow their superposition.<sup>85</sup> Hesiod sings of the past of the world from its very beginning in the *Theogony*, and his own present is the subject of his *Works and Days*, where the future features as the disastrous consequences of not heeding his advice. In both poems, Hesiod’s voice introduces an extraneous subject matter, unrelated to his personal experience. On the contrary, in the *VD* Dorotheus sings of his own present experience of the divine and the past, present and future of the world are actually never mentioned, although the final lines suggest that the *VD* is only the first of many creations of the singer Dorotheus, all of them dedicated to Christian topics:

339–43 εὐξάμην ὑψίστοιο θεοῦ ἔνεχ’ ἄγγελ[ος εἶναι]  
πάντων ὧν μ’ ἐφέηκε. καὶ ἐν στή[θεσιν αἰ]οιδῆν.  
παντοίην ἐνέηκε παρεστάμενα[ι καὶ αἰείδ]ειν []  
ἔργων δικαίων ἡδ’ αὖ Χρηστοῦ ἀνακτος

εἰς ἔτος ἐξ ἔτεος γλυκερώτερον αἰὲν [ᾄδ]ῶ.

I prayed to be a messenger in the service of God Most High  
of all the things that he laid upon me. And in my heart he  
has laid songs of various kinds as to keep guard and sing  
about the deeds of the righteous and also of Christ the Lord,  
year after year ever more delightful for a singer.

The topics of subsequent poems would be 342 ἔργων δικαίων ‘the deeds of the righteous’, perhaps like himself, or like other the figures praised in the subsequent poems of the *Codex* (Abraham in *P.Bodmer* 30, the righteous admonished in *P.Bodmer* 31, Abel in *P.Bodmer* 33 and 35) and Χρηστοῦ ἀνακτος ‘Christ the lord’ (as in *P.Bodmer* 32, 34). ᾄοιδήν./ παντοίην (340b–341a) could refer to poems of different types, i.e., all genres, or to internal variation, as a synonym of the ubiquitous ποικιλία, aesthetically valued in Late Antiquity ([Miguélez-Cavero 2008](#), pp. 21–22, 129–30, 139–46, 163–69). In particular, the final line reads both as the projection of a poetic career onto which the poet embarks with progressively growing poetic abilities (he keeps producing more seductive, beautiful lines [γλυκερώτερον] as time passes) and to the evergrowing impact of this particular poem on his readers, who by revisiting it will be able to derive more and more benefits from its contents.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, VD 343 cites the end of Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica*:<sup>87</sup>

AR 4.1773–5 ἴλατ’ ἀριστῆων μακάρων γένος· αἶδε δ’ αἰοιδάι  
εἰς ἔτος ἐξ ἔτεος γλυκερώτεραι εἴεν ἀείδειν  
ἀνθρώποις . . .

“Be gracious, you race of blessed heroes, and may these songs year after year be  
sweeter for men to sing”

As envisaged by the VD, the epic is a living poetic channel of production, reaching back to Homer and Hesiod, its Hellenistic incarnations (Apollonius) and more recent developments. For instance, VD 342b Χρηστοῦ ἀνακτος harks back to the usage of ἀναξ for gods, kings and heroes in the Homeric poems,<sup>88</sup> but is also a frequent combination in the poetry by Gregory Nazianzen and Nonnus’ *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John*.<sup>89</sup> A number of times the diction of VD is closer to post-Homeric and contemporary poems than to archaic ones. For instance:

VD 270–2 ἀλλὰ σύ γε πρόφρασσαι ὃ τοι θεὸς ὥπασε δῶρο[ν.]  
χάρμα θεῶ τελέοιτο· σὲ γὰρ θεὸς ἔκφηνε τοῖς[ιν]  
κύδιμον ἡρώων καὶ αἰοίδιμον ἔσσομένοισ[ιν.]

But you must proclaim the gift that God has presented to you.

May it prove to be a cause of rejoicing for God: for God has brought you forward  
to them

as renowned among heroes and sung of for generations to come.

The phrasing for the presentation with a gift in line 270 does not relate to Homeric turns of phrase,<sup>90</sup> but rather to Apollonius, Quintus and Nonnus.<sup>91</sup> κύδιμος is in epic terms very much a Quintus word (11.358 κύδιμοι ἄνδρες |, 6.143 = 7.325 κύδιμον υἷα, 4.460 = 6.430 = 8.162 = 12.243 κύδιμος ἀνὴρ |),<sup>92</sup> even if the second half of line 270 is a Homeric cluster (*Il.* 6.358 αἰοίδιμοι ἔσσομένοισι |). Additionally, both the vocabulary and the appropriation of the Classical authors are done in a Christian manner.

VD 7 ἦμ’ εὖ γρηγορόων, τὰ δ’ ἐφῆνατο ἡμα[τ’ αἰ]δων

“I sit well awake, and singing in the daytime all that has appeared”).

When Dorotheus reflects on his experience, like Hesiod he sings (ἀείδων) about what has happened to him (τὰ δ’ ἐφῆνατο). However, γρηγορέω (see LSJ s.v.) ‘to be or become fully awake’, is not a poetic nor Classical term, but recurs in the NT to denote the watchfulness appropriate for the disciples.<sup>93</sup> On a programmatic level,

VD 293–6 τ.[οιάδ’ ἐμοί] προσέειπεν ἐμὸς θεὸς οἷος Ἰησοῦς  
καί με κ[έλε]εν θυρέησι παριστάμεν ὥς τὸ πάρος περ,

295 φ<θ>ογγήν ἐξανιών γεράνων μελιγερυῆσσαν,  
ἐν δὲ βίην ὤπασσε καὶ ἄφθιτον ἦτορ ἔδωκεν.

“Such were the words he spoke to me, my sole God, Jesus  
and he ordered me to stand at the gate just like before,  
sending forth a sweet sounding voice (like the sound) of cranes,  
and he put strength into me and gave me unending valour”.

Here, 295 μελιγερυῆσσαν points to the equally programmatic model of the Sirens. In the *Od.* these raise their clear-toned song (12.183b λιγυρὴν δ’ ἔντυνον αἰοιδήν) and call on Odysseus to steer his ship to listen to their sweet voices (187 μελιγερυν ἀπὸ στομάτων ὅπ’ ἀκοῦσαι). The Odyssean passage highlights the seductive power of the sung word, capable of distracting sailors to destruction, and requiring being tied to a mast (as Odysseus is) to be resisted. The *VD* conflates the roles of the singing Sirens and the strong, upright Odysseus resisting them by presenting Dorotheus singing as he stands at the gate, endowed with divine strength and valour.<sup>94</sup> The choice of the cranes as the image for Dorotheus’ singing (295 γεράνων) may be an inadequate appropriation of the Homeric simile comparing noisy armies marching to combat with a band of equally shrill cranes (*Il.* 2.460–73, 3.1–3, 15.691–2),<sup>95</sup> or a reference to the different quality of the sound of Christian poetry, more like a trumpeting call to march in line displaying strength and valour, than a simple beautiful song with no spiritual content whatsoever. Hence the final reflection of the poem:

VD 339–40 εὐξάμην ὑψίστοιο θεοῦ ἔνεχ’ ἄγγε[λος εἶναι]  
πάντων ὧν μ’ ἐφέηκε

“I prayed to be a messenger in the service of God Most High  
of all the things that he laid upon me.”

Although the rest of the poems of this codex are not as programmatically explicit as the *VD*, this Christian poetic program of continuity with plurisecular and variegated epic poetry can be seen to seep into them, as it is picked up together with the figure of Dorotheus in *Righteous*:

*Righteous* 154–6 ἀγλ[α]ῶι δὲ θρόνῳ ἰστῆκει τηλεθόων  
ὑμ[ν]είων πατέρα κλυτὸν λιγυρῆι ἐπ’ αἰοιδῇ,  
ἀγγ[έλ]οις ἐστιχόων ἡμερα μελπόμενος

“He [Dorotheus] sits on a splendid throne, with a loud voice,  
singing a hymn to the renowned Father with a clear song,  
taking his place in a row of angels, intoning lovely songs”

λιγυρῇ αἰοιδῇ (155) is both the song of the Sirens (*Od.* 12.44 ἀλλὰ τε Σειρῆνες λιγυρῇ θέλουσιν αἰοιδῇ, 183 λιγυρὴν δ’ ἔντυνον αἰοιδήν) and the Hesiodic Muses who pass it on to the poet.<sup>96</sup> The Hesiodic Muses sing hymns on their father Zeus,<sup>97</sup> just as Dorotheus sings hymns on his Father (155 ὑμ[ν]είων πατέρα κλυτὸν).

The poetic accomplishments of Gregory of Nazianzus, Synesius or Nonnus may give an impression of extensive compositions of poetry as the art of the few, whereas the *Codex Visionum* is a healthy reminder that authors that have reached us through Medieval manuscript transmission did not exist and work in a cultural vacuum, but rather anyone who had attended school was equipped with the background readings and compositional tools necessary for poetic practice, and many would indeed try a hand at it.<sup>98</sup>

#### 4.2. Completing the Arch of Salvation: Synthesis of Christian History and Infinite Reading

The poems of the *Codex Visionum* also situate themselves within the canon of texts on the Christian history of salvation, a continuous narrative that goes back to Genesis and ahead to the Book of Revelation, including post-evangelical times. One community of believers stretches from the beginning of the world, through the present and reaches the end of time. They do so by means of a number of well-known interpretative principles, the first of which is typology. Because God’s *modus operandi* was thought to be reducible to a number of types or archetypes, effectively events in the Old Testament prefigured or

announced elements of the Jesus story.<sup>99</sup> This meant that any figure or event inserted in the arch of salvation could be presented as a retake or summary of similar ones. Additionally, the Old Testament is read spiritually so that Jerusalem and Sion are no longer concrete places, but the Christian immaterial fatherland and all cues can be taken to give an outline of the principles of the Christian faith (Christian dogma can be uncovered in any text related to the arch of salvation).

The second principle is that of *scrittura infinita*:<sup>100</sup> it is impossible to exhaust the interpretation of Bible texts as their depth grows with the progression of the reader, to whom polysemy and prophetic intensity are gradually revealed. When late antique poets signal a Bible text as their source of inspiration they can be assumed to seek to comment, complete and uncover new meanings in their basic texts. Typology and *scrittura infinita* turn the composition of Biblical poetry into an exegetical practice which serves readers of different levels of proficiency. This is particularly visible in the three ‘Biblical’ poems of the Codex, *On Abraham*, *Cain* and *Abel*.

The starting point of *P.Bodmer 30 On Abraham* (Πρὸς Ἀβραάμ) is the Aqedah or binding of Isaac: in Genesis, God tests Abraham’s loyalty by asking him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac (Gen. 22:1–18) and when He has had the proof He needs, He gives Abraham an animal to put in Isaac’s place. *P.Bodmer 30* expands the episode first chronologically with a reference to the creation of the world (Faulkner 2022, pp. 90–91):

1 Ὁς κόσμον συνέλευξε καὶ οὐρανὸν[ ἡδὲ θά]λασσαν

“He who put together the world and the heaven [and the s]ea”

This first line gives the beginning of the poem a psalmic ring as it looks like a repeated psalmic description of God,<sup>101</sup> and helps to connect the poems of the Codex, as it can be read as a preliminary reference to *Cain*, where all ends of the *kosmos* reject Cain as he tries to flee after killing Abel. Considering that *On Abraham* is the first poem after the two works on visions (*The Shepherd* in prose and the *VD* in verse), this line also has a programmatic quality: a Bible episode, well known in prose to all Christian audiences, is retold highlighting its connections with the broader arch of human history, understood as God’s history of salvation (starting with Creation, proceeding to the figure of Jesus and reaching the recent martyrial narratives and subsequent adaptations of the post-Constantinian Church). As a poetic retelling, *On Abraham* signals both to the Homeric poems (popular Homeric half-lines are easily identifiable)<sup>102</sup> and to the first ‘Christian’ poetry, the Psalms.

The *On Abraham* deviates from Genesis 22 visibly, but follows well-known traditions, by introducing speeches of acceptance by Abraham, Sarah and Isaac: Sarah and Isaac never express their opinions about the sacrifice in the Aqedah, but Isaac’s willingness is represented in early Jewish sources,<sup>103</sup> and the introduction of speeches is done following the rules of the *ethopoea* or ‘speech in character’ (the character should speak appropriately for their age, gender, origin, etc.).<sup>104</sup> Thus, Abraham speaks like an old man (line 7 mentioning his age), and Sarah, like a pious mother, encourages her son to assume martyrdom. The model for Sarah would be the mother of the Maccabean brothers (2 Macc. 7:20–3, 25–9 and 4 Macc.):<sup>105</sup> these seven brothers, tempted by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (king of the Seleucid empire 175–164 BC) to break their religious rules in exchange for their lives, were killed upon their refusal to submit. Their connection with the Aqedah episode is explicit in 4 Macc 13:1–12, where the brothers exhort one another to remember Isaac’s piety in accepting his sacrifice. Their mother, who encourages them not to abandon their faith and to sacrifice their lives, became the model for the mothers of martyrs in Christian martyrial literature.<sup>106</sup> The Maccabaeans were very popular saints in the fourth century when their relics were venerated in Antioch and homilies (starting with Jo. Chrys. *Or.* 15) celebrated their mastery over the passions.<sup>107</sup> The typological connection of Sarah/Isaac, the Maccabean family and the Christian martyrs is not explicit in the text and would be visible only to readers trained in the mechanics of typological reading, with a command of the Scriptures, and aware of trends in Christian ‘culture’ and cult.

Isaac, like a young man of marriageable age, refers to the sacrifice as a wedding:



16–18 νυμ[φί]διον θαλερόν θάλαμον τεύξασθε τοκῆες,  
 ξαν[θ]ήν μοι πλοκάμοισι κόμην πλέξασθε πολῖται,  
 ὄφ[ρ' ἱερ]ήν τελέσαιμι χάριν μεγάλῃτορι θυμῷ  
 “Parents, prepare for me a luxurious brid[al] chamber!  
 Citizens, braid my fai[r] hair into locks,  
 tha[t] I may fulfil a [hol]y task with magnanimity”

The preparation of the bridal chamber and the participation of the town in the singing of songs of encouragement for the groom are both elements recorded in the treatments of the epithalamium and bedtime speech (κατευναστικός λόγος) by Menander Rhetor.<sup>108</sup> The grooming of the couple before the ceremony is not discussed by Menander, but even if Isaac's blond hair (*Abraham* 17 ξαν[θ]ήν ... κόμην) recalls Athena pulling Achilles' in the *Iliad* (1.197 ξανθῆς δὲ κόμης ἔλε Πηλεΐωνα), its braiding (*Abraham* 17 πλοκάμοισι ... πλέξασθε) would be a feminine preparation (see Aphrodite about to braid her hair in AR 3.46b–47a μέλλε δὲ μακροῦς/πλέξασθαι πλοκάμους), rather than a masculine one. The image suggests Isaac was assuming the role of the (virginal) bride and not of the groom, which is unusual for a masculine character, but has a precedent in the presentation of martyrs as virgins (the feminine παρθένοι) and brides of the Lamb in *Revelation* 14:1–5 and 9:6–9.<sup>109</sup> A late antique reader would easily recognise the wedding preparations as standard, but the connection to Christian martyrs would elude those who could not recall *Revelation* or interpreted it differently.

The poet explicitly connects Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac and Moses' crossing of the Red Sea:

20–1 ῥ[οίβδη]σεν δὲ θάλασσα περὶ φλόγα, τὴν ῥὰ Μουσῆς  
 σ[χίσε]ι· Ἀβραάμ υἱὰ ποτιξυναίρετο κύμα  
 “Around the flames [rush]ed the sea that Moses  
 would [split]. Abraham lifted son and wave.”<sup>110</sup>

Such a connection is unusual.<sup>111</sup> we would expect on the one hand a connection between the sacrifice of Isaac and the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb before the departure from Egypt and then a reference to Christ as the Paschal lamb,<sup>112</sup> and on the other hand a link between the crossing of the Red Sea and baptism, already suggested in the New Testament.<sup>113</sup> The latter was sustained by the practice of administering baptism on Easter eve in a framework recalling the departure from Egypt, and highlighted by the Fathers (sometimes in connection with the salty waters of Marah in Ex. 15:25).<sup>114</sup> *Abraham* 20–21 could be making a connection of the two paradigms eliding the intermediate step or simply making an unusual connection. In either case, this poem concerns itself with the exegesis of a particular passage of Genesis and makes use of typology. In this regard, the poem can (1) introduce a novice reader to the technique (explicit connections such as that of the sacrifice of Isaac and Moses crossing the Red Sea) and (2) suggest further connections to more experienced readers (Isaac's mother as a prefiguration of the mother of the Maccabean brothers; Isaac as a bride prefiguring the martyr brides of the Book of Revelation). The connection between the two Testaments is furthered by post-Biblical references, closer to the time of the composition of the poem. Thus, *Abraham* concludes with an address to Abraham, as the father of humanity and, therefore, the father of the martyrs:

29–30 χίλια[τέκνα σ]ε τοῖον ἐπαυγᾶσαι ἀνθεμόεντα  
 δωρο[δότη]ν πανάριστον ἐπεμβεβαῶτ' ἐπὶ πύργῳ  
 Thousands of flourishing [children] to make you shine (?),  
 excellent [giver] of gifts, who has climbed the tower.

Isaac would be the first, followed by the Maccabean brothers, Dorotheus and the Christian martyrs of more recent times. As the father of these descendants, Abraham can be said to have reached the top of the tower (=Church), an image we have seen recurring in the texts of the *Codex Visionum*.

*P.Bodmer 33* “What would Cain say after killing Abel?” follows interpretative and creative principles similar to those visible in *On Abraham*. In the case of the *Cain*, Genesis 4:13–14 does in fact include such a speech, as Cain replies after God curses him for killing his brother. In Genesis, Cain foresees a life in punishment, whereas in the poem he considers where to flee: the air, the sea and the land (1–2 πῆι πολέω πῆι φεύξομ’ ἄν’ ἥέρα πῆι δὲ[ κατ’ οἶμους/ ὕγρῃς τε τραφερῇς τε ἐμὸν[ ].νο.[ ]να.]),<sup>115</sup> all reject him (3–16) because the Lord punishes the evildoer who has sinned (17 ὅς τε κακορρέκτ[ην ἀ]ποτίνυται, ὅς κεν ἀμάρτη).<sup>116</sup> In the end, the Bodmer Cain sees only one way out: to go to Tartarus with those who are like him (18–19 ἤδη δ’ οὐτὶν’ ἐγὼ[ προτι]όσσομαι ἄμμι[ κ]έλευθον·/ Τάρταρα λοιπὸν ἴκ[εσ]θε κακορραφίη[ς ] ἀκόρητοι).<sup>117</sup> The phrasing again reflects popular Homeric turns,<sup>118</sup> but the construction of the speech could have been inspired by Ps. 139(138):7–12,<sup>119</sup> on the impossibility of fleeing from an omniscient God who can follow mortals to the heavens, the underworld, the ends of the sea, and even the darkness of the night, although not certainly not the phrasing. The notion was anticipated by references to God’s capacity to see to the ends of the earth in *VD*.<sup>120</sup>

Both in the OT (*Wisdom* 10:3–4) and in the NT (*Hebr.* 11:4, 1Jo 3:10–15, *Jude* 11) Cain is the prototype of evildoers and killers. Although there is no explicit reference to the type in the form of a mention of another Biblical miscreant, the poem refers to the abstract figure of the evildoer and sinner (17 ὅς τε κακορρέκτ[ην ἀ]ποτίνυται, ὅς κεν ἀμάρτη) with a phrasing that will be picked up in *Abel* to describe the punishment of evildoers,<sup>121</sup> and concludes with a plural call to evildoers, all of whom share their lack of satiety for evil and the (Christian) destiny in the Tartarus (19 Τάρταρα λοιπὸν ἴκ[εσ]θε κακορραφίη[ς ] ἀκόρητοι), in accordance with the teaching on the eternal punishment of evildoers (Matthew 25:41–6). The context of the *Cain* would also encourage a typological reading as most texts of the *Codex Visionum* elaborate on the figure of the suffering, *dikaïos*, leaving the Cain as the sole named instance of the perpetrator or persecutor.<sup>122</sup>

*Cain* is effectively written in a diptych with *P.Bodmer 35* *What would Abel say after being killed by Cain?* Like the Bodmer Cain, the Bodmer Abel appropriates a psalmic passage, effectively paraphrasing Ps. 102 (101) on the sufferings of the just man. Apollinaris’ *Metaphrasis Psalmorum* includes a poetic rendition of the same Psalm, but points of contact between the two texts are virtually non-existent and differences in emphasis are relevant as to the different aims and functions of the two compositions: where the psalmic paraphrase simply creates an epic version of the text of the Septuaginta, the Bodmer poem makes a strong Christian typological reading so as to complete the whole arch of salvation in the new Abel speech.<sup>123</sup> To start with

Ps. 101:1 Εἰσάκουσον, κύριε, τῆς προσευχῆς μου (“Hear my prayer, O Lord”)

*Met. ps.* 1 Εὐχῆς ἡμετέρης ἐπικέκλυθι, φέρτατε ποιμὴν (“Hear my prayer, powerful lord”)

*Abel* 1 Κέκλυ[θί μοι] πάσχοντι πάτερ θεὸς δημοεργέ (“Listen [to me] in my suffering, God father and creator”)

The *Met. ps.* and *Abel* only share the chosen verb. The rendition of the *Met.* is nearly literal, with a slight elaboration for κύριε to complete the final two feet of the hexameter, similar to the popular Homeric formula ποιμένα λαῶν (*Il.* 1.263).<sup>124</sup> *Abel* elaborates and contraposes the entities of the speaker and the recipient of the prayer. The speaker is presented as a suffering subject (πάσχοντι) with a verb that in a Christian context often designates the sufferings of the martyrs.<sup>125</sup> Abel thus becoming the first martyr and the speaker of the Psalm is another in a long list reaching out to the subjects and recipients of the *Codex Visionum*. The notion of a community of sufferers and martyrs is also highlighted by the fact that lines 14–15, describing a body wasting away, are borrowed from *VD* 151–2, where they describe Dorotheus’ body wasting away in punishment.

Abel is contraposed to the recipient of the prayer, not simply God, but the father (πάτερ—of humanity, of Abel, of the psalmist, of Christ, of the historical martyrs—who are

said to demand retribution for their suffering in a departure from the psalmic text,<sup>126</sup> of the anonymous *dikaioi* mentioned in the codex) and the maker of the universe (δημιουργέ).<sup>127</sup>

Then in the second section of the Psalm (versets 12–22), the psalmist calls the Lord to have pity on Sion and Jerusalem in the concrete context of the exile: he asks to return to Jerusalem whose stones people miss (14), to see the reconstruction of the city (16), listening to those who are destitute (17) and imprisoned (20) in exile, so that they may praise again the Lord in Sion and Jerusalem (21), where peoples and kingdoms gather to serve him (22). In the Bodmer poem, there are no references to the physical essence and reconstruction of Jerusalem, which becomes a spiritual place<sup>128</sup> to which the servants of the Lord tend (36–7 οἱ ὕνεκ' ἄρ' Ἰροσόλυμα τεῇ[ν πο]θέου[σι]ν ἅπαντ[ες] / ἱφ]θιμοὶ θεράπον[τ]ες ἐλδόμενοι[ι χ]νόον αὐτ[ῆ]ς),<sup>129</sup> the saviour of the peoples (41 λαοσσόον Ἰροσολύμα). Now the Lord listens not to those who suffer in exile, but to the poor and the sinners, and He does not hold a grudge against anybody but saves those he takes pity on (43–4 ἔκλυε[ν] ἀμφὶ πενιχροῖς ἀλειτάων ἐπακούσας / καὶ ῥ' οἱ[ὕ]τιν' ἐμέγηρε σάωσε δὲ τοὺς ἐλεήσας). On the contrary, the vague psalmic reference to a written record of the Lord's grace to be remembered by future generations<sup>130</sup> becomes a very concrete summary of some tenets of the Christian faith:

Abel 45–51 ἔσ[φ]ερε ῥ[ῆ]ματα πάντα γραφαῖς ἁγίαις γενετῆρων  
 ἢ π[ε]ριεσόμενοι μέγαν ἄφθιτον αἰνήσουσιν  
 ὅτ[τι] μὲν] ἐξεκάλυψε ν ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ φώσδε  
 σ[ω]τῆρ' ὃν προέηκεν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐσεσθαι  
 οὕνε]κεν αὐτὸς ἄναξ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἀμφ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν  
 ἦ[εν] ὥστε φράσαιτο ἰδὼν στοναχὴν τε πενιχρῶν,  
 κα[ὶ] μογέοντ[α]ς ἅπαντας Ἄδην<sup>131</sup> σαοὶ ἦδ' ἐλεαῖροι  
 In[sert] all the words in the sacred writings of the fathers,  
 so that the survivors praise the great, imperishable one,  
 who, from the heaven, revealed in the light  
 a s[aviour] he sent to remain amongst men;  
 for this the lord himself [came] from heaven to the earth  
 to contemplate the wailing of the poor and show them the way  
 and save and take pity on all those who suffer in Hades.

The prediction of the Incarnation (God the Father sending a saviour who will remain on earth) ascribed to the psalmist follows the model of the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah, some of which were explicitly considered fulfilled in the Gospels.<sup>132</sup> Along similar lines, the proem of the *Metaphrasis Psalmorum* (lines 83–104) lists all the important elements of the Christian faith<sup>133</sup> and the *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John* begins like the Gospel of John, with the Hymn of the Logos, in which Nonnus inserts references to the Creed.<sup>134</sup>

In the poems of the *Codex VISIONUM*, the Incarnation is regularly referred to as the Father sending the Son and the Son being the image of the Father, and Christ is presented as light (of the world and the underworld).<sup>135</sup> I.e., as a summary from New Testament passages, specifically from the Pauline letters,<sup>136</sup> rather than a summary of any sort of Creed. This may be a sign that the poems were written before doctrinal debates and the definition of the right faith became central to the life of the Church (the council of Nicaea in 325 was a notable turning point),<sup>137</sup> or that the focus of the poet(s) and the scribes copying these texts was not a doctrinal definition. Perhaps their aim was not to describe God accurately, but to celebrate the divine both in the form of (shorter) prayers<sup>138</sup> or hymns (*Abraham*, *Cain* and *Abel*)<sup>139</sup> and of (longer) reflections (*VD*, *Righteous*),<sup>140</sup> which may serve the purpose of the glorification of the saints.<sup>141</sup> This would explain their use of basic epic words to define and describe the divine: God is pure/holy (ἁγνός/ἅγιος),<sup>142</sup> the highest (ὑψιστος),<sup>143</sup> eternal (αἰώνιος),<sup>144</sup> immortal,<sup>145</sup> imperishable (ἄφθιτος)<sup>146</sup> and famous (κλυτός).<sup>147</sup>

#### 4.3. Reflection of Contemporary (Religious) Realities

Christian poetry exists as well to relate to and comment on the reality in which it is produced.<sup>148</sup> I propose a broad arch of cultural and religious interrogation, on *metanoia* (a combination of repentance, conversion and search for penitence), in connection with baptism<sup>149</sup> and the Final Judgement, as God rewards obedience<sup>150</sup> and condemns the one who does not repent (*Righteous* 5–55a, 76–103a; *Cain*).

*Metanoia* is a key term in early Christian culture, one that undergoes a visible chronological development from occurrences in the New Testament to its late antique use in monastic environments. In the Gospels, John the Baptist calls for repentance from sins twinned with baptism,<sup>151</sup> as do some passages from Acts.<sup>152</sup> *Metanoia* after baptism is also contemplated in the early Church:<sup>153</sup> in Acts 8:20 Simon the magician, who has been baptised, sees the disciples receiving the Holy Spirit by the imposition of the hands of Peter and John and offers them money to get that gift; Peter replies

Acts 8:21 “You have no part or share in this, for your heart is not right before God.  
22 Repent [μετανόησον] therefore of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you”.

Post-baptismal *metanoia* and forgiveness are, therefore, possible, though not automatic.<sup>154</sup> However, some passages in the Pauline letters are inconclusive (they advise the community to beware of sin, but do not mention lack of forgiveness),<sup>155</sup> or explicitly order that the sinner is expelled from the community because their only possible salvation is on the Second Coming of Christ (1Cor. 5:3). The Letter to the Hebrews denies the possibility of restoration after baptism and suggests that the sinner will be punished in the Final Judgement.<sup>156</sup> Effectively, the connection between *metanoia* (defined as the repentance from sins and a complete reset of the mind and life of the believer on becoming a Christian) and baptism (a one-time event marking the integration of the catechumen in the Church, one with Christ who gave his life on the cross for his sins) implied that *metanoia* could only happen once: just as only one baptism was possible, only one *metanoia* was possible.<sup>157</sup> In the first centuries this was at the very least problematic: there was no agreement as to whether the reintegration of serious sinners to the community was possible, and in the NT texts in which it was allowed there was no specific method or channel through which it could be effected.

Historically, one of the options was to allow a second *metanoia* without baptism (Lat. *paenitentia secunda*), but since the model for it was (one-off) baptism, it also had to be one-off: pardon would be given on the condition that the sinner was only allowed to use the mechanism once. For instance, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215) insisted that the only possible *metanoia* is that which is the foundation of faith and concurrent with baptism, and attributes the second (and final) chance of repentance to God’s grace.<sup>158</sup> At the same time, Clement allows that not sinning after baptism is difficult and seems to imagine the baptised in a process towards sin-lessness in which the individual is helped along by the community and prayer,<sup>159</sup> which would allow for (minor) setbacks.

*Metanoia* was thus a concept fraught with tension: on the one hand, a depreciation or incompleteness of (baptismal) *metanoia* would entail an automatic debasement of baptism itself, which was to be avoided at all costs; on the other hand, Christian communities required a practical method of identifying sin (both defining it in general terms and classifying it in degrees of gravity) and re-integrating those who repented into communion. Flexible thinkers avoided the fracture by simultaneously reinforcing baptismal *metanoia* and accommodating post-baptismal (minor) sinning: thus, Clement referred to second *metanoia* as a by-product of God’s mercy and mentioned the importance of personal and community proactivity to avoid sinning. Other authors prove the instability of the concept. For instance, Tertullian (ca. 155–ca. 220) in his *De paenitentia* notes that a Christian in theory should not sin anymore (6.17) and the *paenitentia secunda* is a concession of God’s grace to human weakness (5.1), but in his more strict, Montanist period published *De pudicitia*,



where he attacked the penitential discipline of the Church in Africa, and in particular an edict of Pope Callistus forgiving sins of adultery and fornication to penitents.<sup>160</sup>

Well into the fourth century, Ambrose of Milan (*De Paenitentia* II.2.6–12) explained that Paul in Hebrews 6:4 rejected the possibility of a second baptism, not of repentance; the baptised must give up the graver faults of their old lives (II.3 analyses the case of the prodigal son who relents) and do penance for lighter ones in continuous strife against sin (II.10.95). In this case, the reinforcement of *metanoia* is so extreme that it seems to imply something similar to a retreat from the world, renouncing civic life (earthly honours), the pleasures of the table (wine) and married life. This was not usually the case.<sup>161</sup> The combination of baptismal *metanoia* and post-baptismal repentance is explained in the final paragraph through the metaphor of the vestment (II.11.98): catechumens would leave their old dress before the liturgy of baptism to don a new one symbolising their new identity, physically marking the break with their previous life of sin. Ambrose assumes that the new dress, despite *metanoia* and baptism, cannot possibly be maintained in pristine condition, and should be looked after with minor repairs. It is clearly not a case of leaving baptism for the last minute to ensure a definitive *metanoia*.

Together with this insoluble connection of *metanoia* with baptism,<sup>162</sup> we find that in monastic settings *metanoia*, translated as a combination of repentance and penance, becomes the name and tool of the lifelong process by which the baptised aims to become the best version of him- or herself.<sup>163</sup> Basil of Caesarea (330–379) wrote at length about ascetic practices in his homilies and in other writings often labelled as ‘monastic’ and seems to recommend a disciplined way of life and very high moral and spiritual ideals and goals to a broad audience, not to a narrow group of enthusiasts.<sup>164</sup> One of the pillars of Basil’s advice was to focus on repentance (*Mor.* I.1).<sup>165</sup> He clearly stated that sin was to be judged and measured by repentance (*Ep.* 217.74, 84) and correction directed to help a change of heart within the sinner (*Ep.* 112.3, 260). A sign of regret, a little goodness in one’s life was enough to attract God’s mercy (*Hom.* 350.3, 356.5, 357.3),<sup>166</sup> but something must be done about it because all transgressions are displeasing to God (*On. Judg.* 4, 81).

In a different context, the first of the letters of Antony “document the mental world of an Egyptian monk in the first decades of the fourth century” (Rubenson 1995, pp. 11–12), and can be discussed as an introduction to the life of those who retreat from the world.<sup>167</sup> Antony discusses three types of souls whom God has assembled by his own Word (i.e., called to an ascetic or angelic life). For the latter he says:

*Letter I.15* “the third kind we find in those whose hearts are hard from the beginning and who persist in the works of sin. God the merciful sends afflictions and chastisement upon them, [16] until through their afflictions they are made aware and repent and return. And if they repent with all their heart they enter into the calling and attain the virtues”

Divine (physical and psychological) punishment and conversion are necessary to seek to abandon civic life. Antony is not referring to the *metanoia* linked to baptism, but to a (subsequent) conversion to a particular form of life, not expected of all the baptised. This ascetic call is but the beginning of a long way of return to their first being in the creator, in which many elements are necessary to succeed: the Spirit teaches the mind about repentance, deprivation of food and sleep purify the body, the study of the Scripture and prayer purify the soul, renunciation of the world and of human things improve matters and God, in his mercy, helps.<sup>168</sup> *Metanoia* (here a process of purification inextricably linked to the lifelong battle against sin) became a trademark of the ascetic life,<sup>169</sup> and was usually accompanied by fasting, praying and reflection on sin. This type of repentance was expressed outwardly through prostration, and it was so ingrained in the ascetic practice that βάλλειν μετάνοιαν is usually translated as ‘to make the gesture of prostration’, and someone who made the gesture of prostration would be identified as a monk.<sup>170</sup>

This overview can only give a broad impression of the complexities and ramifications of *metanoia* in the fourth century: there was a strong connection to baptism, which meant

that pre-baptismal *metanoia* was expected to be sincere and definitive; a second *metanoia* would have been accepted by most for application for grave sins, but only once; the pairing of *metanoia* and baptism is also linked to the Final Judgement (those who fail to convert and live up to their baptismal creed condemn themselves); post-baptismal repentance and reparation would have existed in different forms, none of them systematic or agreed by all; ascetic *metanoia* was on the rise, sometimes as a call to all the baptised, some other times a particular call differentiated from baptism.

The tone of the discussion on *metanoia* in the *Codex Visionum* is set by the first text copied, *The Shepherd* of Hermas, a visionary text laden with metaphors. In the second vision, Hermas is allowed to read a book given to him by the Church, personified as an old lady, where he learns that there is a limit to repentance for those who are baptised, whereas the unbaptised can repent until the final day.<sup>171</sup> In the third Vision, Hermas is allowed to see a great tower being built by angels with square stones so perfect that it seems to be built in one piece. The Lady Church reveals (*Vis. III.2.4–7.15*) that the tower is herself, built upon baptismal waters, and the perfect stones, those who walked after the holiness of God and exercised their office in purity and sanctity (apostles, bishops, teachers, deacons) and those who suffered for the name of the Lord (martyrs). The stones lying around the tower are the baptised with promising faith in whom wickedness has been found and are placed there in wait, to see if they repent (second *metanoia*). A good number of imperfect stones have been discarded and thrown far away as the representation of sinners who cannot possibly repent or for whom the pull of the world is too strong.

The intent of this allegory is not (only) descriptive (the Church as immaculately pure), but mostly paraenetic: it seeks to encourage the middle group, those who could possibly take the opportunity of the second *metanoia*—those who need to choose at some point between faith and perdition.<sup>172</sup> In the final explanation, the Lady Church further elaborates that second *metanoia* will be accompanied by (physical) torments, which are both a form of punishment for sins and enforced to help sinners to physically understand what they have done (*Vis. III.7.5*).

Although a visionary text, *The Shepherd* is connected to the reality in which it was composed and bears the marks of its process of composition.<sup>173</sup> The first four books seem to have been composed first and circulated independently. *Mandata* I–XII and *Similitudines* I–VIII, which sought to explain and support the first section, were added later. In the third, final phase the text was completed with *Similitudines* IX–X and *Visio* V. *Simil. IX*, added in the third phase and not copied in the *Codex Visionum*, included an actualisation of the allegory of the tower which highlights how the Christian mindset had evolved between the first and third phases of composition: the figure explaining the allegory is now the angel of repentance, dressed as a shepherd (*Simil. IX.33.1* “ego pastor nuntius paenitentiae”); whereas in the third Vision, there was no reference to the persons of the Trinity, Comparison IX begins with a reference to the Holy Spirit (*Parable IX.1.1–2*) and the tower has a newly hewed out gate as the image of the Son of God (*IX.2.2, IX.12.1–3*—after John 14:6); the tower is now in Arcadia (*IX.1.4*), surrounded by twelve hills (an allegory of the twelve tribes of Israel, now the different types of Christians—*IX.1.4–10, IX.17.1–27.6*), which suggests that the Gospel has now reached all nations.<sup>174</sup>

The baptismal references are much stronger in the first allegory, where the tower literally grows in the waters of baptism. These waters are not mentioned in the second allegory, where baptism is referred to in a more immaterial manner in the association of the entrance into the kingdom of God and the name of the Son of God, whose name the believer receives and bears.<sup>175</sup> Admittedly, the second allegory was not copied in the *Codex Visionum* and there is no way of knowing whether it ever was part of the library or whether anyone of those composing the poems and copying them was aware of its existence. In any case, it is indicative of an interest in making explicit the presence of the Trinity in the life of the believer and the emphasis on baptism not only as the moment of cleansing but as the permanent change of identity expressed in the new name which the baptised chose when they make themselves one with Christ in baptism, not prioritary in the context of the first

allegory. Both the first and the second allegory are helpful to understand the *metanoia* in the poems of the codex.

In the *Visio Dorothei*, Dorotheus, who is presumably a Christian (although no reference is made to his baptism or religious habits)<sup>176</sup> dreams that he is sent to invigilate the gates of God's palace, but he does not comply with his duties and lies to cover his wrong-doing (16–95, 106–25). In an aside from the dream he prays to God for mercy as he remembers his misbehaviour (96–105). Following God's orders he is severely punished with lashes and left covered in blood in his previous place by the gates (126–68). The punishment is not enough to make up for his faults: God tells Christ and archangel Gabriel (no reference is made in the poem to the Holy Spirit) to demote Dorotheus from his position, as he is not fit for service (178–87). Christ, however, speaks in his favour:

VD 190–5 ‘οὐτι, πάτερ, τόδ’ ἔοικεν ἐν ἄγκ[ ... ] ... [ ... ] λῶσι  
πάντες ἀλειταίνουσιν ἀτασ[θαλί]ησι κ. ακῆσι.  
ἀλλ’ ἔα ἐν μεγάρῳ, δοκέει δέ [μοι] εἶναι ἄριστος.  
Γαβριὴλ δ’ ἄρ’ ἔπειτ’ ἐπαμεί[βε]το· ‘α ... ..  
ἀσχαλόων ἀλίηται. τα ... [ ... ]. κύνες ἡδ’ οἰωνοί  
195 ἔγκατά τε σάρκα τε καὶ ὅστέα δαρδῶπτοι[εν].’  
“No, Father, this does not seem fit ...  
all are sinners in their wicked presumptuousness,  
but let him stay in the palace, for he seems to me to be the best.’  
And Gabriel then added in response: ‘ ...  
if to his grief he will be a sinner (again?), may dogs and birds of prey  
then gnaw at his entrails, his flesh and his bones.’”

This one-off pardon by God's grace, on the condition that he does not sin again, is clearly a second *metanoia*, which Clement and Ambrose amongst others defined as the product of God's mercy. In this context, the attacks of dogs and vultures, the Homeric (feared) destiny of dead heroes, are the epic equivalent of the torments of hell, after the Final Judgement. This should not be disregarded as a simple epic adornment, as the fortified version of Dorotheus will be described as a hero. We can see here a categorisation of the believers similar to that of the first allegory of the tower in *The Shepherd*: there are those who by baptism are turned into heroes, but sin and fail to realise their potential; of this group, some will be lost forever (deserving the dogs and birds of prey), but others will repent (second *metanoia*) and correct their defects for good. Torments as a means of punishment and help for the second *metanoia* are mentioned in *The Shepherd* (Vis. III.7.5–6) and Antony's first letter (I.15–16).

As Dorotheus is standing by the gates covered in blood, Gabriel offers him water for cleansing the blood of the lashes and commands him to pour the contents of the vessel over his head:

208–14a καὶ [τότ’] ἐμ’ ἐκκαλέσας προσεφώνεε· ‘τῇ δέ, λοετρά  
χε[ρσίν] ἐλὼν ἐπίχευαι’. ἐπεσσυμένως δ’ ἀπένιπτον  
210 [χεῖράς] τ’ ἡδὲ πόδας καὶ ῥ’ ἥϋσεν ἀμφ’ ἐμὲ δεινόν·  
[μὴδ’ οὐτ]ως ἐπίνιζε· κατὰ κράτα ὦν κατάχευαι  
[εἰς ὃ κε] φοίνιον αἶμα καταπλυνέης ἀπομάσσων.  
[αὐτὰρ ἐγ]ὼ χεῖρεσσιν ἐλὼν κρητῆρα φαιινὸν  
[κάκχεϋ]ον κεφαλῆς ...  
“And then he called me out and spoke: ‘There, take this water for bathing  
in your hands and pour it over you’. And quickly I washed  
210 my hands and my feet, and loudly he shouted round me:  
‘Don’t wash yourself off like this; pour the water over your head  
till you have washed and cleaned off the dark blood’.  
And I took the splendid bowl in my hands  
and poured it out over my head”.

The blood Dorotheus is covered in is the visible sign of his previous sin. The command to wash it off is proof that his second *metanoia* has been accepted by God and he can now appear clean from sin (as the baptised when they don a new clean dress) before his community. Gabriel's anger and emphasis on a full wash are derived from the fact that not fully washing the stains of sin away would mean that the second *metanoia* is incomplete. A good parallel for this stage is AP GN, N.190: a brother embattled by *porneia* tries to marry the daughter of a pagan priest; the pagan priest sees a dove leaving his mouth and realises that he has been touched by God's presence and rejects him; the brother then repents and fasts under the direction of an elder who prays for him without ceasing; they know that God has accepted his repentance when the dove returns to him and enters his mouth. The restoration to the pre-sinning condition/appearance proves that the *metanoia* has been accepted.

Upon the completion of penance and second *metanoia* Gabriel makes a further offer:

214b-20 ὁ δ' ἐμὲ φθάμενος φάτο μῦθον·

215 [ἔϋδρ]α νίη[ν] χαρίεσσιν ἐέλδεται ἀμφελέεσθαι

[τ]άξιιν <θ'> ἡρώων τῶν ῥ' ἐσταότων πρὸ δόμοιο;

[ἦ] τοι ἐγὼ πατέρα κλυτόν, ἦ τεά, Γαβριήλ, ἐλλά'.

[ὅ]ς δ' ἄρ' α[μ]ειδιῶν προσεφώνεεν· ἦ μ' ἄλ' > ἄμαργος

[ὅ]φρα [μοι] ἔσποιτο πᾶσιν ἐφ' ἡμασι ποιμανέων με

220 [.] [σ.δ.] τοι οἷω ἐφέψεται ἐς πατέρ' ὁμφῆς

"And before I could speak he said:

'Do you desire to take upon you the graceful strength

and the rank of the heroes that are standing before the palace?'

'Yes I do, by the renowned Father, or by your deliverance (?), Gabriel.'

And smiling at me he spoke: 'Surely, very eager is he,

that he may follow me, herding me all days

... with (his heart?) alone he will listen to the Father of the Word"

Gabriel seems to make a specific call to follow (219a [ὅ]φρα [μοι] ἔσποιτο) him and therefore, God (220 [ἦ] τοι ἐγὼ πατέρα κλυτόν, ἦ τεά, Γαβριήλ, ἐλλά'). This task similar to being a shepherd (219 ποιμανέων),<sup>177</sup> but also to invigilating the gates of God's palace (216b [τ]άξιιν <θ'> ἡρώων τῶν ῥ' ἐσταότων πρὸ δόμοιο). The call to follow Christ goes along traditional lines: it would be a retake of the Jesus' calls to the disciples in the Gospels to follow him and in Jo 21:16 calling Peter to be a shepherd for his sheep.<sup>178</sup> This call to leadership in the Church, but also to obedience to God (220b ἐφέψεται ἐς πατέρ' ὁμφῆς). The palace guards could be an image for the martyrs as the guardians of faith and the Church, compared to heroes because of their physical resistance to torture,<sup>179</sup> and to a battalion in line of battle (216 [τ]άξιιν) because of their number and defence task. Lines 215–16 imply that their strength is God-given for the fulfilment of their particular task.<sup>180</sup> A connection with martyrdom is, however, not necessary, as a metaphorical reading would be supported by a comparison with Antony's *Letter I*. Here the third type of those called to live an ascetic life is that of those who are broken down by torments and upon experiencing (second) *metanoia* hear God's particular call for them. God then supports and accompanies them so that they fulfil their chosen (ascetic) path. Following this interpretation, Dorotheus' punishment would be a metaphor for the suffering experienced by the sinner who realises his error, repents and is truly sorry for the pain and offence he has caused himself and others, including God.

Gabriel then tells Dorotheus to "chose a man [as your guide]" (222 [ἡγεμόν' οὖν] τ.ι.ν] α φῶτα λελέξεο), suggesting John, Peter, Moses or Solomon (223–4). Dorotheus' choice is different:

225–32 αὐτὰ[ρ] ἐγὼν [ὡς] τὸ πρὶν ἐνὶ χθονίοισιν ἔθ' ἐ<ί>λον,

ἐκπ[ά]λως δ' ἀπέειπον, ὅπερ θέλον, Ἀνδρέας εἶναι.



Ἀνδ[ρέαν οὖν μ' ὄνό]μηναν· ἐπεύξατο δ' αἰψα {δ} Ἰησοῦς  
 ὑψί[στω μακάρ]ω.ν πατέρι κλυτῷ εἶνεκ' ἐμεῖο,  
 ὥς τ.ό.[τ' ἐμοὶ πίστι]ν. τε καὶ ἀνδρείαν ἐγγυαλίξῃ.  
 230 καὶ ῥ' ἐπ' ἀτα[ρβέ' ἐ]μοῖο ἐπωνυμίην, ἐλέησας,  
 χεῦεν. ἐλῶν [βα]θ.άλης ὕδωρ ἄμβροτον ὑψίστοιο.  
 βαπτισθέντα δ.[ ' ἄ]παντα πέπαλτό μοι ὑψόσε γυῖα,  
 "But I made the choice as before when still among the people on earth,  
 - but then I had vehemently disavowed—what I wanted: to be Andrew.  
 So they called me Andrew, and forthwith Jesus prayed  
 on my behalf to the Most High, the renowned Father of the blessed ones,  
 that he might now confer upon me faith and courage.  
 And to give me my fearless name in his mercy  
 he took the divine water of the Most High from a well and poured it out.  
 When my limbs were baptized they all leapt up high"

After the (second) *metanoia* and the special call, comes a narrative of a (second) baptismal rite including the choice of a new name (226, 227 Ἀνδρέας, with a pun with 229 ἀνδρεία, masculine courage) and pouring of holy water (231 ὕδωρ ἄμβροτον). Dorotheus explicitly says that his limbs were baptised (232 βαπτισθέντα ... γυῖα). The promised strength takes the shape of a 'leaping' of his limbs (232 πέπαλτό) and is recognised by others who now see him as a towering figure (233–42).<sup>181</sup>

This second baptism is puzzling. Either we consider it a real baptism, and, therefore, identify this as a heretic text, or consider this as an allegory or metaphor. The latter seems more likely because the *VD* is a revelation text,<sup>182</sup> and because the only known cases of a second baptism occur in the Donatist schism at the beginning of the 4th c. in North Africa, when Donatus' followers reject those who during the persecutions made sacrifices or handed over sacred books and vestments and in some cases (esp. priests) re-baptise those who join them.<sup>183</sup> But what type of image is this? Baptism is a metaphor in the NT too: John the Baptist says that his baptism with water as a sign of *metanoia* is unlike the future baptism of the Messiah, a baptism in Spirit and in fire, linked to the Final Judgement, described with an agricultural allegory as the separation of the wheat for the granary and the chaff for the fire.<sup>184</sup> Jesus himself talks in the Gospel of Luke of a baptism of fire<sup>185</sup> and there are frequent references to the Holy Spirit in the institution of baptism and early Church narratives.<sup>186</sup> The most complicated rendering is that of Mark 10:38–9, also with a violent eschatological collection.

Origen (ca. 184–ca. 243)<sup>187</sup> describes the sacrament of baptism follows along the practical lines of other authors, including three elements (*Hom. in Leviticum* VI 3 [GLS 29], 360.19–361.1): putting aside one's sinful life, washing away sins and a new life in the spirit. This new life should be definitive and last until death, as what God has purified should not be defiled,<sup>188</sup> but he complains that few of the baptised can maintain purity to the end of their lives.<sup>189</sup> Together with this practical approach, Origen maintains a metaphorical one, for instance, in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (VI, § 222–4) (Transl. Heine 1989): the baptisms of water, fire and blood of the NT are different images of the same baptism, just as there are different images describing Christ as water, wine or blood. In a further spiritual elaboration, baptism incorporates the sacrifice of one's life, as in Lk 3:16:<sup>190</sup> post-baptismal martyrdom becomes the only perfect equivalent of baptism, the only possible route for the complete remission of sins after baptism,<sup>191</sup> and the baptism of fire and martyrdom is to be had in mind by all the baptised, including those living in the secular world with their families and civic duties.<sup>192</sup> Origen (*Hom. Levit.* II.4.4–5) also accounts for seven forms of remissions of sins for Christians: baptism for the remission of sins (Mk 1:4), the suffering of martyrdom, through alms (Lk 11:41), forgiving the sins of our brothers (Mt 6:12, 14–15), by making a sinner convert from their error (James 5:20), by an abundance of love (Lk 7:47, 1

Peter 4:8), and the seventh one “through penance [*Hom. Levit. II.4.5 per poenitentiam remissio peccatorum*]”,

*Hom. Levit. II.4.5* “although admittedly it is difficult and toilsome [*licet dura et laboriosa*], when the sinner washes ‘his couch in tears’ [Ps 6:7] and his ‘tears’ become his ‘bread day and night’ [Ps 41:4], when he is not ashamed to make known his sin to the priest of the Lord and to seek a cure [*medicinam*]”. [Transl. (Barkley 1990)]

There is admittedly a long way from the baptism in the Gospel to Origen’s seven remissions of sins. Origen operates with a chain of equivalences to progress from literal figurative and then to spiritual meaning.<sup>193</sup> (1) real baptism is conducted with water, (2) there is actually one baptism of water, fire, Spirit and martyrdom in the Gospel; (3) martyrdom is in terms of remission of sins equivalent to baptism; (4) the Gospels allude to a number of routes for the remission of sins, including baptism, martyrdom and difficult and toilsome penance.

The writer of the *VD* seems to operate with a similar chain of equivalences, albeit most of them are implicit, and the logical trail jumps from penance to baptism without mention of the intermediate steps. Dorotheus experiences *metanoia* accompanied by the “difficult and toilsome” penance of flogging and standing by the gates of God’s palace severely injured and in extreme pain. This would be equivalent to baptism, in that it entails a complete remission of sins, but, as in Antony’s *Letter I*, is the basis for a particular call to be at the service of the Lord. The positive answer to this second call entails the change of his name, a new identity and a renewed dependence on God’s mercy to succeed under the new strains of the service. When Gregory of Nazianzus mentioned in *In suos versus* 34–7 controlling his natural prolixity when writing poetry, it is unlikely that he thought of missing intermediate steps in his argument, but this is one of the reasons why poetry is more restrained by prose: the *Visio Dorothei* collapses in a few lines a complex argument similar to that we see sprawling along several of Origen’s treatises.

In this context, it is easier to understand *On the Righteous* (Πρὸς δικαίους, *P.Bodmer* 31). The poem begins with a four-line introduction:

*Righteous* 1–4 Ὁν φ[ίλε]ε[ν] θεὸς οἶον ἀφήρπασε καὶ ῥ’ ἐκόμισσε  
νῆ[σον] ἐς ὠγυγίην εἵνεκα μαρτυρίας,  
ἱερὸν ἐς] πα[ρά]δεισον ἄγων Χρηστοῖο ἐφετμέων  
ὧ ἔ[νε]κεν [θν]ῆσκειν πλήρης ἐν σοφίῃ.  
“God has snatched away the one he loves and taken him  
to the is[land] of Ogygia as a reward for his martyrdom.  
He takes him to the [holy] paradise at Jesus’ behest,  
for the sake of whom he died filled with wisdom”.

The loved one, none other than Dorotheus as we learn at the end of the poem (157–62), has experienced full *metanoia* accompanied by suffering. μαρτυρίας (2) could refer either to physical martyrdom or to one of its equivalents, in this case probably the torments experienced by Dorotheus in his *Vision*. *Righteous* then focuses on the life of man as the battleground for the temptations of the devil, who settles on earth, craving for domination over men (lines 5–41),<sup>194</sup> and then the action of the immortal God as he sits in heaven and passes judgement, sending the good one to paradise and handing the evil one over to the devil (lines 42–75). *Metanoia* is not explicitly mentioned, but men are given the choice to turn to God and to succeed with his help and their own (physical) toil:

*Righteous* 103b–110 ὁδε μόχθον ἀλεύων  
κρίνει διά[βολ]ον· λίσσ[α]το δ’ αἴψα θεὸν  
105 ὥς κέ μιν [αὔ]θι θέλῃ, νῦν ῥέζ]όμενον δικαίοισι  
ἔργον ἀκαμά[του, ὥς] θεράποντ’ ἐλεεῖν  
ὅστις διαβόλῳ ἄ[ν]τησ’ ἀε]σίφρονι θυμῷ  
κε[ῖ]νος δ’ αὖ θερά[πων] ἔπ]λετο διαβόλου,

ἄλ[γ]εα μοχθίζω[ν τά οἱ ὦ]πασε λυγρῇ ἀπάτῃ,  
 110 δ[αίμ]ονι ἀστεργή[ς, πεί]θετο δ' ἀφραδίῃ  
 "Other man, keeping distress far away,  
 singles out the devil, and immediately prays to God  
 [105] that he [again wills to accomplish now] for the just  
 the work of an untiring man, [that] he takes pity of his servant,  
 who [faces] the devil with irrational heart,  
 he was before a ser[vant] of the devil,  
 [110] toiling with pains sent to him by baneful delusion."

Such a complete turn towards God is difficult enough not only because of the action of the devil, but also because of the temptations and distractions of civic life:

*Righteous* 111–18 καὶρὸς γὰρ δικάίοισι πέλεν ναίειν σ[ὺν ἀ]δήμοις  
 ἀρτυὶ ὠσαμένους ἔκτοθι κουριδίη[ν.  
 οὗτις γὰρ δίκαιος δύναται ναίων ἐ[ν] δῆμῳ  
 ἀγχόθι βουλευφόρων καὶ ῥ' ἀλόχου κ[εδ]νῆς  
 115 ὑψίστοιο θεοῦ θητεύεμεν. ἄλλα τε [βου]λῆι  
 ἢ τ' ἀλόχῳ φορέων τοῖσιν ἄρεσκος ὑπ[ὲρ] ἦν.  
 πλούσιος ἡδὲ πένης, ποθέων κλέος ὥ[πασε] δῆμῳ  
 καὶ ῥ' ἀλόχῳ ἐχέμεν λανθανέει τε θεο[ῦ].  
 "The moment has arrived for the just ones to live [with] those who have retired  
 from the world,  
 after sending back the wife with an arrangement.  
 Because no just man can, living in the world,  
 close to counsellors and a diligent wife,  
 serve God on high. But to the [coun]cil  
 or to the burdens of the wife he submits as he constantly wants to please them.  
 Rich or poor, he willingly seeks the glory for his city  
 and presents it to his wife, but he forgets God"

This may be a case of the writer and the scribes of the codex, but there is no single interpretation of the passage: this could be the reflection of a community of men who have retreated into some form of seclusion to reduce the risk of sinning, or the 'woe is me' of some *saeculares* trying to live their faith while in a marriage and as members of a civic community that relies on them to thrive. We have actually seen similar reflections in Ambrose's *De Paenitentia* II.10.96 and Origen's *Exhor. ad mart.* XXXVII.

Ambrose, Origen and the poet of *Righteous* coincide in requesting high standards of the Christian who has undergone *metanoia*, apparently incompatible with civic life, but no proof of a physical retreat from the world. We may be able to refer here to Rousseau's interpretation of Basil's high ethical and vital standards: "[1994, 200] Basil presented to communities in Caesarea and elsewhere principles that he considered were applicable to all; he then asked who among them would take the matter seriously; finally, in response to what was inevitably a smaller group, he gave special advice", and [Torrance \(2012, p. 74\)](#) noting that at some point monastic repentance superseded the once-for-all repentance. The common language of both types makes it virtually impossible to know if the *Righteous* is demanding the overall application of the high standard,<sup>195</sup> reflecting its restrictive application, or making a simultaneous call to the universal Church and to its particular addressees. Actually, the intent of the poet and the reading of the scribes of the *C. Visionum* may not have been exactly the same.

This admittedly long section on *metanoia* has brought to the surface the cultural, spiritual and pastoral complexities of the texts of the *C. Visionum* and broadly of late antique Christian literature, and proves that one of the central functions of Christian poetry is to make (literary) sense of difficult concepts, not necessarily the dogmas of the Creed, but rather those having an impact in the daily lives of the communities. We can only figure out

the bottom lines of the poems of the *Codex* if we read them against the broadest possible late antique background: linking a series of poems copied in an Egyptian backwater area to arguments made by Origen of Alexandria, who had a long-lasting influence on the religious communities of the Egyptian *chora*,<sup>196</sup> may not be surprising—finding similarities between the *Codex Visionum* and the writings of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, renews our awareness of the circulation of ideas and the construction of a true Christian *koinonia*. These poems may well date from the turning point in which high behavioural standards are demanded from all the members of the Church, and smaller groups of faithful in different places have started to search to realise the extraordinary forms of *metanoia* only possible for those who live beyond diocesan communities, what we may call pre-monastic *metanoia*.

#### 4.4. Multiple Readings—Satisfying a Heterogeneous Audience?

The comparison with Origen triggers the additional question of whether the author of the *VD* depended on his method of spiritual reading of the Scripture, or on his actual exegesis of Gospel texts and homilies. The *VD* does not yield enough information for a positive conclusion, other than remarking on the proximity of the method of reading. We can, however, note that this is not the only point of convergence between the poems of the *Codex Visionum* and Origen's writings. For instance, in both cases, deep knowledge comes from divine revelation, rather than from the Scriptures or from one's own intellectual capacity. Thus, like *The Shepherd of Hermas* before, the *Visio Dorothei* does not reflect on other sources of knowledge but highlights that Dorotheus achieves his from his personal, oneiric experience of God.<sup>197</sup> Further to this, the remaining poems constantly associate wisdom (σοφία) with God and God imparting his wisdom to those he loves and who live a righteous existence.<sup>198</sup>

Origen's take on knowledge<sup>199</sup> is well summed up in the Latin prologue of *On First Principles*, where he states that those who believe and know Christ to be the truth (*Christum veritatem esse norunt*), derive the knowledge (*scientiam*) to live a good and blessed life from Christ's words and doctrine. When discussing the Gospel of John, Origen notes that Scripture does not contain the deepest mysteries of God, being a brief introduction to knowledge.<sup>200</sup> On the other hand, true knowledge was revealed to relevant figures of the Old Testament before the incarnation,<sup>201</sup> and full revelation will have to wait for the next life, which he envisioned as a schoolroom (*On First Principles* 2.11.4–6). The *Letters* of Antony, which Rubenson (1995) defended were influenced by Origen, also show signs of preference for knowledge by revelation. The *Letters*, however, reveal an additional emphasis on Christ revealing himself in the first coming and on the secondary revelation through the saints; they also insist that all human knowledge of God is preceded by self-knowledge.<sup>202</sup> Livrea proposed in his 1986 recension of the *VD* a Gnostic reading of the text, because of the prominence of *sophia*, which was rejected by Hurst and Rudhardt in the 1999 *editio princeps* of the remaining poems of the *codex*.<sup>203</sup>

It is probably impossible to reach an agreement on the labels (Origenistic, Gnostic, standard?) we ought to use for these poems, and labels are of doubtful use. Firstly, because we simply do not have enough contemporary sources: the extant ones are not always helpful in the face of the complexity of the topics discussed (the source review on *metanoia* is a good example); later sources are frequently impossible to connect to factual information (e.g., the paraphrastic enterprise of the Apollinarii mentioned by Socrates and Sozomen), are mediated by polemics (Clark 1992 on the Origenist controversy) or effectively rewrite the past to make it more uniform and venerable (Goehring 1997).

Secondly, poetic texts are not univocal: by nature, they lend themselves to more than one reading, amongst other reasons because of their capacity to condense and collapse concepts and arguments. A Christian poet can thus exploit this characteristic to attract readers of different sensibilities with an ambiguous turn of phrase,<sup>204</sup> and readers will inevitably tend to interpret passages from their own (theological) angles.



Finally, thirdly, ‘conservative’ poems, that is to say, those reaching out to multiple audiences (Gregory’s Nemesianus at the same time as any pagan in need of reasons for converting, and Christian readers wishing to convert their pagan friends), allowing multiple readings (*metanoia* for all and for the few) and easily connected to the basic texts (mainly the OT and the NT) were probably more likely to be copied by subsequent generations of Christian readers. We should probably be talking more about this: Christian poetry, like any literary form, aims to survive in a changing environment and will probably incorporate a number of strategies to facilitate a long afterlife.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> I am extremely grateful to David Hernández de la Fuente for his invitation to contribute to this volume and to the two anonymous reviewers, whose honest and detailed comments on the first draft of this paper have helped me enormously in presenting a shorter and hopefully more coherent argument that makes better use of the existing bibliography on the subject.
- <sup>2</sup> Note also the 2nd-c. prose *Homily on the Passion* by Melito of Sardis, marked by its extensive use of rhetorical figures and featuring clauses which are grammatically parallel and have approximately the same number of syllables, so that they can be treated as verses: (Lefteratou and Hadjittofi 2020b, pp. 10–11).
- <sup>3</sup> Complete translation Charlesworth 1983–5: 317–472; for metrics (Nieto Ibáñez 1992).
- <sup>4</sup> A total of 22 lines (line 2 is a pentameter) transmitted in *S. Abercii Vita* and partially extant in an inscription now at the Vatican Museums (Cat. 31643). See also (Merkelbach and Stauber 2001) 16/07/02 (Hierapolis, Phrygia, 216 AD: epitaph of the Christian Alexandros, using lines 1–3 and 20–22 of the epitaph of Abercius). See now (Tully and Johnston 2023).
- <sup>5</sup> (Agosti 2008, 2010, 2015) on epigraphy and highbrow literature.
- <sup>6</sup> On which see (McLynn 2014; Criboire 2013, pp. 229–37; Sandnes 2011, pp. 84–97; Sandnes 2009, pp. 160–9). On the project of the Apollinari, see (Agosti 2001b, pp. 68–72; Simelidis 2009, pp. 25–28; Sandnes 2011, pp. 97–105; Faulkner 2020a, Introduction 3 Poetic Tradition, Periphrastic Technique, and Biblical Exegesis; Faulkner 2020b).
- <sup>7</sup> (McGuckin 2008, p. 648). On the possibility of a performance of these hymns, see (Lacombrade 2003, p. 11), on the use of the first person plural.
- <sup>8</sup> Homer: *D.* 1.34b–38, 13.49b–52, 25.8b–10, 25.253–70, 32.284–5, 42.180–1. Recent poets: *D.* 25.27b νέοισι καὶ ἀρχεγόνοισιν ἐρίζων (“in rivalry with both new and old”).
- <sup>9</sup> Poetic hexameter paraphrases were actually not restricted to Bible texts: Eudocia, wife of Theodosius II, is attributed a hexameter paraphrase of the *Conversion, Confession and Passion of St Cyprian*, known as *The Life of Saint Cyprian*, which (Rigo 2020, p. 218) considers an epic hagiography. See also (Rigo 2020, p. 220) “Readers were meant to recognize the Homeric echoes in Eudocia’s text and appreciate how Homer could help in narrating the story of Cyprian and praising the power of God, which are the main objectives of this story”.
- <sup>10</sup> For late antique auxiliary texts, see (Führer 2013; Pollmann 2009). Exegesis would have also been transmitted orally at schools, in sermons and informal discussions: an overview in (Mayer 2019). Compare the proem of the *Met.Ps.*, where the poet dedicates the composition to Marcian (lines 1–43) and calls his poem a treasure of Marcian’s wisdom (48), suggesting that he has condensed in it Marcian’s exegetical teachings on Psalms.
- <sup>11</sup> In his discussion of Juvenius, Green (2006, pp. 91–92) differentiates positive exegesis where the author “makes an active and conscious contribution . . . and where he simply follows a tradition that is familiar to him”.
- <sup>12</sup> For a summary of the debate on the appropriate literary label for Nonnus’ *P.* and those by Juvenius and Sedulius, see (Accorinti 2020, pp. 228–29). More broadly on genres in late antique Christian poetry, (Lefteratou and Hadjittofi 2020a).
- <sup>13</sup> See Lactantius *Inst.* 5.1.5, on how the crude style of the Scripture (esp. the Gospels) put off the learned reader; to be read with (Roberts 1985, pp. 68–70; Sandnes 2011, pp. 65–84). Additionally, (Accorinti 2020, p. 241): “There is no doubt that this kind of poetry with its mixture of genres must have been intended to give pleasure to lovers of learning and literature”.
- <sup>14</sup> E.g., in the Gospel, John the Baptist seeks that all believe through him (1:7 ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι’ αὐτοῦ), which but in the *P.* his voice call for the orthodox faith (1.18b–19 ἵνα πάντες ἐνὸς κήρυκος ἰωῆ/ὀρθὴν πίστιν ἔχουσιν). This follows Cyril’s

presentation of the evangelist as a champion of orthodoxy and of his Gospel as a correction of heretical teachers (*Comm. in Jo.* Preface book 1 = 1.14–15).

- 15 E.g., (Franchi 2016, p. 243): “From Cyril Nonnus takes a symbolic exegesis combined with an orthodox Christology, which underlines the divinity of the Son of God”.
- 16 What follows relies heavily on (Milovanovic-Barham 1997; Simelidis 2009, pp. 24–30).
- 17 He will later accuse prose writers (‘sophists’) of double-speech: 76–81. Translation from (Daley 2006). Additionally available in (White 1996). The Greek text is that of Migne PG 37.
- 18 Juvencus ELQ *preface*, to be read with (Green 2006, p. 17): “The main thrust of the Preface is a meditation (and perhaps also a manifesto) on fame, not a new topic by any means but one that he wishes to reconfigure”.
- 19 See also line 61 μακρὸν δ’ οὐδὲν οὐδ’ ὑπὲρ κόρον “Nothing’s too long, nothing beyond due measure”.
- 20 42–4 Φιλεῖ δ’ ἀνίσσθαι τε καὶ νευρᾶς τόνο· Εἴ πως θέλεις καὶ τοῦτο· εἰ μή τι πλέον, / Ἄντ’ ἁσμάτων σοι ταῦτα καὶ λυρισμάτων “Verse help us to relax the tightened string, / if we but will, even if it be no more / than lyric songs, musical interludes”. For a similar reflection on poetry as made of music-style format and content, see *Carmina* 2.1.34.69–75.
- 21 The expected audience of this poetry is the young (37b τοῖς νέοις) and “the folk who find such joy in words” (38 Καὶ τῶν ὅσοι μάλιστ’ αἰσθάνονται λόγους), i.e., *pepaideumenoi*. Most interpreters of the poem (e.g., Meehan (1987, p. 20)) have focused on the use of Gregory’s poetry in educational establishments for young men, although neither here nor elsewhere is Gregory confining his poetry to their use. Compare Greg. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.11 (*De vita sua*), lines 6–10 where he talks about poetry as a medicine against sorrow, pleasurable and educational for the young, and addresses his former Constantinopolitan community. (McDonald 2020) argues that Gregory did not write his Biblical poems (*carmina* 1.1.12–27) specifically for a classroom, but rather for a wider more mature audience that could deal with the complexity of the metres.
- 22 Similarly *Met. Ps.* pr. 29–34 Ἡμεῖς δ’, ὥς κ’ ἐπέοικε, τὰ περ πρότεροι λίπον ἄνδρες / 30 Ἐκ μελέων, μέτροισιν ἐνήσομεν, εἰς δὲ μελιχρὴν / Δαυίδου βασιλῆος ἐγείρομεν αὐτίς ἀοιδὴν / Ἐξατόνοις ἐπέεσσιν, ἵνα γνῶσι καὶ ἄλλοι, / Γλῶσσ’ ὅτι παντοίῃ Χριστὸν βασιλῆα βοήσῃ / Καὶ μιν πανσυδὴ γυνάσσεται ἔθνεα γαίης. (“But we, as is fitting, will place what earlier men left / 30 From songs into metre, and let us again / Rouse these towards the honeysweet song of king David / In hexameter verse, in order that others as well should know, / That every tongue will proclaim Christ as King and / All nations of the earth will with all speed kneel before him”). (Faulkner 2020b, p. 270), makes *alloy* (32) include non-Christians and heretics, and suggests a similar reading for Gregory’s τοὺς ξένους. In the VD, after his punishment and baptism, Dorotheus offers: “You can send me to the foreign men [ἄνδρας ἐπὶ ἄλλοδαπούς] as a messenger”.
- 23 89–96 Τίς οὖν βλάβη σοι, τοὺς νέους δι’ ἡδονῆς / 90 Σεμνῆς ἄγεσθαι πρὸς Θεοῦ κοινωνίαν; / Οὐ γὰρ φέρουσιν ἄθροον μετὰστασιν. / Νῦν μὲν τις ἔστω μίξις εὐγενεστέρα. / Πῆξιν δ’ ὅταν τὸ καλὸν ἐν χρόνῳ λάβῃ, / Ὑποσπάσαντες, ὥς ἐρείσματ’ ἀψίδων, / 95 Τὸ κομψὸν, αὐτὸ τὰγαθὸν φυλάξομεν / Τοῦτον τί ἂν γένοιτο χρησιμώτερον; (“What harm then, if we try to lead the young / 90 To share in God by means of holy pleasure? / They cannot bear a sudden transformation, / So let us find a gentler form of contact. / Then, when the good is finally firm in place, / We can withdraw aesthetics, like the struts / 95 Supporting some new vault, and see the Good / Standing alone. What profits more than this?”).
- 24 Greg. *In Suos Versus* 81–8. See also Jer. *ep.* 107.4 (of the education of the soul) *adhuc tenera lingua psalmis dulcibus inbuatur* (“its tender tongue must be imbued with the sweetness of the Psalms”); Greg. Nyss., *Pss. titt.* 8 “Great David mixed melody with the philosophy of virtue, thus pouring the sweetness of honey over elevated teachings”; Basil Caes. *hom. in Ps.* 1.1–2; Apollinaris *Met. Ps.* proem 15–18a Οἶσθ’, ὅτι Δαυίδου μὲν ἀγακλέος ἦθεα μέτροις / Ἐβραίοις ἐκέκαστο καὶ ἐκ μελέων ἐτέτυκτο / Θεσπεσίῳ τὸ πρόσθεν, ὅθεν φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ / Μέλετο καὶ μελέεσσιν (“You know that the moral teachings of glorious David / Were previously adorned in Hebrew metre and fashioned from / Divine songs, on account of which they were sung with a / Clear-toned lyre and music”), and mention of David’s sweet song in lines 30–1, 36–9.
- 25 Compare *Met. Ps.* proem 50–1 δὲ ... λιγυρὴν ἡσπασσάτο μολπήν / γήραος εὐφύμοιο συνέμπορον αἰὲν ἐλέσθαι (Marcian “joyfully chose clear-toned song / To be his constant companion in auspicious old age”).
- 26 Greg. Nys. *Life of Macrina* 26–7 when Macrina dies the virgins living with her weep in grief and shout her name, but Gregory asks them to turn their lamentations into psalming, and the night is spent in vigil, singing hymns and Psalms (32–3); Augustine *Confessions* 9.12.29 when his mother, Monica, dies, Evodius chants Ps. 100 and is followed by the whole house; Jo. Chrys. *Hom. Matth.* 31.4. For an early poetic *threnos*, see the lament of the Virgin in the *I Homeric Centos* (probably written under Theodosius II), on which (Lefteratou 2020).
- 27 Inventories in (Fournet 2015, pp. 21–24) (and explanations on pp. 8–12); (Nongbri 2018, pp. 157–215) (p. 207 for the dating of the collection: “my working hypothesis for the Bodmer find is that it is a collection that began to be formed in the fourth century. This may have happened as a result of multiple smaller collections being brought together or as a result of local production, or (more likely) a combination of the two ... The bulk of the collection appears to me to be a product of the fourth and fifth centuries, and I imagine a date of deposition in the late fifth or sixth century”). Earlier reconstructions by (Kasser 2000; Robinson 2013). On the Coptic side of the library, see (Boud’hors 2015). See also the overview in (Orsini 2015).
- 28 Definition in (Petrucci 2004, pp. 5–6): “unità libraria comprendente più testi di uno o di più autori diversi in successione, che può essere, dal punto di vista testuale, *organica*, ove si sia ispirata ad una sostanziale unitarietà d’argomento, o *disorganica* ove ne sia priva”. Analysis of this codex in (Crisci 2004, pp. 115–22).

- (Carlini 1991, pp. 25–27; Brox 1991, pp. 55–71). On its diffusion in Egypt, see (Carlini 2008; Bagnall 2009, pp. 40–48; Camplani 2015, pp. 112–13). On the common ground of *The Shepherd* and Pachomius, see (Rousseau 1985, pp. 136–38).
- Ed. pr.: (Hurst et al. 1984). Ed. altera: (Kessels and van der Horst 1987). I will be citing the latter.
- This Quintus is probably not the 3rd-c. poet Quintus of Smyrna, author of the *Posthomerica*: (Hurst et al. 1984, pp. 33–36, 43–49; Vian 1985, pp. 47–48; Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, pp. 13–14, 68–70; Gelzer 2002; Agosti 2015, pp. 90–91). A ‘joyful Dorotheus’ is also the addressee of the C. *Montserrat*, originated from the same library as the C. *Visionum* (see (Crisci 2004, pp. 129–32)): in p. inv. 159 we read *filiciter Dorotheo* in a *tabula ansata*, under which is written VTERE [F]ELIX DOROTH[EE]; p. inv. 165 in a *tabula ansata* “*Filiciter . . . Dorotheo*”. The ed. pr. and (Kessels and van der Horst 1987) date him from the turn of the 4th c.; (van Berchem 1986), a little later; (Livrea 1986, pp. 688–702), around 342–62; (Bremmer 1988) and (Bremmer 1993) from the latter part of the 4th c. (Schubert 2002, p. 25): “je proposerais d’accepter une rédaction de la *Vision de Dorotheos* dans la seconde moitié du IVe siècle. Le poème a pu être rédigé sur la base du souvenir . . . des persécutions du début du siècle”. (Camplani 2015, p. 130) suggests a connection of the VD with the transfer of the relics of the apostle Andrew to Constantinople in 357.
- Ed. pr.: (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999). *Proekdosis*: (Livrea 1994). English translation: (van der Horst and Parmentier 2002, pp. 157–59), translating the title as ‘On Abraham’, understanding *πρός* as ‘with regard to,’ as it appears in the NT. (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999) translated *Adresse à Abraham*. Note (Faulkner 2022, p. 86), fn. 1 “*πρός* as ‘to’ is explained by the direct address to Abraham in the final lines of the poem”.
- Ed. pr.: (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999). Ed. alt. Livrea (Livrea 2006–2008). (Agosti 2017, p. 242) suggests *Concerning/On the Righteous*, following the translation of *Πρός Ἀβραάμ* as *On Abraham*: “this would fit better with the content of the poem, which is a meditation of evil and its dangers, but despite its parenetic tone it is not addressed *explicitly* to the Righteous”.
- Already identified as such in (Fournet 1992).
- Analysis in (Nongbri 2018), ch. 5. Because of the co-existence of these four miscellaneous codices, three of which were copied by more than one scribe, I do not think (Avdokhin 2022’s) suggestions on the significance of individual agency in the copying of texts are relevant.
- (Carlini and Bandini 1991, p. 162): at the top of the page a new hand continues the copy of Daniel 1:5, interrupted at the beginning of the third line; the same hand then adds *ἵνα ὁπῶς τῷ κ(υρίῳ) δόξα <ν> δώσομεν* “so that we give glory to the Lord” (cf. Rev. 19:7); the acrostic then follows without a title.
- P.Bodmer XX* (*Apology of Phileas*) and IX (Ps 44–34) are no longer thought to be part of this codex.
- Edition, English translation and analysis in (Caulley 2009).
- P.Bodmer VIII* (1–2 Peter), generally regarded as the work of the same copyist as *P.Bodmer VII*, was originally part of a separate codex, from which it was removed to be attached to the ‘composite codex’: (Nongbri 2016).
- Melito *On the Passover* §1, 11; see analysis in (Camplani 2015, pp. 117–18).
- In *P.Bodmer VIII* (1–2 Peter), the text is accompanied by a series of marginal notes highlighting themes of interest similar to those of the other texts in the same codex: purity (1 Pt 1:15 ΠΙΕΠΙ ΑΓΕΙΟΣΥΝΗ, 1 Pt 1:22 ΠΙΕΠΙ ΑΓΝΙΑ), the chosen people (1 Pt 2:9), death of Christ in the flesh (1 Pt 3:18), on the passion (1 Pt 4:1) and false teachers (2 Pt 1:15). A note in Coptic by 2 Pt 2:22 suggests a bilingual reader/scribe. See (Camplani 2015, p. 122).
- Ed. pr. (Roca-Puig 1965). Overall analysis, text and French translation in (Atzori 2007). Sources (Atzori 2007, pp. 582–83): *Protoevangelium of James* (also Bodmer composite codex), Matthew 1:18–2:23 for Jesus’ childhood (strophes 8–11); Jo 2:1–12 for the wedding at Cana (strophe 12); Luke 1:26–38 for the annunciation (strophe 6).
- Edited and analysed in (Zheltoev 2008).
- (Camplani 2015, p. 124): “*l’esorcismo sull’olio presenti forti connessioni con temi del C[odice] Bodmer misc[ellaneo]: l’insistenza sulla nascita reale di Cristo da una Vergine (NatMar), il suo essere posto in una mangiatoia e dunque la realtà della sua incarnazione (3 Cor), la sua lotta contro il diavolo e contro Ade (OdSal), e la sua passione e resurrezione (Pascha [di Melito])*”.
- Hadrian story is edited in (Gil and Torallas Tovar 2010). List of words edited in (Torallas Tovar and Worp 2006).
- (Mihálykó 2019, p. 258): “The Latin hymn . . . presents the title *Psalmus responsorius* and a four-verse strophe at the beginning, probably a refrain . . . likely . . . for learning Latin along with the other Latin texts in the codex.” Note (Camplani 2015, p. 124): “*Psalmus responsorius* . . . canta poeticamente la nascita e vicende infantili di Gesù sulla base di tradizioni proveniente dal *Protoevangelo di Giacomo* (=NatMar) e i vangeli sinottici”, suggesting a link with the Bodmer miscellaneous codex. On the bilingualism of this codex see also (Nocchi Macedo 2013). On the linguistic diversity of early Pachomian monasteries see (Papaconstantinou 2014).
- Compare other lists of words such as those edited in (Huys and Baplu 2009), with references to earlier publications.
- (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, pp. 22–4, 70–3; Lukinovich 2002), esp. 47–55 and 58–59 prefers a community of diocesan priests and deacons; (Camplani 2015, p. 135): “potrebbero i codici Bodmer essere stati copiati, costruiti, letti e annotati da gruppi di laici impegnati, che costituirono la preistoria di quelle confraternite laicali destinate ad affermarsi nel corso dei due secoli successivi?”. For an overview of the Egyptian context in terms of Christian masculine communities, see (Martin 1996, pp. 646–62, 746–63; Rousseau 2000; Caner 2009). Note (Agosti 2017, p. 243): “the textual evidence of [*P.Bodmer 31 On the Righteous*] does not support the assumption that it was addressed to a group calling itself “The Righteous” . . . This does not mean, however, that there was

no group or community behind the poems. On the contrary, it is highly possible that to renounce wives, wealth and political commitments would have been intended as the “rule” for such a community”. (Nongbri 2018, p. 214) (discussing the setting of the collection): “monastic milieu”.

(Agosti 2013, p. 141): “la comunità . . . avesse un’impronta intellettuale paragonabile per certi aspetti con quella del monachesimo di Gaza . . . nel corso del V secolo”; (Agosti 2001a, p. 191): “Una comunità simile a quelle create da Basilio e Gregorio ad Annesi, a quella di Ieraca a Leontopoli, e ai circoli culturali tardoantichi e bizantini”; (Agosti 2020, p. 193).

For Abel as a prototype of the Christian faith, see Mt 23:34–5; Hebr. 11:4, 12:24. For Cain as the prototype of a sinner see 1Jo 3:12. Abel 14–15 = VD 151–2, on which (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, p. 152) (“lien entre la victime du premier meurtre de l’histoire et le martyr du héros . . . du codex”) and 176, n. 14–15 (“Cet emprunt montre deux choses: (a) pour les lecteurs du codex, la *Vision de Dorotheos* est un texte de référence; (b) L’auteur lie explicitement le sort d’Abel à celui d’un martyr”).

E.g., Athanasius *Vita Antonii* 47.1: Antony seeks martyrdom unsuccessfully and is considered someone who has experienced martyrdom in his conscience. See (Camplani 2015, pp. 128–29).

See also (Leemans 2005, p. xv): martyrdom accounts created a recurring Christian discourse which “did not only keep the martyr’s memory alive but was ‘more than a memory’ in the sense that it contributed to the construction of a Christian identity understood as the *imitatio Christi* through the *imitatio martyris*”.

(Camplani 2015, pp. 108–12; Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, pp. 10–11), on the analogies between *The Shepherd* and the poems of the *Codex*. (Camplani 2015, pp. 112–13) on the use of *The Shepherd* in Egypt. (Agosti 2020, p. 192): “les *Visions* d’Hermas . . . constituent le « prologue » théologique”.

Not all visions are communicated: 2Cor. 12:2–4.

At the beginning of the second vision of *The Shepherd*, Hermas borrows from the old lady (the Church) the little book in which his first vision is written and copies it letter by letter because he cannot read (literally, he cannot put the syllables together). At the end of that same vision he is instructed to write two books, to be sent to Clement and Grapte. At the end of the fifth vision, the angel of repentance dressed as a shepherd asks Hermas to write down his commandments and parables as he shows them to him. See (Agosti 2001a, pp. 206–7), for a list of all the elements the VD shares with other visions, and (Verheyden 2011) on the unexpected oneiric elements of Dorotheus’ vision. On dream patterns in late antique literature, see (Miller 1994).

See also Ezekiel’s vision (Ez. 1.1–3:21): Ezekiel is given orders to communicate God’s words to his people (2:7, 3:4, 3:10–11) and given a rolled-up book to eat (2:8–3:3). In Ez. 40:1–4, Ezekiel is taken to a high mountain on the land of Israel, where a city is built, and ordered to tell the house of Israel all he sees; he gives a detailed description focusing particularly on the Holy of Holies (40:5–43:17) and then recounts God’s dispositions regarding the temple (43:18–46:24). On Dorotheus and Ezekiel’s vision see (Gelzer 1988, pp. 249–50). Also to be noted, *P.Bodmer XLVI* (part of a miscellaneous codex—LDAB 4120), on which the first vision of Daniel was copied, was part of the same library as the *C. Visionum*.

(Cobb and Jacobs 2021, pp. 43–5) for the dating. I quote the Greek text and English translation of pp. 46–65.

*Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* I “As surely as the ancient declarations of faith—which have both revealed the glory of God and rendered edification to humans—have been written down so that we might experience their reading as the presence of the deeds and God may be, why shouldn’t the new examples also be transmitted in writing in like manner?” There is also a validation of the authenticity of the account that follows: II (end) “Henceforth is the full account of her martyrdom, just as she left it behind, composed by both her heart and hand. This is what she said . . . ” After her brother suggests she should ask God for a vision (IV), Perpetua goes on to have four of them, recounted in chapters IV, VII, VIII and X, at the end of the final one of which she mentions putting them all in writing: Ibid. X (end) “I wrote these things up to the day before the public honors. Let whoever wishes write down what will happen in the amphitheater.” (Agosti 2001a, p. 207) compares the VD with the *Visio Maximi* (Bernard 1969, no 168): Maximus describes a dream he has in the temple of the god Mandoulis, where he is purified with the water of the Nile, receives the epiphany of the god, who initiates him in poetry and gives him the order to sing in his honour, which he does with a short hexametric hymn; and with visions in the Coptic Life of Pachomius (*Vita Copta* § 114).

VD 145–53 Dorotheus flogged; *Abraham* 3 (to make him sacrifice his dear son as a perfect hecatomb); *Righteous* passim (note line 2 εἴνεκα μαρτυρίας); *Sufferers* passim.

VD 240–1, 170–1, 330–3, 308–9, 336–7; *Righteous* 1–4 taken to paradise, 55–6 the good one taken by the angels to paradise, 67, 104–7, 154–62.

*Shepherd Vis.* III.2.3.5, *Sim.* IX.16.2–4; *Abraham* 30; *Sufferers* 18–19. To be read with (De Spirito 2002), linking the theme of the tower to the references to God’s palace in the VD.

Athanasius *Festal Letter* 39, which outlines the canon of the Old and New Testaments, mentions seven books which, not being part of the canon, were to be used for the instruction of catechumens: *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Sirach*, *Esther*, *Judith*, *Tobit*, *Didache* and *The Shepherd of Hermas*. For an integrated translation of all the fragments of this letter, see (Brakke 1995, pp. 326–32), to which (Brakke 2010) should be added.

I will not be discussing the adaptation of hexametric patterns, for which see (Agosti and Gonnelli 1995). On Dorotheus and Homer see (Agosti 1989, 2005a; Hurst 1997). On the integration of the poems of the *C. Visionum* in late antique literature see (Agosti 2002).



- 65 VD 159, 169; *Abraham* 2; *Righteous* 71. See (Agosti 2011) on the notions of usurpation and contrastive imitation.
- 66 VD 15 αἰώνιος ἄναξ, 24, 49, 101, 179 Χρηστὸς ἄναξ, 189 Χρηστὸς ἄναξ, 240 δέσποτ' ἄναξ, 342 Χρηστοῖο ἄνακτος; *Lord Jesus* 22 Χρηστὸς ἄναξ, 25 δέσποτ' ἄναξ; *Abel* 6, 25, 29 ἄναξ ... αἰωνίοιο, 31 αἰωνίοιο ... ἄναξ, 33, 34, 40 ἄνακτα ... αἰωνίοιο, 49, 54 ἄνακτα ... αἰωνίοιο.
- 67 VD 155 Christ as shepherd of the peoples ποιμένι λαῶν; *Lord Jesus* 7 Ἡύξανε λα[ὸ]ν ἅπαντα φαοσφόρος ἐν δικαίοισιν (“He, the bringer of light among the just, made his whole people grow”); *Sufferers* 8 εἴξ' ἐ[καθ]εν κόσμοιο σαῶν κοσμήτορε λαῶν (“He withdrew from the world, so as to save the two founders of the peoples”), 14 θήσω δέ μοι λαὸν ἄριστον (“I shall make you my chosen people”); *Abel* 38 καὶ ῥ' ὁπόταν κλυοῦσι λαοὶ κλυτὸν οὖνομα σεῖο (“And when the peoples listen to your glorious name”), 41 λαοσσόον Ἰεροσολύμα (“Jerusalem, saviour of the peoples”), 55 πρὸς τε μιν ἡγερέθοντο λαοὶ ... (“[Towards] him gather the peoples”).
- 68 E.g., *Righteous* 24 Tartarus and Erebus, 26 Hades, 32 Erebus, 82 Tartarus, 83 Hades; *Cain* 19 Tartarus. Overview in (Kalish 2012).
- 69 *Righteous* 2—after *Od.* 1.85, 7.257.
- 70 Sin: VD 1 τῷ ἀλιτρῷ, 96 ἀλιτρός, 147 ἀλιτάων, 166 μεγ' ἀλητεύοντα, 194 ἀλίτηται; *Righteous* 6 ἤλιτε[ν, 17 ἀλήτην, 59 ἤλιτεν, 98 ἀλιτροσύνης; *Lord Jesus* 6 ἀλιτροσύνας; *Sufferers* 10 ἀλιτροῖς; *Abel* 43 ἀλειτάων. Delusion (ἀπάτη): *Righteous* 11, 56, 66, 68, 74, 76, 78, 80, 84, 90, 94, 96, 109, 162. Note (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, p. 65) [on *Righteous*]: “Le diable [διάβολος] et la tromperie [ἀπάτη]—quasi personnifiée—sont le [66] plus souvent associés l'un à l'autre et situés tous deux sur le même plan (84, 90, 132, 162); à la limite, nous pourrions les tenir pour deux aspects d'une même entité”. Folly (ἄφραδία): *Righteous* 103, 110.
- 71 *Abel* 6 γουνοῦμαί σε ἄναξ, σὺ δέ μ' αἶδεο καὶ μ' ἐλέησον (“I clasp your knees, my lord, so that you feel regard for me and have mercy on me”), paraphrasing Ps. 102(101):3b ἐν ᾗ ἂν ἡμέρᾳ θλίβωμαι, κλῖνον τὸ οὖς σου πρὸς με. Compare *Od.* 6.149 γουνοῦμαί σε, ἄνασσα· θεός νύ τις ἢ βοτόρος ἐσσι; and 22.312 = 344 γουνοῦμαί σ', Ὀδυσεῦ· σὺ δέ μ' αἶδεο καὶ μ' ἐλέησον.
- 72 On the transformation of Biblical characters in epic heroes by Gregory of Nazianzus, see (Prudhomme 2020). The ‘heroisation’ of Christian figures is particularly visible in the centones: see (Sandnes 2022). See (Bremmer 1997), arguing that there is no straight line from heroes to saints.
- 73 ἀρετή VD 45, *Lord Jesus* 4; ἀνδρεία VD 229 (and its excess ὑπερηγορή: VD 96; *Righteous* 100; also ἀγνηγορή: *Righteous* 121); θάρσος, *Abraham* 11. For ἀρετή, see (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, p. 107): “nous sommes enclins à penser que le mot ἀρετή signifie ici [*Lord Jesus* 4] la vertu ou le pouvoir ... Il s'agit du pouvoir qui se manifeste dans des actions glorieuses ... (1 Petr. 2.9)”. μένος VD 258, 265; κράτος *Sufferers* 4, 5.
- 74 γέρας VD 42, 47, 48, 55; *Abraham* 28.
- 75 κῦδος VD 274, *Lord Jesus* 10, 16; κλέος *Righteous* 19. See (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, p. 118), n. 16: “Mot poétique, κῦδος n'est pas employé dans les Écritures et très peu dans les textes chrétiens. Il paraît ici se référer à la δόξα divine ... Le mot κλέος a un sens voisin; il signifie la gloire (1 Petr. 2.20), la gloire de la foi (1 Clem. 5.6). Il existe une complémentarité entre la glorification de Jésus et celle du Père (Jo. 17.1–5)”.
- 76 χάρις VD 3, 173, 215, 274, 301, 308; *Abraham* 18.
- 78 E.g., the description of God's anger in the VD: 137–41 [χωμένου] δ' ἄσβεστον ἐπὶ βλεφάροις κέχυτ' ἀχλὺς/ἀ[χνυμένο]ν, μένος δὲ μέγα φρένες ἀμφιμέλαιναι/π[ι]μ[πλ]α[ν]τ[ι], ὅσ[ε] δὲ οἱ πυρὶ λαμπετόντι ἐκτεν./[ἔστη] δ' ὥσ[τε] λέων κραδίην γναθμοῖσι τανύσσας/[θῆ]γ[ω]ν λευκὸν ὀδόντ' (“In his unquenchable anger a mist spread over his eyes,/while lamenting, and his heart darkened on either side was filled with great passion/and his two eyes showed like blazing fire./He remained there standing as a lion straining his rage with his jaws,/grinding the white fangs”. For line 137, see *Il.* 5.696 = 16.344 = *Od.* 22.88 κέχυτ' ἀχλὺς, *Od.* 20.54 οἱ ὕπνον ἐπὶ βλεφάροις ἐχενεν, and the use of *asbestos* for the unending laughter of the gods (*Il.* 1.599, *Od.* 8.326). VD 138–9 = *Il.* 1.103–4 = *Od.* 4.661–2. For VD 140a ἔστη] δ' ὥσ[τε] λέων compare *Od.* 9.292 ἦσθι δ' ὥς τε λέων. For VD 140b γναθμοῖσι τανύσσας see *Il.* 16.175b γναθμοὶ δ' ἐτάνυσθεν. VD 141a = *Il.* 11.416.
- 79 Tartarus: Prov. 30:16; Job 40:20, 41:24. Hades: Prov. 1:12, 15:11, 30:16; Job 17:13, 26:6; Ecclesiasticus 28:21; Habakkuk 2:5; Isaiah 5:14, 14:9. See also in the NT Rev. 6:8, 20:13–14. Compare Nonn. *P.* 11.165–6 (mentioning Hades and the river Lethe).
- 80 Compare *Il.* 2.426 σπλάγχνα ... Ἡφαίστοιο, 9.468 φλογὸς Ἡφαίστοιο and 20.73–4 and 21.324–81 Hephaestus against the river. On which see (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, p. 133). Note also VD 220 ἐς πατέρ' ὁμῶς (“to the father of the word”).
- 81 Leaving μῦθος for plain words: e.g., *P.* 1.59–60.
- 82 On the interconnectedness of the programmatic passages of the VD, see (Hurst et al. 1984, p. 16).
- 84 Retaken in Dorotheus' words to Gabriel to thank him for this protection (he calls him a father and compares him to a mother in lines 170–3, for which see *Il.* 4.130–1 ὥς ὅτε μήτηρ/ ... ) and inspiration of song (VD 173b–4a βαλὼν χαρίεσσιν ἀοιδίην)/ἐν στήθεσιν ἐμοῖσιν—“by putting graceful song/into my heart”), and in the final lines of the poem (340b–1 καὶ ἐν στή[θεσιν] ἀοιδίην./παντοίην ἐνέηκε παρεστάμενα[ι καὶ αἰείδ]ειν [—“And in my heart he/has laid songs of various kinds as to keep guard and sing”). (Agosti 2013, p. 146) notes also *HApoll.* 519 ἐν στήθεσιν ἔθηκε θεὰ μελίγηρυν ἀοιδίην.
- 85 This double movement of appropriation of and dissociation from Hesiod is visible later in the poem when Dorotheus is given his final set of instructions: he is reminded that Jesus is an iron rock for him (263 πέτρη τε σιδηρῇ ἐπλετ' Ἰη[σοῦς]) and that he is not made of bronze from which the mortals make their vain works (266b–8a μη[ ]ενομή/χάλκειος, Ἄνδρέας, ἐσὶν ὅτε βροτοὶ ἔργον ἔτευξ[αν]/κωφόν), effectively reinterpreting the Hesiodic myth of the human races (*Op.* 106–201).



- 86 On infinite reading, see Section 4.2 below.
- 87 (Agosti 2013, p. 147): “Il riadattamento di un verso delle Argonautiche ... se è giustificabile sul piano letterario come una ‘imitazione contrastiva’ (... una correzione dell’originale), sul piano culturale apre invece prospettive inattese sulla cultura dell’autore, tanto che si è pensato anche a possibili interpretazioni allegoriche del poema di Apollonio”.
- 88 *Il.* 1.502 Δία Κρονίωνα ἄνακτα (~ 2.102; Hes. *Op.* 69); 2.405 etc Ἰδομενεῖα ἄνακτα; 15.8 Ποσειδάωνα ἄνακτα; 1.36 Ἀπόλλωνι ἄνακτι (Hes. *Th.* 347); 9.164 Ἀχιλλῆϊ ἄνακτι; 4.18 etc Priam; 20.194 βασιλῆϊ ἄνακτι; 1.7 Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν (1.172 etc. ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων).
- 89 Greg. Naz. *AP* 8.41.2, 141.3, 142.6; *Carmina de se ipso* PG 37, col. 1318.6 (Εἰς τὴν ἐν ταῖς νηστείαις σιωπῇν line 154) Καί με Χριστὸς ἄναξ ἦγεν ἐπ’ ἀντιπάλῳ; *Carmina de se ipso* PG 37 col. 1400.2 (Ἀποτροπὴ τοῦ πονηροῦ, καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐπὶ κλησὶς line 7). See Χριστὸς ἄναξ at the beginning of the line in Nonn. *P.* 1.68, 7.102 = 117 = 141 = 153 = 158 = 162, 11.15, 12.72. Also ἄναξ referred to Jesus: Nonn. *P.* 1.143, 1.171, 1.188, 1.205, 2.39, 2.61–2, 2.94, 4.96, 4.155, 4.188, 4.192, 4.218, 4.222, 4.224, 228. Compare Nonn. *D.* 5.210 = 44.131 ἀθέμιτος ἄναξ ... Πενθεύς, 7.159 Κάδμος ἄναξ, 9.302 ἄναξ Ἀθάμας, 10.126 ἄναξ Κρονίδης, 12.171, etc. Βάκχος ἄναξ, 17.97 ἄναξ Διώνυσος, 26.79 ἄναξ ... Μορρεῦς, 31.56 Ζεὺς μὲν ἄναξ, 35.359 Ἰνδὸν ἄνακτα (~27.209 = 39.25).
- 90 *Il.* 20.268 χρυσὸς γὰρ ἐρύκακε, δῶρα θεοῖο; *Od.* 18.282 ἀγλαὰ δῶρα διδοῦσιν, 19.460 ἀγλαὰ δῶρα πορόντες.
- 91 *AR* 2.813–14 μυρὶ’ ὀπάσσας/δῶρα φέρειν, 3.909–10 εἴ κεν ὀπάσση/δῶρα φέρων; *QS* 7.193 καὶ τοι δῶρ’ ὀπάσουσιν ἀάσπετα δῖοι Ἀχαιοί, 2.140–1 δ’ ἄρ’ ὥπασεν νίει δῶρον/Δαρδάνῳ, 3.775–6, 4.173–4; Nonn. *D.* 7.62b ἀνδράσι δῶρον ὀπάσσαι |, 16.186–7, 41.422b–3.
- 92 Unrelated to the Homeric hero + name clusters (*Il.* 4.200 ἥρωα Μαχάονα, 11.339 Παιονίδην ἥρωα, 13.112 ἥρωες Ἀτρεΐδης, 13.384 ἥρωες Ἰδομενεύς; *Od.* 1.189 Λαέρτην ἥρωα), or as a collective in Homer (*Il.* 2.110 ὦ φίλοι ἥρωες Δαναοὶ θεράποντες Ἄρηος), Hesiod (*Op.* 159 ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον γένος) and *AR* (1.1329, etc.).
- 93 Mt 25:13, 24:42, 26:38–41; Mk 13:34–5, 13:37, 14:34, 14:38; Lk 12:37; Acts 20:31; Cor 1:16; 1 Peter 5:8; Col. 4:2; 1 Thes. 5:6, 5:10; Rev. 3:2–3, 16:15.
- 94 The Sirens claim that those who listen to their song not only enjoy it but leave wiser (*Od.* 12.188 ἀλλ’ ὃ γε τερψάμενος νεῖται καὶ πλεῖονα εἰδώς) because the Sirens know (189 ἴδμεν, 191 ἴδμεν) of the recent development of the Trojan war and more broadly “all the things that come to pass upon the fruitful earth” (191 ὅσσα γέννηται ἐπὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ). Note the contrast with *VD* 7 when he sings of what has happened (τὰ δ’ ἐφῆναιτο) and this is related to the knowledge of the true God.
- 95 A popular image (often combined with the connection of the arrival of the cranes and winter, following Hes. *Op.* 448–51): Opp. *H.* 1.620–30; *QS* 3.589–91, 5.297–9, 11.110–20, 13.103–10; *Triph.* 350–5; Nonn. *D.* 14.329–39, 36.35–7, 40.513–24.
- 96 Hes. *Op.* 658–9 τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ Μούσῃσ’ Ἑλικωνιάδεσσ’ ἀνέθηκα/ἐνθά με τὸ πρῶτον λιγυρῆς ἐπέβησαν αἰοιδῆς (“This [tripod] I dedicated to the Heliconian Muses, where they first set me upon the path of clear-sounding song”). Also the song of the cicada: *Op.* 582–4.
- 97 Hes. *Th.* 11a ὕμνεῦσαι Δία τ’ αἰγίοχον (“singing of aegis-holding Zeus”), 36–7 τύνη, Μουσάων ἀρχώμεθα, ταὶ Δὲ πατρὶ/ὕμνεῦσαι τέρπουσι μέγαν νόον ἐντὸς Ὀλύμπου (“then, let us begin from the Muses, who by singing for their father Zeus give pleasure to his great mind within Olympus”); *Op.* 1–2 Μοῦσαι Πιερίθην, αἰοιδῆσι κλείουσai,/δεῦτε, Δί’ ἐννέπετε σφέτερον πατέρ’ ὕμνειουσai (“Muses, from Pieria, glorifying in songs, come here, tell in hymns of your father Zeus”. See (Agosti 2016, pp. 191–92) on other Hesiodic hemistichs in *Righteous*.
- 98 This is essentially a repetition of the main thesis of (Miguélez-Cavero 2008), which is probably standard now in terms of the composition of ‘Classical’ poetry but not sufficiently emphasised when discussing Christian literature.
- 99 (Kannengieser 2004, p. 230): “a biblical ‘type’ is a person, an event or an institution with a lasting significance which enables that person, event or institution to signify someone or something in God’s future acting in history ... ‘types’ [231] were understood inside the dynamic of a unified biblical history”. Overview and problematics in (Young 1997, pp. 152–57, 192–201). Types are mentioned already in the NT: Rom. 5:14–21, 1Cor. 10:1–6. For ancient reflections on the notion see Basil *De Spiritu Sancto* 14 Ἔστι γὰρ ὁ τύπος προσδοκωμένων δῆλωσις διὰ μιμήσεως, ἐνδεικτικῶς τὸ μέλλον προὑποφαίνων (“the type is a manifestation of things to come through an imitation allowing us to see in advance the things of the future in such wise that they can be understood”); Cyril Alex. *Ador.* 1 (PG 68.140c), 2 (213a), 17 (1097c–d), to be read with (Wilken 1971, chapter 4; Russell 2000, pp. 13–21). On the different typological methods, see e.g., (Ondrey 2018) for the approaches of Theodore of Mopsuestia (Antioch school) and Cyril of Alexandria (a ‘Christocentric’ interpreter) as they commented on the minor prophets.
- 100 On the principle, see (Bori 1987; Stella 2001). On the application to late antique poetry, see (Agosti 2005b, pp. 20–21).
- 101 Ps. 115 (113B):15 τῷ ποιήσαντι τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν; 121 (120):2; 124 (123B):8; 134 (133):3; 146 (145):6.
- 102 For line 1b οὐρανὸς ἥδ’ ἐθάλασσα, after *Od.* 12.404, 14.302; Hes. *Th.* 427, 847; *AR* 1.496; *QS* 7.201; for the line see *Il.* 18.483 (Ἐν μὲν γαῖαν ἔτευξ’, ἐν δ’ οὐρανόν, ἐν δὲ θάλασσαν). For 3b after τελέσσεας ἐκατόμβας in *Il.* 1.315b, 2.306b, *Od.* 4.352, 4.582, 13.350, 17.50, 17.59. For line 7b see ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδ’ in Hom. *Il.* 22.60, 24.487, *Od.* 15.348, Hes. *Op.* 331, Nonn. *D.* 24.186. For 11a θάρσει, ἐμὸν φίλε τέκνον see *Il.* 22.183 θάρσει Τριτογένεια φίλον τέκος. For 11a θάρσει—same sedes in *Il.* 4.184, 8.39, 10.383, 15.254, 18.463, 24.171; *Od.* 2.372, 4.825, 13.362, 16.436, 19.546, 22.372, 24.357; *QS* 7.288. For 15b προσεφώνεε φαίδιμος υἱός see Hom. *Il.* 21.152, *Od.* 16.308, 24.243 (φαίδιμος υἱός | was more popular: e.g., *Il.* 6.144, etc.; *Od.* 2.386, etc.; Hes. *Th.* 940, 986). For 18b μεγάλητορ θυμῷ see *Il.* 9.109, etc; *Od.* 5.298, etc.

- Overview in (van der Horst and Parmentier 2002, pp. 159–61). On the Isaac tradition, (Huizenga 2009, pp. 75–127; van Ruiten 2014).
- On the theory of the ethopoea as explained by Theon 115.12ff., Hermog. *Prog.* 20.7ff., Aphth. 34.2ff., Nic. 64.1ff., see (Migueléiz-Cavero 2008, pp. 316–20). Pp. 330–36 discuss the ethopoetic practice of *P.Bodmer* 31, 33 and 35.
- 4 Macc. is probably to be dated between the late 1st c. AD and the middle of the 2nd c. AD.
- Overviews in (Rajak 2014, 2015).
- Overviews: (Hahn 2012; Knust 2020). Homilies by Greg.Naz. and Jo.Chrys analysed and translated in (Ziadé 2007).
- Epithalamium: Men. Rh. 404.15–20 “The city has gathered: everyone is celebrating. The bridal bedrooms have been prepared as never before for anyone else. The chamber has been decorated with flowers and paintings of all sorts and is full of Aphrodite’s charm”. Bedroom speech: 405.19–20 “Poets compose their bedtime poems by urging the couple on to the wedding chamber and by exhorting them”; 406.1 “as for the groom we shall praise his valor and strength [τὴν ἀλκὴν καὶ τὴν ῥώμην]”, 8–13; 407.4–7, beauty of the wedding chamber; 410.9–18, exhortation to the groom. Translations (Race 2019).
- To be read with (Middleton 2015). In the section “Male brides” Middleton considers the parallel with the *Passion of Sergius and Bacchus*, two Christian soldiers who refuse to accompany the emperor to the temple of Zeus to sacrifice, and in punishment are stripped of their uniforms and paraded through the streets in female clothing, effectively becoming brides of Christ (§7). Translation (with some errors) in (Boswell 1995, pp. 375–90). This passion has often been dated to the 5th c. and would therefore, not be relevant for the C. *Visionum*, but an alternative dating to the reign of Julian (360–3) has been suggested: (Woods 1997).
- Line 21 is difficult to understand: (van der Horst and Parmentier 2002, p. 158) suggest “A wave lifted Abraham’s son” or “Abraham lifted his son to a wave”. I have translated a double accusative with an elliptic connective.
- Though not unknown, as Camplani (2015, p. 125) relates, these lines to the acrostic hymn on the sacrifice of Isaac (ἀγνήν θυσίαν), copied in the Barcelona-Montserrat miscellaneous codex (in the same library as the *Codex Visionum*): lines 5–6 ῥοιζήσας ἐπὶ κύμασι βάνει Μουσης, εἴξεν προφήτης/ῥοιζήδον ἀναβήναι τὸ κύμα (“Having whistled over the waves Moses walks; the prophet seemed to come out of the whistling wave”). According to (Camplani 2015, p. 126), “tale menzione dell’acqua, proprio nel momento in cui Isacco sta per essere sacrificato, può essere interpretata come un’allusione a un rito lustrale con un significato battesimale”.
- (Daniélou 1960, pp. 118–46): Ireneus *Adv. Haer.* 4.5.4; Tertullian *Adv. Marc.* 3.18, *Adv. Jud.* 10, 13; Clement *Paedag.* 1.5.23 (“Isaac is another type too . . . this time of the Lord . . . he was a victim, as was the Lord, but his sacrifice was not consummated, while the Lord’s was . . . Isaac rejoiced for a mystical reason, to prefigure the joy with which the Lord has filled us, in saving us from destruction through His blood . . . Jesus rose again after His burial, as if He had not suffered, like Isaac delivered from the altar of sacrifice”—transl. (Wood 1953)); Origen *Hom. Genesis* VIII.1, 4, 9; Ambrose *De Isaac* 1.1.
- 1Cor. 10:1–4.6 “our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea [πάντες εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσαντο ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ], 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ . . . 6 Now these things occurred as examples [τύποι] for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did”. Origen is particularly keen on this type to explain baptism: see e.g., *Hom. in Exodum* VI (GCS 29), 184, lines 9–10 “Quod Iudaei transitum maris putant, Paulus baptismum vocat”. To be read with (Af Hällström 2011, pp. 992–94).
- (Daniélou 1960, pp. 167–201): Ambrose *De mysteriis* 3.14; Tertullian *De Bapt.* 8–9; Didim. Caec. *De Trinitate* 2.144 (PG 39.697A); Basil *De Spiritu Sancto* 14 (PG 32.121C); Greg. Nys. *In diem luminum* (PG 46.589); Theodoret *Questions on Exodus* 27 (PG 80.257).
- As in *Il.* 14.308 = *Od.* 20.98 ἐπὶ τραφερὴν τε καὶ ὑγρὴν ἰ. Overviews of the parts of the *kosmos* in Hes. *Th.* 736–8= 807–9. See also QS 2.210 τραφερὴ δὲ γελᾷ περὶ γαῖα καὶ αἰθήρ, 5.437 περὶ τραφερὴ χάνει γαῖα.
- For κακορρέκτης see AR 3.595. Retaken in Abel 58. Cf. (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, p. 126).
- On the Final Judgement, see *Righteous*, esp. 27–32, the devil turned the blessed into a sinner “until he fell in the hands of the judge/and getting hold of him he sent him to the Erebus” (31–2 εἰσόκε δ’ ἐν χεῖρεσσι δικασπόλου ἀμφιπέ[σῃ]σι/καὶ μιν ἐλὼν πέμψῃ εἰς Ἑρεβος προσά[γων]; 47–8 ῥέεθρα/φερβομένου ποταμοῦ αἰθομέν[οι]ο πυρός (“the streams/of the insatiable river of blazing fire), 81–4 εὐτέ ἐ μοῖρα/ἔλκουσ’ εἰσελάσῃ Τάρταρον ἡρόεν/ . . . [ἔ]λγεα πολλὰ παθήσεται εἰν Ἀἴδαο/πληγαῖς δια[β]όλου καὶ χαλεπῆς τ’ ἀπάτης (“and when destiny/[takes over] in the earth it will drive him to the windy Tartaros/[ . . . ] he will endure many sufferings in Hades/[under the blows] of the devil and harmful delusion”).
- For line 6 γαῖη μὲν ῥ’ ἀνένευσεν, see Homeric gestures of rejection (*Il.* 6.311 ἀνένευε δὲ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη, 22.205, *Od.* 21.129). For line 8 εἰ δὲ κεν ἀτρυγέτοιο πολυ[π]λάγκτοι[ο] θαλάσσης, see *Il.* 1.72 etc ἄλως ἀτρυγέτοιο, *Il.* 14.204 = Hes. *Th.* 413 ἀτρυγέτοιο θαλάσσης, *Il.* 15.27 etc ἐπ’ ἀτρυγέτον πόντον. For 9 κόλπον ἄλως ποτὶ βένθε[α], see *Il.* 5.52 δεινοῦς κόλπους ἄλως ἀτρυγέτοιο, 21.125 ἄλως εὐρέα κόλπον. For 11 δῖης ἄλως μέγα λαῖτμα, see *Il.* 19.267 ἄλως ἐς μέγα λαῖτμα (QS 3.102 ἄλως μέγα λαῖτμα), *Od.* 4.504 etc μέγα λαῖτμα θαλάσσης. For 17 ὅς τε κακορρέκτ[η]ν ἀποτίννεται, ὅς κεν ἁμαρτη, see *Od.* 13.214 τείννεται, ὅς τις ἁμαρτη ἰ.
- There are no connections between *Cain* and the rendition of Psalm 139 (138) in *Met. Ps.* 138.13–20.

- 120 VD 102–4 ἰλαθί μοι πάντη παρεὼν καὶ πάντη ἀκούων,/τῆλε φανῆ γαῖαν τε καὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺ μεμαρπῶς·/οὐ νύξ, οὐ νεφέλη  
μιν ὅπη θεὸν ἔ[στ]ιν ὁρᾶσθαι (“Have mercy on me, You who are everywhere and hear everything,/and are holding in your hand  
the earth visible from afar and the wide heaven;/neither night nor cloud is there, where He, God, may be seen”).
- 121 Abel 58 ἐρχομένην προπάροιθε κακορρέκτην ἀποτίνειν (“to go immediately and punish the evil-doer”).
- 122 (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, p. 120): “Notre poème dit les tourments du méchant ou du persécuteur, la vanité des efforts qu’il fera  
pour les atténuer et le destin qui l’attend, finalement, au-delà du trépas”.
- 123 (Hurst 2002, p. 201): “Par opposition aux discrètes harmoniques chrétiennes que touche le texte d’[Apollinaire de Laodicée], plus  
respectueux du texte du psaume, on a envie de discerner dans notre texte un christianisme affirmé avec plus d’insistance, la  
marque d’une doctrine plus militante; on peut en trouver l’indice dans une intervention plus marquée dans le texte paraphrasé,  
et tout particulièrement dans la mise en œuvre d’une sorte d’exhortation au martyr qu’alimente la vision d’un Paradis chrétien lu  
au travers de la reconstruction de Jérusalem et du triomphe de Dieu, un Dieu vu comme celui des persécutés”.
- 124 Compare Nonn. D.: 1.400 φιλοτήσιε ποιμήν, 1.463 ὄλβιε ποιμήν, 7.73 αὐτόσπορε ποιμήν.
- 125 (Lampe 1961) s.v. πάσχω “suffer, in particular of martyrs”. (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, p. 129): “La formule οἱ παθόντες désigne  
très souvent les martyrs, chez les auteurs chrétiens; Hermas l’emploie couramment dans ce sens (*Vis.* 3,1,9; 3,2,1; 3,5,2; *Sim.*  
9,28–2-6) ”.
- 126 Abel 57–9 κλῆσι[ν] εἰς προσέειπεν ἐπίφρασας ἡματι τῷδε/ἐρχομένην προπάροιθε κακορρέκτην ἀποτίνειν·/”μηδ’ ἐμὲ γουνάζη  
τέλεος προπάροιθ[ε] δικά[ζε]ιν” (“He speaks, noticing the invocation made that day,/to go immediately and punish the evil-  
doer:/”Do not entreat me to [judge] before the end”).
- 127 Picked up in lines 62–3a ἐ[ξ] ἀρχῆς γαῖαν τ’ ἐ[πι]τέυξαο ἔργα τε χ[ειρῶν]/σ[ὺ]ν πέλον ἄνθρωποι (“At the beginning you  
created the earth and men are/the works of your h[ands]”) deviating from Ps. 102(101):26 κατ’ ἀρχὰς σὺ, κύριε, τὴν γῆν  
ἐθεμελίωσας,/καὶ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί (“Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth,/and the heavens are  
the work of your hands”) in referring to the creation of man. *Met.* Ps. 101.49–50 only mentions the earth and heavens.
- 128 (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, p. 154): “Serait-ce en termes vagues, le psaume se réfère à la Jérusalem de l’histoire et à son destin  
tragique, même si les auditeurs du texte sacré peuvent attribuer une valeur symbolique à ce destin. Notre poète nous sort  
délibérément de la réalité historique, pour évoquer la communauté des croyants, préfigurant pour lui la Jérusalem céleste ... une  
Jérusalem eschatologique ... vision néotestamentaire”.
- 129 (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, p. 153): χνόος “désigne un objet léger, dépourvu de consistance ... notre auteur dépouille l’évocation  
de Jérusalem de tout ce qui pourrait suggérer la solidité matérielle de cette cité”.
- 130 Ps. 102 (101): 19–20 γραφήτω αὕτη εἰς γενεὰν ἐτέραν,/καὶ λαὸς ὁ κτιζόμενος αἰνέσει τὸν κύριον,/ὅτι ἐξέκυψεν ἐξ ὕψους  
ἀγίου αὐτοῦ,/κύριος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἐπέβλεψεν (“Let this be recorded for a generation to come,/so that a people yet  
unborn may praise the Lord:/that he looked down from his holy height,/from heaven the Lord looked at the earth”), after which  
similarly *Met.* Ps. 101.35–8.
- 131 Reading ᾧδην (Kalish 2012, pp. 395–96) instead of the adverb ᾧδην ‘fully’ (*ed.pr.*).
- 132 Is. 9:1–2 light brought to Zebulun and Naphtali (Mt 4:12–16), 9:6 a son to be born (Mt 1:23, Lk 1:31–33, 2:7.11), 11:1 a shoot from  
Jesse (Lk 1:31–33), 26:1–21 protection of God’s people during the tribulation and promises of resurrection, 40:1–2 comfort for  
all in Messiah’s kingdom, 42:1–4 the Messiah’s calling and ministry, 49:6 the Messiah to be a light to the nations so that his  
salvation reaches to all the earth, 53:12 Messiah intercedes for sinners (Lk 23:34; Acts 5:31; Heb. 7:25, 9:24). Note that Kalish (2012)  
suggested that *P.Bodmer* 35 could be an early testimony of the interpretation of Psalm 101 as an anticipation of Jesus’ *descensus*  
*ad inferos*, common by the 8th c. AD. Kalish (2012, p. 394) notes that some Byzantine depictions of the Anastasis (the descent  
into hell) display Abel as one of the righteous in Hades liberated by Christ, for which there is some earlier homiletic presence  
(Ps.-Epiphanius *In die resurrectionis Christi* PG 43.465ff.). See (Kartsonis 1989, pp. 209–10).
- 133 (Faulkner 2020b, p. 14): “Lines 83–97 ... make a profession of faith, whose broad outlines are Nicene”.
- 134 P. 1.2 ἰσοφυῆς ~ Creed ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί; P. 1.3 ἐκ φάεος φῶς ~ Creed φῶς ἐκ φωτός; P. 1.6 ἀενάω ... θεῶ, τεχνήμονι  
κόσμου ~ Creed Πατέρα παντοκράτορα, ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς; P. 1.7b–8a καὶ ἔπλετο πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ/ἄπνοα καὶ πνεύοντα  
~ Creed δι’ οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο. According to (De Stefani 2002, pp. 14–15) Nonnus aimed at establishing his position regarding  
divisive issues, such as the nature of the Son, his rapport with the Father and the mystery of the Incarnation, from the beginning  
of the poem.
- 135 VD 1–2, 155 φῶς μέγα, 168 ἦλυθε δὲ Χρηστός φραεσίμβροτος ἐν δικ[αί]οις (“And Christ came, the Bringer of light, among the righ-  
teous”); *Lord Jesus* 1–3 Ἀγνὸν ἄγαλμα θεοῦ πέλεν πᾶς οἶος Ἰησοῦς·/Βέ[λ]ατος ἐμβασιλευσεν ἐν οὐρανῷ ἀγλαόεντι·/Γ[ῆ]ς  
θετο μιν σκηπτοῦχον αἰώνιον, [ἐ]λ[λ]υσε δ’ αὐτήν (“Jesus, the only son, was a [holy] image of God./Ex[ceptional], he reigns in  
the luminous heaven./He [made] him the eternal sceptre-holder of the earth and thus freed it”), 7, 17, 21–4; *Sufferers* 4–7, 24; *Abel*  
47–8.
- 136 2Cor. 4:3–6 “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has  
blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing clearly the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the  
image of God. 5 For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’s sake.  
6 For it is God who said, “Light will shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the



glory of God in the face of Christ"; Col. 1:11–16; Heb. 1:3. For a combined reference to the Incarnation and Christ as light, see also Jo. 1:1–5.9.14.

137 As suggested by (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, p. 74).

138 *Lord Jesus* (P.Bodmer 35), final line: ὦ μοι δέσποτ' ἄναξ ἐπάμυνε ὁδῶν [μογέοντι] ("Oh my lord and master, come to my aid in my path [in my sufferings]"). See also *Lord Jesus* 18–19.

139 (Young 1997, p. 230): "regular use of the Psalter provided a staple prayer-diet, certainly among monks and ascetics at a later date, but one suspects from earliest times also".

140 VD 173–7, 246 πάντας τιμών ("while you are honouring all"), 249–60 work with laughter so that the elders rejoice and pray for you, 305–15 Dorotheus prays to be sent for a different task, 339–40 Dorotheus prays to be a God's messenger; *Righteous* 103b–6 the just man prays to God, 154–6 Dorotheus sings in God's presence.

141 See (Agosti 2013, p. 145). Note that the Bodmer library included *P.Bodmer 20 Apology of Phileas, bishop of Thumouis*, dated to shortly after Phileas' martyrdom (306/7), on which (Schubert 2002, p. 21).

142 VD 135, 289, 292; *Righteous* 23, 129 (ἀγνοσύνη); *Lord Jesus* 21 ἄγιον φάος.

143 VD 100, 134, 231, 302, 315 (θεὸς μέγας ὑψὸς ὁρεγνύς), 339; *Righteous* 10, 115, 157; *Cain* 15; *Sufferers* 5.

144 VD 15 πάντη ὁρῶν αἰώνιος ἄναξ ("the eternal Lord who looks to every side"), 183; *Righteous* 47 κριτὴν αἰώνιον, 129 κάρτος τε αἰώνιο[v]; *Lord Jesus* 3; *Cain* 16; *Sufferers* 6 Μαρίας ἄγιον τέκος; *Abel* 31, 40, 42, 54, 61.

145 ἄθάνατος: VD 258; *Righteous* 128. ἄμβροτος: *Abraham* 6; *Righteous* 143. ἄμβρόσιος: VD 11–2 ἄμβρόσιον πανάτικτον ἐνὶ μεγάροις ἀνακτα]/ αὐτοφυῆ, 124; *Righteous* 17, 149.

146 VD 66, 169 (ἤλυθε δ' ἄγγελος ὥκύς, ὃς ἄφθιτος ἐπλετο[ο πάντων]ν "and the swift angel came, who was imperishable in all respects"); *Lord Jesus* 9; *Abel* 46.

147 VD 228 πατέρι κλυτῷ; *Righteous* 155 πατέρα κλυτὸν; *Sufferers* 9 κλυτοεργόν; *Abel* 38 κλυτὸν οὖνομα σεῖο. See also VD 178 κλειτοῖο θ[ε]οῖο; *Lord Jesus* 16 (Πατρὶ φέρων μέγα κῦδος ὅου κλ[έος] ἐ[στὶ] μέγιστον) 19 (Τεῦ κλέος αἰνὸν ἔπεστι καὶ ἔσσο[μέ]νοισι πυθέσθαι).

148 Relating the poems of the *Codex Visionum* to their context of production has proved a difficult enterprise. There is agreement that in the VD God's palace is modelled on the emperor's earthly one, with Dorotheus at the beginning of the poem guarding the gates like an imperial *ostiarus*, but Dorotheus' post-baptismal outfit (described in lines 328–35) has been interpreted as the clothing of a soldier of the imperial guard (van Berchem 1986), of an angel (Kessels and van der Horst 1987, p. 359, n. to 334), of one of the various grades of the soldiers of the schola palatina (Bremmer 1988), and of a deacon (Lukinovich 2002, pp. 44–45). Camplani (2015, pp. 103, 129) suggests relating Dorotheus' choice of post-baptismal name as Andrew to the *translatio* of the relics of the apostle Andrew to Constantinople in 357, although he notes "[129] si tratta solo di una proposta, che nel testo non trova aganci particolari".

149 (Camplani 2015) reads the references to baptism in these poems as "[102] l'espressione di una riflessione cristiana coerente sul battesimo, sul perdono dei peccati, sulla propagazione della fede anche a costo del martirio, sulla soteriologia", "[126] un insieme di testi fatti circolare tra membri di un'élite per approfondire il significato personale, religioso e culturale del battesimo che Doroteo e la sua comunità hanno ricevuto da adulti ... nella sua doppia dimensione di confessione verbale e di pentimento/rinuncia/conversione". These poems would have never been used in the liturgy of baptism. We know what a liturgical text looked like at the time because the Montserrat-Barcelona miscellaneous codex of this same library preserves an eucharistic anaphora and thanksgiving prayer (ed. Zheltov 2008) and they are not written in Homeric-style hexameters.

150 *Abraham* is willing to sacrifice his son and is rewarded (28–30); *Righteous* 1–4, 55–6, 67–75 God takes the loved one to paradise; *Sufferers*, passim (He will take to paradise those who suffer for him).

151 Mt 3:2 "Repent [Μετανοεῖτε], for the kingdom of heaven has come near", 6 "they were baptised by him in the River Jordan confessing their sins [τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν]", 11 "I baptize you with water for repentance [εἰς μετάνοιαν]". Similarly Lk 3:3, 7–8; Mk 1:4–5. To be read with Origen *Comm. in Jo.* book VI, §165: "We must note that although the Four Gospels have said that John confesses that he has come to baptize in water, only Matthew adds to this the phrase 'unto repentance'. He is teaching that the benefit of baptism depends on the choice of the one who is baptized. It is a benefit for the one who repents, but it will result in a more grievous judgement for the one who does not approach baptism in this way". Transl. (Heine 1989).

152 Acts 2:38 "Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized [Μετανοήσατε, καὶ βαπτισθήτω] every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the light of the Holy Spirit". Without explicit reference to baptism: Acts 3:19, 17:30–1 26:20.

153 See also 2Cor 7:9–10.

154 Also 1Jo 5:16; James 5:15–17.

155 2Thess. 3:14–15; Gal. 6:1.

156 Heb. 6:1–6 "Therefore let us go on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works [μετανοίας ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων] and faith toward God, 2 instruction about baptisms and laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment ... 4 For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened [Ἀδύνατον γὰρ τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας ... πάλιν ἀνακαίνιζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν] and

have tasted the heavenly gift and have shared in the Holy Spirit 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come 6 and then have fallen away, since they are crucifying again the Son of God to their own harm"; 10:26–7 "For if we willfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins but a fearful prospect of judgment".

For how this came to be, see (Stroumsa 1999, pp. 172–75).

Clem. Alex. *Strom.* II.13.56.1 "So a person who has received pardon for sins must refrain from future sin. For in the light of the first (and only) repentance of sins [ἐπὶ γὰρ τῇ πρώτῃ καὶ μόνῃ μετανοίᾳ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν] (which would be sins committed earlier in a person's first, pagan life, I mean a life led in ignorance), repentance [μετάνοια] is immediately available to those who are called, and it cleanses the region of the soul from anything discordant, to provide a foundation for faith [ἡ πίστις]. (2) The Lord, having the knowledge of the hearts . . . 57.1 So in his great mercy he gave yet another chance of repentance [μετάνοιαν δευτέραν] to those who, despite their faith, fall into some form of disharmony, so that if anyone should after their calling fall into temptation, and be forced or tricked into sin, they may have one more chance of 'a repentance which brings no regret' [Heb. 10.25] . . . (3) Continual and repeated repentance [μετάνοιαι] for sins is no different from those who have once and for all turned away from faith, except along in the consciousness of sin". Transl. (Ferguson 1991).

Clem. Alex. *Quis dives salvetur* 39 "The good Father . . . waits for those who turn to Him. And to turn to Him truly is to cease from sins and no more to look back. [40] Of sins already committed, then God gives remission [ἄφεσιν], but of those that are to come each man procures his own remission. And this is repentance [μεταγνώσκειν], to condemn the deeds that are past and to ask forgetfulness of them from the Father, who alone of all is able to make undone what has been done, by wiping out former sins with the mercy that comes from Him and with the dew of the Spirit [i.e., baptism] . . . Now it is perhaps impossible all at once to cut away passions that have grown with us, but with God's power, human supplication, the help of brethren, sincere repentance [μετανοίας] and constant practice success is achieved". Transl. (Butterworth 1919). To be read with (Méhat 1954).

Overview in (Stroumsa 1999).

(Torrance 2012, p. 74): "The argument here is not that the early form of unrepeatable repentance was monasticism *avant la lettre*. There are key fronts on which the two are different: the sinful qualifications needed for penitential discipline were not required form monasticism, for instance, and there does not seem to be a need for the penitent to break the marital bond if there is one, or to move off to the desert (indeed, he or she was expected to be at the local church frequently, repenting before God, and asking form the prayers of the people). However, the similarities are also striking: the unrepeatability of the act, the need for radical self-denial (including the avoidance of marital relations, wine, and general excess), and constant prayers for mercy. What we are soon to be faced with (to different extents), is a meeting and merging of these two worlds, the monastic trumping that of once-for-all repentance". (Torrance 2012, pp. 73–74) notes examples of "proto-monastic conception of once-for-all repentance": Leo the Great *Epistle* 167.13 (PL 54.1207AB); Canons of the Second Council of Arles 20; Canons of the Third Council of Orleans 24; Pope Siricius *Letter to Himerius* 5 (PL 1.1137AB); Jerome *Epistle* 147 (PL 22.1195–204); Paulinus of Pella *Eucharisticos* 451–88 (SC 209.88–90). A translation of Ambrose *De Paenitentia* is available at (de Romestin et al. 1896).

The tension between pre- and post-baptismal *metanoia* does not only occur in texts. Ritual historians have noticed that in the fourth century a process of development and ritual enrichment of baptism. Firstly, a forty-day season of fasting prior to Easter was adopted before the administration of baptism: candidates were introduced to the ethical teaching of the Old Testament and doctrines of the Creed, and a daily exorcism was performed on them, pointing to "an enhanced understanding of the need for all candidates to be purified from the power of evil but also to the belief that this was a gradual process that required regular repetition in order to achieve its results". At the same time "the rites developed an increasing theatricality in an attempt to instill in the candidates a profound psychological effect in order to compensate for the deficiency of an actual conversion . . . [measures were taken] to increase the dramatic effect" (Bradshaw 2019, p. 532). This ritual theatricality found a counterpart in textual evidence of heightened descriptions of baptismal experiences. Broad-arching introductions can be found in (Porter and Cross 1999; Spinks 2006; Ferguson 2009; Hellholm et al. 2011; Jensen 2012). Texts in (Whitaker and Johnson 2003).

Sources on monastic *metanoia*: (Ward 1987). On its different applications, see (Bitton-Ashkelony 1999, 2006; Kofsky 1999; Hunt 2004).

(Rousseau 1994, pp. 190–200, 210–11), thinking especially of *Letter* 22. Basil never uses the word 'monk' or any synonym, although writings such as the *Asceticon* and *Ep.* 200 seem to be referred to some institutional form of ascetic life. See also (Hildebrand 2014, pp. 125–45).

To be read with (Rousseau 1994, pp. 216–20). On the *Moralia* see (Rousseau 1994, pp. 228–32) (dating the work to the period of Basil's stay with Gregory in Pontus between 359 and 361); (Hildebrand 2014, pp. 115–16, 120–21).

Compare *Apophthegmata Patrum* (*Collectio Graeca Anonyma*) [AP GN] (Wortley 2013), N.43 (a prostitute admonished by her brother who is a monk leaves the brothel; her brother instructs her on repentance; unknown to him, she has left barefoot and dies on the way to the desert, her feet covered in blood: God has accepted her repentance before confessing her sins and doing penance for them because she was unconcerned with any matter of the flesh and despised her own body); N.217 (there is repentance for those who genuinely turn to God), N.751 (a will to repent is enough for God to accept the repentance).

There is no extant Greek text of the letters (only part of *Letter* I, transmitted as *Apophthegmata Patrum, Collectio Graeca Alphabetica* Antonius 22). Reconstructed translation from (Rubenson 1995, pp. 197–202).



- 168 See esp. Antony *Letters* I.18–22, 77–8.
- 169 *Apophthegmata Patrum* (*Collectio Graeca Anonyma*) [AP GN, (Wortley 2013)] N 77 *metanoia* as taking the blame and apologising for something; N.243 (“A brother withdrew [from the world], took the habit and immediately shut himself away, saying: ‘I am an anchorite.’ When the elders heard of this they came and made him come out, obliging him to do the round of the brothers’ cells, asking for forgiveness by prostrating himself [βάλλειν μετάνοιαν] and saying: ‘Forgive me, for I am not an anchorite but a beginner’”); N.245; N.521 on the lifelong toil against sin.
- 170 See AP GN, N.243 above; N.482 “A brother once called to [another] brother at Scete saying: ‘Come to my cell so I can wash your feet’, but he did not come. He spoke to him a second and a third time, but [the other] still did not come. Later one [the first brother] came to his cell, prostrated himself [βαλὼν μετάνοιαν] and begged him saying: ‘Come to my cell.’ [The other] rose up and came with him. ‘How is it that you did not come when I begged you repeatedly?’ the brother said to him. ‘I was not convinced when you only spoke the words,’ he said, ‘but when I saw the monastic gesture (the prostration [τὴν μετάνοιαν], that is) then I came with you gladly”.
- 171 *Vis.* II.2.4–5. Also *Vis.* II.7.3, III.5.5; *Comp.* IX.16.1–4, IX.18.3; *Mand.* IV.3.1–6. Translation (Lightfoot 1926).
- 172 See (Blomkvist 2011, p. 857), who compares the allegory of the tower with the synoptic parable of the sower.
- 173 On which see (Blomkvist 2011, pp. 850–52).
- 174 The differences between the two versions are analysed by (Blomkvist 2011), who concludes “[866] The two versions of the allegory should . . . be considered evidence of the author’s ‘correction’ or improvement of his work. The occasion of his making this improvement may be found in the reception of the original ‘Book of Visions’ (= *Vis.* I–IV). Possibly, the message of this first book was not recognised by the original audience and the ‘Book of the shepherd’ [= *Mand.* I–XII, *Sim.* I–VIII] and the ‘Addenda’ [= *Sim.* IX–X, *Vis.* V] were composed to present this message with even greater authority”.
- 175 *Sim.* IX.12.4, 8; IX.13.2; IX.14.6; IX.15.2, 3; IX.17.4. Analysis and bibliography in (Blomkvist 2011, pp. 863–64). Note also how, in his overview of baptism in the monasteries of Upper Egypt, (Lundhaug 2011) notes that the references to baptism are sporadic in the Pachomian corpus and the writings of Shenute.
- 176 On Theodorus as a Christian name in inscriptions, where the epitaphs make a pun on its meaning (Theodore was a gift from God and has now returned to Him) see (Agosti 2021, pp. 314–16).
- 177 Line 19 ποιμανέων με is puzzling: it would mean “shepherding me” or “being my shepherd”, but how can Dorotheus be the shepherd and Gabriel the animal led by him? Should we interpret με as equivalent to a dative (μοι) “working for me as a shepherd”?
- 178 Mt 4:19 “Follow me [ὁπίσω μου] and I will make you fishers of men (~Mk 1:15, Lk 5:10); Jo 21:15–17, 19 (esp. 16 Ποίμαινε τὰ πρόβατά μου, 19 Ἀκολουθεῖ μοι). Note that VD 155 refers to Christ as ποιμένι λαῶν, following on the image of Christ as a shepherd (Jo 10:1–16).
- 179 Compare AP GN N.41, a brother who does not repent is not comforted by God as he is tortured.
- 180 See earlier, on seeing Dorotheus covered in blood before the palace, God had said: 186–7 ἄλλον δὴ τινὰ φῶτα κομίσατ’ ἔ[τ’ ἐ]νδυν[α]μοῦντ[ε]ς[ε]ς/παρφυλακὴν ποιέειν μεγάροι['] ἅτ’ ἐπίτρο[π]ον αὐ[λ]ῆς['] (“another man you must bring and give him strength in addition/to stand guard over the palace as a guardian of the courtyard”).
- 181 Additionally, later VD 296–8 ἐν. δὲ βίην ὥπασσε καὶ ἄφθιτον ἥτορ ἔδωκεν./φαίνεσκο[ν] γὰρ ἔγωγ’ ὡς ἥλιος καταλάμπων,/καὶ μέγα[ς] ἡδὲ πέλωρος ἀκήριος ἐν προδόμοιο (“and he put strength into me and gave me unending valour./For I appeared to be brilliant as the sun,/and a great and untouchable giant in the ante-chamber I was”), 308 νῦν δὲ μέ γ’ ἥρωα θῆκε τετὴ χάρις (“now your grace has made me a hero”), 326–35.
- 182 (Hurst et al. 1984, p. 35): “Le baptême de la Vision n’est donc pas la préfiguration d’un baptême réel, mais un acte symbolique où le parrainage d’André signifie son cheminement vers le courage”.
- 183 See (Adamiak 2019).
- 184 Lk 3:16–17 “John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water [Ἐγὼ μὲν ὕδατι βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς], but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire [αὐτοὺς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ]. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire”.
- 185 Lk 12:49–50 “I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already ablaze! I have a baptism with which to be baptized [βάπτισμα δὲ ἔχω βαπτισθῆναι], and what constraint I am under until it is completed!”
- 186 Jo 7:39; Acts 1:5, 2:1–4, 11:15–18; 1Cor. 12:13.
- 187 On baptism in Origen, see (Af Hällström 2011, esp. pp. 1004–5).
- 188 *Hom. in Exodum* XI 7 (GCS 29), 261 line 16.
- 189 *Hom. in Judicum* VII 2 (GCS 30), 507, lines 14–15.
- 190 Origen *Comm. in Jo.* book VI, § 290.
- 191 Origen *Exhor. ad mart.* XXX. Transl. (Greer 1979).
- 192 Origen *Exhor. ad mart.* XXXVII.

- 193 See Origen's analogy of Scripture and the human self, both composed of body, soul and spirit, with the meaning of a text deposited in its spirit (*On first principles* 4.2.4–5). For Origen's method of interpretation of Scripture, see *On First Principles* 4.3, where he argues against a strictly literal interpretation of Scripture and in favour of moving beyond the letter of the text because all Scripture has a spiritual meaning but not all has a bodily (or literal) meaning (4.3.5 ὅτι πᾶσα μὲν ἔχει τὸ πνευματικόν, οὐ πᾶσα δὲ τὸ σωματικόν): the bodily meaning is often proved impossible when tracing out the meaning by comparing similar expressions scattered in the Scriptures. In *Comm. Jo.* 1.43–5, Origen defines the task of the exegete as that of translating the bodily Gospel into the spiritual Gospel in the light of the Incarnation, and of the spiritual Gospel into the eternal Gospel. On Origen's interpretation of the eternal Gospel (Rev. 14:6), see (Keough 2008). For an overview of Origen's exegetical method, see (Martens 2012, pp. 41–68, esp. pp. 64–66) on allegory; (Kannengieser 2004, pp. 206–9, 213–27 (Th. Böhm), 536–74 (H. J. Vogt)).
- 194 *Righteous* 8b–9 διαβόλου,/τόφρ' ὑπερηνόρην χατέων' κατενάσσατο γαίῃ. Etymological interpretation of ὑπερηνόρη as '[domination] over men'.
- 195 Note the references in other poems of the codex: *Lord Jesus* 4–6 Δεῦρο φ[ι]λῶν δικαίοις ἐλὼν ἀρετὴν ἀναφαίνων,/ἰρήνην ἐκόμεσε φέρων ἐπ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν./Ζώγρησ' ἀλ[ι]τροσύνας φορέων μετάνοιαν τειρομένη (‘‘Here, out of [lon]e, he made his virtue shine on the just/and he provided and brought peace for the boundless earth. He revived the sinners and brought conversion [ . . . ]’’); *Sufferers* 9–10 ζητ[ε] κλυτοερτόν ὁπόσσ' ἐμόγησε διδάσκ[ων],/ῥπ[ι]ά τε φρονέων, φορέων μετάνοια ἀλιτροῖς (‘‘Look for the famous maker, how much he suffered while teaching,/filled with kindness, constantly bringing about the conversion of the sinners’’).
- 196 On the afterlife of Origen's theories in late antique sermons in Coptic, see (Brakke 2000).
- 197 VD 6–9 οὐκ οἶσθ' οὐδὲ πέπεισμαι ἄ μοι φάνθη [τότε] λαμπρά./ῥμ' εὖ γρηγορώων, τὰ δ' ἐφῆνατο ῥμα[τ] ἀείδων,/ἔκπαγλον δέ μοι ἐστι κατὰπτεσθα[ι] ἐπέε[σ]ιν/ὅσσα μοι ἀχράντοιο φάντατα τέρματ[ε] ἐφάνθη (‘‘You do not know and I cannot believe all the splendour that appeared to me then./I sit well awake and singing in the daytime all that has appeared,/but it baffles me to describe in words/all the splendid supremacy of the Immaculate that appeared to me’’); 12b–15 τὸ μὲν οὐτις ἐπέδρακεν ὅσσ[τ] ἐπὶ γαίῃ/οὔτε σεληναίη οὔθ' ἥλιος οὔτε καὶ ἄ[σ]τρα./οὐ νύξ, οὐ νεφέλη ἐπιπλνεται ῥχι δι[σ]οπτῇ[ρ]/ἐνναίει πάντη ὁρόων αἰώνιος ἄναξ (‘‘This no man on earth has ever set eyes upon/nor the moon, nor the sun, nor the stars./Neither night nor cloud comes near to where the All-seeing/lives, the eternal Lord who looks to every side’’), 102–4 (God knows everything); 224 (Dorotheus is offered the chance of being like Solomon); 245 ἀλλὰ μάλιστ' ἀκέων ξυνίει ἔπος, ὅν κε πύθῃαι (Dorotheus admonished ‘‘But foremost try to comprehend in silence the word that you may hear’’), 336 (‘‘Such were the things that were revealed to me all of a sudden’’), 339–43 (Dorotheus as messenger of the deeds of the righteous and Christ).
- 198 *Righteous* 125, 135–43a ἄ μάκαρ ἔπλετο κείνος ὅ[τ] ῥμάρωσε τὸν ὀλβον/γαίης διαβόλου καὶ ῥα θε[ὸν] φίλ[ε]ν/πιστεύων σοφίῃ. τὸν μὲν [θε]ὸς ἐξεσά[ω]σε/πείραισι διαβόλου προφον[έ]ως ἀμύνων/πολλὰ πειραζόμενον. δὴ γὰρ θεὸν ἐλλιτάνευσεν /140 διάβολος κρυερὸς πίστιν ἐποσσόμενος/ἀνδρός. ἐπεὶ ῥα βίην θεὸς ὥπασε καὶ σοφίην τε,/τέρματα διαβόλου φρίζας ἐν χθονί/ὠίξετο πιστεύων θεὸν ἄμ[β]ροτον (‘‘Oh, blessed is the one who is blind to the earthly/bliss of the devil and loves God,/trusting in his wisdom: this one God has saved/zealously warding him off the temptations of the devil,/as he greatly tempted, and the chilling devil/prayed to God on seeing the faith/of this man. Because God granted him strength and wisdom,/although freezing out when seeing the power of the devil on earth/he left, trusting in the immortal God’’); *Sufferers* 7b κεκασμένον ἐν σοφίῃσι (the incarnated Christ, ‘‘adorned with wisdom’’); *Lord Jesus* 7–8; *Abel* 42, 52.
- 199 On which see (Martens 2012, pp. 235–42).
- 200 Origen *Comm. in Jo.* XIII.27 ‘‘For indeed, Scripture has not contained some of the more lordly and more divine aspects of the mysteries of God, nor indeed has the human voice and the human tongue contained some, as far as the common understanding of the meanings are concerned . . . 30 Now I think that all the Scriptures, even when perceived very accurately, are only very elementary rudiments of and very brief introductions to all knowledge, 37 The Scriptures, therefore, are introductions’’. See also *On First Principles* 4.3.14: no created mind has the capacity to understand everything, even with God's help in deciphering the Scriptures; those who know more are the seraphim to whom God reveals himself.
- 201 *Comm. in Jo.* I.37 (the patriarchs knew Christ because they had contemplated his glory); II.7 (the word came to Isaiah and Jeremiah), 10 (‘‘we shall add that by coming to the prophets he enlightens them with the light of knowledge, causing them to see things which they had not perceived before his coming as if they saw them before their eyes’’); VI.22–23 (Moses, Isaiah, other OT figures), 24 (‘‘I wish to prove that those who have been perfected in former generations have known no less than the things which were revealed to the apostles by Christ, since the one who also taught the apostles revealed the unspeakable mysteries of religion to them’’), then quoting Rom 16:25–6 and 2 Tim 1:10.
- 202 *Letter* VI.29 ‘‘I ask God to give you a heart of knowledge and a spirit of discernment, that you may be able to lift your hearts before the Father’’. *Letter* VII.13 ‘‘And I tell you, that the knowledge of all virtues has vanished from us. 14 For this reason the Father, our God, saw our weakness, that we thus were not able to invest ourselves with truth, 15 therefore he, in his benevolence, came to visit his creatures through the ministry of the saints’’; VII.52 ‘‘we have hid nothing that is to your benefit from you, but what we have seen we declare unto you [1Jo 1:1], that the enemy of virtue always meditates evil against the truth’’; VII. 58c ‘‘A wise man has first to know himself, so that he may then know what is of God, d and all his grace which he has always bestowed upon us and then to know that every sin and every accusation is alien to the nature of our spiritual essence; e and finally that our Creator saw that, though our free will we possess what is unnatural, by which our will has died; moved by his mercy, he in his

benevolence, wished to bring us back to that beginning without end. He visited his creatures, *not sparing himself for the salvation of us all, he gave himself for our sins* [Rom 8:32]”.

- 203 See (Hurst and Rudhardt 1999, pp. 15–24). Note the emphatic assertion in p. 16 (“nos poèmes n’énoncent aucune des idées caractéristiques de la gnose”) and the careful analysis of the mentions of *sophia* and how they are related to basic ideology expounded in the NT (pp. 21–22). For *Sufferers* see also (Berolli 2015).
- 204 E.g., Hadjittofi (2018, pp. 182–83) suggests that with P. 2.9 = 19.135 Μάρη, Χριστοῦ θεητόκος Nonnus could be seen mediating between the Nestorian *Christotokos* and the orthodox *theotokos*, giving readers the opportunity to give it their own interpretation. Hadjittofi (2018) also analyses possible Origenistic readings of fabric metaphors in Nonn. P. 19.21–25, 19.118–32, 20.81–2.

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