The English Inheritance of Biblical Verse

By

Patrick McBrine

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: The English Inheritance of Biblical Verse

Submitted by: Patrick McBrine

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Department: Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto

“The English Inheritance of Biblical Verse” explores the transmission of late antique Latin biblical poetry to England and the subsequent development of the genre in the vernacular. This study offers close readings of the most important contributions to a genre that produced more than twenty major compositions between AD 400 and 1500. For over a millennium, this literature effectively represented the Bible in popular form, yet this is the first study to explore the stylistic and thematic affinities between the Latin and English traditions.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to ‘biblical verse,’ defines the term and offers a broad outline of the genre, including a summary of general stylistic features and critical trends. The first chapter also provides an overview of the subject matter in each of the following chapters.

Chapter 2 discusses the Latin beginnings of the genre in the fourth century, beginning with the poetry of Juvencus, whose stylistic choices regarding the appropriation of classical literature establish many of the generic norms for later poets. Among them is Cyprianus, who reflects the Juvencan model in his Heptateuch, while Prudentius, though not a biblical poet per se, anticipates a movement toward stylistic freedom in later versifications of the Bible.
Chapter 3 examines the growing stylistic freedom among biblical versifications at the end of late antiquity. Sedulius, Avitus and Arator break the silence imposed by epic conventions of detachment and begin to comment on the underlying significance of biblical episodes such as the crossing of the Red Sea at length. Biblical exegesis and figural allusions to Christ abound in the poetry of this period.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus to Anglo-Saxon England and the study of Juvencus, Sedulius and Arator in the monastic schools of the time. Many Anglo-Latin writers, especially Aldhelm, Bede and Alcuin, borrow heavily from the style of late antique biblical verse. My purpose here is to deepen our understanding of the specific ways in which this is the case.

Chapter 5 makes another transition, to Old English biblical poetry. My goal here is to explore the ways in which the Latin and vernacular traditions overlap. My approach is mainly stylistic, and I focus in particular on the biblical verse of the Junius manuscript, containing Genesis A/B, Exodus, Daniel and Christ and Satan.

Chapter 6 offers some conclusions about the variety of functions and audiences of this literature. I also suggest what work remains to be done and how knowledge of the Latin tradition informs our understanding of the literature of the Anglo-Saxon period.

My goal, therefore, is to examine various ways in which poets of different eras versify the Bible by considering what is omitted from, elaborated upon and unique to a given period or author. Ultimately, I aim to show that Latin and Old English biblical verse have more in common that not and that knowledge of the former enriches understanding of the latter.
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Patrick McBrine

University of Toronto

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### Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>ASE</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon England</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASPR</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCSL</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</td>
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<td>CSASE</td>
<td>Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England</td>
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<tr>
<td>CdV</td>
<td>Carmen de uirginitate</td>
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<td>CE</td>
<td>Carmina ecclesiastica</td>
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<td>Carmen paschale</td>
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<td>English Language Notes</td>
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<td>ES</td>
<td>English Studies</td>
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<td>Ev</td>
<td>Euangelia</td>
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<td>CMCS</td>
<td>Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSEL</td>
<td>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum</td>
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<tr>
<td>MÆ</td>
<td>Medium Ævum</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGH</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</td>
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<tr>
<td>NM</td>
<td>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIMS</td>
<td>Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies</td>
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<td>PL</td>
<td>Patrologia Latina</td>
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<td>TAPS</td>
<td>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society</td>
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<td>TMLT</td>
<td>Toronto Medieval Latin Texts</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Throughout its existence—from Juvencus to Klopstock—the Biblical epic was a hybrid with an inner lack of truth, a genre faux. The Christian story of salvation, as the Bible presents it, admits no transformation into pseudo-antique form. Not only does it thereby lose its powerful, unique, authoritative expression, but it is falsified by the genre borrowed from antique Classicism and by the concomitant linguistic and metrical conventions. That Biblical epic could nevertheless enjoy such great popularity is explained only by the need for an ecclesiastical literature which could be matched with and opposed to antique literature. So a compromise solution was reached.¹

E.R Curtius’ evaluation of Latin biblical verse is scarcely an endorsement of the genre, and his attitude does not reflect that of most late antique and medieval audiences, who admired this poetry, recommended it to others, produced manuscript collections of it and imitated it in their own writings. Biblical poets must compromise in the negotiation of scriptural and non-scriptural materials, but for Curtius this means a glass half empty, a dilution of the potency of both classical and biblical sources, while most late antique and medieval audiences see a glass half full, an opportunity to enjoy the best of both worlds—the form of the old and the content of the new. Certainly, something intrinsic of the classical work is diminished in the translation to biblical poetry; the same is true of the works that lay behind vernacular versifications of the Bible in the Anglo-Saxon period, such as Genesis A.² This fact does not seem to bother most ancient and medieval audiences, however, who accept this literature for what it is. Biblical epic is a hybrid genre, yes, but not a faux one. There are no pretenders here and no illusions about the pseudo-antique forms that fire the poetic vigour of this literature. The audience knows

that features of secular poetry have found their way into Christian verse, and their general silence suggests an approval of this synthesis. For Curtius, though, the story of salvation is cheapened, even falsified by its transformation into poetry, so that the original story loses its ‘powerful, unique, [and] authoritative expression.’ This may be true to some extent, but no biblical poet ever denies the supremacy of the Bible or promises to replace it in his song. He only seeks to channel something of the scriptures and to cultivate a measure of his own devotion in the hearts of his audience. Curtius is therefore partly right that biblical epic enjoys lasting popularity because it offers a pious alternative to secular-pagan works like Vergil’s *Aeneid*, but not because there is any real ‘need for an ecclesiastical literature that can be matched with and opposed to antique literature,’ but because there is a will and an impulse among authors in the genre to express something of their own faith. The recognition and appreciation of this desire in generations of audiences is the real reason for the endurance of the genre.

Juvenecus’ *Euangeliorum libri quattuor* (c. 330), a versification of the Gospels, stands at the beginning of a genre that culminates with Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667). In the intervening years, nearly twenty Latin and vernacular versifications of the Bible emerge from the continent and England. These poems range from relatively close treatments of the Bible, like that of Juvenecus or the Old English *Genesis A*-poet, to free renditions of individual episodes in biblical history, such as Avitus’ account of the Fall, Flood and Crossing of the Red Sea in *De spiritalis historiae gestis* (fl. 507). All of these compositions promote knowledge of the scriptures and provide authors with a means to

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express their faith and creativity. From the beginning, Latin poets depend on their knowledge of classical literature for inspiration, and Vergil’s *Aeneid* in particular provides a conduit through which to channel the power of the scriptures. Classical epic is the foundation upon which Latin biblical poets base the stylistic conventions of the genre. That said, poets begin immediately to imitate each other as well as Vergil, and the lines of literary transmission from antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages are often blurred by such interrelationships. Even so, there is certainly enough evidence, at least in the Latin tradition, to demonstrate that biblical poets recognize the idea of a genre of biblical verse and to show that many of them respond to one another in the process of composing their own poems. In fact, the Latin tradition provides a valuable model, a kind of pattern, we may apply to the later vernacular versifications of the Bible, where date, provenance and authorship of the biblical poems is uncertain, as are the specific relationships between the authors and their sources of inspiration.

The ultimate goal of this study, therefore, is to broaden the context in which we read and understand Old English biblical verse, by demonstrating the ways in which Latin writers go about versifying the Bible. The tradition of late antique biblical poetry is especially relevant here, because many of the poems play a fundamental role in the education of the Anglo-Saxons. Juvencus (fl. 330), Cyprianus (fl. 400), Sedulius (fl. 425–50) and Arator (fl. 544) are part of the Anglo-Saxon school curriculum throughout the period, and their work leaves a lasting impression on the most important Anglo-Latin writers of the time, especially Aldhelm, Bede and Alcuin. It therefore stands to reason

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that late antique biblical versifications inspire not only the production of Anglo-Latin poetry but also works which are part of the re-genesis of the genre in Old English. However, before we may gauge the reception of late antique biblical poetry in England and the potential relationship of that literature to the Anglo-Latin or vernacular traditions, it is necessary to improve our knowledge of the late antique poems themselves.

Scholars have written broadly on the biblical poetry of late antiquity, though much remains to be said about the individual style of the versifications, especially the *Euangelia* of Juvencus and *Carmen paschale* of Sedulius.8 Monumental studies in this area include those of Max Manitius and E. R. Curtius, both of whom provide essential introductions to the literature of the period, but who do not undertake extended analyses of individual poems.9 More recently, Reinhart Herzog (1975) Michael Roberts (1985, 1989), Carl Springer (1988), Daniel Nodes (1993), Richard Hillier (1993), and Roger Green (2006) have provided more in-depth criticism, but these works tend to focus on individual features of the genre, such as the stylistic debt to Vergil, the classical rhetorical origins of the language in biblical poetry, or biblical exegesis (baptismal imagery in particular), rather than how all of the poems relate to one another.10 What is more, these

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studies limit their focus to late antiquity and do not account for the ways in which the genre continues in Anglo-Latin or Old English literature.

Michael Lapidge has led the way in the study of Anglo-Latin literature, and his recent book, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (2006), provides a valuable guide to the verbal echoes of late antique verse in Anglo-Latin poetry.\(^\text{11}\) Although Lapidge does not offer stylistic analyses of the poems themselves or discuss the ways in which Anglo-Latin verse and the prior tradition relate, he certainly opens the way for this study, by providing a wealth of primary evidence.\(^\text{12}\) Likewise, Andy Orchard offers a comprehensive study of Aldhelm’s poetic style, making clear Aldhelm’s debt to several Latin biblical poets, especially Sedulius.\(^\text{13}\) His stylistic and metrical analyses of Aldhelm’s poetic artistry have set the groundwork for my own analyses in Chapter 4. As for the manuscript evidence, Helmut Gneuss’ *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (2001) allows us to identify which codices from the period contain biblical verse from late antiquity; Gneuss, however, does not offer any conclusions about the implications of this physical evidence.\(^\text{14}\) Finally, a number of shorter studies, including those of A.G. Rigg and G.R. Wieland, suggest how collections including Latin biblical poetry may function in an educational setting as classbooks, although we are very much still at a loss to explain how this is precisely the

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\(^ {12}\) Lapidge, however, does provide an overview of the genre in ‘Versifying the Bible in the Middle Ages,’ in *The Text in the Community: Essays on Medieval Works, Manuscripts, Authors, and Readers*, edited by Jill Mann and Maura Nolan (Notre Dame, 2006), pp. 11–40.


case. In short, a wealth of primary evidence now exists for closer analyses of the place of Latin biblical poetry in Anglo-Saxon England; the purpose of this study is to expand upon the scholarship which has already been done.

My own approach is systematic and selective, in order to provide a single, sustained impression of how the genre of biblical poetry proceeds throughout late antiquity and enters Anglo-Saxon England. In order to do this, I have chosen to expand on models provided by several late antique scholars, including Carl Springer and Roger Green, who have used a comparative approach in their analyses of this poetry. For example, Springer compares several versions of the wedding at Cana in the versifications of Juvenecus, Sedulius, Prudentius and Dracontius. In so doing, he demonstrates not only common features among poems but ways in which each author’s portrayal differs. Likewise, Roger Green, though on a smaller scale, discusses several descriptions of storms in the poetry of Juvenecus, Sedulius and Arator, to highlight the stylistic debts and peculiarities of individual episodes. My approach is much the same thing, but broadens the scope to include Anglo-Latin and vernacular biblical poetry. As far as possible, I will also focus on a similar stage in the narrative, the preface, and similar episodes in each work, such as the Crossing of the Red Sea, in order to demonstrate how various works in the genre more or less relate to one another. As far as I know, no study has engaged the genre as a whole in this way or tried to show how the three traditions of late antique,

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Anglo-Latin and Old English biblical poetry relate to one another. Whatever the relationship among these various poems may be, however, the fact remains that all three traditions coexisted in the libraries of Anglo-Saxon England and offered writers innumerable points of inspiration. Any appreciation for the genre as a whole therefore stands to improve our understanding of the literature produced in this period.

A notion essential to this study is the idea of verbal echoing, which refers to a manner of repetition or allusion among Latin poets that suggests a debt to the earlier work. The term applies especially to Latin hexameter poetry, where such imitation is frequent and provides a sense for which works the author knew best or perhaps preferred. Editors commonly list such verbal echoes in the lower margins of their editions (in the *index scriptorum* or *fontium*), and both Michael Lapidge and Andy Orchard have assembled numerous such borrowings with regard to Anglo-Latin poetry, in order to reconstruct something of the Anglo-Saxons’ reading habits. As Orchard says of Aldhelm—though the sentiment is applicable to other poets—these echoes help to provide ‘a detailed picture not simply of the extraordinary range of Aldhelm’s reading, but also of the precise pattern of usage and adaptation of borrowed phrases and diction.’ The problem of intermediary sources, however, complicates the precise origins of many verbal echoes, and as Neil Wright has pointed out of McKinlay’s edition of Arator, some editors cite what they believe to be an echo of Vergil, for example, when it is in fact an echo of Juvenecus.

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18 A possible exception is the study of E. M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford, 1968), which to some extent gauges the progress of Old Testament biblical verse from Latin to the vernacular.

19 Lapidge’s *Anglo-Saxon Library*, for example, assembles countless verbal echoes in an effort to ‘provide a complete listing of the Latin sources quoted or alluded to by the principal authors of Anglo-Saxon England’ (p. 174).

echoing Vergil.\textsuperscript{21} As Wright says, some of this ‘evidence’ amounts to little more than ‘remote parallels of thought or diction rather than close verbal imitation.’\textsuperscript{22} It is therefore necessary to provide some context for these kinds of verbal borrowings, in order to present a reliable impression of whom the author is imitating and how.

Therefore this study begins with the earliest stages of the genre, with the poetry of Juvencus, Cyprianus and Prudentius, and proceeds chronologically toward the Anglo-Saxon period. The \textit{Euangelia} of Juvencus represents the first concerted effort to translate a significant portion of the Bible into poetry, and it is an important witness to the early versification of the Bible. In general, the work is a conservative and reserved blend of classical poetry and biblical prose, and the author’s creative restraint wins him the approval of the Church, so that the generic norms he establishes in the \textit{Euangelia} provide a valuable stylistic model for subsequent writers in the genre. Cyprianus is among these authors, and although we know very little about him or the circumstances under which he composed his \textit{Heptateuch}, a poetic rendition of the first seven books of the Bible, it is clear that he knows Juvencus and maintains a similar creative reticence. The same cannot be said of Prudentius, who is an exception in this study, because he does not produce a biblical versification \textit{per se} or follow the example of his fellow countryman, Juvencus. He does, however, draw upon features of the genre in his \textit{Cathemerinon}, a series of lyrical poems or hymns, and he treats several biblical episodes along the way. The poetry of Prudentius provides a witness to the broader outlines of the genre beyond the canonical versifications of the Bible.

\textsuperscript{21} The edition in question is that of Arthur Patch McKinlay, ed., \textit{Aratoris Subdiaconi De Actibus Apostolorum}, CSEL 72 (Vienna, 1951).
\textsuperscript{22} Neil Wright, ‘Arator’s Use of Caelius Sedulius: A Re-Examination,’ \textit{Eranos} 87 (1989), 51–64.
Chapter three continues the discussion of late antique biblical poetry with Sedulius, Avitus and Arator.\footnote{See Huemer, ed., \textit{Sedulii Opera Omnia}, CSEL 10 (Vienna, 1885); Nodes, ed., \textit{The Fall of Man: De Spiritualis Historiae Gestis, Libri I-III} (Toronto, 1985); and R. Peiper, ed. \textit{Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti Vienensis Episcopi Opera}, MGH Auct. Ant. 6.1 (Berlin, 1883); A. P. McKinlay, ed. \textit{Aratoris Subdiaconi De Actibus Apostolorum} (Vienna, 1951); and A. P. Orbán, ed. \textit{Aratoris Subdiaconi Historia Apostolica}, 2 vols, CCSL 130 (Turnhout, 2006).} These three authors and their works represent a development in the genre toward greater stylistic freedom and the incorporation of biblical exegesis into the narrative. Juvenecus and Cyprianus draw occasionally upon exegesis in their versifications, but from Prudentius onward there is a much stronger impulse to add interpretive material to the raw text of the Bible. Sedulius is arguably the most influential poet in the genre, and his \textit{Carmen paschale} represents a clever, sometimes humorous, but always sincere dedication to the New Testament and the miracles of Christ. Allusions to his poem are identified in every later Latin versification of the Bible and in every major poem in Anglo-Latin literature as well. For this reason, I have dedicated more attention to his work than to that other biblical poets, including a full translation of the \textit{Carmen paschale}, the first book of which appears in Appendix 2.

Alcimus Avitus offers a much freer rendition of the scriptures in his treatment of the Fall, Flood and Crossing of the Red Sea, and although no manuscript evidence exists for the widespread knowledge of his poetry in Anglo-Saxon England, I have included him in this discussion, because he is important to the development of the genre in antiquity and because there is some evidence for knowledge of his work in Anglo-Saxon England. There is extensive evidence for knowledge of Arator, however, who is very well-known throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, and whose poetry leaves a strong impression on Anglo-Latin verse, especially that of Bede. The problem, however, is that we have no
clear sense of how Arator or any other of the late antique biblical poets fit into the tradition of Anglo-Latin literature beyond the simple evidence of verbal echoes.

The purpose of chapter four is therefore to begin to address exactly how late antique biblical verse enters into Anglo-Latin literature, and I have chosen to focus specifically on the poetry of Aldhelm, Bede and Alcuin, all of whom demonstrate greater familiarity with late antique poetry than any other writers of the period. There is ample textual evidence to show that each of these authors owes a dept to Juvencus, Sedulius and Arator, and yet we still know little about the nature or extent of this debt. How far is the style of the *Carmen de uirginitate* indebted to the *Carmen paschale* of Sedulius, for example? The answer to this question and similar assessments of the reception of late antique biblical poetry in other works of the period will tell us more about the importance of this literature to Anglo-Saxons, and may suggest that we have underestimated the role of these works in the production of Anglo-Latin and Old English literature.

Chapter five explores the question: how are we to address the potential relationship between the Latin and vernacular traditions of biblical verse? It is one thing to suggest a connection among Latin poems of different traditions where many words are the same, but another to find traces of the Latin genre in vernacular poetry, where the language is different and the authors provide no explicit indications of their sources. In other words, verbal echoes are of little help here, and at present there has never been compelling evidence to suggest that any of the poets in the so-called Junius manuscript depend on any Latin biblical versification for inspiration. For this reason, my goal is not to argue direct influence *per se* but to consider common points of style between the two traditions. For example, the poetry in both traditions is imbued with a strong sense of
secular heroism, one from Vergil, the other from poems in the tradition of Beowulf. What is more, authors in both traditions express an abiding affection for word- and sound-play of various kinds, including paronomasia, polyptoton and alliteration. Versifiers in both traditions also centralize the omnipotence of God in their narratives and stress his agency in the deeds of their Christian ‘heroes’; and finally, both traditions share a number of themes and stylistic features which suggest, if nothing else, a common devotion to the Bible and a desire to express their faith through poetry.

In their analyses of Old English poetry, scholars of vernacular biblical verse often refer to Latin prose sources, biblical or otherwise. Bernard Huppé, for example, has argued for the influence of Augustine on the composition of Genesis A, while Paul Remley has demonstrated the influence of the liturgy on the Old English Daniel. With all this Latin source-work going on, why is it that scholars have not turned to the more obvious place? After all, there is ample evidence to suggest widespread and enduring knowledge of Latin biblical verse in monastic schools throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, and many scholars have admitted the potential value of such an investigation. John Gardner, for example, writes that ‘the first three sections of Avitus’ work, dealing imaginatively with the fall of man, may have influenced the English Cædmonian poet who treated this subject,’ and James Wilson argues that there is ample evidence that many continental Christian Latin writers were ‘known in England early enough to have affected the development of the Old English poetic tradition.’ Unfortunately, both

Gardner and Wilson reflect the current state of the question, which only grants the possibility that Latin biblical verse may be important to the production of vernacular poetry, but none of them has undertaken to show how.

This study therefore proposes to suggest that the biblical verse of late antiquity is directly relevant to our reception and understanding not only of Anglo-Latin poetry but also of vernacular verse. There may be little evidence of direct borrowing at this point, but surely we stand to gain something by an analysis of the genre that coexisted alongside the Old English tradition. As Lawrence Martin says in a single article on knowledge of Arator in Anglo-Saxon England, there is much to warrant a discussion of the genre as a whole.28

Although the influence of the learned tradition of biblical exegesis upon the Cædmonian poems has been emphasized by several recent critics, little work has been done on the influence of the Latin biblical epics, which did, after all, establish the precedent for treating the biblical narrative in an artistic form which had been developed in a pre-Christian context. Furthermore, poems like Arator’s foreshadow the Old English biblical epics in applying pagan diction and themes to Christian concepts—for example, referring to heaven as *Olympus* and hell as *Avernus* or *Tartara*, or to God as *Regnator Olympi*, or even as *Tonans*, ‘the Thunderer.’ Moreover, just as the Old English biblical poets applied battle motifs of Germanic heroic poetry to the battle of Abraham in *Genesis A*, or to Moses’ battle with Pharaoh’s forces at the Red Sea in the Old English *Exodus*, just so Arator used Vergilian motifs like the sea storms of the *Aeneid* to describe the storm which wrecked Paul’s ship in Acts 27. Arator’s mystical passages sometimes, too, suggest parallels in Old English poetry like the exile theme and gnomic passages about the result of crime.

Like Martin, I believe there is much to be said for the stylistic commonalities between the Latin and vernacular traditions of biblical verse, though I also acknowledge the need now to develop a better knowledge of the Latin versifications themselves, before attempting to suggest how authors of Old English texts may respond to that prior tradition.

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Chapter 2

Early Latin Biblical Verse: Juvenecus, Cyprianus, Prudentius

Odi profanum vulgus et arceo
Favete linguis; carmina non prius
Audita Musarum sacerdos
Virginibus puerisque canto.¹

[I despise the uninitiated mob and warn them off: Keep your tongues well-omened; I, priest of the Muses, am singing songs, never heard before, to girls and boys.]

—Horace, Odes 3.1 (1–4)

In ancient Rome, a priest would call for silence at the beginning of a religious ceremony, ‘warning the uninitiated to remove themselves and those present to avoid ill-omened words.’² At the opening of his third book of Odes, Horace also stands before his own ‘congregation’ as a priest of the Muses (Musarum). He does not perform any kind of religious ceremony, however, but rather a new kind of poetry (‘carmina non prius audita’). What he calls his ‘unheard of songs’ are in fact based on the rhythms and styles of Sappho and Alcaeus, but as he mixes secular and religious traditions here, Horace offers his verse as if it were the expression of divine truth and as if he himself were a uates in both senses of the word—a poet and a prophet.³ This integration of traditions and styles is not unlike that in the genre of biblical versification, where poets promote Christian values through classical forms; like Horace, they appreciate the lasting appeal

² Williams, ed., Horace’s Odes, p. 29.
³ For Horace’s claims to originality see Ode 30.13–14 and Epistle i.19, both of which Williams cites in Horace’s Odes, p. 11 and p. 151. See also N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, eds., The Oxford Classical Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1970), p. 528. Williams also refers to the Augustan revitalization of the word uates (p. 10), which Lewis and Short (A Latin Dictionary, p. 1960) defines as ‘I. a foreteller, seer, soothsayer, prophet’ and ‘II. a poet; a poetess (the oldest name for a poet; but it fell into contempt, and was discarded for poeta, until restored to honor by Vergil).’
of writers such as Vergil, and as admirers themselves, they keep many features of the metre and diction of their predecessors’ work, but change the context of well-worn words and phrases from their remembered reading. In the hands of a Christian poet, for example, elements of Horace’s ode might find themselves in a very different context, so that profanum vulgus could come to mean something like ‘heathen mob,’ while the priest (sacerdos) could become a Christian priest, whose unheard of songs (‘carmina non prius audita’) now sing of the Fall of Man or miracles of Christ. In this way, Aeneas becomes Jonah in Avitus’ *De spiritualis gestis historiae*, still ‘buffeted on land and sea’ (‘Multum ille et terris iactatus et alto,’ 4.359), but now in the belly of a whale; or in Proba’s *Cento Vergilianus*, Dido yields features of her unmistakeable beauty to the characterization of Eve. Latin biblical verse is therefore often a learned game of allusions and a sometimes precarious balance of sacred and profane, as Christian poets consecrate pagan literature for use in a Christian world.

From the first quarter of the fourth century to the middle of the sixth, poets from Italy, France and Spain leave their mark upon a nascent genre of biblical verse. The Spanish priest Juvencus is the first among them, and his Vergilian versification of the Gospels, *Euangeliorum libri quattuor* (AD 329), composed of 3220 verses, represents the earliest effort in the genre to paraphrase a significant portion of the Bible. His fusion of classical and biblical elements moreover establishes many of the generic norms for later

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4 See, for example, *una profana* in the *Carmen paschale* of Sedulius (1.47).
biblical poets, with the exception of Proba (fl. AD 360). She is the only female biblical poet, and her 694-line *Cento Vergilianus*, a patchwork of Vergilian quotations covering the whole of biblical history from Creation to the ascension of Christ, does not follow the stylistic *modus operandi* established in the *Euangelia*. The *Heptateuch* of Cyprianus Gallus (fl. c. AD 400), however, is very much in tune with the Juvencan model. This poem (5550 lines) exhibits a comparable fidelity to the scriptural narrative in the versification of the first seven books of the Bible. Writing in the first quarter of the fifth century, Caelius Sedulius is the first writer to show an appreciable degree of stylistic freedom in the genre, whose *Carmen paschale* (c. AD 425) renders the Gospels into 1770 lines of verse with thematic emphasis on the miracles of Christ (*miracula Christi*, 26).

Three subsequent poets direct their attention away from the New Testament to the Book of Genesis: pseudo-Hilary, with his *Metrum in Genesin* (c. AD 440–60), a 204-line poem dedicated to Pope Leo; Claudius Marius Victor with the *Alethia* (c. AD 450–75), 2020 lines; and Dracontius, with *De laudibus dei* (c. AD 484–96), 2327 lines. In the following century, Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus, bishop of Vienne (AD 490–523), renders the Mosaic books into verse in *De spiritalis historiae gestis* (c. AD 507), a free rendering of the Creation, Temptation, Fall, the Flood and Crossing of the Red Sea. The genre reaches its height in late antiquity with Arator’s *Historia apostolica* (c. AD 544), a loose paraphrase of the *Acts of the Apostles*, which alternates between narrative episodes and

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10 J. Huemer, ed., *Sedulii Opera*, CSEL 10 (Vienna, 1885).
exegetical interpretations of them. These are the chief biblical poets of late antiquity, although other writers such as Prudentius, also treat biblical episodes in a variety of ways.

**Juvenoc (fl. AD 329)**

As the earliest Latin biblical poet, Juvenoc is the father of biblical verse in the West. He composed his *Euangelia*, containing four books of hexameter poetry, around AD 329. The poem is the author’s only surviving work, though Jerome alludes to other compositions about the sacraments. Johann Huemer, whose 1891 edition is still the standard text of the *Euangelia*, best summarizes what little we know of the life and literary activities of Juvenoc, and he provides three notable quotations by Jerome:  

Iuuencus, nobilissimi generis Hispanus, presbyter, quattuor euangelia hexametris uersibus paene ad uerbum transferens quattuor libros composuit, et nonnulla eodem metro ad sacramentorum ordinem pertinentia. Floruit sub Constantino principe.

[Juvenoc, a Spanish priest of noble birth, translating the four Gospels almost word for word into hexameter verse, wrote four books and many other things in the same metre related to the order of the sacraments. He flourished in the time of Constantine.]

—*De viris illustribus* (Ch. 84)

Iuuencus presbyter, natione Hispanus, Euangelia heroicis uersibus explicat.

[The priest Juvenoc, of Spanish nationality, unfolds the Gospels in heroic verse.]

—*Chronicon* (ad ann. 329)

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14 A. P. McKinlay, ed., *Aratoris Subdiaconi De Actibus Apostolorum*, CSEL 72 (Vienna, 1951); see also A. P. Orbán, ed., *Historia apostolica*, CCSL 130 (Turnhout, 2006). For the dating period of late antiquity, I follow Michael Roberts (*Biblical Epic*, p. 3), who places the period between ‘the mid-third to the mid-seventh century.’

15 For manuscript attestations of the author’s name the title of his poem, see Huemer, *Euangeliorum Libri*, p. v, note 1. For example, CCCC 304: ‘SAPIENTISSIMI VIRI IVVENCI XPIANI EVANGELIORUM LIBER PRIMUS EXPLICIT; INCIPIT LIBER SECVNDUS CALVETII AQVILINI C (36)’ [‘Here ends the first book of the *Euangeliorum libri* of the wisest Christian man, Juvenoc; Here begins the second book of Calvetius Aquilinus’]. Numerous such inscriptions appear at the beginning and end of books of the poem.


17 For the date of the poem see Roger Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, p. 3


19 See further E. C. Richardson, ed., *De Viris Illustribus* (Leipzig, 1896); see also Migne, *PL* vol. 23, col. 691.

Iuuencus presbyter sub Constantino historiam Domini Salvatoris uersibus explicauit nec pertimuit euangelii maiestatem sub metri leges mittere.

[The priest Juvencus put the story of the Lord-Saviour into verse in the reign of Constantine; nor was he afraid to subject the majesty of the Gospels to the rules of metre.]

—Epistula 70 (to Magnus)\(^\text{21}\)

These references attest to the nationality, nobility and priesthood of Juvencus, and from these details many later writers adapt their own biographies of the poet.\(^\text{22}\) For our purposes, Jerome’s statement that Juvencus translates the Gospels ‘almost to the word’ (\textit{paene ad uerbum}) is important as a contemporary evaluation of the poem’s style. Moreover, that Jerome holds Juvencus in high esteem is clear from his inclusion of the poet in his \textit{De uiris illustribus} and his quotation of the \textit{Euangelia} in his \textit{Commentary on Matthew} (written in 398), where he cites Juvencus’ reference to the gifts of the Magi: ‘Pulcherrime munerum sacramenta Iuuencus presbyter cum uersiculo comprehendit: \textit{Tus aurum myrrham regique hominique deoque dona ferunt}’ ['The priest Juvencus most beautifully embraces the sacraments of these gifts with this short verse: They bring gold, incense and myrrh, for the king, and the God and the man’].\(^\text{23}\) In effect, Jerome’s quotation effectively endorses the orthodoxy of the \textit{Euangelia} and sanctions its status as a model exemplum for later poets who incorporate classical literature into their biblical versifications. Pope Gelasius furthermore echoes Jerome’s endorsement of Juvencus at the end of the century in his \textit{Decretum Gelasianum}: ‘Item Iuuenci nihilominus laboriosum opus non


spernimus sed miramur’ [‘Likewise we by no means spurn the arduous work of Juvencus but rather admire it’].

Jerome’s comment that Juvencus follows the Bible paene ad uerbum is basically true, though a more accurate statement would be paene ad uersum, ‘almost to the verse.’ In fact, no biblical poet ever tries to render every word of any particular part of the Bible into verse—the demands of even the simplest metre would make this a virtually impossible task, to say nothing of the sacrifice to the author’s creative impulse. Instead, poets typically take what they consider to be the essential features of a given chapter or verse of the Bible, usually a word, phrase or image, and omit everything else. In the Euangelia and other biblical poems, genealogical material such as that found at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, for example, is regularly omitted, and so are specific details relating to ritual practices, such as those concerned with Passover in chapter thirteen of Exodus. Otherwise, on the whole, the Euangelia represents a harmony of the Gospels with emphasis on Matthew and only a few excursions into the other Gospels: ‘From Luke he takes chiefly the information pertaining to the Baptist and the infancy of Jesus … From John, he takes the Wedding at Cana, the conversations with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman, the vocation of Philip and Nathaniel, Lazarus and some other

episodes. A lengthy digression into the Gospel of John also appears in Book Two, lines 99–349.

As far as the classical stylistic heritage of the Euangelia is concerned, the heroic metre alone betrays its epic lineage, and later biblical poets adopt the same metre in imitation of Juvenecus as much as Vergil. In his handling of hexameter verse, Juvenecus is a skilled imitator of his predecessors, as Longpré says, ‘c’est un disciple, non pas créateur.’ His vocabulary likewise reflects a desire to incorporate epic diction, including compounds such as superincrepito (to shout over, 2.161), flammipes (fire-footed, 2.546), glaucicomans (grey-haired, 3.623), flammicomans (fiery-haired, 4.201), ignicolorus (fire-coloured, 4.155) and praestupidus (exceedingly stupid, 4.199).

Likewise, in the spirit of epithets like ‘Far-seeing Zeus’ or ‘Jupiter the Thunderer,’ Juvenecus also refers to God as Tonans (the Thunderer), calling Christ ‘Venerable offspring of the Thunderer’ (proles veneranda tonantis, 4.785), for example. Other epithets for Christ in the Euangelia include, ‘Victor of death’ (leti victor, 2.405), ‘Ruler of the world’ (mundi regnator, 2.265) and ‘Sower of eternal life’ (sator aeternae vitae, 3.161), and all of this language contributes to what becomes a stereotypical style of vocabulary in biblical poetry.

But despite numerous classical reminiscences in the Euangelia, the poem contains few of the features we would normally associate with classical epic. It is not written in twenty-four or twelve books, like Homer’s Iliad or Vergil’s Aeneid, but four, in imitation of the Gospels. There are no catalogues of sins or miracles to reflect catalogues of ships,
few epic similes, and no battle scenes with heroic, haughty speeches. Christ does not take
up arms (physical or spiritual) against earthly or demonic foes, and no quarrelling gods
contend for the lives of their favourite mortals—only one God descends to earth, and not
for the sake of any one person but all mankind. Still, Juvencus maintains a fairly strict
detachment from his narrative, in keeping with classical decorum. The Euangelia also
begins in medias res with the introduction of Herod in the opening lines. Heralding
angels come and go from earth in terms we may equate with Hermes, the messenger
god, for example, and a conspicuous epic sunset greets the reader at the opening of
Book Two (2.1–3): ‘Iamque dies prono decedens lumine pontum / Inciderat, furuamque
super nox caerula pallam / Sidereis pictam flammis per inane trahebat’ ['And so,
departing day etched the sea with leaning light / And night drew its darkened cloak, /
Tinged with starry flames, over the emptiness']. Overall, while the epic reminiscences
in the Euangelia elevate the grandeur of the Gospel-story, it is never at the expense of the
author’s essential focus on the biblical narrative; nor is Juvencus ever careless or
ostentatious in his use of epic embellishments.

One of the more obvious classicisms in the poem, which serves to formalize
speeches is the repetition of the archaic form of ille, which Vergil also uses several times
in the Aeneid. Consider the following examples, which include all the uses of this
formula in the Euangelia, together with a few illustrative examples from the Aeneid.

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30 For the repeated phrasing in descriptions of divine messengers in the Euangelia see further 1. 42: ‘Haec
aet et sese teneris inmiscuit auris’; 1.79, ‘Nuntius abscedens uacuis se condidit auris’; and 4.702, ‘Aetheriis
animam comitem commiscuit auris.’
31 Roberts comments on the Christian appropriation of this classical topos in Biblical Epic (p. 208), and he
notes that evocations of the ‘epic dawn’ are more common in Juvenecus and Cyprianus than other biblical
poets.
32 Roger Green mentions the use of olli for illi in Latin Epics, p. 54.
33 For all the instances of olli in the Aeneid see further 5.10, 5.197, 5.284, 5.358, 5.580, 6.730, 7.505, 8.94,
Ev. 1.127  Olli confusa respondit mente sacerdos:
Ev. 2.14  Olli Christus ait: ‘Quo me tu, scriba, sequeris?
Ev. 2.134 Olli respondit terrarum gloria Christus:
Ev. 2.252 Olli Christus ait: ‘Laticis da, femina, potum.
Ev. 2.265 Olli respondit mundi regnantor Iesus:
Ev. 2.410 Ollis Christus ait: ‘Quid credunt pectora uestra?
Ev. 3.110 Olli confidens respondet talia Petrus:
Ev. 3.659 Olli Christus ait: ‘Non sit tibi fructibus umquam
Ev. 3.677 Ollis Christus ait: ‘Quaerentibus omnia uobis
Ev. 4.29  Ollis Christus ait: ‘Errori obnoxia prauo
Ev. 4.525 Olli Christus ait: ‘Gladium tu ponito, noster:

cf. Aeneid (see note for all uses):

Aen. 1.255  Olli subridens hominum sator atque deorum [ait]
Aen. 4.105  Olli (sensit enim simulata mente locutam ...Venus [ait]:
Aen. 6.321  Olli sic breuiter fata est longaeva sacerdos [ait]:
Aen. 12.18  Olli sedato respondid corde Latinus:
Aen. 9.740  Olli subridens sedato pectore Turnus:
Aen. 12.829  Olli subridens hominum rerumque repertor:

Of all the biblical poets, with the exception of Proba (1.133, 1.446) and Cyprianus (Ex. 197), Juvencus is the only writer in the genre to use this archaic form. Essentially, it constitutes a formulaic phrase in which the vocabulary, order of words and even the speaker remain the same: olli + forms of respondeo + the speaker’s name at the end of the line (sacerdos, Iesus, Petrus); or olli + Christus + ait. Vergil uses the same structure, and often places the subject at the end of the line as well (sacerdos, Latinus, Turnus, repertor). The effect of the rhetorical device in both the Aeneid and the Euangelia is a formalization and elevation of the style of the poetry.

Nowhere does Juvencus respond to the style of classical epic more strongly than in his preface to the Euangelia, the language of which suggests that we might have had a very different poem from the author, had he chosen to exploit classical literature toward a
different end. As it is, the author’s style at the opening of the poem does not reflect the style of the whole *Euangelia*; it is instead a deliberate attempt to align the grandeur of the Gospels with the majesty of classical epic. The tone and language of the opening are therefore strongly Vergilian, while the message of the preface nevertheless represents a departure from the classical tradition, especially in the rejection of earthly fame and glory (1–29):\(^{34}\)

Inmortale nihil mundi conpage tenetur,
Non orbis, non regna hominum, non aurea Roma,
Non mare, non tellus, non ignea sidera caeli.
Nam statuit genitor rerum inreuocabile tempus,
Quo cunctum torrens rapiat flamma ultima mundum.
Sed tamen innumeros homines sublimia facta
Et uirtutis honos in tempora longa frequentant,
Adcumulant quorum famam laudesque poetae.
Hos celsi cantus, Smyrnae de fonte fluentes,
Illos Minciadæ celebrat dulcedo Maronis. 10
Nec minor ipsorum discurrît gloria uatum,
Quae manet aeternæ similis, dum saecula uolabant
Et uertigo poli terras atque aequora circum
Aethera sidereum iusso moderamine uoluet.
Quod si tam longam meruerunt carmina famam,
Quae ueterum gestis hominum mendacia nectunt,
Nobis certa fides aeternæ in saecula laudis
Inmortale decus tribuet meritumque rependet.
Nam mihi carmen erit Christi uitalia gesta,
Diuinum in populis falsi sine crimine donum. 20
Nec metus, ut mundi rapiant incendia secum
Hoc opus; hoc etenim forsan me subtrahet igni
Tunc, cum flammiuoma descendet nube coruscans
Iudex, altithroni genitoris gloria, Christus.
Ergo age! sanctificus adsit mihi carminis auctor
Spiritus, et puro mentem riget amne canentis
Dulcis Jordanis, ut Christo digna loquamur.

[Nothing in the substance of this world is immortal: not the earth, not the kingdoms of men, not golden Rome, not the sea, not the land, not the fiery stars of the sky. For the Creator has set an irrevocable time for things, in which a final torrent of

\(^{34}\) Note that here and throughout the following sections and chapters I provide indentation for longer passages, which affords some measure of pause. This indentation does not, however, represent sectional divisions in the manuscripts.
flame will grip this entire world. Nevertheless, inspired deeds and the distinction of power have visited countless men for a long time, whose fame and praise the poets heap up. Some are celebrated in lofty songs flowing from the font of Smyrna, others by the sweetness of Mincian Maro. And no less does the glory of the poets themselves spread far and wide, lasting like eternity, while the ages fly by; and the spinning axis turns land and sea around the starry heights of heaven with bidden moderation. So, even if those songs do deserve such lasting fame—songs that bind lies to the deeds of ancient men—my sure faith in an eternity of everlasting praise will grant me immortal glory and render me my due reward. For my song will be about the life-giving deeds of Christ, a divine gift among the people without the sin of falsehood. Nor shall I fear that the fires of this world will grip my work along with them; for perhaps He will spare me from the blaze when He descends, shining in flame-spewing cloud, the Judge, the Glory of the High-Throned Creator, Christ. Therefore come, Holy Spirit! Be the author of my song and dip my heart in the pure streams of sweet-singing Jordan, that I may speak things worthy of Christ.]

Like Homer and Vergil, Juvenecus puts the heart of his poem in his first word, *immortale*, through which he strives to outdo his predecessors, who merely sing of mortal wrath (*Mōn ἑιδε, qeâ*) and of arms and a man (*Arma virumque cano*). Yet with the second word, *nihil*, Juvenecus immediately reverses our expectation that immortality is to be the central theme of his poem. If nothing of this world is immortal, then what is? The answer to this question is self-evident, but Juvenecus withholds it until the end of his preface. For the moment, he maintains his focus on the ‘final flame’ of Judgment, which he says will destroy all of this world’s transient wealth, including the apparent glory which poets like Homer and Vergil have enjoyed and which even Juvenecus admits seems eternal (‘gloria vatūm ... aeternae similis,’ 12).

Juvenecus’ rejection of earthly fame and glory at the opening of the *Euangelia* is not simply a moral generalization on the vanity of worldly ambition, but a specific allusion to Book Ten of the *Aeneid*, where such achievements are the highest goals in

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life. In this book, Alcides advises his son Hercules to gather all the fame he can before his death (10.464–69):

Audiit Alcides iuuenem magnumque sub imo
Corde premit gemitum lacrimasque effundit inanis. 465
Tum genitor natum dictis affatur amicis:
‘Stat sua cuique dies, breue et irreparabile tempus
Omnibus est uitae; sed famam extendere factis,
Hoc uirtutis opus …

[Alcides listened to his mighty son and from the bottom of his heart he suppressed a groan and shed tears in vain. Then, father addressed son in kindly words, saying: 'A day is set for every man; brief and irreparable is the time of life for all; but it is the work of virtue to extend one’s fame through deeds …]

It is hard to believe the similar language in lines 467–8 of the Aeneid and lines 4–8 of the Euangelia is coincidental: Juvencus echoes the verb stat (from sto) in the Aeneid with statuit (from statuo), emphasizing the certainty of Judgment just as Vergil admits the inevitability of death. Both poets also stress man’s ultimate destiny in similar terms (inreuocabile tempus; irreparabile tempus). But whereas Alcides recommends ‘extending one’s fame through his deeds,’ Juvencus emphasizes the futility and transience of the fame and glory Homer and Vergil ‘heap up’ in their poetry (‘adcumulant quorum famam laudesque Poetae,’ 8). The opening of the Euangelia therefore exemplifies the negotiation of Christian and Classical literature mentioned earlier, the renovation of pagan material to promote a Christian message. In this case, the message is a pointed one: the outward form of classical verse may suffice for the versification of the Bible, but not its core values.

The central theme of the Euangelia is therefore emphatically not the pursuit of glory in this life, but in the next, and the answer to the implicit question, ‘What is immortal if not golden Rome?’ is eternal salvation (immortale decus, 19). The repetition of the word immortale in line nineteen is highly emphatic and punctuates the author’s disapproval of
songs that bind the lies to the ancient deeds of men (‘carmina ... quae uterum gestis hominum mendacia nectunt,’ 14–15). For his part, Juvenecus proposes to sing about ‘the eternal life-giving deeds of Christ’ (‘Nam mihi carmen erit Christi uitalia gesta,’ 19), which, unlike those untruthful songs, are without the sin of falsehood (falsi sine crimine, 20). So the language that describes Christ’s fiery descent to earth, though it is once set in classical terms, looks to the Judgment of the wicked and salvation of the blessed (23–4):

‘Tunc, cumflammiuoma descendet nube coruscans / Iudex, altithroni genitoris gloria, Christus ...’ [‘Then, when He descends, shining in flame-spewing cloud, the Judge, the Glory of the High-Throned Creator, Christ ...’]. The language here is reminiscent of Vulcan’s descent to earth in the Aeneid, when he comes from Olympus bearing Aeneas’ newly-made armour in a similar burst of flame (8.423): ‘Hoc tunc ignipotens caelo descendit ab alto’ [‘Then the fire-mighty god descends from lofty heaven’]. But the glory in this case belongs to Christ, and the inevitability of Judgment Day motivates the author to beg for the Holy Spirit’s intervention on his behalf (1.27–9):

Ergo age! sanctificus adsit mihi carminis auctor
Spiritus, et puro mentem riget amne canentis
Dulcis Jordanis, ut Christo digna loquamur.

[So come, Holy Spirit! Be the author of my song,
And dip my heart in the pure streams of sweet-singing
Jordan, that I may say things worthy of Christ.]

Here, for the first time, a Christian poet invokes the Holy Spirit instead of the pagan muse, and in a single stroke, Juvenecus plunges himself and the whole tradition of classical poetry into the river Jordan in what represents a figural baptism of both poet and poetry. From this moment forward and all the way to Milton’s Paradise Lost, writers in the genre of biblical poetry invoke the Christian muse to inspire their songs. Sometimes
they call upon Christ, sometimes the Holy Spirit or the Virgin Mary, but always a representative of the Christian faith.

Apart from the preface, occasional stylistic flourishes appear here and there throughout the *Euangelia* whenever Juvencus is inspired to raise the tone of a given scene. He devotes considerable attention, for example, to the journey of the Magi, which he elevates to epic proportions out of reverence for the occasion (1.243–51):36

Qui cum audissent regem abierunt et ecce stella quam viderant in oriente antecedebat eos usque dum veniens staret supra ubi erat puer. Videntes autem stellam gavisi sunt gaudio magno valde; et intrantes domum invenerunt puerum cum Maria matre eius et procidentes adoraverunt eum et apertis thesauris suis obtulerunt ei munera aurum tus et murram. —Mt 2:9–11

[Who having heard the king, went their way; and behold the star which they had seen in the East, went before them, until it came and stood over where the child was. And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down they adored him: and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh.]

Ecce iteris medio stellam praecurrere cernunt.
Sulcantem flammis auras, quae culmine summo
Restitit et pueri lustrata habitacula monstrat.
Gaudia magna Magi gaudent sidusque salutant:
Et postquam puerum uidere sub ubere matris,
Deiecti prono strauerunt corpore terram
Submissique simul quaesunt; tum munera trina,
Tus, aurum, murrham regique hominique Deoque
Dona dabant …

[Behold, they saw the star coursing before them in the midst of their road, ploughing the air with flame, which stood in the utmost height and revealed the holy, humble dwelling of the boy. The Magi rejoiced with great joy and hailed the star. And when they saw the child in his mother’s bosom, they cast themselves to the ground with outstretched limbs and submitted themselves at once to his worship. Then they made offerings, three gifts: gold, incense, myrrh for the king, for the God, for the man.]

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Even from a comparison with the Vulgate, it is clear that Juvencus retains the essential language of the Bible and the order in which it appears, raising it with poetic imagery and syntax. He retains the ubiquitous _ecce_ (243), which he repeats at every turn in his poem in imitation of the Vulgate’s use of the interjection. He keeps _stella_ (‘star,’ 243) and represents _staret_ (‘stood’) in the perfect (_restitit_, 245), repeating _puer_ (‘boy,’ 245) as it is. He then echoes the synonymic phrase, ‘rejoicing with great joy’ through polyptoton (‘gavisi sunt gaudio mango,’ 246), further intertwining the sounds of the line with internal rhyme, connecting _magna_ with _Magi_; alliteration finishes off the cadence with _sidusque salutant_ (246) To this language, Juvencus adds an epic touch in line 244, with the star, which ‘ploughs the air with its flame,’ coming to rest in the height of heaven above the boy’s dwelling (‘Sulcantem flammis auras, quae culmine summo,’ 244). The use of _sulcantem_ (‘ploughing’) is entirely poetic, usually applying to ships, while _culmine summo_ is a stock Vergilian phrase appearing in both the _Aeneid_ and _Georgics_.

The rhythmic potential of ‘munera aurum tus et murrum’ in the Bible must have occurred to Juvencus almost immediately, and he reflects the words in hexameter verse, using asyndeton and polysyndeton to align the three gifts with their symbolic counterparts. This is the passage Jerome quotes in his commentary on Matthew, and as we shall see, poets regularly comment on the mystical significance of the gifts of the Magi in biblical poems. Juvencus, however, is the earliest source for this interpretive symbolism in verse.

Later in Book One, where he reproduces the rhetorical force of the Sermon on the Mount, Juvencus shows how he is able to unite his poetic impulse with the desire to remain faithful to the biblical narrative. The Vulgate appears for comparison (1.452–65):

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37 See Vergil (Aen. 10.197): ‘Arduus, et longa sulcat maria alta carina’; or Ovid (Meta. 15.726): ‘Sulcat et innixus moderamine nauis in alta.’
38 See Vergil (Aen. 7.512 and Georgics 1.142).
Videns autem turbas ascendit in montem et cum sedisset accesserunt ad eum discipuli eius et aperiens os suum docebat eos dicens:


—Mt 5:1–10

Hos populos cernens praecelsa rupe resedit
Ac sic discipulis gremium cingentibus infit:
‘Felices humiles, pauper quos spiritus ambit,
Illos nam caeli regnum sublime receptat,
His similes mites, quos mansuetudo coronat,
Quorum debitur iuri pulcherrima tellus.
Hoc modo lugentes solacia magna sequentur.
Pabula iustitiae qui nunc potusque requirunt,
Illos plena manet satiandos copia mensae.
Felix, qui miseri doluit de pectore sortem,
Illum nam Domini miseratio larga manebit.
Felices, puro qui caelum corde tuentur,
Visibilis Deus his per saecula cuncta patebit.
Pacificos Deus in numerum sibi prolis adoptat.
Felices nimium, quos insectatio frendens
Propter iustitiam premit; his mox regia caeli
Pandetur.

[Seeing the people, he went up into a mountain, and when he was set down, his disciples came unto him.

And opening his mouth he taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart: they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.]
and they are rightfully owed the fairest of lands. Likewise do worthy comforts follow those who mourn. Now, those who seek the food and drink of righteousness—the full abundance of the table waits to fill them up. Blessed is he who grieves the lot of the wretched in his breast; for the bountiful mercy of the Lord awaits him. Blessed are those who look to Heaven with a pure heart: God will ever be visible to them. God receives peace-makers into the number of his children. Very blessed are those whom gnashing persecution seeks in the name of justice: the palace of heaven will soon be open to them.

The English translation does not do justice to the care Juvencus has given the composition of this scene. Again, he represents the essential language of the Bible, using synonyms where the metre demands it (*pauperes/pauper; saturabuntur/satiandos; regnum/regia*), but he also tries to capture the rhetorical force of the speech by giving his verse a similar structure. The strength of the passage is the unmistakable connection to the source and the affinity of the verse with the biblical prose, despite the changes Juvencus has to make. Especially notable, for example, is the complete absence of the adjective *beatus* (blessed). The reason is that it cannot be the first word of a hexameter line, because the first syllable is short (*bêatus*). So, Juvencus uses *fêlix*, an adjective of similar meaning (‘happy,’ ‘fortunate,’ ‘blessed’), which also affords greater metrical flexibility as a third declension adjective (*fêlix* or *fêlicês*). But Juvencus does not repeat even this word with the same frequency as the Vulgate does *beatus*, because of the influence of the classical rhetorical device of *variatio*, which advises synonymic rather than precise repetition.39 Instead of using a series of synonyms, therefore, which would defeat the purpose of trying to represent the rhetorical effect of the prose, Juvencus uses occasional repetition (of *felix*) together with inflectional rhyme. *Similes mites* in line 456 and *lugentes* in line 458 share tail-rhyme with the first instance of *felices* in line

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39 For rhetorical variation in biblical poetry of late antiquity see Michael Roberts, *Biblical Epic*, pp. 198–99: ‘The principle of *variatio* is one that distinguishes biblical from classical aesthetics. The Bible makes no attempt to avoid repeating the same word; by classical standards, as interpreted by late antiquity, such repetition was a stylistic fault.’
454, which is then repeated later in lines 461, 463 and 466. Notice also how Juvenecus recreates the structure of the biblical passage, delineated by beatus, by punctuating each line with a finite verb in the final position. The result is the allusion of a paene ad uerbum translation of the Bible, which is actually a considerable re-working of the original in order to suit the technical demands of the verse.

Later in the Sermon Juvenecus directs his attention to the versification of the Lord’s Prayer. This section is another conspicuous embellishment in the poem and a source of inspiration for many later versifications of the Prayer (1.590–600):

Pater noster qui in caelis es sanctificetur nomen tuum
Veniat regnum tuum fiat voluntas tua sicut in caelo et in terra
Panem nostrum supersubstantiale da nobis hodie
Et dimitte nobis debita nostra sicut et nos dimisimus debitoribus nostris
Et ne inducas nos in temptationem sed libera nos a malo.
[Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our supersubstantial bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen.]

Sidereo genitor residens in uertice caeli,   590
Nominis, oramus, ueneratio sanctificetur
In nobis, pater alte, tui: tranquillaque mundo
Adueniat regnumque tuum lux alma reclaudat.
Sic caelo ut terris tua fiat clara voluntas,
Vitalisque hodie sancti substantia panis   595
Proueniat nobis; tua mox largitio soluat
Innumera indulgens erroris debita prauui;
Et nos haud aliter concedere foenora nostris.
Tetri saeua procul temptatio daemonis absit
Eque malis tua nos in lucem dextera tollat.   600
[Father residing in the starry height of heaven, may the veneration of your name, we pray, be hallowed—yours, high Father, in us; and may your kingdom come unto this world and may your tranquil, nourishing light enfold us. May your bright will be done on earth as it is in heaven and may the life-giving substance of your holy bread come to us each day; may your charity soon free us, forgiving the countless sins of our depraved error; and likewise grant that we may forgive the
debts owed to us. May the savage temptation of the foul demon be far from us and may your right hand bear us from the darkness into the light.]

Once more, the essential elements of the prose are all here (‘hallowed be thy name,’ ‘give us this day our daily bread,’ and so on) but with notable deviations. The addition of ‘the starry height of heaven’ (‘sidereō … in uertice caeli,’ 590) is purely poetic, for example; the phrase is likely adapted from Book One of the Aeneid (sic uertice caeli, 225), where Jupiter himself looks down from his own lofty throne.40 To the words, ‘thy kingdom come’ (594), Juvencus adds ‘may your tranquil, nourishing light enfold us’ (‘tranquillaque … lux alma reclaudat’), which, together with the adjective clara in the next line, reflects the author’s persisted interest in light motifs throughout the poem.41 Also notable in this passage is the addition of the adjective, uitalis (life-giving, 595), which qualifies ‘the substance of holy bread.’ Looking back to the preface and the central statement of there, ‘my song will be about the life-giving deeds of Christ’ (uitalia gesta), the repetition of the adjective here is probably connected to the central theme of immortality in the poem. The adjective also appears at several key moments elsewhere, including Book Two, where it relates to Christ’s ‘life-giving table,’ (uitali accumbere mensae, 1.757), his ‘life-giving grace’ (uitalis gratia, 2.270), his ‘life-giving times’ (‘aduentu proprio uitalia saecula pandet,’ 2.292) and his ‘life-giving words’ (uitalia uerba, 2.452; ‘dictis pandens uitalibus aures,’ 2.547; uitalia dicta frequentat, 2.725; uitalia uerba securit, 3.255). In this particular instance (at line 595) the adjective alludes to Christ as the bread of life, and the metaphor is one of the few exegetical interpolations in the narrative along with the signification of the Gifts of the Magi. More than just a

40 Juvencus uses the phrase uertice caeli two other times (1.614, 4.153). Vergil only uses it once (1.225).
41 See further Wilfrid Röttger, Studien zur Lichtmotivik bei Iuvencus (Munster, 1996).
verbatim imitation of the Bible, Juvencus’ versification of the Lord’s Prayer combines epic grandeur with the brilliance and vital power of God’s omnipotence.

Unaware that he is initiating a genre, Juvencus makes the first decisions as to how biblical verse should respond to the Bible on the one hand and classical literature on the other. The importance of these decisions is not be underestimated. For while Juvencus may be a fairly literal versifier compared to his successors, the stylistic freedom they enjoy is due in part to his initial success in establishing the legitimacy of the genre. As a model exemplum, the Euangelia furthermore attains high status through the endorsements of Jerome and Gelasius, who endorse the orthodoxy of the poem and provide later authors with an authorized template for their own compositions.42 In fact, it is a testament to the success and popularity of the Euangelia that it does not fail to leave some impression on every single poet in the genre from Cyprianus to Arator, and while Juvencus is not necessarily a conduit for the spiritual sense of the Scriptures, like Sedulius in Book One of his Carmen paschale or Avitus in his Historia spiritualis, he is nevertheless a kind of virtual evangelist, a conduit for the facta, the essential words and deeds, of the Gospels themselves. So, far from representing the infancy of the genre in any underdeveloped or immature sense, the Euangelia of Juvencus is perhaps the most faithful versification of the Bible of all, and the proof of its enduring influence is found in the biblical poems to follow.

42 As Michael Lapidge says in ‘Versifying the Bible in the Middle Ages’ (p. 15), ‘Certainly the Late Latin poets who followed Juvencus were aware of the importance of his achievement, and the imprint of his diction is found in all his successors.’
The *Heptateuch* is the second major versification of the Bible after the *Euangelia*, and while it concerns the Old Testament, the *Heptateuch* is nevertheless a very Juvencan style of poem. Like Juvencus, for example, Cyprianus observes a similar fidelity to Scriptures, the same detachment from the narrative and the same control over his appropriation of classical literature. However, it is fair to say that Cyprianus is more susceptible to rhetorical flourishes when it comes to the epic potential of certain biblical stories.

Cyprianus probably wrote his versification of the first seven books of the Bible around AD 400, but we cannot be precise about its date of composition or even the identity of the author himself, since contemporary sources are silent on both accounts. The cognomen ‘Gallus’ is the invention of the poem’s editor, Rudolf Peiper (1891), even though it is based on a general consensus that features of Cyprianus’ poetry are ‘Gallo-Roman.’ If for no other reason, the name is useful to distinguish the poet from Cyprian of Carthage, who was also once a candidate for authorship of the *Heptateuch*. In fact, uncertainty over the identity of the author has led scholars over the years to attribute the poem variously to Tertullian, Juvencus, Salvian, Avitus, Prudentius and even Aldhelm. The only reliable piece of information we possess, however, is the title of the work itself, which Peiper bases on tenth- and twelfth-century manuscript catalogues mentioning the

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43 See further Daniel Nodes, *Doctrine and Exegesis* (p. 83): ‘[Cyprianus’] work contains the fewest direct comments of all the biblical epics.’
45 See Di Berardino, *Patrology*, vol. 4, p. 313.
46 See John, E. B. Major, *The Latin Heptateuch* (Cambridge, 1889), esp. pp xxii–viii and xli, which provides scholarly and anecdotal details about the various candidates for authorship. See also Di Berardino, *Patrology*, vol. 4, p. 312.
‘Heptateuch’ by name. For the edition of the poem, Peiper’s text (still the standard) draws upon the five known manuscripts of the Heptateuch, which amounts to 5550 lines of hexameter verse and includes Genesis (1498 lines) Exodus (1333 lines), Leviticus (309 lines), Numbers (777 lines), Deuteronomy (288 lines), Joshua (585 lines) and Judges (760 lines). In addition, a catalogue from the monastery of Saint Nazarius at Lorsch also attests to the versification of Kings, Chronicles, Esther, Judith and Maccabees, but these portions of the poem only survive in fragments. Obviously, then, we are lacking a great deal of basic information about the author and his work, even if there is much we can still say about the poem we have inherited.

The biblical language of the Heptateuch suggests a pre-Vulgate text of the Bible, and Michael Roberts names a version of the Vetus Latina (Municipal Library, Lyons, Ms. 403) as an approximation of the author’s source. Even a comparison with the Vulgate, however, shows that Cyprianus keeps a close eye on the Bible, and Peiper’s marginal cross-references to the Bible make it easy to see what Cyprianus adds or leaves out. The omissions in general reflect the choices of Juvenecus in the Euangelia, so that, for example, Cyprianus excludes the genealogy of Moses in Chapter Six of Exodus (line 258), just as Juvenecus omits the genealogy of Christ in Matthew; and at line 351, Cyprianus leaves out all of the details relating to the ritual of Passover in Chapter Twelve of Exodus (12:1–28), in the same way Juvenecus omits similar material throughout his versification of the Gospels.

47 See further Rudolf Peiper, ed., Cypriani Galli Poetae Heptateuchos (Vienna, 1891), p. i. The Nazarius catalogue attests to the name Peiper gives the poem, and so does one 12th century catalogue from Cluny. 48 My calculations for the lineation are based on Peiper’s edition. 49 Peiper prints the fragments on pp. 209–10 of his edition. 50 See further Michael Roberts, Jeweled Style, p. 10. For a text of the Codex Lugdunensis 403 see Ulysse Robert, Pentateuchi Versio Latina Antiquissima E Codice Lugdunensi (Paris, 1881). 51 For biblical omissions see Michael Roberts, Jeweled Style, p. 10; also, Roberts, Biblical Epic, p. 183.
Like Juvenecus and in keeping with classical decorum, Cyprianus also maintains strict detachment from the narrative except for two occasions. His use of metre is conventional, even more orthodox at times than his classical models. As Longpré says, ‘D’autre part, on a relevé, chez le poète de l’Heptateuque, des marques d’une technique personelle, encore plus stricte, si possible, que celle des poètes classiques.’ The diction of the Heptateuch betrays the primary influence of Vergil, although echoes of the Euangelia blur the lines of transmission at times. Cyprianus also shares with Juvenecus an over-zealous affection for the Tonans-epithet, as in Genesis (65): ‘Atque opifex tali formatur uoce tonantis’ [‘And the workman is summoned by the voice of the Thunderer’]. So, too, heavenly messengers come to earth much as they do in the Euangelia or Aeneid, so that it is difficult at times to tell precisely which poem Cyprianus is imitating. For example, the descent of the angel in Genesis (‘Nuntius aetherio descendit culmine caeli,’ 572) recalls the Annunciation in the Euangelia (1.357) but also Vulcan’s fiery descent in Book Eight of the Aeneid (8.423): ‘Hoc tunc ignipotens caelo descendit ab alto.’ One conspicuous Vergilian borrowing in the Heptateuch—something Juvenecus would perhaps have considered an excessive appropriation of classical literature—is the association of God with Mount Olympus (Gen. 923): ‘Ego sum rex magnus olympi’ (‘I am the great king of Olympus’); or God’s speech to Moses on Sinai (150), ‘Atque ideo huc ueni celso degressus olympo’ [‘And

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52 For Cyprianus’ narrative interventions see Ex. 1082–6 and Lev. 34; and, Nodes, Doctrine and Exegesis, p. 18.
54 According to Peiper’s appendix of Auctores imitatores, Cyprianus echoes Juvenecus about twenty times, though I suspect many more echoes exist, especially among lines that appear to be Vergilian but are in fact filtered through Juvenecus (references to Juvenecus appear in parentheses): Gen. 536 (3.228), 672 (1.469), 713 (1.44), 795 (1.735), 873 (2.422), 916 (2.761), 1287 (3.508), 1370 (3.738), 1432 (3.763); Ex. 203 (2.146), 296 (2.523), 375 (3.566), 421 (1.580), 1062 (3.330); Lev. 41 (4.104), 195 (1.124); Num. 111 (2.293), 695 (4.459); Iesu nave 18 (3.315), 40 (1.763), 201 (1.297).
55 For other examples of the Tonans-epithet in the Heptateuch see Genesis, 141, 168, 325, 793, 930, 1044, 1278; Exodus, 134, 728, 1077; Numbers, 437; Deuteronomy, 52; Iesu nave, 465, 491, 500; Judges, 236, 412, 437, 503, 522.
56 For another epic description of an angel’s descent to earth see also Ex. 992–9.
I have come here, descending from lofty Olympus’). Manna, too, rains down from Olympus (Deut. 39): ‘Ilicet et mannam nitido demittit Olympo’ ['He sends manna from shining Olympus’]. While the word can be taken to mean simply ‘heaven,’ Olympus has more pagan connotations than caelum, which Juvencus prefers.

The absence of any preface to the Heptateuch is highly conspicuous and puzzling. For a work that must have taken a great deal of the author’s time, it is surprising that Cyprianus has nothing to say about his inspiration for this 5000-line poem, and unlike all other poets in the genre, who reflect on the themes or creative motivations behind their poems, Cyprianus simply begins the Heptateuch with the ‘In principio’ of Genesis (1–10):

In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram. Terra autem erat inanis et vacua et tenebrae super faciem abyssi et spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas. Dixitque Deus fiat lux et facta est lux et vidit Deus lucem quod esset bona et divisit luxem ac tenebras appellavitque lucem diem et tenebras noctem factumque est vespere et mane dies unus. —Gen. 1:1–5

[In the beginning God created heaven, and earth. And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters. And God said: Be light made. And light was made. And God saw the light that it was good; and he divided the light from the darkness. And he called the light Day, and the darkness Night; and there was evening and morning one day.]

Principio dominus caelum terramque locavit: Namque erat informis fluctuque abscondita tellus Immensusque deus super aequora uasta meabat, Dum chaos et nigrae fuscabant cuncta tenebrae; Has dum disiungi iussit, a cardine fatur: ‘Lux fiat!’ et clare nituerunt omnia mundo. Cum dominus primi complessset facta diei, Condidit albentem nebulis nascentibus axem. Accipit immensus errantia litora pontus, Multiplices rapiens ualidis cum tractibus amnes.
[In the beginning, the Lord made a place for heaven and earth; for the land was
without form and hidden by a flood. Boundless, God walked upon the vastness of
the waters, while Chaos and dark shadow covered everything; he commanded
these to be divided, and spoke from the axis of heaven: ‘Let there be light!’ and
everything shone brightly in the world. When the Lord had finished the deeds of
the first day, he set the white axis of the sky apart from the nascent clouds.
Immense waters took on wandering shores, filling their manifold rivers with
mighty tracts.]

No one could mistake this opening for anything but the beginning of Genesis, and

Cyprianus, like Juvenecus keeps enough of the biblical prose to ground his verse in the
Scriptures. Perhaps Cyprianus thought that the first words of Genesis were famous enough,
perhaps as famous as any epic poem, so that there was no need to come up with his own.
The opening certainly shows a determination to stay close to the biblical source, and several
close parallels to the Bible suggest a paene ad uerbum concern for the source: informis (2)
for inanis et uacua; tellus (2) in place of terra; and super aequora (3) for super aquas.

This is not to say that Cyprianus is immune to the allure of epic verse, and the
heroic nature of classical literature comes to the surface in the versification of Exodus.
Leading up to the banks of the Red Sea, Cyprianus takes full advantage of the dramatic
potential inherent in the story—the anxious flight of the Israelites, the incessant pursuit of
the Egyptians and the frightening passage through the waters.57 These moments provide
the basis for poetic expansion on an epic scale, and Cyprianus draws deeply from the well
of classical literature in this part of the Heptateuch. Consider, for example, the departure
of the Israelites out of Socoth (Ex. 412–17):

57 The Crossing of the Red Sea is one of the most appealing episodes to Christian poets, and versions can
be found not only in Cyprianus’ poem but in those of Prudentius, Paulinus, Sedulius, Carmen de
Resurrectione, De martyrio Maccabaeorum, Sidonius Apollinaris, and Dracontius. See further Michael
Roberts, ‘Rhetoric and Poetic Imitation in Avitus’ Account of the Crossing of the Red Sea (De Spiritualis
And marching from Socoth, they encamped in Etham, in the utmost coasts of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them to shew the way, by day in a pillar of a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire; that he might be the guide of their journey at both times. There never failed the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, before the people.

Hence, they leave Socoth and come to Etham, with Christ showing them the unknown ways through the wilderness. With the new day, he spread light from the stars, and flying before them ploughed the stars in a cloud of white; and when night covered candescent day, brilliance spread through the heavens and shone in the bright tail of a comet.

Cyprianus begins with the essential vocabulary of the Bible, in this case the place-names (Sochotumque and Othumque, 412). He then renders the ‘extremes ends of the wilderness’ (‘in extremis finibus solitudinis’) with ignotas uias (413) the poetic phrase, ante uolans (415) approximates praecedebat; monstrante uias (413) reflects ostendendam uiam; and per diem becomes cum mane nouo (414). But in the poetry, the pillar of fire does not just ‘precede’ the Israelites, it ‘ploughs through the stars in snowy cloud’ (‘niuea sulcabat sidera nube,’ 415). This language is reminiscent of the Euangelia and the star leading the Magi to Christ’s manger (Sulcantem flammis auras, 1.244). More conspicuous than this poetic language, however, is the figural association of the pillar with Christ. In later biblical poetry especially, the appearance of Christ at this point is not
unusual, where the crossing often serves as a metaphor for Baptism.

The heroic-epic character of the crossing interests Cyprianus the most, however, and his versification of Exodus ultimately represents a desire to raise the martial-heroic character of the biblical story to the level of epic. In the Bible, Pharaoh’s preparations for war amount to a single verse (14:7): ‘Tulitque sescentos currus electos quicquid in Aegypto curruum fuit et duces totius exercitus’ [‘And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots that were in Egypt: and the captains of the whole army’]. Cyprianus, however, takes the opportunity to expand this single verse to a livelier image of the Egyptian troop (Ex. 426–33):

Ergo alacris in bella ciet ceu parua phalanges Ferratos agitans currus, quos axe uolante Trinus miles agit, uolucrem dum surgit in hastam, Nunc humilis, nunc uentosas sublimis in auras, Terroris fraudisque capax, quia uerbere crebro Pulsati sternunt acies, quae comminus obstant, Cornipedes pulsumque rotis feruentibus addunt, Incita quas uariis assultibus ungula uersat.

[Eager, then, Pharaoh musters his troops as if for some small war, spurring the iron-clad chariots driven by a three-fold team of footmen, while he lifts his winged spear, now low, now high into the windy air. It can frighten and betray, that spear, since from its steady blows the beaten battle-lines that stand in the way are scattered low, as horn-footed steeds add to the pounding of raging chariot-wheels, their headlong hoofs turning them in various charges.]

The scene here is a flurry of noise and expectation. The adjective alacris (‘eager,’ 426) along with the participle agitans (‘spurring,’ 427) betray the pharaoh’s impatience to set out, while ferratos (‘iron-clad,’ 427) adds a touch to the dreadfulness of the chariots. The axis of his own cart literally ‘flies’ (uolante, 427) and Pharoah’s spear is ‘winged’ like a bird (uolucrem, 428), and capable of terror and treachery (Terroris fraudisque capax, 430). What is more, the chariot-wheels themselves are ‘fervent’ (feruentibus, 432), as if they too
were burning to be under way. In short, this is no mere paraphrase of the Bible but a lively
and vivid response to the Exodus of the Israelites from the perspective of classical epic.

The Crossing of the Sea itself is the climax to this part of the poem (Ex. 14.23–8),
at which point Cyprianus provides a clever solution to the problem of rendering the
biblical prose. The whole scene is filled with dramatic vitality and images of terror and
confusion (Ex. 488–515):

Quod licitum credens Pharao, dum comminus instat,
Ingreditur calcatque salum; sed tarda repente
Plaustra gemunt in terram pectore proni 490
Cornipedes genibus nequiquam pondera tradunt,
Quae penitus uincto nequibant axe moueri.
Illicet exsangues immensaque compede uincti
Festinam temptare fugam rursumque reuerti
Nitentes uano stimulant terrore iugales. 495
His aliud maius miseris multoque tremendum
Ingeritur magis et sensus affligit inertes.
Namque fretum dubios solitum collidere fluctus
Discretas coniunxit aquas undasque tumentes
Miscuit et totam fundo demersit Aegyptum. 500
At Iudaeae cohors fluitantia corpora cernens
Hostili de parte uirum currusque natantes
Armaque et obliquum quidquid torquetur in hostem,
Suspexit timuitque deum sensuque fidel
Credidit imperio domini uatemque sacravit,
Cantica dum psallit Moysetis dulcia uerbis:
‘Cantemus domino deoque nostro,
Cui gloria cum honore pollens.
Sese magnificis decorat actis.
Dum currus celeres Aegyptiorum 510
Iunctis equitibus grauique turba
Rubri marmoris enecat fluentis.
Adiutor ualidus meae salutis
Plebem de medio tulit profundo,
Custos et genitor salusque uera!’ 515

[Thinking he had permission as he stood there before it, Pharaoh walked in and
stepped upon the open sea-bed. But suddenly, the sluggish chariots groaned and
the horn-hoofed steeds, their breasts to the ground, thrust their weight with their
knees, which they could barely move because of the axles under the mud. Pale
and conquered by their immense burden, the Egyptians were not permitted to]
escape or turn back, but they strove in vain and cracked their whips in terror. But something far more dreadful is heaped upon them and afflicts their helpless senses. For the sea, accustomed to the collision of the changing tides, brought the parted waters together and mixed the swelling waves, drowning all Egypt to the bottom. But the Judean troop, seeing the floating bodies, the men who made up their enemy, swimming chariots, weapons and their overturned foe twisting, marvelled and feared God with a faithful heart; they believed in the power of the Lord and consecrated the prophet as he sang sweet canticles in Moses’ words:

Let us sing unto the Lord our God,  
For whom there is great honour and glory.  
He decks himself with magnificent deeds,  
While the swift carts of the Egyptians  
With their horsemen joined in a heavy troop  
He kills with floods of the Red Sea.  
The mighty helper of my salvation  
Has raised his people from the midst of the deep,  
My Guardian, Creator and true salvation.]

Approaching the Sea, Pharaoh wrongly believes that he too has the right to make the passage with his troops (*licitum*, 488), when in fact he does not (*illicet*, 493). This simple juxtaposition reveals the blind determination of the pharaoh, and the sudden appearance of the adverb, *repente* introduces a rise in dramatic tension. Cyprianus then adds further anticipation in lines 497–8, saying, ‘they had something much worse to fear,’ and immediately afterward, the waves crash together with frightening speed, and the Israelites look upon the floating corpses of the Egyptians (*fluantia corpora cernens*) and the ‘swimming’ chariots (*currusque natantes*). The sight inspires awe and fear in the Israelites, and the canticle which then follows stands out in the verse as it does in the prose, because Cyprianus switches from hexameter to hendecasyllabic verse. This is a simple solution to the versification of the Canticle, and the change in metre demonstrates the author’s desire and ability to preserve the integrity of his biblical source in much the same way Juvencus strives to preserve the rhetorical language of the Sermon on the Mount in the *Euangelia*. 
No other biblical poet changes metre in the middle of his narrative like this, though Sedulius and Arator do select alternative metres for their prefaces and prefatory letters.

Therefore, while the Heptateuch, like the Euangelia, is a fairly literal versification of the Bible compared to later poems in the genre, it nevertheless reveals a number of episodes which respond with enthusiasm to the tradition of classical epic. As Michael Roberts says: ‘Although Cyprianus, like his New Testament predecessor Juvenecus, aspires to retain the sense of the biblical original, an essential aspect of his undertaking is to bring the scriptural text into conformity with the standards of poetic excellence, in particular of Vergilian epic, as understood by late antiquity.’ 58 The author’s treatment of the Crossing of the Red Sea in particular shows that Cyprianus is much more susceptible to the allure of rhetorical embellishment than Juvenecus, and yet he maintains a comparable degree of fidelity to the Bible overall, reflecting in many respects the style of the Euangelia. The versification of the Canticle in Exodus likewise shows that Cyprianus strives to preserve as nearly as possible some of the more subtle features of his biblical source. In short, Cyprianus is a conservative versifier, though there is much in the Heptateuch to commend his negotiation of biblical and classical sources.

Prudentius (AD 348 to c. 410)  

Aurelius Prudentius Clemens was born in the area of Tarragona in Spain in 348 and he died around 410. 59 He was well educated, practised law and was Prefect of two

58 Roberts, Jeweled Style, p. 9.  
59 The date for Prudentius’ death is based on references in his writings to Rome’s victories over its enemies (see Contra Symmachum, ll. 709–38); this information assumes a date prior to the sacking of Rome by Alaric in 410. See further G. R. Wieland, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts of Prudentius’ Psychomachia,’ ASE 16 (1987), 213. Prudentius’ name is handed down in manuscripts, and only once does the author use it himself (Peristephanon 2.582). Pierre-Yves Fux, Les sept passions de Prudence: Peristephanon 2.5.9. 11–14, Paradosis 46 (Fribourg, 2003).
cities; he was not a member of the clergy.⁶⁰ Prudentius himself provides this information in the preface to his collected works written in 405, when, at the age of fifty-seven, he looks back upon a life of public service in pursuit of the kind of fame Juvencus says cannot last (Immortale nihil mundi, 1). Now at the end of his life, Prudentius makes the same point with this rhetorical question (28–30): ‘Numquid talia proderunt / Carnis post obitum vel bona vel mala / cum iam, quidquid id est quod fueram, mors aboleverit?’ ['Will such things, good or bad, be of any use after the flesh dies, when death has wiped out whatever it is I was?']. But whereas Juvencus rejects earthly fame with reference to the heroes and deeds of a literary tradition, Prudentius refers to his own life experience, and he does not speak as one with the distanced voice of classical decorum but the more personal voice of human experience, of wisdom and self-assuredness (praef. 1–45):⁶¹

Per quinquennia iam decem,
Ni fallor, fuimus; septimus insuper
Annum cardo rotat, dum fruimur sole uolubili.
Instat terminus et diem
Vicinum senio iam deus applicat. 5

... Atqui fine sub ultimo
Peccatrix anima stultitiam exuat;
Saltem uoce deum concelebret, si meritis nequit.
Hymnis continuet dies
Nec nox uilla uacet quin dominum canat
Pugnet contra hereses, catholicam discutiat fidem,
Conculcet sacra gentium,
Labem, Roma, tuis inferat idolis,
Carmen martyribus deuoueat, laudet apostolos.
Haec dum scribo uel eloquor,
Vinclis o utinam corporis emicem
Liber quo tulerit lingua sono mobilis ultimo! 45

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⁶⁰ See Di Berardino, Patrology vol. 4, pp. 281–96.
⁶¹ Textual citations of Prudentius refer to M. P. Cunningham, ed., Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina, CCSL 126 (Turnhout, 1966).
[I have lived for fifty years, if I am not mistaken, and the seasons have revolved another seven times on top of that, as I take pleasure in the gifts of the circling sun. The end is near, and the time God gives me is now a neighbour to old age … At my final end, let my sinning soul cast off its foolishness; let it at least celebrate God with its voice, if it cannot with its deeds. Let the days pass with hymns, and let no night want for songs for the Lord. Let my soul fight heresies, strike with the Catholic faith and trample the rituals of heathens! Let Rome bring destruction down upon her idols. Let her devote songs to the martyrs and praise to the apostles! And as I speak or write these things, oh, may I leap from the bonds of this body to where I may be a free man and raise my trembling tongue up to its final utterance!]

In this outpouring, Prudentius appeals to our sympathy for his old age and his regret over past sins. However much we may attribute these comments to the literary figure of the narrator, there is a strong personal element here. The focus in Prudentius’ preface is not the grandeur of theme, as it is at the opening of the Euangelia, but the narrator’s personal sense of loss and his wish to atone for his misdeeds by writing against sin and heresy. Lines 37–42 allude to the kinds of poems which make up his collection, where the daily ‘hymns’ refer to the Cathemerinon, the subject of this section; the violently-described verses against ‘heresies’ and ‘heathen rituals’ no doubt allude to the bloody and merciless battles of virtues and vices in the Psychomachia and Contra Symmachon; and the ‘songs to martyrs’ refer to the Peristephanon.

It is true that Prudentius did not compose a versification of any particular book of the Bible, but several of his poems focus on episodes from the Old and New Testament. The Cathemerinon or ‘Daily Round,’ for example, treats a number of biblical stories, and many of these scenes bear stylistic resemblance to the earlier versifications of Juvencus and Cyprianus, not to mention the later Carmen paschale of Sedulius. Prudentius’ Cathemerinon is a series of twelve lyrical poems apparently for the different hours of the day, but only the first six confirm this assumption; the other six involve more general
topics. What is more, many of these so-called hymns are too long for practical 'congregational use' and they are perhaps better defined as lyrical poems for extended devotional reading. That said, portions of them still appear in modern hymnals. Hymns or not, the musical potential of the collection is undeniable and provides a much greater variety of metres and subject-matters than we find in the main-stream of biblical verse.

Below, for reference, is a summary list of all the hymns, their metres and lengths:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hymn</th>
<th>Metre</th>
<th>Number of Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Hymn to the Rooster’s Song</td>
<td>iambic dimeter</td>
<td>100 (25 4–line strophes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Morning Hymn</td>
<td>iambic dimeter</td>
<td>112 (28 4–line strophes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hymn before Eating</td>
<td>dactylic trimeter</td>
<td>205 (41 5–line strophes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Hymn after Eating</td>
<td>phalecian hendecasyllabic</td>
<td>102 (34 3–line strophes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hymn for Lighting of the Lamp</td>
<td>minor asclepiads</td>
<td>164 (41 4–line strophes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Hymn before Sleep</td>
<td>iambic dimeter catalectic</td>
<td>152 (38 4–line strophes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Fasters’ Hymn</td>
<td>iambic trimeter</td>
<td>220 (44 5–line stanzas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Hymn after Fasting</td>
<td>sapphic</td>
<td>80 (20 3–line strophes + adonic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Hymn for Every Hour</td>
<td>trochaic tetrameter catalectic</td>
<td>114 (38 tercets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Hymn on the Burial of the Dead</td>
<td>anapestic dimeter catalectic</td>
<td>172 (43 4–line stanzas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Hymn for the 25th of December</td>
<td>iambic dimeter</td>
<td>116 (29 quatrains)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Hymn for Epiphany</td>
<td>iambic dimeter catalectic</td>
<td>208 (52 quatrains)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the hymns are about the same length and often contain four- or five-line stanzas; their titles, like ‘Hymn to the Rooster’s Song,’ suggest they have little to do with any specific book of the Bible, yet significant portions of many hymns cover biblical episodes which often involve multiple layers of symbolic meaning. The rooster, for example, symbolizes Christ in the first hymn, while many of the other hymns concern eucharistic and baptismal imagery.

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63 For the metre of each hymn and an introduction to it see further Jean-Louis Charlet, *La création poétique dans le Cathemerinon de Prudence* (Paris, 1982). The Latin names for the various hymns are: (1) Hymnus ad galli cantum; (2) Hymnus matutinus; (3) Hymnus ante cibum; (4) Hymnus post cibum; (5) Hymnus ad incensum lucernae; (6) Hymnus ante somnum; (7) Hymnus iejunantium; (8) Hymnus post ieunium; (9) Hymnus omnis horae; (10) Hymnus circa exequias defuncti; (11) Hymnus VIII Kal. Ianuaria; (12) Hymnus Epiphaniae.
In response to his fellow countryman and the tradition of biblical poetry, Prudentius invokes the pagan muse in several of his hymns, despite the personal and uncommon style of his preface to his collected works. So in the ‘Hymn for Every Hour,’ Prudentius calls upon the Muse to sing of ‘Christ’s glorious deeds’ (gesta Christi insignia, 9.2) in much the same way (and in the same position of the line) Juvenecus determines to sing of the ‘life-giving deeds of Christ’ in the Euangelia (uitalia gesta Christi, 19). Here is Prudentius’ invocation (3.25–30):64

O crucifer bone, lucisator,  
Omniparens pie, Verbigena,  
Edite corpore virgineo,  
Sed prius in genitore potens,  
Astra, solum, mare, quam fient,  
Huc nitido, precor, intuitu  
Flecte salutiferam faciem  
Fronte serenus et irrigia,  
Nominis ut sub honore tui  
Has epulas liceat capere.  

Te sine dulce nihil, Domine,  
Nec iuvat ore quid adpetere,  
Pocula ni prius atque cibos,  
Christe, tuus favor inbuerit,  
Omnia sanctificante fide.  

Sperne, camena, leues hederas,  
Cingere tempora quis solita es,  
Sertaque mystica dactylico  
Texere docta liga strofio  
Laude dei redimita comas.

[O good cross-bearer, light-sower, pious parent of all, word-born, begotten of a virginal body, though mighty in the Father before the stars, land or sea were made. Here, I plead, bend your gaze with its bright regard and shine forth with your serene brow, so that we may duly take this meal in honour of your name. Without you, nothing is sweet, Lord, and there is no point in eating, Christ, until your favour fills our cups and food with all-sanctifying faith. Spurn the trifling ivy, Muse, which usually crowns your head, and learning to weave mystic garlands in dactyls, bind your hair with a band wreathed in God’s praise.]

The opening apostrophe to Christ unfolds in a flourish of exotic compound words, some of which Prudentius coins himself.65 These compounds and the lines that follow stress the creative and omnipotent might of God (omniparens, potens), which gives birth to the stars, land and sea (astra, solum, mare). Juvencus begins his poem in the same way, though with emphasis on the transience of the world (‘Non mare, non tellus, non ignea sidera caeli,’ Ev. 3); and both poets place the fate of the world in God’s hands.

The acknowledgment and favour Prudentius seeks of the Almighty, ‘Huc nitido, precor, intuitu / Flecte salutiferam faciem’ ['Here, I plead, bend your gaze with bright regard and shine forth with serene brow'] also evokes images of the pagan god, Jupiter. In Book Nine of the Aeneid, for example, Ascanius begs Jove to bless his actions and lead his arrow to its mark (9. 625–30): ‘Iuppiter omnipotens, audacibus adnue coeptis. / Ipse tibi ad tua templae feram sollemnia dona … Audiiit et caeli genitor de parte serena’ [‘Almighty Jupiter, assent to these bold ventures …’ and the creator heard him from his serene abode’]. Earlier in Book Nine and later in Book Ten, Jupiter also shakes the earth with the inclination of his head and will (9.106): ‘Adnuit, et totum nutu tremefecit Olympum’ ['He consented and shook all Olympus with his nod’].66 In the Cathemerinon, Prudentius aligns God with such classical imagery but from a Christian point of view. Cyprianus does much the same thing, by setting God atop mount Olympus in the Heptateuch. But God never inclines his head toward the vanities of earthly success in

65 Crucifer and lucisator, for example, do not appear in verse before Prudentius and both Omniparens and Vergena are rare. See further Poetria Nova (Florence, 2001).
66 See also Aeneid 10.115.
Christian verse, only toward piety and struggles for eternal salvation (Flecte salutiferam faciem, 7).67

Much more than Juvencus, Prudentius shows at every turn that he is more susceptible to classical flourishes and clever turns of phrase. In the final stanza of the first hymn, for example, Prudentius disdains the laurel wreath as a symbol of the prosperity of classical culture. In terms that are more self-consciously witty than Juvencus’ usual style, Prudentius tells his muse to ‘spurn the trifling ivy’ of old and weave mystic garlands with dactyls (dactylico), to bind her hair with a strofium, a ‘head-band’ or in poetry, a strophe (‘strophe’). The adjective mystica is also noteworthy, which, similar to some scenes of the Euangelia, suggests a desire to promote the deeper figural sense of the Scriptures.

For example, like Juvencus, Prudentius attaches symbolic meaning to the gifts of the Magi in his ‘Hymn for Epiphany,’ and he also takes advantage of the classical diction at his disposal, to elevate the tone of the scene in much the same way Juvencus and Cyprianus do (12.53–76):

Exim sequuntur perciti
Fixis in altum vultibus,
Qua stella sulcum traxerat 55
Claramque signabat viam.

Sed verticem pueri supra
Signum pependit inminens,
Pronaque submissum face
Caput sacratum prodidit. 60

Videre quod postquam magi,
Eoa promunt munera,
Stratique votis offerunt
Tus, myrrham et aurum regium.

67 Cf. Carmen paschale 1.240–41: ‘Omne suum famulatur opus sequiturque iubentis / Imperium quacumque trahit sententia nutu’ ['And his work heeds the will of the one who commands it / Wherever his thought draws it with a nod.'].
Agnosce clara insignia
Virtutis ac regni tui,
Puer, o, cui trinam pater
Praedestinavit indolem:

Regem deumque adnuntiant
Thesaurus et fragrans odor
Turis Sabaei, at myrrheus
Pulvis sepulchrum praedocet.

Hoc est sepulcrum, quo Deus,
Dum corpus extingui sinit
Atque id sepultum suscitat,
Mortis refregit carcarem.

[Then, they followed quickly with their eyes fixed to the heights, where the star drew its furrow and marked a brilliant path. But the hanging symbol came to a stop above the child, and with its bowing flame, it thrust out its sacred head. When they saw this, the Magi brought forth their gifts from the East and, stretched themselves out upon the ground and offered these gifts in prayer: royal myrrh, incense and gold. Behold the manifest significance of your strength and power, child, for whom your Father preordained a three-fold nature: The treasure and fragrant odour of Sabaean incense announce the king and god, while the dust of myrrh signifies the tomb. It is the tomb in which God, when allowing his body to die and then raising it up again from the grave, shattered the prison of death.]

Ploughing its way through the heavens, the star leaves a ‘furrow’ (sulcum) for the Magi to follow. The same language describes the star in the Euangelia (Sulcantem flammis auras, 1.244) and the pillar of fire in the Heptateuch (‘niuea sulcabat sidera nube,’ Gen. 415). The three scenes together effectively amount to a poetic commonplace in biblical poetry, which originates in classical epic. What is more, the image and actions of the Magi are strongly reminiscent of Juvencus’ poem, where the three gifts bear the same mystical sense (Ev. 1.250) : ‘Gold, incense, myrrh for the king, for the God, for the man.’ Prudentius, however, is more explicit about the Trinitarian significance of the gifts (trinam indolem, 67–8) and the myrrh specifically as a symbol for the death and resurrection of Christ. Overall, the whole scene is rich in symbolic language which
announces itself at every turn (*signabat, signum, insignia, admoniant, praedocet*).

In his poetic recount of the Crossing of the Red Sea, Prudentius also introduces levels of meaning beyond the literal narrative, where he exploits the dramatic potential of the scene in much the same way Cyprianus does. With Cyprianus in mind, therefore, compare Prudentius’ characterization of the Egyptian host (5.53–80):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Densetur cuneis turba pedestribus,} \\
\text{Currus pars et equos et uolucres rotas} \\
\text{Conscendunt celeres signaque bellica} \\
\text{Praetendunt tumidis clara draconibus.} \\
\text{……} \\
\text{Moses porro suos in mare praecipit} \\
\text{Constans intrepidis tendere gressibus.} \\
\text{Praebent rupta locum stagna uiantibus,} \\
\text{Riparum in faciem peruia sstitur} \\
\text{Circumstans uitreis unda liquoribus,} \\
\text{Dum plebs sub bifido permeat aequore.} \\
\text{……} \\
\text{Ibant praecipiti turbine percita} \\
\text{Fluctus per medios agmina regia,} \\
\text{Sed confusa dehinc unda reuoluitur} \\
\text{In semet reuolans gurgite confluor.} \\
\text{Currus tunc et equos telaque naufraga} \\
\text{Ipsos et proceres et uaga corpora} \\
\text{Nigrorum uideas nare satellitum,} \\
\text{Arcis iustitium triste tyrannicae.}
\end{align*}
\]

[The crowd is packed with infantrymen; others hastily mount their steeds or chariots with winged wheels and raise their warlike banners up; they are famed for their puffed-up dragons … Farther off, Moses bids his people be strong and enter the sea with unfa.tering steps. The ruptured expanse offers a path for those wayfarers, and the passable water stands still, as if it had banks; the waves surrounded them with glassy streams, as the people walk through the divided depths … The hastening ranks ploughed forward, headlong in a whirlwind through the midst of the flood. But then, the mingling water rolled back upon itself, rolled back in a rushing swell. You could see horses and chariots, spears and shipwrecked men, chiefs and drifting bodies of black princes floating by, woeful justice for that tyrannical citadel!]
The use of ‘turba’ instead of a more generic word like ‘gens’ or ‘hostes’ nicely captures in simple terms the underlying chaos of the scene, as soldiers, horses and chariots rally to the sea. Stylistically, the close repetition of ‘currus pars et equo’ (54) in ‘currus tunc et equos’ in line 77 brings the Egyptians to their final destruction, enclosing the host in a flood of water and the scene in an envelope pattern. Like Pharaoh’s flying spear in the *Heptateuch* (*uolucrem hastam*, 438), the chariot wheels are likewise winged here, like birds in the sky (*uolucre rotas*, 54), and the clamour of the marshalling force echoes with the same martial-heroic vigour as it does in the *Heptateuch*. Also like Cyprianus, Prudentius puts Christ at the scene as the agent of the Israelites’ salvation. Speaking figuratively, Prudentius says that Christ ‘calls the weary over the sea of the world’ [*Fessos ille vocat per freta saeculi,’ 5.109], and referring to the miracles of the manna from heaven and water from the rock, he calls all three ‘mystic feasts’ through which we nourish our hearts (*pascentes dapibus pectora mysticis,’ 5.108).

The Crossing of the Red Sea is just one of the many miracles Prudentius describes in his *Cathemerinon*, and his versifications of other episodes provide further sources of inspiration for later poets like Sedulius. The summary of Christ’s miracles in the ‘Hymn for Every Hour’ (9.25–69) is a conspicuous example. As part of the entertainment of this review, Prudentius expects the audience to know or guess the source of these allusions, as if this were some kind of game or riddle. He gives the bare minimum of referential material so that the reader will have just enough information to make an educated guess. Prudentius introduces these wonders chronologically and begins with the story of the wedding at Cana (28–30), followed by Christ’s healing of the diseased (*membra morbis ulcerosa*, 31), the healing of the blind man at Siloah (34–6), the calming of the sea (37–
9), the woman suffering from an issue of blood and healed by the touch of Christ’s cloak (40–2), the resurrection of the young man (43–6), the resurrection of Lazarus (47–8), Christ walking on the water (49–51), the healing of the demoniac and the Gadarene swine (52–7), the feeding of thousands from five loaves and two fish (58–63), a scene linked with the Eucharist where Christ is a source of spiritual food, and the healing of the deaf, dumb and blind (64–9). Together, these incidents confirm the omnipotence and glory of Christ through his supremacy over the laws of nature. This theme and many of these scenes become central to the opening book of Sedulius’ *Carmen paschale*, and although Prudentius’ *Cathemerinon* is not a biblical versification in the usual sense, there is no denying its potential to be a source of inspiration for later poets in the genre. The style of many episodes in the *Cathemerinon* certainly qualifies Prudentius as a biblical poet, and as an innovator accustomed to working with a variety of metres and subjects, he has much to offer biblical versifiers interested in different approaches to the genre. Sedulius is one of these.
Chapter 3

Later Latin Biblical Verse: Sedulius, Avitus, Arator

Cognoscite cuncti, mystica quid doceant animos miracula nostros!

[Let all recognize what these mystical miracles may teach our souls!]

—Carmen paschale, 4.263–4

The *Carmen paschale* of Sedulius is a hexameter versification of the Gospels in five books or 1770 lines (384/300/339/309/438).¹ The poem has much in common with the *Euangelia* of Juvencus, though perhaps more with the stylistic freedom of Prudentius’ *Cathemerinon*. This is no *paene ad uerbum* adaptation of the Gospels but a thematically motivated elaboration upon the miracles of Christ and his manifest omnipotence;² the *Carmen paschale* moreover attests to a growing interest among biblical poets of late antiquity in the symbolic links between the Old and New Testament. Words such as *figura* or *signum* become increasingly common as narrators break the silence imposed by epic conventions of distance and detachment. Now they pause more often and at greater length, to comment on the meaning behind the literal narrative. What does the Flood signify, and why is the Crossing of the Red Sea important for Christians? What does Moses have to do with Christ? With one eye on their predecessors and one hand on the Bible, the poets of the sixth century venture out with their readers to explore the deeper signification of the Scriptures.

¹ For an outline of the poem see Appendix 1; for a translation of Book One see Appendix 2. The standard edition is that of Johann Huemer, ed., *Sedulii Opera Omnia*, CSEL 10 (Vienna, 1885). For a more recent treatment of the manuscripts see Carl Springer, *The Manuscripts of Sedulius: A Provisional Handlist, TAPS, 85.5* (Philadelphia, 1995). For the title of the poem see Huemer (p. 12, 8–10) and Sedulius’ letter to his friend Macedonius: ‘Hui autem operi fauente Domino *paschalis carminis* nomen imposui, quia pascha nostrum immolatus est Christus’ [‘So, with the help of the Lord I have given this work the name *Carmen paschale*, because Christ was sacrificed at Easter’].

² Michael Roberts discusses Sedulius’ tendency toward elaboration in *Biblical Epic*, pp. 165–6.
Apart from his versification of the Gospels, and in addition to two hymns, Sedulius has left a later and longer prose version of his poem called the *Opus paschale*.\(^3\) But despite the influence of these works on later writers on the continent and in England, we know very little of the life and education of the author himself beyond a brief inscription appearing in a few manuscripts of the *Carmen paschale*. The inscription reads as follows:\(^4\) ‘Sedulius uersificus primo laicus in Italia philosophiam didicit; postea cum aliis metrorum generibus heroicum metrum Macedonio consulente docuit. In Achaia libros suos scripsit tempore imperatorum Theodosii et Valentinianei’ ['Sedulius first learned philosophy as a layman in Italy; he later taught the heroic metre (among others) with the encouragement of Macedonius. He wrote his books in Greece at the time of the emperors Theodosius and Valentinian'].\(^5\) Otherwise, nothing more is known of the life of Sedulius or his patron Macedonius, although the reference to Valentinian III (425-55) and Theodosius II (408–50), together with stylistic analyses and contemporary references to the *Carmen paschale* in other works, help date the poem to the years between 425–50.\(^6\)

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\(^3\) For the relationship of the *Carmen* to the *Opus paschale* see further Di Berardino, *Patrology* (Texas, 1999), vol. 4, pp. 324–5. The text of the *Opus paschale* and the hymns appear in Huemer, *Sedulii Opera*, pp. 163–303. For the title of the *Opus paschale* see Huemer (p. 173, 16–19): ‘Priores igitur libri, quia uersu digesti sunt, nomen *Paschalis Carminis* acceperunt, sequentes autem in prosam nulla cursus uarietate conuersi, *Paschalis* designantur *Operis* vocabulo nuncupati’ ['Because the earlier books were set in verse, they received the name *Carmen paschale*, while the following ones translated into prose and with no particular rhythm have been given the name *Opus paschale*']. The chronology of the hymns themselves is problematic, and it is unclear whether they precede or follow the *Carmen paschale*. See further Springer, *Gospel as Epic in Late Antiquity*, pp. 57–8.


\(^5\) Huemer, *Sedulii Opera*, p. viii. It was at the request of Macedonius that Sedulius produced the *Opus paschale* after the *Carmen* (Huemer, p. 171, 3–5): ‘Praecepisti, reuerende mi domine, *paschalis carminis* textum, quod officium purae deuotionis simpliciter executus uobis obtuli prelegendum, in rhetoricum me transfere sermonem’ ['You have asked, venerable lord, that I transfer the text of the *Carmen paschale*—which I offered for your reading in simple observance to pure devotion—into rhetorical language'].

\(^6\) For the dating of the *Carmen paschale* see further Green, *Latin Epics*, pp. 140–3; see also Springer, *Gospel as Epic*, p. 1.
While details of the author’s life are sparse, a letter to his friend and mentor Macedonius at least tells us something about Sedulius’ choice of poetry as his medium (Huemer, pp. 5–6):

Multi sunt quos studiorum saecularium disciplina per poeticas magis delicias et carminum uoluptates oblectat. Hi quicquid rhetoricae facundiae perlegunt, neglegentius adsequuntur, quoniam illud haud diligunt. Quod autem iuvenis non repudiandos aestimo sed pro insita consuetudine uel natura tractandos, ut quisque sue magis ingenio uoluntarius adquiratur Deo. Nec differt qua quis occasione inbuatur ad fidem, dum tamen uiam libertatis ingressus non repetat iniquae seruitutis laqueos, quibus ante fuerat inretitus. Hae sunt, pater egregie, nostri operis causae, non superuacuae, sicut didicisti, sed commodae.

[Many prefer the study of secular works through the delights of poetry and pleasures of song. Whatever piece of rhetorical eloquence they read, they are less attentive to it, because they do not enjoy it. But whatever poetry they see sweetened with charm, they take up with such hearty eagerness, that it sits and remains in the front of their minds through the frequent repetition of it. So, I believe that the practice of these people is not to be rejected but taken in response to each one’s innate experience or nature, so that one may be drawn more willingly to God according to his capacity. It does not matter how one is drawn to the faith, provided one does not fall into the same snares of iniquitous servitude that entangled him before, having not committed himself to the path of freedom. These, excellent father, are the reasons for my work, which are not superfluous, as you have come to learn, but advantageous.]

Already here Sedulius looks toward the banquet-themed preface of his *Carmen paschale*. For Sedulius, poetry is a culinary delight (*poeticas delicias*), filled with sumptuous songs (*carminum uoluptates*) and honey-sweet with charm (*blandimento mellitum*). Poetry does not simply appeal to taste, however. It is beneficial, as Sedulius argues, precisely because it may lead Christians to the Faith more readily than prose. Poetry is at once more appealing and memorable, says Sedulius. He furthermore denies
that poetry is morally or spiritually dangerous per se, but that the potential flaw of the medium is only proportional to the spiritual weakness of the reader, who more or less governs his activities (here, reading) with faith.

There is no denying Sedulius’ love of classical poetry and his predilection for sumptuous literary allusion. Most of all, he is fond of Vergil, and Huemer counts more than one hundred and fifty echoes of the Aeneid and Georgics together with a dozen further echoes from the Eclogues.\(^{10}\) After Vergil, Sedulius alludes to Juvenecus, Prudentius and Ovid most frequently, then Lucan, Ausonius and Paulinus of Nola. Huemer’s loci similes ‘do not tell the whole story,’ however, as Roger Green notes, and there are numerous uncounted echoes of other poems such as the Cathemerinon of Prudentius.\(^ {11}\) Still, there is no doubt that Vergil is Sedulius’ favourite poet and that he is fonder of poetic classicisms than either Juvenecus or Cyprianus.

For example, Elijah’s fiery ascent to heaven in Book One of the Carmen paschale evokes not only the biblical episode but also a familiar form of ancient entertainment. Typical of Sedulius’ style, this allusion is not explicit but implied in the language he chooses. Understated double-entendre is a favourite device of the author (1.179–87):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Aurea flammigeris euectus in astra quadrigis,} \\
\text{Qua leuis aerios non exprimit orbita sulcos,} \\
\text{Sidereum penetrauit iter curruque corusco} \\
\text{Dexteriora petens spatio maiore triumphum} \\
\text{Duxit et humani metam non contigit aeui.} \\
\text{Quam bene fulminei praelucens semita caeli} \\
\text{Conuenit Heliae! meritoque et nomine fulgens} \\
\text{Hac ope dignus erat: nam si sermonis Achiui} \\
\text{Vna per accentum mutetur littera, sol est.}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{10}\) Huemer only lists classical echoes in his notes; the enumeration of these echoes is my own. For a more recent and comprehensive list of sources, with Vergil at the top, see further Green, Latin Epics, pp. 419–31. Green’s calculations bring the number of Vergilian echoes to well over two hundred.

[Carried to the golden stars in a flame-born chariot, whose gentle trail left no airy tracks, he pierced a starry road in his glimmering cart; and seeking better things on a greater course, he drove to victory and did not reach the finish-line of human age. How well that shining path to glittering heaven suits Elijah! Gleaming in merit and name, he was worthy of this help: for, if one letter of his name is changed according to the sound of the Greek tongue, it becomes ‘helios’ (‘sun’).]

In literal terms, *maiore spatio* (182) means ‘a greater space,’ referring to heaven, but *spatium* is also the word for a racetrack; what is more, ‘metam’ in the next line alludes at once to the point of death and the finish line or boundary post of a racecourse. In this context, the word *triumphum* also has obvious implications for both salvation and earthly ‘victory.’ The secular allusion is not just epic window-dressing, however. The message underlying the classicism is that God’s disciples achieve greater success than any mortal champion could ever hope to win.12

Sedulius takes a similar view at the end of the poem, where he finds a further use for the chariot-image, this time with reference to Christ (4.291–302):

Vtque caduca uagi contemnens culmina saecli
Monstraret se rite Deum, non curribus altis,
Qui pompae mortalis honor, rapidisque quadrigis
Puluerum sulcauit iter nec terga frementis
Ardua pressit equi, faleris qui pictus et ostro
Ora cruentatum mandentia concutit aurum:
Sed lento potius gestamine uilis aselli
Rectori suffecit honos …

[And rejecting the shaky heights of this transient world, so that he might duly show that he was God, Christ did not plough the dusty road in a lofty chariot—an honour reserved for mortal pomp—nor in rapid four-horse carts, seated on the back of some tall, chomping steed, covered in purple garb and metal regalia, shaking its head and biting its bloodied golden bit; but to be the languid burden of a lowly ass was honour enough for the Lord …]

12 Note that the last two lines in this passage suggest a knowledge of riddles (186–7): ‘nam si sermonis Achiui / Vna per accentum mutetur littera, sol est’ [‘for, if one letter of his name is changed according to the accent of the Greek tongue, it becomes ‘helios’ (‘sun’)]. The change-a-letter type of riddle is a common variation in the *enigmata* of Symphosius. See E. Behrens, ed., *Poetae latini minores*, vol. iv.
This is Christ’s ‘victorious’ entrance into Jerusalem in Book Four of the *Carmen paschale*, and here Sedulius makes the point of saying it is nothing like the pomp and pageantry of a Roman triumph. Yet Sedulius takes such pains to describe exactly what Christ is *not* doing that it is difficult to dismiss the very image of a purple-robed Messiah riding in a golden chariot. It is one of the persistent ironies of poetry in the genre of biblical verse, that some of the most compelling scenes represent condemnations of pagan values in the very language of that earlier tradition. There is a thin line between the censure and admiration of pagan literature, and many Christian poets, including Sedulius, relish in this sort of ornamental pageantry.

As a versification of the Bible, the *Carmen paschale* is, as I have said, a thematically-guided revision of the Gospel story that focuses on the miracles of Christ (*miracula Christi*, 1.26). Book One of the poem does not involve the New Testament *per se* but Old Testament miracles that prefigure Christ’s future deeds. Many of the miracles in Book One therefore bear figural associations with the New Testament and reflect the belief that Christ is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The selection of these miracles is chronological, and Sedulius proceeds from Genesis to Daniel in Book One and from Matthew to John in the remaining books of the poem. In versifying the Gospels, Sedulius exhausts the material in Matthew first, running out of miracles at the beginning of Book Four (line 82). He then moves on to Mark (Mk 1:23) for the rest of the book and the end of the miracle-sequence. Book Four culminates in the death and resurrection of Lazarus, which emphatically prefigures the events of Book Five,

concerning the death and resurrection of Christ. Appropriately, Book Five concludes with the final chapter and verse of the Gospel of John (21:25). Any omissions Sedulius makes along the way are a consequence of the poem’s thematic focus, while he embellishes the episodes he does choose with classical diction and rhetorical language. In particular, double-entendre, paronomasia, polyptoton and alliteration (not necessarily in that order) are the author’s favourite rhetorical devices (see Appendix 3 for a summary of Sedulius’ use of polyptoton).

Consider the author’s condemnation of pagan worship in Book One, which is an acoustic tour-de-force (1.242–7):

Heu miseri, qui uana colunt, qui corde sinistro
Religiosa sibi sculpunt simulacra suumque
Factorem fugiunt et quae fecere uerentur!
Quis furore? quae tanta animos dementia ludit,
Ut uolucrem turpemque bouem tortumque draconem
Semihominemque canem supplex homo plenus adoret?

[O wretched men who worship idle things, who sculpt religious likenesses with a sinister heart and shun their own creator and revere the things they have made! What madness is this? What great dementia plays upon their souls, so that a whole man lowers himself to worship a misshapen bird or bull, a contorted snake, or half-man dog?]

The persistence of alliteration in this scene is typical of many Sedulian flourishes. In the first three lines, he expresses an audible disdain for paganism (colunt … corde sinistro), where sinistro represents interlinear sibilance with Religiosa sibi sculpunt simulacra suumque in the following line (243); the frication of Factorem fugiunt et quae fecere uerentur likewise conveys the author’s contempt for idolatry, though his disdain is tempered to some extent by the obvious excess and playfulness of these aural effects. Sedulius then adds a series of rhetorical questions in which tail rhyme (-em/-um) and polysyndeton (-que) punctuate his contempt for personifications of various pagan deities
(uolucrem turpemque bouem tortumque draconem / Semihominemque canem). The last of these, semihominemque canem displays the author’s poetic creativity, as he manages to fit so long and unusual a compound into the metre of the line.

In terms of its structure, Book One of the Carmen paschale amounts roughly to eight sections:15 a formal preface (1.1–37); a spirited condemnation of paganism (1.38–59); an emphasis on God’s omnipotence over creation, especially personified Nature (1.60–102); fifteen miracles from the Old Testament, which offer proof of God’s might (1.103–219; see Appendix 4); a lively recapitulation of these miracles (1.220–41); a lengthy and rather light-hearted digression on heathen forms of worship (1.242–81); a section on the Trinity, including a denunciation of Arianism and Sabellianism (1.282–333); and finally an appeal to Christ for favour and salvation (1.334–68).

The first book of the Carmen paschale is therefore not what you would expect, especially in light of Juvencus’ steady focus on the New Testament and comparatively straightforward versification of the Gospels. Sedulius, on the other hand, offers in Book One of his poem a lengthy and lively introduction to the symbolic meaning of the Old Testament, which then unfolds in the New Testament portions of the poem (Books 2–5).16 Sedulius’ preface does not, therefore, present a straightforward invocation to the Muse in hexameter verse, but in sixteen lines of elegiac distichs which transform a classical image—that of a Roman feast—into a dual metaphor symbolizing the Eucharist and the spiritual consumption of literature (1–16):

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15 See Appendix 1 for a complete outline of the poem.
16 For a full discussion of biblical exegesis in the Carmen paschale, see further Green, Latin Epics, pp. 226–44.
Paschales quicumque dapes conuiua requiris,
   Dignatus nostris accubitare toris,
Pone supercilium si te cognoscis amicum,
   Nec quaeras opus hic codicis artificis:
Sed modiae contentus adi sollemnia mensae
   Plusque libens animo quam satiare cibo.
Aut si magnarum caperis dulcedine rerum
   Diuitiasque magis deliciosus amas,
Nobilium nitis doctorum uescere cenis,
   Quorum multiplices nec numerantur opes.
Illic inuenies quidquid mare nutrit edendum,
   Quidquid terra creat, quidquid ad astra uolat.
Cerea gemmatis flauescunt mella canistris
   Conlucentque suis aurea uasa fauis.
At nos exiguum de paupere carpsimus horto,
   Rubra quod adpositum testa ministrat, holus.

[You who seek this paschal banquet as a guest, having deigned to lean upon our couches, put your arrogance aside, if you think yourself a friend, and do not look for the work of an artful book here: but approach the solemnities of this modest table contently, wanting more to be filled in spirit than with food. Or if you are taken with the sweetness of great things, and, being delicate, love their richness more, then feast upon the brilliant fare of learned nobles, whose manifold riches cannot be counted. There you will find whatever the sea nourishes for eating, whatever the land creates, whatever flies to the stars. Waxen honey turns golden-yellow in sparkling canisters, and golden vessels gleam in their combs. But we have picked meagre greens from a poor garden, which are put before you in an earthen-red pot.]

What is traditionally the place for the invocation to the Muse becomes an invitation to a metaphoric meal, a paschal banquet (pascales dapes), where the main course is food for the soul.17 The readers of the Carmen paschale are the guests at this meal, and they recline upon couches in the Roman fashion and partake of the spiritual food of biblical verse. This is a mystic feast like that in Prudentius’ ‘Hymn before Eating’ (Cath. 3.16–17): ‘Fercula nostra deum sapiant, / Christus et influat in pateras’ [‘May our dishes taste of God and Christ flow into our bowls’]; and through Christ, as says Prudentius, ‘we are fed, nourishing our hearts with mystic feasts’ [‘Cuius subsidio nos quoque uescimur /

17 Compare Book Five, lines 405–8, another paschal meal to which the apostles are invited. See further Springer for a discussion of that passage in Gospel as Epic, p. 107.
Pascentes dapibus pectora mysticis,’ 5.107–8]. The innovative style of the preface is unlike any prior biblical poem, and Prudentius is the most likely source of inspiration for Sedulius in terms of the metrical variation and figural language of the opening.

The rest of the preface unfolds in a series of double-entendres which involve literal and figurative forms of consumption. Sedulius says that his guest may be deliciosus in the sense of ‘dainty’ or ‘pleasure-loving,’ and the association with ‘delicious’ suits the culinary interest of the scene. The delicate guest, says Sedulius, is likely to prefer ‘the sweetness of great things’ (magnarum ... dulcedine rerum), by which he means food, literally, but also the enjoyment of great literature on a figurative level. The meals of ‘learned nobles’ (Nobilium nitidis doctorum uescere cenis) are not simply feasts but epic songs by poets like Homer and Vergil, whose ‘food’ is served in golden vessels filled with honeyed eloquence. In contrast, and with affected humility, Sedulius offers ‘meagre greens from a poor garden.’ Still, it is wholesome food, and the same food that Prudentius recommends in his ‘Hymn before Eating’ (3.63–5):

Nos holeris coma, nos siliqua
Feta legumine multimodo
Pauerit innocuis epulis. 65

[As for us, the leaves of greens, the pod that swells with beans of various kinds, will nourish us with an innocent banquet.]

By no means humble fare, the Carmen paschale (like the Cathemerinon) therefore offers real substance, not just food that looks and tastes good. For Sedulius, biblical verse is a

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18 Note Green, Latin Epics (p. 160), who believes that the ‘closest parallels [for the preface] seem not to be the prefaces of Prudentius or Claudian, but certain prefaces of Ausonius and Martial.’ Here, however, I am concerned not so much with the form but the content. That said, Prudentius is certainly a model for the use of metres besides hexameter verse, even if Sedulius looked elsewhere in this case.

much more wholesome, spiritual diet than pagan literature, which is admittedly
delightful, but incomparable to the richness of the New Testament.

The lines which immediately follow this banquet-preface constitute a second
preface of sorts, where the condemnation of pagan verse bears closer resemblance to the
sort of invocation we find in Juvencus’ *Euangelia* (1.17–26):

Cum sua gentiles studeant figmenta poetae
Grandisonis pompare modis, tragicoque boatu
Ridiculoue Geta seu qualibet arte canendi
Saeua nefandarum renouent contagia rerum
Et scelerarum monumenta canant, rituque magistro
Plurima Niliaci tradant mendacia biblis:
Cur ego, Dauiticis adsuetus cantibus odas
Cordarum resonare decem sanctisque uerenter
Stare choro et placidis caelestia psallere uerbis,
Clara salutiferi taceam miracula Christi?

[Since pagan poets are eager to parade their fictions in lofty-sounding modes, and
with their tragic wailing, ridiculous Geta or whatever other kind of singing, they
renew the savage contagions of unspeakable things, and sing monuments of sin
and, with ritual as a teacher, pass down more lies in their papyrus books, why
should I—accustomed to resounding odes of ten chords in David’s songs and
standing reverently in the holy choir, singing psalms of celestial things in gentle
words—be silent about the brilliant miracles of Christ the Saviour?]

Just as Juvencus condemns the lies bound to the deeds of ancient men in his *Euangelia*
(‘Quae ueterum gestis hominum mendacia nectunt,’ 1.16), so too does Sedulius attack
classical poetry as purely fictitious (*figmenta poeta*); and using classical diction against
itself, he imitates what he calls the ‘pompous’ style of epic verse in a series of long, open
vowel sounds (‘Grandisonis pompare modis, tragicoque boatu’). In exchange for the
‘memorials of sins’ (*scelerarum monumentum*), as he calls them, Sedulius offers a much

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20 In particular, Sedulius criticises tragedy and comedy; the reference to Geta is an allusion to the comedies
of Terence, for example. See Roger Green, *Latin Epics*, p. 163, and Green also mentions Springer in the
same passage, whom he says wrongly attributes Geta to Hosidius Geta, the writer of a cento called the
*Medea*. See further Springer, *Gospel as Epic*, p. 77. Certainly, the *Opus paschale* gives no indication of
Geta’s identity (‘seu ridicule Getae comica foeditate’), though Remegius’ commentary does (Huemer, p.
321): ‘Getae, persona comica est apud Terentium.’
more reverent and celestial poem, a song about the ‘illustrious miracles of Christ’ (‘Clara
salutiferi taceam miracula Christi?’). Ironically, at the end of this introductory passage,
Sedulius reinforces his thematic focus and calls his audience to attention with two
Vergilian echoes. First, he says that only Christ ‘shows the way to salvation and leads
firm steps to the paschal gifts’ [‘Haec est uia namque salutis, / Haec firmos ad dona
gradus paschalia ducit,’ 1.19–20], which is an echo of ‘uia prima salutis’ in the
_Aeneid_ (6.96–7) and the Sibyl’s prophecy that a Grecian city will help Aeneas. The city, as
Roger Green points out, is ‘emphatically not the way to salvation,’ and so Sedulius’ use
of the phrase is a ‘notable reversal.’ What is more, the last line of the preface, which is
emphatic by position, calls his audience to attend the author’s words in terms that echo
both Juvencus and Vergil. ‘Haec mihi carmen erit’ (line 37) is an echo of Juvencus’
preface (‘Nam mihi carmen erit,’ 19), and ‘mentes huc uertite cuncti’ echoes ‘huc
advertite mentem’ from Book Eight of the _Aeneid_. Therefore, as Sedulius sets out on
his paschal song, he provides the audience with a clear indication of the two traditions
which govern the style of his _Carmen paschale_: Vergil and classical epic on the one hand
and Juvencus and biblical verse on the other.

The actual opening of the main narrative does not begin until line thirty-seven of
the poem, at which point Sedulius introduces the chief antagonist of Book One—
paganism. The language of this scene is highly allusive and draws upon classical
literature to present a lively and original renewal of pagan literature (1.38–44):

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21 Green, _Latin Epics_, p. 164.
22 I am indebted to Green, _Latin Epics_ (p. 164) for the Vergilian echoes in this passage.
23 See further 1.242–33 in the _Carmen paschale_ for a lengthy digression on various pagan practices.
Hanc constanter opem laesis adhibete medullis,
Quos letale malum, quos uanis dedita curis
Attica Cecropii serpit doctrina ueneni,
Sectantesque magis uitam spirantis odorem
Legis Athenaei paedorem linquite pagi.
Quid labyrintheo, Thesidae, erratis in antro
Caecaque Daedalei lustratis limina tecti?

[Lend this power to wounded hearts constantly, into whom creeps deadly evil, the
Attic doctrine of Cecropian poison, which is given over to vain cares, and
following rather the scent of the law that breathes life, give up the stench of the
Athenian countryside. Why, children of Theseus, do you wander in that
labyrinthine cave and roam about the blind thresholds of that Daedalean hall?]

Sedulius devotes a great deal of attention to exposing the fallacy of worshiping stones
and trees in Book One of his poem. As he says on one occasion, ‘Ligneu, ligna rogas,
surdis clamare uideris, / A mutis responsa petis’ (267–8): ‘You blockheads! You are
begging to blocks of wood, barking at deaf [limbs], and beseeching answers from mute
[trees]. In lines 38–44 he associates paganism with the mythical founder of Athens,
Cecrops, who now leads Christians into a Daedalean maze of sin and delusion, at the
heart of which Satan himself stands.24 Here letale mālum must mean ‘deadly evil’ for
metrical reasons, yet one cannot help but see letale mālum, ‘deadly apple,’ especially
alongside the words serpit (‘creeps up on’) and veneni (‘of poison’), both of which evoke
images of the serpent in the Garden of Eden.25 In fact, just a few lines later, Sedulius says
that Christ ‘has renewed man dying from the sweetness of the forbidden apple with a
better food and dispelled the poison spread by the serpent with the drink of his sacred
blood [‘Qui pereuntem hominem uetiti dulcedine pomi / Instauras meliore cibo potuque

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24 Springer comments briefly on this passage, calling Sedulius a ‘latter-day Paul’ who addresses the
Athenians with reference to pagans in general (Gospel as Epic, p. 30). He also provides a discussion later
on of serpentine imagery in particular, where he also mentions this passage (pp. 93–5).
25 For other uses of the word uenenum in the Carmen paschale see further 1.40, 1.72, 2.186, 3.190; and
5.64 (the last example refers to Judas as the ‘poison’ to Christ’s ‘honey’).
A century later, the poet Avitus also uses the same language to describe the temptation of Eve in his *De spiritualis historiae gestis libri* (2. 220): ‘Diis tamen esse cupit similis, serpitque uenenum / ambitione nocens.’ [‘Still, she wanted to be like God and so the poison crept in, wounding her with ambition’] So, aligning Cecrops with the devil, Sedulius makes a subtle but unmistakable connection between paganism and Satanism, and this connection is all the more poignant for anyone who realizes that Cecrops is often depicted as a serpent below the waist—a personification of the devil himself!28

At the heart of Book One, a series of Old Testament miracles exemplify God’s omnipotence over nature, and many of these scenes prefigure Christ’s wondrous deeds in the New Testament portion of the poem. From a narrative point of view, God’s ability to overturn the laws of nature is relevant to Christ’s resurrection at the end of the *Carmen paschale*, and Sedulius plants those seeds here (1.85–7): ‘Te duce difficilis non est uia; subditur omnis / Imperis natura tuis, rituque soluto / Transit in aduersas iussu dominante figuras’ [‘With you as leader the way is not difficult; all nature is subject to your commands, and freed of its ritual, Nature changes to contrary figures by your dominating will’]. Prefiguring the Eucharist and reinforcing the paschal theme of the poem, many of the miracles in Book One therefore concern forms of literal as well as figural nourishment.

What is more, several readings from the Easter vigil probably provide an extra-biblical

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26 See further 2.186: ‘The devil readies another attack with his viperous poison’ [‘Altera uipereis instaurans arma uenenis’]; and 3.189–92: ‘Look! That slippery serpent is up to his old tricks, envious with the bile of black venom and loving to fatten himself on human suffering’ [‘En iterum ueteres instaurans lubricus artes / Ille chelydrus adest, nigri qui felle ueneni / Liuidus humano gaudet pinguescere tabo’]. Note that the word is also used of Judas in Book Five (5.64) and of the acerbic thief crucified beside Christ (5.216).

27 See further Nodes, ed., *The Fall of Man* (Toronto, 1985). Note that Avitus uses the plural form of *deus* here, a simple classicism.

source for several of these miracles. For example, the first miracle in the *Carmen paschale*, the story of Enoch, is also among the second series of readings for the Easter vigil (*Gen* 5, 6, 7 and 8). Likewise, the second miracle in the poem presents Abraham’s offering of Isaac, which is also the third reading in the vigil (*Gen* 22.1–19); the Crossing of the Red Sea is the fourth miracle in the poem and the fourth reading in the vigil (*Ex* 14.24–31 and 15.1); and the tenth reading in the vigil is the story of Jonah, which is also the thirteenth miracle in the *Carmen paschale*. Finally, the story of the three youths in the furnace from the book of Daniel figures in the vigil as the twelfth reading and the fourteenth miracle in the *Carmen paschale*. In all, it would seem that the twelve readings of the vigil provide a loose model for the choice of the miracles in the first book of the *Carmen paschale*, though another possible source is the *Cathemerinon* of Prudentius. Hymns 3–12 of his *Cathemerinon* cover many of the same episodes, and perhaps Prudentius had the vigil in mind as well.

The figural and thematic importance of Book One is best represented by a series of three miracles from Exodus: the Crossing of the Red Sea; the story of manna raining from heaven; and the drawing of water from the rock. Sedulius places these three episodes at the heart of his miracle sequence, and they are central to the theme of Book One and the whole of the *Carmen paschale*. The account of the crossing appears first, and Sedulius’ interpretation of this scene reflects an enduring interest in the underlying message of the Crossing among poets in the genre (1.136–47):

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30 See further Green, *Latin Epics*, pp. 148–9. As Green says (p. 149), ‘The variety of Sedulius’ approach in his own series of gospel scenes may owe something as well to Prudentius’ remarkable fertility in his modes of re-enacting the narratives and his constantly changing focus from one cameo to the next.’
31 These episodes are based on *Ex* 14:21–25, *Ex* 16:13–16 and *Ex* 17:1–7.
[A road lay open through the cerulean waters of the parted sea which rolled back into a double flank, and the naked earth was stripped of its usual waters, as a host of foot-soldiers entered a sea without water, and throughout the deep the dry bedrock marvelled at their foreign tracks. Nature changed its way, and walking into the midst of the sea, the people underwent a rudimentary baptism, with Christ as their leader; for the Scriptures proclaim: the voice of God stretches over many waters; in the end, the voice is the Word. The Word is Christ, who, ruling the harmonious Testaments of a twin law, laid open the old abyss, so that a following doctrine might go forth over the open plains.]

Cyprianus hints at the Christian significance of Exodus with a single phrase in the

*Heptateuch*, ‘Ignotas monstrante uias per deuia Christo’ [‘with Christ showing the way through the unknown wilderness’], but for Sedulius, the symbolism is more important than the literal fact of the crossing.32 The poetry here is colourful: the waters are ‘cerulean blue’ (*caerula ponti*); the sea, like a fallen warrior, is ‘despoiled’ of its precious ‘armour’ (*spoliatur*), and the personified seabed marvels at the unusual footprints on its floor. Still, the ultimate significance of the episode is figural, as a reenactment of the rite of Baptism.33 It is no coincidence that here Sedulius echoes words from the beginning of the miracle sequence, where the focus is God’s ability to make nature ‘change its way’ and ‘cross over’ into different ‘forms’ (*natura ... transit in aduersas ... figuras*, 1.86–7);

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32 See further Green, *Latin Epics* (p.238), who refers to the episode as a ‘history or prehistory of baptism.’ For a fuller discussion of Sedulius’ ‘authorial intrusions’ see Springer, *Gospel as Epic*, pp. 90–2.
nature does this with God as its leader (*te duce*, 1.85). Here, echoing that same passage as proof of God’s omnipotence, nature does indeed change its way (*Mutuit natura uiam*, 1.141), as the Israelites literally ‘cross over’ the dry seabed with ‘Christ as their leader’ (‘cui dux Christus erat,’ 1.143); and the ocean has changed the nature of its surface (*figura*), too, but the change is also ‘figural’ and symbolic of Baptism. Here Christ parts the Red Sea and the mysteries of the Old Testament simultaneously.

The next two miracles likewise look to the New Testament for their meaning. In retelling the story of how Moses feeds the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex 16.13–16) and draws water from the rock (Ex 17.1–7), Sedulius deliberately avoids mentioning Moses by name (1.148–51). He does this in order to emphasize Christ’s agency at the Sea and again here (1.159): ‘His igitur iam sacra tribus dans munera rebus, / Christus erat panis, Christus petra, Christus in undis’ ['Therefore, granting His sacred gifts on these three occasions, Christ was the bread, Christ the rock, Christ was in the water']. These three miracles constitute a symbolic unit, whose greater significance is revealed only at the closing of the *Carmen paschale*.

At the Crucifixion in Book Five, Sedulius reveals the underlying symbolism of the wound at Christ’s side (5.287–92):

> Vulnere purpureus cruor et simul unda cucurrit.  
> Haec sunt quippe sacrae pro religionis honore:  
> Corpus sanguis aqua tria uitae munera nostrae.  
> Fonte renascentes, membris et sanguine Christi  
> Vescimur atque ideo templum deitatis habemur

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34 Cf. 1 Corinthians (10.1–4): ‘Nolo enim uos ignorare fratres quoniam patres nostri omnes sub nube fuerunt et omnes mare transierunt et omnes in Mose baptizati sunt in nube et in mari; et omnes eandem escam spiritalem manducuerunt; et omnes eundem potum spiritalem biberunt bibeant autem de spirituali consequenti eos petra petra autem erat Christus.’ ['For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea. And all in Moses were baptized, in the cloud and in the sea. And did all eat the same spiritual food. And all drank the same spiritual drink and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them and the rock was Christ.']
Crimson blood and water ran together from the wound. Surely these things stand for the honour of holy religion—body, blood, water—three gifts for our life. Reborn at the font, we are nourished on the limbs and blood of Christ, and so we are held to be the temple of his deity.

With this passage in mind, consider again Sedulius’ words at the end of the three-fold miracle sequence in Book One (1.158–9): ‘Granting sacred gifts on these three occasions, Christ was the bread, Christ the rock, Christ was in the water.’ In other words, the three miracles or ‘gifts’ prefigure man’s redemption through Christ in Baptism and the participation in the Eucharistic, the gifts of his body and blood. As Prudentius says, it is through Christ that we are fed, ‘nourishing our hearts with mystic feasts’ ['Cuius subsidio nos quoque uescimur / Pascentes dapibus pectora mysticis']. So, *fonte renascentes* (5.291) relates both to Baptism and the Crossing of the Red Sea, while ‘membris et sanguine Christi vescimur’ (5.291–2) relate to the manna and water as Christ’s body and blood. The climax to the *Carmen paschale* is therefore a return to the beginning of the poem, where God’s power over nature and death is first revealed.

Book One contains a number of other episodes which look forward to the New Testament, and these stories, as Carl Springer says, are ‘designed to instruct the faithful, not only to dazzle them with virtuosity.’ The story of Abraham and Isaac, for example, is among the most well-known figural episodes of the Bible, and Sedulius treats this scene catechetically, with emphasis on the underlying meaning of the episode (1.114–20):

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35 *Cathemerinon*, ‘Hymn before Eating’ (5.107–8).
36 Springer likewise notes the connection between the opening and closing portions of the *Carmen paschale*, and mentions God’s omnipotence in particular and his ability to overturn the laws of nature in Book One (1.85–92) in connection with Christ’s resurrection in Book Five (5.276-84). See further Springer, *Gospel as Epic*, pp. 68–70
37 Springer treats several such episodes, which he says are ‘filled with shadows, types, and references, all of them pointing to Christ and the events of his life, passion, and death’ (ibid, p. 35).
38 See also Sedulius’ rendition of the Jonah-story (1.192–6), which also bears figural significance.
Mactandumque Deo pater obtulit, at sacer ipsam
Pro pueri iugulis aries mactatur ad aram. 115
O iusti mens sancta uiri, pietate remota
Plus pietatis habens contempsit uulnera nati
Amplexus praecepta Dei, typicique cruoris
Auxilio uentura docet, quod sanguine Christi
Humana pro gente pius occumberet agnus. 120

[And the father offered his son to be sacrificed to God, though a ram was
sacrificed in place of his boy’s throat. O, the holy heart of that righteous man!
Putting pity aside and having more piety, he turned his thoughts from his child’s
wounds, having embraced the precepts of God! And with the help of figural
bloodshed he teaches what is to come, since a pious lamb would die for the
human race by the blood of Christ.]

The offering of Isaac is a prefiguration of God’s sacrifice of Christ, and Sedulius uses
the words *typicique* and *docet* to instruct his audience in the greater significance of the
episode. As a sign of personal and almost intimate devotion, Abraham literally
‘embraces’ the commandments of God, and sacrifices his son, who is still dear to him.
Sedulius also plays on the sense of *pietas* here (116, 117), which refers to ‘duty’ and
‘piety’ in the secular and religious senses but also a sense of sparing ‘pity.’

Like Juvencus, Sedulius also comments on the meaning behind the gifts of the
Magi, but unlike him and more like Prudentius, Sedulius is willing to distance himself
from the biblical narrative to digress at length. This passage, like the episode of Abraham
and Isaac, serves an instructive function (2.93–101):

Thesaurisique simul pro religione solutis,
Ipsae etiam ut possint species ostendere Christum,
Aurea nascenti fuderunt munera regi, 95
Tura dedere Deo, myrram tribuere sepulchro.
Cur tria dona tamen? quoniam spes maxima uitae est
Hunc numerum confessa fides, et tempora summus
Cernens cuncta Deus, praesentia, prisca, futura,
Semper adest semperque fuit semperque manebit
In triplici uirtute sui.
[At once they laid out treasures in devotion, so that their figures might symbolize Christ: They poured out golden gifts for the new-born king, gave incense for God, and bestowed myrrh for the tomb. But why three gifts? Because our greatest hope of life, faith, confessed this number, and because the highest God, who sees through all time, present, past, and future, always is, was, and always shall be in threefold power.]

Like Juvencus, Sedulius associates each of the gifts with a stage in Christ’s life, but he does not limit himself to suggestive allusion. He states explicitly that the number of the gifts symbolizes the Holy Trinity, and so demonstrates a greater desire than Juvencus or Cyprianus to provide didactic commentary on the Gospels.39

Book One, however, represents a freer response to the biblical narrative than the rest of the poem, and like the preface to Juvencus’ Euangelia it is not generally representative of how Sedulius goes about versifying the Gospels. A few examples from the New Testament portion of the Carmen paschale will provide a better sense of how Sedulius compares to his predecessors. The lengthiest interpolation in the early part of the poem is the versification of the Lord’s Prayer at the end of Book Two, which Sedulius expands to over seventy-lines. The Prayer is not immediately apparent, however, because it is embedded into the narrative with a word or verse of the Pater noster at intervals of 5–10 lines. Eight interconnected sections elaborate on a word or phrase of the original, and the rhetorical function of the interpolation is connected to the apostles, whom Christ instructs to ‘fish for human souls’ (1.220–21). Contrary to the order in the Gospels, Sedulius does not present the Prayer in the context of the Sermon on the Mount (which he does not treat at all), like Juvencus, but in relation to the apostles and their mission to

39 See further Springer, Gospel as Epic, p. 85. Springer also treats the end of this episode (2.101–61) in terms of Sedulius’ interest in the figural significance of biblical episodes. ‘Like the wise men,’ says Springer, who do not return to Herod, ‘Sedulius’ readers are to shun the path of evil and stick to the narrow road which leads to salvation’ (p. 87).
spread the Word. Because of its length, I offer only an excerpt from the beginning of the Prayer (2.231–48):

Quin etiam celerem cupiens conferre salutem
Orandi praecepta dedit, iudexque benignus
Indulgenda peti breuiter iubet, ut cito praestet,
Sic dicens: orate patrem, baptimate nostrum,
Iure suum; propriumque homini concessit honorem
Et quod solus habet cunctos permisit habere.
Qui dominum caeli patrem memoramus, in ipso
Iam fratres nos esse decet nec origine carnis
Germanum tractare odium, sed spiritus igne
Flagrantes abolere doli monumenta uetusti
Atque nouum gestare hominem, ne forsan ab alto
Degenerent terrena Deo, cui nos duce Christo
Fecit adoptiuos caelestis gratia natos.
Sanctificetur ubi Dominus, qui cuncta creando
Sanctificat, nisi corde pio, nisi pectore casto?
Vt mereamur eum nos sanctificare colendo,
Annuit ipse prior, sicut benedicier idem
Se iubet a nobis, a quo benedicimur omnes.

[Furthermore, wanting to provide quick help, he gave instructions for prayer; and the benign judge bade our requests be briefly sought, so that he might grant them quickly: ‘Beseech the father, who is ours through baptism, his own by right,’ he said. He granted his honour to men, and what he alone has he allows all men to have. It is right for us who are mindful of the Lord Father in heaven to be brothers in him and not draw fraternal hate from the origin of the flesh. But rather, enflamed with the fire of our spirits, we should destroy the monuments of ancient wickedness and make a new man, so that we of the earth are not unworthy of the Lord; for, with Christ as our leader, God’s celestial grace makes us his adopted children. Where else should the Lord be hallowed, who hallows all things through creation but in the pure breast, in the pious heart, that we may deserve to hallow him through our worshiping? He himself said before that, just as he is bids us praise him, so too shall we all be praised by him.]

Sedulius renders the initial words of the Lord’s Prayer, ‘Pater noster qui in caelis es,’

with caeli patrem in line 237, while ‘hallowed be thy name’ (sanctificetur nomen tuum) does not appear until seven lines later (sanctificetur ubi Dominus, 244). The material in between represents an exhortation to love God with the soul and not the flesh, the implication being that the weakness of the flesh is what leads to the Fall and subsequent
discord between Cain and Abel. Sedulius puts the same onus on his readers as he does in his letter to Macedonius, that each of us must avoid the snares of sin by our commitment to ‘the path of freedom.’ A second exhortation to overcome sin and follow ‘Christ as a leader’ comes next. The reiteration of the phrase, *duce Christo* reaffirms the agency of Christ in man’s salvation, which nevertheless requires him to worship God through his actions and not prayer alone. The opening to Sedulius’ version of the *Pater noster* is therefore not just a paraphrase of the biblical prose but a spiritual–didactic exhortation which explains the meaning of the words that underly the Prayer, so that disciples may approach it with a clarity of purpose. It is a much freer and lengthier rendition than that of Juvencus, and it is characterized by biblical exegesis and homiletic exhortation.

The remainder of the prayer (lines 249–300) expands upon the biblical narrative in similar ways: to the words, ‘thy kingdom come,’ Sedulius adds several comments on the brilliance and eternal nature of God’s kingdom once more emphasizes Christ’s agency (*principe Christo*); of the words ‘thy will be done,’ Sedulius suggests that God’s ‘will’ is chiefly to protect us from the devil; the ‘daily bread’ is a metaphor for the body of Christ; and to the words ‘forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us,’ Sedulius inserts a section from the gospel of Matthew, which emphasizes our accountability to God; the words ‘lead us not into temptation’ become a brief sermon against the indulgence of worldly pleasures; and finally, ‘deliver us not from evil’ becomes another exhortation to pursue ‘good’ (*debemus adire sectarique bonum*). Therefore, the whole of the Prayer in the *Carmen paschale* becomes a petition not just to the Father but to the Son as well, and Sedulius is careful to assert throughout that, while Christ’s will is to answer our prayers, ours must be to live in accordance with the tenets of the Faith.

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Christ rewards the faithful, and his miracles bear witness to God’s desire to answer the pleas of his disciples. From a stylistic point of view, Sedulius’ versification of several miracles which relate to Christ’s healing of blindness provide an opportunity to demonstrate how he treats similar episodes. The first of these scenes, based loosely on Matthew 9:27–30, appears half-way through Book Three, and the Vulgate is given below for comparison (3.143–51):

Et transeunte inde Iesu secuti sunt eum duo caeci clamantes et dicentes, ‘miserere nostri Fili David.’ Cum autem uenisset domum accesserunt ad eum caeci et dicit eis Iesus, ‘creditis quia possum hoc facere uobis?’ Dicunt ei, ‘utique Domine.’ Tunc tetigit oculos eorum dicens, ‘secundum fiden uestram fiat uobis.’ Et aperti sunt oculi illorum et comminatus est illis Iesus dicens, ‘uidete ne quis sciat.’

—Mt 9:27–30

[And as Jesus passed from thence, there followed him two blind men crying out and saying, ‘Have mercy on us, O Son of David.’ And when he was come to the house, the blind men came to him. And Jesus saith to them, ‘Do you believe that I can do this unto you?’ They say to him, ‘Yea, Lord.’ Then he touched their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith, be it done unto you.’ And their eyes were opened, and Jesus strictly charged them, saying, ‘See that no man know this.’]

Inde pedem referens duo conspicit ecce sequentes
Caecatos clamare uiros: Fili inclite Dauid,
Decute nocturnas extinctis uultibus umbras
Et clarum largire diem. Quam credere tutum,
Quam sanum est cognosse Deum! iam corde uidebant
Qui lucis sensere uiam; tunc caeca precantum
Lumina defuso ceu torpens ignis oliuo
Sub Domini micuere manu, tactuque sereno
Instaurata suis radiarunt ora lucernis.

[Then, retracing his steps, behold, he saw two blind men following him and shouting: ‘Noble son of David, shake these nocturnal shades from our darkened faces and grant them clear daylight. O, how prudent to believe, how wholesome to know God!’ Those two men already saw with their hearts, sensed the path of light; and then the blind eyes of those entreating men, like a waning flame in want of oil, flickered beneath the hand of the Lord; and with his bright touch their renewed eyes shone forth from their lanterns.]

41 For a full catalogue with biblical cross-references of Sedulius’ treatment of New Testament miracles see further Green, Latin Epics, pp. 180–3.
The first two lines follow the Vulgate closely, echoing the verbs *sequor* and *clamo* as well as the adjective *caecus*; the third line, however, introduces a sustained play on words involving images of light and darkness. The men’s blindness is a ‘nocturnal shade’ and their eyes themselves are literally ‘extinguished’ (*extinctis*) like flames of a fire. The word *lumina* (‘lights’) in line 349, which complements the emphasis on light imagery throughout the passage, is also a poetic alternative for the biblical *oculus*. *Lumen* never appears in the Bible with this sense. In fact, beyond one or two words in common, there is very little vocabulary here to connect Sedulius’ Latin with the Bible. Instead, he uses synonymic substitution and poeticism to echo the Bible indirectly. This is especially true of the climax to this episode, where Sedulius compares the rekindling of sight with a waning lamp, drained of its oil. When Christ touches the men’s eyes, their vision returns and their ‘lamps’ burst into flame, beaming brightly.⁴²

In the previous episode, inner faith makes the blind men worthy of Christ’s healing power. Sedulius, like Juvencus, often juxtaposes the internal health of the soul with the outward signs of physical infirmity. So in Book Three, Christ heals the centurion’s son, because the centurion believes in God’s far-reaching power (3.121–8). Christ likewise heals the woman of issuing blood, because of the ‘wealth of faith that begins to flow into her healthy heart’ ['Ast ubi credentis iam sano in pectore coepit / Diues adesse fides’]. In Book One, the fire of their souls saves the three youths in the furnace (1.204–5): ‘O quanta est credentum gloria! flammis / Ardentis fidei restincta est flamma camini’ ['O how great is the glory of those believers! With the flames of ardent faith, the flame of that furnace was restrained’]. More than once in the *Carmen paschale*,

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⁴² See Green, *Latin Epics* (p. 218), who attributes the poetry of this passage to the epic heritage of the *Carmen paschale*. 
Sedulius makes a point of saying that Christ does not deny or hold back his gifts from anyone who believes in him (‘Credenti quae nulla negat nec dona retardat,’ 3.16), and the miracles which deal with the restoration of the blind or lame in the *Carmen paschale* typically emphasize the inner spiritual health of the victims.

At the beginning of Book Four, Christ heals another two blind men, and here Sedulius alters his treatment of the miracle slightly, but retains the essential focus on faith (4.31–9):

Praeterea geminos Dominus considere caecos
Dum quoddam transiret iter comitante caterua
Conspicit, extinctae poscentes munera formae
Flebilibusque uagas implentes uocibus auras.
Nec cunctata solens pietas inferre salutem,
Quae sentit flagrare fidem, mox lumina tangens
Euigilare iubet, quae somnus presserat ingens,
Atque diu clausas reserans sub fronte fenestras
Ingredientiae die fecit discedere noctem.

[Afterward, when the Lord was once crossing a road in the company of a crowd, he saw two blind men sitting there, begging for offerings on account of their lost eyesight and filling the wandering air with their tearful voices. His pity, not used to holding back its help, sensed their burning faith, and touching them, he bade those eyes be wakeful, which a great sleep had overcome; and opening the long-shut windows beneath their brows, he made night vanish with the coming day.]

As in the preceding miracle, the men’s eyesight is literally ‘extinguished’ (*extinctae*), while the inner fire of their faith burns brightly (*flagrare fidem*); the word *lumina* again describes the eyes, but two new ideas separate this miracle from the last. The men’s blindness is now compared to a heavy sleep (‘quia somnus presserat ingens’), not unlike the girl whom Christ awakens from the ‘sleep’ of death (3.103–42), and Christ literally commands the men’s eyesight to awake and be watchful (*euigilare iubet*), as if they were drowsy sentries at their post. A new metaphor also compares blindness to windows which the hand of Christ opens up, in order to let in the daylight. All of this imagery builds upon
the essential Gospel story, to emphasize the miraculous nature of Christ’s power and the importance of cultivating inner faith.

Of the three other miracles in the *Carmen paschale* which involve blindness, the last is the most elaborate and important.\(^\text{43}\) In Book Four, Christ opens ‘the gateways of a blind man’s cheeks’ at the pool of Siloah (4.251–70):

Inde means genitum cernit considere caecum,  
Qui male praegnantis dilapsus uentre parentis  
In lucem sine luce ruit. Tunc sanguinis ille  
Conditor humani mundique orientis origo,  
Imperfecta diu proprii non passus haberi  
Membra operis, natale lutum per claustra genarum  
Illiniens hominem ueteri de semine supplet.  
Nec uisum tamen ante capit, quam uoce iubentis  
Accepta Domini Siloam uenisset ad undam  
Et consanguinei tutus medicamine limi  
Pura oculos fouisset aqua. mox ergo gemellae  
Vultibus effulgent acies tandemque merentur  
Ignotum spectare diem. cognoscite cuncti,  
Mystica quid doceant animos miracula nostros.  
Caeca sumus proles miserae de fetibus Euae,  
Portantes longo natas errore tenebras.  
Sed dignante Deo mortalem sumere formam  
Tegminis humani, facta est ex uirgine nobis  
Terra salutaris, quae fontibus abluta sacris  
Clara renascentis reserat spiramina lucis.

[As he was walking along, Christ saw a man born blind sitting nearby, who had fallen badly from his mother’s pregnant womb and rushed into the light without light. Then, the Creator of human blood and Origin of the world’s beginning—not suffering long the limbs of his own work to be imperfect—smeared natal mud upon the gates of his cheeks and made that man whole again from the ancient seed. But he did not regain his sight until he heard the voice of God commanding him to come to the pool of Siloah and not until the pure water had healed his eyes, which were protected by the medication of the kindred mud. So his twin pupils shone from his face and at last deserved to see the unknown day. Let all recognize what these mystic miracles may teach our souls! We are the blind offspring of Eve’s wretched womb, bearing a darkness born of longstanding sin; but since God deigned to take on the mortal form of this human coil, the land has been made wholesome for us by the Virgin, who was washed by sacred fonts, so that she might open the shining passageways of light reborn.]

\(^{\text{43}}\) A brief account of healing blindness appears at 4.99–105 and then at 4.106–8.
As usual, the essential biblical story forms the basis of the literal narrative, but now Sedulius uses it to introduce another baptismal metaphor. The blind man stands for humankind, and like Adam and Eve, his blindness is the result of his fall, literally, from the womb. Humanity is therefore spiritually blind as a result of the Fall. The specific allusions to Genesis and the Fall begin in this scene with the epithets for Christ, ‘the founder of humankind’ and ‘origin of the nascent world’ ['Conditor humani mundique orientis origo,' 254]. These epithets place Christ, or rather the Trinity, at the moment of Creation. With Genesis in mind, Sedulius then presents a virtual re-enactment of the creation of Adam, where the mud smeared on the blind man’s cheeks symbolizes Adam’s birth (Gen. 2:7): ‘formauit igitur Dominus Deus hominem de limo terrae’ ['And the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth']. This ‘slime’ (limus) is mud, like that used to heal the blind man. That it is ‘natal mud’ (natale lutum), emphasizes the association with birth. In the lines that follow, Sedulius alludes to Adam and Eve more explicitly with reference to the ‘ancient seed’ (ueteri de semine) and through Christ’s refusal to let his ‘own work’ be imperfect (256–7). As the miracle draws to a close, the blind man cleanses his eyes in the pool of Siloah, an allusion to baptism, and Mary appears in the narrative as the vessel for the salvation of humankind. Her presence echoes the opening of the poem and the passage where Mary represents the new Eve and Christ’s birth signifies the rebirth of humankind (2.33–4): ‘Christo nascente renasci / Possit homo, et ueteris maculum deponere carnis’ ['Man can be reborn with the birth of Christ and put aside the stain of ancient flesh']. Sedulius relies on his readers in this case to connect the symbolic dots, however, and he chooses instead to address the audience directly (Cognoscite cuncti, 4.263), much as he does at the beginning of the poem (Mentes huc uertite cuncti,
1.37), so that he may state plainly that we are ‘the blind offspring of Eve’s wretched womb’ and that this story is a metaphor for our own fallen state of existence.

Sedulius is the first writer in the genre to take advantage not only of the artistic potential of biblical verse but the deeper spiritual truths contained in the Bible. There is nothing unfaithful about Sedulius’ versification of the Gospels. On the contrary, the characterization of him by later Renaissance editors as poeta Christianissimus is fitting, and the Carmen paschale reflects Christian orthodox views on the figural interpretation of the Scriptures. By incorporating these views into his verse, Sedulius is merely echoing what many Christians already know to be true. Moreover, by appealing to his audience with the ‘delights’ of verse (poeticas delicias), as he calls them in his letter to Macedonius, Sedulius uses poetry to make doctrine more appealing.45

Avitus (fl. c. 507 AD)

Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus was born in Vienne, the grandson of Emperor Marcus Maecilius Avitus (455–6) and the son of Isychus, whose seat as bishop he assumed upon his father’s death in 490.46 Avitus died sometime around 518.47

In a letter to Apollionaris, the bishop of Auvergne, Avitus refers to his versification of the Old Testament as a pleasant distraction from more serious work (Epist. 51 ad Apollinarem): ‘Inter occupationes seria et magis necessaria conscribendi nihilominus tamen de spiritualis historiae gestis etiam lege poematis lusi’ ['In the business of writing serious and more necessary things, I have nevertheless amused myself with the

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44 See Springer, Gospel as Epic, p. 91.
45 See Huemer, Sedulii Opera, pp. 5–6.
46 See Nodes, ed., The Fall of Man, p. 1.
Deeds of Spiritual History and the principle of poetry].\(^4\) No doubt Avitus is referring to his responsibilities as bishop here, when he speaks of ‘serious and more necessary things.’ Daniel Nodes suggests that the sense of *ludere* in this quotation is not only ‘to play,’ but is also ‘a conventional term for poetic composition.’\(^5\) He argues that the use of the term should not discount the seriousness of the poem, though I would suggest that Avitus is probably ‘playing’ with the word and allowing for both senses.

As a hexameter poet with an extensive knowledge of classical literature, Avitus takes full advantage of the Vergilian epic model. So Jonah is ‘buffeted on land and sea’ like Aeneas (‘Multum ille et terris iactatus et alto,’ 4.359), and both Noah and Moses are described as ‘heroes’ in martial-heroic terms (*heros*).\(^6\) What is more, Avitus uses the banks of the Red Sea to stage an epic battlefield upon which heroes fight for glory, and make epic speeches.\(^7\) Above this plain, heaven is *Olympus* and ‘God’ often appears in the plural form of *deus* as a deliberate classicism.\(^8\) Below, Satan ‘arms’ for war (*armat*, 2.125) and enters Eden, covering his ‘airy body’ (*aerium corpus*, 2.121) with snake’s skin; the sense of *aerium* is surely a pun on *aereum* (‘bronze’), the stuff of epic battle-gear. In response to the conventional epic simile, Avitus also lavishes a great deal of attention on comparisons of all kinds, so that, for example, ‘untended’ souls grow as unruly as untended fields (4.37–53), and sin, like a surging river (4.62–75), destroys all in

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\(^4\) For the complete letter of Avitus to Bishop Apollionaris see further R. Peiper, ed., *Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti Vienensis episcopi opera*, MGH Auct. ant. 6.1 (Berlin, 1883), pp. 79–81, at p. 80.

\(^5\) See further Nodes, *Doctrine and Exegesis*, p. 17.

\(^6\) The allusion is to the opening of the *Aeneid*, Book One, line 3: ‘Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris / Italian fato profugus Lauiniaque uenit / Litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto.’ R. A. B Mynors, ed., *Vergili Opera* (Oxford, 1969). The borrowing of a whole line is unusual in biblical verse and therefore highly conspicuous.

\(^7\) For use of the *heros* in the poem see further 4.222 (Noah) and 5.67 (Moses). For martial-heroic scenes in the Exodus portion of the poem see 5.373–83, 5.501–25.

\(^8\) For plural forms of *deus* see, for example, 2.202, 209 and 220.
its path. At every turn, Avitus ranges outward from the language of the Bible, adding lofty diction and imagery.

So, his poem is by no means a \textit{paene ad uerbum} rendition of the Bible but gives free rein to his poetic impulse, which halts only for reflection upon the deeper meaning of certain scriptural episodes. Like Sedulius, Avitus frequently puts Old and New Testament passages in the same context, commenting at length on the significance of the former in relation to the latter. So in the context of the Fall (3.220–312), he tells the whole story of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk 16:19–31), in order to emphasize the importance of confessing sins which cannot be forgiven after death (3.307–9): ‘Nos autem, dum uita manet, dum luce uigemus, / Olim defuncti perterret nuntius Adam, / Dum locus est flendi’ [‘But while life remains, while we yet thrive in the light, let that herald of fallen Adam frighten us, while there is still a place for weeping’]. Like Book One of the \textit{Carmen paschale}, figural allusions to the New Testament abound in the \textit{Historia spiritualis}, where, for example, the wood of the tree in Paradise symbolizes the cross and Christ’s propitiation for our sins (3. 20–2): ‘Et tamen adueniet tempus, cum crimina ligni / Per lignum sanet purgetque nouissimus Adam / Materiamque ipsam faciat medicamina uitae’ [‘There will come a time when the sins of the tree will be cleansed by wood, and a last Adam will purge his own substance, to provide a remedy for this life’]. Note the polyptoton in \textit{criminal ligni / per lignum}, a favourite rhetorical device of the author.

\footnote{In the last instance, compare Juvenecus (1.687), who, in versifying Mt. 7:13–14, refers to evils which carry one off like the current of a river (‘arripit hos pronoque trahit uelut impetus amnis’).}
\footnote{In associating Christ and the redemptive power of the cross with the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, Avitus no doubt chooses the word \textit{materia}, which also refers to wood or building material, as a pun on the wood of the tree (\textit{lignum}); the notion of redemption as a medication (\textit{medicamina}) is probably a reference to a healing salve of some kind made from the bark of trees. The substance of Christ, therefore, in opposition to the substance of the tree, forms the essential ingredient in the remedy for mortal life, that is salvation.}
\footnote{For further examples of polyptoton see in the poem see for example 3.136, 343; 5.391, 420, 447, 681–2.}
Noah’s Ark is likewise an emblem for the redemptive power of the cross at the prospect of inevitable Judgment (4.323–5): ‘Effugiet tunc ille malum quicumque paratus, / Construat ut ualidam praeduri tegminis arcam; / Per lignum uitale crucis seruatus ab undis’ [‘Then, whosoever will escape evil, having prepared himself, let him build a mighty ark of great protection, so that he may be saved by the life-giving wood of the cross’]. Sedulius says much the same thing in the Carmen paschale (1.70–78), and also calls Jonah’s whale a uitale sepulchrum, like the uitale lignum of Avitus’ ark; both represent the ‘life-giving’ and redemptive power of Christ in Old Testament contexts. Avitus therefore looks to the Old Testament for inspiration, but not simply as a literal narrative. The whole Bible, as he says, is a spiritual history (historia spiritualis), where Christ represents the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

That said, it is difficult to say whether Avitus is more interested in the message of the Scriptures or the poetry he derives from them. As Avitus moves from Creation to the Crossing of the Red Sea, he injects such a degree of dramatic vitality into the narrative that one scholar has said, he ‘reveals a poetical talent above that of Juvenecus or indeed of any of the ‘epic’ poets of the Church.’56 This assessment is based not on the extent to which Avitus more or less represents the words of the Bible, but the manner in which he deviates from them. In other words, many of his interpolations are engaging, precisely because they offer a new perspective upon a well-known story. In the Genesis portion of the poem, for example, some of these additions include: a sexually charged image of Eve fondling the forbidden fruit (2.215–6); a vision of the unhappy pair contemplating suicide (3.32–40); a description of God making goatskin pants for Adam and Eve (3.194–5); a touching scene of the couple weeping for the first time, as ‘unbidden moisten pours down

their attentive cheeks’ (3.209–19); the characterization of Christ as a potter, who fixes ‘broken vessels’ (3.363–4); the frightening picture after the Flood of monsters who rule the depths of the ocean, swimming through underwater forests of trees (4.520–2); the sun, sad, for the loss of the land (4.528–30); and the oddly detailed description of the Israelites’ wilderness outfits (5.620–35). All of this added material contributes to the individual appeal of the Historia spiritualis and attests to Avitus’ creative achievement.

The Crossing of the Red Sea in Book Five of the poem also reflects the author’s interest in interpolation through manipulation of classical and Christian traditions. Like Cyprianus, Prudentius and Sedulius, Avitus recognizes the dramatic potential of the scene, but he dedicates more time and space (the whole of Book Five) to what he calls De transitu mare rubrum. Like his predecessors, Avitus emphasizes the symbolic meaning of the crossing, framing the whole of Book Five in two figural commentaries at the opening and closing of the Book. Here is how he introduces his version of the story (5.12–18):

In quibus excellit longe praestantius illud,  
Quod pelago gestum rubro celeberrima perfert  
Scriptorum series, in cuius pondere sacro  
Causarum mage pignus erat pulchramque relatu  
Pulchrior exuperat praemissae forma salutis,  
Historiis quae magna satis maiorque figuris  
Conceptam grauido peperit de tegmine uitam.

[Among those (old stories), there is one that stands out in particular, which the most celebrated series of the Scriptures relates as the deeds at the Red Sea. Within its sacred weight, the symbol is greater than the causes, and the fairer form of promised salvation surpasses the beauty of the episode itself, which, great enough as a story and greater still in symbolism, gave life from beneath its pregnant veil.]

This passage, a single, convoluted sentence, exemplifies the typical complexity and allusive nature of Avitus’ Latin style. As he indicates with the title of his poem—De spiritualis historiae gestis—the deeds alone (gestis) are not all-important; we must consider their ‘spiritual’ significance. Here, says Avitus, the causes of the crossing are
important in and of themselves (*gestum*, 13), but so is the pledge or symbolism beneath the surface, behind the pregnant veil which conceals the mystery of the Old Testament (*grauido tegmine*, 18). No doubt *pignus* is a pun here, meaning ‘pledge’ or ‘token’ on the one hand, and referring to Christ, the ‘child,’ on the other, who is born from the ‘pregnant’ (*grauido*) womb of Mary. As Avitus says, the story is indeed greater in ‘figures’ or symbolism (*figuris*) than the literal words of the text suggest, and the path through the Sea represents the promise of salvation through Christ and baptism much as it does in the *Carmen paschale*.

Focused on the redemptive meaning of the crossing, Avitus nevertheless yields to the dramatic appeal of the scene, and like Cyprianus and Prudentius, he describes the action of Exodus in epic, martial-heroism. Pharaoh’s preparations for battle, for example, are lavishly described (5.507–25):

`Hi loricarum uasto sub tegmine gaudent,  
Intexit creber sibimet quas circulus haerens,  
Atque catenosi crepitant per corpora panni.  
Ast aliis tenui concurrens lammina ferro,  
Qua se succiduas iunctim scandente per oras  
Flectitur, adsuti cratis compacta metalli,  
Horrentes habitus diuersa fecerat arte.  
Et tamen ardentum cuncta inter tela uirorum  
Terribilis plus forma fuit; quis namque furentes  
Spectet, quos laetos uix possit cernere uultus?  
Inclusae galeis facies et ferrea uestis  
Cinxerat iratas armorum luce tenebras.  
Progreditur collecta manus: rex ipse frementes  
Curru cogit equos, telis tamen undique saeptus  
Delituit, densam reddunt hastilia siluam.  
Concutitur pulsata rotis et pondere tellus,  
Angustauit humum latam stipata iuuentus  
Conclusitque uias. Quidquid uirtutis habere  
Aegyptus potuit, totum mors proxima ducit.`

510 515 520 525
[They rejoice beneath the broad cover of their mail-coats, interwoven with repeated, self-clinging links, and their chain garb rattles over their bodies. Still others wear thin iron plating, which bends according to consecutively overlapping edges held together by a framework of patched metal; their gear of varied craftsmanship made them terrifying. But with all the weapons of those ardent men, their countenance was the more dreadful sight; for who could behold the furious host among whom it was hard to find a happy face? Their features were enclosed in helms and their iron mail over-covered their infuriated darkness with the light of their armour. The assembled host advances; the king himself drives the raging horses from his cart, but hemmed-in on every side by spears, he hid, and the lances look like a dense forest. The earth is trampled by the weight and the wheel, and the crowded youths choked the broad earth and blocked the way. Whatever power Egypt had, impending death was about to take away.]

This is an impressive display of poetic virtuosity, and the complexity of the verse here reflects the intricacy of the links in the battle-gear. Such elaborately crafted portraits are common in the Historia spiritualis, and they often far exceed the prose of the Bible and indeed the poetry of other writers in the genre. Cyprianus responds to epic battle-scenes with martial-heroic language in his versification of Exodus, but his style is not nearly as deliberately elaborate as that of Avitus.

Furthermore, as an appeal to the drama and realism of the crossing, as well as for didactic purposes, Avitus writes a number of speeches, which he inserts into the narrative. One such speech comes out of the mouth of an Egyptian soldier (5.619–35), whose heart sinks at the sight of the parted sea. He says (5.623 & 629): ‘What is the cause of this monstrous path?’ [‘Monstriferae quae causa uiae?’]; and ‘None will go down into that dry deep, with me as leader’ [‘Non duce me quisquam siccum descenderit aequor’]. The soldier’s fear is justified, however, since, as we have seen in the Heptateuch and Carmen paschale, only ‘with Christ as leader’ (Christo duce) can anyone cross the sea. The effect of the soldier’s speech is to add realism and drama to the
essential story, but other speeches serve a more instructive function, including that of Pharaoh himself moments before his destruction and the end of Book Five (5.671–721):

Ille ferus semper, iam mitis morte sub ipsa:
‘Non haec humanis cedit victoria bellis;
Expugnamur, ait, caeloque euertimur hoste.
Effuge quisque potes uictusque euade satelles
Nec iam tela deo conatibus ingere cassis.’ 675
O si compunctas humana superbia mentes
Ante obitum mutare uelit! Quid denique prodest
Tunc finem posuisse malis, cum terminus urget,
Praesentis uitae spatium dum ceditur aeuo?
‘Confitearis!’ ait sanus scripturna ualensque.
680
Si tunc peccatum quisquam dimittere uouit,
Cum peccare nequit, luxu dimittitur ipse.

[That man, ever bold, is now meek at his moment of his death: ‘This victory does not yield to human wars; we are beaten,’ he said, ‘and overthrown by a celestial foe.’ Take flight whoever can, and escape, my conquered friend; do not bear arms against God in empty effort.’ O, if only his human pride had wanted to change its stubborn mind before the point of death! What, in the end, does it avail us to put an end to evil deeds, when the end itself presses down upon us, as the space of our present life gives way to time? ‘Confess!’ says the hale and hearty scripture. If anyone has vowed to put his sin aside, he is freed from the pleasures of the world, when he wants to sin no more.]

Pharaoh shows no such resignation in the Bible, not on the banks of the sea or in the waters themselves, but rather charges wordlessly to his doom. Avitus, on the other hand, takes full advantage of the dramatic potential of the episode, emphasizing Pharaoh’s regret and urging the readers to beware of the vanity of human pride.57 Even though he is resigned, Pharaoh is unrepentant, and Avitus offers his wilful determination and subsequent destruction as a warning to his readers.

Book Five comes to a close with an epilogue returning the audience to the preface and the initial emphasis on the symbolic meaning of the crossing. This final passage

57 Romans 10.9: ‘Quia si confitearis in ore tuo Dominum Iesum et in corde tuo credideris quod Deus illum excituit ex mortuis saluus eris’ [‘For if thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thy heart that God hath raised him up from the dead, thou shalt be saved’].
brings structure and unity to the whole of Book Five and leaves the audience with the impression not of the book’s literal significance, but its figural importance (5.711–21):

Si quid triste fuit, dictum est quod paupere uersu,
Terserit hic sacri memorabilis unda triumphi,
Gaudia quo resonant, crimen quo tollitur omne
Per lauacrum uiiuque nouus pereunte ueterno;
Quo bona consurgunt, quo noxia facta necantur,  715
Israhel uerus sacris quo tingitur undis;
Consona quo celebrat persultans turba tropaeum,
Quo praecurrentes complentur dona figure
Quas pius explicuit per quinque volumina uates.
Nosque tubam stipula sequi numerumque tenentes 720
Hoc tenui cumbae ponemus portum.

[If anything that was said in this meagre verse was sad, the memorial water of holy victory wipes it clean here, out of which joys resound, all sin is taken away, and, renewed from ancient death, it lives again through baptism. Out of which good things arise, out of which harmful deeds die, out of which true Israel is tinged by sacred waters; out of which a leaping consonant crowd celebrates victory, out of which the afore-running gifts of symbolism are fulfilled, which the pious prophet explained in five volumes. And we follow the horn with our pipe by following their number and will set up a port for our boat on a little shore.]

With the same humility that Sedulius shows in his preface to the Carmen paschale, Avitus apologizes for anything that may have been unduly sad or poorly put in his Historia spiritalis. Referring to baptism, he says that the waters of the Sea now wash away any of these imperfections, referring at the same time to his own work and all of humankind. Through anaphora (quo … quo … quo), Avitus emphasizes the manifold power of this cleansing, which nullifies evil, purifies our ancient sin and fulfills the meaning of the Old Testament. Like a Moses himself, Avitus offers his own five-book work, a small ‘pipe’ (stipula), to the grandeur of the great ‘horn’ (tuba) of the Pentateuch, and so puts a end to his song, bringing his boat to port.58

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58 As Green notes, the reference to a small or humble boat in this context is a classical trope, appearing in Horace’s Odes (4.15.3–4), Vergil’s Georgics (2.41) and Statius’ Thebaid (12.809). See further Latin Epics, p. 155, note 1.
There is nothing humble about the *Historia spiritualis*, however, either in scale or delivery. Avitus expands each of the biblical stories in the narrative to epic and dramatic proportions, and he goes far beyond the sparse, passing comments of earlier writers, including Juvencus, who only briefly alludes to the significance of the gifts of the Magi, for example, or Cyprianus, who mentions Christ’s name in Exodus and nothing more. Even Sedulius tends to restrict his exegetical comments to Book One of the *Carmen paschale*, but Avitus, in keeping with the title of his poem, responds to the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures at every turn, and these digressions actively involve the audience in the process of reading the Bible. In other words, Avitus not only points to the underlying message of the incident; he exhorts his audience to action directly (*Confitearis!*). What is more, his spiritual lessons appeal to the reader’s aesthetic sensibilities through poetry which is, as Sedulius would also have it, ‘sweetened with charm’ (*blandimento mellitum*) and filled with the richness of classical diction and allusion.

**Arator (fl. 554 AD)**

Born in Italy in the area of Liguria, Arator was a rhetorician and politician before entering the Church as subdeacon.⁵⁹ He dedicates his *Historia apostolica* to Pope Vigilius in 544 AD, and according to one manuscript, read and re-read this poem to enthusiastic audiences at the Church of St. Peter in Chains on four separate occasions.⁶⁰

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In his prefatory letter to Pope Vigiliius Arator suggests how he plans to go about his versification of the Acts of the Apostles (Epist. ad Vigilium, 17–22):61

Sensibus ardor inest horum celebrare labores,
Quorum uoce fides obtinet orbis iter.
Versibus ergo canam quos Lucas rettulit Actus,
Historiamque sequens carmina uera loquar.  20
Alternis reserabo modis quod littera pandit
Et res si qua mihi mystica corde datur.

[There is a burning in my heart to celebrate the labours of these men, by whose voice faith finds a path in the world. Therefore, I shall sing in verses the Acts that Luke related; and following his account, I shall utter true songs. I shall disclose alternatively what the letter divulges and whatever mystical sense is given in my heart.]62

The poet’s approach is clear: to tell the essential biblical story (historiam), and then comment on the deeper mystical sense of Acts according to whatever ‘mystical sense’ occurs to him (res mystica). Avitus takes the same approach in versifying Exodus, which he says is ‘great enough as a story and greater still in symbolism’ (‘Historiis quae magna satis maiorque figuris,’ 5.17). Likewise, Prudentius weaves ‘mystic garlands’ in florid dactyls (Sertaque mystica dactylico, 3.27), and Sedulius invites the audience to consider what the ‘mystical miracles’ of Christ may teach our souls (‘Mystica quid doceant animos miracula nostros,’ 4.264).63 In turn, Arator responds to that same interpretive impulse, which moves him to consider the mysteries hidden beneath the surface of Acts.

In another letter to his friend and mentor Parthenius, Arator further explains his choice of Acts in particular as a model for his poem. His choice of language in this letter

63 See also Carmen paschale (1.75-8) for a further reference to the ‘mystical might’ of the Lord (mystica virtus), which washes and renews man through baptism (‘totum namque lavans uno baptismate mundum’).
effectively announces Arator’s debt to earlier biblical verse and his participation in the genre (Epist. Parth. 69–82).  

Namque ego, Romanae caulitis permixtus amoenis
   Ecclesiae, tonso uertice factus ouis,
Pascua laeta uidens et aprica uolumina Christi
   Quaerebam gustu tangere cuncta meo
Et nunc Davidicis assuetus floribus odas
   Mandere, nunc Genesim mens cupiebat edax.
Cumque simul uiolas et lilia carpere mallem
   Quae uetus atque nouus congeminauit odor,
Incidit ille mihi, quem regula nominat Actus,
   Messis apostolicae plenus in orbe liber,
In quo nos Dominus Petro piscante leuauit
   De gremio salis caeruleique maris
Ostensaque dedit caelestis imagine nauem
   Gentibus assumptis exsaturare famem.

[And so I, mingled into the pleasant sheep-fold of the Roman Church, made a sheep by my tonsured head, and seeing the joyous pastures and sunny volumes of Christ, began to try to sample everything with my taste; at one moment, I was wont to devour the odes of David’s flowers; at another, my ravenous mind hungered for Genesis. And since I prefer to graze on violets and lilies at the same time, where Old and New Testament aromas have combined, I fell upon the book which the canon calls Acts, a book filled with the Apostles’ harvest in the world, where the heavenly Lord, with Peter as his fisherman, raised us up from the bosom of the salty, cerulean sea, and—with the imagery shown—the celestial (Lord) gave a ship to satisfy the hunger of the nations taken up therein.]

The deeply allusive quality of Arator’s verse here brings Avitus to mind, and like Avitus, Arator is drawn to the symbolic richness of the Bible and its potential for spiritual commentary. Interestingly, the language in this passage also betrays a stylistic debt to the Carmen paschale of Sedulius. Sedulius, who declaims pompous secular verse at the opening of his poem, says that he is ‘accustomed to odes in David’s songs’ (‘Dauiticis adsuetus cantibus odas,’ 1.23’), by which he means the Psalms. Surely Arator is alluding to Sedulius here, by saying that he, too, is ‘accustomed to consuming the odes of David’s flowers’ (‘Dauidicis assuetus floribus odas’). What is more, in likening the Old and New

64 For the text of the letter see Orbán, Aratoris Subdiaconi Historia Apostolica.
Testaments to the ‘scent’ (odor) of ‘violets and lilies’ (uiolas et lilia), it appears that Arator harmonizes two passages from Book One of the Carmen paschale. Specifically, Sedulius describes his song in terms of ‘soft lilies’ and ‘violets of the purple field’ (‘Lilia, purpurei neu per uiolaria campi,’ 1.278); and in a metaphor which compares the Scriptures to roses (rosis, 1.46), Sedulius likewise calls the Old Testament the ‘scent’ that ‘breathes life’ (‘uitam spirantis odorem / legis,’ 1.41). Arator’s agrarian imagery evokes both of these passages, not to mention his use of the phrase ‘cerulean sea’ (caeruleique maris), an obviously Sedulian phrase (caerula ponti). So, Arator chooses Acts in part because it offers him the opportunity to explore the significant relationships between the two Testaments and perhaps also because he is already ‘accustomed’ to earlier versifications of the New Testament like that of Sedulius. Perhaps this is the real reason he chooses Acts instead of the Gospels. In fact, Arator simply takes up where Juvenecus and Sedulius leave off at the end of the Gospel of John. The Acts of the Apostles is therefore a logical place to carry on.

The Historia apostolica, like its biblical counterpart, falls into two sections, the first dealing with Peter and the events of Acts 1–12, and the second with Paul and Acts 13–28. But Acts is not a precise model for the poem; it is, as Richard Schrader puts it, a source for ‘searching out spiritual meaning’ more than a verse-for-verse model. By alternating between narrative episodes and allegorical interpretations of them, Arator ceases to be merely a narrator and becomes a praedicator (‘preacher’). As Schrader says,

65 See further Carmen paschale (1.136, 2.222 and 3.219).
66 A manuscript of the tenth century supports this assumption (ms. Orléans 295, fol. 36v), stating that Juvenecus and Sedulius had already written the evangelical acts, so there was no need to go over them again. See further McKinlay (p. xxx): ‘Qui, considerans Iuuencum et Sedulium scripsisse actus euangelicos, noluit eos iterum rescribere sed totum se contulit ad actus Apostolicorum describendos’; see also Green, Latin Epics, p. 259.
68 Roberts, Biblical Epic, p. 176.
the ‘New Testament poetry is revealed in the *Historia apostolica* as a hybrid genre, a cross between traditional epic, the persuasive techniques formulated for forensic oratory and the exegetical methods of the Christian sermon.’69 So, if Juvencus’ *Euangelia* represents the initiation of the genre and a careful negotiation of biblical narrative with epic conventions, Arator’s *Historia apostolica* represents a synthesis of Christian and pagan on the one hand with the author’s interpretive impulse to comment on the messages behind the literal words of the Bible on the other. For example, ‘Arator uses traditional poetic locution, *pignus amoris*, in a new, Christian sense, referring to divine rather than human love. Such reinterpretation of the language of pagan epic was one way, as we have seen, that a distinctively Christian poetic idiom was being formed.’70

Arator by no means abandons classical literary conventions, however. He shows a thorough knowledge of Vergil and Lucan as well as of Ovid, Statius, Juvenal and Claudian.71 Juvencus and Sedulius likewise leave a strong impression on the *Historia apostolica*; like Juvencus, he calls upon the Holy Spirit for inspiration,72 and many features of the language and imagery of the *Carmen paschale* contribute to Arator’s style.73 Even so, many of the more common classicisms—the epic dawns, the ‘thundering’ God, heaven as ‘Olympus’—are now so typical of the tradition of biblical poetry, that they are little more than generic stereotypes.74

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71 See further Green, *Latin Epics*, pp. 321–33. Green makes a strong case for the influence of Lucan upon Arator (p. 329: ‘Vergil and Lucan, then, are supreme, with Lucan perhaps having the more prominent role;’ see also Neil Wright, ‘Arator’s Use of Caelius Sedulius,’ p. 38; and Andy Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 166–7. Wright has re-evaluated many of the parallels in McKinlay’s edition, and concludes that several of McKinlay’s connections between Arator and Sedulius are tenuous. Still, this does not dismiss the significant contribution of Sedulius to the style of the *Historia apostolica*.
74 Heaven is still ‘Olympus’ and God is still the ‘Thunderer’ (*Tonans*) and the ‘Ruler of Olympus’ (*Regnator Olympi*, (2.1117); Hell is likewise *Avernus* or *Tartarus*.)
This is most prominent, as Roger Green says, in the opening lines of the poem, which do not present an invocation but a poetic excursus on the aftermath of the Crucifixion. It is an appropriate transition from the Gospels (1–20): 75

Vt sceleris Iudaea sui polluta cruore,
Ausa nefas, compleuit opus rerumque Creator
Hoc quod ab humanis sumpsit sine semine membris
Humana pro stirpe dedit, dignatus ut ima
Tangeret inferni, non linquens ardua caeli,
Soluit ab aeterna damnatas nocte tenebras
Ad Manes ingressa dies; fugitiua relinquent
Astra polum comitata Deum; cruce territa Christi
Vult pariter natura pati, mortisque potestas
Se uniciente perit, quae, pondere mersa triumphi,
Plus rapiens nil iuris habet; diuinaque uirtus
Rursus membra ligans animata cadauera mouit;
Ad uitam monumenta patent, cineresque piorum
Natalem post busta nouant. Lux tertia surgit;
Maiestas cum carne redit speciemque coruscam
Vmbrarum de sede refert ut ab exsule limo
Interclusa diu patriae repetatur origo.
Omnipotens parat ipse uias et corpora secum
Post tumulos regnare iubet; moriente ueneni
Semine, florigero sua germina reddidit horto. 20

[When Judea, polluted by the blood of its crime and daring the unspeakable, finished its work, and the Creator of things gave up what he assumed without seed from human limbs for the sake of the human race, daylight came to the dead, having deigned to touch the depths of hell, not leaving the heights of heaven, and unbound the shadows damned by eternal night; fugitive stars leave heaven in the company of God; nature, terrified by Christ, wants to suffer as well, and the power of death dies, conquering itself, which, overwhelmed by the weight of triumph and grasping too much, has no authority; and divine strength, rebinding limbs, roused animated corpses. Monuments lie open to life and the ashes of pious men renew birth from the pyre. A third light arose. Majesty returns with the flesh and delivers a shining face from the seat of the shadows, so that the origin of the fatherland, long cut off by the exiled dust (Adam), may return. The Almighty himself prepares the ways and commands bodies to rule with him after the tomb; with the seed of poison dying, he returns his own seeds to the flower-bearing garden.]

75 See Green, *Latin Epics*, p. 268; see also Schrader, *Acts of the Apostles* (p. 56): ‘This highly abstract opening refers to the consequences of the crucifixion. Christ descended into hell to free the just; there was darkness, the earth quaked, and the dead awoke (Mt. 27:45, 51–4). Christ returned, having made it possible for Adam’s children to enter paradise; there, it is promised the saved will reign with Him (Tim. 2:12).’
This opening does not correspond to the first chapter of Acts, but is instead a fusion of the author’s imagination and his remembered reading of biblical and classical verse. Most of all, however, these lines represent a pastiche of Sedulean phrases from Book Five of the *Carmen paschale*, which bring thematic significance to the context of the *Historia apostolica*. With his first line, Arator echoes Sedulius’ contempt for Judea in the *Carmen paschale* (5.351-2): ‘Plange sacerdotes perituros, plange ministros / Et populum, Iudaea, tuum pro talibus ausis’ [‘Mourn your priests about to die, mourn your ministers and your people, Judea, for daring such things’]. Note the use of direct address in both passages and the shared use of a participial form of *audeo*, which refers to those who dare to crucify Christ. In the *Carmen paschale*, these two lines introduce a highly rhetorical denunciation of Judea’s crime (5.351-64), and it is easy to see how Arator would remember this episode in particular, which he incorporates into the opening of his poem. But why this passage in particular and at this point in the *Historia apostolica*?

Arator answers this question in the rest of his preface and with an eye to the climax of the *Carmen paschale*. In Book Five of Sedulius’ poem, the author rebukes death itself, which, given Christ’s imminent return from the dead, has failed in its victory (5.276–7): ‘Dic ubi nunc tristis uictoria, dic ubi nunc sit / Mors stimulus horrenda tuus’ [‘Tell me, where is your sorry victory now? Speak up, horrid death, where is your sting

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76 See also earlier in the book, as Christ is led within Pilate’s walls (5.115): ‘Pandebat populis Iudaeae crimina gentis’ [‘The crime of the Judean race was revealed to people’].
now?’]. This apostrophe, based on I Corinthians 15:55, forms an essential structural and thematic link with Book One of the Carmen paschale where Sedulius recapitulates the miracles of the Old Testament (1.220–21), ‘Dic, ubi sunt, natura, tuae post talia leges? / Qui quotiens tibi iura tulit? [‘Tell me, Nature, where are your laws after this? Who has overthrown your laws so many times?’]. As a close parallel to the passage in Book Five, this rhetorical question foreshadows Christ’s ultimate omnipotence over death and nature itself, thereby bringing unity of form and expression to the whole of the poem. The climax to Book Five therefore encapsulates one of the central themes of the Carmen paschale—God’s omnipotence over nature—and this fact does not escape Arator’s notice, who, by echoing Sedulius, adds a deeper dimension to the thematic focus of his own opening, which is the power of Christ to renew humankind by his death and resurrection.

Once it is clear that Arator is alluding to the Carmen paschale, a number of other verbal parallels begin to come to the surface. Arator borrows from Sedulius the reference to ‘Judea’ and its ‘crime’ but also the biblical-poetic epithet, rerumque Creator (‘the Creator of things,’ 2), which, in the Carmen paschale (2.38), appears just before the birth of Christ and relates to Mary’s ‘work fulfilled’ (‘Promissum compleuit opus: uerbum caro factum,’ 2.43). Here, it is yet another point of comparison between the Historia apostolica and the Carmen paschale, and there is nothing at odds with Arator’s adoption of ‘opus complevit’ in the context of Christ’s death, which after all fulfills Christ’s purpose no less than his birth.78 What is more, in line five (‘Tangeret inferni, non linquens ardua caeli’), Arator echoes ‘Inferiora petens et non excelsa

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78 Green, Latin Epics, p. 268. The epithet, rerum Creator is restricted to Christian verse and largely to biblical poetry: Avitus uses it in the Historia spiritualis (3.384 and 4.134); Marius Victor in the Alethia (2.42).
relinquens’ from Book Two of the *Carmen paschale* (line 214). The allusions continue with the fearful response of nature to the crucifixion in the *Carmen paschale* (*Expauit natura*, 5.247), which reflects the fear of nature toward the cross in Arator’s poem (*cruce territa Christi*, 1.8). With ‘the power of death conquering itself’ in the *Historia apostolica* (‘mortisque potestas / Se vincente perit’), Arator once again echoes the climax to the *Carmen paschale*, death’s empty victory before God’s might (‘Etuenia regnante peris,’ 5.284). Finally, the opening of Arator’s poem ends with reference both to the departure from Hell and the redemption of man through Christ, both of which happen on the third day (‘lux tertia surgit,’ 1.14). Here, ‘the origin of the fatherland’ (Paradise) opens up once again to ‘exiled dust’ (a reference to Adam and Genesis 2:7), as ‘the seed of poison dies’ (‘moriente veneni semine’). In the *Carmen paschale*, Sedulius refers to original sin in the same terms, referring to man’s ‘origin’ and the death that gave birth to that seed (‘Crescere postquam / Coepit origo, perit clademque a semine sumpsit,’ 2.9–10).

Arator’s reason for choosing to model his introduction on Sedulius is therefore Sedulius’ thematic focus in the *Carmen paschale* on Christ’s redemptive power, His omnipotence over nature and his salvation of faithful disciples. As Deproost says in more general terms:

D’autre part, si nous rassemblons les passage où l’on peut établir des points de comparaison entre Sédulius and Arator, nous pouvons déterminer d’une manière générale trois contextes dans lesquels Arator fait des emprunts textuels à son

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79 Green does not mention this passage, but he does suggest two others from Book One (‘sic aliena gerens, ut nec tua linquere possess’) and Book Five (‘qui cuncta tenens excelsa uel ima’). See Green, *Latin Epics*, p. 269.

80 Compare the first and therefore emphatic miracle in Book One of the *Carmen paschale*, where Enoch defies death and nature in similar terms as those above (1.104–6): ‘Multa per innumeros iam saecula contigit annos / Natura perdente modum: quem iure creandi / Terra tulit genitum, sed mors miratur ademptum’ [‘He lived for many ages over the course of his countless years, with nature losing its sway: born by the law of creation, the earth gave life to him, but death marvels at his escape’].

In the case of the *Historia apostolica*, Arator’s opening focuses on paschal imagery and God’s supremacy over nature, although he does introduce the Jews in anti-Semitic terms. The allusions to Sedulius aside, Arator’s emphasis on redemption in the preface to the *Historia apostolica* is obvious. Note, for example, the several finite verbal forms such as *nouant* (14) as well as verbs pointing to ‘re-newal’ in the opening lines (*redit*, *refert*, *repetatur*, *reddidit*). But what is the larger reason for the focus on Christ’s death and resurrection at the opening of the poem? The answer is this: The Crucifixion, Resurrection and final focus on man’s salvation at the end of the preface prepare the way for a broad and persistent emphasis throughout the *Historia apostolica* on baptismal imagery.

Not surprisingly, one of the central episodes in this context is the Exodus and Crossing of the Rea Sea, which is not actually mentioned in Acts, but which is an irresistible source of spiritual meaning for Arator, who cannot help but comment on the greater symbolic importance of the episode. Like Sedulius in his treatment of the scene, Arator is explicit about the primary significance of the passage, which is not literal but rather figural (2.89–95):

*Consule signa maris, quae mystica dona susurrant
Temporibus uentura crucis, cum sanguine Jesus
Tinxit aquas laterisque uno de uulnere fluxit
Quod uitae tria dona daret. Rubor aequoris ille
Causa futura fuit: sic conditor abluit omnes,
Sic emit; hic pretii color est in gurgite ponti,
Apparentque uado miracula debita ligno.*
[Look at the signs of the sea, which whisper the mystical gifts to come in the time of the Cross, when Jesus tinged the waters with blood and from the one wound of his side flowed that which gave the three gifts of life. That redness of the water was an occasion which was to come: so the Creator washes all men and redeems them. The colour of the ransom is here in the whirlpool of the ocean, and there appear in the deep miracles which belong to the tree (Cross)].

Like Sedulius, who says ‘look what these mystic miracles may teach our souls’ ('cognoscite cuncti, / Mystica quid doceant animos miracula nostros,’ 4.263-4), Arator says ‘look at the signs of the sea, which whisper the mystical gifts’ (‘Consule signa maris, quae mystica dona susurrant’). As Michael Lapidge says, ‘the miracle of the sea, in particular the mixture of blood and water, anticipates that of the Crucifixion, when one of the soldiers pierced Christ’s side with a lance … the water and blood, in turn, represent baptism and the Eucharist.’ This figural interpretation of the three gifts is precisely the same as that in Book One of the *Carmen paschale* (1.136–59), where Christ appears at the Crossing of the Red Sea, as the agent of the manna falling from heaven and the source of the water from the rock (‘Christus erat panis, Christus petra, Christus in undis’).

Other passages in the *Historia apostolica* also involve baptismal imagery, and Richard Hillier mentions all of them in detail, but Arator’s introduction and treatment of the Red Sea is enough to demonstrate Arator’s participation in the wider genre of biblical verse as well as his willingness to depart from the literal text of the bible, while he explores his interest in the spiritual meaning behind the veil. Certainly, much of the interpolated material in biblical poetry from Sedulius to Arator is paschal in nature: Easter is the central concern of the *Carmen paschale*; Avitus treats the Fall, Flood and

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82 I have borrowed Michael Lapidge’s translation of this passage from ‘Versifying the Bible in the Middle Ages,’ in *The Text in the Community: Essays on Medieval Works, Manuscripts, Authors, and Readers*, eds. Jill Mann and Maura Nolan (Notre Dame, 2006), pp. 21–2.

83 Lapidge, ‘Versifying the Bible,’ p. 22.

84 Lapidge notes the connections with the *Carmen paschale* in ‘Versifying the Bible,’ p. 20–22.

Crossing of the Red Sea with man’s redemption in mind; Arator, too, resorts primarily to baptismal imagery in the Historia apostolica. Therefore, however different the periods producing Latin biblical verse from Juvencus to Arator may be, and whatever versions of the Bible these poets had in mind or in front of them, it is clear that there is a development in the style of biblical poetry from rather literal paraphrases at the beginning of the genre to those that exercise a greater degree of stylistic freedom at the end. As Roger Green says, Juvencus presents ‘Christ’s dicta or doctrina, as well as his facta,’ but he is for the most part resolved to let the facta speak for themselves.  

He is a virtual evangelist, while Sedulius ‘occupies a middle ground between Juvencus and Arator.’ In many ways, his versification of the Gospels (Books 2–5) bears close resemblance to the style of Juvencus, who treats many of the same episodes, but Sedulius is more inclined to rhetorical flourishes, and the thematic focus of his poem on the miracles of Christ sets the Carmen paschale farther from the Bible than the Euangelia. Book One of the Carmen paschale, a creative tour-de-force in which the author gives free rein to his imagination is a foreshadowing of the style of biblical poems to come. After Sedulius, later versifiers, as Michael Roberts has suggested, become conduits, even preachers, for the interpretation of the facta of the Bible.  

Avitus is the freest of all the biblical poets in terms of his tendency toward poetic elaboration. His Historia spiritualis only loosely represents the events of each biblical book from chapter to chapter, and his poetic style is so complex and convoluted at times, that his verse can be almost inaccessible. Nevertheless, the vitality and drama he infuses into many of his characterizations and speeches elevates the literary status of biblical verse. For his part, Arator is not as interested in colouring the

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86 Green, Latin Epics, p. 84.
87 Springer, Gospel as Epic, p. 86.
88 Michael Roberts, Biblical Epic, p. 179
Bible with lengthy epic-creative flourishes. His primary impulse is didactic, and he invests a great deal of time explaining biblical episodes to his audience. Clearly, then, there is a stylistic development in the biblical poetry of late antiquity in terms of the author’s involvement in the narrative as well as his desire to add not only poetic flourishes to his versification but also didactic commentary.

The question now becomes, how do the later Anglo-Saxon poets of England who inherit this literature respond to the genre? Do they compose biblical verse themselves? Old English poets certainly write versifications of Genesis and other books of the Bible, but what about Anglo-Latin writers? What is the nature of their debt to Latin biblical verse, and is there a link with the production of vernacular biblical poetry?
Chapter 4

Anglo-Latin ‘Biblical Verse’: Aldhelm, Bede, Alcuin

Quamobrem non est spernenda haec [metrica ratio], quamuis gentilibus communis ratio, sed quantum satis est perdiscenda, quia utique multi euangelici uiri, insignes libros hac arte condiderunt, et Deo placere per id satagerunt, ut fuit Juvencus, Sedulius, Arator, Alcimus, Clemens, Paulinus et Fortunatus, et caeteri multi.

[So this metrical art, though it is common to pagans as well as ourselves, must not be rejected but mastered in due measure, since there is doubt that many preachers of the Gospels wrote famous books in this style and thereby strove to please God. Such were Juvencus, Sedulius, Arator, Avitus, Prudentius, Paulinus, Fortunatus, and many others.]

—Hrabanus Maurus, De institutione clericorum.¹

Late antique biblical verse enters Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century with the advent of Christianity and the foundation of monastic schools, where poetry finds a place in the educational curriculum.² Juvenlus, Sedulius and Arator form the core of a programmed study in verse, and their faithful renditions of the Bible makes them ideal exempla for Anglo-Latin poets.³ Apart from providing a source of devotional reading, this literature motivates the production of several imitative works beyond the

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¹ *De institutione clericorum* appears in PL 107, col. 0293–0420A; the above quotation is from Chapter 18, col. 0396A. Hrabanus Maurus (c. 776–856) was a student of Alcuin of York during Alcuin’s time on the Continent. As abbot and headmaster of the abbey of Fulda, an Anglo-Saxon foundation established by Sturm (744) at the instigation of St. Boniface (680–754), Hrabanus perpetuated the curriculum in biblical poetry inherited from Alcuin and his school. It is therefore not surprising that he mentions many of the same authors Alcuin names in his York poem (lines 1551–4). See further Godman, ed., *Alcuin: The Bishops, Kings and Saints of York* (Oxford, 1982), pp. xxxiii–ix and lx–lxxv.


³ See further Michael Lapidge, ‘Versifying the Bible in the Middle Ages,’ p. 12.
usual boundaries of the genre. Aldhelm’s *Carmen de virginitate*, Bede’s versified life of St. Cuthbert (*Vita sancti Cuthberti*), and Alcuin’s encomiastic York poem (*Versus de patribus regibus et sanctis Euboricensis ecclesiae*), for example, although distinctive, all owe a stylistic debt to the biblical verse of late antiquity, and there is now sufficient scholarly evidence to support a closer analysis of the extent to which this is the case. In recent years, several Anglo-Saxon scholars have begun to come to terms with the extant physical evidence for knowledge of biblical poetry in Anglo-Saxon England, and this evidence provides the groundwork for the present chapter. Helmut Gneuss, for example, offers a comprehensive handlist of manuscripts written or owned in England up to 1100 (2001), including all of those which contain biblical verse, while Michael Lapidge provides a list of all the known echoes of biblical poetry in Anglo-Latin. What I propose to do here, then, is first to provide a summary treatment of this physical evidence, including the manuscripts and known echoes of biblical poetry in Anglo-Latin and then to proceed to a closer analysis of several passages from the works of Aldhelm, Bede and Alcuin, in order to determine more precisely how these authors respond to the tradition of Latin biblical verse. First, however, I offer a brief summary of the educational context in which this biblical poetry finds an Anglo-Saxon audience.

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The initial venue for the transmission of biblical poetry in England is the monastic ‘classroom,’ but since neither ‘classbooks’ nor teachers’ manuals or drawings of schools in manuscripts have survived, we know very little about the educational procedures of this time, to say nothing of the physical space in which this learning took place. There is no doubt, however, that a working knowledge of Latin remained a priority in medieval schools, since it was the language of the Bible and the daily Offices of the Benedictine Rule. A few texts such as Ælfric Bata’s 10th-century Colloquies do provide some lively glimpses into the medieval classroom, yet these scenes of students working with styli and tablets (or scraps of parchment) and dutifully copying out their teacher’s dictations, provide little sense of a general program of education for the whole period. It is difficult to imagine, as Michael Lapidge says, how any student could memorize thousands of lines of verse from a wax tablet which could only hold about thirty lines of text. At that rate, it would take over a hundred sessions to copy and learn the 3219 verses of Juvencus’ Euangelia. It therefore seems likely that students did not memorize whole biblical poems in class but only portions of them. A more thorough knowledge of any given poem was likely gained later during private, devotional reading. According to the stipulations of the Benedictine Rule, private reading held a substantial place in the monastic life: three hours each morning in winter, two hours each afternoon in summer, nearly all day every Sunday throughout the year—an average of 20 hours per week. Such times would

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9 Ibid, p. 126.
provide a more suitable opportunity to contemplate many of the more difficult passages of Latin biblical verse and to contemplate the deeper spiritual significance of poems like Arator’s *Historia apostolica.*

One of the persistent debates related to the question of education involves so-called ‘classbooks’ and the extent to which certain manuscripts and their glosses suggest pedagogical agenda. Collections like CUL Gg. 5.35 (s. xi med) and Sainte-Geneviève 2410 (s. x/xi), for example, provide compendia of religious verse and prose suitable for educational purposes, and some scholars have argued that the texts in these compilations and their accompanying glosses fulfill an educational role as ‘classbooks.’ These are not deluxe manuscripts with rich illustrations and delicately drawn letters, but anthologies of Christian literature packed with all kinds of material including biblical poetry alongside the verse of Aldhelm, Bede and Alcuin. These supposed ‘classbooks’ may be the kinds of resources from which a teacher taught his class or, as ‘library books,’ the sorts of texts that monks would have read in private.

Whatever the function of these collections, which probably varied from time to time and place to place, the instructional potential of books like CUL G.g. 5.35 is clear. As far as biblical verse is concerned, the preface to Juvenecus’ *Euangelia* is an ideal length for a single lesson, and it contains several cues (or clues) for the elementary reader. The *Euangelia* is also a logical choice, because it is the first poem in the genre,

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10 Ibid.
12 See Gneuss, *Handlist*, items 12 and 903 for a full list of contents for these manuscripts.
and the *paene ad uerbum* style of the verse enables the reader to situate himself with relative ease in the text of the Gospels. Consider, for example, the initial preface which accompanies the *Euangelia* in CUL G.g. 5.35 and which appears just above the main preface to the poem (see Appendix 5a for a facsimile reproduction):

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. i. docuit
Mattheus instituit uirtutum tramite mores

Et bene uiuendi iusto dedit ordine leges.

b
a
d
d
e

Marcus amat terras inter caelumque uolare

f
wel ueniens g

i
f
s. iura h

iuolatu

Et uehemens aquila stricto secat omnia lapsu.

facundus
conficta

Lucas uberius describit praelia Christi,

. i. genelogiam Christi
ab ioseph usque
adam. auita . i. ab aeuo

Iure sacer uitulus, quia uatum menia fatur auita.

. i. prima

[Matthew has established morals with a path of virtue and laws for living well in a proper order. Mark loves to fly between the earth and sky, and, a soaring eagle, he cuts through everything with his strict flight. Luke describes the battles of Christ more fully, a sacred calf by right, since he speaks the office of the ancient prophets. John, the lion, roars from his mouth, he resounds like thunder, laying bare the mysteries of eternal life.]

The elementary nature of these glosses is clear, and they suggest a reader or teacher who is approaching the text from the perspective of a beginner. The most striking series of glosses are the syntactical-alphabetical variety in lines 3 and 4, which direct the reader
through the syntax of the Latin. Only a novice or teacher of novices would need to indicate such basic steps: Amat (a) Marcus (b) uolare (c) terras inter (d) caelumque (e), et (f) secat (f) uehemens aquila (g) omnia (h) stricto lapsu (i). Note that the glosses direct the reader first to the verb and then the subject, which is still common practice in Latin pedagogy today. Other glosses here also focus on the beginner, providing basic synonyms for verbs (*instituit, .i. docuit* or *intonat, .i. sonat*) or indicating that *fremit* in the second-to-last line, for example, can also be spelled *fremet* as a second conjugation form. These glosses may seem to indicate the responses of an Anglo-Saxon student or teacher to the text on an *ad hoc* basis, but in fact a number of glosses in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts were copied along with the text from continental exemplars. CUL F.f.4.42 (saec. ix[^2]) provides a case in point, where many of the same glosses appear above words in the *Euangelia*, thus eliminating the possibility that the preface in CUL G.g. 5.35 represents a contemporary reader’s *ad hoc* response to the text (see Appendix 5b).[^16] Still, this fact does not preclude the likelihood that such inherited glosses could have been used for teaching purposes. There is no reason, for example, why a passage like the one above could not have served as an introduction to the process of reading poetry, since it exemplifies many of the difficulties a beginning Latin student faces.[^17]

[^14]: For further discussion of alphabetic and syntactical glosses in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts see Fred Robinson, ‘Syntactical Glosses in Latin Manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon Provenance,’ *Speculum* 48.3 (1973), 443–75.
[^16]: For example, CUL F.f. 4.42 contains the same alphabetic glosses in lines 3–4 and many of the same synonymic alternatives (*instituit, .i. docuit* or *intonat, .i. sonat*); as well as the same marginal gloss to *auita, .i. ab ioseph usque adam*, 6; *intonat/fremet, .i. sonat*, 7; and *ore leo, .i. gratia dei*, 7.
A different kind of evidence than what we are able to glean from manuscripts comes from the many echoes of late antique biblical verse in Anglo-Latin literature. Here we gain a sense for not just what Anglo-Saxons were reading but which works—and especially which biblical poems—they knew best and imitated most often. Where Juvencus is concerned, the evidence for knowledge of the *Euangelia* in Anglo-Saxon England, apart from the six surviving manuscripts of his poem and the reference to it in an inventory of books given to the church of Saint-Vaast in Arras by Sæwold of Bath (c. 1070), depends on a host of echoes in the writings of Aldhelm, Bede, Alcuin, Lantfred, Wulfstan and Byrhtferth. Based on Michael Lapidge’s citations alone, I count 122 echoes of the *Euangelia* in the works of the above-mentioned authors: Lantfred (1), Alcuin (1), Wulfstan (3) and Byrhtferth (2) echo Juvencus only seven times collectively, while Aldhelm (84) and Bede (31) account for the vast majority of citations (115). Lapidge cites only two references to the *Euangelia* in Alcuin’s writings—one in the York poem (line 1551) and the other in his *collectaneum* De laude dei, where the whole of the preface appears. But Alcuin also alludes to the *Euangelia* several times in his correspondence, where he refers to Judgment Day (*praef*. 22–4), the Incarnation (*Ev*. 1. 60–3), and, like Jerome,

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18 See further Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 136. The poem also appears in an eighth century Würzburg inventory from the area of the Anglo-Saxon mission in Germany; see ibid, p. 148.

19 See further Gneuss, *Handlist*, items 7, 12, 87, 489, 540, 903. See also Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library* (p. 319), from which the following summary is taken: Cambridge, UL, Ff. 4. 42 (Wales, s. ix); Cambridge, UL, Gg. 5. 35 (St. Augustine’s, Canterbury, s. xmed); Cambridge, CCC 304 (Italy, s. viii); London, BL, Royal 15. A. XVI (N. France, s. ix/x; prov. Canterbury, s. x); Oxford, BodL, Barlow 25 (England, s. x); Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève 2410 (Christ Church, Canterbury, s. x/xi). Lapidge provides a summary overview of these manuscripts in ‘Study of Latin Texts,’ pp. 99–165. There he also mentions a possible early fragment from seventh-century England in Cues, Hospitalbibliothek, MS 171 (p. 108); the fragment appears in Lowe, *CLA*, VIII, no. 1172.


the gifts of the Magi (Ev. 1. 250-1). What is more, in the index to his edition of Alcuin’s York poem, Peter Godman lists seventeen echoes of the \textit{Euangelia} which do not appear in the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Library}. This brings the total number of citations to 139. The more important observation, however, is that all of these echoes of the \textit{Euangelia} suggest that Book One, and the preface in particular, are the best-known parts of the poem for Anglo-Saxons. Thirty-seven of Aldhelm’s eighty-four citations are from Book One, as are fourteen of Bede’s thirty-four; and both Bede and Aldhelm cite Book One in their respective metrical treatises more than any other portion of the \textit{Euangelia}. What is more, the early portion of the text is often the most regularly and heavily glossed in manuscripts, which may also suggest a greater familiarity with that section of the poem. If the \textit{Euangelia} was part of a larger curriculum of Christian reading—and collections such CUL Gg. 5. 35 suggest that it was—then it stands to reason that teachers would cover only a portion of each text with their students (much as we do in survey courses today). As the beginning of both the poem and the genre of biblical verse, Book One of the \textit{Euangelia} is a logical choice for study, and it is tempting to think that part of the reason Aldhelm and Bede are so familiar with Book One of the \textit{Euangelia} is that they were teaching it to their own students year after year. In the end, we can only guess at how different Anglo-Saxon schools and teachers introduced their students to Juvenecus, but there is no doubt that Book One of his \textit{Euangelia} played a significant role in the Latin education of the period.

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22 For citations of the \textit{Euangelia} in Alcuin’s correspondence see Margaret Norton, ‘Prosopography of Juvenecus,’ in \textit{Leaders of Iberian Christianity 50–650 AD}, ed., Joseph Marique (Boston, 1962), pp. 114–20. References to the preface of the \textit{Euangelia} appear in Alcuin’s \textit{Epistula 126 (ad Arnonem)} and \textit{166 (ad Theodulfium)}; Alcuin refers to the incarnation in \textit{Contra Felicem Urgellitanum Episcopum libri septem II.6 (PL 101, 152)} and in \textit{Aduersus Elipandum (Toletanum) libri quattuor, II.8 (PL 101, col. 266)}; the reference to the Magi in the \textit{Euangelia} appears in Alcuin’s \textit{De diuinis officiis}, ch. 5 (PL 101, col. 1179).

23 See Godman, \textit{Bishops, Kings and Saints}, p. 149 (references in parentheses are to Alcuin’s poem): i. 7 (222), 96 (497), 281 (757), 341 (921), 737 (1379); ii. 112 (855), 153 (194), 177 (147), 412 (491), 575 (217); iii. 1 (13), 79 (1098–9), 480 (43), 492 (1293), 556 (226); iv. 49 (251), 150 (976).

24 Cf. Aldhelm’s citation of other books of the \textit{Euangelia} (Bk2, 8; Bk3, 22; Bk4, 17) and Bede’s (Bk2, 3; Bk3, 8; Bk4, 6). Note that Lantfred quotes 2.625, and Wulfstan, 1.404, 2.177, 4.353.


26 See Lapidge, ‘Study of Texts,’ p. 125.
The *Heptateuch* of Cyprianus survives in Anglo-Saxon England in a single manuscript, Cambridge, Trinity College B. I. 42 (St. Augustine’s, Canterbury, s. x²).²⁷ It contains *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* and *Deuteronomy.*²⁸ This manuscript, however, is later than either of the two authors who knew Cyprianus best, that is Aldhelm and Bede, who cite the *Heptateuch* a total of twenty-five times together.²⁹ No other writer from the period appears to quote the poem at all, though I suspect a closer study of knowledge of the text among Anglo-Latin writers may reveal more evidence than we now possess. For his part, Aldhelm cites the *Heptateuch* eighteen times, alluding to *Genesis* (2), *Exodus* (5), *Numbers* (2), *Judges* (8), and *Kings* (1). His wide-ranging familiarity with the narrative suggests more than a passing acquaintance with the *Heptateuch*, which he quotes several times in the *Carmen de uirginitate* (10 times), four times in his metrical treatises, and four times in his riddles (92.3, 72.1, 96.4, 46.4).³⁰ Note that *Numbers*, *Judges* and *Kings* do not appear in the Trinity College manuscript, so it stands to reason that Aldhelm’s text is not an earlier version of Trinity College B. I. 42. The same appears to be true for Bede, who also quotes *Judges* (1), *Genesis* (2), *Exodus* (2), and *Deuteronomy* (1). Echoing Jerome’s endorsement of Juvencus in his *Commentary on Matthew*, Bede likewise promotes the orthodoxy of the *Heptateuch*, by citing it in his *Commentary on Genesis*.³¹ He also reproduces a large section of *Exodus* in his *De arte metrica* (lines 507–21), where he uses Moses’ Canticle to exemplify the use

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²⁷ Gneuss, *Handlist*, item 159.
²⁹ See John Mayor, *The Latin Heptateuch: Published Piecemeal by the French Printer William Morel (1560) and the French Benedictines E. Martène (1733) and J.B. Pitra (1852-88)* (London, 1889).
³¹ Bede quotes *Genesis* 1–4 of the *Heptateuch* in his commentary on Genesis; for the Latin text see Jones, ed., *Comm. in Genesin*, CCSL 118 (1967).
of hendecasyllabic verse.\textsuperscript{32} Obviously, Bede was familiar with Cyprianus’ version of the Crossing of the Rea Sea, but neither he nor Aldhelm shows any special preference for any specific portion of the \textit{Heptateuch}. Instead, the distribution of their echoes, ranging from \textit{Genesis} to \textit{Judges} and scattered throughout their writings, suggests a general familiarity with the \textit{Heptateuch} rather than a fragment or small portion of the text. Therefore, granting that the \textit{Heptateuch} is not as popular or readily available as the other canonical versifications of the Bible, the poem does leave an impression on two of the most influential writers of the Anglo-Saxon period.

The \textit{Psychomachia} was Prudentius’ most popular work among the Anglo-Saxons, a fact that is well-documented by scholars and exemplified by Aldhelm’s adaptation of the poem in his \textit{Carmen de uirginitate}.\textsuperscript{33} Often given a separate title in manuscripts, Aldhelm’s \textit{De octo uitiis principalibus} forms the conclusion to the \textit{Carmen de uirginitate} and owes a considerable debt to the style of Prudentius.\textsuperscript{34} Michael Lapidge (citing Gneuss) lists no fewer than eighteen manuscripts containing Prudentius’ works from the Anglo-Saxon period, twelve of which contain the \textit{Psychomachia}.\textsuperscript{35} This is a striking number compared to the average six manuscripts of Juvencus, Sedulius, and Arator, to say nothing for the moment of the meagre remains of vernacular biblical verse. The \textit{Psychomachia} also appears in two book inventories, one among Bishop Leofric’s donations to Exeter (c. 1069 × 1072) and another in a booklist perhaps from 11\textsuperscript{th} century

\textsuperscript{35} See further Lapidge, \textit{Anglo-Saxon Library}, pp. 328–31.
Worcester. Alcuin mentions ‘Clemens’ among the poets in his library at York and his own prose treatise on the virtues and vices suggests a familiarity with the broader tradition of the *Psychomachia.* It is therefore not surprising, as Andy Orchard says, that ‘most scholarly discussion this century has focused on the nature and extent of Anglo-Saxon knowledge of *Psychomachia,* including a number of examples of alleged influence of *Psychomachia* upon vernacular Old English literature, to the exclusion of the rest of the Prudentian corpus.’ Prudentius’ ‘minor works,’ including the *Cathemerinon,* have received scant attention from scholars by comparison, even though six manuscripts of the hymns survive in England, a number comparable to that of the biblical poems. On the other hand, only a few quotations of the *Cathemerinon* have been identified in the works of Aldhelm, Bede or Alcuin to date, but this lack of verbal evidence does not *ipso facto* exclude the possibility that further echoes may be found or that the hymns are less important to the transmission of extra-biblical lore.

Sedulius is easily the most popular and influential late antique poet in Anglo-Saxon England, if we are to judge from the physical evidence together with the number of verbal echoes of his poem in Anglo-Latin. Eight manuscripts of the *Carmen paschale* have survived plus four references to the author in booklists. ‘Sedulium’ appears in the inventory of an

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36 See further ibid, pp. 139–41; see also Godman, *Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York,* line 1551. Alcuin’s *De uirtutibus et uitiis* appears in *PL* 101, pp. 613–38.
38 Aldhelm cites the *Cathemerinon* once (v.48) in *Enig.* xcvi.1; Bede does as well (iv.74 in VCM 970); Alcuin appears not to cite it, but nor does he appear to cite any other of Prudentius’ works, despite his reference to ‘Clemens’ in his York poem (line 1551).
39 A list of the eight manuscripts of Sedulius’ poem can be found in Gneuss, *Handlist,* items 12, 53, 253, 491, 652f, 824.5, 890, 903. I quote Lapidge’s summary in *The Anglo-Saxon Library,* p. 331: Cambridge, UL, Gg. 5. 35 (St. Augustine’s, Canterbury, s. xi-med); Cambridge, CCC 173, fos. 57–83 (S. England, s. viii2; prov. Winchester, Canterbury); Edinburgh, NLS Advocates 18. 7. 7 (s. xii; prov. Thorney); Evreux, BM, 43 (? England, s. x); London, BL, 15. B. XIX, fos. 1–35 (Christ Church, Canterbury, s. x2); Oxford, BodL, Lat. theol. c. 4 (? Worcester, s. x2) (frg.); Paris, BNF, lat. 8092 (England, s. xi23); Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève 2410 (Christ Church, Canterbury, s. x/xi). Lapidge also notes two continental
otherwise unknown grammarian named Æthelstan (s. x²); and item 27 on a list of books
donated to Saint-Vaast by Sæwold of Bath names Sedulius beside Juvenecus (‘Iuuencus,
Sedulius in uno uolumine’); Bishop Leofric’s catalogue of books for the Church of Exeter
mentions in Old English, ‘Sedulies boc;’ and one list, perhaps from Worcester, contains
‘Sedulius’ as the second and ninth items, both copies of the poem, in addition to a copy of
Remigius’ prose commentary on the text (item 13). Elsewhere, Alcuin names Sedulius as
one of the poets available at York (‘Quid quoque Sedulius, uel quid canit ipse Iuuencus,’
1550), and both Bede and Aldhelm cite Sedulius as a model for the composition of Latin
verse in their metrical treatises. Taken together, the Carmen and Opus paschale also
constitute an opus geminatum, a literary tradition that inspired similar compositions in
Anglo-Saxon England in the form of Aldhelm’s prose and verse De uirginitate, Bede’s two
lives of Cuthbert and Alcuin’s lives of Willibrord. Bede mentions Aldhelm’s ‘twin work’ in
his Historia ecclesiastica (HE V., 18): ‘Scripsit et de uirginitate librum eximium, quem in
exemplum Sedulii geminato opere et uersibus exametris et prosa conpositus’ [‘He also wrote
an excellent book on virginity both in hexameter verse and in prose, producing a twofold
work after the example of Sedulius’]. There is no doubt, then, that Sedulius was among the
favourite poets of the Anglo-Saxon period and that his Carmen paschale was the single most

manuscripts: Basle, UB, O. IV. 17 (possibly Fulda, s. viii/ix); and Gotha, Landesbibliothek, Mbr. I. 75, fos.
1–22 (S. England or Anglo-Saxon centre on continent, s. viii²).
40 Lapidge, Anglo-Saxon Schools, p. 133.
41 Ibid, p. 137.
42 Ibid, p. 139.
43 Ibid, p. 141.
44 See further Godman, Bishops, Kings, and Saints, line 1550; see also Ehwald, ed., Aldhelm Opera; and
45 See further Peter Godman, ‘The Anglo–Latin opus geminatum from Aldhelm to Alcuin,’ Medium Ævum
46 See further B. Colgrave and R. A. B Mynors, eds., Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People,
influential biblical poem from late antiquity. I have counted 354 echoes of the *Carmen paschale* in the Latin works of the period, which is almost three times as many as the number for the *Euangelia* (122). The distribution of these references again favours Aldhelm, partially because his *De uirginitate* is so long: Aldhelm (189), Bede (45), Alcuin (30), Asser (1), Lantfred (1), Abbo (1), Wulfstan (82), Aelfric (1) and Byrhtferth (4). As with the references to the *Euangelia*, Aldhelm’s quotations of Book One of the *Carmen paschale* outweigh those of all the other books of the poem (81). The same is true for Bede, who appears to be much less familiar with the end of the *Carmen paschale* than the beginning. Wulfstan is the exception here, who cites Book Three twenty-six times, significantly more than any other book. That particular section of the *Carmen paschale* deals with Christ’s miraculous deeds in the New Testament, so perhaps Wulfstan uses it as a stylistic model for the deeds of St. Swithun. Apart from the textual evidence, several of the Sedulian manuscripts are also heavily glossed in Latin (and some in Old English), and these manuscripts are accompanied on three occasions by the Carolingian commentary of Remigius of Auxerre. All of this collateral material strengthens the conclusion that the *Carmen paschale*, along with the other versifications of the Bible, was studied closely.

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47 Note that I have added the twenty-five citations listed in Godman’s edition of Alcuin’s York poem, which Lapidge does not cite in his *Anglo-Saxon Library*. Godman’s citations follow with the numbers in parentheses referring to the lines of Alcuin’s York poem: praef. 11–12 (1536); i. 55 (82), 67 (1310), 82–3 (672), 85 (1591), 96 (742), 136 (1322), 146 (1449), 302 (932), 312 (1), 337 (1497), 341 (990, 1245); ii. 14 (836), 97 (1589), 206 (1247); iii. 78 (1231), 91 (865), 100 (1149), 226 (1365, 1370), 227 (1370), 293 (793), 301 (1617); iv. 8 (1379); v. 120 (466), 328 (630).

48 Aldhelm’s echoes of the different books of the *Carmen paschale* are as follows: Bk.1 (81); Bk.2 (28); Bk.3 (29); Bk.4 (24); Bk.5 (27).

49 Bede’s echoes of the different books of the *Carmen paschale* are as follows: Book One (23); Book Two (9); Book Three (6); Book Four (1); Book Five (6).

50 Wulfstan’s citations of the different books of the *Carmen paschale* are as follows: Bk.1 (18); Bk.2 (13); Bk.3 (26); Bk.4 (16); and Bk.5 (9).

No manuscript of Avitus’ *De spiritalis historiae gestis* survives from the Anglo-Saxon period, though evidence for knowledge of the poem does exist in the writings of the Anglo-Saxons themselves. ‘Alcimi Auiti’ appears on the list of books donated by Bishop Ethelwold of Winchester to the monastery of Peterborough, refounded in 970, and Alcuin names ‘Alcimus’ among the authors known in the York library (*Alcimus et Clemens, Prosper, Paulinus, Arator, 1552*). Aldhelm and Bede also provide textual evidence for knowledge of the poem in their verse and prose writings: four echoes of the *Historia spiritualis* appear in Aldhelm’s verse, three in the *Carmen de uirginitate* and one in the *Carmen ecclesiastica*; and Bede cites Avitus nine times, six in his metrical life of St. Cuthbert and twice in his poem on Judgment Day (*Versus de die iudicii*) in addition to a single reference in his *Commentary on Genesis*, which again attests to the orthodoxy of many biblical poems in the minds of prominent Christians like Bede and Jerome.

Despite the poverty of manuscript evidence for knowledge of Avitus’ *Historia spiritualis* in Anglo-Saxon England, therefore, the distribution of verbal echoes nevertheless suggests a broad familiarity with the work, which is to say the whole poem was probably available at some point. What is more, the kinship of certain episodes of the *Historia spiritualis* with verses of Anglo-Latin and Old English biblical poetry invites further speculation as to the possible connections between Avitus and Anglo-Saxon literature.

Michael Lapidge, for example, has recently argued that Samuel Moore’s rejection of

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54 See further Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 179. The passages in question are: i. 25 (CdV 1584), ii. 358 (CdV 846), vi. 223 (CE iv.6.7), vii. 512 (CdV 1912).
55 See further Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 204.
Avitus as a possible source for the Old English *Exodus* is by no means conclusive. As Lapidge says, ‘Moore’s ‘demolition’ (which on inspection turns out to be more special pleading than demolition) has steered scholarship away from the obvious inspiration of the Old English *Exodus*, namely the curriculum of Christian Latin poets which were studied in all Anglo-Saxon schools.’

Knowledge of Arator in Anglo-Saxon England was extensive. Eight manuscripts of the *Historia apostolica* have survived, and two booklists mention him by name, one in Bishop Leofric’s inventory of books donated to Exeter and another in an unidentified list from Worcester. Alcuin mentions Arator as one of the poets available at York (line 1552), and a bulk of evidence comes once again from verbal echoes in Anglo-Latin literature. I count 139 allusions to Arator’s poem, including citations by Aldhelm (42), Bede (31), Alcuin (26), Lantfred (3), Wulfstan (32) and Byrhtferth (5). Not surprisingly, Aldhelm cites the *Historia* mostly in his *Carmen de virginitate* (22), followed by a fairly even distribution of echoes in his *Carmina ecclesiastica* (8),

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57 Lapidge, ‘Versifying the Bible,’ p. 28.

58 See further Lapidge, ‘Study of Latin Texts’, pp. 116–24. The eight surviving manuscripts of Arator’s poem are listed in Gneuss, *Handlist* items 12, 175, 280, 488, 523.5, 620.6f, 660, 890, and in Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 281. I list Lapidge’s summary: Cambridge, UL, Gg. 5. 35 (St. Augustine’s, Canterbury, s. xi<sup>med</sup>; London, BL, Royal 15. A V, fos. 30-85 (s. xi<sup>ii</sup>); London, Westminster Abbey Library, 17 (England, s. xi/xii) (fr.); Oxford, BodL, e Mus. 66 [offsets] (‘N Italy, s. vi or vii); Oxford, BodL, Rawlinson C. 570 (St. Augustine’s, Canterbury, s. x<sup>iii</sup>); Paris, BNF, lat. 8092 (England, s. xi<sup>i</sup>). On whether London, BL, Royal 15.A. V is Anglo-Saxon or not, see Gernot R. Wieland, ‘British Library, Ms. Royal 15.A. V: One Manuscript or Three?’ in *Beatus Vir: Studies in Early English and Norse Manuscripts in Memory of Philip Pulsiano*, ed. A.N. Doane and Kirsten Wolf (Tempe: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), 1–25.


60 Again, I have added twenty-one citations of Arator’s *Historia* from Godman’s edition of Alcuin’s York poem: i. 52 (664), 54 (1628), 99 (34), 227 (4), 234 (629), 404 (1405), 528 (1379), 553 (35), 777 (1318), 801–2 (427ff), 953 (1208), 989 (57); ii. 78 (267), 106 (429), 123 (1246), 183–4 (159ff), 520 (1364), 624 (365), 928 (282), 939 (1166), 1167 (1036).
Enigmata (5), De metris (5) and De pedum regulis (2). What is more, just as Aldhelm quotes Book One of the Euangelia and Carmen paschale more than any other book, so does he cite Book One of the Historia apostolica twice as often as Book Two. Bede likewise cites Book One more frequently, though not significantly so (Bk.1, 18; Bk.2, 12). Bede acknowledges a notable debt to Arator’s poem in his prose commentary on the Acts of the Apostles (Expositio actuum apostolorum):

In quo me opusculo, cum alii plurimi fidei catholicae scriptores, tum maxime iuuauit Arator, sanctae romanae ecclesiae subdiaconus, qui ipsum ex ordine librum heroico carmine percurrens nonnullos in eodem metro allegoriae flores admiscuit, occasionem mihi tribuens uel alia ex his colligendi uel eadem planius exponendi.

[In this small work, though many other writers of the Catholic faith (have helped me), Arator helped me most, a sub-deacon of the Holy Roman Church, going through that book in order in heroic poetry, he added many flowers of allegory in the same metre, giving me the occasion to take other things from it or explain the same things more plainly.]

It is clear from this quotation that Bede has read Arator’s letter to Parthenius, where Arator refers to the ‘flowers’ of the Psalms (Dauidicis assuetus floribus, 73) and ‘violets’ and ‘lilies’ of the Old and New Testaments (uiolas et lilia, 75), which commingle in the Acts of the Apostles (‘uetus atque nouus congeminauit odor’). Bede’s reference to the mingling of flowers as allegories for the symbolism of the Testaments (allegoriae flores admiscuit) coincides with Arator’s emphasis, and this is only a hint of Bede’s debt to Arator. Lantfred of Winchester also cites the Historia apostolica in order to elevate the

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62 Aldhelm cites Book One of the Historia apostolica 28 times and Book Two, 14.
63 Bede’s distribution of quotations of the Historia apostolica include: Ep. ad Vigilium (1); Bk.1, 18; Bk.2, 12.
64 See further M. L. W. Laistner, ed., Expositio Actuum Apostolorum et Retractatio (Cambridge, 1939). Lawrence Martin also emphasizes the importance of Arator for Bede in ‘Knowledge of Arator in Anglo-Saxon England,’ Proceedings of the PMR Conference: Annual Publication of the International Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance Conference 7 (1982), 75–81, and he notes that ‘Laistner’s edition of Bede’s Commentary credits Augustine for the symbolism of the lame beggar, but Augustine does not develop the full four points of the symbolic structure of Bede’s Commentary on the story. Every feature of Bede’s allegorical structure is, however, found in Arator (1.244–92).’
tone of his preface to the life of Saint Swithun,\textsuperscript{65} and Wulfstan of Winchester does the
same thing with his preface to the versification of Lantfred’s prose (‘Narratio metrica de
Sancti Swithuno’).\textsuperscript{66} Finally, Byrhtferth of Ramsey cites Arator in his life of St. Ecgwine
(‘Vita sancti Echwini’) and quotes lines 1.226–7 of Arator’s poem in his Enciridion.\textsuperscript{67}
Therefore, like Juvencus and Sedulius, Arator enjoys an enduring readership throughout
the Anglo-Saxon period, from Aldhelm to Wulfstan of Winchester, and his poem is
among the three most popular biblical versifications of the period.

So what do we learn from all of this empirical evidence? For one, it is clear that
Juvencus, Sedulius and Arator are the most popular biblical poets of the Anglo-Saxon
period, though manuscript and textual evidence also points to knowledge of Cyprianus and
Avitus among other Christian writers. It also appears that many of the biblical poems
circulate together in large compendia or among groups of books donated to various
institutions by benefactors. So Juvencus, Sedulius and Arator appear as the first three
items in CUL G.g. 5.35 and on many of the same booklists.\textsuperscript{68} The coherence of such
groupings also suggests both an awareness of a genre of biblical poetry and a general
program of reading. What is more, based on the distribution of verbal echoes in Anglo-
Latin verse, it appears that the first books of the Euangelia, Carmen paschale and Historia
apostolica were the best-known portions of those poems, which may indicate a selective

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\textsuperscript{65} See Lapidge, \textit{Anglo-Saxon Library}, p. 240.
\textsuperscript{66} See ibid. For Wulfstan’s text of the poem see also Michael Lapidge, \textit{The Cult of St Swithun} (Oxford,
\textsuperscript{67} See further Peter S. Baker and Michael Lapidge, eds., \textit{Byrhtferth’s Enchiridion}, EETS (Oxford, 1995),
2.3. 265. The text of the \textit{Vita s. Ecgwini} is also in Lapidge’s edition of the \textit{Enchiridion}.
\textsuperscript{68} Juvencus and Sedulius also both appear in Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève 2410 (Christ Church,
Canterbury, s. x/xi) (Gneuss’ item 903), and both Arator and Sedulius in Paris, BNF, lat. 8092 (England, s.
xı\textsuperscript{24}) (Gneuss’ item 890). Juvencus and Sedulius appear as item 27 on Sæwold’s list of books donated to
Bath (‘Iuuencus, Sedulius in uno uolumine’); and Arator and Sedulius appear one after the other in the list
of books donated to the Church of Exeter by Leofric (19. \textit{Sedulius boc} / 20. \textit{liber Aratoris}); likewise both
Sedulius and Arator appear on an inventory from an unidentified centre, possibly Worcester (s. xi\textsuperscript{25}) in
double copies (Sedulius, 2/9; Arator 15/26).
program of reading focused on the early sections of these texts. As for the glosses attached to these works, many of them are probably inherited from the Continent as Michael Lapidge suggests, but even if they do not represent *ad hoc* responses of a teacher or student to the text before him, they nevertheless offer ready-made pedagogical aids for Latin teachers. Glossed passages like the one at the opening of the *Euangelia* in CUL Gg. 5. 35, for instance, provide exemplary evidence for the kinds of problems encountered by a basic Latin student, and there is no reason to deny the possibility that teachers used such passages for their own lessons.

The question now remains, what is the context of these verbal echoes of late antique biblical verse in Anglo-Latin? Are they more than just disparate strands of remembered reading? On the one hand, there are certainly occasions when a given word or phrase from biblical poetry appears in Anglo-Latin without any special significance. This is true of much of the Christian-epic vocabulary the Anglo-Saxons inherit from classical literature *via* Juvencus and other biblical versifiers. Loan-words like *Tonans* or phrases like *culmina caeli* (‘the heights of heaven’), for example, filter through biblical poetry to become part of the stereotypical Christian-poetic idiom.69 There are also practical reasons for the adoption and repetition of phrases such as *culmina caeli*, which provide ready-made metrical units in hexameter verse. After all, Latin was not the native language of the Anglo-Saxons, and their ability to compose verse in hexameters did present some unique challenges. As Neil Wright says, ‘Aldhelm was one of the first Germanic speakers to compose Latin hexameter verse,’ and ‘he was therefore working in a poetic tradition completely foreign to that of his own native oral verse; hence he was

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69 Juvencus uses the phrase *culmina caeli* in the *Euangelia*, 3.456 (‘Sic uobis faciet genitor, qui culmina caeli’). The phrase is ubiquitous throughout Aldhelm’s verse.
faced by the daunting task of mastering not only alien systems of prosody, quantitative metre, and poetic diction, but also a canon of poetic themes and motifs quite different from that familiar to him. As a result, Aldhelm and many later Anglo-Latin poets may have resorted to repetitive imitation, ‘as much of the conventions and commonplaces of Christian-Latin verse, as of its vocabulary and phraseology.’ Even so, there are undoubtedly moments when Anglo-Latin poets such as Aldhelm borrow more than just a word or phrase from a formulaic vocabulary but whole passages that carry thematic significance from their native contexts. What I propose to do in the following pages, therefore, is to examine several passages from Anglo-Latin verse in which echoes have been identified and to assess the extent to which these verbal borrowings are significant to the author’s stylistic and thematic design. Because the introductory sections of biblical poems like the *Euangelia* or *Carmen paschale* tend to be the best known, I will focus on the opening portions of the *Carmen de uirginitate*, *Vita sancti Cuthberti* and *Versus de patribus regibus et sanctis Euboricensis ecclesiae*. I will begin in chronological order and end with Alcuin’s poem.

It is clear that Anglo-Latin writers draw on their knowledge of Sedulius more than any other biblical poet. For example, Sedulius is the second most quoted author in Aldhelm’s poetry after Vergil, and yet we still know little about the specific context of these Sedulian echoes. In fact, we are only now coming to terms with the bulk of physical evidence for knowledge of the *Carmen paschale* in Anglo-Saxon England,

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71 Ibid.
72 For Vergil as the most cited author in Aldhelm’s poetry see Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, p. 164; see also Wright, ‘Imitations of Paulius of Nola,’ p. 141; ultimately see M. Manitius, *Zu Aldhelm und Baeda*, pp. 574–9.
which includes the surviving manuscripts and verbal echoes (to say nothing of the
glosses); but there is already much to say for how Aldhelm adapts his favourite Christian
author. The first one-hundred-and-fifty verses of the *Carmen de uirginitate*, for example,
imitate the opening sections of the *Carmen paschale*, and there is much more going on
than just verbal echoing.\(^7^3\) For example, Aldhelm models his characterization of God (1–
16) on the *Omnipotens Deus* of Sedulius (1.60-78) as well as the thematic focus in Book
One of the *Carmen paschale* on God’s supremacy over the created world, especially his
ability to overturn the laws of nature. Aldhelm likewise responds to a number of the finer
stylistic characteristics of Sedulius’ Latin, though many of these points are not
immediately apparent. In the following section, I have placed the opening lines of
Aldhelm’s *Carmen de uirginitate* beside the corresponding section of the *Carmen
paschale*, in order to emphasize the close relationship between the two passages:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{*Carmen de uirginitate* (1–16)} & \text{*Carmen paschale* (1.60–78)} \\
Omnipotens genitor mundum dicione gubernans, & Omnipotens aeterne Deus, spec unica mundi, \\
Lucida stelligeri qui condis culmina caeli, & Qui caeli fabricator ades, qui conditor orbis.
Necnon telluris fundamina uerbo, & Qui maris undisonas fluctu surgente procellas \\
Pallida purpureo pingis qui flore uirecta; & Mergere uicinae prohibes confinia terrae,
Sic quoque fluctuati refrenans caerula ponti, & Qui solem radiis et lunam cornibus imples \\
Mergere ne ualeant terrarum litora limphis, & Inque diem ac noctem lumen metiris utrumque, \\
Sed tumidos frangant fluctus obstacula rupis, & Qui stellas numeras, quorum tu nomina solus, \\
Arorum gelido qui cultus fonte rigabis & Signa, potestates, cursus, loca, tempora nosti,
Et segetum glumas nimbosis imbribus auges; & Qui diuersa nouam formasti in corpora terram \\
Qui latebras mundi geminato sidere demis: & Torpentique solo uiuentia membra dedisti, \\
Nempe diem Titan et noctem Cynthia comit; & Qui pereuntem hominem utiti dulcedine pomi  \\
Piscibus aequoreos qui campos pinguibus ornas & Instauras meliore cibo potuque sacrati \\
Squamigeras formans in glauco gurgite turmas; & Sanguinis infusion depellis ab angue uenenum, \\
Limpida praepetibus sic complens aer a caterus, & Qui genus humanum praeter quos cluserat arca \\
Garrula quae rostris resonantes cantica pipant  & Diluui rapid spumantis mole sepultum \\
Atque creatorem diuersa uoce fatentur: & Vna iterum de stirpe creas, ut mystica uirtus, \\
& Quod carnis delicta necant, hoc praesule ligno \\
\end{array}
\]

\(^7^3\) See also Wright’s assessment of Aldhelm’s debt to Sedulius at the beginning of the *Carmen de
Immediately, the overall structural symmetry between the two passages is apparent, both of which are built around a series of anaphoric *qui*-clauses which emphasize God’s omnipotence over Creation. In line one, Aldhelm’s apostrophe to *Omnipotens genitor* reflects Sedulius’ direct address to *Omnipotens aeterne Deus* in line sixty of his *Carmen paschale.*

Aldhelm likewise situates that power directly in relation to the human world (*mundum … gubernans*, 1), as Sedulius does (*spes unica mundi*, 60). Aldhelm’s second verse follows the corresponding line of the *Carmen paschale* (61), though Aldhelm makes several changes. He maintains, for example, the focus on the ‘Founder,’ but chooses a verbal form of *condo* (*condis*, 2) instead of Sedulius’ nominal form, *conditor* (61); he then replaces *caeli fabricator* with *culmina caeli,* a Sedulian (or Juvencan phrase). Aldhelm’s second verse is also a golden line, a stylistic hallmark of Sedulius’ poetic style. As Neil Wright says, 31 of the first 368 verses of the *Carmen paschale* are golden lines (see Appendix 6). It therefore makes sense that Aldhelm, who quotes Book One more than any other portion of the *Carmen paschale,* would imitate this particular stylistic feature in response to his favourite Christian poet. In fact, 24 of the first 368 verses of the *Carmen de uirginitate* are also golden, in addition to another 22 verses that

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74 Aldhelm uses the *Omnipotens* epithet in eight other verses of the *Carmen de uirginitate*: 506, 679, 1606, 1678, 1761, 1915, 2019, 2107; see also *Carmen ecclesiastica* 4.1. 36 (‘Arbiter omnipotens ad caeli culmina uexit’); and *Aenig.* 91.1 (‘Omnipotens auctor, nutu qui cuncta creauit’). Note, too, that Aldhelm closely echoes the second verse of the *CdV* on two later occasions in the poem: *CdV* 1445 (‘Lucida stelligeri scandentes culmina caeli’); and 2816 (‘Limpida stelligeri scandentes culmina caeli’).

75 See also line 35 of the *Carmen de uirginitate*: ‘Quo pater omnipotens per mundum cuncta creauit.’

76 Note that like his predecessors, Aldhelm places this phrase at the cadence of the line. Cf. Juvenecus, *Evangelia,* 3.456 (‘Sic uobis faciet genitor, qui culmina caeli’); Sedulius, *Carmen paschale,* 4.94 (‘Ille stelligeri scandentes culmina caeli’); and Cyprianus, *Heptateuch,* Gen. 592 (‘Nuntius aetherio descendit culmine caeli’); see also Aldhelm *CdV* 1445 and 2816, as well as *Enig.* 100, which also begins with an apostrophe to God the Founder, *Conditor* (1), who supports the world ‘while the hanging heights of broad heaven revolve (‘Pendula dum patuli uertuntur culmina caeli,’ 3).

are ‘near golden’ or ‘closely modelled on the golden line form.’\textsuperscript{78} The only other poem from this period to contain so many golden lines is the \textit{Hisperica famina}, a roughly contemporary Hiberno-Latin text which Aldhelm may also have known; in any case, the important point is that both poems look to the \textit{Carmen paschale} as stylistic model.\textsuperscript{79}

In verses three and four of the \textit{Carmen de uirginitate}, Aldhelm complicates his debt to Sedulius, going beyond the level of verbal parallel. The fourth verse is a golden line (‘Pallida purpureo pingis qui flore uirecta’), and though Aldhelm deviates from Sedulius to comment on the creative power of the Word (\textit{formans fundamina uerbo}), this emphasis is by no means at odds with the focus on God’s omnipotence.\textsuperscript{80} In fact, Sedulius himself comments on the miraculous power of the word later in Book One.\textsuperscript{81} In addition, Aldhelm’s focus here anticipates his own invocation to the muse at lines 30–1, where he declares, ‘I shall strive with prayers to move the Thunderer, Who grants us the divine declaration of the gentle Word. I seek the word from the Word’ [‘Sed potius nitar precibus pulsare Tonantem, / Qui nobis placidi confert oracula uerbi; / Verbum de uerbo peto: hoc psalmista canebat’]. More to the point, though Aldhelm seems to digress from lines 62–3 of the \textit{Carmen paschale} here, the language of this apparent deviation suggests otherwise. In other words, the third and fourth verses of the \textit{Carmen de uirginitate} form a grammatical unit composed of a present participial phrase (\textit{formans fundamina}), followed

\textsuperscript{78} Orchard, \textit{Poetic Art of Aldhelm}, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{79} See further Wright, ‘The \textit{Hisperica Famina} and Caelius Sedulius,’ pp. 65–76, esp. p. 76: ‘on closer examination they [the sections of \textit{De oratione} and \textit{De gesta re} of B-text] reveal a surprising level of literary borrowing and imitation, principally of the \textit{Carmen paschale} of Sedulius.’
\textsuperscript{80} Aldhelm’s focus on ‘the Word’ here also anticipates his central thesis later in the preface (‘uerbum de uerbo peto,’ 33).
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Cp} (1.144–6): ‘Vox Domini super extat aquas; uox denique uerbum est. / Verbum Christus adest, geminae qui consona legis / Testamenta regens ueterem patefecit abyssum [‘The voice of God stretches over many waters; in the end, / The voice is the Word and the Word is Christ, who rules / The harmonious Testaments of a twin law and has laid open the old abyss’].
by a medial finite verb in the next line (*pingis*). This is precisely what Sedulius does in lines 62–3 of the *Carmen paschale*, where he uses a present participial phrase (*fluctus surgente*), followed by a medial finite verb (*prohibes*). Furthermore, if Aldhelm’s choice of *pingis* is a deliberate alliterative alternative to *prohibes*, then these lines represent a degree of virtuosity which can only appeal to someone very familiar with Sedulius’ poem. Consider also the correspondence in line three of *telluris fundamina* to *confinia terrae* in line sixty-four of the *Carmen paschale*—both phrases contain third declension neuter accusative plural nouns (*fundamina/confinia*), followed by a genitive singular word for ‘earth’ (*telluris/terrae*), suggesting once again that Aldhelm is imitating more than the content of the *Carmen paschale* but also the very style of this particular passage. There is even a coincidence of alliteration between the two phrases, *fundamina/confinia* and *telluris/terrae*. All this is to say that however deliberate Aldhelm’s choice of words is in this case, the consequence of the synonymic phrasing, coupled with the imitative grammar and alliteration, forces the reader’s ear to acknowledge aural connections between the two passages.

In lines five and six of the *Carmen de uirginitate*, Aldhelm picks up the thread of the corresponding passage from the *Carmen paschale*, now echoing lines 62–3 closely. This correspondence removes any doubt about Aldhelm’s source, and again he imitates Sedulius’ two-line structure of participle (*surgente*) and finite verb (*prohibes*) with *refrenans* and *frangant*, including two close verbal echoes in *mergere* (6/64) and *fluctus* (7/62). With Sedulius in mind, Aldhelm renders the whole of *undisonas fluctu … procellas* with a single compound word, *fluctiuagi*, and ends off the line with an unmistakeable Sedulian phrase, *caerula ponti*, which he puts at the cadence exactly as he
does with *culmina caeli* in line two.\textsuperscript{82} Both phrases constitute a tri- and disyllabic pair or \( 3 + 2 \) unit which is one that Aldhelm prefers at the cadence of the line.\textsuperscript{83} Note as well that Aldhelm substitutes *confinia terrae* in line sixty-three with *terrarum litora*, another variation similar to the form and meaning of *telluris fundamina* in line two. Considering the opening lines of Aldhelm’s poem, it is therefore clear that he is not just remembering formulaic phrases from his reading but a specific passage upon which he models his own introduction very closely.

Before proceeding, a few words are in order about another feature of Aldhelm’s opening which is more or less indebted to the style of late antique biblical verse.\textsuperscript{84} Aldhelm’s metrical patterning or distribution of dactyls (\( \overline{\overline{\rightarrow}} \)) and spondees (\( \overline{\rightarrow} \)) tends to be repetitive and heavily spondaic in the first four feet, with a fixed cadence composed of a dactyl and spondee or trochee (\( \overline{\rightarrow} \)).\textsuperscript{85} Of the sixteen possible combinations of dactyls and spondees in the first four feet, Aldhelm regularly uses just four of these, which are heavily spondaic:\textsuperscript{86}

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Dactyl + Spondee + Spondee + Spondee} & \quad \text{(DSSS)} \\
\text{Spondee + Dactyl + Spondee + Spondee} & \quad \text{(SDSS)} \\
\text{Dactyl + Dactyl + Spondee + Spondee} & \quad \text{(DDSS)} \\
\text{Spondee + Spondee + Spondee +Spondee} & \quad \text{(SSSS)}
\end{align*}
\]

\textsuperscript{82} Sedulius uses the phrase three times in the *Carmen paschale*, always at the cadence (1.136, 2.222, 3.219); Aldhelm likewise uses it three times in the *Carmen de uirginitate* (5, 423, 1736).
\textsuperscript{83} See Lapidge, *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works*, p. 21. The alternative for Aldhelm in most other cases is an inversion of this syntax, so, 2+3, as in *fonte rigabis* in line 8.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid, pp. 21–4.
\textsuperscript{85} Note that Aldhelm and Bede forbid anything but a dactyl in the fifth foot of a hexameter line. Aldhelm is also explicit about this in the *Carmen de uirginitate* (49): ‘Spondei quintam contemnat sillaba partem’ [‘let the syllable of the spondee avoid the fifth foot’]; see also Aldhelm’s *De metris* (p. 83 in Ehwald); and Bede’s *De arte metrica*, p. 109 (124–5, 129) in Kendal, ed., *Bedae Venerabilis Operae*. For a basic introduction to Aldhelm’s verse see Wright, ‘Introduction to Aldhelm’s Prose Writings on Metrics,’ in *Aldhelm: Poetic Works*, pp. 183–190.
The first pattern (DSSS) is Aldhelm’s favourite type, and he repeats it twice in the first ten lines of the *Carmen de virginitate* (7 and 9): ‘Sēd tūmī|dōs frān|gānt || flūc|tūs ōb|stācūlā|rūpīs …’Ēt sēgē|tūm glū|mās || nīm|bōsīs| ĭmbrībūs| āugēs.’

Classical poets tend to avoid such frequent repetition of metrical patterning, including Vergil and Lucan, who repeat a combination only once every eleven or twelve lines. But what about Sedulius? Given Aldhelm’s debt to the form and content of the *Carmen paschale* (lines 1.60-78) at the opening of his poem, we might expect his metrical patterning to imitate that of Sedulius as well. Consider, then, the following metrical analysis of the two passages in question, which I have placed side-by-side for comparison:

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<th><em>De Virginitate</em> (1–10)</th>
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Contrary to the usual practice of classical composition but typical of his own verse, Aldhelm repeats several metrical patterns here. He uses the DDSS type four times in the first ten lines alone (2, 4, 5, 6) and the DSSS pattern twice (7, 9). Sedulius’ distribution is more fluid, however, though it is striking that he repeats four patterns twice: DSDS (60, 63); DDSS (62, 65); SDSS (64, 66); SDSD (68, 69). Even though the types

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87 See also *CdV* (9): ‘Ēt sēgē|tūm glū|mās || nīm|bōsīs| ĭmbrībūs| āugēs [*And you increase the crops of fields with rain-filled showers*].
89 I have also consulted Michael Lapidge’s scansion of Aldhelm’s opening in *Aldhelm: Poetic Works*, p. 21.
themselves do not match, showing that Aldhelm does not imitate Sedulius’ metre exactly at this point, the repetitive nature of the patterning does suggest a general stylistic affinity between the two authors. Even though this is an isolated example, it nevertheless suggests that Aldhelm’s tendency toward metrical redundancy may not be due to a difficulty with the language as a non-native speaker *per se* but indicative of his debt to the style of late antique verse. I would also add that one of the characteristic features of Juvencus’ poetry is heavily spondaic hexameter verse, and like Aldhelm, he repeats several patterns regularly. In the first fifty lines of the *Euangelia*, for example, Juvencus prefers Aldhelm’s favourite pattern (DSSS), which he repeats four times in the first twelve lines alone and then seven more times in the first fifty lines (21, 22, 25, 28, 30, 34, 50); his second favourite type is also one of Aldhelm’s (SSSS), and Juvencus uses it nine times in the first fifty lines (2, 4, 7, 10, 15, 19, 27, 33, 44). Finally, his third favourite type is DDSS and it appears seven times in the first fifty lines of the *Euangelia* (8, 13, 14, 20, 23, 35, 46). Again, this is one of Aldhelm’s four preferred types. Although these conclusions are only preliminary and require further supporting evidence, I would suggest tentatively that Aldhelm owes more to late antique biblical poetry for the style of his metrical patterning than a struggling second-language grasp of Latin that fails to match the innate skill of classical poets like Vergil.

Returning to the opening of the *Carmen de uirginitate*, it is true that the general tenor of lines 1–247 is primarily Sedulian, and this affinity continues into the invocation. Following the series of anaphoric ‘qui’ clauses in lines 1–16, Aldhelm looks to God for divine assistance. In grammatical terms, the invocation begins with an imperative, *da* (‘give,’ 17), and a purpose clause (17-18): ‘Da pius auxilium clemens, ut carmine possim
/ inclita sanctorum modulari gesta priorum’ ['Grant help, merciful and pious (Lord), that I may sing the deeds of former saints in song']. This focus on inclita gesta sanctorum falls squarely within the praefatio-tradition of biblical verse, where, for example, Juvencus resolves to sing of ‘Christ’s life-giving deeds’ (Christi uitalia gesta, 19) or Sedulius about ‘Christ’s bright miracles’ (Clara miracula Christi, 1.26); it may also be that Aldhelm is thinking of the ‘renowned deeds of Christ’ (gesta Christi insignia) from Prudentius’ Cathemerinon (9.2), but whatever the case, a debt to the tradition of late antique verse is clear. Even more, following his own series of anaphoric qui-clauses in the Carmen paschale, Sedulius beseeches God’s help in much the same way Aldhelm does (79–82):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Pande salutarem paucos quae ducit in urbem} \\
\text{Angusto mihi calle uiam uerbique lucernam} & \quad 80 \\
\text{Da pedibus lucere meis, ut semita uitae} \\
\text{Ad caulas me ruris agat} \ldots
\end{align*}
\]

[Stretch out a road for me along the narrow path, which leads but few to the city of salvation, and grant the lantern of your word to light feet, that the road of life may lead me to the sheepfold in the country …]

In lines 79–81, Sedulius alludes to Psalm 119 (‘lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum et lumen semitis meis’);\(^91\) but note his use of the imperative, \(da\), in line eighty-one at precisely the same point Aldhelm uses it. In fact, the whole opening section of the Carmen paschale (17–102) concerns God’s omnipotence and his ability to aid the weak and sin-stricken. The first words Sedulius utters after his preface are ‘Hanc constanter opem laesis adhibete medullis’ ['Continually grant your help to wounded hearts']. Aldhelm addresses God with the same emphasis: ‘Auxilium fragili clementer dedere seruo’ ['Mercifully grant your help to a frail servant']. So, once again Aldhelm’s debt to

\(^91\) ‘Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths.’
Sedulius transcends the level of mere verbal echoing and represents a broader stylistic and thematic affinity.

Numerous other allusions to Sedulius’ poem and late antique verse appear in the opening sections of Aldhelm’s *Carmen de uirginitate*. Some of these are close verbal parallels; others are more subtle reminiscences. These six are notable: the reference to the ‘Thunderer’ in line 31 (*Tonantem*), an effective calling-card for biblical poets; Aldhelm’s show of disdain for the ‘unspeakable verses’ of pagan antiquity, ‘uersibus infandis non umquam dicere dignor’ (28), a distinctively Juvencan/Sedulian affectation; the definition of the Trinity as ‘simplex’ and ‘triplex’ (38–41), another allusion to the *Carmen paschale* (‘Quod simplex triplicet quodque est triplicabile simplicem,’ 1.298); the Prudentian tenor of lines 47–52 and 138–9, evoking the mystic garlands and ‘strophen’ of the *Cathemerinon* (3.17–20); Aldhelm’s statement that nothing is ‘difficult’ for God in line 54 (‘Nec tibi difficile’), who ‘relaxes’ Nature’s laws (‘Qui crebris uicibus naturae iura relaxas’), an allusion to lines 85–7 of the *Carmen paschale* and the central theme of Book One of that poem; and Aldhelm’s adaptation of the miracle of the talking ass in the *Carmen paschale* (1.160–2), which he applies to his own meagre talent in much the way Sedulius does in his preface. Aldhelm is therefore not only incorporating disparate

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92 Juvencus likewise opposes songs that ‘bind lies to the deeds of ancient men’ [‘Quae ueterum gestis hominum mendacia nectunt,’ *Ev.* 20], and Sedulius rebukes classical poets who ‘saeva nefandarum renouent contagia rerum’ [‘Renew the savage contagions of unspeakable things,’ *Cp.* 1.20].

93 See *CdV.* 138–9: ‘Nunc igitur raros decerpant carmina flores / E quis virgineas valeant fabricare coronas!’ [‘Now, then, let these songs gather rare flowers from which virgin crowns may be made’].

94 Note that Prudentius also declares his disdain for the pomp of the pagan muse in the same passage (‘Sperne, camena, leues hederas,’ *Cath.*, 3.16).

95 See further *Carmen paschale*, 85–7: ‘Te duce difficilis non est uia; subditur / Imperiis natura tuis, rituque soluto / Transit in adversas iussu dominante figuras’ [‘All nature is subject to your commands, / and freed of its ritual, / Nature changes to contrary forms by your dominating will’]. Compare *CdV* (53–4): ‘Nec tibi difficile prorsus quicquam arbitror esse, / Qui crebris vicibus naturae iura relaxas’ [‘I do not, of course, think anything difficult for you, who relax the laws of nature with frequent changes’].

96 See further *Cp.* 1.160–2: ‘Angelicis tremefacta minis adfatur asella / Sessorem per uerba suum, linguaque rudenti / Edidit humanas animal pecuane loquellas’ [‘Frightened by angelic threats an ass addressed / Its
strands of the *Carmen paschale* into his narrative but also following the progress of his
source step-by-step, so that the first two hundred and fifty lines of the *Carmen de
uirginitate* track the narrative movement of the *Carmen paschale*.

Aldhelm’s exemplary lives of chaste individuals throughout the remainder of the
poem present a number of further stylistic affinities with the *Carmen paschale* and the
miracle-sequence of Book One in particular. Sedulius’ group of fifteen miracles from the
Old Testament (1.103–219)—and indeed all of those in the *Carmen paschale*—offer rich
tableaux filled with brief but saintly images of faithful disciples. Four of his first five
stories, those of Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, and Daniel and the three youths (248–90) are
now adapted to fit Aldhelm’s focus on chastity. The story of Daniel in the *Carmen de
uirginitate* opens with emphasis on virginity, for instance: ‘Scriptorum ueterum liquido
monumenta testantur, / Quod Daniel semper uirgo florescet almus’ [‘The monuments of
ancient writings clearly attest that blessed Daniel always flourishes as a virgin’].
Sedulius, on the other hand, says nothing of Daniel’s chastity, only that he is the
‘innocent glory of the Hebrews’ (‘Hebraeumque decus Danihel decernitur insons,’ 1.214)
and ‘a just man’ (*iustus uir*, 215). Aldhelm’s rendition of the three youths in the furnace
likewise emphasizes that they ‘preserve the rights of chastity’ (‘Tres pueri partier
seruarunt iura pudoris,’ 368), overcoming the flames of the furnace with their ‘faith,’
much as they do in the *Carmen paschale* (‘Ardentis fidei restincta est flamma camini,’
1.205), but also with their chastity (384–7):

```
O mirum dictum, pueros quod flamma camini,
Torribus innocuis diro sub carcere coxit,
Verum uirginitas spreuit tormenta rogorum
Scintillante fide dum feruent corda uirorum.
```

rider in words and with braying tongue / [And] the barnyard beast made human speech’]. Aldhelm adapts
this passage, so that he himself becomes the lowly ass.
It is remarkable to say that the flame of that furnace, with its harmless brands, cooked those youths in a dreadful prison; in truth, virginity scorned the torments of that pyre, while the hearts of the young men seethed with scintillating faith.

Aldhelm owes much to Sedulius here, including the reference to the furnace itself (*flamma camini*) in the *Carmen paschale* (1.205) as well as the image of the furnace as a pyre (*rogus*, 386), which ‘dares nothing’ against the youths in Sedulius’ poem (‘Nil audente rogo,’ 202). What is more, Aldhelm’s emphasis on the harmlessness of the ‘innocuous brands’ (*Torribus innocuis*, 385) is a composite of images taken from Sedulius’ fourth Old Testament miracle, that of the burning bush, where ‘innocuous flames’ (1.127) yield to God’s might, and the bush resists the ‘torrid harm’ of the fire (‘nec torrida uiuens / Sensit damna frutex’). This last example again shows how verbatim echoes tell only part of the story and that Aldhelm sometimes draws various scenes together from memory.

The transition to the New Testament at line 391 of *Carmen de uirginitate* will provide a final example of Aldhelm’s debt to Sedulius. Here Aldhelm turns to John the Baptist, who is filled with the Holy Spirit (*sacro spiramine plenus*) in the same way the three youths or Elijah are in the *Carmen paschale* (*Plenus at ille Deo*, 1.176; *spirante Deo*, 1.197). And even though John is an example for virgins in Aldhelm’s poem (*Virginibus … exempla*, 395), the miraculous account of his birth is similar to many similar episodes in the *Carmen paschale*. Here is Aldhelm’s account (414–20):

```
Sic fulsit felix uirgo baptista Iohannes
Nuntius et domini dictus praecursor in auum;
Quem genuit sero patris ueneranda propago,
Quamuis fecundo caruisset corpore mater
Iamdudum et sterili matrix algesceret aluo.
Nullus erat potior muliebri uiscere natus
Ni medicus mundi, proles generata Tonantis.  
```
[So the blessed virgin John the Baptist shone, the messenger and said precursor of the Lord forever; he was born late from his father’s venerable lineage, though his mother had lacked a fruitful womb, a parent long since cold in her sterile belly. No other child born of woman’s womb was more important than this except the healer of the world, the begotten son of the Thunderer.]

Aldhelm bases his account of John’s birth on that of Isaac in the *Carmen paschale*. There is no mistaking the characterization of his mother and her barren, icy womb (‘sterili matrix algesceret aluo’) as an allusion to Sara and the birth of another late-come child (1.107–13):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Saucia iam uetulae marcebant uiscera Sarrae} \\
\text{Grandaeuo consumpta siti, prolemque negabat} \\
\text{Frigidus annoso moriens in corpore sanguis:} \\
\text{Cum seniore uiro gelidi praeordia uentris} \\
\text{In partum tumuere nouum tremebundaque mater} \\
\text{Algentes onerata sinus, spem gentis opimae} \\
\text{Edidit et serum suspendit ad ubera natum.}
\end{align*}
\]

[The stricken womb of poor old Sara was already withered away, consumed with aged neglect, and her frigid blood, dying in her old body, kept denying her a child; her husband was older than she was when the insides of her icy womb swelled to new birth, and the trembling mother, burdened of her cold belly, brought fourth the hope of a fertile race, as she held this late-come child to her breast.]

What is more, the focus on baptismal imagery in the lines of the *Carmen de uirginitate* that immediately follow offers Aldhelm the opportunity to incorporate the central theme of the *Carmen paschale* into his narrative (421–5):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Idcirco mundus mundu m sine labe piacli} \\
\text{Abluit et laticis Christum sub flumine tinxit} \\
\text{Humida fluctuagi sacrantom caerula ponti} \\
\text{Fontibus et uitreis donantem munera partus,} \\
\text{Dum uetuli redeunt iterum ad cunabula uitae.}
\end{align*}
\]

[Therefore, being pure of sin and without fault he washed a pure man and dipped Christ in the waters of the river, sanctifying the wet, cerulean streams of the wave-wandering sea and giving the gifts of birth through vitreous springs, as the old return again to the beginnings of life.]
In effect, Aldhelm combines two passages from Book One of the *Carmen paschale* in these two scenes. Through polyptoton in line 421—one of Sedulius’ favourite rhetorical devices—Aldhelm refers to one clean man (*mundus*) washing another (*mundum*), but the usual sense of ‘world’ for *mundus* suggests itself through a similar passage in to the *Carmen paschale*, where, in the figural context of the flood, Christ ‘washes the whole world in one baptism’ (1.78): ‘Totum namque lauans uno baptisme mundum.’ What is more, the reference in the *Carmen de uirginitate* to the *caerula ponti* (423) of the river Jordan directs the reader’s attention at once to the opening of Aldhelm’s poem, where he emphasises God’s manifold omnipotence, but also to the ultimate source of the phrase in the *Carmen paschale*, where ‘the people [undergo] a rudimentary baptism’ [‘Ingrediens populus rude iam baptisma gerebat’]. Aldhelm’s gifts (*donantem munera partus*, 424) are therefore connected to the mystical gifts presented in the *Carmen paschale* (1.159): ‘His igitur iam sacra tribus dans munera rebus, / Christus erat panis, Christus petra, Christus in undis’ [‘So, granting his sacred gifts on these three occasions, Christ was the bread, Christ the rock, Christ was in the water.’]

Several characteristics come to the surface from this brief analysis of Aldhelm’s debt to late antique biblical verse and Sedulius in particular. For one, it is clear that Aldhelm follows the narrative progress of the *Carmen paschale* in many places at the opening of his poem and that the nature of these allusions exceeds the level of mere verbal parallel to synonymic imitation and even close syntactical modelling. There is also a strong thematic affinity between the two poems, which both emphasize God’s omnipotence early in the narrative and focus on baptismal imagery in particular, as in the scene describing John the Baptist in the *Carmen de uirginitate*. In short, Sedulian
language permeates Aldhelm’s narrative, and his many allusions to the *Carmen paschale* testify to his deep affection for the poet. What is more, given the certainty of Aldhelm’s debt to Sedulius and new insights into the ways in which he appropriates him, we may be able to detect similar borrowing on the part of other Anglo-Latin poets where the relationship between the texts is less clear. In other words, based on Aldhelm’s stylistic adaptations of the *Carmen paschale*, we should not hesitate to look beyond mere verbal parallels to more subtle interactions between the traditions of late antique and Anglo-Latin verse.

Bede’s versified life of St. Cuthbert provides further evidence of how Anglo-Latin poets respond to biblical poetry, and in the preface to his *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, Bede turns for inspiration to the very models he recommends in his *De arte metrica* (1–10): 97

```
Multa suis Dominus fulgescere lumina saeclis
Donauit, tetricas humanae noctis ut umbras
Lustraret diuina poli de culmine flamma.
Et licet ipse Deo natus de lumine Christus
Lux sit summa Deus, sanctos quoque iure lucernae
Ecclesiae rutilare dedit, quibus igne magistro
Sensibus instet amor, sermonibus aestuet ardor,
Multifidos uarium lychnos qui sparsit in orbem,
Vt cunctum noua lux fidei face fusis sub axem
Omnia sidereis uirtutibus arua repleret.
```

[God has granted many lights to shine in their own time, so that their holy flame might brighten the dark shadows of human night from the height of heaven. And though God is the highest light and Christ himself is born of God out of light, he has duly let his saints shine as a lamp for the Church, through whom, with their flame as a guide (lit. teacher), love may press upon the heart and fire may burn from out of our lips (lit. words); it is he who scattered these manifold lamps throughout the fading world, so that a new light, spread by the torch of faith beneath every sky, might replenish all the lands with its starry might.]

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The focus of Bede’s opening is light imagery, a central thematic feature of the *Euangelia* of Juvencus.\(^98\) Consider, for comparison, Simeon’s first glimpse of Christ in Book One of the *Euangelia* (1.205-6), ‘En splendida nostros / Lux oculos tua circumstat radiisque renidet’ ['Behold! Your splendid light enfolds our eyes and shines back with its beams’].

With the same emphasis, Bede uses no fewer than fifteen different words for ‘light’ or ‘fire’ in the first ten verses of the *Vita sancti Cuthberti*: *fulgesco, lumen ×2, lustro, flamma, lux ×3, lucerna, rutilo, ignis, aestuo, ardor, lychnus, sidereus*. This display of rhetorical *variatio*, together with the complexity of the seven-line sentence which constitutes verses 4–10, amounts to a deliberate show of virtuosity on Bede’s part. Much like his late antique antecedents, who appreciate the importance and tradition of the formal *praefatio*, Bede recognizes the need to do something special with his opening.

Note, too, that Bede puts emphasis on the agency of God here (*deus, dominus, Christus*), whose ‘supreme light’ and ‘starry strength’ lend help to his disciples. The scope of God’s omnipotence, which spreads its radiance throughout the entire world (*cunctum … axem; omnia … arua*) is reminiscent of Aldhelm’s focus on *Omnipotens genitor* at the opening of the *Carmen de uirginitate*, not to mention Sedulius poem. While Aldhelm directs that power toward the service of faithful virgins, Bede enfolds God’s servants in a powerful, celestial light (*sidereis uirtutibus*).

Upon closer inspection, it appears that Bede owes a stylistic debt to Arator as well. The *Historia apostolica*, apparently one of Bede’s favourite poems and a source of inspiration for his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, also treats the apostolic mission in similar terms (1.119–23):

Spiritus aetherea descendens sanctus ab aula
Irradiat fulgore locum quo stemma beatum
Ecclesiae nascentis erat, quibus igne magistro
Imbuit ora calor dictisque fluentibus exit
Linguarum populosa seges.

[The Holy Spirit, descending from the ethereal palace, lit up that blessed place
with radiance, where the origin of the nascent Church was, for whom (apostles),
with fire as their teacher, heat imbued their mouths and a populous crop of
tongues left them with fluent speech.]

The relationship to Arator’s Latin is close, and we find, for example, the same emphasis
on rhetorical variatio based on words for ‘light’: irradio, fulgor, ignis, calor. There is
also a close verbal parallel between Bede’s sixth line, ‘Ecclesiae rutilare dedit, quibus
igne magistro,’ and line 121 of Arator’s poem: ‘Ecclesiae nascentis erat, quibus igne
magistro.’ The diction and similar context of the two passages support direct borrowing
on Bede’s part.

The middle of Bede’s preface to the Vita Cuthberti owes a further debt of
inspiration to the Euangelia of Juvencus. Line eleven begins with an echo of Arator’s
Historia apostolica, Petri Paulique (2.1233), but the remainder of lines 13–24 suggests
an affinity with the brief preface at the head of Juvencus’ poem, where several alphabetic
and syntactic glosses accompany the anamorphic descriptions of Matthew, Mark, Luke
and John. The subject of the apostles and the style of the Euangelia together provide
Bede with an ideal entrance into his own narrative, and his adaptation of Juvencus in this
case suggests not a general reminiscence of the genre of biblical verse but a specific
recollection and imitation of this passage. Once again, I have put these two passages side-
by-side for comparison:
Euangelia (pref. 1–8)  Vita Cuthberti (13–24)

Mattheus instituit uirtutum tramite mores
Et bene iuuendi iusto dedit ordine leges.
Marcus amat terras inter caelumque volare
Et uhehens aquila stricto secat omnia lapsu.
Lucas uoberius describit praefia Christi,
5 lure sauer utiulus, quia uatun munia futur.
Ioannes fremit ore leo, similiis rugienti
Intonat aeternae pandens mysteria uitae.

Ast Asiae lucem uerbis serit ore Ioannes,
Hauzerat e Domini quaee pecente mystica ructat.
Bartholomaeus Eoa uolat per regna triumphans,
15 Indomitosque armis lingua domat inclytus Indos.
Tu quoque Niliacos componens, Marce, furores,
Sicca euangelicis satias de nubibus arua.
Africa Cypriani dictis meritisque refuglet,
Spermeye delicias fusus qui sanguine sausit.

Pictaus Hilario multum radiata magistro,
Discutit annorum vera iam luce tenebras.
Constantinopolim Chrysostomus ille Ioannes.
Aurato nitidae lustrat fulgore loquelae.

As with Aldhelm’s adaptation of Sedulius at the opening of his Carmen de uirginitate,
these two passages are concerned with the same subject-matter; in this case, the
evangelical efforts of faithful Christians. Note, too, the persistent emphasis in Bede’s
poem on light imagery: lucem (14); refuglet (19); luce tenebras (22) and the final
flourish of ‘aurato nitidae lustrat fulgore loquelae’ [‘he enlightens (the city) with the
golden radiance of his brilliant speech,’ 24] in Juvencus’ poem.99 Specific verbal
parallels between Bede and Juvencus begin with ‘serit ore Ioannes’ in line 13 of the Vita
Cuthberti, which echoes ‘Ioannes fremit ore’ in line 7 of the Euangelia. ‘John’ is the
subject in both cases, and each phrase is composed of a disyllabic finite verb in the
present tense (serit/fremit), followed by the verbatim use of the word ore in the ablative.
The difference is that John ‘roars with his mouth’ in the Euangelia, but ‘sows light with
it’ in Bede’s life of Cuthbert; this distinction is secondary to the shared focus on the

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99 Note that lustrat, meaning ‘to cleanse’ also carries the secondary sense of ‘illuminate’ or ‘enlighten’ in this
case. Also, line nineteen of Bede’s poem (‘Africa Cypriani dictis meritisque refuglet’) appears to be a
remembrance of the miracle of Elijah from the Carmen paschale (1.170–87), which concludes with a strong
emphasis on light imagery; for example, ‘fulminei praelucens semita caeli’ [‘the exceeding bright path of
light-flashing heaven’]. In this same scene Sedulius emphasizes the ‘merits’ of Elijah (meritisque suis, 1.
177) and the fact that he ‘shines out’ because of them and in keeping with his name, a pun on helios, ‘sun’
(‘meritoque et nomine fulgens,’ 1.185). Notice the similar phrasing of Bede’s meritisque and refuglet.
‘divulgence of mysteries,’ however. John literally ‘belches out’ the mysteries of the Faith in Bede’s narrative (pectore mystica ructat, 14), which may seem an odd reference to John 13.23, but the choice language may also originate in the characterization of John as a lion in the Euangelia, who ‘intones the mysteries of life’ (intonat ... mysteria uitae) as if ‘roaring’ or ‘bellowing’ (leo, similis rugienti). Wishing to imitate his source, therefore, Bede may have chosen ructat as an alliterating alternative to rugienti. This modus operandi recalls that of Aldhelm, who likewise adapts Sedulius through synonymic variation and even imitates the grammar and alliterative style of modelled phrases. In line 15, for example, Bede describes Bartholomew, ‘flying triumphantly through the kingdoms of the world’ (‘Bartholomaeus Eoa uolat per regna triumphans,’ 15). Why is Bartholomew ‘flying’? Again, the reason is perhaps an allusion to Mark in the Euangelia, whose anamorphic form is a mighty eagle (uehemens aquila) that ‘loves to fly between the heavens and the earth’ (Marcus amat terras inter caelumque uolare, 3–4). In this case, Bede keeps uolare as the surest indicator of his source and simplifies terras inter caelumque to per regna, and he exchanges uehemens, a third declension adjective, for a similar-sounding present participle, triumphans. The result is a very Juvencan sounding passage which nevertheless bears the stamp of Bede’s renovative ingenuity. When Bede arrives at last to St. Cuthbert in line twenty-nine, he says that he ‘taught the English how to follow in his steps and ascend the heights’ (‘Scandere celsas suis docuit iam passibus Anglos,’ 29). With the same emphasis, Juvencus says that

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100 The agrarian imagery in Bede’s poem, the idea that the light of faith is sown or scattered throughout the world, appears persistently in Alcuin’s verse life of Willibrord as well, who, for example, ‘sparisit evangeliaca radios per pectoral lucis’ [‘spread beams of evangelic light throughout their breasts,’ i.5). Just lines above this Alcuin refers specifically to ‘spreading the seeds of celestial life’ (i.9–10): ‘Semia perpetuae cupiens caelestia uitae / Spargere, qua rarus fuerat prius accola uerbi’ [‘wishing to spread the seeds of perpetual life, where the inhabitant of the Word was rare before’].
‘Matthew established morals on a path of virtue’ (‘Mattheus instituit uirtutum tramite mores, 1). In effect, this is what Cuthbert does, teaching Christians how to live their lives according to his example.

A few other correlations with Juvencus appear, not surprisingly, at the invocation to Bede’s poem. Here the author effectively announces his desire to participate in the tradition of biblical verse, even though his poem is not a biblical versification per se. Still, it is no coincidence that Bede’s opening is roughly the same length as that of Juvencus or that he alludes to the language of the Euangelia in several places. In effect, Bede is doing exactly what Aldhelm does before him and what Alcuin does in the next century. That is, when faced with the problem of how best to begin a Christian poem, Bede and other Anglo-Latin authors turn for inspiration to the most venerated Christian poets at their disposal, the same authors who form the basis of their education in Latin verse. In this case, Bede draws on his knowledge of the invocations of both Juvencus and Arator, taking this moment to pay homage to the pious works of his predecessors. Again, Bede’s preface, like that of Aldhelm, reinforces the evidence suggesting the opening books of biblical poems leave the strongest impression on Anglo-Latin writers. What better way to pay homage to Cuthbert than to place his life in the context of versifications of the Bible which involve the miraculous and benevolent deeds of Christ?:

1. Euangelia (23–7):

Tunc, cum flammiuoma descendet nube coruscans
Iudex, altithroni genitoris gloria, Christus.  
Ergo age! sanctificus adsit mihi carminis auctor 25
Spiritus, et puro mentem riget amne canentis
Dulcis Jordanis, ut Christo digna loquamur.

[...Then, when he descends, shining in flame-spewing cloud, the Judge, the Glory of the High-Throned Creator, Christ. So come, Holy Spirit! Be the author of my song and dip My heart in the pure streams of sweet-singing Jordan, that I may speak things worthy of Christ.]
2. *Historia apostolica* (1.223–7):

… post missu s ab astris
Nescia uerba uiris facundus detulit ignis.
Ne quid inexpertum studio meditemur inani, 225
Spiritus alme, ueni! Sine te non diceris umquam;
Munera da linguae qui das in munere linguas.

[After the eloquent (Spirit) had been sent from the stars, flames brought down words unknown to men. Come wholesome Spirit, that nothing may be judged inexpertly in vain effort!
Without you, there can never be any word of you; grant gifts to the tongue you who grants tongues through your gift.]

3. *Vita Cuthberti* (praef. 35–8):

Tu, rogo, summe, iuuia, donorum Spiritus auctor:
Te sine nam digne fari tua gratia nescit.
Flammiuomisque soles dare qui noua famina linguis,
Munera da linguae, uerbi tua dona canentis.

[You, I beg, Highest Spirit, Author of gifts, help me: for without you your grace cannot be spoken about worthily. You who are used to giving new speech to flame-spewing tongues, grant then the gifts of the tongue to me, your gifts of verbal song.]

From Juvencus, Bede likely borrows the conspicuous compound *flammiuoma* (*Ev.*, 23), effectively declaring his intention to emulate the opening of the *Evangelia*, and the invocation to the Holy Spirit—*donorum spiritus auctor* in Bede (35–7)—which coincides with *carminis auctor spiritus* (25–6) in Juvencus’ preface. The difference of *donorum* in Bede’s poem is significant, because it is the central focus of Bede’s invocation and represents a desire for the verbal gifts of the Holy Spirit (*donorum … dare … dona*).

There is also a verbatim allusion to Arator’s *Historia apostolica* here. Lines 36–8 of Bede’s poem are a composite of lines 226–7 of Arator’s invocation, where he begs for the ‘gifts of the tongue’ (*munera da linguae*) just as Bede does (*munera da linguae*). Bede also borrows from Arator the pun on ‘spiritus,’ which can also mean ‘breath,’ without which one cannot speak. So Arator says, ‘Sine te non diceris umquam,’ and Bede, ‘Te sine nam digne fari tua gratia nescit.’ Finally, it is likely that Bede takes his emphasis on ‘speaking worthily’ (*digne fari*) from Juvencus (*digna loquamur*) as well as the phrase *dona canentis*, which may be an allusion to the ‘sweet-singing waters’ of the river Jordan.
(amne canentis) in the *Euangelia*. In all, Bede’s invocation reads like a poem from late antiquity, and there is no mistaking his desire to respond to that tradition at the opening of his *Vita sancti Cuthberti*.

At the head of this chapter there is a quotation by Hrabanus Maurus (c. 776–856), one of Alcuin of York’s students from the Continent (c. 802–4). His *De institutione clericorum* defends the study of biblical verse in much the same way Sedulius’ letter to Macedonius does.101 Granting the pagan heritage of Christian hexameter verse, Hrabanus nevertheless argues that biblical poetry, including that of Juvencus, Sedulius and Arator, is the product of men who were themselves teachers of the gospels (evangelici viri) and eager to please God through their writing (‘Deo placere per id satagerunt’). Their verse is therefore not be rejected (non est spernenda), says Hrabanus, but thoroughly learned (perdiscenda) as a potential path to greater faith. This respect and enthusiasm for the study of poetry no doubt owes something to Alcuin’s teaching, who introduced many Continental students to the virtues of biblical poetry, and it is no mistake that Hrabanus names many of the same authors Alcuin cites in his York poem (1551–2): ‘Quid quoque Sedulius, uel quid canit ipse Iuuencus, / Alcimus et Clemens, Prosper, Paulinus, Arator, / Quid Fortunatus, uel quid Lactantius edunt’ [‘Also, what Sedulius or Juvencus himself sings, / Alcimus and Clemens, Paulinus, Arator, / What Fortunatus or Lactantius relate’].

Given Alcuin’s own knowledge of biblical verse, we would therefore expect him to display the same stylistic affinity with late antique verse as Aldhelm and Bede, especially at the opening of his major composition. Consider, then, the prefatory lines to Alcuin’s

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101 See Huemer, *Sedulii Opera*, pp. 5–6; see also Green, who provides a discussion of the two letters to Macedonius in *Latin Epics*, pp. 154–61.
The York poem, which is not only a tribute to the bishops, kings and saints of his beloved minster but his favourite Christian poets (1–14):

Christe deus, summi uirtus, sapientia patris, Vita, salus, hominum factor, renouator, amator, Vnica lingua dei, donorum tu dator alme; Munera da mentis, fragili da uerba poetae, Irrorsans stolidum uiuaci flumine pectus, Vt mea lingua queat de te tua dicere dona: Te sine nulla ualet dignum quid dicere lingua. Vos quoque suppliciter ciius contestor Olympi, O sancti, populus fortis, gens diua tonantis, Vctrices aquilas caeli qui fertis in arcem, Aethereo regi regalia dona ferentes, Qui uestri causa sacratum sponte cruorem Fuderat in terris, ut uos saluaret ab umbris, Inque deique patris secum dedeceret aulam;

[Christ our God, Power of the highest, Wisdom of the Father, Life, Health, Maker of Men, Redeemer, Lover, Only Voice of God, You, Nourishing Giver of Gifts, grant gifts of the mind and grant gifts to this feeble poet, watering a foolish heart with a lively stream, so that my tongue may speak of your gifts. Without you, no tongue has the power to say anything worthwhile. And you, citizens of Olympus, I humbly call to witness, you saints, brave people, holy clan of the Thunderer, who bear the conquering eagles into heaven’s citadel, bearing regal gifts for the Ethereal King, who shed your sacred blood freely upon the lands, so that He may save us from the darkness and lead us up with Him to the palace of God the Father.]

The *Tonans*-epithet (9) stands out immediately as a stereotypically epic-Christian expression, and it joins a host of other allusions from Bede and earlier biblical poets, all the way back to the genesis of the genre in the *Euangelia*. Much like Aldhelm imitating Sedulius in the *Carmen de uirginitate* (1–16), Alcuin opens with an apostrophe to God (*Christe Deus*), which then unfolds in a series of asyndetic epithets that emphasize the Lord’s almighty power. Although Alcuin focuses on everything God is rather than all he has done, his characterization of God’s omnipotence is essentially the same as that of Aldhelm at the beginning of the *Carmen de uirginitate* (1–16), which is itself based on the *Carmen paschale* (1.60–78). Most likely, however, the specific source for Alcuin’s
opening is that of Dracontius in the preface to Book Two of his *De laudibus Dei*, another well-known biblical poem from late antiquity (2.1–2): ‘Omnipotens aeterne Deus, fons, auctor, origo / Inuentor, genitor, nutritor, rector, amator [‘Omnipotent Eternal God, Source, Author, Origin, Maker, Begetter, Nourisher, Rector, Lover’].\(^{102}\) Knowing what we do of Bede and Aldhelm’s adaptation of late antique sources, we would expect Alcuin not to follow Dracontius verbatim but to choose his own roughly synonymic epithets in response to *De laudibus Dei*. This is perhaps what Alcuin does, adapting his source and the tradition of biblical verse to make his own poem.

The rest of Alcuin’s preface contains a host of other allusions to biblical verse, including lines 3–4, in which Alcuin refers to Christ as the ‘only tongue of God’ and ‘Nourishing Giver of Gifts.’ This line and the following one are both allusions to Bede’s *Vita Cuthberti* and Arator’s *Historia apostolica*, at which point both poets beg for the gifts of speech from the Holy Spirit. Alcuin’s muse is not the *auctor Spiritus* of Bede’s poem (35) or the *Spiritus almus* of Arator’s (1.226), however, but Christ himself as the ‘Nourishing Giver’ (*dator alme*), whom Alcuin nevertheless begs for similar favour. Just as Bede and Arator seek the ‘gifts of the tongue’ (*Munera da linguae*), so too does Alcuin seek the ‘gifts of the heart’ or mind (*Munera da mentis*), and all three poets place these phrases in the same position of the line (at the beginning). Note that Alcuin also adopts Bede’s zealous repetition of nominal and verbal forms of *dare/donum*, which further connects his poem to the opening of the *Vita sancti Cuthberti*.\(^{103}\) In fact, Alcuin’s seventh line, ‘Te sine nulla ualet dignum quid dicere lingua,’ which originates in Arator’s *Historia apostolica* (1.226), bears closer resemblance to Bede’s adaptation (‘Te sine nam

\(^{102}\) The text is that of F. Vollmer, ed., *De Laudibus Dei*, MGH AA 14 (1905).

\(^{103}\) Alcuin uses forms of *dare/donum* six times in just fourteen lines.
digne fari tua gratia nescit’) than that of Arator (‘Sine te non diceres umquam’). What is more, beside these allusions to Bede and Arator, there is a clear reference to the

Euangelia of Juvencus. In lines 5–6, Alcuin begs Christ to ‘water his foolish heart with a lively stream,’ so that his tongue may ‘speak of his gifts’ [Irrorans stolidum uiuaci

flumine pectus, / Vt mea lingua queat de te tua dicere dona’]. These lines look back to the very first invocation of the muse in biblical poetry, where Juvencus asks the Holy Spirit to ‘dip [his] heart in the pure streams of sweet-singing Jordan, that [he] may speak things worthy of Christ.’ [‘Spiritus, et puro mentem riget amne canentis / Dulcis Jordanis, ut Christo digna loquamur,’ 26–7]. Therefore, like Bede and Aldhelm before him, Alcuin announces his debt to the style of late antique verse by appropriating key references to those poems into his own invocation.

Ultimately, there is no substitute for first-hand knowledge of the poems which inspire Anglo-Latin verse. The citations of verbal echoes found in Lapidge and the various editions of late antique texts do provide a sense of what books the Anglo-Saxons preferred or seemed to know best, but the fact of synonymic allusions and more subtle adaptations of biblical poetry perhaps better characterize the reception of biblical verse in Anglo-Saxon England. Poets like Aldhelm, Bede and Alcuin do not simply insert scattered words or lines of biblical verse into their narratives; they intently and carefully model their texts on particular passages of the earlier genre. Reflexes to conventional invocations of the muse in Anglo-Latin provide a case in point, and here Anglo-Latin poets seek to participate in the established tradition and raise the literary status of their works. Their Anglo-Latin poems may not be biblical versifications, but they are written in the style of ‘biblical verse.’ The example of Aldhelm’s Carmen de uirginitate in
particular is useful as a window into the reception of the earlier tradition, since the case of his borrowing from the *Carmen paschale* is clear. Aldhelm’s process of appropriating language and themes from late antique poetry offers an invaluable model for the reception of biblical verse among other Anglo-Latin writers, where the case of borrowing is less clear. Again, we should feel free to look beyond the coincidence of verbatim parallels to the more subtle stylistic relationships between these two traditions. There is no guaranteeing that later authors like Bede and Alcuin follow the same compositional practices as Aldhelm, or that Aldhelm himself always responds to a source-text in the same way, but even the preliminary assessments of their verses here suggest a similar *modus operandi* based on the mixture of verbatim echoes and more subtle allusions. If we can bring anything from the example of Anglo-Latin poetry to the study of the vernacular it is the awareness of tradition, the tendency to remember specific passages and not just formulaic terms, and the focused emphasis, especially at the beginning of poems, on God’s omnipotence as the instrument of creation and salvation.
Chapter 5

Old English Biblical Verse: *Genesis A, Exodus, Daniel*

Nunc laudare debemus auctorem regni caelestis, potentiam Creatoris, et consilium illius, facta Patris gloriae: quomodo ille, cum sit aeternus Deus, omnium miraculorum auctor extitit, qui primo filiis hominum caelum pro culmine tecti, dehinc terram Custos humani generis omnipotens creuit.¹

Nu scylun hergan hefenricaes uard,
metudæs maecti end his modgidanc,
uerc uuldurfadur, sue he uundra gihuaes,
eci dryctin, or astelidæ.
He aerist scop aelda barnum
heben til hrofe, haleg scepen;
tha middungeard moncynnæs uard,
eci dryctin, æfter tiadæ
firum foldu, frea allmectig.²

The story of *Cædmon’s Hymn* in the *Ecclesiastical History* marks the beginning of recorded English poetry and English biblical verse, yet the language of Bede’s translation also links the poem to the earlier Latin tradition.³ Much, to be sure, sets Cædmon apart from Latin writers in the genre, to say nothing of the vernacular. He is an uneducated cowherd, unable to sing, while they tend to be noble born, classically trained

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¹ ‘Now we must praise the Maker of the heavenly kingdom, the power of the Creator and His counsel, the deeds of the Father of glory: how He, since he is eternal God, exists as the beginning of all marvels, who first made the heavens as a roof for the children of men; and then the Guardian of the human race created the earth.’ The Latin text is that of B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, eds., *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1969), iv. 24, p. 416.

² This is the Northumbrian version of *Cædmon’s Hymn* from CUL Kk. 5.16 (s. VIII), which was transcribed close to Bede’s lifetime and is closer to the Latin than later West-Saxon versions of the poem, where *eordan bearnum* (‘for the children of the earth’) appears at 5b rather than *aelda barnum* (‘for the children of men’); this arrangement is closer to *filis hominum* in Bede’s version. For a discussion of the manuscript see N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 38–9 and E.V.K. Dobbie, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ASPR 6 (New York, 1942), pp. xciv–c. For the text see Dobbie, *Minor Poems*, p. 105.

and ready to voice their devotion to God. ‘Why should I be silent about the brilliant miracles of Christ,’ asks Sedulius, ‘when I can sing about these manifest things and since it delights me to praise the Lord-Thunderer with all my heart and soul?’ ['Clara salutiferi taceam miracula Christi? / Cum possim manifesta loqui, Dominumque tonantem / Sensibus et toto delectet corde fateri']? For his part, Cædmon runs out of the room at the prospect of performing, while Arator stands up before crowds of admiring listeners, to give multiple readings of his Historia apostolica. In the Latin tradition, poets beg the Muse for the gift of divine inspiration—‘Munera da linguæ,’ says Arator, ‘Grant me the gifts of the tongue’—but Cædmon has this gift thrust upon him in his sleep and effectively against his will. ‘I do not know how to sing,’ he says, trying to evade yet another occasion to sing, yet heaven’s answer comes with imperative finality: ‘Even so, you have to sing to me … Sing about Creation!’ ['At tamen’ ait, ‘mihi cantare habes’ … ‘Canta’ inquit ‘principium creaturarum’]. Like it or not, Cædmon opens up and out comes the story of Creation: ‘Nu scylun hergan hefaenricaes uard …’ ['Now we must praise the Guardian of the kingdom of heaven …’]. The next morning when Cædmon awakens, that gift of song remains, and for the rest of his life Cædmon knows with enviable assurance that all his songs will please the Lord. Of all the authors in the genre, Cædmon is the only one graced with this honour, a distinction that realizes the greatest desideratum of every Biblical poet. As Juvenecus says, ‘Ergo age! sanctificus adsit mihi carminis auctor / Spiritus … ut Christo digna loquamur’ ['So, come, Holy Spirit! Be the

4 Sedulius, Carmen paschale (1.26–8) in Huemer, ed., Sedulii Opera Omnia (Vienna, 1885).
7 Colgrave and Mynors, Ecclesiastical History, p. 416.
author of my song … that I may speak things worthy of Christ’]. For Cædmon this wish, conscious or otherwise, becomes a reality.

According to Bede, Cædmon goes on to sing other, longer songs about ‘the whole story of Genesis, of the exodus of Israel from Egypt and the entrance into the promised land and many other stories of Holy Scripture’ [‘Canebat autem de creatione mundi et origine humani generis et tota Genesis historia, de egressu Israel ex Aegypto et ingressu in terram repromissionis, de aliis plurimis sacrae scripturae historiis’]. If this is true, these compositions belong to the wider development of the genre in literary history and place Cædmon within the ranks of his fellow Latin biblical versifiers. Unfortunately, none of these poems has survived, and if they were only ever oral, no one but Bede now attests to their existence. If they were written down, like the poems of the Junius manuscript, which were indeed once ascribed to the Northumbrian poet, no prefatory letter or clever runic signature (like that of Cynewulf) now remains to endorse their Cædmonian authenticity. In the end, the Hymn is all we have and the surviving body of Old English biblical verse is entirely anonymous. As for Cædmon, he finds himself in the unique and awkward position of being a biblical poet without a biblical poem.

Even so and despite the many differences between Cædmon and his Latin counterparts, Bede for his part suggests a kinship between the genesis of the English genre and the earlier Latin tradition of biblical verse. In fact his own version of the Hymn betrays several reflexes to the rhythm and style of poems like the Euangelia or

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8 Juvencus, Euangelia (praef. 19.27) in J. Huemer, ed., Euangeliorum Libri Quattuor (Vienna, 1891).
9 Colgrave and Mynors, Ecclesiastical History, p. 418.
10 While Cædmon’s Hymn is written in the style of biblical verse (as Genesis A attests), not unlike the hymns of Prudentius’ Cathemerinon, it does not represent an effort on the part of the author to translate a significant portion of Genesis or any other book of the Bible, and so it is not a biblical versification per se.
11 Orchard likewise comments on the poetic style of Bede’s prose translation in ‘Poetic Inspiration and Prosaic Translation,’ pp. 402–22.
Carmen paschale. In his prose translation he uses several poetic phrases, such as regni caelestis, patris gloriae, aeternus deus, culmine tecti and humani generis, all of which scan in hexameter verse and suggest a logical, mental association between the Latin and vernacular traditions of biblical poetry in Bede’s mind. Therefore, when Cædmon says, God ‘created heaven as roof for the children of men’ (‘He aerist scop aelda barnum / heben til hrofe’) and Bede translates that as ‘qui primo filiis hominum caelum pro culmine tecti,’ the reader’s ear falls at once upon the end of the line, culmînē tēctī, a typical poetic phrase at the cadence of hexameter verses. What is more, if we remove the adverb primo from the sentence altogether, ‘quī filīīs hōmīnūm cēlūm prō culmīnē tectī’ almost scans perfectly in hexameter verse (the second syllable of filīīs would need to be long). Still it is clear that Bede has greater aspirations for his translation of the Hymn than simple prose, and his reflex to the rhythm and style of Latin poetry, the same poetry that forms his educational background, suggests that we might reconsider the importance of this literature in the Anglo-Saxons’ imagination. True, we could dismiss a phrase like culmine tecti as simply Vergilian and leave it at that. The famous flight of Fama in the Aeneid is certainly well known (4.173–86): ‘Extemplo Libyae magnas it

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12 The following list is by no means exhaustive, but it gives a sense of the poetic context of many phrases in Cædmon’s Hymn: regni caelestis appears several times in hexameter verse, including the poetry of Alcuin (Carm. 110.2.4) and Wulfstan (Brevil. 587; Swithun, praef., 3, 421); Juveneius also adopts the phrase in the Evangelia (e.g., ‘Caelestisque tibi claves permettere regni / Est animus,’ 3.283–4; and ‘Increpat ac tales affirmat regna mereri / Aulae caelestis,’ 3.495–6); Sedulius uses the inverse of the phrase, caelestis regni (Carmen pasch., 3.321, 4.12); Alcuin uses regni caelestis in Carm. 110.2.4 (‘Qui nobis faueant regni caelestis ab arce’); patris gloriae appears only once in hexameter verse, in the poetry of Hrabanus Maurus (Carm. app. 16. 22); aeternus Deus appears in Prudentius (Perist. 2.293, 10.603, 2.262) and Paulinus of Nola (Carm. 32.255); culmine tecti is originally Vergilian (Aen., 2.695, 4.186), but Juveneius adopts it in the Evangelia (2.484, 4.582) and Sedulius in the Carmen paschale (1.271, 3.129); Bede uses a variant of the phrase in his Vita Cuth. 1.294 (‘Arida diriperent tecti dum culmina quondam’); Wulfstan uses it several times in his metrical life of St. Swithun (1.588, 1.1385, 1.1589); Paulinus of Nola uses it several times (Carm. 15.337, 16.34, 26.405); humani generis is ubiquitous in Latin poetry, appearing first in Ovid (Met. 1.246, 10.35) and then in Prudentius (Ham. 1.561); Avitus uses the phrase in his Historia spiritalis (4.54, 4.311); and Aldhelm uses it in his De Virginitate (84); Wulfstan also uses it his verse metrical life of Swithun (1.744).

13 Note also Bede’s use of ‘caelum’ in the same line, which evokes the more common expression, culmine caeli, which is ubiquitous in late antique and Anglo-Latin verse.
Fama per urbes … Luce sedet custos aut summi culmine tecti’ ['At once Rumour flies through the great cities of Libya … (and) sits by day as a guardian atop the height of the highest roof']. But the phrase is also one that Juvencus and other Christian poets appropriate into the generic vocabulary of Christian verse, and this literature, to judge from manuscript remains and echoes in the surviving works of Anglo-Latin literature is much better known in England than Vergil. It is therefore more likely that Bede is remembering some passage from Christian poetry, such as the Euangelia (2.483–4):

‘Auribus et uestris dicam quaecumque susurrans, / Excelso in populos spargantur culmine tecti’ ['Whatever I shall say, whispering in your ears, let it be spread among the people from the highest rooftop’]. Christ’s words to the Samarian woman at the well are not to spread scandalous rumours throughout the future seats of Christendom but to share the news of his message of redemption and salvation.14 Seven hundred years later, the conversion of England and the introduction of Latin biblical poetry—of the very poem that bears these words—effectively represents the fulfillment of Christ’s will.

It is true, that Bede admits to his readers that his translation can only fail the essence of the English poem, the ‘ordo ipse uerborum,’ as he says, of Caedmon’s Hymn, since ‘no poetry, however well-composed, can be translated from one language into another without detriment to its beauty and dignity ['neque enim possunt carmina, quamuis optime conposita, ex alia in aliam linguam ad uerbum sine detrimento sui decoris ac dignitatis transferri’].15 This caveat, from the mouth of an Anglo-Saxon no less, would seem to recommend from the beginning that Latin biblical verse could not survive the process of translation into the vernacular and should therefore not even be

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14 The episode in the Euangelia is based on John 4:5–44.
15 Colgrave and Mynors, Ecclesiastical History, p. 416.
submitted to the process. Still, there is no denying the common ‘sensus’ (as Bede puts it) between his Latin translation and *Cædmon’s Hymn* on the one hand and the wider commonalities between the anonymous biblical poems in Old English and the earlier Latin versifications of the Bible on the other. Put differently, Cædmon may not recognize the words that come out of his mouth (‘coepit cantare in laudem Dei Conditoris uersus quos numquam audierat’), but Bede knows something of their heritage, and Cædmon’s song in praise of the Creator, though new to English, certainly evokes a host of earlier poems which do much the same thing: ‘Quidquid est uirtutis usquam psallat in laudem dei, / Nulla linguarum silescat, uox et omnis consonet’ ['Whatever power there is in any place, let it sing praise to the lord, let no tongue be silent, let every voice sound out together’]. This chapter, therefore, aims to explore various moments of consonance between the two traditions, the Latin and the Old English, and those moments which appear to ally the spirit and purpose of different biblical versifiers. This is not about finding ‘sources’ and verbal parallels to the point of ignoring or sacrificing what Bede calls the essential ‘beauty and dignity’ of the Old English tradition. On the contrary, this chapter is only an acknowledgment that these two genres coexist in Anglo-Saxon England and, at times, they coincide. If anything, it is my purpose to show how the example of the Latin tradition may enrich our understanding of the vernacular genre.

One essential difference between the Latin and Old English genres is that, unlike the proliferation of manuscripts containing Latin biblical poetry in this period, the corresponding vernacular tradition relies on a single codex and few scattered poems, all

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17 For a general introduction to Old English biblical poetry see further Geoffrey Shepherd, ‘Scriptural Poetry,’ in *Continuations and Beginnings*, ed. E.G. Stanley (London, 1966), pp. 1–36; Greenfield and
of which are moreover unique, anonymous and unnamed, bearing the adoptive titles of their respective editors. According to Paul Remley, Old English biblical verse refers to ‘compositions which maintain reasonable fidelity to biblical narratives while evincing their own distinctive poetical identities.’ In this category he includes the following poems: 18  

- Genesis A (2318 lines) and B (618 lines), which cover the events of the Bible up to Genesis 22:13 (the Offering of Isaac);  
- Exodus (590 lines), featuring the Crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 13:20–14:31);  
- Daniel (764 lines), which deals with the first five chapters of the biblical book; 19 and Judith (348 lines), which focuses on the death of Holofernes (Jud 12:10–51). 20 The poetic version of Psalms 51–150 in the Paris Psalter also qualifies as biblical verse in the strictest sense, but because they are (as Remley writes) ‘determinedly literalistic renditions from the Scriptures reflecting a minimal artistic intervention on the part of their translators,’ they are outside the interest of this discussion. 21 In addition, a number of so-called ‘amorphous’ poems stand on the edges of the genre and relate to the Bible and biblical verse more generally. 22 Such poems include Christ and Satan (729 lines), a neglected poem on the Fall of Angels (ll. 1–365), Harrowing of Hell (ll. 366–662) and Temptation of Christ in the wilderness (ll. 663–729); 23 Christ I, II, III (439, 426

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22 Remley uses the term ‘amorphous’ in ‘Biblical Translation,’ p. 67.  
and 797 lines, respectively), a trilogy on the Advent, Ascension and Doomsday return of Christ; Cynewulf’s *Fates of the Apostles* (122 lines), a short but well-wrought meditation on the deaths of the apostles; and the anonymous metrical versions of the *Lord’s Prayer I, II, III*, (11, 123 and 37 lines, respectively), the second of which compares in scope and exegetical interest to Sedulius’ *Pater Noster* in the *Carmen paschale* (2.231–300). Each of these poems stands to owe something to the Latin tradition for features of form and content, yet no systematic study of this relationship has ever been done. In fact, no systematic study exists for the canonical versifications in the Junius manuscript either, which is why this chapter will begin there and limit itself to *Genesis A, Exodus* and *Daniel*.25

Like many poems in the Latin tradition, the Old English *Genesis* covers only a portion of the corresponding biblical book and also opens with extra-biblical material.26 The narrative begins with a preface incorporating the apocryphal story of the Fall of Angels (lines 1–91) and breaks off abruptly at line 2936 with the offering of Isaac (Gen. 22:13). In light of the Latin tradition, there is nothing surprising or unusual about the preliminary extra-biblical details, since a formal *praefatio* appears in virtually every Latin versification of the Bible. But what sets the Old English rendition apart is its composite nature and the fact that the narrative incorporates several hundred lines from a completely

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24 Metrical versions of the Lord’s Prayer are common in Latin and the vernacular throughout the Middle Ages, and many of the Latin poems draw on the earlier examples of Juvencus and Sedulius, including two Anglo-Latin versifications in CUL. Gg. 5. 35 at folios 421–4. Based on the diction, these poems appear to be of the school of Alcuin and are perhaps by Hrabanus Maurus or Walafrid Strabo. For a general study see Hans Walther, ‘Versifizierte *Pater Noster und Credo*,’ *Revue du Moyen Age Latin* 20 (1964), 45–64.

25 Because a study of *Genesis B* is complicated by at least two traditions of verse, the *Saxon Genesis* and the Latin genre of biblical poetry, I have omitted it from this discussion.


different version of the Genesis-story. Eduard Sievers (1875) was the first to put forward compelling evidence that lines 235–851 of the Old English text were based on a lost poem in the style of the Old Saxon *Heliand*, and the discovery of a fragment of the *Old Saxon Genesis* in the Vatican library in 1894, corresponding to lines 791–817 of the Old English poem, proved Sievers right beyond any doubt.28 The great advantage of Siever’s discovery is that we can now date *Genesis B* relative to the *Heliand*, that is to the mid ninth century; *Genesis A* is much earlier and belongs perhaps to the early years of the eighth century.29

The disadvantage is that modern readers now approach the text with its duality foremost on their mind, a critical perspective which the unfortunate and unimaginative titles of these poems promotes: *Genesis A* (1–243 and 852–2935) and *Genesis B* (235–851). Whatever else is true about the relationship between the two parts of the narrative, it is fair to say that the acknowledgment of their distinctiveness has effectively put an end to any appreciations of the poem as a whole or the possibility that discussions of the whole poem may proceed, even if part of the text is an interpolation.30 After all, why should we presume that whoever put these two parts together did so poorly or without any consideration for artistic integrity of the narrative?31

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30 As Malcolm Godden says, Doane suggests that the leaves containing the account of the fall in *Genesis A* were lost and the owner made good the damage by inserting the equivalent episode from the Old Saxon poem. Godden, ‘Biblical Literature,’ p. 212.

31 The allusion of unity between *Genesis A* and *B* is furthermore supported by the appearance of forty-one fitts, which appear at intervals of about 50–100 lines in the manuscript; these fitts have been added by the scribe and
From a stylistic point of view, *Genesis A* shares a number of features with earlier versifications of the Bible and not just with versifications of Genesis. Even without *Genesis B*, for example, the narrative is three times as long as the second-longest poem in the genre (*Daniel*, 764 lines) and so closer to the length of most Latin biblical versifications than those in the vernacular.\(^{32}\) The author of *Genesis A* also follows the Bible closely in much the same way Cyprianus or Juvenecus does, remaining faithful to the Scriptures but adapting them to suit poetic expectations.\(^{33}\) In fact, A.N. Doane basically reiterates Jerome’s *paene ad uerbum* assessment of the *Euangelia*, by saying that the *Genesis A*-poet ‘has systematically, virtually phrase by phrase, reproduced in traditional poetry the essential meaning of the Latin Genesis.’\(^{34}\) He adds that ‘few if any episodes are omitted altogether’ and that the author tends to leave out details of a genealogical or ritualistic nature.\(^{35}\) All of these tendencies coincide with the general practices of Latin biblical versifiers, and yet Doane insists that *Genesis A* has nothing in common with the Latin genre, that the vernacular author’s ‘method is entirely alien to it, though not his impulse or inspiration,’ and that his ‘response is to a poetic technique not the poet, and they continue seriatim through *Exodus* (42–9) and *Daniel* (50–55), beginning afresh in *Christ and Satan* (1–12). See Krapp, *Junius Manuscript*, pp. xviii–xix; also, Sheppard, ‘Scriptural Poetry,’ p. 23–4. The same continuous numeration of fitts appears in *Beowulf*, *Elene* and the extant part of *Judith*, and J. R. Hall has suggests this points to unity for the Junius collection. See further ‘The Old English Epic of Redemption: The Theological Unity of MS Junius 11,’ *Traditio* 32 (1976), 185–208, at pp. 185–6.

\(^{32}\) Daniel is 764 lines, but even it contains an interpolation of over a hundred verses. Compared to *Genesis A/B* (2936 lines), for example, the *Euangelia* of Juvenecus is 3220 lines; the *Genesis* portion of Cyprianus’ *Heptateuch* is 1498 lines (the whole poem is 5550 lines); and Sedulius’ *Carmen paschale* is 1770 lines. The only Old English poem longer than *Genesis A/B* is *Beowulf* (3182 lines).


\(^{35}\) Doane, *Genesis A*, p. 63; see also Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry*, pp. 148 and 177.
completely outside the classical tradition.' 36 Doane concludes that ‘nothing seems further removed from the self-conscious gorgeousness of Avitus or Dracontius, or, at the other extreme, from the epigrammatic inclusiveness of Cyprianus Gallus.’ 37 Unfortunately, Doane does not say specifically how Genesis A is ‘far removed’ from Latin biblical verse or what ‘self-conscious gorgeousness’ means; it is therefore clear that his comments require some qualifying.

Immediately, I would suggest that viable stylistic models for Genesis A must include not only the versifications of the Old Testament (which Doane mentions) but also the poems based on the New Testament, since the works of Juvenecus, Sedulius and Arator especially are much more widely and thoroughly known than the poetry of Cyprianus, Dracontius or Avitus, the poets Doane cites. What is more, because the versification of the Bible into Latin or English was never taken lightly, it makes sense that vernacular authors would consult pre-established models which they knew were already endorsed by the Church. What better exemplum than Juvenecus, whose poetry bears the seal of orthodoxy, or Sedulius, who acknowledges to Macedonius the potential pitfalls of pagan verse, while defending the idea that the form, at least, of secular poems may serve to promote Christian values? If we assume that the author of Genesis A is highly literate and therefore Latinate, then why not consider the Latin versifications of the Bible which were available in a number of monasteries throughout Anglo-Saxon England? Even if the absence so far of verbal echoes in vernacular biblical verse suggests independence from the prior genre, there are nevertheless stylistic affinities which invite comparisons.

36 Ibid, p. 58.
37 Ibid.
For example, allowing for the differences of the Old English poetic style, the *Genesis A*-poet’s method in the rendition of the Creation story is not that different from the approach of Juvenecus or Cyprianus in their versifications of the Bible. On the one hand, the vernacular author expands the first five verses of Genesis to more than thirty lines of poetry, incorporating elements from secular-heroic verse the way many Latin poets do; but at the same time he remains faithful to the essential details of the biblical narrative. Before moving on to the verse, consider first an Old English prose translation of Genesis from the tenth century, which will provide a sense of the vernacular poet’s relationship to the biblical prose:

In principio creauit Deus caelum et terram. Terra autem erat inanis et uacua et tenebrae super faciem abyssi et spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas. Dixitque Deus fiat lux et facta est lux. Et vidit Deus lucem quod esset bona et diuisit lucem ac tenebras appellauitque lucem diem et tenebras nocem factumque est uespere et mane dies unus.

—Gen. 1:1–5

[In the beginning God created heaven, and earth. And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters. And God said: Be light made. And light was made. And God saw the light that it was good; and he divided the light from the darkness. And he called the light Day, and the darkness Night; and there was evening and morning one day.]

1. On angynne gesceop God heofonan & eorðan.
2. Se eorðe soðlice wæs idel & æmti, & þeostra wæron ofer ðære nywelnyssse bradnyssse; & Godes gast wæs geferod ofer waeteru.
4. God geseah ða ðæt hit god wæs, & he todælde <ðæt> leoh fram ðam ðystrum.
5. & het ðæt leoh dæg & þa ðystru niht: ða wæs geworden æfen & merigen an dæg.

This is Ælfric of Eynsham’s version of Genesis 1:1–5, and in keeping with his anxiety about biblical translation at all, it is very literal.38 In his preface to Æthelweard, Ælfric is clear that ‘We ne durron na mare awritan on Englisc þonne ðæt Leden hæfð’ [‘We do not dare write anything more in English than what the Latin has’], and this anxiety stems

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from a belief that the untrained layman or priest lacks the understanding, the ‘angit,’ as he says, to grasp the figural significance of the Old Testament, whose text and especially whose laws are not meant to be taken literally. Ælfric imagines a worst-case scenario in which some man or other might presume to live now according to the laws of the Old Testament ['þæt he mote lybban nu on þære <niwan> æ, swa swa þa ealdan fæderas leofodon þa on þære tide,’ p.77. 9–10]. He furthermore adds that the deeper meaning beneath the surface of many episodes in the Bible is likely to be lost upon the untrained reader. Ælfric says, for example, that when God created the heavens and the earth (‘On annginne gesceop God heofenan & eorþan’), the ‘beginning’ is Christ, revealed in the ‘spiritual understanding’ of the text: ‘æfter gastlicum andgite þæt anginn ys Crist … for þan þe he gesceop ealle gesceaftra þurh þone sunu’ [‘through spiritual understanding that the beginning is Christ … for He made all Creation through the Son,’ p. 78, 51–2, 54–5]. This understanding, which for Ælfric appears to require knowledge of Latin and the Church Fathers, mediates the proper reception of the Old Testament. For Ælfric, the concern is not just finding the appropriate words to represent the language of the Latin but a real fear that unlearned readers will fail to appreciate the deeper spiritual messages contained in the Bible.

Three centuries earlier, it would appear the Old English Genesis-poet suffers no such anxiety about translating the Bible or incorporating elements of poetic and secular-

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39 See, for example, the following comments (23): ‘Da ungelæredan preostas, gif hi hwæt litéles understandað of þam Lydenbocum, þonne þingð him sona þæt hi magon mære fareowas beon, ac hi ne cunnon swa þæh þæt gastlice andgít þærto, & hu seo eald ðæ wæs getacnung toweardra þinga ðæþ he hu seo niwe gecyðnis æfter Cristes menniscnisse <wæs> gefillednys ealra þæra þinga, þe seo eald gecyðnis getacnode towearde be Criste & be hys gecorenium’ [‘Unlearned priests, if indeed they understand a little something of those Latin books, will think they can be great teachers all of sudden, but they will not also be able to understand the spiritual meaning which belongs to it, and how the Old Law was a token of all the things which the Old Testament signified toward the future of Christ and his chosen ones’].
Her ærest gesceop ece drihten, helm eallwihta, heofon and eorðan, rodoar aræde, and þis rume land gestæhelode strangum mihtum, 115 frea ælmhtig. Folde wæs þa <gyta> græs ungrene; garsecg þehte sweart synhihte, side and wide, wonne wægas. Da wæs wuldortorht heofonweardes gast ofer holm boren miculum spedum. Metod engla heht, lifes brytta, leoh ðor cuman ofer runne grund. Raþe wæs gefylled heacrininges ðaes; him wæs halig leoh ofer westenne, swa se wyrhta bebead. 120 Þa gesundrode sigora waldend ofer laguflode leoh wið þeostrum, sceade wið sciman. Þeop þa bam naman, lifes brytta. Leoh wæs ærest þurh drihtnes word dæg genemned, whitebeorhte <gesceafte>. Wel licode frean æt frymðe forþbæro tid, dæg æresta; geseah deorc sceado sweart wiðrían geond sidne grund. 125 Ða seo tid gewat ofer <timber> sceacan middangeardes, metod æfter sceaf scirum sciman, scippend ure, æfen ærest. Him arn on last, þrang þystre genip, þam þe se þeoden self sceop nihte naman. 130

[Here the eternal Lord, Protector of all living things, first made heaven and earth; He raised up the sky and established this spacious land by strong powers, the Almighty Lord. The earth was as yet ungreen grass; dark, unending night veiled the sea, the dark waves, far and wide. Then, gloriously bright, the spirit of the Guardian of heaven was carried over the water with great haste. The Creator of angels, Bestower of life, bade the light come forth across the spacious earth. The High King’s bidding was fulfilled at once; holy light came over the emptiness from him as the Maker had commanded. Then, the Ruler of victory divided the light

40 The Beowulf poet also sings a version of the Creation-story (lines, 92–8). As Godden says, ‘the minstrel invites the audience … to see a parallel between the building of Heorot and God’s building of the world … Old Testament allusion here is used to suggest the Satanic aspects of Grendel and the Edenic aspects of Heorot.’ Godden, ‘Biblical Literature,’ p. 215.
from the darkness, shadow from the radiance over the surface of the sea. The
Bestower of life then gave names to both of them. Through God’s word the light
was first called ‘day,’ a wondrously bright creation. That first day, that life-giving
time, well-pleased the Lord at the beginning; he saw the dark shadow vanish black
over that vast ground. As time moved forward across the framework of the earth,
the Creator, our Maker, then thrust out of that bright radiance the first evening.
Rushing in behind, the mist of darkness crowded in, to which the Prince himself
gave the name of ‘night.’]

Like Juvencus in his treatment of the Sermon on the Mount (Ev. 1.452–65), the Old
English poet accounts for every verse of the Bible here (Gen 1:1, 112a–16a; Gen 1:2,
116b–21a; Gen 1:3, 121b–25b; Gen 1:4, 126a–8a; Gen 1:5, 128b–40a), even if only a few
of his words coincide with Ælfric’s prose translation: Gen 1:1 (gesceop, 112a); heofon
and eordan, 113b); Gen 1:2 (gast, 120a); Gen 1:3 (leoht, 122b, 124b), Gen 1:4 (leoht …
þeostrum, 127b); Gen 1:5 (leoht … ðæg, 129b–30b; nihte, 140a). Distance from Ælfric
does not necessarily mean distance from the biblical narrative, however, and although the
difference of diction and greater length of the poetic version seem to add much to the
biblical story, the fact is that little is changed. The reason for the greater length of the
poetic version is that poet’s response to the Old English appositive style, whereby the
author adds a series of phrases in apposition reiterating elements of each verse from the
Bible.41 So lines 114–5, ‘rodor arærde, and þis rume land gestaþolode,’ essentially repeat
lines 112–13, ‘Her ærest gesceop ece drihten … heofon and eordan,’ together with two
closely-related epithets for drihten in line 112: helm eallwihta (113); and frea ælmihtg
(116). This repetition does not deviate from the Bible, nor is it pointless; each epithet tells

41 For a discussion of the appositive style in Old English see further Fred C. Robinson, *Beowulf and the
Appositive Style* (Knoxville, 1985); see also Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge,
2003), pp. 57–61. For other Latin poems whose opening lines coincide with the appositive style see
Prudentius’ *Cath.* (3, 1–2): ‘O crucifer bone, lucisator, / Omnipares, pie, uerbigena’; Augustine’s *Precatio
ad Christum* (1–2): ‘Spes mea Christe Deus, hominum tu dulcis amator, / Lux, uia, uita, salus, pax et decus
omne tuorum’; Paul the Deacon (Carm. 49, 1–7): ‘Christe, deus mundi, qui lux es clara diesque ...
omnipotens ... conditor alme’; Hrabanus Maurus (Carm 85, 13): ‘Christe deus, hominum saluator, rector et
auctor.’
us something more about God as the eternal, protecting and almighty Lord, and each
serves to reinforce the impression of His omnipotence. Even the repetition of Gen 1:1 in
the second instance comes with the added qualification that God works according to his
‘strong powers’ (*strangum mihtum*, 115b), and the addition of appositive words and
phrases is part of the natural rhythm of Old English verse.

The author chooses his words carefully, and the impression of his versification is
neither tedious nor dull but rather dynamic and meaningful, as we gain an appreciation
for God’s far-ranging power.42 He is not simply *ece drihten* (‘Eternal Lord,’ 112b), but
*helm eallwihta* (‘Protector of all creatures,’ 113a), *frea ælmihtig* (‘Lord almighty,’ 116a),
*heofonweardes Gast* (‘Spirit of the heavenly Guardian,’ 120a), *metod engla* (‘Ruler of
angels,’ 121b), *lifes brytta* (‘Bestower of life, 122a, 129a), *heahcyning* (‘High King,’
124a), *se wyrhta* (‘the Maker,’ 125b), *sigora waldend* (‘Wielder of victories,’ 126b) and
*Scippend ure* (‘our Shaper,’ 137b). These epithets are emphatic and important to our
understanding of God’s power. Also, when the author variously describes how God
creates the earth, he does not simply repeat *eorðan … eorðan … eorðan*, but rather varies
his choice of diction with *pis rume land* (114b), *folde* (116b), and *rumne grund* (123a).
Likewise, referring to the abyss of the deep, the poet uses *garsecg* (117b), *wonne wægas*
(119a), *holm* (120b) and *laguflode* (127a), and alongside the compound words that denote
radiance, *wuldortoht* (119b) and *wlitebeorht* (131a), these various phrases elevate the
basic language of the Bible and emphasize the creative power of God in much the same
terms Latin biblical poets use. This kind of variation is moreover in tune with the late
classical practice of rhetorical *uariatio*, which Michael Roberts applies to the style of late

42 Rosemary Woolf comments on ‘the habit of variation in Anglo-Saxon poetic style’ with reference to *The
Dream of the Rood*, where the ‘richness of synonyms’ likewise contributes to the artistry of that poem. See
antique biblical verse.\footnote{See Michael Roberts, \textit{Biblical Epic}, p. 198–9. As Roberts says, ‘The principle [of variation] can be seen at work in all the biblical poets. It is perhaps most marked in the \textit{Heptateuch} poet, because of the peculiar difficulties of giving a close version of the Heptateuch text. Characters that appear frequently are variously identified. Thus Abraham is \textit{propheta} (Gen, 440), \textit{procer} (Gen 444), \textit{pater} (Gen, 455), \textit{senex} (Gen, 460), and \textit{vates} (Gen, 486); Noah is \textit{senex} (Gen, 283), \textit{vates} (Gen, 294), \textit{senior} (Gen, 300) and \textit{propheta} (Gen, 302).’} Through variation, Sedulius describes God in similar terms at the beginning of the \textit{Carmen paschale}, saying that it is right for God’s creation to serve Him alone (1.30–35),

\begin{verbatim}
   cui iure perenni  30
   Arcibus aetheriis una est cum patre potestas,
   Par splendor, communis apex, sociale cacumen,
   Aequus honor, uirtus eadem, sine tempore regnum,
   Semper principium, sceptrum iuge, gloria consors,
   Maiestas similis.  35
\end{verbatim}

[for whom, by eternal law in the ethereal citadels, there is one power with the Father, matching splendour, a common height, a shared pinnacle, equal honour, the same strength, a kingdom out of time, ever a beginning, an everlasting sceptre, a shared glory, similar majesty.]

In addition, many of the phrases in the Old English version of the Creation story carry secular Germanic-heroic connotations, so that, as the Eternal Lord (\textit{ece drihten}, 112b), God surpasses the kind of \textit{eorla drihten} we find in secular literature, kings who must suffer the decay of their age and strength.\footnote{See, for example, \textit{eorla drihten} in \textit{Beowulf} (1050).} As the \textit{helm eallwihta} (‘the Protector of all creatures,’ 113a) God’s range of power also far surpasses the insignificant scope of any earthly realm, including that of the \textit{helm Scyldinga}, for example.\footnote{\textit{Helm Scyldinga} appears in \textit{Beowulf} at lines 371, 456, 1321.} Like any good secular king, God maintains his power and authority by his strong powers (\textit{strangum mihtum}, 115b), just as Beowulf or Hrothgar do, but unlike the scattered wins and losses of mortal kings on the field of battle, God remains the supreme ‘Lord of victories’ (\textit{sigora waldend}, 126b), undefeated and unmatched by the rebel angels or anyone else. Nor is He simply a ring-giver (\textit{beaga brytta} or \textit{sinces brytta}) but the very ‘Bestower of life’ itself (\textit{lifes})
brytta, 122a, 129a).\textsuperscript{46} Therefore, the Anglo-Saxon vision of the first day in \textit{Genesis A} represents a twofold response, to the Bible on the one hand and the secular-heroic values of physical strength, authority and generosity on the other. By engaging the biblical narrative in terms of these secular-heroic values, the Old English poet appeals to the very same desire of Juvenecus or Cyprianus to combine secular and Christian traditions in order to praise God’s omnipotence and immortality. In short, there is nothing ‘entirely alien,’ as Doane says, about the late classical tradition of biblical verse.\textsuperscript{47} In fact, at least as far as this scene is concerned, \textit{Genesis A} is very much in tune with it.

The preface to \textit{Genesis A}, the first ninety lines of the poem, offers another perspective from which to consider the relationship between the Latin and vernacular genres. Of course, the impulse to begin with prefatory comments of some kind is typical of poems in the Latin tradition of biblical verse, and it is here that authors introduce their major themes, offering up words of supplication to the Muse. It is therefore surprising, given the persistence of the formal \textit{praefatio} in the Latin tradition, that \textit{Genesis A} appears to begin without any overt reference to Latin biblical verse at all. There is no invocation (or condemnation) of the Muse, no affected claims of inadequacy or apparent references to classical literature for the benefit of a learned audience. In short, these conventions belong to the Latin literary history of biblical verse and do not survive in the vernacular. No doubt the reason has to do in part with the intended audience and the fact that references to ‘Olympus’ or ‘the Muse’ are unlikely to find the same appreciation among

\textsuperscript{46} As John Gardner says in \textit{The Construction of Old English Poetry} (p. 21), ‘God wins battles, deals out treasures to those who have earned them, gives his thanes a safe place to live, and so forth.’ From a secular point of view note that Scyld Scefing is a \textit{beaga brytta} in \textit{Beowulf} (35) and Wealhtheow refers to Hrothgar as \textit{sinces brytta} at line 1170; the Wanderer also longs to find a new treasure-giver (25): ‘sohte sele dreorig sinces bryttan.’

\textsuperscript{47} Doane, \textit{Genesis A}, p. 58
vernacular audiences used to Germanic-heroic verse. This is not to discount the potential presence of the traditional praefatio altogether, however, and the Old English poem has more in common with Latin biblical verse than not, even in the absence of the usual trappings of the conventional Latin preface (1–14):48

Us is riht micel ðæt we rodera weard, wereda wuldircing, wordum herigen, modum lufien. He is mægna sped, heafod ealra heahgesceafa, frea ælmihtig. Næs him fruma æfre, 5 or geworden, ne nu ende cymþ ecean drihtnes, ac he bið a rice ofer heofenstolas. Heagum þrymmum soðfæst and <swiðfeorm> sweglbosmas heold, þa wæron gesette wide and side 10 þurh geweald Godes wuldres bearnum, gasta weardum. Hæfdon gleam and dream, and heora ordfruman, engla þreatas, beorhte blisse. Wæs heora blæd micel!

[It is very right, that we should praise the Guardian of heaven, the glorious King of hosts, with words and love him in our hearts. He is a wealth of power, the Head of all high creation, the Lord Almighty. He has never had a beginning, nor will there now be an end to the eternal Lord, but He will ever rule over heaven’s seats. With high powers, truthful and abundant, He has held heaven’s embrace, which was established far and wide by God’s might for the children of glory, the guardians of souls. They had joy and happiness, those angelic hosts, and bright bliss in their Creator. Vast glory was theirs!]

The opening words of Genesis A, like those of the Evangelia or Carmen paschale are thematically significant and highly allusive. Juvencus focuses on immortality with the first word of his poem, which is not prima facie just a Christian view of worldly transience but also a direct criticism of the fame and glory promoted in classical epic. In the same way, Sedulius’ reinvention of a sumptuous Roman feast as a symbolic re-

48 Compare Juvencus, Ev. 1.27 (‘ut Christo digna loquamur’); Sedulius, Cp. 1.28 (‘Sensibus et toto delectet corde fateri’); Arator, Hist. apost. 1.229–30 (‘Vt duo iussa colant tabulis conscripta duabus: / Dilige mente Deum feruenti plenus amore’); Aldhelm, preface to Cdv. 9–10 with reference to the saints (‘qui laude perenni / Rite glorificant moderantem regna Tonantem’); Bede, Vit.Cuth. 38 (‘Munera da linguae, uerbi tua dona canentis’); and Alcuin, Carm.1.6 (‘Vt mea lingua queat de te tua dicere dona’).
enactment of the Eucharist evokes at the same time the richness of classical verse and the moral-spiritual superiority of the paschal offering. Not unlike Sedulius, who invites his ‘guests’ to approach his table with humility, the author of Genesis A likewise tells his audience how to approach the Old Testament, that is with the praise of God upon their lips and in their hearts.

But the words, ‘Us is riht micel ðæt we rodera weard, / Wereda wuldorcing, wordum herigen, / modum lufien’ (1–3a) also announce a broader literary context for the reception of the Genesis-story in the vernacular poem; they are not to be taken simply at face value.⁴⁹ In 1914, Holthausen suggested a source for Cædmon’s Hymn in the preface to the Canon of the Mass, a suggestion which, several years later, Bernard Huppé extended to include the opening of Genesis A.⁵⁰ As Huppé says, ‘even more clearly than the Hymn, the lines [of Genesis A] reflect the Latin words of the Preface to the Mass.’⁵¹ Huppé then quotes the relevant passage from the liturgy: ‘Vere dignum et justum est, aequum et salutare, nos tibi semper et ubique gratias agere: Domine sancte, Pater omnipotens, aeterne Deus’ ['Truly it is fitting, right and proper that we should give praise and thanks to God everywhere and at all times: Holy Lord, Father almighty, eternal God'].⁵² The verbal correspondence is clear, and ‘vere dignum ... nos ... gratias agere’ coincides with ‘Us is riht micel ðæt we ... herigen,’ while the epithets, Domine sancte, Pater omnipotens, and aeterne Deus are in the same spirit as rodera weard (1b) and

⁴⁹ See Bernard Huppé, Doctrine and Poetry, p. 134; Doane, Genesis A, p. 225. Specific references to the honour and praise of God, or in the case of Satan, the unwillingness to do so, are abundant in the Junius manuscript. See Genesis A/B, lines 2, 15, 310, 328–9, 537 and 740–5; Exodus, line 270; Daniel, lines 21–2, 85–7, 357, 385 and 421; Christ and Satan, lines 47, 54, 182, 221, 232, 315–6, 363, 594 and 643.


⁵¹ Huppé, Doctrine and Poetry, p. 134.

⁵² Ibid.
wereda wuldorcining (2a). More importantly, however, the significance of the connection to the Canon of the Mass is paschal in nature and ties Genesis A to the Eucharist and the whole of the poem to salvation history. In short, the allusion mediates our approach to the poetic re-telling of the Genesis story and suggests that we should read it with a view to the ultimate salvation of man.

What is more, Huppé’s acknowledgment that the Metrum in Genesin by Hilary of Arles (c. 440–60) likewise begins with reference to the liturgy is important, because it provides a further textual basis for New Testament interpretations of the opening of Genesis A. On the one hand, it is encouraging that Huppé incorporates Latin biblical verse into his discussion of the Old English poem, but his example has not inspired many other Anglo-Saxon scholars to consider the relationship between these two texts. What is more, Huppé himself passes over the opening of the Metrum in Genesin in order to emphasize the significance of the connection with the Canon of the Mass in line seven. Had Huppé paused to consider the language at the very opening lines of the poem, however, he might have discovered another connection with the Eucharist to support his argument (1–10):

Paruimus monitis tua dulcia iussa securti,
Antistes Christi, quae dabas ore pio.
An ego non canerem tanti praeconia patris,
Munus opusque dei dum mihi lingua foret?
Rauca quidem stridens et nullis digna coturnis,
Ingeniumque iacens: sed libet alta loqui.
Dignum opus et iustum semper tibi dicere grates.
Omnipotens mundi genitor, quo principe cuncta
Natalem sumpsere diem atque exorta repente
Post tenebras stupendi spectarunt lumina caeli:

[We have followed your advice and obeyed your sweet bidding, priest of Christ, which you have offered from your pious lips. Why should I not sing the praise of so great a Father, of the work and bounty of God, while I have a tongue? Indeed, I may screech out hoarse words and nothing worthy of high stage in my low talent, yet it pleases me to speak of lofty things. It is worthy and righteous work to give thanks to You always, omnipotent Creator of the world, under whose supremacy all things have received their day of birth, senseless creatures have suddenly beheld the risen light of heaven after the darkness.]

Hilary’s first six verses are elegiac distichs and probably written in imitation of Sedulius’ preface to the *Carmen paschale* (1–16). This possibility becomes more likely when Hilary says, ‘Why should I not sing the praises of so great a Father, / of the work and gifts of God, while I have a tongue?’ (3–4). These lines sound suspiciously like Sedulius’ rhetorical question at the beginning of the *Carmen paschale* (23–8): ‘Cur ego … Clara salutiferi taceam miracula Christi / Cum possim manifesta loqui’ ['Why should I … remain silent about the brilliant miracles of Christ / since I can speak about these things?']. What is more, just as Sedulius disparages his own meagre talent with affected modesty (‘At nos exiguum de paupere carpsimus horto’), so Hilary does the same (‘Rauca quidem stridens et nullis digna coturnis,’ 5); both poets also put their feigned insecurities aside out of a desire to sing God’s praise. Sedulius says, ‘it pleases me to acknowledge the Lord Thunderer with all my senses and all my heart’ (‘Dominumque tonantem / Sensibus et toto delectet corde fateri,’ 1.27–8), and Hilary says that ‘it pleases’ him ‘to speak of lofty things’ (6). Through the *Carmen paschale*, Hilary’s opening therefore bears even stronger associations with the Eucharist than Huppé first noted, and all of this material provides a strong precedence for reading *Genesis A* in light of the New Testament.
As far as the apocryphal story of the Fall of Angels is concerned, it too finds precedence in Latin biblical verse, even though scholars have focused on the source of the episode in prose exegesis of the Bible. Although it is not among the manuscript remains of the Anglo-Saxon period, the fifth-century *Alethia* of Claudius Marius Victor connects the downfall of Lucifier and his minions with that of Adam and Eve. The whole preface to the *Alethia* (126 lines) is a pastiche of conventional elements identifying the generic category of the poem. Like many biblical versifications, the narrative opens with an invocation to the ‘Muse’ (1–7), ‘Summe et sancte deus, cunctae uirtutis origo, / Omnipotens (‘Highest and holy God, source of all might, Omnipotent,’ 1–2), and the author ends by seeking inspiration (‘da simul mentem … da studium’ [‘grant me the heart; grant me the zeal,’ 113]). What is more, a whole section of the opening deals with God’s incommensurate might and unfathomability (81–100), another dominant theme in formal prefaces of the Latin tradition, not to mention the initial and final references to the Holy Trinity, which frame the Creation story in the wider context of salvation history.

The account of the Fall of Angels in the *Alethia* appears immediately before the account of man’s fall and both episodes serve to promote God’s goodness (*bonitas*, 51), as He allows both the angels and Adam and Eve to exercise the gift of free will. Like Adam and Eve, Lucifer simply chooses poorly (59–61):

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56 See lines 4–5: ‘nam te ratione profunda / In tribus esse deum, sed tres sic credimus unum, / Vt proprias generis species substantia reddat’; and 123–5: ‘Per Iesum Christum, qui filius unice tecum / maiestate uigens pariter qua spiritus almus / Indeprensa animis saeclorum saecula uiuit.’
And among those You created to rule one grew envious of the Lord of light and life and longed for His title; he preferred to be the author of evil and to introduce death to the earth, after he was cast down from lofty Olympus with his partners in crime.

In a similar way, the disobedience of Adam and Eve only validates God’s goodness, which allows them to choose for themselves between right and wrong. Ironically, the fall of Lucifer in the *Alethia* represents not only a pattern for the Fall of Man but also the very means through which Christ proves the ultimate futility of Satan’s efforts to pervert and destroy God’s work (86–91):

*You raised man up, who had been pulled down by the treachery of savage poison into death’s snare and into impious Tartarus; seeking him, You restored man from the seat of Erebus with greater effort than it was to create him and returned him to eternal life, carried him with You into heaven, after the enemy was defeated.*

In short, the *Alethia* of Marius Victor provides a context in which to understand the manifold significance of the Fall of Angels as a negative exemplum, a pattern for the Fall of Adam and Eve and a part of God’s plan for the salvation of mankind.

From a different perspective, the account of the Fall of Adam and Eve in *Genesis* also responds to another impulse among biblical poets, which is to incorporate elements of secular literature into the narrative. Just as Juvenecus and other biblical versifiers negotiate their love of classical and Christian poetry, so too do Old English
biblical poets balance heroic and elegiac literature with biblical. In the case of *Genesis A*,
the poet links the expulsion of Adam and Eve to secular themes of exile such as we find
in poems like the *Wanderer*, in which the protagonist is similarly isolated from his lord
and the pleasures of the meadhall (925–38):

> Ad Adam uero dixit quia audisti uocem uxoris tuae et comedisti de ligno ex quo
praeciperam tibi ne comederes maledicta terra in opere tuo in laboribus comedes
eam cunctis diebus uitae tuae. Spinas et tribulos germinabit tibi et comedes herbas
terrae. In sudore uultus tui uesceris pane donec reuertaris in terram de qua
sumptus es quia puluis es et in puluerem reuerteris. —Gen. 3:17–19

[And to Adam he said: ‘Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and
hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldst not eat,
cursed is the earth in thy work: with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the
days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat
the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return
to the earth out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and into dust thou
shalt return.’]

> Abaed eac Adame    ece drihten, 925
lifes leohtfruma,    lað ærende:
‘Þu scealt oðerne    eðel secean,
wynleasran wic,    and on wræc hwoerfan
nacod niedwædla, neorxnawanges
duðeðum bedæled;    þe is geda gæðod
lices and sawle.    Hwæt, þu laðlice
wrohte onstealdest;    forþon þu winnan scealt
and on eorðan þe þine andlifine
selfa geræcan,    wegan swatig hleoer,
þinne hlaf etan,    þenden þu her leofast, 935
oðhæt þe to heortan    hearde gripeð
adl unliðe    þe þu on æple ær
selfa forswulge;    forþon þu sweltan scealt.

[The eternal Lord, the Chief light of life, also delivered a loathsome sentence to
Adam: ‘You must seek out another homeland, a joyless dwelling-place and turn
into exile, a poor naked wretch, deprived of the glory of Paradise; you will suffer
the separation of body and soul. Look! You have hatefully committed this sin. So,
you must struggle and gain your own livelihood upon the earth, suffer a sweaty
brow and eat your own bread as long as you live here, until the unpleasant poison
that you yourself have swallowed fiercely grips your heart; so, you must die.’]
According to the practice of abbreviation typical in all biblical verse, the poet reduces Genesis 3:17 to a single, summary line in Old English, putting it into direct speech: ‘Hwæt, þu laðlice wrohte onstealdest’ (931b–32a). He leaves out Chapter Eighteen altogether and Chapter Nineteen appears in lines 934–8 of the Old English, where the poet keeps only the specific reference to ‘the sweat of the brow’ and ‘eating of bread’ (in *sudore uultus/swatig hleor*; *tui uesceris pane/pinne hlaf etan*); the metaphorical allusion to ‘dust’ is rendered literally—‘forþon þu sweltan scealt’ (938b). In general terms, however, the effect of the language is elegiac and similar to that found in poems such as *The Wanderer, Seafarer, Wife’s Lament* or *Fates of the Apostles*, even if the causes of isolation in those poems is very different from that in *Genesis A*. God’s judgment that Adam must ‘turn into exile and seek out a new homeland’ is similar to the physical and psychological landscape of the *Wanderer*, in which the protagonist must also venture into the world without a land of his own, without the joy or company of his lord or fellow retainers (*eðle bidæled, 20b; wynn eall gedreas, 36b; dugup eall gecrong, 79b*). In *Genesis A*, the phrase ‘dugeðum bedæled’ (930a) is therefore especially poignant and represents not only a loss of paradisal ‘glory’ but also a connection with the secular Germanic-heroic *comitatus* of the mead-hall.

A similar Christian context for themes of exile can also be found in Cynewulf’s *Fates of the Apostles* or *Juliana*, where the author uses the same language to imagine the process of his own death. In these scenes, death is likewise a journey in which the soul and body are exiles of sorts, driven from mortal existence and forced to wander the afterlife until the day of Judgement:

Fates of the Apostles (109b–14):

Ic sceall feor heonan,
an elles forð,  eardes neosan, 110
sið asettan,  nat ic sylfa hwær, of þisse worulde.  Wic sindon uncuð,
eard ond eðel,  swa bið ælcum menn
nemþe he godecundes  gastes bruce.

[I must venture far from here, elsewhere on my own, seek out a homeland, set out on a journey; I know not where myself but from this world. The dwellings are unknown to me, the land and homeland, as they are for every man, unless he has a divine soul.]

Juliana (699–704):

Min sceal oflice  sawul on siðfæt,
nat ic sylfa hwider,  eardes <uncyðgu>; 700
of sceal ic þissum,  secan ofperne ærgewyrhtum,
gongan iudædum.  Geomor hweorfęd /C/ /Y/ ond /N/.

[My soul must [venture] out of my body on a journey; I know not where myself—the land is unknown to me. I must seek out another place from this one according to my former deeds and works of old. Sorrowful, /C/ /Y/ and /N/ (? humanity) will pass away.]

In both cases, death is an exilic journey upon which the soul is separated from the body.

In Juliana, the narrator’s ‘former deeds’ determine the course of that journey (ærgewyrhtum /iudædum), which ultimately finds a source in the original sin of Adam and Eve. In fact, the whole epilogue to Juliana is a riddle of sorts that perhaps conceals the same allegorical significance biblical poets mention in their versifications of the Bible. ‘Cognoscite cuncti, / mystica quid doceant animos miracula nostros!’ says Sedulius (‘Let all recognize what these mystical miracles may teach our souls,’ 4.263–4).

In other words, in Juliana, the runic letters may simply spell out the author’s name (CYN/EWU/LF) and so refer to his death alone; but the runic combination of ‘CYN’ also spells out ‘humanity’ (cyn), and so applies in broader terms to the death-sentence of all
humanity.\textsuperscript{58} Again, as Sedulius says of Adam and the Fall (2.4–6), ‘that reckless man, cast down under mortal law, did not only feel God’s righteous wrath, but straight away the whole human race felt it, too.’\textsuperscript{59} The very separation of body and soul that Cynewulf mentions in \textit{Juliana} therefore continues the same judgment God delivers to Adam in \textit{Genesis A} (930b–1a): ‘pe is gedal witod / lices and sawle’ [‘yours is the separation of body and soul’].

The only sure hope of salvation for Cynewulf or the souls of Adam and Eve and all those who follow in their steps is Christ himself, and it is significant that \textit{Genesis A} ends with the episode most famously figuring or prefiguring Christ’s Crucifixion. The symbolism of the Offering of Isaac seldom goes without saying in Latin Christian poetry, and poets regularly linger on the underlying significance of the episode. Sedulius is explicit about the figural nature of the story (\textit{Cp.} 1.114–20):

\begin{verbatim}
Mactandumque Deo pater obtulit, at sacer ipsam
Pro pueri iugulis aries mactatur ad aram. 115
O iusti mens sancta uiri! pietate remota
Plus pietatis habens contempsit uulnera nati
Amplexus praecepta Dei, typicique cruoris
Auxilio uentura docet, quod sanguine Christi
Humana pro gente pius occumberet agnus. 120
\end{verbatim}

[And the father gave that child to be sacrificed to God, though a ram was sacrificed in place of the boy’s throat. O the pious heart of that righteous man! Putting pity aside and having more piety, he ignored wounds to his child, embracing God’s commandments! And with the help of this figural bloodshed he teaches us what is to come, since a pious lamb would die for the human race by the blood of Christ.]


\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Carmen paschale} (2.4–6): ‘Nec solus meritam praesumptor senserat iram / Mortali sub lege iacens, sed prorsus ab ipso / Humano simul omne genus’.
The emphasis here falls squarely upon the symbolic importance of the Offering, yet the *Genesis A*-poet treats the episode literally and with little overt or subtle reference to the underlying Christian significance of the sacrifice. His is a very close following of Genesis 22:9–10 (2887–2907):

Veneruntque ad locum quem ostenderat ei Deus in quo aedificuit altare et desuper ligna conposuit cumque conligasset Isaac filium suum posuit eum in altari super struem lignorum. Extenditque manum et arripuit gladium ut immolaret filium.

[And they came to the place which God had shown him, where he built an altar, and laid the wood in order upon it; and when he had bound Isaac his son, he laid him on the altar upon the pile of wood. And he put forth his hand, and took the sword, to sacrifice his son.]

Gestah þa stiðhydig steape dune up mid his eaforan, swa him se eca bebead, þæt he on hrofe gestod hean landes on þære stowe þe him se stranga to, værfæst metod wordum tæhte. Ongan þa ad hladan, æled weccan, and gefeterode fet and honda bearne sinum and þa on bæl ahof Isaac geongne, and þa ædre gegræp 2900 sweord be gehiltum, wolde his sunu cwellan folmum sinum, fyre scencan mæges dreore.

[Then, resolute, he climbed up the steep hill with his son, as the eternal One had bidden him, so that he stood at the height of the high land in the place that that mighty One, the faithful Lord, had instructed him in words. He then began to pile up a funeral pyre, to kindle the fire, and he bound the hands and feet of his son, and then raised up young Isaac onto the pyre, and then at once he grasped his sword by the hilt; he wanted to kill his son with his own hands, to quench the fire with the blood of his son.]

Note that the author, as in his treatment of the Creation story, continues to vary his choice of words according to his artistic aspirations for this scene. For example, he describes Isaac as ‘his eaforan’ (2898a), ‘bearne sinum’ (2904a), ‘Isaac geongne’ (2905a), ‘mæges’ (2908a), and ‘his sunu’ all of which (except the last) he places emphatically in the a-line.
But there is no hint that Isaac must symbolize Christ in this scene or that Abraham must represent God. The focus is in fact not symbolic but serves to remind the audience of the poem’s central theme, that obedience and praise of God bring rewards to the faithful. As Larry McKill writes, the poet emphasizes this fact through the repetition of several clauses stressing Abraham’s obedience: ‘hæfde on an gehogod / þæt he gedæde swa hine drihten het’ (‘he had decided on one thing only, that he should do as the Lord ordered him,’ 2893b–2894); ‘Swa him bebead metod’ (‘as the Measurer had commanded him,’ 2872b); ‘swa hine drihten het’ (‘as the Lord had ordered him,’ 2894b); ‘swa him se eca bebead’ (‘as the Eternal One commanded him,’ 2898b). The end of the poem therefore returns the audience to the beginning—‘Us is riht micel ðæ t we rodera weard, / wereda wuldorcining, wordum herigen / modum lufien’ (1–3a)—and ‘provides a fit conclusion to a poem revealing in concrete terms both sure punishment for the warlogan ‘pledge-betrayers’ and rewards for the wærfæst ‘pledge-firm’ dear to God.’ It may be true as Huppé says that literate audiences would have taken for granted the figural significance of this episode, but such an assumption does not take precedence over what must be a primarily literal message at the end of the poem.

Because of its exceptional length, Genesis A offers more venues to explore the potential connections between the Latin and vernacular traditions of biblical verse than any other Old English poem. It is fair to say, for example, that the vernacular author’s response to his biblical narrative, his modus operandi, as he negotiates scriptural and secular values, is consistent with the approach of Juvencus and Cyprianus, although the

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61 McKill, ‘Offering of Isaac,’ p. 4.
extent to which this is true remains to be shown. In terms of diction, expressions like *lifes brytta* (122a, 129a) or *sinces brytta* (1857b, 2728b) appeal to the same secular-heroic impulse that incorporates the *Tonans*-epithet into the narrative or refers to heaven as *Olympus* in the Latin tradition. It is also likely that the Old English poet is familiar not only with prose traditions of biblical exegesis, which relate the events of the Old Testament to the New, but also with Latin poems that do much the same thing. The sources of inspiration need not be whole poems or even poems focused on the Old Testament, but scenes from texts like the *Carmen paschale*, which are equally likely to trigger some creative impulse in the mind of an Old English poet. In short, there is much in *Genesis A* to warrant a closer assessment of the extent to which Latin biblical verse may engage the author’s imagination and inform his approach to the versification of *Genesis*.

The Old English *Exodus* is a much freer rendition of the Bible than the first poem in the Junius manuscript, ‘and the internal evidence of style also separates *Exodus* sharply from *Genesis*.’ This 509-line poem covers just one-and-a-half chapters of the biblical book (Ex 13.20–14.31), although the author incorporates his knowledge of *Genesis*, *Numbers*, *Psalms* and *Wisdom*. In particular, he adds two interpolations from *Genesis*, involving the stories of Noah’s Ark and the Offering of Isaac (362–446), episodes which bear figural significance with reference to the rite of Baptism and appear as readings for Holy Week. The allusion to the *Exultet* of the Easter vigil at lines 113b–15a in

62 Krapp, *Junius Manuscript*, p. xxvii. See also p. xxxi: ‘As to authorship, little can be said except that for stylistic reasons it seems scarcely credible that the poet or poets who wrote *Genesis A*, in spite of the many excellences in their kind of that poem, could have written *Exodus*.’


particular supports a liturgical context for the composition of *Exodus*.\textsuperscript{65} Peter Lucas also suggests that the pillar of fire leading the Israelites through the desert is potentially allegorical and a metaphor for the cross; he adds that the nautical imagery in the narrative likewise bears symbolic meaning, where the image of the mast represents a vision of the cross and the sail, an allusion to the tabernacle.\textsuperscript{66} As a single snapshot of the biblical book, not unlike the treatment of the Crossing of the Red Sea in the *Carmen paschale* (1.136–47) or *Cathemerinon* of Prudentius (5.53–80), the Old English poem nevertheless begins and ‘closes with no effect of incompleteness or disorganization.’\textsuperscript{67} Most scholars agree that it is a single, unified poem and that *Exodus* dates to the eighth century, between the lives of Bede (c. 673–735) and Alcuin (c. 735–804); there is nothing to prevent a date after 800, however.\textsuperscript{68} Of the author, we can say nothing certain, though Lucas suggests ‘the poem may have been composed in a Northumbrian dialect and transmitted to Malmesbury via a West Mercian centre such as Worcester or Lichfield.’\textsuperscript{69}

More recently, Paul Remley has suggested a connection with Aldhelm of Malmesbury.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{65} Lucas, ‘Exodus,’ in *Blackwell*, p. 179.


\textsuperscript{67} Krapp, *Junius Manuscript*, p. xxviii.


\textsuperscript{69} Lucas, *Exodus*, p. 72.

Despite figural or symbolic elements within the narrative, it is the heroic tenor of *Exodus* that leaves the strongest impression; God dispenses the richness of salvation to the Israelites and horrors of destruction to the Egyptians largely in heroic terms. On the one side stands Moses, who, ‘dear to God’ (‘he wæs leof Gode,’ 12a) and ‘a battle-keeper of men,’ dons his grim-helm for war (‘guðweard gumena grimhelm gespeon,’ 174) and commands his troops to hold the line (‘het his hereciste healdan georne / fæst <fyrdgetrum>,’ 177–8a) in much the same way Byrhtnoth does in *The Battle of Maldon* (17–19): ‘Þa þær Byrhtnoð ongan beornas trymian, / rad and rædde, rincum tæhte / hu hi sceoldon standan and þone stede healdan’ [‘Then Byrhtnoth began to array his men, rode and counseled them, showed his warriors how they should stand and hold their place’]. On the other side, the Egyptians, ‘savage wolves’ (*heorawulfas*, 181a), pursue the Israelites into the waters of the Red Sea, like the murder-hungry Vikings who wade across the river Panta, equally heedless of the danger (96–99): ‘Wodon þa wælwulfas (for wætere ne murnon), / wicinga werod, west ofer Pantan, / ofer scir wæter scyldas wegon, / lidmen to lande linde bæron’ [‘Then those slaughter-wolves waded in—they paid no heed to the water—the Viking host went west over the Panta, shouldered their shields across the shining water, the seafarers bore their shields to land’].

The numerous martial descriptions of both sides provide the author with ample opportunity to introduce heroic diction into the narrative, which he does with zeal, and the tone and language of these scenes is often similar to what we find in the *Heptateuch* (*Ex. 426–33*), for example, or the *Cathemerinon* (5.53–80). In the following passage,

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72 See also *Ex. (215–20): ‘Moses bebead / eorlas ... habban heora hlencan, hycgan on ellen, / beran beorht searo’ [‘Moses commanded his men … to take hold of their shields, to think of glory, to carry out their bright battle-gear’].
based loosely on Ex. 14:10 (‘levantes filii Israhel oculos, uiderunt Aegyptios post se et
timuerunt ualde’ [‘the children of Israel lifting up their eyes, saw the Egyptians behind
them: and they feared exceedingly’], the author introduces the kind of martial-heroic
imagery we are accustomed to seeing in *The Battle of Brunanburh* or *The Battle of
Maldon* (154–60):73

[Then the heart of those warriors grew fearful, when they saw Pharaoh’s army
coming from the south, bearing boar-spears—spears were made ready, battle drew
near, shields glimmered, horns sang out—the shining troop, the rising standards,
the host treading the road.]

The clamour and fearful expectation in this scene are reminiscent of similar images of
Pharaoh and his men in the *Heptateuch* (Ex. 426–33) or *Cathemerinon* (5.45–64). In the
latter case, Pharaoh’s men likewise ‘take up arms and arm themselves with menacing
swords, as the horn sings out sorrowfully (‘sumunt arma uiri seque minacibus / accingunt
gladiis, triste canit tuba,’ 49–50). They also put their faith in their spears (‘hic fidit
iaculis,’ 51) and show their war-banners (‘signaque bellica praetendunt,’ 55–6) before the
frightened Israelites, whom Moses bids to enter the sea with unwavering steps (‘Moses
porro suos in mare praecipit / constans intrepidis tendere gressibus,’ 63). One can argue
easily that there is no clear evidence for the influence of Prudentius on this or any other
scene of the vernacular poem, but that does not dismiss the possibility or the fact that the

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Latin tradition provides many obvious stylistic templates for the kind of secular-Christian poetry we find in the Old English \textit{Exodus}.

The preface begins with several conventional oral-formulaic expressions that evoke the style of vernacular poems such as \textit{Beowulf}, but the syntax of the introduction is unusual, almost Latinate, and features of the language of the opening also invite allegorical readings that are typical of Latin versifications of Exodus (1–7):

\begin{quote}
Hwæt! we feor and neah gefrigen habbað
ofer middangeard Moyses domas,
wræclico wordriht, wera cneorissum—
in uprodor eadigra gehwam
æfter bealusıðe bote lifes,
lifigendra gehwam langsumne ræd—
hæleðum secgan. Gehyre se ðe wille!
\end{quote}

[So, we have heard far and near across the earth that Moses spoke judgments, wondrous laws to the children of men—a reward for life for each of those blessed ones in heaven after the deadly journey, enduring counsel for each of the living—spoken to warriors. Let him hear who will!]

Clearly, the poet begins with an eye (or ear) to vernacular literature, not Latin.\footnote{For ‘hwæt’ at the beginning of other poems see \textit{Beowulf}, \textit{Andreas}, \textit{Fates of the Apostles}, \textit{Dream of the Rood}, \textit{Juliana}, \textit{Judgment Day II}, \textit{Vainglory}, \textit{Solomon and Saturn}, and the \textit{Meters of Boethius} (2.1, 9.1, 14.1, 17.1, 31.1). More commonly, and as the first element in speeches, see also \textit{Genesis A} (‘Hwæt scal ic winnan, cwæð he,’ 278), \textit{Exodus} (‘Hwæt, ge nu eagum to on lociða,’ 278), \textit{Daniel} (‘Metod alwihta, hwæt!’ 283), \textit{Christ and Satan} (‘Hwæt, we for dryhtene iu dreamas hefdon,’ 44). Huppé suggests the poet uses this device ‘to mark a stage in the development of the poem’ (\textit{Doctrine and Poetry}, p. 149).}

\textit{Beowulf}, for example, begins in much the same way (‘Hwæt we Gardena ... þrym gefrunon,’ 1–2), as do both \textit{Daniel} and \textit{Judith}.\footnote{‘Gefrægn ic’ is a common formula in Old English; it appears throughout \textit{Beowulf} and at the beginning of both \textit{Daniel} (Gefrægn ic, 1a) and \textit{Judith} (Gefrægn ic, 7a). The opening of \textit{Christ and Satan}, ‘hæt wearð underste eorðbuendum,’ likewise belongs to the same formula.} The call for attention (\textit{Hwæt}, 1a) and the appeal to knowledge of this story (‘we feor and neah gefrigen habað,’ 1) are therefore typical expressions at the opening of several Old English poems, though Trahern also notes a connection to Ecclesiasticus 45:6, which says, ‘[God] \textit{dedit illi} [Moses] \textit{coram praecepta legem uitate et disciplinae} [‘God gave him commandments to his face, a law of life and...}'}
instruction’], a passage corresponding in sequence and sense to wordriht (3a) bote lifes (5b), and langsumne ræd (6b) in Exodus.\textsuperscript{76} The concluding phrase, ‘Gehyre se ṭe wille!’ may also be an old minstrel formula as Irving suggests or a biblical echo of the Gospels: ‘he that hath ears to hear, let him hear;’\textsuperscript{77} however, a similar exhortation appears in the opening sequence of the Carmen paschale as well (1.37): ‘Haec mihi carmen erit: mentes huc uertite cuncti’ [‘This will be my song: Turn all your minds to this!’]. This call for attention accords with that in Exodus and provides another potential source for the Old English sentiment.

The meaning of bealusid in line 5, which refers to the ‘dreadful journey’ of the Israelites through the desert to the Promised Land may also imply a metaphorical journey through life.\textsuperscript{78} As Prudentius says of the crossing in his Cathemerinon, Christ ‘calls the weary over the sea of the world’ [‘Fessos ille uocat per freta saeculi,’ 5.109]. This sense of ‘sið’ is common in Old English verse, and it can be found, for example, in The Fates of the Apostles, where Cynewulf’s narrator refers to himself as siðgeomor (‘travel-weary,’ 1b).\textsuperscript{79} The Old English elegies also relate physical journeys to metaphorical ones; the Seafarer presents his life-story as a blend of literal and figurative journeys (1a–2a): ‘Mæg ic be me sylfum soðgied wrecan, / siþas secgan’ [‘I can sing a true song about my


\textsuperscript{78} James Wilson also suggests that ‘wræclico’ is a pun meaning both ‘wondrous’ and ‘wretched, miserable’ and that it also relates to the noun ‘wrecca’ or ‘wræca’ meaning ‘exile, wanderer, pilgrim.’ Wilson argues, ‘the pun gives added meaning to the lines by suggesting that the theme of the poem will have to do not only with the Laws of Moses but also with man’s exile, as that exile is related to the covenant between God and man.’ Wilson, Christian Theology and Old English Poetry, p. 116.

self, about my journeys’]. In *Exodus*, the dual significance of the word *bealusið* therefore may prepare the audience to read the poem in a certain way, beyond the level of the literal narrative. As Lucas says, ‘the stylistic device is used to indicate to the audience the kind of response required for the understanding of the poem as a whole,’ namely that Exodus also relates to the Christian journey toward salvation, a journey that begins with the baptismal imagery of the Red Sea. The Latin poet Avitus is explicit about this relationship in his *De transitu maris rubri*, in which he tells his readers at the beginning of his poem that the crossing is ‘great enough as a story but greater still in symbolism, which gives life from beneath its pregnant veil’ ['Historiis quae magna satis maiorque figuris / Conceptam grauido peperit de tegmine uitam,’ 17–18]. This symbolism refers to Baptism, and if the same is true of *Exodus*, then readers are meant to keep in mind the underlying significance of the poem alongside the more literal, secular-heroic values of the poem.

The baptismal significance of the Crossing of the Red Sea is seldom overlooked in biblical poetry, and Moses is often a type-figure for Christ. Even Cyprianus, one of the most faithful adherents to biblical narrative, says that it is Christ who shows the Israelites through the wilderness (‘Ignatas monstrante uias per deuia Christo,’ *Gen.*, 413), and Prudentius asks, ‘should we not recognize Christ in the example of so great a man’ (‘licetne Christum noscere tanti per exemplum uiri?’ *Cath.*, 12. 157–8), who ‘cleanses the people in the waves at the crossing’ (‘hic expiatam fluctibus / plebem marion in transitu / repurgat,’ *Cath.*, 12. 165–7). Sedulius likewise views the episode as a ‘rudimentary

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80 See further Greenfield and Calder, *New Critical History*, p. 214; see also the extended simile at the end Cynewulf’s *Christ II* (lines 850–66), which likewise compares life to a sea-journey in which Christ is the only ‘safe harbour.’
81 Lucas, *Exodus*, p. 75.
baptism’ (‘Ingrediens populus rude iam baptisma gerebat, / Cui dux Christus erat,’ 1.142–3), through which Christ literally ‘parts’ the mystery of the Old Testament. He later calls Christ ‘a typical Moses and a true prophet’ [‘typicus Moyses uerusque propheta,’ 3.207). The exegetical impulse is therefore very strong among poets who treat the Crossing of the Red Sea, and the vernacular author is no exception.

The two digressions in *Exodus*, referring to the Flood and Offering of Isaac (lines 362–446) likewise invite allegorical interpretation. Figural digressions of this kind are commonplace in the Latin genre and they appear without offence or interruption to the narrative, so there is nothing strange or ill-fitting about these sequences in the course of *Exodus*. In fact, a long section from Exodus appears in Arator’s versification of the Acts of the Apostles (2.40–95), and Bede includes the story of Noah’s Ark and Solomon’s temple in his commentary on Exodus. Lucas rejects a typological reading of the episodes involving Abraham and Isaac and Solomon’s temple in *Exodus*, yet the language of the scene may evoke images of the cross, even if such language is implicit (384–96):84

Siððan he gelædde leofost feora
Haliges hæsum; heahlond stigon 385
sibgemagas, on Seone beorh.
Wære hie þær fundon —wulder gesawon—
halice heahtreowe, swa hæleð gefrunon.
Þær eft se snottra sunu Dauides, 390
wulderfæst cyning, witgan larum
getimbrede tempel Gode,
alh haligne, eorðcyninga
se wisesta on woruldrice, 395
heahst ond haligost, hæleðum gefrægost,
mæst ond mærost, þara þe manna bearn,
fira æfter foldan, folnum geworhte.
Later he led out that dearest of living beings at the commands of holy God; those kinsmen climbed the hill, the mountain in Sion. There they sought out the covenant—they witnessed a great wonder—a holy promise, as men have heard tell. There the wise son of David, the glorious king, wisest of earthly rulers in the kingdom of the world later built under the direction of a wise man a temple to God, a holy shrine, the highest and most holy, fairest to men, greatest and most famous of those that the sons of men built with their hands in all the land of men.

Although the context appears to be quite different, the verb stigan also suggests Christ’s ascension of the cross, as it does in The Dream of the Rood (‘Geseah ic þa frean mancynnes / efstan elne mycle þæt he me wolde on gestigan’ [‘I saw then the Lord of mankind hastening with great courage, that he wanted to ascend on me,’ 33–4]) or The Creed-poem (‘on gealgan stah, gumena drihten,’ 28). It also stands that ‘halige heahtreowe’ is a pun on the cross itself. In the Dream of the Rood, for example, the narrator says, ‘Geseah ic wuldres treow’ [‘I saw the tree of glory,’ 14b], and that passage in particular comes to mind when reading ‘wuldor gesawon, / halige heahtreowe’ (387b–88a). What is more, like Solomon, Christ is the ‘son of David’ (sunu Dauides, 389b), a ‘glorious king’ (wuldorfaest cyning, 390a), and the series of superlatives, ‘heahst and haligost, hæleðum gefrægost, / mæst and mærost’ (394–5a), can refer simultaneously to the temple, Solomon and Christ. Grammatically, the series of strong adjectives must be accusative singular and refer to the temple, but the forms themselves can also be nominative, and syntactically they immediately follow ‘se wisesta on woruldrice,’ which refers to Solomon. In other words, the language in this scene appeals first to the ear and then the mind. The mind must reason out the sense of the passage, but the ear hears both possibilities. I am not suggesting that the author intended apo koinou in this case, but that some vernacular audiences would have been likely to make these aural connections.

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themselves. Given the subtlety and ingenuity of many episodes in *Exodus*, there is certainly room to read between the lines.

The Old English versification of *Exodus* therefore appeals to the audience on several levels. On the literal level, the action of the story is indeed entertaining and edifying in and of itself, as Avitus says, and the martial-heroic imagery in the poem reflects the same impulse in the poetry of Cyprianus or Prudentius. Irving emphasizes, however, that ‘the poet does not pause in his story [like Avitus] to moralize (as does Cynewulf, for example, in *Christ II*) or to point out the explicit *significatio* of individual objects or events in the manner of exegetical commentators,’ and he proposes that *Exodus* ultimately ‘offers its message of human salvation largely in heroic terms.’

Yet surely there are hints in the narrative, such as in the preface or the treatment of Solomon’s Temple, where the audience may look beyond the veil (as it were) to deeper layers of meaning. Nowhere is this invitation more explicit than at the end of the poem, where the author suggests a more symbolic meaning for the story (516–30a):

> Þanon Israhelum ece rædas
> on merehwearfe Moyses sægde,
> heahþungen wer, halige spræce,
> deop ærende. Dægweorc nemnað
> swa gyt werðode, on gewritum findað
> doma gehwilcne, þara de him drihten bebead
> on þam siðfate soðum wordum.
> Gif onlucan wile lifes wealhstod,
> beorht in breostum, banhuses weard,
> ginfæsten god Gastes cægon,
> run bið gerecenod, ræd forð gæð;
> hafāð wislicu word on fæðome,
> wile meagollice modum tæcan
> þæt we gesne ne syn Godes þeodscipes,
> metodes miltsa.

86 Irving, ‘Exodus Retraced,’ p. 212. Irving does not, however, deny ‘that the Christian typological pattern is also there, the same majestic series of great names one can find in the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews or in the liturgy’ (p. 216).
Then through holy speech that noble man, Moses, spoke everlasting laws, a deep message, to the Israelites on the seashore. People still speak about the works in those days, and in the Scriptures one can find each of the judgments that the Lord enjoined to him in true words on that journey, if the interpreter of life, the keeper of the body, bright within its breast, will unlock those ample goods with the keys of the spirit. The mystery will be explained and wisdom will issue forth; [it] has wise words in its breast and earnestly wants to teach our hearts, so that we may not be without God’s fellowship and mercy.

The pun on ‘deop ærende’ (519) at once alludes to the literal and figurative meanings of the ‘depth’ of the waters of the Sea and the meaning of the story. It is perhaps the author’s favorite pun, which he uses earlier for the ‘deep reward’ the Egyptians earn for from their persecution of the Israelites (‘þæs dægweorces deop lean forgeald,’ 315). Here the two passages come together, as Moses’ profound message to the Israelites suggests a connection with the waters of the Red Sea, where the people undergo a rudimentary baptism. That the Exodus poet is not explicit about the figural significance of the story in the way Avitus is, and says only that we should use the ‘keys of the spirit’ to unlock its meaning, does not dismiss the likelihood that we should be thinking especially of baptism here. As Sheppard says of this passage, ‘the poet emphasizes the importance of spiritual meaning without elucidating it.’

The final poem for discussion here, the Old English Daniel, offers another brief glimpse into the Old Testament, as a paraphrase of only the first five books of its biblical counterpart. The scriptural source of the poem is ‘a rare, Old Latin text conforming to the model of Greek scripture,’ and like Genesis A and B the text is also a composite of sorts, owing to the correspondence of lines 279–408 to Azarias in the Exeter Book. The two poems are too similar to suggest anything but a common source, and Paul Remley

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87 Sheppard, ‘Scriptural Poetry,’ p. 31.
88 Paul Remley, Old English Biblical Verse, pp. 231 and 328.
attributes both works to a shared archetype of the mid-tenth century derived from a liturgical canticle that accompanies texts of the *psalterium Gallicanum.*\(^{90}\) A version of this canticle (*Canticum trium puerorum*) appears in BL, Cotton Vespasian A. i.

A comparison of the poet’s versification with the first five chapters of the biblical book of Daniel reveals a number of additions and subtractions from the scriptural narrative. Earl Anderson summarizes many of the more obvious discrepancies: \(^{91}\)

Major omissions include the role of Malassar and the prince of the eunuchs ... in changing the names of Daniel, Ananias, Misael and Azarias to Baltassar, Sidrach, Misach and Abnego (Dan. 1.6–7); the episode about the Hebrews’ dietary restrictions which involves Malassar (Dan. 1.8–17); the symbolic details of Nabochodonossor’s first dream (Dan. II.31–35); and Nabochodonossor’s idolatrous worship of Daniel (Dan. II.46–7). Alterations or additions [include] ... The drunken feast of the Hebrew’s just prior to the Babylonian captivity (Dan. 17–18), comparable to Holofernes’ drunken feast in *Judith* 15–34a, probably reflects an Old English poetic tradition ... The addition of a speech by the unnamed ‘cyninges ræswa’ (Dan. 416b) ... seems to be the poet’s own invention.

In short, the *Daniel*-poet approaches the versification of the Bible in much the same way his Latin and Old English counterparts do, by removing whatever does not fit his artistic design and adding whatever augments it. \(^{92}\) The omission of the dietary habits of the Hebrews, for example, is a typical omission, while the interpolation of the drunken feast reflects the larger thematic concern with the sins of pride and inebriation. \(^{93}\) As Farrell points out, ‘it would seem that the poet did intend to limit the subject-matter of his poem to the first five chapters of the Old Testament book, those narratives which deal with the

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\(^{90}\) Remley, ‘*Daniel, the Three Youths* Fragment and the Transmission of Old English Verse,’ *ASE* 31 (2002), 81–140.

\(^{91}\) See further Anderson, ‘Style and Theme,’ p. 8.

\(^{92}\) Anderson also mentions minor exegetical additions that may be attributed to a third-century commentary by Hippolytus of Rome. See further ‘Style and Theme in the Old English *Daniel,*’ p. 13.

struggle of Daniel and the three children as protagonists, with Nabuchodonosor and
Baltassar as the antagonists.’\textsuperscript{94}

The extent to which the \textit{Daniel}-poet balances biblical material with more
traditional heroic materials is clear from the preface to the poem (1–7):

\begin{quote}
Gefrægn ic Hebreos       eadge lifgean
in Hierusalem,       goldhord dælan,
cyningdom habban,       swa him gecynde wæs,
siððan þurh metodes mægen on Moyses hand
wearð wig gifen,       wigena mænieo, 5
and hie of Egyptum       ut aforon,
mægene micle.       ðæt wæs modig cyn!
\end{quote}

[I have heard of the Hebrews living blessed in Jerusalem, giving out gold, having
a kingdom, as was natural for them to do after an army was given into Moses’
hands by the might of the Lord, a host of warriors, and they had departed out of
Egypt through great power. That was a bold race!]

The narrative begins with a stereotypical formula, \textit{gefrægn ic} (1a), which serves the same
conventional function as invocations to the muse in Latin biblical poetry.\textsuperscript{95} The
distribution of treasure, \textit{goldhord dælan} (2b), likewise links the Hebrews and the opening
of \textit{Daniel} to the kind of heroic idealism we find in \textit{Beowulf}: ‘Swa sceal geong guma /
gode gewyrcean, fromum feohgiftum on fæder bearme’ [‘so should a young man do good
with splendid, rich gifts while in his father’s protection,’ 20–1]. In \textit{Daniel}, God is this
father, and as long as the Hebrews remain faithful to His will, they have every right to be
proud of their success and status. From this point of view, the phrase ‘ðæt wæs modig
cyn!’ (7b) is certainly as optimistic as ‘ðæt wæs god cyning!’ in \textit{Beowulf} (11b),\textsuperscript{96} but it is

\textsuperscript{94} Farrell, ‘Structure of the Old English \textit{Daniel},’ p. 541. David Yost also points to parallels in other books
62.
\textsuperscript{95} See above p. 36, note 75.
\textsuperscript{96} Robert E. Bjork, R. D. Fulk and John D. Niles, eds., \textit{Klaeber’s Beowulf}, 4\textsuperscript{th} edition (Toronto, 2008).
equally as foreboding as ‘wæs heora blæd micel’ in *Genesis A* (14b).97 In other words, as long as the Hebrews remain faithful to God, the happiness and glory persist. The Hebrews owe their victories to the might of God, which He puts into the hands of Moses (‘þurh metodes mægen on Moses hand,’ 4). This acknowledgment effectively echoes *Exodus*, where God grants the same honours to Moses and the Israelites (262–5): ‘Mihtig drihten þurh mine hand / to dæge þissum dædelean gyfan, þæt hie lifigende leng ne moton / ægnian mid yrmdum Israhela cyn’ [‘The almighty Lord has given us recompense today by my hand, so that they may no longer be able to live and enslave the people of Israel with miseries’]. In what is almost certainly a pun in the preface to *Daniel*, the poet reminds his audience that the Israelites set out from Egypt in great strength of numbers (*mægen micle*, 7a), protected by the strength of God (*metodes mægen*, 4b). The two go hand-in-hand, so long as the people are faithful.

It is worth noting that the preface to *Daniel* bears several resemblances to the openings of both *Exodus* and *Genesis A*, and that these similarities suggest not only the author’s participation in a larger literary tradition or genre but perhaps also an awareness of these specific texts. Among other things, the Latin versifications of the Bible offer a way for poets in the genre to interact. Sedulius echoes Juvencus, just as Arator echoes Sedulius and so on; it may be that the *Daniel*-poet models his introduction on the earlier examples of *Genesis A* and *Exodus* or poems very much like them. Both *Daniel* and *Exodus* begin, for example, with neatly contained seven-line units written around the use of conventional formulas (‘We … gefrigen habað,’ 1; and ‘Gefrægn ic,’ 1a); both are also punctuated by an emphatic statement in the second half of the last line (‘Gehyre se ðe

97 There is a context for reading ‘þæt wæs modig cyn!’ negatively, but only after the awakening of pride in the Hebrews (‘oðþæt hie wlenco anwod æt winþege / deofoldædum, druncne geðohtas,’ 17–18).
wille!’ 7b; ‘þæt wæs modig cyn!’ 7b). *Genesis A* offers a similar declaration (‘Wæs heora blæd micel!’ 14b), which, like ‘þæt wæs god cyning’ (11b) in *Beowulf*, announces a point of emphasis or pause. Both *Daniel* and *Exodus* also promote the agency of God’s omnipotence in the salvation of the Hebrews. In *Exodus*, ‘the Lord of hosts, the righteous King,’ honours Moses in the wilderness with His own power (‘on westenne <weroda> drihten, / soðfæst cyning, mid his sylfes miht, / gewyrðode’ 8b–9b); the *Daniel*-poet alludes to this same might from the beginning of his narrative (‘þurh metodes mægen on Moses hand,’’ 4). Of course, *Genesis A* places strong emphasis on God’s creative omnipotence through which the world is formed (‘þa wæron gesette wide and side / þurh geweald Godes,’ 10-11a), and the ‘fall’ of the Hebrews imitates the patterns of the Fall in *Genesis A*, as the Hebrews forfeit the blessings of God’s might (*mægenscipe, Daniel* 20a) that they had earned for themselves before. Like the angels in heaven, they had brilliant prosperity (‘wæs him beorht wela,’ 9b), but they forfeited this by their disobedience. In short, these prefaces have no immediate source but the genre itself, and although the example of the formal *praefatio* in the Latin tradition is not a perfect model, it may contribute on some level to the narrative shape of these vernacular versifications of the Bible. In other words, the opening of *Daniel* suggests an awareness of how best to begin a biblical versification in Old English, and his fusion of secular and Christian values seems to owe something to the models of *Genesis A* and *Exodus*.

Discussions of the theme of *Daniel* have centered on the opening lines and the emphasis throughout the narrative on the need to obey God’s commandments. Huppé argued that ‘modig’ in ‘þæt wæs modig cyn’ carries both negative and positive connotations, and that a sense of ‘arrogance’ in the use of the word suggests proper and
improper behaviour.\textsuperscript{98} Anderson (citing Farrell) rejects Huppé’s emphasis on thematic word-play and prefers instead Farrell’s suggestion that the theme of \textit{Daniel} operates through a series of repeated keywords that contrast the ‘wisdom and good counsel \textit{(wisdom, lar, ræd, adjectives gleaw, snotor, wis)} of those who keep God’s law and the covenant \textit{(æ, aecræft, wær)}, and the foolish counsel of those who yield to the arts of the devil, \textit{deofles cæft}.\textsuperscript{99} Huppé is surely right about the potential duality of ‘þæt wæs modig cyn,’ which suggests both healthy and excessive pride; but there is no need to reject the argument of Anderson or Farrell. It does not have to be one way or the other.

Certainly, the opening sections of \textit{Daniel} introduce the basic conflict between Daniel, who is beloved of God and the personification of good judgment \textit{(Daniel to dome, se wæs drehtne gecoren, 150)},\textsuperscript{100} and Nabuchodonosor, the personification of enmity \textit{(niðhete, 48, 278)}.\textsuperscript{101} Daniel is knowledgeable in the law \textit{(aecræftig, 741a)} and obedient to it, and like him, the Three Youths determine to keep their pact with the Lord \textit{(wæron wærfæste, 194a)} at the cost of their lives. The story of the Three Youths is based on Chapter 3:52–90 of the biblical book, but Remley has shown that the version in \textit{Daniel} is inspired by a liturgical canticle circulating in psalters of the period \textit{(Canticum trium puerorum)}.\textsuperscript{102} As Farrell says, ‘The Songs of Azarias and the Three Children appear very frequently in the liturgy of the church, particularly as Hymns among the Canticles, and in

\textsuperscript{100} See also line 735 (‘oðþæt Daniel com, drehtne gecoren’). Note that Daniel’s name is an onomastic pun, and that ‘Daniel’ means ‘judgement’ \textit{(dom)}; for other examples of name-meanings see further Fred Robinson, ‘The Significance of Names in Old English Literature,’ \textit{Anglia} 86 (1968), 14–58; and Robinson, ‘Some Uses of Name-Meaning in Old English Poetry,’ \textit{NM} 69 (1968), 161–71.
\textsuperscript{101} See line 48: ‘Nabochodonosor, þurh niðhete’; as well as lines 618 (‘Nabochodonosor, siðdan him nið Godes’) or 663 (‘Nabochodonosor of niðwracum’).
\textsuperscript{102} Paul Remley, ‘Daniel, the Three Youths Fragment,’ pp. 81–140.
the services of Holy Week. This fact no doubt also explains Sedulius’ interest in the episode, who includes it in the miracle sequence of the *Carmen paschale* (1.197–211), alongside many other miracles that follow the sequence of readings for the Easter vigil. Like the *Daniel*-poet, Sedulius uses the episode to promote the faith of the Three Youths and the glory which comes to those who remain faithful (1.204–5): ‘O quanta est credentum gloria! Flammis / Ardentis fidei restincta est flamma camini’ [‘O, how great is the glory of those believers! The furnace-flame was held back by the flames of their ardent faith’]. Aldhelm echoes this same passage in his *Carmen de uirginitate*, though with emphasis on the chastity of the three men (384–7): ‘Verum uirginitas spreuit tormenta rogorum, / Scintillante fide dum feruent corda uirorum’ [‘Indeed their virginity spurned the torments of the furnace, while the hearts of those men burned with glowing faith’]. The importance of the story of the Three Youths, therefore, like the opening lines of *Genesis A* and the interpolations of the stories of Noah’s Ark and the Offering of Isaac in *Exodus*, is its focus on the liturgy, which exerts a persistent influence on narrative features of each of the chief biblical poems from the Old English period. This fact provides yet another connection to poems in the Latin genre, many of which bear strong connections to the liturgy as well.

In the introduction to his edition of *Genesis A*, A.N. Doane argues that the Old English poem has nothing in common with the Latin genre and that the vernacular author’s ‘method is entirely alien to it, though not his impulse or inspiration.’ He furthermore says that his ‘response is to a poetic technique completely outside the

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classical tradition.\textsuperscript{104} It is easy to refute absolute terms, and even the preliminary findings in this chapter suggest that the method of the \textit{Genesis A}-poet is by no means ‘entirely alien to’ or ‘completely outside’ the nature of the Latin genre. In fact, there are a number of ways in which the style of each of the Old English versifications in the Junius manuscript correspond to elements of style in the Latin tradition, such as the way in which poets incorporate secular-heroic materials into their work or their common responses to the liturgy. Doane only allows that the vernacular poet’s ‘impulse and inspiration’ may be similar to that of the Latin versifier, but surely this is the whole point. The impulse and inspiration to write biblical poetry may suggest themselves to a vernacular author without any awareness of a Latin genre, but it is more likely that Old English biblical poets who compose these biblical versifications draw inspiration from the corresponding tradition that forms part of many Anglo-Saxons’ education. It is not of supreme importance to identify a precise source for \textit{Genesis A} in the Latin poetry of late antiquity to acknowledge the existence and relevance of the other genre. Even if there is no indebtedness at all to the versifications of Cyprianus or Sedulius, for example, surely there is still much to be learned from the Latin process of versifying the Bible. For a start, we are bound to gain a broader appreciation for the poetic artistry behind the versification of the Scriptures, if we will look beyond the prose sources to Ms. Junius 11 and consider works that the Anglo-Saxons themselves tended to read and enjoy. If we approach the two genres not with the goal of establishing precedence but of increasing our appreciation for the inherent differences and similarities between the two traditions, then perhaps we will gain a better appreciation of why poets continued to versify the Bible so persistently.

\textsuperscript{104} See p. 155 above and Doane, \textit{Genesis A}, p. 63.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

Inmortale nihil mundi conpage tenetur,
Non orbis, non regna hominum, non aurea Roma,
Non mare, non tellus, non ignea sidera caeli.
Nam statuit genitor rerum inreuocabile tempus,
Quo cunctum torrens rapiat flamma ultima mundum.
Sed tamen innumeros homines sublimia facta
Et uirtutis honos in tempora longa frequentant,
Adcumulant quorum famam laudesque poetae.\(^1\)

We cannot begin to appreciate the impact of late antique biblical verse upon
Anglo-Latin or Old English literature until we understand better the nature of the Latin
versifications of the Bible themselves. While the ultimate aim of this study has been to
provide students of the Anglo-Saxon period with an introduction to the Latin literature
that existed alongside the vernacular,\(^2\) the focus has not been upon Anglo-Latin or even
the vernacular _per se_ but the curriculum texts that predate and motivate the composition
of both. Only by studying what the Anglo-Saxons themselves studied can we appreciate
the depth and subtlety of the relationship between what the Anglo-Saxons read and what
they wrote.\(^3\) To this end, I have chosen to focus on the Latin biblical poems which the
Anglo-Saxons knew best, in order to provide stronger critical framework upon which to
develop arguments about the relative debt of Anglo-Latin and Old English literature to
the tradition of Latin biblical verse. In the process, I have not been concerned with the
reception of these poems in their contemporary late antique milieux, but have approached

\(^{1}\) Juvenecus, _Ev._, 1–8.
\(^{2}\) My comments here are adapted from those of W. F. Bolton in _A History of Anglo-Latin Literature_ (Princeton, 1967), p. v. Although Bolton does not address the role of the curriculum authors in his study, his desire to promote knowledge of the Anglo-Latin literature of the period is similar to my own.
\(^{3}\) As Michael Lapidge has argued in ‘Versifying the Bible’ (p. 133), ‘vernacular literature can only properly be understood within the wider context of Latin literature, and that the key to such understanding lies in scholarly awareness of the medieval school curriculum.’
the genre much as the Anglo-Saxons would have inherited it, that is as a more or less homogeneous body of work anthologized in the manuscript collections of the period.

Juvenicus is the father of biblical verse, and he is at once the most important and neglected author in the genre. His *Euangelia* establishes the normative features of the genre and remains popular and influential for centuries after its composition, but the poem lacks many of the things we now take for granted in Anglo-Saxon studies: a recent and updated edition; a Modern English translation; a wealth of literary criticism. Of the purpose of the *Euangelia* and other works in the genre, Daniel Nodes suggests the following:

The impetus for composing poetry modeled after the great classical epics came largely from the official endorsement of Christianity by the Roman Empire in the fourth century. Most important is the consequent mission to educate in the open, in the mode of the familiar Hellenistic/Roman literary culture, retaining and adapting the best of the old regime to the service of the new era.⁴

This statement certainly applies to Juvenicus, whose versification receives the official endorsements of both Jerome and Pope Gelasius. As Jerome says, the *Euangelia* is a faithful rendering of the Gospels, a *paene ad uerbum* rendition,⁵ and the same is true for the versification of Cyprianus at the end of the century, whose *Heptateuch* reflects the general style of the *Euangelia*.⁶ But what many readers of either poem have failed to appreciate is the difficulty involved in maintaining a faithful versification of the Bible, and no one admires these texts for what is in fact a degree of virtuosity. Juvenicus’ handling of the Sermon on the Mount (1.452–65) is a case in point, which attests to the lengths to which the author must go to preserve the rhetorical effect of the original, struggling at the same time with a choice of diction and syntax limited by the

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⁴ Daniel Nodes, *Doctrine and Exegesis*, p. 133.
⁵ See p. 17 above.
⁶ See, for example, pp. 40–41 above.
requirements of metre. So, while both the *Euangelia* and *Heptateuch* represent fairly literal renditions of the Bible, in which the authors curb their creative impulse to deviate from the Scriptures or comment upon their meaning, the fact of their adherence to biblical narrative by no means suggests any inadequacy as poets.

As Michael Lapidge says, if ‘Juvencus created the diction of Christian-Latin biblical verse[,] Sedulius opened up the possibility of using it for figural and typological interpretation.’ The *Carmen paschale* (c. 525) is the only biblical poem to challenge the status of the *Euangelia* for approval among leaders of the Church like Jerome and Gelasius; for while Juvencus takes the first steps in the genre, Sedulius is the first author to test the range and depth of meaning afforded by the fusion of classical and Christian diction. No doubt inspired in part by the inventiveness of Prudentius, Sedulius converts the image of a Roman feast into a metaphorical eucharistic banquet; he aligns Cecrops, the mythical founder of Athens with Satan; and scolds Christians for losing their way in a Daedalean maze of sin and delusion. Unlike Juvencus or Cyprianus, who do not permit interpretation to take precedence over the literal narrative, Sedulius is willing and eager to elaborate upon various episodes of the Bible. In the *Carmen paschale*, he ‘combines paraphrastic amplification ... poetic reminiscence and biblical metaphor to concentrate attention on the miraculous nature of Christ’s healing and its spiritual significance for his readers.’ Book One of the poem especially represents a new direction in the genre of biblical verse, in which Sedulius presents a series of scriptural tableaux—brief but lively glimpses into the Old Testament—which he uses to prefigure the miraculous deeds of

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7 See pp. 27–30 above.
8 Lapidge, ‘Versifying the Bible,’ p. 17.
9 See pp. 64–5 above.
Christ in the New Testament portion of the poem.\footnote{See pp. 66–71 above.} The real genius and achievement of the \textit{Carmen paschale} is the multivalence of its language, which affords myriad connections between the Old and New Testament, between one episode or another, and between a single series of words at the opening and closing of the poem, which bring structural and thematic unity to the whole work. Part of the enduring popularity of the \textit{Carmen paschale} is therefore that it does not simply suggest connections between the Old and New Testament but reproduces and revitalizes them in a new poetic language.

\textit{Avitus’ Historia spiritualis} (fl. 507) reflects and surpasses the stylistic freedom of the \textit{Carmen paschale}. As Lapidge says, ‘in amplifying the biblical narrative, Avitus went far beyond the warrant of Scripture.’\footnote{Lapidge, ‘Versifying the Bible,’ p. 19.} But there is nothing unfaithful about his rendition of the Old Testament; it is simply a freer response to the Bible, which ‘conforms to epic norms of realistic, literal narrative while suggesting the rich, allusive polyvalency of Christian allegory.’\footnote{Michael Roberts, ‘Rhetoric and Poetic Imitation in Avitus’ Account of the Crossing of the Red Sea (De Spiritualis Historiae Gestis, 5.371–702),’ \textit{Traditio} 39 (1983), 29–80, at p. 80.} Like Sedulius, Avitus is very much interested in the mystical sense of episodes like the Crossing of the Red Sea,\footnote{See Lapidge, ‘Versifying the Bible,’ p. 19: ‘We should not forget the figural significance of the Crossing for Avitus, as for Sedulius before him, unambiguously represents purification through baptism’; see also pp. 98–9 above.} but he limits himself to fewer episodes and amplifies them to a much greater degree. The same is true of Arator, writing fifty years after Avitus (544), for whom ‘the Crossing of the Red Sea is a significant event in salvation history precisely because it adumbrates at a stroke the crucifixion, baptism, and the Eucharist.’\footnote{Lapidge, ‘Versifying the Bible,’ p. 22.} As this study has shown, Arator owes a great debt to the \textit{Carmen paschale} of Sedulius, which he echoes frequently, and yet more than any other biblical poet Arator breaks the silence of epic detachment with the voice of a \textit{praedicator},
interjecting, and interpreting the Scriptures at every turn. As a result, Arator’s
digressive interpretations of the Bible in the *Historia apostolica* are sometimes difficult
to construe and indeed undecipherable at times.

When Latin biblical verse enters Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh century, it
undergoes a transformation or re-genesis. As Dag Norberg says, ‘because the medieval
school continued the traditions of late antiquity, there was no break in the evolution of
versification. Throughout the entire Middle Ages, poets continued to write ancient
quantitative verses according to the model of Virgil or Sedulius, of Horace or
Prudentius.’ As this study has shown, scholars have identified numerous manuscripts
containing the poetry of Juvencus, Sedulius and Arator as well as hundreds of verbal
echoes in the Anglo-Latin poetry of writers such as Aldhelm, Bede and Alcuin. One of
the purposes of this discussion has been to qualify this quantitative evidence and examine
closely the nature and value of these verbal parallels. In my discussion of Anglo-Latin
poetry, I have shown that Anglo-Saxons do not simply draw from disparate strands of
their remembered reading—a pool of stereotypical or formulaic diction—but imitate
specific episodes. The opening of Aldhelm’s *Carmen de uirginitate* provides an excellent
case in point, where Aldhelm not only echoes large sections of the opening of the
*Carmen paschale* but also imitates and adapts the very style of Sedulius, emulating the
earlier poet through synonymic repetition and syntactical imitation. I have also
demonstrated a significant debt to late antique biblical verse on the part of Bede and

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Paul his epic heroes, and he went beyond Sedulius in often using the events of Acts merely as a
springboard for mystical, allegorical explorations of the spiritual meanings of the events.’
17 See further Lapidge, ‘Versifying the Bible in the Middle Ages,’ p. 20.
19 See Chapter 4 above, esp. pp. 107–18.
Alcuin, both of whom respond to the traditional prefaces of biblical verse in their *Vita sancti Cuthberti* and York poem, respectively. If the evidence of verbal echoes has proved valuable in gauging the relative knowledge or popularity of a given biblical poet in the Anglo-Saxon period, it has not shown the depth of the relationship between the two traditions, which only a first-hand knowledge of the poetry can yield.

In a sense, Old English biblical verse is the final destination of this study. I might have chosen disparate episodes throughout the Junius manuscript to suggest connections between Latin and vernacular episodes in biblical poetry, but I have decided instead to preserve the integrity of my approach and to focus on the opening sections of *Genesis A*, *Daniel* and *Exodus*, in order to maintain a sense of unity and objectivity. The discussion here has nevertheless shown a number of general stylistic affinities between the Old English and Latin traditions, specifically in the *modus operandi* of the authors, their selective approach to the versification of the Bible, their impulse to include elements of vernacular verse, and their potential responses to one another. At the very least, the Latin tradition provides a valuable model for understanding the essential features of the vernacular genre, given how little we know about the composition of these texts. However, if we broaden our approach beyond verbal echoes to stylistic affinities and between Old Testament poems in Latin and Old Testament poems in Old English, we will gain a greater appreciation for the relationship between the two traditions. For example, while *Genesis A* and *Exodus* do not in the main emphasize figural interpretations of those books of the Bible, the choice to focus on Exodus and Genesis in the first place suggests *ipso facto* a figural interest in these books which is shared by the biblical poets of late antiquity.

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20 See pp. 134–44 above.
So what are the main purposes of these biblical poems and who are the intended audiences? Of the Latin versifications of the Bible Lawrence Martin, echoing the voice of most scholars, suggests that ‘their purpose was evidently to provide edification along with delight to a cultured class of readers who were among the last generations of the Roman system of education, with its core curriculum devoted to the literary study of grammar and rhetoric.’ Others argue that Latin biblical verse represents a desire to improve upon the text of the Bible stylistically and to make the Scriptures ‘more acceptable and indeed pleasing’ to well-educated audiences of late antiquity. This is partly true, and the common denominator in both cases is a learned audience which is able to appreciate the sometimes sophisticated allusions to classical literature and its significance in the new context of biblical verse. But Judith McClure has rightly warned that biblical poets do not try to replace the Bible, and that ‘it would be a serious mistake to suggest that they regarded [their poetry] as an improvement on the biblical text, still less a more attractive alternative.’ In short, the act of versifying the Scriptures for Latin and vernacular poets represented a response to a creative impulse as well as an act of devotion, and these poems served at times an educational function (as they surely did in Anglo-Saxon England) but also a source of pious and pleasurable reading. The audience for the Old English biblical poems is slightly different, since the popular language of the vernacular versifications does not require any special training. Anyone understanding Old English could have appreciated the story of Exodus without any

22 McClure, ‘Biblical Epic and its Audience,’ p. 307. See also Roberts, Biblical Epic (pp. 95–6), who says of Cyprianus’ Heptateuch, for example, that it ‘was intended as literary entertainment for cultivated readers.’
24 See Roberts, Biblical Epic, pp. 1–2, who believes the primary function of biblical poetry was to ‘fulfill the devotional needs of the Christian community.’
formal education, though no doubt many learned readers appreciated it as well. In any case, it is fair to say that ‘Christian poets, whether they wrote in Latin or English expected their audiences to possess, in varying degrees, a common tradition of doctrine and symbol. They seem also to have expected their audiences to make considerable effort to understand the underlying meaning of a poem.’

This is particularly true of the Old English *Exodus*, which is not explicit about the baptismal imagery of the poem, yet includes interpolations which can only suggest a relationship with the readings for Holy Week and the rite of baptism.

Whatever the various aims of these biblical versifications, McClure is right to say that ‘there is much work still to be done on the relationship of metrical versions one with another, and many minor works remain to be analysed.’

There are a number of potential connections between *Genesis A, Daniel* and *Exodus*, for example, which suggest an awareness not just of a common poetic vocabulary but a common genre of biblical verse, and the relationship between many of the so-called ‘amorphous’ or minor biblical poems, such as *Christ and Satan* or the poems in the Cynewulf canon, should also be included in future discussions of the genre. It is possible, for example, that a number of Old English poems in the general category of Christian verse, such as *Christ I, II, III* or the metrical versions of the *Lord’s Prayer* in Old English, owe something of their inspiration to versifications of the Bible in Latin. There is also much work to be done on the Latin poems of late antiquity themselves, including a translation of the *Euangelia* and closer

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25 Bernard Huppé, *Doctrine and Poetry*, pp. 93–4. Note that McClure makes the same point of Latin biblical verse in ‘Biblical Epic and its Audience,’ p. 312: ‘It is clear, then, that certainly by the time that Sedulius wrote, the writer of the Scriptural paraphrase might anticipate that some at least of his readers would be familiar not only with the text, but also with homiletic and expository works devoted to its detailed interpretation.’

26 Ibid.
analyses of the style of the biblical poems of the period. The main difficulty with this study has been the absence of any systematic analysis of biblical poetry from late antiquity through the Anglo-Saxon period to inform my approach, and that ‘no one,’ as Lapidge says, ‘has ever attempted to read Old English verse in light of the school curriculum which all Old English poets must have studied.’27 Still, this analysis has shown that present and future students and scholars of the Anglo-Saxon period stand to gain much by considering the role of Latin biblical poetry in the development of Anglo-Saxon literature. Why did vernacular authors begin their poems the way they did? Why did they choose the episodes they did? What stylistic guidelines or models informed their appropriation of secular-heroic material in their biblical narratives? The answers to these questions come not from the mouths of the authors themselves, who say nothing of their sources of inspiration, but from the books in their libraries and the verses in their memories.

27 Lapidge, ‘Versifying the Bible,’ p. 27.
Appendix 1: Outline of the Carmen Paschale

1.1–37   Two-stage preface
1.38–59  Lost pagans and the garden of heaven
1.60–102 Omnipotence of God over nature
1.103–219 Fifteen miracles from the Old Testament
1.220–41 Recapitulation of those miracles
1.242–81 Digression on heathen practices
1.282–333 Agency of the Trinity, Arianism, Sabellianism
1.334–54 Desire for heaven, prayer to Christ
1.355–58 Reference to the four Gospels

2.1–34   Summary of the Fall, redemption through Mary (Jesus)
2.35–72  Birth of Jesus
2.73–106 Coming and adoration of the Magi
2.107–33  Killing of the first-born (Herod)
2.134–38 Jesus in the temple
2.139–74  Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan
2.175–219 Temptation in the wilderness
2.220–30  Gathering of the apostles
2.231–300 The Lord’s Prayer (greatly expanded)

3.1–11   Miracle 1: water to wine at the wedding
3.12–22  Miracle 2: healing of the royal official’s son
3.23–25  Miracle 3: healing multitudes along the way
3.26–32  Miracle 4: healing a leper
3.33–39  Miracle 5: healing Peter’s mother-in-law
3.40–45  Miracle 6: exorcism of demons
3.46–69  Miracle 7: calming of the sea
3.70–85  Miracle 8: exorcism of the Gadarene swine
3.86–102 Miracle 9: healing a paralytic
3.103–42 Miracles 10/11: resurrection of the ‘sleeper’ & the healing cloak
3.143–51  Miracle 12: healing two blind men
3.152–57  Miracle 13: healing a deaf and mute
3.158–81 Jesus sends the apostles out to heal and convert
3.182–88 Miracle 14: healing a withered hand
3.189–98 Miracle 15: healing a deaf and mute demoniac
3.199–205 Miracle 16: healing a crippled woman
3.206–18  Miracle 17: feeding five thousand
3.219–36  Miracle 18: Jesus walks on water
3.237–41  Miracle 19: healing at the touch of Jesus’ cloak
3.242–50 Miracle 20: healing/exorcism of Canaanite woman’s daughter
3.251–56  Miracle 21: healing multitudes of various ailments
3.257–72  Miracle 22: feeding four thousand
3.273–95  Miracle 23: Transfiguration of Jesus
3.296–312 Miracle 24: exorcism/healing of an epileptic child
3.313–19  Miracle 25: Coin from the mouth of a fish
### 3.320–39 Apostles ask Jesus what man will be considered greatest in heaven

| 4.1–8 | Reiteration of God’s power over nature |
| 4.9–30 | Vanity of earthly wealth, heavenly riches |
| 4.31–39 | Miracle 26: healing two blind men |
| 4.40–44 | Miracle 27: healing in the temple |
| 4.45–56 | Miracle 28: the withering of the fig tree |
| 4.57–63 | Miracle 29: healing a mute |
| 4.64–81 | Miracle 30: woman washes the feet of Jesus with her hair |
| 4.82–89 | Miracle 31: healing a mute demoniac, forbidding demons to speak |
| 4.90–98 | Satan and his demons are dismayed by Christ’s incarnation |
| 4.99–105 | Miracle 32: healing a blind mute |
| 4.106–68 | Miracle 33: healing blindness |
| 4.109–24 | Miracle 34: an abundance of fish caught by the apostles |
| 4.125–41 | Miracle 35: the resurrection of a dead boy |
| 4.142–49 | Miracle 36: healing/exorcism of Mary Magdalene |
| 4.150–71 | Instruction of the twelve apostles |
| 4.172–88 | Miracle 37: healing a man with edema |
| 4.189–209 | Miracle 38: healing ten lepers |
| 4.210–21 | Miracle 39: healing Bartimeaus, son of Timaeus |
| 4.222–32 | The Samaritan woman at the well (salvation) |
| 4.233–50 | Jesus forgives the adulterous woman |
| 4.251–70 | Miracle 40: healing a man born blind |
| 4.271–90 | Miracle 41: the resurrection of Lazarus |
| 4.291–309 | Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey |

| 5.1–19 | Introduction to crucifixion and resurrection |
| 5.20–28 | Jesus washes the feet of the apostles |
| 5.29–68 | Judas betrays Jesus, lengthy digression on Judas |
| 5.69–112 | Arrest of Jesus, Peter denies him three times |
| 5.113–38 | Judas refuses his reward and hangs himself |
| 5.139–55 | Jesus endures accusations at the trial |
| 5.156–63 | The narrator condemns Pilate |
| 5.164–81 | Jesus is given over to torture |
| 5.182–201 | The Crucifixion |
| 5.202–31 | Two thieves crucified with Jesus |
| 5.232–49 | Jesus dies, darkness falls |
| 5.250–60 | Jews compared to vinegar on the sponge |
| 5.261–75 | Jesus descends into Hell |
| 5.276–94 | Climax. Apostrophe to conquered death. |
| 5.295–314 | Guards demand the tomb be well-protected from robbers |
| 5.315–50 | Tomb is empty, the narrator rebukes the guards |
| 5.351–64 | The narrator rebukes the Jews |
| 5.365–91 | Resurrected, Jesus reveals himself to the apostles (Thomas) |
| 5.392–404 | Miracle 42: fish from the right side of the boat (metaphor) |
| 5.405–21 | Jesus eats with the apostles, tests Peter, grants his peace |
| 5.422–38 | Miracle 43: the ascension of Jesus into heaven |
Appendix 2: Translation of Sedulius’ *Carmen paschale*, Book One

Paschales quicumque dapes conuiua requiris,  
Dignatus nostris accubitare toris,  
Pone supercilium si te cognoscis amicum,  
Nec quaeras opus hic codicis artificis:  
Sed modicae contentus adi sollemnia mensae  
Plusque libens animo quam satiare cibo.  
Aut si magnarum caperis dulcedine rerum  
Diuitiasque magis deliciousus amas,  
Nobilium nitidis doctorum uescere cenis,  
Quorum multiplicies nec numerantur opes.  
Illic inuenies quidquid mare nutrit edendum,  
Quidquid terra creat, quidquid ad astra uolat.  
Cerea gemmatis flauescunt mella canistris  
Conlucentque suis aurea uasa fauis.  
At nos exiguum de paupere carpsimus horto,  
Rubra quod adpositum testa ministrat, holus.

You who seek this paschal banquet as a guest,  
Having deigned to lean upon our couches,  
Put your arrogance aside, if you think yourself a friend,  
And do not look for the work of an artful book here:  
But approach the solemnities of this modest table contently,  
Wanting more to be filled in spirit than with food.  
Or if you are taken with the sweetness of great things,  
And, being delicate, love their richness more,  
Then feast upon the brilliant fare of learned nobles,  
Whose manifold riches cannot be counted.  
There you will find whatever the sea nourishes for eating,  
Whatever the land creates, whatever flies to the stars.  
Waxen honey turns golden-yellow in sparkling canisters,  
And golden vessels gleam in their combs.  
But we have picked meagre greens from a poor garden,  
Which are put before you in an earthen-red pot.
Cum sua gentiles studeant figmenta poetae
Grandisonis pompare modis, tragicoque boatu
Ridiculooue Geta seu qualibet arte canendi
Saeua nefandarum renouent contagia rerum
Et scelerum monumenta canant, rituque magistro
Plurima Niliacis tradant mendacia biblis:
Cur ego, Dauiticies adsuetus cantibus odas
Cordarum resonare decem sanctoque uerenter
Stare choro et placidis caelestia psallere uerbis,
Clara salutiferi taceam miracula Christi?
Cum possim manifesta loqui, Dominumque tonantem
Sensibus et toto delectet corde fateri:
Qui sensus et corda dedit, cui conuenit uni
Facturam seruire suam, cui iure perenni
Arcibus aetheriis una est cum patre potestas,
Par splendor, communis apex, sociale cacumen,
Aequus honor, uritus eadam, sine tempore regnum,
Semper principium, sceptrum iuge, gloria consors,
Maiestras similis. Haec est uia namque salutis,
Haec firmos ad dona gradus paschalia ducit.
Haec mihi carmen erit: mentes huc uertite cuncti.
Hanc constanter opem laesis adhibete medullis,
Quos letale malum, quos uanis dedita curis
Attica Cecropii serpit doctrina ueneni,
Sectantesque magis uitam spirantis odorem
Legis Athenaei paedorem linquite pagi.
Quid labyrintheo, Thesidae, erratis in antro
Caecaque Daedalei iustratis limina tecti?
Labruscam placidis quid adhuc praeponitis uuis
Neglectisque rosis saliuncam sumitis agri?

Since pagan poets are eager to parade their fictions
In lofty-sounding modes, and with their tragic wailing,
Ridiculous Geta or whatever other kind of singing,
They renew the savage contagions of unspeakable things,
And sing monuments of sin and, with ritual as a teacher,
Pass down more lies in their books of the Nile,
Why should I—accustomed to resounding odes of ten chords
In David’s songs and standing reverently in the holy choir,
Singing psalms of celestial things in gentle words—
Be silent about the brilliant miracles of Christ the Saviour?
Why, since I can speak about these manifest things,
And since it pleases me to acknowledge the Lord Thunderer
With my senses and all my heart? It is He who gave wit and heart,
Whose creation it befits to serve Him alone, for Whom, by eternal law
In the ethereal citadels, there is one power with the Father,
Matching splendour, a common height, a shared pinnacle,
Equal honour, the same strength, a kingdom out of time,
Ever a beginning, an everlasting sceptre, a shared glory,
Similar majesty. And so, this is the way to salvation,
This leads firm steps to the paschal gifts.
This will be my song: Turn all your minds to this!

Lend this power to wounded hearts constantly,
Into whom creeps deadly evil, the Attic doctrine
Of Cecropian poison, which is given over to vain cares,
And following rather the scent of the law that breathes life,
Give up the stench of the Athenian countryside.
Why, children of Theseus, do you wander in that labyrinthine cave
And roam about the blind thresholds of that Daedalian hall?
Why still prefer the wild vine to mild grapes,
And pick the nard of the field, leaving the roses neglected?
Quid lapides atque aera coli, quid fana profana
Proderit et mutis animas damnare metallis?
Parcite pulverei squalentia iugera campi
Et steriles habitacres plagas, ubi gignere fructum
Arida nescit humus, nec de tellure cruenta
Liuida mortiferis uellatis toxica sucis,
Tartareo damnata cibo: sed amoena uiirecta
Florentum semper nemorum sedesque beatas
Per latices intrate pios, ubi semina uitae
Diuinis animantur aquis et fonte superno
Laetificata seges spinis mundatur ademptis,
Ut messis queat esse Dei mercisque futurae
Maxima centenum cumulare per horrea fructum.

Omnipotens aeterne Deus, spes unica mundi,
Qui caeli fabricator ades, qui conditor orbis,
Qui maris undisonas fluctu surgente procellas
Mergere uicinae prohibes confinia terrae,
Qui solem radiis et lunam cornibus impleas
Inque diem ac noctem lumen metiris utrumque,
Qui stellas numeras, quarum tu nomina solus,
Signa, potestates, cursus, loca, tempora nosti,
Qui diuersa nouam formasti in corpora terram
Torpentique solo uiuenta membra dedisti,
Qui pereuntem hominem uetiti dulcedine pomi
Instauras meliore cibo potuque sacrati
Sanguinis infusum depellis ab angue uenenum,
Qui genus humanum praeter quos clauserat arca
Diluui rapida spumantis mole sepultum
Vna iterum de stirpe creas, ut mystica uirtus,
Quod carnis delicta necant, hoc praesule ligno
Monstraret liquidas renouari posse per undas,
Totum namque lauans uno baptismate mundum:

Pande salutarem paucos quae ducit in urbem
Angusto mihi calle uiam uerbique lucernam
Da pedibus lucere meis, ut semita uitae
Ad caulas me ruris agat, qua seruat amoenum
Pastor ouile bonus, qua uellere praueius albo
Virginis agnuis ouis grexque omnis candidus intrat.
Te duce difficilis non est uia; subditur omnis
Imperiis natura tuis, rituque soluto
Transit in aduersas iussu dominante figuras.
Si iubeas mediis segetes are pruinis,
Messorem producit hiemis; si currere mustum
Vernali sub sole uelis, florentibus aruis
Sordidus impressas calcabit uinitor uuas:
Cunctaque diuinis parebunt tempora dictis.
Indicio est antiqua fides et cana priorum
Testis origo patrum, nullisque abolenda per aeuum
Temporibus constant uirtutum signa tuarum. 80
Ex quibus audaci perstringere paucu relatu
Vix animis committo meis, siluamque pati tem
Ingrediens aliquos nitor contingere ramos.
Nam centum licet ora mouens uox ferrea clamet
Centenosque sonos humanum pectus anhelet,
Cuncta quis expediet, quorum nec lucida caeli
Sidera nec bibulae numeris aequantur harenae?

Might show that it is possible, with this cross as a leader,
To renew in flowing water what the sins of the flesh kill,
Thereby washing the whole world in one Baptism.

Stretch out a road for me along the narrow path,
Which leads but few to the city of salvation,
And grant the lantern of your word to light my feet,
So that the path of life may lead me to the sheepfolds of the country,
Where the good shepherd tends his pleasant flock, where, going forth in
White fleece, the lamb of the Virgin and the whole shining herd enter in.
With you as leader the way is not difficult;
All nature is subject to your commands, and freed of its ritual,
Nature changes to contrary figures by your dominating will.
If you bid the cornfields to wither in the midst of frost,
Winter makes a reaper; if you wish juice to flow
Beneath the vernal sun, the juice-stained vine-dresser
Will be trampling pressed grapes in the flowering fields.
And all the seasons will obey your divine utterances.
Ancient faith is evidence and the grey origin of former fathers
Is testimony, and the signs of your strength last the ages
Never to be abolished at any time.
About these things, I commit my soul not easily
To touch upon a few of them in this bold recital,
And walking through an open wood I strive to touch a branch or two.
For even if an iron voice moving a hundred mouths should cry out
And the human breast exhale a hundred sounds,
Who will [be able to] unravel everything, when neither heaven’s lucid stars
Nor the porous sands of the sea are equal in number?
[1] Through his long-lived merits, Enoch was the first to escape the chaos; He has already touched many an age over the course of countless years, As nature loses its sway: the earth bore him according to The law of creation, and death marvels at his deliverance.

[2] The stricken womb of poor old Sara was already withered away, Consumed with aged disuse, and her frigid blood, Dying in her old body, kept denying her a child; Her husband was older than she was when the insides Of her icy womb swelled to new birth and the trembling mother, Burdened of her cold belly, brought forth the hope of a fertile race, As she held this late-come child up to her breast. And the father offered his son to be sacrificed to God, Though a ram was sacrificed in place of his boy’s throat. O, the holy heart of that righteous man! Putting pity aside And having more piety, he turned his thoughts from his child’s wounds, Having embraced the precepts of God! And with the help of figural Bloodshed he teaches what is to come, since a pious lamb Would die for the human race by the blood of Christ.

[3] With Lot fleeing the chaos of Sodom, his wife looks back, And there she remains, stupefied, turned to a pillar of salt, Facing the source of her punishment, since no one who looks back, Ignoring the harmful dangers of this contemptible world, Will be saved; nor should the ploughman, Seeing to his work, look over his shoulder.

[4] Once, flickering with harmless flames, A bush not burning seemed to burn, nor joined to the heat Did the wood feed the fire, nor the living bush Suffer fiery harm, but the fawning flames Licked the leafy wood in the warmth of that friendly tinder.
The sun stood toward Gibeon at the height of mid-heaven
And fixed its panting light as evening was delayed.
It was not used to holding back the day, nor did the sluggish moon
Run its course until, in league with heaven,
A burning sword consumed its mighty foe.
Already then the attendant stars saw
The coming of Jesus in that promised name.

Once, ministering ravens fed Elijah,
Offering feasts against their nature, and a bird
Given to pillaging handed over unspoiled food
In tiny morsels, filling its hollow throat with an eager beak.
Now good to Elijah what was unfaithful to Noah before,
The raven redeemed on land what it had forsaken on the waters.
Filled with the Lord, Elijah later worked many miracles in those lands
And made his friend [Elisha] an heir to his might,
Who was also worthy to advance by his merits!
And carried to the stars in a flame-born chariot,
Whose gentle trail left no airy tracks,
Elijah struck a starry road in his glimmering cart,
And drove to victory, seeking better things on a greater course;
Nor did he cross the finish-line of human age.
O, how well that bright path to glittering heaven
Suited Elijah! He was worthy of that power,
Shining in merit and name: for if one letter [of his name] is changed
According to the accent of the Argive tongue, it is ‘Helios.’

Having taken pity on the final hours of his fading light,
God once gave fifteen years more to a king,
Using His own judgment; and closing the open doors of death,
He turned that king’s life from sunset to sunrise.
[13] Falling from his ship and swallowed by a gulping whale,
Jonah did not touch the waters of the sea, having a living tomb
To save him from death. And safe within the savage belly,
He was the deposit, not the prize, and he came across the vast
Surface of the sea to unknown lands by means of that hostile rower.
[14] With God inspiring them, three men of one mind
Spurned the rites of Babylon and were sentenced
To harsh ruin by the savage law of the Chaledean tyrant,
Whose rage enflamed his Achaemenian wrath
More than his own furnace. They are thrust into the midst of the flames,
But death dares nothing; and heated only by the fire of their hearts,
They overcome the blaze of that imaginary torment with the soul’s flame.
O, how great is the glory of those believers!
The furnace-flame was held back by the flames of ardent faith.
Yet worthy vengeance soon struck down that ruthless king.
For because that madman abandoned human pity,
He was the companion of beasts in the wilderness,
Exchanging courtly banquets for chewed-up hay.
And, prone, he drank from the river and roamed about for seven years,
Wandering around, all hairy, through the mountains and the woods.
[15] And no less mad was the biding of the tyrant Darius.
Look here! The wrath of that madman piled crime upon crime,
And innocent Daniel, the glory of the Hebrews, was sentenced
To be the food of starving beasts. But the brute, made gentle
By that just man, so that it might not harm his holy limbs,
Began to love hunger; with its madness soothed,
It put aside its fury and anger rested in its savage throat,
And fierce lions learned to protect their prize.
Dic, ubi sunt, natura, tuae post talia leges? 220
Qui quotiens tibi iura tulit? qui tartara iussit
Translatum nescire uirum, sterilemque marito
Fecundauit anum, sacram praecepit ad aram.
Sponte uenire pecus, muliebres transtulit artus
In simulacra salis, ramos incendia passos 225
Non ardere dedit, uirgultum soluit in anguem,
Per pelagus siccauit iter, mirabile nimbis
Manna pluit, saxo latices produxit ab imo,
Quadrupedem fari plano sermone coegit,
Suspensis rapidas elementis distulit horas,
Per uolucre hominem pasci atque coruscis
In caelum transuexit equis, iam morte grauato
Adiecit tria lustra uiro, praedonis in ore
Nafragio fundauit opem, flagrante camino
Seruauit sub rore pios, per pascua regem
Pauit ut hirsutam . . . fame iussit nescire furorem?
Nempe creatori, cuius quaecumque uidentur
Seu quaecumque latent et rerum machina sermo est,
Omne suum famulatur opus sequiturque iubentis
Imperium quacumque trahit sententia nutu. 240
(a) Heu miserri, qui uana colunt, qui corde sinistro
Religiosa sibi sculpunt simulacra suumque
Factorem fugiunt et quae fecerunt uerentur!
Quis furor est? quae tanta animos dementia ludit,
Ut uolucrem turpemque bouem tortumque draconem
Semihominemque canem supplex homo plenus adoret?
Tell me, Nature, where are your laws after this?
Who has overthrown your laws so many times? Who bade Tartarus
Not know a man had been spared? Who made a barren
Old woman fertile for her husband? Made a ram
Come freely to the sacred altar? Turned womanly limbs
To the likeness of salt? Made branches
Suffering fire not burn? Turned a staff to a snake?
Dried a path through the sea? Miraculously rained manna
From the clouds? Drew streams from the depths of a rock?
Made a four-footed beast speak in plain speech?
Held off the rapid hours with the elements in check?
Made birds feed a man, then carried him to heaven
On shining steeds? Gave fifteen years to a man
Already weighed down by death? Brought help to a castaway
In a robber’s mouth? Saved pious men
From the furnace, protected by dew? Fed a king who became a hairy beast
In the wilderness? And commanded lions’ jaws—
Driven by hunger—not know their fury?
The Creator, of course. All his work serves him,
Visible or invisible, and his word is the working of things,
And his work follows the will of the one commanding it,
Wherever his thought draws it with his nod.
O wretched men who worship idle things,
Who sculpt religious effigies with sinister heart
And shun their own creator and revere the things they have made!
What madness is this? What great dementia plays upon their souls,
So that a whole man lowers himself to worship a misshapen bird or bull,
A contorted snake or half-man-dog?
(b) Ast alii solem caecatis mentibus acti
Adfirmant rerum esse patrem, quia rite uidetur
Clara serenatis infundere lumina terris Et totum lustrare polum: cum constet ab istis
Motibus instabilem rapidis discursibus ignem Officium, non esse Deum, quique ordine certo
Nunc oritur, nunc occiduas dimissus in oras Partitur cum nocte uices. nec semper ubique est,
Nec lumen fuit ille manens in origine mundi Cum geminum sine sole diem nouus orbis haberet.
(c) Sic lunae quoque uota ferunt, quam crescere cernunt
Ac minui, stellisque litant quae luce fugantur.
(d) Hic laticem colit, ille larem, sed iungere sacris Non audent inimica suis, ne lite propinqua
Aut rogus exiguas desiccet fortior undas, Aut ualidis tenues moriantur fontibus ignes.
(e) Arboreis alius ponit radicibus aras
Instituitque dapes et ramos flebilis orat,
Vt natos caramque domum dilectaque rura
Coniugiiique fidem, famulos censumque gubernent.
Lignee, ligna rogas, surdis clamare uideris,
A mutis responsa petis, quae iura domorum
Hac ratione regunt, si caesa securibus actis
Ardua pendentis sustentent culmina tecti,
Aut subiecta focis dapibus famulentur edendis.
(f) Nonnulli uenerant holus mollesque per hortos
Numina sicca rigant uerique hac arte uidentur
Transplantatorum cultores esse deorum.

Some, driven by their blinded hearts,
Proclaim the sun to be the father of things, for it seems (and rightly so)
To spread its brilliant light upon the illuminated lands,
And brighten all the sky: but since, by its very motions,
It is an inconstant flame of rapid ups and downs,
It only serves a function; it is not God. It rises in
Due course then changes places with the night,
Sent off to the western shores. And it is not always everywhere,
Nor was it there at the beginning of the world,
Since the new earth had two days without the sun.
In the same way, they offer up gifts to the moon, which they see
Wax and wane, and worship stars that are then chased off by the light.
This one worships a spring, that one a hearth; but they dare not join
Their enemy’s rites to their own, lest in close contention,
The stronger fires should dry the waters up,
Or the tender flames should die by the mighty fonts.
Another one sets up altars with arboreal roots,
Institutes feasts and tearfully begs to the branches,
That they should rule over his children, his beloved rural home,
The faith of his spouse, his servants and wealth. You blockheads!
You are begging to blocks of wood, barking at deaf limbs,
Seeking answers from mute beams, which only have the sense
To rule the needs of your house: they can hold up your lofty rafters,
If cut down by driven axes, or, tossed in the fire,
They can help cook your food for eating.
Many others worship vegetation and in their tender gardens
Water their dry divinities, and so are shown to be
True cultivators of transplanted gods!
Plura referre pudet, sanctorque in carmine longum
Vel damnare nefas, ne mollia sentibus uram
Lilia, purpurei neu per uiolaria campi
Carduus et spinis surgat paliurus acutis.

Iam satis humanis erroribus addita monstra
Risimus aut potius tales defleuimus actus.
Nunc coeptam iuuet ire uiam montemque per altum
Nitentes firmare gradus; properemus in urbem,
Libertatis opem, radians ubi regia fuluis
Emicat aula tholis, ubi dantur digna petenti,
Quarentem spes certa manet, claustrisque remotis
Peruia pulsanti reserantur limina cordi.

Hic est ille lapis, reprobum quem uertice gestat
Angulus atque oculus praebet miracula nostris:
Cuius onus leue est, cuius iuga ferre suae est.

Per digesta prium ueteris miracula legis
Rettulimus, sancti coniuncto Spiritus actu
Quae Genitor socia Nati uirtute peregit. Per digesta rudis necnon
Dicemus, sancti coniuncto Spiritus actu
Quae Natus socia Patris uirtute peregit,
Semper ut una manens deitatis forma perennis
Quod simplex triplicet quodque est triplicabile simplex.

Haec est uera fides; hanc spreuit habere salutem
Arrius infelix, qui curua per auia rectum
Flectere nius iter, foueam dilapsus in atram

Conruit et tetri mersus petit ima profundi:
Tam uacuus sensu, iustae quam tempore poenae
Visceribus fusus uacuus quoque uentre remansit.

Demens, perpetui qui non imitanda parentis
Iura caducorum gradibus simuluit honorum!

It is a shame to go on and condemn such enduring sin
In this holy song, lest I bruise the soft lilies with briars
Or thorn and thistle rise up among
The violets of the purple field with their pointed barbs.
I have mocked these deeds enough now—or rather,
Lamented the monstrousities of human error.
Now I would like to set out on the road I have begun,
And fix my steps toward the lofty mount; let us hasten to the city,
The wealth of liberty, where a shining royal palace gleams
With golden domes, where honours are given to one who beseeches,
And sure hope awaits the one who searches; with their locks removed,
Heaven’s open doors invite the heart that pounds upon them.

Here is that rejected stone, the one the corner bears
At the top, and is wondrous to our eyes:
Its weight is light, its yoke is sweet to bear.
Through various miracles of the Old Law, we have described
What the Father did with the allied strength of the Son,
Joined by the action of the Holy Spirit.
And through various miracles of the New Law,
We shall also describe what the Son has done
With the allied strength of the Father, joined by the action
Of the Holy Spirit, since they are ever one form of the eternal deity—
The one is threefold and the threefold is one.
This is the true faith; wretched Arius refused to accept this salvation,
Who strove to bend a straight path through the crooked wilderness;
Slipping, he fell into a darkened pit,
And sinking, sought the depths of the foul abyss:
He was as empty of sense as he was of his bowels
At the time of his punishment, when his entrails spilled out.
He was a madman, who mimicked with steps of failing honour
The laws of the perpetual father which are not to be imitated!
Namque homines inter natum genitore minorem Lex carnalis habet, quoniam pater ipse parentis Filius ante fuit, mox et qui filius est nunc Adforet esse pater: sic per genus omne nepotum It noua progenies et aui numerantur auorum. At Dominus, uerbum, uirtus, sapientia, Christus, Et totum commune Patris, de lumine lumen, De solo solus, cui nec minus est Patre quicquam, Nec quo crescat habet, genitus, non quippe creatus: Ipse est principium. nam sicut clarus habetur In genitore manens, genitor quoque clarus in ipso Permanet, et rerum caput est Deus unus ubique. Non quia qui summus Pater est, et Filius hic est, Sed quia quod summus Pater est, et Filius hoc est. Sic ait ipse docens: ‘ego in Patre et Pater in me’. Rursus: ‘ego atque Pater unum sumus’. Arrius ‘unum’ Debet scire ‘sumus’que Sabellius esse fatendum. Iste fidem ternam, hic non amplectitur unam: Ambo errore pares, quamquam diversa sequentes. Qualiter adsueti uarias producere sectas Inpugnant sua dicta uiri, qui brachia nudis Ostendunt exerta umeris, nil tradere docti. Sed tantum certare cati, prudentia quorum Stulta iacet, quia uana Deo est sapientia mundi. Hic loquitur nimis, ille tacet; hic ambulat, hic stat; Alter amat fletus, alter crispare cachinnum: Diuersisque modis par est uesania cunctis. Interea dum rite uiam sermone leuamus Spesque fidesque meum comitantur in ardua gressum, Blandius ad summam tandem peruenimus arcem. En signo sacra crucis uexilla coruscant,

For among men carnal law holds that the child is lesser Than the father, since the father himself existed before The son of the parent, and soon he that is the son Will become the father: so it is with every kind of descendant— The new generation comes and ancestors of ancestors are numbered. But the Lord Christ—the word, might and wisdom, And every feature of the Father, light of light, One God of one alone—is nothing less than the Father, And he has nothing from which he may grow, for he is begotten not made: He is himself the beginning. For just as that bright One is held To reside in the Father, so the bright Father remains in Him, And one God is the head of all things everywhere. This is Not because He who is the highest is the Father and the other is the Son, But because what the highest Father is the Son is that as well. So He himself says: *ego in Patre et Pater in me.* And again: *ego atque Pater unum sumus.* Arius ought to know *unum,* And Sabellius should acknowledge *sumus*— The one does not embrace the three-fold faith, the other not the one. Both are equal in their error, although they follow different paths. In the same way, men given to forming sects of various kinds Deny their own words and, with their uncovered arms Exposed to the shoulders, they are taught to teach nothing. They are only clever enough to argue, whose foolish wisdom Is nothing, since knowledge of the world is worthless to God. This one speaks too much; that one says nothing at all. This one walks; That one stands still. One loves weeping; another loves Bursting out in laughter. In different ways their madness is the same. Meanwhile, as we pause from our journey with these words, And hope and faith accompany our steps to the heights, We come more gently to the highest citadel at last. Look! The holy standard shimmers with the sign of the cross.

Look! The king’s pious camps glimmer; the master’s horn calls out, The gate lies open to the troops: he who fights may enter. The eternal gate beckons you—and that gate is Christ. You will recieved the golden honours of eternal life, Who bear God’s arms with all your might, And His glory is fixed upon your brow. And I bear arms and glory In your land, my good king, standing firm in the outermost rank. Grant me a place of my own here, some humble dwelling Within the walls of this city, that I, your citizen, May deserve to dwell in this holy place and be written Last on the white roll of the blessed order of this city forever. I know I ask a great deal, but you know how to give a great deal, You, who are more insulted by the one who becomes indifferent to hope. Christ, favour my prayers, you who, wanting this dying world To be reborn, once sought out the holy place From heaven, having deigned to assume human form, So bearing foreign limbs, that you might not forsake your own. Guiding man, Matthew covers all this in general, Mark, the lion’s lofty voice, roars out in the wilderness, Luke holds the laws of priesthood in the mouth of bull, John, soaring like an eagle, flies to the stars with his words. These four noble men sing your praises with one voice, Spreading like the seasons over all the earth. And so the peak of apostolic honour, twelve-fold in number, Always shines in imitation of the months and hours, So that each year does service to you in everything. Therefore, remembering the origins of ancient death, I shall hasten from here toward new life, and by sowing tears I shall reap lasting joys: for we who lament in Adam As we sow our seeds, shall each exult every one, When we carry our harvest at the coming of Christ.
### Appendix 3: Polyptoton in the *Carmen Paschale*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
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<tr>
<td>pietas</td>
<td>pietate remota / Plus pietatis habens contempsit uulnra nati</td>
<td>1.116–17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ardeo</td>
<td>Non ardens ardere rubus, nec iuncta calori</td>
<td>1.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mitis</td>
<td>Mitis in inmitem uirga est animata draconem</td>
<td>1.132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ligneus/lignum</td>
<td>Lignea, ligna rogas, surdis clamare uideris,</td>
<td>1.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>auus</td>
<td>It noua progenies et aui numerantur auorum.</td>
<td>1.311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lumen</td>
<td>Et totum commune Patris, de lumine lumen,</td>
<td>1.313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solus</td>
<td>De solo solus, cui nec minus est Patre quicquam,</td>
<td>1.314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genitor</td>
<td>In genitore manens, genitor quoque clarus in ipso</td>
<td>1.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pater</td>
<td>Sic ait ipse docens: ego in Patre et Pater in me.</td>
<td>1.321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uirgo</td>
<td>Virginis antiquae facinus noua uirgo piaret:</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nascor</td>
<td>Sub dicione necis, Christo nascente renasci</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pario</td>
<td>Virgo sinus gaudetque suum paritura parentem.</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lex/lego</td>
<td>Et sensu iugulare cupis, legemque legendo</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rex/regnum</td>
<td>Neglegis et regi regum tua regna minaris.</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tollo</td>
<td>Tollere cum dicit quod non habet, hoc mihi tollit:</td>
<td>2.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piscator/piscor</td>
<td>Protinus ergo uiros ex piscatoribus aptos</td>
<td>2.220–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nobilis</td>
<td>Nobilis accepit Domino locus ille iacente,</td>
<td>2.296–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominus/o</td>
<td>A Domino dominante trahit primusque uidere</td>
<td>2.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ternus</td>
<td>Haec terno sermone monens, ut terna negantis</td>
<td>2.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pasco</td>
<td>Pascere, non pasci ueniens, mirabile! Fusas</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rex</td>
<td>Rex etiam solus regum et Dominus dominantum</td>
<td>3.313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lux</td>
<td>In lucem sine luce ruit. Tunc sanguinis ille</td>
<td>4.253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fleo</td>
<td>Flebant germanae, flebat populatio praesens, …flebat</td>
<td>4.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>famulus</td>
<td>Assurgit famulisque libens famulatus et omnem</td>
<td>5.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>panis/trado</td>
<td>Prodit auctorem, panem cui tradidit ipse</td>
<td>5.33–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perdus</td>
<td>Sors melior nescire datam quam perdere uitam … perdet</td>
<td>5.54–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pius/pietas</td>
<td>Ense Petri, ne qua pius a pietate uacaret,</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lauo/lauacrum</td>
<td>Non solas lausius manus, sed corpore toto</td>
<td>5.159–60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oheo</td>
<td>Idem iuius erat membris oheuntibus in se,</td>
<td>5.264–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>templum</td>
<td>Illud ouans templum, maioris culmina templi</td>
<td>5.270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mors/morior</td>
<td>Cui licuit sine morte mori quique omnia gignens,</td>
<td>5.281</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix 4: Miracles in Book One of the *Carmen Paschale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miracle</th>
<th>Biblical bk.</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Tot. lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The story of Enoch</td>
<td>Gen 5:18–24</td>
<td>103–6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lot’s wife turned to a pillar of salt</td>
<td>Gen 19:24–6</td>
<td>121–26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The burning bush</td>
<td>Ex 3:2</td>
<td>127–31</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Moses’ staff becomes a serpent</td>
<td>Ex 4:3; 7:10–12</td>
<td>132–35</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Manna from heaven</td>
<td>Ex 16:13–16</td>
<td>148–51</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Water from the rock</td>
<td>Ex 17:1–7</td>
<td>152–59</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The sun and moon stand still</td>
<td>Jos 10:12–13</td>
<td>163–69</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Elijah, ravens &amp; chariot of fire</td>
<td>1 Kings 17:1–6</td>
<td>170–87</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Hezekiah given an extra 15 years</td>
<td>2 Kings 20:1–6</td>
<td>188–91</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The three youths in the furnace</td>
<td>Dan 3:13–30</td>
<td>197–211</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Daniel and the lions</td>
<td>Dan 6:16–24</td>
<td>212–19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5b: Facsimile Reproduction of CUL F.f. 4.42, 2r (Juvencus, *Evangelia*, 1.1–17)
## Appendix 6: Golden Lines in the First Book of the *Carmen paschale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Textual Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Cerea gemmatis flauescunt mella canistris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Cum sua gentiles studeant figmenta poetae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Saeua nefandarum renouent contagia rerum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Plurima Niliacis tradant mendacia biblis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Clara salutiferi taceam miracula Christi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Attica Cecropii serpit doctrina ueneni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Caecaque Daedalei lustratis limina tecti?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Liuida mortiferis uellatis toxica sucis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Maxima centenum cumulare per horrea fructum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Qui diuersa nouam formasti in corpora terram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Sordidus impressas calcabit uinitor uuas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Cunctaqae diuinis parebunt tempora dictis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Saucia iam uetulae marcebant uiscera Sarrae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>Frigidus annoso moriens in corpore sanguis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>Noxia contempi uitans discrimina mundi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>Frondea blanditae lambebant robora flammae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>Peruia diuisci patuerunt caerula ponti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Sicca peregrinas stupuerunt marmora plantas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td>Et ieiuna nouum uomuerunt marmora potum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>Heredem propriae fecit uirtutis amicum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179</td>
<td>Aurea flavmigeris euectus in astra quadrigis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>Qua leuis aerios non exprimit orbita sulcos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>188</td>
<td>Vltima labentis miseratus tempora lucis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206</td>
<td>Digna sed immitem mox perculit ultio regem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209</td>
<td>Aulica depasto mutans conuiuia faeno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>Clara serenatis infundere lumina terris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>262</td>
<td>Aut rogus exiguas desiccat fortior undas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>263</td>
<td>Aut ualidis tenues moriantur fontibus ignes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>271</td>
<td>Ardua pendentis sustentent culmina tecti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>287</td>
<td>Peruia pulsanti reserantur limina cordi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>341</td>
<td>Aurea perpetuae capietis praemia uitae</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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