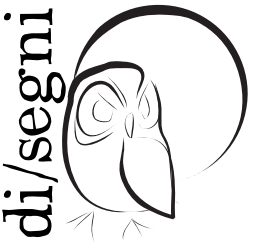
FEEDING THE DRAGON

An Eschatological Motif in Medieval Europe

Edited by Claudia Di Sciacca and Andrea Meregalli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Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature, Culture e Mediazioni
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Table of Contents

Introduction..... 11

CLAUDIA DI SCIACCA AND ANDREA MEREGALLI

List of Abbrevations 15

Feeding the Dragon. A Foreword 19

CLAUDIA DI SCIACCA

Recedite, ecce draconi ad devorandum datus sum. *The Devouring Dragon Topos in the Works of Gregory the Great* 39

LUCIA CASTALDI

Efne her is cumen an draca þe me sceal forswelgan. *Ælfric's Take on Gregory the Great's Swallowing Dragons* 57

CLAUDIA DI SCIACCA

"Their Souls Will Shine Seven Times Brighter Than the Sun". An Eschatological Motif and Its Permutations in Old English Literature.....105

THOMAS N. HALL

Þær bið æfre ece fyr and undeadlic wyrm. *The Worm of Hell in Ælfric's Corpus*.. 153

FEDERICA DI GIUSEPPE

From Gulping Dragon to Harmless Mouse. Christ's Deception and Entrapment of Satan in Niðrstigningar saga 179

DARIO BULLITTA

Index of Manuscripts 195
Index of Texts Cited and Discussed 199
Index of Names 213
Abstracts 221
Contributors 225

INTRODUCTION

The idea of this volume originated in the workshop *Feeding the Dragon. An Eschatological Motif in Early Medieval Europe*, held online on 17 September 2020, as the concluding act of the project 'Feeding the Dragon. An Eschatological Motif in Old English Homilies and Hagiographies (FEEDEM)', coordinated by C. Di Sciacca and funded by the University of Udine (PRID - PSA 2017).

The book consists of six original essays concerning two popular eschatological motifs of medieval Europe: the devouring devil, especially in the guise of a dragon, and the zoomorphic mouth of hell, arguably a distinctive English adaptation of the anthropomorphic mouth of hell of classical antiquity.

The opening essay (C. Di Sciacca, "Feeding the Dragon. A Foreword") offers a survey of the topos of the devouring demonic monster, a veritable commonplace across cultures and ages. Focusing on the analysis of some key Old English (OE) homilies and hagiographies, C. Di Sciacca argues that the pervasive imagery of the devouring dragon in early medieval England coalesced with the mouth of hell, thereby contributing to popularise it, and that such a coalescence was triggered by the special currency of two apocrypha, the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, especially the *Descensus Christi ad inferos* section of the latter text.

One of the most influential exegetical interpretation of the devouring dragon in Rev. 12 can be found in Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*. Moreover, Gregory used the devouring dragon as an iconographic symbol of the devilish tempter in two exempla of the *Homiliae in Evangelia*, eventually incorporated into the *Dialogi* (of disputed authorship). Thus, the Gregorian homiletic and hagiographic works were instrumental in spreading the topos of the devouring dragon in subsequent medieval literature, as well as providing some revealing case-studies of the distinctive modes of production and transmission of Gregory's texts. (L. Castaldi, "*Recedite, ecce draconi ad devorandum datus sum*. The Devouring Dragon Topos in Gregory the Great's Works").

The Gregorian exempla of the swallowing dragons were adapted into OE by the major Anglo-Saxon homilist and hagiographer, Ælfric of Eynsham (*c.* 950 – *c.* 1010). Moving on from L. Castaldi's study, the third essay discusses Ælfric's take on the imagery of the swallowing devil in three of the Catholic Homilies: the homily for the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost (CH I. 35), the homily for St Benedict's Day (CH II. 11), and the homily for Palm Sunday (CH I. 14). In all three homilies, the antecedent of the demonic devourer has ultimately been traced to Gregory the Great, although, as is often the case with Ælfric, the ultimate patristic source has been mediated by Carolingian transmitters and integrated with echoes of ingrained biblical reading, exegetical learning, liturgical drill, and familiar stories of monastic literature. Through a detailed comparative analysis of the primary sources, this essay discusses the relationship between Ælfric's homilies and their source-texts, both ultimate and intermediate, as well as assessing Ælfric's distinctive contribution to the imagery of the devouring dragon. (C. Di Sciacca, "*efne her is cumen an draca þe me sceal forswelgan*. Ælfric's Vernacular Take on a Gregorian Dragon").

In his eschatological imagery, Ælfric also made use of the worm as a symbol of evil as well as of death and decay. In particular, the punishment of unrepentant sinners involves two scriptural motifs ultimately deriving from Mark 9:43-50, namely the eternal Worm and the unquenchable fire. The fourth essay discusses how Ælfric articulates such motifs within three relevant texts of his homiletic and hagiographic corpus. While the homily *On Auguries* focuses on those guilty of idolatry and the *Homily for the Third Sunday after Epiphany* conveys the spiritual meaning of Christ's healing miracles, the Passion of St Julian and His Wife Basilissa presents an exemplary tale of resistance against hostile forces. These three texts offer a way to consider how both the Worm of Hell and the maggots devouring the flesh are embedded in Ælfric's approach to the conflict between Good and Evil, inciting people to follow a Christian conduct that will save them from the jaws of the *undeadlic wyrm*. (F. Di Giuseppe, "*þær bið æfre ece fyr and undeadlic wyrm*. The Worm of Hell in Ælfric's Corpus").

The role of apocrypha into the shaping of the imaginative and eclectic eschatology and cosmology of the Middle Ages cannot be overemphasized. One of the most distinctive debts of early Insular eschatology to apocryphal lore is the frequency of motifs structured around numbers: the three utterances of the soul, the three hosts of Doomsday, the four kinds of death, the seven journeys of the soul, the seven joys of heaven, the seven heavens, the seven pains of hell, the fifteen tokens of Doomsday, etc. Though fixed by number and at least structurally resistant to alteration, these motifs are nevertheless subject to creative reformulation. T.N. Hall's comprehensive study aims to reconstruct the literary history of these seemingly interrelated ideas, ultimately demonstrating the role of medieval apocrypha and Hiberno-Latin florilegia in transmitting them ("'Their Souls Will Shine Seven Times

Brighter Than the Sun'. An Eschatological Motif and Its Permutations in Old English Literature").

The most widespread and influential New Testament apocryphon in medieval Europe was the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. The earliest Icelandic translation of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, *Niðrstigningar saga* or 'The Story of the Descent' (c. 1200), is not a translation *sensu stricto* but rather an adaptation of the second section of the original Latin text, the *Descensus Christi ad inferos*. D. Bullitta discusses two of the four interpolations of *Niðrstigningar saga* containing two divergent descriptions of Satan: the former as the terrifying seven-headed dragon of Rev. 12:3, who threatens to destroy the world; the latter as the fish swallowing the dying Christ, whose body serves as a human bait and the Cross as a divine hook. The essay traces this metaphor to Augustine's *Sermo* 265D (*De Quadragesima Ascensione Domini*), which the Icelandic compiler might have known in the form of a marginal gloss to Peter Lombard's *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae* (*c.* 1157) ("From Gulping Dragon to Harmless Mouse. Christ's Deception and Entrapment of Satan in *Niðrstigningar saga*").

The three indexes have been put together by Dr Dario Capelli, whom we wish to thank for his generous help. Our gratitude goes of course also to the colleagues and friends who participated in the original workshop (Dario Bullitta, Lucia Castaldi, Tom Hall, and Giorgio Ziffer, who delivered their papers under the competent and good-humoured chairmanship of Rosalind Love), as well as to those who have eventually accepted to contribute to this volume and have ever since gracefully put up with our requests and demands during the (alas) long stages of editing the manuscript. We would also like to thank the reviewers for taking the time and effort to comment on the individual contributions.

Last but not least, we wish to express our gratitude to the Directors and Editorial Board of the series 'di/segni' for their interest in our editorial venture and for accepting our manuscript for publication.

It has been a long and winding road, but it is now a pleasure to bring this book to fruition and an even greater pleasure to make it available to students and scholars open access.

Claudia Di Sciacca and Andrea Meregalli
St George's Day, 23 April 2023

Note: Throughout this book, 'Anglo-Saxon' is used to refer to the history and culture of pre-Norman England.

Latin, Old English, and Old Norse spellings have not been standardised.

List of Abbreviations

ANF	*Arkiv för nordisk filologi*
ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
BHG	Halkin, François, ed. [1895] 1957. *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*. Brussels: Société des Bollandistes (Subsidia Hagiographica 8a)
BHG Auct.	Halkin, François, ed. 1969. *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca. Auctarium*. Brussels: Société des Bollandistes (Subsidia Hagiographica 47)
BHG Nov. Auct.	Halkin, François, ed. 1984. *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca. Novum Auctarium*. Brussels: Société des Bollandistes (Subsidia Hagiographica 65)
BHL	Socii Bollandiani. 1898-1901. *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina antiquae et mediae aetatis*. Brussels: Société des Bollandistes (Subsidia Hagiographica 6)
BHL Suppl.	Fros, Henrik. 1986. *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina antiquae et mediae aetatis. Novum Supplementum*. Brussels: Société des Bollandistes (Subsidia Hagiographica 70)
BL	British Library
BM	Bibliothèque Municipale
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
Cameron	Cameron, Angus. 1973. "A List of Old English Texts." In *A Plan for the Dictionary of Old English*, ed. Angus Cameron and Roberta Frank, 27-306. Toronto: UTP (Toronto Old English Series 2)
CANT	Geerard, Maurits. 1992. *Clavis Apocryphorum Novi Testamenti*. Turnhout: Brepols
CAVT	Haelewyck, Jean-Claude. 1998. *Clavis Apocryphorum Veteris Testamenti*. Turnhout: Brepols
CCCC	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina

CH I	Clemoes, Peter, ed. 1997. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. The First Series. Text*. Oxford: OUP (EETS s.s. 17)
CH II	Godden, Malcolm R., ed. 1979. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. The Second Series. Text*. Oxford: OUP (EETS s.s. 5)
CPG	Maurits, Geerard. 1974-98. *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*. 5 vols. and Supplement. Turnhout: Brepols
CPL	Dekkers, Eligius and Emil Gaar. [1951] 1995. *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*. Turnhout: Brepols
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DOEC	*Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, compiled by Antonette diPaolo Healey with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang. Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project 2009.
EETS	Early English Texts Society
e.s.	extra series
o.s.	ordinary series
s.s.	supplementary series
G & L	Gneuss, Helmut, and Michael Lapidge. 2014. *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts. A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100*. Toronto: UTP (Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series 15)
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
Ker [1957] 1990	Ker, Neil R. [1957] 1990. *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
MS	*Mediaeval Studies*
OUP	Oxford University Press
PG	Migne, Jacques-P., ed. 1857-66. *Patrologia Graeco-Latina*. 161 vols. and Index. Paris
PL	Migne, Jacques-P., ed. 1844-55. *Patrologia Latina*. 217 vols. Paris; Index. 1864. 4 vols. Paris
PLS	Hamman, Adalbert G. ed. 1958-74. *Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum*. 5 vols. Paris
SASLC I	Biggs, Frederick M., Thomas D. Hill, and Paul E. Szarmach, eds., with the assistance of Karen Hammond. 1990. *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture. A Trial Version*. Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies. State University of New York at Binghamton

SASLC AASS	Biggs, Frederick M., Thomas D. Hill, Paul E. Szarmach, and E. Gordon Whatley, eds., with the assistance of Deborah A. Oosterhouse. 2001. *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture Volume I. Abbo of Fleury, Abbo of Saint-Germain-de-Prés, and Acta Sanctorum*. Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University. Medieval Institute Publications.
SASLC Apocrypha	Biggs, Frederick M. 2007. *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture. Apocrypha*. Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University. Medieval Institute Publications (Instrumenta Anglistica Mediaevalia 1).
SH	Pope, John C., ed. 1967-68. *Homilies of Ælfric. A Supplementary Collection*. 2 vols. Oxford: OUP (EETS o.s. 259-60).
UL	University Library
UP	University Press
UTP	University of Toronto Press

FEEDING THE DRAGON. A FOREWORD

Claudia Di Sciacca
University of Udine

0. introduction

The project of which this volume is the concluding act (see *supra*, 11), but hopefully also a springboard into further research, has concerned two popular eschatological motifs of early medieval England: the devouring demonic monster, especially in the guise of a dragon, and the zoomorphic mouth of hell, arguably a distinctively English adaptation of the anthropomorphic mouth of hell of classical antiquity (Di Sciacca 2019b, 53-61).

The devouring monster, visualising the unrelenting rapaciousness of death and/or of the underworld, can be said to be immemorial and cross-cultural, being rooted in the universal experience of the ruthlessness of death. As I have tried to show elsewhere, the early English elaborations of this topos syncretically blend crucial themes of Christian theology and demonology – the bait-and-hook metaphor, the soteriology of the Cross, *Christus victor*, the baptismal symbolism –, with elements of diverse origin, from classical mythology to the Celtic 'Monster of Hell' and the lupine or serpentine monsters of Germanic lore (Di Sciacca 2019b, 53-71, 93-99). I would argue that in early medieval England the pervasive imagery of the devouring monster coalesced with the mouth of hell and, at the same time, contributed to popularise it, and that such a coalescence was arguably triggered by the special currency enjoyed by two apocrypha, the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, with their imaginative cosmology and eschatology (Di Sciacca 2019a, 368-74; 2019b).

1. St Margaret and the dragon

All of the above (and the following) had the most casual starting-point at a *kjallara*-party held in the cellar of the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykavík over ten years ago on 13 July, that is St Margaret's day,[1] as the namesake party-planners merrily explained to their bemused Italian guest. At the time I was a newcomer to the Institute, having just taken up a Snorri Sturluson Fellowship to work on the reception of the *Elucidarium* by Honorius Augustodunensis in early medieval England and Scandinavia, and was totally as oblivious to St Margaret as I was to the caloric threats and alcoholic traps of Icelandic parties. However, I made use of the Arnamagnæan library also to get introduced to a saint that seemed to be so popular in Iceland (Wolf 2013b, 217-19) and in England (Clayton and Magennis 1994; Di Sciacca 2015; 2019a), as I was indeed to find out pretty soon, much to my embarrassment both as a Germanic philologist and a Catholic.

Sehnsucht of my happy times at the Árnastofnun apart, the legend of the formidable dragon-fighting St Margaret, with its swallowing of the saint by the demonic dragon – a distinctive, indeed unique, narrative twist into the commonplace hagiographic tradition of the dracomachia (Ogden 2013, 196-256 and 383-426; Rauer 2000, 174-93; Riches 2003) –, has proved the veritable cornerstone of my investigations. St Margaret's popularity in early medieval England cannot be overestimated: her life[2] is attested in at least two Latin witnesses[3] and four Old English versions.[4] The flamboyant demonology of St Margaret's hagiographic tradition has long attracted the attention of scholars and has already been traced to a complex net of

1 On the cult of St. Margaret in Iceland, see Cormack 1994, 121-22, and Wolf 2013b. On the varying dates of St Margaret's feast day as well as name, see Di Sciacca 2019a, 356-57 note 9. In the *Old English Martyrology*, St Margaret is commemorated on 7 July under her Eastern name, Marina: see below, note 4.

2 Although strictly speaking a 'passion', St Margaret's legend is commonly referred to as a 'life' in Anglo-Saxon studies. Similarly, although I am aware that 'homily' and 'sermon' are not synonymous, they will not be differentiated in the course of this essay. Finally, although they have recently proved controversial, the adjectives 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Insular' will be used in their most proper historical and geographical sense.

3 Paris, BnF, lat. 5574 (*s.* ix/x or $x^{1/4}$, Mercia?; provenance: France, *s.* xii), and Saint-Omer, BM 202 (*s.* ix^{2}, North-East France; provenance: England [Exeter?] by *s.* xi^{med}): see G & L, nos. 885.5 and 930.5, and Clayton and Magennis 1994, 7-8, 95-96, and 192; a corrected text of the Paris *Life of St Margaret* with facing-page English translation is provided *ibid.*, 191-223. On the Saint-Omer manuscript, see Cross and Crick 1996.

4 1) Entry (7 July) in the *Old English Martyrology* (*s.* ix), though under the Eastern name of Marina: Rauer 2013, 132-33, 271; 2) Prose life in ms. London, BL, Cotton Tiberius A.iii (*s.* xi^{med}, Canterbury, CC): G & L, no. 363; Ker [1957] 1990, no. 186, art. 15; Cameron B3.3.16; Clayton and Magennis 1994, 112-39; 3) Prose life in ms. CCCC 303 (*s.* xii^{1}, Rochester): Ker [1957] 1990, no. 57, art. 23; Cameron B3.3.14; Clayton and Magennis 1994, 149-80; 4) Prose life once in ms. London, BL, Cotton Otho B.x (*s.* xi^{1}), destroyed in the Cottonian fire of 1731 and known only from the transcript of the *incipit* and *explicit* by H. Wanley: G & L, no. 355; Ker [1957] 1990, no. 177, 228; Cameron B3.3.15; Clayton and Magennis 1994, 95.

Judaeo-Christian apocryphal traditions (Di Sciacca 2015, 43-47; 2019a, 361-68). A recent contribution to the debate has argued that the swallowing dragon motif shows significant analogues with the cosmology of two apocrypha, the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* and the *Pistis Sophia*, both associated with Egyptian Gnosticism (Di Sciacca 2019a, 368-74).

2. THE *SEVEN HEAVENS APOCRYPHON*

The *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* is so-called because it describes the journey and purgation of the souls, both blessed and sinful, through seven heavens, until they reach the throne of God and are there handed over by St Michael for the Lord to pass His judgment (Di Sciacca 2002, 244-46; 2019a, 368-72; 2019b, 72-76). The sinful souls are then plunged into hell, which is also a composite region, consisting of twelve walls, above which there are twelve fiery dragons, and the sinful soul is progressively swallowed and then spewed out from the outermost dragon to the lower one, until it ultimately reaches Satan (see below, 21-22).

The tradition of the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* in the West amount to five attestations, all traceable to the British Isles and to Insular centres on the Continent.[5] Though the five surviving witnesses agree in significant places and obviously betray what must have been a shared source, they are textually unrelated (Carey 2014a; Volmering 2014, 286-87). The Old English Seven Heavens text attests to the most detailed description of the peculiar itinerary of the sinful soul to its final destination, as well as featuring the most thorough portrayal of Satan bound on his back with fiery bonds at the bottom of hell and in a position that resembles Christ's cross:

> Sio helle hafað iserne weal 7 .xii. siðum. H[e] beliet ða helle, 7 ofer þam .xii. fealdum þara wealla wæron .xii. dracan fyrene. Se grimma engel sende[ð] þa synfullan sawla þam ytemestan dracan 7 he hi forsweolgeð 7 eft aspiweð þam niðeran dracan, swa hira æghwylc sendeð oðrum in muð þa sawla, ðe bioð gebundene mid þam bendum ðara eahta synna ealdorlicra. Se yetemesta draca þæt is þæt ealdordeoful se [bið] gebunden onbecling

5 The five Seven Heavens texts are: 1) a fragmentary Latin homily within the *Apocrypha Priscillianistica* (item no. 2 in ms. Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Aug. perg. 254, *s.* viii/ix, Novara; Carey 2014b); 2) an Irish version contained within the *Fís Adamnáin*, or *The Vision of Adamnán* (*s.* x/xi; Carey 2019); 3) the Irish *Na Seacht Neamha*, or *The Seven Heavens*, within the *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* (*s.* xv; Ó Dochartaigh 2014); 4) an Irish version contained within the third recension of *In Tenga Bithnúa*, or *The Evernew Tongue* (Nic Cárthaigh 2014); 5) an Old English version within a text of the *Apocalypse of Thomas* (G & L, no. 39; Ker [1957] 1990, no. 32, art. 12; Cameron B3.4.12.2; Volmering 2014).

> mid raceteage reades fyres to tacne Cristes rode in hellegrunde (Volmering 2014, 300).[6]

These swallowing dragons can be said to be highly syncretistic creatures, having been associated with the 'Monster of Hell', a motif popular in medieval Insular eschatology (Volmering 2014, 288 and 305; Wright 1993, 156-65), whose "ultimate progenitor" has, in turn, been identified with the dragon Parthemon (Wright 1993, 165) of several Latin redactions of the *Visio S. Pauli*,[7] the "complete Baedeker to the other-world", according to Silverstein's iconic definition (1935, 5). This 'Pauline element' is intriguing, since the cosmology of the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* has been traced to a Gnostic *Apocalypse of Paul* from the Coptic library of Nag Hammadi (Stevenson 1983, 30-33; Dumville 1977-78, 67-69).

The very manuscript context of the Old English Seven Heavens piece is also revealing. This is uniquely attested within a vernacular homiletic adaptation of the *Apocalypse of Thomas* (Ker [1957] 1990, no. 32, art. 12; Cameron B3.4.12.1; Förster 1955), itself also an apocryphon where Christ purportedly reveals to the Apostle Thomas the fifteen signs that will herald Judgement Day (*CAVT* 326; Biggs and Wright 2007). In turn, this version of the *Apocalypse of Thomas* is the third of a set of six Old English homiletic items, added, together with other *marginalia*, in the margins of ms. CCCC 41.[8] Collectively considered, the six homiletic items[9] make up a small

6 "The hell has an iron wall and twelve sides. It surrounds the hell, and above the twelve folds of these walls were twelve fiery dragons. The grim angel sends the sinful souls to the outermost dragon and he swallows them and spews [them] out again to the lower dragon; so each one of them sends the souls, who are bound with the bonds of the eight cardinal sins, to the other into [his] mouth. The outermost dragon, that is the chief devil, he [is] bound on his back with chains of red fire as a sign of Christ's cross at the bottom of hell." (Volmering 2014, 301).

7 For an overview of the *Visio S. Pauli* and its circulation in the Insular world, see at least Wright 1993, 106-74, and diPaolo Healey 2007. The Latin tradition of the *Visio S. Pauli* has generally been divided into the Long Versions, more faithful to the Greek original and relating Paul's visit to both heaven and hell, and the Redactions, abridged accounts focusing on Paul's journey to hell. On the Long Versions, see Silverstein 1935 and Silverstein and Hilhorst 1997. More recently, L. Jiroušková has proposed a new way of grouping the Latin tradition of the *Visio* (2006, 5-17 and 29-35).

8 This codex is a copy of the Old English version of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*s.* xi^{1}), to which a slightly later hand (*s.* xi^{1} or xi^{med}) added a number of *marginalia* both in Latin (mass sets, office chants, prayers, charms) and in Old English (homilies, charms, a medical recipe, fragments from the *Old English Martyrology*, and the poem *Solomon and Saturn I*): G & L, no. 39; Ker [1957] 1990, no. 32; the vernacular *marginalia* are Ker arts. 2-18; see also Volmering 2014, 290-96, Olsen 2010, and further bibliography in Di Sciacca 2019b, 79 note 103.

9 The six Old English homiletic *marginalia* are: a version of Vercelli iv (Ker [1957] 1990, no. 32, art. 9; see below, note 14); an abbreviated adaptation of version B^{2} of the *Transitus Mariae* by pseudo-Melito, uniquely attested in CCCC 41 (Ker [1957] 1990, no. 32, art. 11; Cameron B3.3.21; Clayton 1998, 216-28); the homiletic adaptation of the *Apocalypse of Thomas*, including the Seven Heavens narrative (on which, see above, 21-22 and note 6); an Easter homily (Ker [1957] 1990, no. 32, art. 13; Cameron B8.5.3.2; Hulme 1903-04, 610-14); a homily in praise of St Michael, uniquely attested in CCCC 41 (Ker [1957] 1990, no. 32, art. 17; Cameron B3.3.24;

compendium of apocryphal eschatology and demonology, their recurring themes being the fate of the soul, Doomsday, and the resurrection. As has already been noted, their thematic (and, at times, also stylistic) consistency suggests a shared literary milieu, namely one that was imbued with apocryphal lore of likely Eastern origin and mediated by Irish sources (Johnson 1998; Volmering 2014, 292-96).

Particularly relevant to the present study is the fifth item, namely a homily in praise of St Michael, not only or rather not so much because St Michael is the Christian dragon slayer *per excellence*, as because some distinctive elements in this homily, especially some idiosyncratic eulogistic epithets bestowed upon the saint, "could reasonably reflect a degree of Coptic influence mediated by a Hiberno-Latin source" (Johnson 1998, 90; Ruggerini 1999). St Michael enjoyed a special popularity within Coptic Christianity, particularly as the most effective and sympathetic intercessor on behalf of mankind (Johnson 1998, 87-90). In turn, St Michael seems to play a crucial role within the six homiletic *marginalia* of CCCC 41, as he occurs also in the account of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, where he features as guardian and conveyor of Mary's soul, in keeping with his traditional role as psychopomp and guardian of souls of the living and the dead; in the Seven Heavens piece, where St Michael guards the door of the first heaven and presents the souls before the throne of the Lord; finally, in the Easter Homily, where St Michael together with the Virgin Mary and St Peter intercede on behalf of sinners on Judgement Day. Furthermore, other non-homiletic *marginalia* of CCCC 41, in particular charms and loricas, that is texts which purport to offer protection, both material and spiritual, are in line with St Michael's apotropaic power, although they do not explicitly mention the saint (Johnson 1998, 65-85).

3. THE *PISTIS SOPHIA*

The Gnostic background of the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* has also been further corroborated by recent *Quellenforschung*, which has identified the closest antecedent of the apocryphon with an Egyptian Gnostic text, the *Pistis Sophia* (Carey 2003; 2014a, 156-57; Touati 2014, 176-83).

A treatise dated to the third century, the *Pistis Sophia* features a gigantic serpentine monster, the dragon of the outer darkness, that encircles the earth and bites its own tail (Schmidt and Macdermot 1978). When the soul reaches the dragon, the latter takes its tail from its mouth in order to swallow the soul, which now has to go through twelve chambers of punishments

Grant 1982, 42-77); finally, a homily on Palm Sunday based on the account of Christ's passion in Matt. 26 and 27, uniquely attested in CCCC 41 (Ker [1957] 1990, no. 32, art. 18; Cameron B3.2.19; Grant 1982, 78-110).

inside the dragon's body, each provided with its own gate and presided over by an archon with bestial features. Once the soul has completed its ordeal of atonement, the dragon again takes it tail from its mouth and disgorges it (III, §102: Schmidt and Macdermot 1978, 256-62).

This composite structure of the underworld and the kind of circuit of purification and punishment the soul has to go through has been associated in particular with the Gnostic sect of the Ophites (Carey 2003, 134-35; Touati 2014, 179-83). However, this vision of the otherworld is highly syncretistic in that it is also paralleled in other esoteric doctrines of Graeco-Roman Egypt and, further back, in the ancient indigenous Egyptian doctrines of the afterlife (Carey 1994, 25 note 70; 2003, 135-36; Touati 2014, 173-83). Intriguingly, the environment "that might well have fostered such a fusion of elements" has been pinpointed by Carey in the heterodox monastic communities thriving in fourth- and fifth-century Egypt and whose "hybrid heritage lived on in the apocrypha of the Coptic Church" (Carey 1994, 32). Similarly, the production and usage of the apocrypha of the Nag Hammadi codices have been situated within the intellectual and spiritual context of the Pachomian monasticism of Upper Egypt (Lundhaug and Jenott 2015; Dechow 2018). The hint at an association between Coptic apocryphal eschatology and early Egyptian monasticism is most intriguing, in view of the contribution that Desert monasticism and the related corpus of homiletic and hagiographic exempla gave to the definition of Anglo-Saxon eschatology and demonology (see below, 28-29).

4. The swallowing dragon in Anglo-Saxon England

Unfortunately, there is no evidence of the circulation of the *Pistis Sophia* in pre-Conquest England. As to the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon*, the unique Old English version is probably just the tip of a wider iceberg. The vernacular piece itself has arguably been derived from a now lost Latin (presumably Hiberno-Latin) exemplar (Carey 2014a, 164, 170, and 190; Volmering 2014, 286-87). In addition, the Old English version is probably a copy, hence at least another vernacular witness of the apocryphon should be taken into account (Volmering 2014, 286-87). Furthermore, echoes of the idiosyncratic cosmology and eschatology of the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* have been detected in a distinctive group of Old English anonymous homilies (Di Sciacca 2019a, 377-78; 2019b, 80-84). Fiery dragons that swallow and then regurgitate the sinful soul *en route* to its afterlife destination feature in a composite anonymous homily for the third Sunday after Epiphany, *Be heofonwarum and be helwarum*,[10] and in two composite anonymous homilies

10 G & L, no. 86; Ker [1957] 1990, no. 56, art. 10, and no. 153, art. 4; Cameron B3.2.5; Teresi 2002, 226-29.

relating a *post-mortem* vision ultimately associated with a putative Desert Father Macarius (Di Sciacca 2010, 329-38), the so-called Macarius Homily[11] and Napier xxix.[12]

In particular, *Be heofonwarum and be helwarum* features a twelve-fold hell very similar to the surviving versions of the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon*, albeit more concise and independent of them (Teresi 2002, 228, ll. 40-52). Also, as Wright has noted, the Seven Heavens section of *Be heofonwarum* features a detail, namely the fire of hell is nine times hotter than the fire of Doomsday (Teresi 2002, 228, ll. 55-56), unparalleled in all the other surviving versions of the apocryphon but present in the *Pistis Sophia*, where different kinds of fires are arranged in a numerical *gradatio* (Wright 1993, 220).

The Macarius Homily and Napier xxix feature a dragon that swallows and then regurgitates the sinful souls.[13] Vercelli Homily iv too features a dragon, called Satan, whose throat is the place where witches and wizards receive their eternal punishment,[14] as well as containing an allusion to the heaven of the Holy Trinity, the seventh heaven (Scragg 1992, 94, ll. 90-103). Notably, a variant text of Vercelli iv is attested as the first of six homiletic *marginalia* in ms. CCCC 41 (see above, note 9).

Finally, devouring dragons feature in many an exemplum in the œuvre of Gregory the Great, and as such circulated both in Latin and the vernacular in medieval England (Castaldi, *infra*; Di Sciacca 2019b, 84-85; *Eadem*, *infra*).

5. THE HARROWING OF HELL AND THE *GOSPEL OF NICODEMUS*

The dragon's swallowing of St Margaret and her emerging from inside the dragon's belly after making the sign of cross has been likened to the Harrowing of Hell, when Satan entices Christ into hell only to be inevitably vanquished when Christ sets His cross – the sign of victory – in the midst of hell (Di Sciacca 2019a, 367-68).

The chief ultimate source for the Harrowing has generally been considered the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, especially its latter section, the *Descensus Christi ad inferos*.[15]

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11 G & L, no. 66; Ker [1957] 1990, no. 50, art. 2; Cameron B3.4.55; Zaffuto 1999, 178-97.

12 G & L, no. 637; Ker [1957] 1990, no. 331, art. 22; Cameron B3.4.26; Napier [1883] 1967, 134-43.

13 Zaffuto 1999, 192, ll. 116-18, and Napier [1883] 1967, 141, ll. 23-25. On the textual relationship between the Macarius Homily and Napier xxix, on the one hand, and between the latter two with other Old English eschatological homilies, see also Di Sciacca 2006, 365-81.

14 G & L, no. 941; Ker [1957] 1990, no. 394, art. 4; Cameron B3.4.9; Scragg 1992, 87-107, at 92, ll. 45-47.

15 *CANT* 62; *BHG* 779t and *BHG Nov. Auct.*, 779tb-te (Recension A); *BHG* 779u, v, and w (Recension B). The *Gospel of Nicodemus* was composed sometime between *s.* ii and *s.* vi probably in Greek; its prolific Latin tradition consists of two texts, the *Acta Pilati* and the *Descensus*

The *Gospel of Nicodemus* was the most widespread New Testament apocryphon in the medieval West, as attested by the impressive number of both the surviving Latin witnesses and its vernacular translations, as well as by its impact on both the literary culture and the visual arts (Di Sciacca 2019b, 86-89). In particular, the *Gospel of Nicodemus* enjoyed a special and enduring popularity in England throughout the Middle Ages (Hall 1996, 57-58; Tamburr 2007, 102-47). Five versions have survived from pre-Conquest England: two of them in Latin[16] and another three in Old English, the so-called *NicA*,[17] *NicB*,[18] and *NicC*.[19] Both the Latin and the vernacular versions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* that circulated in pre-Conquest England all attest to the Latin recension A, also known as the Majority Text, by far the most widespread Latin recension of the Gospel,[20] and all three Old English versions have been shown to derive ultimately from the Latin A-text in ms. Saint-Omer, BM 202 (Cross 1996c, 82-87, 90-97, and 100-04; Orchard 1996, 105-08 and 123-30; Thornbury 2011).

Besides the three Old English versions of the Gospel, the motif of the Harrowing of Hell is attested in at least five anonymous homilies for Easter Sunday.[21] Notably, in one of these five items, a homily uniquely attested in ms. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121 (Cameron B3.2.28; Luiselli Fadda 1972), Christ, having defeated death, becomes Himself the death of hell, as well as the *devourer* of hell, thereby fulfilling Hosea's prophecy (Hos. 13:14), which is explicitly quoted in Latin.[22] This passage is closely echoed in

Christi ad inferos, which originally circulated independently before being conflated sometime between *s.* v and *s.* viii: see Izydorczyk 1989, 170-76; 1997b; Hall 1996, 37-47; Bullitta 2017, 3-5.

16 Contained in mss. London, BL, Royal 5.E.xiii (*s.* ix^{ex}, North France or Brittany; provenance England by *s.* x^{med}; G & L, nos. 459), and Saint-Omer, BM 202, on which see above, note 3.

17 Contained in ms. Cambridge, UL, Ii.2.11 (*s.* xi$^{3/4}$, Exeter), *NicA* is the earliest Old English translation of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and the closest to the lost archetype, as well as one of the two earliest vernacular translations in Europe together with the Old Church Slavonic version: G & L, no. 15; Ker [1957] 1990, no. 20, art. 11; Cameron B8.5.2.1; Cross 1996d, 138-247.

18 Contained in ms. London, BL, Cotton Vitellius A.xv, pt I (*s.* xii^{med}), *NicB* corresponds very closely to *NicA*: Ker [1957] 1990, no. 215, art. 2; Cameron B8.5.2.2; Hulme 1898.

19 Contained in ms. London, BL, Cotton Vespasian D. xiv (*s.* xii^{med}, Canterbury or Rochester), *NicC* is a pretty drastic homiletic digest of the apocryphon: Ker [1957] 1990, no. 209, art. 31; Cameron B8.5.3.1; Hulme 1903-04, 591-610.

20 Bullitta 2017, 6-12. Besides the Majority Text, another three Latin recensions have been identified, i.e. B (originated in Northern Italy, the earliest witnesses dating to *s.* xi), C (originated in Spain in *s.* ix), and T (a hybrid text conflating A and C, probably originated in North France in *s.* xii^{1}): see *ibid.*, 12-17.

21 These homilies are Cameron B3.2.26 (or Blickling vii; Ker [1957] 1990, no. 382, art. 7; Morris [1874-80] 1967, 83-97); B3.2.27 (Ker [1957] 1990, no. 38, art. 32; Schaefer 1972, 249-59); B3.2.28 (Ker [1957] 1990, no. 338, art. 33; Luiselli Fadda 1972); B8.5.3.2 and B8.5.3.3: see Wright 2007, 43-44. On the latter two homilies, see above, note 9, and below, notes 24 and 26.

22 "Ac swa se witega cwæð be Cristes hade: *O mors, ero mors tua, morsus tuus ero, inferne*, þæt is on englisc: 'Eala þu deað, ic beo þin deaþ, and þu hell ic beo þin bite": Luiselli Fadda 1972, 1008, ll. 182-84. ("And the prophet said about the condition of Christ [at the Harrowing]: *O mors, ero mors tua, morsus tuus ero, inferne*, that is in English: O, you death, I will be your death, and you hell, I will be your bite"; my translation).

Lambeth Homily xi,[23] and embedded within an adaptation of Ælfric's Palm Sunday Homily for the First Series of the Catholic Homilies (CH I. 14), where the Christ-Satan confrontation at the Harrowing is conveyed by a patristic permutation of the 'devouring motif', namely the bait-and-hook metaphor, with the Satanic devourer in the guise of a fish and Christ's mortal persona in the guise of the bait (see Di Sciacca, *infra*, 69-74).

6. from the devouring dragon to the mouth of hell

The concurrent imagery of the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* and the *Descensus ad inferos* were arguably conflated, and such a conflation in turn contributed to the distinctive pervasiveness of the devouring devil and mouth of hell in early medieval England (Di Sciacca 2019b). This hypothesis seems to me to be supported by the thematic correspondences that run through the two apocrypha and the derivative homilies and hagiographies so far discussed, as well as by the manuscript evidence.

The Old English version of the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* is immediately followed in its unique manuscript witness, CCCC 41, by an Easter homily that includes an adaptation of the Harrowing of Hell narrative (*NicD*).[24] Secondly, the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and the *Life of St Margaret* occur jointly in two manuscripts circulating in early medieval England, Saint-Omer, BM 202[25] and CCCC 303.[26] The former codex reached England from Saint-Bertin by the mid-eleventh century and was probably housed at Exeter during the episcopacy of Leofric (1050-72) (Lapidge [1985] 1994, 132-39). Ms. CCCC 41, the only witness of the Old English *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* and of *NicD*, was written at an unidentified southern English centre and eventually donated to Exeter by Leofric (Lapidge [1985] 1994, 133-34 note 104). Ms. Cambridge, UL, Ii.11.21, which attests to *NicA*, was produced at Exeter in Leofric's days (Hall 1996, 49-51; Lapidge [1985] 1994, 134 and 136-37). Finally, the manuscript containing the Macarius Homily, CCCC 201,

23 "for hit wes awriten þurh þan prophete. *O mors ero mors tua morsus tuus ero inferne*. þet is. Ðu deað ic wulle beon þin deð; and þu helle ic wulle beon þin bite": Morris [1868] 1988, 123, ll. 18-21 ("for it was written through the prophet, *O mors, ero mors tua, morsus tuus ero inferne*; that is, you death, I will be your death, and you hell, I will be your bite": trans. adapted from Morris [1868] 1988, 122). See Pelle 2014. On the Lambeth Homilies and their adaptation of pre-Conquest sources, see Swan 2007, 405-14, and CH I, 49-50.

24 See above, note 9. A version of this Easter homily is also attested in ms. CCCC 303: see below, note 26.

25 See above, note 3. The first two items of the codex are a copy of the Latin A recension of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and the *Passio S. Margaretae* (*BHL* 5303).

26 CCCC 303 contains an Old English version of the *Life of St Margaret* and a version of the CCCC 41 Easter Homily that includes *NicD*: see above, notes 4, 9, and 21. In the CCCC 303 Easter homily the version of the apocryphal Gospel is identified as *NicE*: Ker [1957] 1990, no. 57, art. 17; Cameron B8.5.3.3; Hulme 1903-04, 610-14.

pp. 179-272, also originated in Exeter in the time of Bishop Leofric (see above, note 11).

Last but not least, Leofric's Exeter has been posited as "the most likely place for the original composition" (Cross 1996b, 9) of the Old English translation of both the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and of the related apocryphon *Vindicta Salvatoris* (Hall 1996, 58-81; Di Sciacca 2019b, 101-03). In sum, the cues pointing towards late eleventh-century Exeter as a centre nurturing an active interest in apocrypha, especially, though not only, the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and the related *Vindicta Salvatoris*, are numerous and significant.

7. The demonology of the desert fathers

Early English eschatology and cosmology have long been shown to depend on a creative conflation of motifs derived from an eclectic range of apocryphal sources, often of ultimate Eastern origin and Irish transmitted (Wright 1993).

Indeed, a further component could be pinpointed in the so-called *Vitas Patrum*, a vast corpus of *uitae* and exempla associated with the Desert Fathers.[27] The role of these narratives was acknowledged as far back as the early 70s by Mayr-Harting, when he concluded the chapter headed "Guthlac, Beowulf and Antony the Hermit" of his classic *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, by epitomizing the Christianisation of the Anglo-Saxons as "a fusion of two great and wildly separated traditions", the worlds of Germanic heroes and East Mediterranean hermits ([1972] 1991, 239). Revealingly, Mayr-Harting's point has been reiterated in a recent essay on the Latinity of the *Vita S. Guthlaci* by A. Orchard (2020, 54). Not unlike the demon-fighting St Guthlac, the demonology of the pugnacious St Margaret demonstrably owes to the legacy of the Desert Fathers and the whole legend of St Margaret unfolds along the saint-devil antithesis that defines the Desert Fathers narratives (Clayton and Magennis 1994, 35; Di Sciacca 2015, 44-45, 64-65; 2019a, 361-63 and 367).

A distinctive type of such exempla, centred on the exchanges between an anchorite and the devil, provided the narrative framework of the so-called Devil's Account of the Next World, one of the most popular eschatological tales in late Anglo-Saxon England (Wright 1993, 175-214; Di Sciacca 2010, 339-41). Notably, two of the eight surviving versions of the Devil's Account occur in the same manuscripts that contain the two Old English Lives of St Margaret.[28]

27 *BHL* 943-48; *BHG* III, 191-214. On the *Vitas Patrum* in Anglo-Saxon England, see Jackson 1990 and Di Sciacca 2010.

28 See above, note 4. The two texts in question are contained in mss. Cotton Tiberius A. iii, featuring the most extensive Old English version of the Devil's Account narrative (Ker [1957]

Even the notoriously fastidious Ælfric adapted into Old English two visions of departing souls from the *Verba Seniorum*,[29] in particular the *Adhortationes Sanctorum Patrum*, in what is possibly the earliest translation from that corpus into a Western European vernacular.[30] Contrary to his trademark restraint, here Ælfric does not eschew a full rendition of the sensational and at times gruesome aspects of the *post-mortem* visions; indeed, sometimes he even adds some graphic elements to his source-text, thereby enhancing the dramatic character of the narrative (Di Sciacca 2018; *Eadem, infra*).

That even the most scrupulous representative of the Benedictine Reform, not unlike many anonymous homilists, drew on the Desert Fathers narratives to conjure up two dramatic *post-mortem* scenes is a further hint at the influential role played by such sources in the shaping of the creative eschatology and demonology of pre-Conquest England. Therefore, the study of their circulation and reception – and of their possible mediation through Gregory the Great's *Dialogi*? (Keskiaho 2020; Menendez 2020; Di Sciacca, *infra*) –, is definitely a desideratum of the *Quellenforschung* of early English literary culture.

8. the scandinavian context

The Scandinavian context presents some interesting analogues with the English one, opening up paths for further research.

The seven heavens cosmology seems to have been known in the Old Norse tradition as at least one list of the seven heavens is attested in Latin in the fourteenth-century Icelandic manuscript AM 736 b 4to (fol. 3^{v}).[31] Admittedly, this list doesn't correspond to any of its Irish and English counterparts and it could rather be explained as a pastiche of the names of the

1990, no. 186, art. 18; Cameron B3.4.15; Robinson [1972] 1994, 199-204), and CCCC 303 (Ker [1957] 1990, no. 57, art. 40; Cameron B3.5.9; Luiselli Fadda 1977, 187-88).

29 *CPL* 1079c; *BHL* 6525, 6527-28, 6529-30, 6531, and 6535. For a convenient résumé of these collections within the *Vitas Patrum*, see Di Sciacca 2012, 130-31. On the *Verba Seniorum* in Anglo-Saxon England, see Rudolf 2010, 33-44; 2014. On Ælfric and the *Vitas Patrum* in general, see Di Sciacca 2012.

30 Ælfric's Old English version is included within the homily SH II. 27 (775-79; Cameron B1.4.28). The two Latin exempla are printed in PL 73, §13, 1011-12, and §14, 1012. The first of the two exempla was also adapted within the medieval Irish text known as *The Two Deaths* (Ritari 2014, 101-11), and is attested twice in Old Icelandic, namely within the Old Icelandic version of the *Vitae Patrum*, as they were known in the Scandinavian context (Unger 1877, 632-34), and within the miscellaneous AM 764, 4to (fols. 38^{r-v}; Tveitane 1968, 20-21). I am grateful to A. Meregalli for his bibliographical help with the Old Icelandic tradition.

31 This is a small-sized, bilingual (Latin and Old Norse) miscellaneous codex, of which only eighteen pages survive, mostly filled with brief annotations of geographical, astronomical, and computistical content: for a codicological description and edition of the items, see http://invisibilia.hum.ku.dk/pages/data.aspx?ID=111&Type=MS. Accessed 14 February 2021. My thanks to C.D. Wright for pointing out this list to me in the first place.

seven heavens and of their doors (and possibly also of the seven angels presiding over each door), further muddled by misreadings and/or misspellings occurred in the manuscript tradition (cf. Willard 1935, 7-11). While this Icelandic list of heavens is itself a significant attestation to the notion of the seven heavens also in the Old Norse tradition, its idiosyncrasies invite further research in order to assess if and to what extent this element of the medieval Scandinavian cosmology owed to Insular sources.[32]

The *Gospel of Nicodemus*, and its *Descensus* section in particular, must have been circulating in Scandinavia from as early as the end of the twelfth century or beginning of the thirteenth and its vernacular version, *Niðrstigningar saga*, is one of the earliest Old Norse texts (Bullitta 2017, 86-96).

Notably, the description of Satan in *Niðrstigningar saga* echoes the early English tradition at least twice. Firstly, Satan undergoes a metamorphosis into a dragon as a consequence of the Harrowing of Hell (§xxi.1: Bullitta 2017, 141 and 157), which reminds of the third guise taken by devil in his sensational shape-shifting during his fight against the letters of the Paternoster in the Old English *Solomon and Saturn Prose Paternoster Dialogue*.[33] Secondly, in the description of the climactic scene of the Harrowing of Hell narrative, that is the binding of Satan, the *Niðrstigningar saga* supplements the Latin base-text by specifying that the bonds holding Satan are made of fire (*meþ elldiglom bondom*) (Bullitta 2017, 146), in an intriguing parallel with the Old English version of the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon*, where Satan is described as bound with chains of red fire.[34]

Furthermore, the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and the *Life of St Margaret* are associated also within the Icelandic manuscript tradition. The late fourteenth-century Icelandic ms. AM 233 a fol. contains as its last three items the older (defective) redaction of the *Margrétar saga*, the older (defective) redaction of *Niðrstigningar saga*, and the second (defective) redaction of the *Kross saga*, an Icelandic version of the *Inventio S. Crucis* (Bullitta 2017, 28-31). Such a cluster is unlikely to be accidental, given that the soteriology of the cross and related imagery is a key doctrinal aspect underlying both the *Life of St Margaret* and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, and it resonates meaningfully in

32 The debt of medieval Scandinavian cosmologic and scientific lore to Insular source-texts has already been demonstrated: see the extensive study by Simek 1990.

33 Di Sciacca 2019b, 67-68. The *Solomon and Saturn Prose Pater Noster Dialogue* also implies a seven-heaven cosmology, in that the heart of the Paternoster is said to shine twelve thousand times brighter than all the seven heavens: Di Sciacca 2019b, 83-84. Indeed, in the *Solomon and Saturn I* poem, the Paternoster itself is credited with the power to carry out a sort of Harrowing of Hell, by freeing the souls chained in hell: Anlezark 2009, 62 and 66, ll. 68-72. Also, *Solomon and Saturn I* explicitly identifies the devil with the dragon: *ibid.*, 60, ll. 25-26. On the association between Satan and the dragon in Anglo-Saxon wisdom literature, see Aldhelm's *Enigmata* lxxxi and lxxxii (Glorie and Pitman 1968, 498-501), and Boniface's *Enigma* iv (Glorie and Minst 1968, 324-27), discussed by Salvador-Bello 2015, 212-14.

34 See above, 21-22. In *Be heofonwarum and be helwarum* the fire of hell is described as red (*readum fyre / mid readum lige*), while the chains fastening Satan are simply fiery (*mid fyrenum receteagum*): Teresi 2002, 228, ll. 41, 44, and 52.

the Anglo-Saxon context, where both the *Life of St Margaret* and the *Gospel of Nicodemus* are often associated with texts concerning the soteriological and apotropaic efficacy of the cross (Di Sciacca 2019a, 379-83; 2019b, 92-96).

Finally, an idiosyncratic elaboration of the swallowing dragon in Old Norse can be found in the *Eiríks saga viðfǫrla* or Saga of Eiríkr the Far-Traveller (Jensen 1983), a short, anonymous saga, traditionally included within the *Fornaldarsǫgur* and dated to around 1300, which relates the quest for the Ódáinsakr, or the meadow of the undead, by the Norwegian prince Eiríkr (Di Sciacca 2019c, 173-77). The saga can be considered a brief theological and cosmographical compendium in the guise of an intriguing tale of travel and discovery, which has already been shown to be indebted to Insular texts such as the *Elucidarium* and the *Imago mundi* by Honorius Augustodunensis, as well as to one of the most influential and widespread visions of the Middle Ages, the Irish *Visio Tnugdali* (Di Sciacca 2019c, 163-71; Gardiner 2020).

In particular, the hero's journey culminates into him being swallowed by a dragon; only, in a bewildering twist of the narrative, the dragon's belly encases a paradisal landscape (Di Sciacca 2019c, 177-95). The swallowing by the terrible dragon resulting in the entrance into some form of paradise, however, is not entirely unprecedented. As we have seen, in the Gnostic eschatology and cosmology as attested in the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* and the *Pistis Sophia*, the locales of bliss and damnations are not rigidly distinct and the swallowing dragons are indeed the chief means of the souls' circuit of purification and punishment (see above, 21-24). I would suggest that such apocryphal lore, albeit in a variously mediated and digested form, could have reached Scandinavia as part of the rather vast and significant network of personal contacts, institutional connections, and, what is more, book exchanges that has already been demonstrated to have been in existence between England and Norway during the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Di Sciacca 2019c, 198-200).

9. The devouring dragon and the mouth of hell: some conclusions

As has often been pointed out by previous scholarship, medieval eschatology is a syncretistic, often capricious interweave of Christian dogma and apocryphal elements, of doctrinal subtleties and scraps of popular beliefs, theological orthodoxy and extravagant Eastern legends (Gurevich 1983). Or, to appropriate the famous definition of Old English anonymous homilies by Th. Hill, early medieval eschatological texts are "improvisations on a theme rather than fixed textual discourse with a clearly defined beginning and end" (1990, xx). Keeping track of these improvisations, that is the creative interaction of a wide range of influences, and detailing the various modes of

appropriation and adaptation of a vast stock of source material can admittedly be methodologically taxing, when not downright unsound.[35] On the other hand, it would be equally unsound not to pursue a more holistic, if somehow speculative, investigation of sources, since "any identification of a thought in a work is an aid to understanding, so to explication and, eventually, to evaluation" (Cross 1986, 229).

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35 As Marchand has cautioned, the search for sources should not be at all costs and "the possibility of polygenesis" should always be born in mind (1976, 505).

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RECEDITE, ECCE DRACONI AD DEVORANDUM DATUS SUM. THE DEVOURING DRAGON TOPOS IN THE WORKS OF GREGORY THE GREAT

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As is well known, the exegetical works of Gregory the Great were among the most significant and numerous of early medieval literature. Over subsequent centuries, his commentaries on the Gospels (*Homiliae in Evangelia*), on the prophecies of Ezekiel (*Homiliae in Hiezechihelem prophetam*), on the Song of Songs (of which, unfortunately, only the brief opening section remains), and on the Book of Job (for which Gregory created the thirty-five books of *Moralia in Iob*) came to represent a veritable biblical encyclopaedia, an *auctoritas* which served as a seemingly inexhaustible source of material to be drawn upon. However, the Gregorian method and exegetical style constituted something unique, in which hermeneutic characteristics dating back to the patristic tradition were forced into becoming the sole means of interpretation. As he followed the three degrees of interpretation – literal, allegorical and moral – adopted by the earlier Fathers, Gregory, abandoned strictly doctrinal and theological traits in favour of a self-referential exegesis. That is to say, in order to explain the Bible, Gregory makes near-exclusive use of the Bible itself, and thus the entire commentary becomes a concatenation of scriptural quotations. Far from being intellectual speculation, however, this exegetical method is on the contrary, for Gregory, based on the faith and personal religious experience of the reader, through which the Holy Scripture is renewed, relives and grows, according to the famous Gregorian formula: *divina eloquia cum legente crescent* (*Homiliae in*

Hiezechihelem prophetam I.vii, §8; Adriaen 1971, 87, l. 145).[1] Thus, Gregorian exegesis arises from the reciprocal interaction and growth that occurs between the written book – the Bible – and the living book, represented by the faithful. It is for this reason that the exempla deriving from the commentator's personal experience and from contemporary events constitute one of the central roles of Gregorian exegesis: not only are these examples a valid means of persuasion, but most importantly, they are also the means by which the truth of faith comes to life and is transformed into flesh; they bear concrete witness to the growth of the Holy scripture in experience of faith.

It is, therefore, extremely important to highlight the appearance of the figure of the devouring dragon in one of the narrative examples that was dearest to Gregory the Great. The story, related as a personal memory by Gregory in the collection of the *Homiliae in Evangelia*,[2] is among the most classic hagiographical topoi. In it, a young man arrives at Gregory's monastery, an annexe to the church of St John and St Paul, in order to take the monastic habit; he is welcomed and adopts the rules willingly and devoutly. However, the young man is followed into the monastery by his brother, who behaves very differently: proud and dissolute, he lives in the monastery only because he would not otherwise know where else to go. As though he were a stranger, he does not respect the religious precepts and is tolerated by the monks only out of love for his devout brother. During a plague, the bad brother is stricken with disease and lies dying. The monks approach his bedside to accompany him as he passes away, but the dying man, interrupting their prayers, starts shouting at them to go away: a dragon is eating him and their prayers are preventing this monster from devouring him completely, thus prolonging his agony. To make things worse, the dragon is now gripping him so tightly that he is not able to make the sign of the cross, as the brothers have suggested that he do. Faced with this description of such terror, the monks intensify their prayers and the dragon is forced to flee. The young man, saved, abandons his secular life and converts to God, although he remains burdened with pain.

This exemplum must have been particularly dear to Gregory the Great, since he retells it twice in the *Homiliae in Evangelia* along with some details which are philologically very interesting, in terms both of understanding the dragon topos and of defining the internal relationships between the pontiff's works and the chronology of their transmission.

In the *Homiliae in Evangelia*, indeed, the story can be found in *Homilia* XIX of *liber* I and in *Homilia* XXXVIII of *liber* II. In both of these occurrences, the pericope which is commented on is taken from the Gospel according to Matthew: *Homilia* XIX tackles Matt. 20:1-16, the parable of the workers in

1 "The divine words grow with him who reads them"; unless otherwise specified, translations are mine. On Gregorian exegesis, see Bori 1985; Cremascoli 2008; 2012; and Paoli 2008.

2 Francis Clark has identified fourteen exempla in the *Homiliae in Evangelia* (1987, I, 84).

the vineyard, while *Homilia* XXXVIII explains Matt. 22:1-14, the wedding banquet for the king's son. In both cases, the Gospel passage ends with the phrase *Multi autem sunt vocati, pauci vero electi* ("many are called but few are chosen") and it is precisely the explanation of this maxim which allows the narrative digression to be inserted relating to the young man about to be devoured by the dragon.

As scholars have established, the two books which make up Gregory's *Homiliae in Evangelia* present a different transmission: two recensions for the first book (α being the first and β the second), but only the definitive recension β for the second. Studies by Raymond Étaix and – especially – by Jean-Paul Bouhot have demonstrated that recension α corresponds to the unauthorised copy of some homilies from *liber* I that Secondinus of Taormina had transcribed from the *archivum Lateranense* and taken to Sicily, before Gregory had reviewed and released the text. Recension β, on the other hand, is the definitive one prepared and published by the pontiff himself when he realized that some of his homilies had begun to circulate without his prior permission and approval.[3] Revision β's unusual genesis, which became urgently necessary due to the uncontrolled spread of the work, forced Gregory to limit his corrective interventions to what he considered to be the absolutely essential.

Curiously, *Homilia* XIX is one of those in which Gregory's revisions are particularly visible and incisive, and some significant changes are attested in the episode of the devouring dragon:[4]

> (6). Quia enim *multi uocati, sed pauci electi sunt*, primum est ut de se quisque minime praesumat, quia etsi iam ad fidem uocatus est, utrum perenni regno dignus sit nescit. Secundum uero est ut unusquisque proximum, quem fortasse iacere in uitiis conspicit, desperare non audeat, quia diuinae misericordiae diuitias ignorat. 7. Rem, fratres, quae nuper contigit refero, ut si uos peccatores esse ex corde conspicitis, omnipotentis Dei misericordiam amplius ametis. *Presenti anno* in monasterio meo, quod iuxta beatorum martyrum Iohannis et Pauli ecclesiam situm est, frater quidam ad conuersionem uenit, deuote susceptus est, sed ipse deuotius conuersatus. Hunc ad monasterium frater suus (ex eodempatre et matre genitus: *add.* α) corpore non corde secutus est. Nam ualde conuersionis uitam et habitum detestans, in monasterio ut hospes habitabat, et monachorum uitam moribus

3 See Étaix 1986; 1996; 1999; and Bouhot 2007. On the two recensions, see also Castaldi 2012. For a critical perspective on the transmission of the work and on the reconstructive hypotheses, see Castaldi 2013b.

4 In this and in subsequent Latin citations, the italics are mine; they both indicate sections of text which serve the argument and allow for easier identification of terms used in the explanations.

fugiens, recedere a monasterii habitatione non poterat, quia uel quid ageret, uel unde uiueret non habebat. Erat eius prauitas cunctis onerosa, sed hunc omnes equanimiter pro fratris eius amore tolerabant. Nam superbus et lubricus si qua post hoc saeculum sequeretur uita nesciebat; irridebat uero si quis illi hanc praedicare uoluisset. Itaque cum habitu saeculari uiuebat in monasterio, uerbis leuis, nutibus instabilis, mente tumidus, ueste compositus, actione dissipatus. *Mense autem Iulio nuper elapso*, huius quam nostis pestilentiae clade percussus est, qui ad extremum ueniens, urgeri coepit ut animam redderet. Et ultima iam corporis parte praemortua, uitalis uirtus in solo pectore et lingua remanserat. Fratres aderant, eiusque exitum, in quantum Deo largiente poterant, oratione tuebantur. At ille subito ad deuorandum se draconem uenire conspiciens, *magnis coepit uocibus clamare* dicens: "Ecce draconi ad deuorandum datus sum; propter uestram praesentiam devorare me non potest. Quid mihi moras facitis? Date locum ut ei devorare me liceat". Cumque hunc fratres ut signum sibi crucis imprimeret admonerent,

α	β
respondebat *magnis clamoribus* dicens: "Volo me signare, sed non possum, *quia squamis draconis* premor. Spumae oris eius faciem meam liniunt, guttur meum eius ore suffocatur et ne signare me possim, *squamis eius* mea brachia comprimuntur".	respondebat *uirtute qua poterat* dicens: "Volo me signare, sed non possum, *quia a dracone* premor. Spumae oris eius faciem meam liniunt, guttur meum eius ore suffocatur. Ecce ab eo mea brachia comprimuntur, qui *iam caput meum in suo ore absorbuit*".

Cumque hoc ille pallens, tremens et moriens diceret, coeperunt fratres uehementius orationibus insistere, et oppressum draconis praesentia suis precibus adiuuare. Cum repente liberatus, *magnis coepit uocibus clamare dicens*: "Ecce discessit, ecce exiit, ante orationes uestras fugit draco qui me acceperat". Mox autem seruiturum se Deo et esse monachum deuouit, atque *a tempore illo nuncusque febribus premitur, doloribus fatigatur*. Morti quidem subtractus est, sed adhuc plenius uitae restitutus non est. Quia enim longis et diuturnis iniquitatibus pressus est, longo languore fatigatur et durum cor ignis purgationis durior concremat, quia diuina dispensatione agitur ut prolixiora uitia aegritudo prolixior exurat (Étaix 1999, 149, l. 154 - 151, l. 208).[5]

5 "Since there are many who are called but few who are chosen, the first thing is that no one should be presumptuous about himself. Even though he has already been called to

It is indicated that the events of this episode occurred in the same year that the homily was delivered (*presenti anno*, "this year"); the young man had fallen ill in the July just passed (*mense autem Iulio nuper elapso*, "during the month of July just passed"), and at the end of the story it is indicated that he was still alive, but that at that moment he was in continuous pain (*atque a tempore illo nuncusque febribus premitur, doloribus fatigatur*, "from then until now he has been overcome with fever and beset with sorrows").

The major differences between recensions α and β relate to the vision of the dragon:

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the faith, he does not know whether he may be considered worthy of the eternal kingdom. Secondly, no one should presume to despair of a neighbor, even if he sees him steeped in vice. He does not know the riches of the divine mercy. I tell you something, my friends, which happened recently, so that if you perceive from your hearts that you are sinners you may love the mercy of almighty God all the more. During this year a certain brother came to my monastery, which is situated next to the church of the blessed martyrs John and Paul, to lead the monastic life. He was received with faith, but he himself led the monastic life more faithfully. His brother (α: born of the same father and mother) followed him into the monastery in body but not in heart. Despising the life and dress of a monk, he dwelt in the monastery as a guest; and fleeing the life of the monks by his conduct, he could not withdraw from the monastery because he had no other occupation or means of sustenance. His wickedness was a burden to all, but everyone put up with him patiently out of respect for his brother. He was proud and insecure. He did not know if there was any life to follow after this present age, but he scorned anyone who wished to preach to him about this. Accordingly he lived in the monastery like a layman, frivolous in his speech, unpredictable in his movements, puffed up in mind, carelessly dressed, dissipated in his actions. But during the month of July just passed he was stricken with the plague that you know about. As he approached the end of his life he began to be assailed by the thought that he was rendering up his soul. As the rest of his body was failing, he had strength only in his breast and tongue. His brothers were present and they were supporting his departure by their prayers as far as God granted them to do so. Suddenly he perceived a dragon coming to devour him. He began to shout in a loud voice, 'I am being given up to a dragon to be devoured, but on account of your presence it cannot do it. Why do you stop it? Give it room so it can devour me!' When his brothers urged him to mark himself with the sign of the cross, he replied (α: with a loud shout: 'I want to sign myself, but I cannot because the scales of the dragon are holding me down; the foam from its mouth is spread over my face, it has me by the throat. I cannot sign myself, the scales of the dragon are squeezing my arm together') (β: with what strength he had left: 'I want to sign myself, but I cannot because the dragon is holding me down; the foam from its mouth is spread over my face, it has me by the throat. I cannot sign myself, it is squeezing my arm together, and it has swallowed even my head!'). As he was saying these things, pallid, trembling and dying, his brothers began to press on more insistently with their prayers, to help with their entreaties the poor man overwhelmed by the dragon. Suddenly he was set free! He began to shout with a loud voice, saying: 'Thanks be to God! See, it has departed, it has gone away. The dragon which took me has fled from before your prayers'. And he soon vowed that he would serve God and be a monk, and from then until now he has been overcome with fever and beset with sorrows. He was indeed saved from death, but he has still not been fully restored to life. Because he was held by oppressive and long lasting wickedness, he is beset by oppressive ill-health. A harder fire of purification is completely consuming his hard heart, and by divinely-arranged plan a very protracted illness is entirely burning away his protracted vices" (translation adapted from Hurst 1990, 83-85; the distinction of both recensions is mine).

- in α it is said that the young man screamed *magnis clamoribus*,[6] while in β it is reported that he responded with what force he had left (*virtute qua poterat*);
- in α the young man is not able to make the sign of the cross because he is gripped by the dragon's scales (*quia squamis a dracone premor*), whereas in β there is a more generic description of his being held by the dragon (*quia a dracone premor*);
- in α it is reiterated that the young man cannot make the sign of the cross because his arms are restricted by the dragon's scales (*squamis eius mea brachia comprimuntur*), while in β it is indicated that the dragon has clenched his arms together and has already swallowed his head (*iam caput meum in suo ore absorbuit*).

Some of the corrections in β seem apposite: for instance, the fact that the young man – if his head were already in the dragon's mouth – would not be able to scream, but would be able to respond to the monks with what little force remained to him; similarly, appropriate is the removal of the duplicate reference to his inability to make the sign of the cross. However, it remains unclear why Gregory decided to eliminate the very effective and appropriate image of the dragon's scales constraining the sinner.

Why, when reviewing this passage, did Gregory wish to entirely remove the scales from the narrative? This elimination is strange and demands an explanation, particularly since Gregory would have been well aware of the patristic exegesis associated with this animal – specifically in a passage from Jerome's *Commentarius in Ezechielem* (IX, §29), in which the *draco*[7] represents an embodiment of evil with scales (i.e. the various sins) to which heretics are attached, forming a single body. All evildoers (symbolized by the fish) are to be found on these scales; they position themselves along the body of the *draco* (*caput*, *venter*, *cauda*, "head, belly, tail") based on the type of sin committed, following a very evocative topography of evil:

> Ponit autem Dominus in maxillis *draconis* istius frenum et perforat labia eius atque constringit armillae circulo, quando, per ecclesiasticos uiros qui scripturis sanctis eruditi sunt, imponit ei silentium et uniuersa peruersitatis dogmata dissoluuntur; agglutinatque pisces fluminum eius pennis ipsius uel *squamis* - quibus haeretici per superbiam ad alta festinant –, ut et ipsi, iuncti cum dracone, unum cum eo corpus efficiant, et copulantur ei uel in erroris consortio uel in poenae similitudine, quomodo: qui adhaeret Domino, unus est spiritus. Neque uero unum ha-

6 Notably, in recension α an expression of crying occurs three times: *magnis coepit uocibus clamare; magnis clamoribus; magnis coepit uocibus clamare*.

7 In this case it is a *fluminis draco* and therefore a crocodile.

> bet flumen draco Aegyptius sed multa flumina quibus irrigat Aegyptum humilem atque deiectam et nihil in se habentem montium, nec aquas Siloe, quae uadunt cum silentio, sed turbidas et coenosas; unde et extrahit eum Dominus de medio fluminum suorum ut nequaquam eis incubet nec sedeat in eis, *et omnes pisces squamis illius adhaereant - pro qualitate uitiorum per totum corpus draconis uel capiti uel uentri uel caudae et extremis partibus adhaerentes* – ut, extracto dracone, pisces quoque qui adhaerent ei pariter extrahantur (Glorie 1964, 406-7, ll. 690-708).[8]

Why does Gregory, in reviewing the passage, decide to eliminate the very scales of the dragon which – according to Jerome – represent sins and hence correspond extremely well to the narrative intent of the tale told in the nineteenth *Homilia in Evangelia*? A parallel passage in another of Gregory's works – an excerpt from *Moralia in Iob* – may help provide a plausible explanation here.

In his commentary on the book of Job, Gregory cites the image of the *draco* several times, and four times gives the famous quotation from Job 30:29: *Frater fui draconum, et socius struthionum* ("I was the brother of dragons, and companion of ostriches"). Each time, the hypocrisy and fakes (*simulatores*) are represented by ostriches, while the *draco* is always interpreted as the malice (*malitia*) which lives in the heart of heretics and of the wicked (*iniqui*). Also in another occurrence of the motif, when Gregory cites Jer. 14:6 (*Traxerunt ventos quasi dracones*, "they snuffed up the winds as dragons"), the interpretation of the *dracones* remains the same: *spiritu elationis inflati superbia malitiosa tumuerunt* (*Moralia*, XXIX.xxvi.52, Adriaen 1985, 1470, ll. 42-43; "being puffed up by the spirit of pride they were swollen with malicious haughtiness", *Morals*, III.1, 1847, 338).

Nevertheless, in book XXXIII of the *Moralia* we are given some clarifying details which are of interest when considered alongside the episode of the young man attacked by the dragon in *Homilia* XIX *in Evangelia*. In chapter xxix.51 the pericope Job 41:6 is commented upon. Describing the

8 "But the Lord puts a bridle on the jaws of that dragon and pierces and binds his lips with a circular ring when, through ecclesiastical men who are instructed in the Holy Scriptures, he imposes silence on him and all the doctrines of perversity are dissolved. And the fish of his rivers stick to his *fins* or scales - by means of which the heretics arrogantly hasten to the heights - so that they are themselves joined with the dragon and become one body with him and they are united to him, either in the association of error, or in the likeness of punishment, just as he who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit. But the Egyptian dragon does not have one river but many rivers from which he waters Egypt, which is low lying and cast down, and has no mountains in it; nor does it have the waters of the Shiloh that run on in silence, but it has troubled and muddy waters. And this is why the Lord draws him out from the midst of his rivers, so that he does not recline on them or sit in them, and all the fish stick to his scales - they stick throughout the entire body of the dragon in view of the nature of their vices, either to his head, belly, tail, or extremities. Thus, when the dragon is drawn out, the fish that stick to him are equally drawn out" (translation adapted from Scheck 2017, 336, with changes highlighted in italics).

Leviathan, it reads: *Compactum squamis se prementibus* ("Compacted, with scales pressing each other"). Gregory explains the Old Testament passage by observing that not only is the devil's body made up of the multitude of the wicked (*moltitudo reproborum*), but also that it is covered with protective scales which form an armour preventing any truth from penetrating or piercing it. Just as for the dragon, so for evildoers who excuse their own sins instead of admitting them, the scales are interposed as a means of defence, standing in the way of the holy preachers' teachings and preventing them from scratching the surface.

By means of the *duritia carnali* ("the hardness of the flesh"), the access is denied to the *gladius spiritalis* ("spiritual sword"):

> *Fertur quia draconis corpus squamis tegitur, ne citius iaculatione penetretur. Ita corpus omne diaboli, id est multitudo reproborum*, cum de iniquitate sua corripitur, quibus ualet tergiuersationibus se excusare conatur; *et quasi quasdam defensionis squamas obicit, ne transfigi sagitta ueritatis possit.* Quisquis enim dum corripitur, peccatum suum magis excusare appetit quam deflere, *quasi squamis tegitur, dum a sanctis praedicatoribus gladio uerbi iaculatur*. Squamas habet, et idcirco ad eius praecordia transeundi uiam uerbi sagitta non habet. *Duritia enim carnali repellitur, ne spiritalis ei gladius infigatur* (*Moralia*, XXXIII.xxix.51, Adriaen 1985, 1718, ll. 2-12).[9]

The subsequent paragraph 52 attests to the hardness of this armour, by reporting the example of Saul, whose heart no arrow of evangelical preaching could pierce. Only after Saul met with divine reproach (*forti caelitus increpatione iaculatus*) and was blinded *superno respectu* was his *duritia* melted away by divine illumination and *defensionum squamae ceciderunt*.

> Carnali sapientia contra Deum Saulus obduruerat, quando cor eius nulla praedicationis euangelicae sagitta penetrabat. Sed postquam *forti caelitus increpatione iaculatus*, et *superno respectu* caecatus est, – lumen quippe ut acciperet amisit, – ad Ananiam ueniens illuminatur. In qua illuminatione quia defensionum suarum *duritia* caruit, bene de eo scriptum est: *ceciderunt quasi*

9 "It is said that the body of the dragon is covered with scales, to keep it from being quickly penetrated with shafts. In like manner the whole body of the devil, that is, the multitude of the reprobates, when reproved for its iniquity, endeavours to excuse itself with whatever evasion it can, and opposes, as it were, some scales of defence, that it may not be transfixed with the arrow of truth. For whoever, when reproved, seeks to excuse rather than to lament his sin, is covered, as it were, with scales, when assailed by holy preachers with the sword of the word. He has scales, and therefore the sword of the word has no way of reaching his heart. For the spiritual sword is kept the hardness of the flesh from being plunged into him" (translation is taken from *Morals*, III.2, 1850, 604).

> *squamae* ab oculis eius. Carnalis uidelicet tegumenti illum duritia presserat, et idcirco radios ueri luminis non uidebat. Sed postquam superbae repugnationes eius uictae sunt, *defensionum squamae ceciderunt* (*Moralia*, XXXIII.xxix.52, Adriaen 1985, 1718-19, ll. 13-23).[10]

If, therefore, it is only divine intervention that can scratch the hard surface of Saul's heart, then surely – and even more so – it is the case that only God can conquer the dragon, symbol of evil, and penetrate the scales which stand for the multitudes of sins and sinners. It is not surprising, then, that in the second recension of the story in *Homilia* XIX *in Evangelia*, Gregory eliminates the dragon's scales. It is not possible that the prayers of the few, terrified monks helping the young sinner who is about to be devoured could be stronger and hold more power to save than the gospel words of Christ's disciples, who had not been able to pierce the scales around Saul's heart. It stands to reason all the more that no one except God can scratch the armour of the prince of evil, the dragon.

That the removal of the *squamae draconis* was a considered choice by Gregory is demonstrated by *Homilia* XXXVIII *in Evangelia*, which tells once again the tale of the young sinner who is about to be devoured. The scales of the dragon are nowhere to be found; they have disappeared from the narrative, as in recension β of *Homilia* XIX. This is the text of *Homilia* XXXVIII *in Evangelia*:[11]

> (14). Tanto ergo sibi unusquisque sollicite metuat, quanto ignorat quod restat, quia, quod saepe dicendum est et sine obliuione retinendum: *Multi sunt uocati, pauci uero electi*. (15) [...] Sed quia rem retuli quae uos ex diuina districtione perterruit, aliud adhuc e uicino refero quod ex diuina misericordia perterrita uestra corda consoletur; quod tamen in sermone alio iam dixisse me memini, sed uos nequaquam adfuistis. (16) *Ante biennium* frater quidam in monasterium meum, quod iuxta beatorum martyrum Iohannis et Pauli ecclesiam situm est, gratia conuersationis

10 "Saul had become hardened against the Lord with carnal wisdom, when no arrow of Gospel preaching penetrated his heart. But after he had been smitten by severe reproof from heaven, and blinded by the heavenly vision, (for he had lost light in order to receive it) on coming to Ananias he is illuminated. And because in this illumination he lost the stubbornness of his defence, it is well written of him; There fell from his eyes as it had been scales. The hardness of a carnal integument had in truth pressed upon him, and therefore he saw not the rays of the true Light. But after his haughty resistances were overcome, the scales of his defences fell off" (Translation is taken from *Morals*, III.2, 1850, 604).

11 We may recall that in the homilies of the second book, there is only the definitive version β; actually, there has never been the recension α of *homiliae* XXI-XL (that is to say the unauthorized version circulated by Secondinus of Taormina); rather, these passed directly from the shorthand form preserved in the *scrinium Lateranense* to the definitive form.

uenit, qui diu regulariter protractus, quandoque susceptus est. Quem frater suus ad monasterium non conuersationis studio, sed carnali amore secutus est. Is autem qui ad conuersationem uenerat ualde fratribus placebat; at contra frater illius longe a uita eius ac moribus discrepabat. Viuebat tamen in monasterio necessitate potius quam uoluntate. Et cum in cunctis actibus peruersus exsisteret, pro fratre suo ab omnibus aequanimiter tolerabatur. Erat enim leuis eloquio, prauus actione, cultus uestibus, moribus incultus; ferre uero non poterat si quisquam illi de sancti habitus conuersatione loqueretur. Facta autem fuerat uita illius cunctis fratribus uisu grauis, sed tamen, ut dictum est, pro fratris sui gratia erat cunctis tolerabilis. Aspernabatur ualde si quis sibi aliquid de prauitatis suae correptione loqueretur. *Bona non solum facere*, sed etiam audire non poterat. Numquam se ad sanctae conuersationis habitum uenire iurando, irascendo, deridendo testabatur. In hac autem pestilentia que nuper huius urbis populum magna ex parte consumpsit, percussus in inguine est perductus ad mortem. Cumque extremum spiritum ageret, conuenerunt fratres, ut egressum illius orando protegerent. Iam corpus eius ab extrema fuerat parte praemortuum, in solo tantummodo pectore uitalis adhuc calor anhelabat. Cuncti autem fratres tanto pro eo coeperunt enixius orare, quanto eum iam uidebant sub celeritate discedere, cum repente coepit eisdem fratribus assistentibus *adnisu quo poterat* clamare et orationes eorum interrumpere dicens: "Recedite, recedite. Ecce draconi ad deuorandum datus sum, qui propter uestram praesentiam deuorare me non potest. *Caput meum in suo ore iam absorbuit*. Date locum ut non me amplius cruciet, sed faciat quod facturus est. Si ei ad deuorandum datus sum, quare propter uos moras patior?" Tunc fratres coeperunt ei dicere: "Quid est quod loqueris, frater? Signum tibi sanctae crucis imprime". Respondebat ille ut poterat, dicens: "Volo me signare, sed non possum *quia a dracone premor*". Cumque hoc fratres audirent, prostrati in terram cum lacrimis coeperunt pro ereptione illius uehementius orare. Et ecce subito coepit melioratus aeger *quibus ualebat uocibus exsultare*, dicens: "Gratias Deo, ecce draco qui me ad deuorandum acceperat fugit. Orationibus uestris expulsus est, stare non potuit. Pro peccatis meis modo intercedite, quia conuerti paratus sum et saecularem uitam funditus relinquere". Homo ergo qui, sicut iam dictum est, ab extrema corporis fuerat parte praemortuus, reseruatus ad uitam, toto ad Deum corde conuersus est. Longis et continuis in conuersatione eadem flagellis eruditus, *atque ante paucos dies excrescente corporis molestia*

> *defunctus est*. Qui iam draconem moriens non uidit, quia illum per cordis immutationem uicit. (Étaix 1999, 373, ll. 358-60, and 376, l. 431 - 378, l. 482)[12]

It is interesting to note the differences between *Homilia* XIX and *Homilia* XXXVIII, and several stimulating observations may be made about the two homilies:

- Gregory narrates the story in a different way. It is clear that Gregory re-writes the episode; he does not use the same terms as in *Homilia* XIX of the first book, nor does he reproduce the exact expressions.[13]

12 "Everyone should be anxious and fearful for himself the more ignorant he is of what is in store for him, because – this must be said often and not forgotten – Many are called, but few are chosen. [...] Since I have recounted something in which the strictness of divine judgment has terrified you, I shall tell you a recent event to comfort your terrified hearts with divine mercy. I recall I have already spoken about this in another homily, but you were not present then. Two years ago a certain brother came by the grace of conversation to my monastery, which is situated beside the church of the blessed martyrs John and Paul. He was tested according to the rule, and eventually received. His brother followed him into the monastery, not from any desire for conversation but out of affection for him. Now the one who had come to lead the monastic life was most agreeable to the brothers, but his brother was very different in his way of life and habits. He lived in the monastery from necessity rather than of his own free will. Although he was unruly in all his actions, everyone bore with him calmly for his brother's sake. He was frivolous in his speech, misguided in his actions, careful about his dress, careless about his way of life. He could not bear it if anyone spoke to him of monastic life. His life had become a burden to all the brothers, but, as I have said, they all put up with him for the sake of his brother. He was scornful if anyone spoke to him about his bad behaviour; not only did he hate doing good deeds, but even hearing about them. By swearing, by anger, by scoffing, he declared that he would never come to the practice of monastic life. In the plague that recently killed a large part of the people of this city, his groin was affected, and he came close to death. As he was breathing his last, the brothers gathered to palliate his departure by their prayers. His body had lost all feeling in its extremities, and only the life-giving breath remained in his chest. As the brothers saw that his end was coming nearer, they began to pray more strenuously for him. Suddenly he began to cry out with all the strength he could muster to the brothers standing about him, and to interrupt their prayers, saying: 'Get back! I've been given up to a dragon to be devoured, but it cannot devour me because of your presence. It already has my head in its mouth! Give it room, that it may no longer torture me but may accomplish what it is about to do. If I've been given up to it to be devoured, why are you holding it back?'. Then the brothers began to say to him: 'What are you saying, brother? Sign yourself with the cross!'. He answered as well as he could: 'I want to sign myself but I can't because the dragon prevents me'. When the brothers heard this they fell prostrate on the ground; with tears they began to pray more urgently for his release. Suddenly the sick man became better! He began to rejoice with what strength he had: 'Thanks be to God! See the dragon which had taken me to devour me has fled, he has been driven away by your prayers, he couldn't stay! Now intercede for my sins, because I am ready to be converted and to abandon completely my worldly way of life'. And so the man who, as I described him, had lost all feeling in his extremities, was restored to life, and turned with his whole heart to God. Instructed by long and continuous suffering during his sickness, he died a few days *ago*, when his illness had grown worse. This time he saw no dragon as he died, because he had conquered it by his change of heart" (translation adapted from Hurst 1990, 351 and 354-55, with changes highlighted in italics).

13 This observation has already been made by, among others, Clark, who has remarked on how Gregory had told the same story but "in different words" (1987, II, 557).

- In *Homilia* XXXVIII, Gregory claims that two years have passed since the incident[14] and at the end of the story he reveals that the young man has in fact died some days earlier, confessing that this had motivated him to tell this story once again.
- All the modifications to form β of *Homilia* XIX are maintained: the *squamae* are no longer present; the young man is no longer able to *clamare magnis vocibus* but does what he can with the little force that is left to him (*adnisu quo poterat* and *ut poterat*), and only when the dragon has gone, the sinner is able to catch his breath and shout (*quibus valebat vocibus exsultare*); the image of his head already in the dragon's mouth – which is aptly introduced beforehand – is maintained. It is notable, however, that the powerful image of the dragon's saliva wetting the young man's face – present in both forms α and β of *Homilia* XIX – disappears from *Homilia* XXXVIII.

In *Homilia* XXXVIII, then, Gregory rewrites the story, but keeps the changes and decisions made in recension β of *Homilia* XIX.

Something surprising – and philologically relevant – happens when Gregory tells the story for the third time, in the fourth book of the *Dialogi*.[15] As is well known, this work is (somewhat debatably) of Gregorian authorship, and the scholar Francis Clark has long claimed that it was the work of a forger, a compiler (the *Dialogist*), a continuator who took large excerpts from Gregorian works and added new material (Clark 1987). The matter is a complex one that has over the years been addressed by the leading Gregorian experts.[16] Clark has correctly observed that in the fourth book of *Dialogi* there is evident reuse of Gregorian material already present in other works (1987, II, 527), and according to the British scholar, the tale of the monk beset by the dragon is precisely one of those "Inserted Gregorian Passages" that the interpolator would have taken from the *Homiliae in Evangelia* in order to stitch together his literary patchwork.[17] However, it does not seem that the anomalies present in chapter xl of book IV, in which the story of the young man and the dragon is once again told, have ever been properly evaluated

14 On the dating, see Pfeilschifter 1900, 26 and 57, who suggests the years 591-92; more recent studies claim that the plague afflicting the young man was raging in 592 and that the homilies as a whole were delivered between around 591 and 593.

15 This episode is one of the nine that pass from the *Homiliae in Evangelia* to the *Dialogi*, of which seven are reported *verbatim*: see Clark 1987, I, 84. See also Pfeilschifter 1900, 23-27, 54-57, and the synoptic table of the occurrences at 72-73. For an analysis of the passages from the *Homiliae in Euangelia* inserted in the fourth book of *Dialogi*, see chapter xvii of Clark 1987, II, 525-79.

16 For an overview of the issue and the more recent philological bibliography on the subject, see Castaldi 2013c and Simonetti and Pricoco 2006.

17 The passage is marked *IGP* 65 and is analyzed in Clark 1987, II, 557-58, and 2003, 444.

via a comparison of the four transmitted forms (*Homilia* XIX recension α; *Homilia* XIX recension β; *Homilia* XXXVIII; *Dialogi*, IV.xl).[18]

The exemplum in *Dialogi*, chapter xl of book IV reads:

> Gregorius: 1. Sciendum quoque est quia nonnumquam animae adhuc in suis corporibus positae poenale aliquid de spiritalibus uident, quod tamen quibusdam ad aedificationem suam, quibusdam uero contingere ad aedificationem audientium solet. 2. Nam is de quo in omeliis coram populo iam narrasse me memini, inquietus ualde Theodorus nomine puer fuit, qui in meo monasterio fratrem suum necessitate magis quam uoluntate secutus est. Cui nimirum grauis erat si quis pro sua salute aliquid loqueretur. Bona autem non solum facere sed etiam audire non poterat. Numquam se ad sanctae conuersationis habitum uenire iurando, irascendo, deridendo testabatur. 3. In hac autem pestilentia que nuper huius urbis populum magna ex parte consumpsit, percussus in inguine est perductus ad mortem. Cumque extremum spiritum ageret, conuenerunt fratres, ut egressum illius orando protegerent. Iam corpus eius ab extrema fuerat parte praemortuum, in solo tantummodo pectore uitalis adhuc calor anhelabat. Cuncti autem fratres tanto pro eo coeperunt enixius orare, quanto eum iam uidebant sub celeritate discedere. 4. Cum repente coepit eisdem fratribus assistentibus clamare *atque cum magnis uocibus* orationes eorum interrumpere dicens: "Recedite, recedite. Ecce draconi ad deuorandum datus sum, qui propter uestram praesentiam deuorare me non potest. Caput meum iam in suo ore absorbuit. Date locum ut non amplius me cruciet, sed faciat quod facturus est. Si ei ad deuorandum datus sum, quare propter uos moras patior?" Tunc frastres coeperunt ei dicere: "Quid est quod loqueris, frater? Signum tibi sanctae crucis imprime". Respondebat ille *cum magnis clamoribus*, dicens: "Volo me signare, sed non possum quia *squamis huius draconis premor*". 5. Cumque hoc fratres audirent, prostrati in terra cum lacrimis coeperunt pro ereptione illius uehementius orare. Et ecce subito coepit aeger cum *magnis uocibus clamare*, dicens: "Gratias Deo, ecce draco, qui me ad deuorandum acceperat, fugit. Orationibus uestris expulsus est, stare non potuit. Pro peccatis meis modo intercedite, quia conuerti paratus sum et saecularem uitam funditus relinquere". Homo ergo qui, sicut iam dictum est ab extrema corporis fuerat parte praemortuus, reseruatus ad uitam, toto

18 What Clark reports in the analysis of *IGP* 65 is not convincing; according to this, a similar story is told in *Epistola* XI.26 sent by Gregory to Rusticiana (MGH, *Epist.* II, 287-89); but, actually, the episodes concern different cases and they all have in common the fact that they were miracles brought about through the intercession of St Andrew the Apostle.

> ad Deum corde conuersus est et postquam mutatus mente diu est flagellis adtritus, tunc eius anima carne soluta est (Simonetti and Pricoco 2006, 290-92).[19]

It is evident that, whereas the initial part of the text of the miracle is abbreviated, the central section (from the italicised *Bona autem non solum facere*) becomes a verbatim repetition of *Homilia* XXXVIII *in Evangelia*.

It is striking, however, to note that the only differences between *Dialogi*, IV.xl and *Homilia* XXXVIII, from which it borrows, relate to the *clamare magnis vocibus* and the fact that the young man is gripped by the dragon's scales, details shared with the recension α of *Homilia* XIX.

This is rather strange: for the reasons discussed previously, relating to the *duritia* and the conversion of Saint Paul, Gregory would never have reintroduced the dragon's scales. The pontiff was well aware that he had modified *Homilia* XIX, removing the scales from the original recension of the story, just as he knew very well that he had not included them when relating the exemplum again in *Homilia* XXXVIII.

Previous scholarship has already ascertained that Gregory revised his works several times and at different times; however, the studies published to date show that Gregory reworked his material available in the Lateran archive, but he never re-used material from a recension that had been

19 "We should also keep in mind that sometimes people are given a glimpse of their future punishment while they are fully alive. In some cases, the person himself derives much benefit from the experience; in others, the good lesson is meant for the people who are present and observe what is taking place. I recall giving an example of this in my sermons to the people. I mentioned the case of Theodore, a very restless young man, who entered my monastery with his brother under force of circumstances rather than of his own free will. He was always irritated when any spiritual lesson was brought home to him. He could not bear doing good or hearing about it. In fact, he would become angry or sarcastic and swear that he had never intended to put on religious habit or become a monk. During the plague which recently carried off a large part of the population of this city, Theodore became dangerously ill, with the disease lodging in his abdomen. When he was about to die, the brethren gathered round the bed to offer their prayers for his safe departure from this life to the next. The extremities of his body were now cold with death up to his breast, where the lifeblood was still pulsating warmly. Seeing the end approaching rapidly, his brethren became more fervent in their prayers. Suddenly, the sick man interrupted them. 'Stand back!' he shouted, 'I have been cast out to be devoured by the dragon. Your presence keeps him from doing so, but he has already taken my head into his jaws. Stand back! Don't make him torture me any longer. Let him finish me off, if that is what I am destined for. Why do you make me suffer this suspense?' The brethren tried to quiet him. 'What is it you are saying?' they asked. 'Bless yourself with the sign of the cross'. In answer, he shouted excitedly, 'I want to bless myself, but cannot because the dragon is holding me in his *scales*!' Hearing this, the brethren fell prostrate in prayer and, adding tears to their petitions, begged insistently for his release. Suddenly, with a sigh of relief, the sick brother cried happily, 'Thanks be to God! The dragon who tried to devour me has fled. He could not stand the attack of your prayers. And now please beg God to forgive my sins, for I am ready to live like a real monk and fully determined to abandon my old, worldly ways'. After recovering from the partial death of his body, this monk offered his life generously to God. With a complete change of heart, he now welcomed afflictions and endured them for a long time until his soul was finally freed from the body" (translation adapted from Zimmerman 2002, 244-45, with changes highlighted in italics).

outdated and consciously modified by him (as in the case of the variants of recension α, eliminated in favour of recension β) (Castaldi 2012; 2013a; Castaldi and Martello 2011).

The narrative reworking of the young sinner who is about to be devoured by the dragon suggests that the story of the last book of the *Dialogi* was composed by a compiler who, comparing the two stories of the *Homiliae in Evangelia* (recension α of *Homiliae* XIX and *Homilia* XXXVIII), did not wish to forgo the reuse of the only important difference between the two stories: the monstrous but effective image of the *squamae* of the dragon which grip the condemned man so tightly that they take his breath away.

This is another piece of evidence which suggests that for some Gregorian texts the final recension was not worked out by Gregory himself, other examples being the recension β of the *Regula Pastoralis* and the insertions into the *Moralia* of reworked passages from the *Homiliae in Hiezechielem*, of which Paterio's *Liber Testimoniorum* is partly witness. This does not necessarily mean that the one who reworked the piece of *Dialogi* IV.xl is a forger, but – like the *Regula Pastoralis* and the pieces of the *Moralia* – it could have been someone among the notaries/secretaries of the *scrinium Lateranense* (Castaldi 2012; 2013a; Castaldi and Martello 2011; Chiesa 2005; 2013). Another observation seems to lead to this conclusion: this compiler, whoever (s)he may have been, must have had the opportunity to consult recension α of *Homilia* XIX. This does not leave many possibilities: either the compiler was Secondinus of Taormina (or a friend of his, since they would have been the only people in possession of a manuscript containing the unauthorized recension α), or it was someone in the Lateran, in whose *scrinium* the clean copy of recension α of the *Homiliae in Evangelia* was conserved, from which the Sicilian bishop had copied them.

Somewhat unexpectedly, the figure of the dragon, together with its exegesis, may provide elements that help us form a better understanding of the genesis of such an enigmatic, problematic, and controversial work as the *Dialogi*.

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EFNE HER IS CUMEN AN DRACA ÞE ME SCEAL FORSWELGAN. ÆLFRIC'S TAKE ON GREGORY THE GREAT'S SWALLOWING DRAGONS

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0. introduction

Despite the familiar characterisation of Ælfric of Eynsham (*c.* 950 – *c.* 1010)[1] as a restrained author, equally cautious of doctrinal liberties and descriptive sensationalism (Clayton 1986; Hill 1993; Godden [1985] 2000a), he did not shy away from dramatic and visionary descriptions (Di Sciacca 2012; 2018; Di Giuseppe, *infra*).

One such graphic sketch is provided by the imagery of the swallowing devil which occurs in at least three of the Catholic Homilies. In two such items, namely the homily for the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost (CH I. 35, 476-85) and the one for St Benedict's Day (CH II. 11, 92-109), the devil appears as a formidable dragon with jaws agape, ready to swallow a sinner. Thirdly, in the homily for Palm Sunday of the First Series (CH I. 14, 290-98), the devil is disguised as a fish snatching at the hook, with the bait being represented by Christ Himself. Notably, in all three homilies, the antecedent of the demonic devourer has ultimately been traced to the corpus of Gregory the Great,[2] where the imagery of the devouring dragon

1 Critical literature on Ælfric is extensive; the main general studies and annotated bibliographies are Clemoes 1966; Godden 1974; Reinsma 1987; Gneuss 2009; Magennis and Swan 2009; Kleist 2000, 2001, and 2019.

2 On Gregory the Great and his reception in early Germanic Europe in general, see *Rome and the North*, and in early medieval England in particular, see Ricci 2013.

was often redeployed (Castaldi, *supra*).[3] This essay will try to clarify the relationship between Ælfric's homilies and their source-texts, both ultimate and intermediate, as well as assessing Ælfric's distinctive contribution to this veritable topos of early English demonology and eschatology.

1. *Dominica xxi post pentecosten* (CH I. 35)

Item 35 of the First Series of the Catholic Homilies is a commentary on the parable of the wedding banquet of the king's son as narrated in Matt. 22:1-14. Ælfric explicitly declares that he is following Gregory's exposition of the Gospel lection (l. 26), and indeed Gregory's *Homilia in Euangelia* xxxviii has already been identified as Ælfric's major source-text (Godden 2000b, liii and 289-90; Hill 2007, 75).

The popularity of Gregory's *Homiliae in Euangelia*[4] in early medieval England has already been demonstrated (Hall 2001). Indeed, the earliest extant witness of the *Homiliae*, a papyrus fragment containing the incipit of the first homily dating to *s.* vi^{ex}-vii^{in}, possibly reached England shortly afterwards and eventually ended up in the Cottonian library under unknown circumstances.[5] *Homilia* xxxviii, in particular, is attested in all the five complete or nearly complete witnesses of the *Homiliae in Euangelia* circulating in England *ante c.* 1125.[6] However, source study of the Catholic Homilies has shown that, rather than consulting discrete texts of the individual patristic authorities he is so keen to acknowledge, Ælfric mostly drew on homiletic collections of Continental origin, namely the homiliaries of Paul the Deacon, Haymo of Auxerre, and Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel.[7] Gregory's

3 On Gregory as a key source or indeed the very father of visionary and demonological literature, see at least Carozzi 1994, 43-61; Ciccarese 1987, 115-23; 1989; Gregory 2013, 44; Keskiaho 2015, 93-112, 129-36; 2020.

4 Étaix 1999; item xxxviii is at 359-78. For an overview of the tradition of the *Homiliae in Evangelia* and an assessment of Étaix's edition, see Castaldi 2013b.

5 The fragment in question is London, BL, Cotton Titus C.xv, fol. 1: see G & L, no. 379.3; *CLA Addenda*, no. 1863; Babcock 1985, 2000; Castaldi 2013b, 87-88.

6 The five codices in question are: CCCC 69 (*s.* viii^{ex} / ix^{in}; South England); Durham, Cathedral Library, B. III. 11, fols. 1-135 [*s.* xi^{ex}; Continent (Liège?); provenance Durham]; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 314 (SC 2129) (*s.* xi/xii; probably Exeter; provenance probably *ibid.*); Salisbury, Cathedral Library 132 (*s.* xi^{2}; provenance Salisbury); Worcester, Cathedral Library Q. 21 (*s.* xi^{ex}, North France or Lotharingia; provenance Worcester by s. xi^{ex}): see Hall 2001, 119-20; when relevant, dating and places of origin and/or provenance have been updated on the basis of G & L, nos. 42, 242, 566, 733, and 767. In addition to these five witnesses, G & L list another five manuscripts which contain fragments or excerpts of the *Homiliae in Euangelia*: G & L, nos. 255, 379. 3, 418, 439. 3, and 804.5.

7 For all three collections we still rely on the editions reprinted in PL: for Paul the Deacon's Homiliary, see PL 95, 1159-566; for Haymo's *Homiliae de tempore,* PL 118, 11-746; and for Smaragdus's *Collectiones in epistolas et euangelia*, also known as *Expositio libri comitis*, see PL 102, 13-552. On the *Quellenforschung* of the Catholic Homilies, see especially Godden 2000b, xxxviii-xliv, and Hill 1996; 1998; 2002; 2005; 2020. According to Godden, Paul the Deacon and

Homilia xxxviii did not feature in the original version of Paul the Deacon's Homiliary,[8] but it was added quite early on, together with other *Homiliae in Euangelia*, in an augmented version of the Homiliary that demonstrably circulated in England by the beginning of the twelfth century.[9]

Indeed, CH I. 35 suggests a combined use on Ælfric's part of two of his Carolingian sources, namely a supplemented version of Paul the Deacon's Homiliary and of Smaragdus's. Ælfric most likely drew on Gregory's *Homilia* xxxviii from the former, though he can't have consulted any of the above-mentioned early English witnesses of Paul the Deacon's Homiliary, as they all post-date him.[10] Notably, in these manuscripts Gregory's *Homilia* xxxviii is rubricated for the twentieth (rather than the twenty-first) Sunday after Pentecost.[11] On the other hand, Smaragdus's Gospel homily for the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost shares the same lection as the *Homilia* xxxviii, namely Matt. 22:1-14, and draws on it.[12] Smaragdus's debt to the Gregorian source, however, is selective and definitely less extensive than Ælfric's, and, what is more, Smaragdus does not include the final anecdote on the devouring dragon in his selection. Therefore, while drawing on Gregory's homily from his augmented copy of Paul the Deacon's Homiliary, Ælfric may well have followed Smaragdus in using it for the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost (Hill 2007, 76-77; 2020, 74).

Haymo are the two major sources for the *temporale* items and the Cotton-Corpus Legendary for the sanctorale items, whereas Smaragdus would be an additional exegetical source for Gospel pericopes: Godden 2000b, xlii-xliii. A premium on Smaragdus's role has instead been put by J. Hill (see especially Hill 1992). On the Corpus-Cotton Legendary, the major hagiographic collection circulating in pre-Conquest England and traditionally considered as the chief source of Ælfric's *sanctorale*, see Zettel 1979; 1982; Lapidge 1996; Jackson and Lapidge 1996; Love 1996, xviii–xxxiii. For a recent reassessment of the Legendary and its role as Ælfric's source, see Whatley 2023.

8 Paul the Deacon's homiliary originally consisted of 244 items, including thirty-two of the total forty *Homiliae in Euangelia* by Gregory: see Grégoire 1980, 423-78; Hill 2007, 67-69; 2020, 69-71. On the original structure and subsequent accretions or abridgements of the Homiliary, see Guiliano 2021, 45-89, 199-243.

9 At least five manuscript witnesses of such supplemented Paul the Deacon's Homiliary featuring Gregory's *Homilia* xxxviii were written or circulating in England by *s.* xii^{in}: Cambridge, UL, Ii. 2. 19 (*s.* xi/xii; provenance Norwich); Cambridge, Pembroke College 23 [*s.* xi^{2}, France (Saint-Denis or Saint-Germain-des-Prés?); provenance by *s.* xi/xii, England, Bury St Edmunds]; Durham, Cathedral Library, A. III. 29 [*s.* xi^{ex} (*ante* 1096), Durham]; London, BL, Harley 652 (*s.* xi/xii, Canterbury, St Augustine's); Worcester, Cathedral Library F. 93 (*s.* xi/xii or xii^{in}; provenance Worcester): see Hall 2001, 122-25; Hill 2007, 73-75, 90-94; Guiliano 2021, 277-78, 283; when relevant, dating and places of origin and/or provenance have been updated on the basis of G & L, nos. 16, 129, 222, 424, and 763.1. On the dissemination of the Homiliary, see Guiliano 2021, 123-62.

10 See above, note 9. On Ælfric's would-be copy of Paul the Deacon's Homiliary, see the classic study by Smetana 1959 and, more recently, Godden 2000b, xli, and Hill 2007.

11 On the organisation and rubricating system of Paul the Deacon's Homiliary and the changes it underwent, see Hill 2007, 81-88, and Guiliano 2021, 103-07, and 80-81 on the Sundays after Pentecost in particular.

12 PL 102, 487-91. Smaragdus's homiliary also features an Epistle homily for the same Sunday, with the lection from Eph. 5:15-21: see PL 102, 485-87.

In line with Gregory's exegesis, Ælfric interprets the parable of the wedding of the king's son as an allegory of Christ's marriage with the Church, in which only a certain number partake, though virtually all are invited. Thus, the homily outlines a progressive series of exclusions, from the ones who downright refuse the king's invitation and are therefore wiped out by the king's army, to the guest with no becoming outfit, that is charity, who is cast into the night of eternal damnation. Hence the *egeful* ('awful', l. 208) conclusion of the pericope, that is *fela sind gecigede 7 feawa gecorene* ("many are called and few are chosen", ll. 208-09; cf. Gregory's *multi autem sunt uocati, pauci uero electi*, l. 21)[13], conveying the fine line between God's justice and mercy: while no one can take their own salvation for granted, neither should they despair of it, because God's mercy is bountiful.

1.1 The Dragon Exemplum in Gregory's Homilia in Euangelia *xxxviii*

The *exemplum* featuring the dragon that threatens to devour a sinful monk on his deathbed follows the commentary on the Gospel pericope as a closing illustration that even an otherwise pious monastic community can harbour a sinner and, in turn, even this sinner can ultimately achieve salvation through the charitable intercession[14] of the monks' prayers and his own heartfelt repentance.[15]

The protagonist of the exemplum is the brother of a devout monk of Gregory's own monastery, who follows his relation's steps only for material gain, leading a life utterly contrary to all monastic values and barely tolerated by the community only for his brother's sake.

The duplicitous life of the wicked brother seems to be brought to an abrupt end by plague (*In hac autem pestilentia*, "Indeed in this plague", l. 454), though in Ælfric's vernacular rendition the illness befalling him is left unspecified (*ða wearð he færlice mid sumre coþe gestanden*, "then he was suddenly seized with some disease", ll. 230-31). Despite having made himself burdensome to the community with his depraved conduct, the brethren piously gather around his deathbed to pray for his soul and ease his passing, when he suddenly cries out to them to step away, because a dragon is about to swallow him but is hindered by their presence. Therefore, the dying man beseeches the brethren to leave so that the dragon may no longer afflict him.

13 Unless otherwise specified all translations from Latin and Old English are my own.

14 On the crucial, albeit controversial, theme of intercession and the bonds it establishes between the living and the dead, see at least Foxhall Forbes 2013, 201-64; on Gregory's stance on the matter, in particular, see *ibid.*, 269-71.

15 For the full text of the exemplum in both Gregory's *Homilia* xxxviii and Ælfric's CH I.35, see *infra*, Appendix I b.

The dragon, however, remains invisible to the bewildered brethren, who encourage the dying to dispel the evil apparition[16] by marking himself with the sign of the cross,[17] but the sick man protests that he is prevented from blessing himself by the dragon that oppresses him. Thus, the brethren prostrate themselves on the floor and start to pray more fervently for the salvation of the dying; thereby they ultimately succeed in putting the dragon to flight. Indeed, their intercession also grants the sick man a temporary recovery and sparks his repentance and conversion, as he declares himself ready to give up his worldly conduct and embrace the monastic life, turning to God with all his heart. Reformed and cleansed by the physical suffering caused by his illness, he finally dies shortly afterwards, without facing any dragon this time, having defeated it by means of his conversion.

In line with Ælfric's typical translation method,[18] his rendition of the Latin antecedent can on the whole be said to be faithful, or even literal at times, but also selective. The Old English text is somewhat more succinct than its source, as Ælfric abridges the lengthy preamble detailing the arrival of the wicked brother at the monastery and sketching his depraved personality, to focus more fully on the very climax of the narrative, that is the encounter with the dreadful dragon. In addition to the above-mentioned detail about the nature of the dying monk's illness, Ælfric omits other information concerning the setting of Gregory's story (*Ante biennium frater quidam in monasterium meum, quod iuxta beatorum martyrum Iohannis et Pauli ecclesiam situm est*, "Two years ago a certain brother of my monastery, which is located next to the church of the martyr saints John and Paul", ll. 436-37), by simply situating it in a monastery founded by Gregory (*sum broþer gecyrde to anum mynstre þe* [*sanctus gregorius*] *sylf gestaþelode*, "a certain brother came to a monastery that St Gregory himself had founded", ll. 219-20). It may be worth noting that in introducing the exemplum, Ælfric feels it appropriate to mention again the source he had already declared at the very beginning of the homily and otherwise never cited again, thereby propping the sensational narrative about to unfold with Gregory's authority (*Cwyð nu sanctus gregorius*, "Now St Gregory says", l. 219).

16 Although visions, dreams, and apparitions are not interchangeable in the theory and terminology of patristic sources, they are often blurred as visionary phenomena in the narrative practice of hagiography and homiletics: see Keskiaho 2015, 20-23, 76-136; 2020, 225-32; and Godden 2001.

17 On the apotropaic efficacy of the sign of the cross, see Johnson 2006a. Making the sign of the cross when facing a dragon is explicitly mentioned as the decisive conquering gesture in the hagiographies of at least four late antique and early medieval dragon-slaying saints, namely Donatus, Caluppan, Clement of Metz, and George: see Ogden 2013a, 395-96, 398, 400-04; and 2013b, 231-32, 235-36, 242-44, 249-55. On the role of the cross in the legend of St Margaret, one of the most popular dragon fighting saints in early medieval England, see Di Sciacca 2019a, 379-80.

18 On Ælfric's theory and practice of translation, see Marsden 1991, 322-28; Wilcox 1993; 1995, 62-65; Stanton 2002, 130-41, 144-71; Major 2006; Anderson 2007; Godden 2009; Gretsch 2009, 113-22.

Also, the prelude is condensed by effectively enhancing the polarisation between the two brothers. Emphasising even further the penchant for distinctions characteristic of his source, Ælfric sets the two in blatant contrast to each other, the one being identified as the spiritual brother (*se gastlica broþer*, ll. 222-23) and the other as the fleshly brother (*sum flæsclic broþer*, l. 221, or *his flæsclica broðer*, l. 224). The latter is characterised by his zeal not for a good life but for carnal love (*na for gecnyrdnesse goddre drohtnunge* [...] *ac for flæsclicere lufe*, ll. 221-22), as well as by juxtaposing his idle speech with perverse deeds and his rich attire with evil morals (*He wæs gegafspræce. 7 þwyr on dædum. wel besewen on reafe 7 yfel on* þeawum, "he was loquacious and perverse in deeds, well provided in [his] attire and evil in [his] behaviour", ll. 226-27).

The crucial meeting with the dragon proper is rendered very closely, with no significant omission apart from two Latin adjectives rendered with just one in the vernacular version (cf. Lat. *Longis et continuis* [...] *flagellis*, "by long and continuous afflictions", ll. 479-80, and OE *mid langsumum broce*, "by long disease", l. 255). As already noted regarding the opening of the anecdote, Ælfric again blurs the details of the chronology of the concluding events (cf. Lat. *ante paucos dies*, "before a few days", l. 480, and OE *æt nextan*, "next", l. 256), and emphasises the opposition between the monastic and secular ways (cf. Lat. *quia conuerti paratus sum et saecularem uitam funditus relinquere*, "because I am ready to convert and determined to give up the secular life", ll. 476-67, and OE *ic eom gearo to gecyrrenne to munuclicere drohtnunge. 7 woruldlice þeawas ealle forlætan*, "I am eager to convert to the monastic life and abandon all worldly customs", ll. 252-53). Indeed, as the latter quote shows, the chief trait of Ælfric's subtle rendering of his Latin source-text in this key episode consists of some slight expansions. Generally, these additions merely restate what is already obvious from the context, such as that God is the addressee of the brethren's prayers (*þone wealdendan god*, "the almighty God", l. 247), or that the dragon was dispelled by their intercession (*ongean eowerum þingungum*, "in response to your intercession", l. 251). More relevantly, however, a few unparalleled details emphasise the distress of the dying man (*mid swa micelre orwennysse*, "with so much despair", ll. 242-43), and the torment inflicted by the dragon which oppresses him so gravely (*þearle*, l. 245), that he can't even make the sign of the cross, although he would gladly (*lustbære*, l. 244) do so.

The major discrepancy between Ælfric's vernacular version and Gregory's text, however, consists of a difference in the age assigned to the protagonist. Throughout the Latin exemplum, the age of the dying man is never specified: he can be assumed to be an adult and towards the conclusion of *Homilia* xxxviii he is indeed defined as a man (*homo*, l. 477). Conversely, the Old English describes the monk as *se adlia cniht* ("the sick boy/young

man"[19], l. 248), whereas the corresponding Latin reading is *melioratus aeger* ("the improved sick-man", l. 473). Also, it may be noteworthy that the Latin sentence where the protagonist is said to be a man (*homo* [...] *qui* [...] *ab extrema corporis fuerat parte praemortus, reseruatus ad uitam*, "the man who had been dead in the extremities of the body, [was] restored to life", ll. 477-78), is rendered into a shorter Old English phrase, the subject of which is no longer the (apparently) adult man of the Latin source-text, but his limbs (*His cealdan leomu þa geedcucedon*, "then his cold limbs revived", ll. 253-54).

1.2 The Dragon Exemplum in Gregory's Homilia in Euangelia *xix*

The deathbed exemplum with the dragon threatening to devour the dying man is also attested within the *Homilia in Euangelia* xix (Étaix 1999, 142-52, §7 at 149-52), and in *Dialogi* IV.xl.2-5 (de Vogüé 1980, III, 140-42).

The Gospel lection for *Homilia* xix is the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), which makes a similar point as the parable of the wedding feast and, what is more, features the very same conclusion, namely *multi enim sunt uocati, pauci uero electi* (Matt. 20:16; cf. above, 60). Thus, here too the story of a wicked man snatched from the jaws of the terrible dragon on his deathbed by the monks' intercession and eventually repenting and converting after a life of sin and misconduct, provides a fitting epilogue to the explication of the pericope.

Compared with its counterpart in *Homilia* xxxviii, the exemplum in *Homilia* xix is somewhat differently structured and can be said to be slightly lengthier and rhetorically more elaborated. In turn, there are some differences between the two recensions in which *Homilia* xix is attested, the earlier, unauthorised α, and the later, definitive β.[20] Recension α, in particular, indulges in graphic anatomic details of the dragon's attack (*squamis draconis premor. Spumae oris eius faciem meam liniunt, guttur meum eius ore suffocatur et ne signare me possim, squamis eius mea brachia comprimuntur*, "I am oppressed by the dragon's scales. The foam of his mouth is spreading over my face, my throat is suffocated by his mouth and my arms are squeezed together by his scales, so that I can't sign myself", ll. 190-96). Also, the α-version repeats twice that the dragon's suffocating grip prevents the sick man from making the sign of the cross (*uolo me signare, sed non possum*, "I

19 While OE *cniht* is admittedly a polysemic word, it most often denotes a male of young age, including in Ælfric's own usage: see *DOE*, *s.v. cniht*, 1. a-d, 1. i, 2, and 4; the only two recorded Ælfrician occurrences where *cniht* apparently means "man" (1. f), do not seem to me to be statistically relevant, all the more so since in Ælfric's own *Grammar cniht* glosses Lat. *pub*[*e*]*s* "pubescent, young man" (1. d).

20 On the two recensions, α and β, of the first twenty *Homiliae in Euangelia*, see Castaldi 2013b, 72-77, and *Eadem*, *supra*. The four Gregorian versions of the exemplum are presented synoptically in Appendix I a.

want to sign myself but I can't", ll. 189-90, and the above-quoted *ne signare me possim*, l. 194). Conversely, the β-version doesn't mention the dragon's scales (Castaldi, *supra*), but keeps the vivid detail of the dragon's drooling on the man's face and rounds up the scene with the dragon's swallowing of his head (*Volo me signare, sed non possum, quia a dracone premor. Spumae oris eius faciem meam liniunt, guttur meum eius ore suffocatur. Ecce ab eo mea brachia comprimuntur, qui iam et caput meum in suo ore absorbuit*, "I want to sign myself, but I cannot, because I am oppressed by the dragon. The foam of his mouth is spreading over my face, my throat is suffocated by his mouth. Behold, my arms are squeezed by him, who has already swallowed my head in his mouth", ll. 189-96).

The very last phrase occurs almost identically in *Homilia* xxxviii (*Caput meum in suo ore iam absorbuit*, l. 465), but no mention is made of either the dragon's scales or saliva. Also, in *Homilia* xxxviii the phrase about the dragon's swallowing of the sick man's head is included in the latter's first address to the brethren to step back so that the dragon can finish him off and stop tormenting him, while in *Homilia* xix the phrase is part of the subsequent reply of the sick man to the brethren that urge him to sign himself. Furthermore, in both recensions of *Homilia* xix the distress of the sinful man, both during his hallucination and after the dragon has been dispelled, is described more meticulously and emphatically than in *Homilia* xxxviii. Note, for example, the climactic sequence *pallens tremens et moriens*, "growing pale, trembling, and dying" (l. 197); the twin phrases *febribus premitur, doloribus fatigatur*, "he is oppressed by fevers, vexed by aches" (l. 203); or the sentence *longis et diuturnis iniquitatibus pressus est, longo languore fatigatur et durum cor ignis purgationis durior concremat*, "he is oppressed by long and continuous hardships, he is vexed by a long-lasting languor, and [his] hard heart is burnt by the even harder purging fire" (ll. 205-06). Conversely, in *Homilia* xxxviii just one final mention is made of the man's infirmity *after* he has been rescued by the dragon (*Longis et continuis* [...] *flagellis eruditus*, "instructed by long and continuous afflictions", ll. 479-80).

On the whole, however, it can be concluded that the narrative of *Homilia* xxxviii fundamentally keeps to the β-version of *Homilia* xix, which is in line with the relative chronology that can be reconstructed for the two pieces, with Gregory rewriting the exemplum in *Homilia* xxxviii by keeping to the changes and revisions he made when he emended the unauthorised α-text (see Castaldi, *supra*, and above, note 20).

As to the key detail of the age of the dying man, in particular, throughout *Homilia* xix it is left unspecified and both the reading *melioratus aeger* of *Homilia* xxxviii or Ælfric's *se adlia cniht* are unparalleled. Thus, throughout *Homilia* xix the protagonist can be assumed to be an adult, except that in the lengthy concluding passage, which is unparalleled in all the other Latin

versions under consideration, he is referred to as a *iuuenis prauus*, "evil youngster" (ll. 209-10).

1.3 The Dragon Exemplum in Gregory's Dialogi *IV.xl.2-5*

The *Dialogi* version of the exemplum (de Vogüé 1980, III, 140-42) is the shortest of the four and is explicitly presented as derivative of some unspecified homilies that had been delivered in public (*in omeliis coram populo iam narrasse me memini*, "I remember that I have already told [this story] in homilies [preached] in public", ll. 6-7). Indeed, the core of the *Dialogi* tale overlaps almost verbatim with *Homilia* xxxviii, whilst the latter's lengthy preamble concerning the contrasting demeanour of the two brothers is drastically summarised in the sentence *fratrem suum necessitate magis quam uoluntate secutus est* ("he followed his brother out of necessity rather than of [his own] will", ll. 8-9), and the conclusion is also wrapped up more succinctly (ll. 42-46). The *Dialogi* exemplum also shares with *Homilia* xxxviii distinctive readings against *Homilia* xix, such as *percussus in inguine est* ("he was hit in the groin", ll. 15-16; cf. *Homilia* xix reading *percussus est*, "he was hit", l. 178), or *adhuc calor anhelabat* ("the vital heat was still panting", l. 20; cf. the *Homilia* xix reading *et lingua remanserat*, "and the tongue had remained [vital]", l. 180).

On the other hand, the *Dialogi* version shares at least two distinctive details with the α-recension of *Homilia* xix. Firstly, both the *Dialogi* and the α-text of *Homilia* xix restate three times that the dying monk utters loud cries (cf. the *Dialogi* readings *magnis uocibus*, *magnis clamoribus*, and *magnis uocibus*, ll. 24, 32-33, and 37, respectively, with *Homilia* xix readings *magnis uocibus*, *magnis clamoribus*, and *magnis uocibus*, ll. 183, 188-89, and 199-200, respectively). Notably, instead of the α-reading *magnis clamoribus*, the β-text of *Homilia* xix reads *uirtute qua poterat* ("with what strength he had", ll. 188-89), and *Homilia* xxxviii further tones down the expressionist mode of both the *Dialogi* and *Homilia* xix (cf. the corresponding readings *adnisu quo poterat*, "with the effort he could master", ll. 461-62; *ut poterat*, "as he could master", l. 469; and *quibus ualebat uocibus*, "with the cries he could master", l. 473). Secondly, both the *Dialogi* and the α-version of *Homilia* xix mention the dragon's scales – indeed, the latter mentions them twice (cf. *Dialogi*, l. 34 and *Homilia* xix, ll. 190-91 and 194), whereas neither recension β of *Homilia* xix nor *Homilia* xxxviii features them.

In sum, the *Dialogi* exemplum on the whole doesn't correspond closely with either the β-text of *Homilia* xix and *Homilia* xxxviii, on the one hand, or with the α-text of *Homilia* xix, on the other. The apparently bewildering distribution of parallelisms and discrepancies with the three versions of the exemplum from the *Homiliae* has been put down to the fact that the *Dialogi*

tale may have been pieced together by a later compiler who, having access to both recensions of the *Homiliae in Evangelia*, mostly followed *Homilia* xxxviii but incorporated in it at least two details from the α-text of *Homilia* xix, namely the loud cries and the scales, to confer greater graphic quality to their narrative.[21]

What is most relevant in light of Ælfric's rendition, however, is the *incipit* of the *Dialogi* exemplum. Here the opening lines are totally idiosyncratic and feature some details concerning the protagonist unparalleled in either homily, in that he is presented as a restless youth named Theodore (*inquietus ualde Theodorus nomine puer fuit*, "there was a very restless youth, named Theodore", l. 7), although at the end, in a passage overlapping with *Homilia* xxxviii (l. 477), he is referred to as a *homo* (l. 42).

The Old English version of the *Dialogi*, traditionally attributed to Wærferth, bishop of Worcester from *c*. 872 to 915,[22] repeatedly identifies the dying man as a *cniht* (Hecht 1965, 324, ll. 4, 6, and 22, and 325, ll. 7 and 8). Thus, Godden has concluded that Ælfric's *se adlia cniht* "presumably" recalls the Old English *Dialogi* "unless he had a copy of the homily [xxxviii] in which the detail had been added" (Godden 2000b, 297).[23] In fact, the matter is further complicated by the reading *iuuenis prauus* of *Homilia* xix, which Godden doesn't consider.[24]

However, given the complexities of the relative dating and textual vicissitudes of the *Homiliae in Euangelia*, on the one hand, and of the *Dialogi*, on the other (see above, notes 20 and 21), the two most sensible options are that Ælfric's *se adlia cniht* may be traced to either a version of the *Homilia* xxxviii which, unlike Étaix's edited text, featured a putative *puer*-reading instead of Étaix's *melioratus aeger* (l. 473), or a mnemonic recollection of the *Dialogi* (whether in Latin or Old English) on Ælfric's part. As to the former hypothesis, the reading featured in the extant witnesses of *Homilia* xxxviii which were either written or circulating in early medieval England that I have been able to consult is fundamentally identical to Étaix's *melioratus*

21 Castaldi, *supra*. On the disputed authorship of *Dialogi* and their highly contaminated tradition, see Castaldi 2013c.

22 On the popularity of Gregory's *Dialogi* in early medieval England, see Castaldi 2013c, 153-58, and on their vernacularisation there, see Dekker 2001; Godden 1997; and Langefeld 1986. A revision of Wærferth's translation was eventually undertaken by an anonymous reviser between 950 and 1050, probably at Worcester: see Yerkes 1979 and 1982. The *Dialogi* were also translated into Old Norse: see Wolf 2013c and Unger 1877, I, 179-255; for the exemplum in question see iv, §38, at 251, ll. 9-32.

23 On Ælfric's knowledge of Wærferth's version of the *Dialogi*, see Johnson 2006b. The Latin source-text and the two Old English versions are presented synoptically in Appendix I c.

24 A further echo of *Homilia* xix and its more emphatic description of the sick man's distress in Ælfric's text may possibly be the adverb *þearle* 'greatly' in *for þan ðe se draca me þearle ofþrihð*, "because the dragon greatly vexes me" (ll. 245-46), unparalleled in *Homilia* xxxviii (*quia a dracone premor*, "because I am oppressed by the dragon", l. 470): see above, 62.

aeger.[25] As to the latter, the role of spontaneous mnemonic quotation has been positively advocated in the composition and transmission of Old English anonymous homilies (Swan 1998; Teresi 2000), while it remains "a more open question" (Hill 1997, 97) when it comes to Ælfric.[26] Be that as it may on the Old English front, Gregory himself (or whoever was responsible for the *Dialogi* version of the exemplum) explicitly evokes the role of memory, by stating that the *Dialogi* tale recalls some unspecified homilies (*in omeliis coram populo iam narrasse me memini*, ll. 6-7), where the plural form of *omelia* can be taken as a revealing, albeit scanty, acknowledgement of the plurality of versions of the exemplum within the Gregorian corpus.[27]

Indeed, a similar exemplum occurs shortly later on in the *Dialogi* (IV. xl.10-12: de Vogüé 1980, III, 144-47), featuring another sinful monk who, after living a life of deceit and pretence, on his deathbed reveals to the unaware brethren that he is hopelessly falling prey to a dragon.[28] In particular, the dragon is apparently winding its tail around the monk's knees and feet and pressing its head into his mouth to draw out his breath of life, in a reversal of the swallowing scene described in the previous tale. Interestingly, this exemplum has been likened to a narrative in the *Adhortationes Sanctorum Patrum*, one of the many collections of exempla making up the *Vitas Patrum* as we know them from Rosweyde's edition,[29] a vast and heterogeneous corpus of homiletic and hagiographic texts which constituted the bedrock of monastic literature (Di Sciacca 2010, 311-22, 342-45; 2018, 151-54). Unlike the *Dialogi*, the *Vitas Patrum* tale doesn't admittedly mention any dragon; however, like the former, the latter describes the departing of the soul of a wicked monk who during his life had deceptively acquired a reputation as a holy man and on his deathbed falls prey to a merciless dark devil. What is more relevant, however, is that the *Vitas Patrum* tale was translated into Old

25 CCCC 69 (*melioratus ager*, fol. 78va4); Durham, Cathedral Library, A. III. 29 (*melioratus eger*, fol. 149^{r}2); Durham, Cathedral Library, B. III. 11 (*melioratus eger*, fol. 67^{rb}7-8); London, BL, Harley 652 (*melioratus eger*, fol. 140^{rb}19).

26 Whereas Cross positively argued for Ælfric's "power of recall [and] processes of association" (1969, 135), Hill (1997, 97) and Wright (2007, 24-26) have been more tentative. Eventually, however, Hill has conceded that whereas "[t]he tradition within which Ælfric was working was firmly text-based, [the] effects of memory in contributing to the weaving and interweaving of texts certainly cannot be excluded" (2016, 22).

27 As Castaldi has pointed out, the two key traits of Gregory's production are "una costante e diffusa pluralità redazionale e la rilevanza che l'*archivum* ebbe nell'*iter* della produzione dei testi" (2013a, vii).

28 This exemplum too was faithfully rendered into the Old English version of the *Dialogi*: see Hecht 1965, 326, l. 21 – 327, l. 19, and Appendix I d. The exemplum is also attested in a fragmentary Old Norse version: see Unger 1877, I, 252, ll. 3-6.

29 Cf. de Vogüé 1980, III, 147 note 11. The *Adhortationes Sanctorum Patrum* have been attributed to the deacon Pelagius (eventually Pope Pelagius I) and to the subdeacon John (eventually Pope John III) and are included in Rosweyde's *Vitas Patrum* as Books V and VI (*CPG* 5570; *BHL* 6527-30; PL 73, 851-1024; Battle 1972); the exemplum in question is no. 13 of the *Libellus tertius* of Book VI: PL 73, 1011-12. In the *Dialogi* the tale is attributed to certain *Athanasius Isauriae presbiter* of the monastery *Ton Galathon* (144, ll. 80-83).

English by Ælfric for some unknown occasion (SH II. 27, 775-79), thereby confirming Ælfric's receptiveness to such *post-mortem* tableaux and their gripping, spectacular potential (Di Sciacca 2018). The Latin source-text also demonstrably circulated in pre-Conquest England, as it is attested in the final section (fols. 105-64) of ms. Worcester, Cathedral Library F. 48, dated to the mid-eleventh century (G & L, no. 761). The codex clearly post-dates Ælfric, so it cannot have been the base text of Ælfric's vernacular version of the exemplum, nor does the latter feature any distinctive reading that might link it to the putative exemplar of the Worcester manuscript (Di Sciacca 2018, 156-58). Finally, this tale was also known in medieval Ireland and Scandinavia, as an Irish version of it is attested within a sermon known as *The Two Deaths* (Ritari 2014; see also Ritari 2013; Wright 1993, 177-78; 2014a; 2014b, 362-69), and two versions are attested within the Old Norse *Vitae Patrum* (Unger 1877, II, 632-34; Tveitane 1968, 20-21).

2. *XII KALENDAS APRELIS. SANCTI BENEDICTI ABBATIS* (CH II. 11)

Another Gregorian tale of a dragon attempting to swallow a stray monk was included by Ælfric within his vernacular take on the life of St Benedict of Nursia, a sanctorale item of the Second Series of the Catholic Homilies (CH II. 11, 92-109, esp. 103, ll. 376-92). Although Gregory is acknowledged as a source only about halfway through this long homily (ll. 326-27) – the longest, in fact, of the Catholic Homilies –, the saint's life in the second book of the *Dialogi* is fundamentally Ælfric's only source, which he drastically summarises, keeping to the basics of the many miracles stories and doing without the doctrinal musings, historical details, and dialogue structure of his base-text (Godden 2000b, 429-30). Thereby, Ælfric reshapes Gregory's account into "a context free narrative of sanctity, exemplifying divine power working through Benedict in miracles of healing, prophecy and defeat of the devil" (Godden 2000b, 430).

The exemplum in question features indeed the devil in its most archetypal guise, the dragon, but here the latter plays not so much the saint's antagonist but his ally, instrumental in recovering a stray sheep.[30] As we learn from the final pun, the dragon is a hallucination conjured up by St Benedict himself to scare off a restless monk, who had tried the saint's patience with his eagerness to venture out of the monastery. As soon as the monk is finally granted permission to leave by an exasperated Benedict and actually exits the monastery, he is confronted by a dragon moving menacingly towards him with jaws agape. Terrified, he cries out for help and his brethren promptly run to his rescue, carrying him back to the monastery.

30 This exemplum is also attested within the *Benedikts saga* (§27; Camiz 2017, 140-41), whilst it is missing in the Old Norse version of the *Dialogi* due to an extensive lacuna: cf. Unger 1877, I, 216. On both the saga and the *Dialogi* version, see Wolf 2013b and 2013c.

Still shaking with fear, he is deterred from his roaming whims for good and solemnly promises never to leave again.

Like in the previous deathbed exemplum, here too the dragon is invisible to the other brethren, whereas to the restless monk it is the ultimate epiphany of the devil he had been following all along albeit without seeing him. This basic moral implicitly underlies both this exemplum and the former one, in all its versions, but it is explicitly stated only in the concluding lines of both *Dialogi* II.xxv.2 (*qui sancti uiri orationibus contra se adsistere draconem uiderat, quem prius non uidendo sequebatur*, "because of the holy man's [Benedict's] prayers, he had seen the dragon move against him, whom he had previously followed without seeing [him]", ll. 17-19) and *Homilia* xix (*et eum a quo prius non uidens tenebatur, uidit postea ne tenetur*, "and he then saw the one [the dragon] by whom he had previously been held without seeing [him], so that he wouldn't be held thereafter", ll. 212-13).[31]

Ælfric's rendition of the tale is a straightforward retelling, independent from the corresponding passage of Wærferth's version.[32] While the latter keeps closely to the Latin base-text, occasionally expanding it by means of doublets (Bately 1988, 120-23), Ælfric, in line with the concision he displays throughout the homily, abridges the description of the preliminary exchanges between the rebellious monk and the admonishing Benedict, but retains all the events that follow the monk's departure from the monastery. Notably, when mentioning that the brethren succouring the monk can't see the dragon, Ælfric takes the chance to explain that the reason for this was that the dragon was the invisible devil (*for ðan þæt wæs se ungesewenlica deofol*, "for that was the invisible devil", l. 387) – an explanation that might perhaps sound superfluous, but which Ælfric apparently felt in line with the edifying scope of his text.

3. *In dominica palmarum* (CH I. 14) and the bait-and-hook metaphor

Whereas in CH I. 35 and CH II. 11 Ælfric draws on Gregory's swallowing dragons in exemplary anecdotes, in the homily for Palm Sunday of the First Series of the Catholic Homilies (CH I. 14, 290-98), the Gregorian imagery of the greedy Satanic snake is employed in a dense exegetical passage where

31 As noted by de Vogüé (1979, II, 441), a similar version of this tale occurs, together with other anecdotes concerning monks intolerant of the Benedictine *stabilitas loci*, at the end of Gregory's *Epistola* xi. 26 (Norberg 1982, II, 900, ll. 61-77). In the epistle, however, the attack on the stray monk happens in a dream and is virtually carried out by a black hound (rather than a dragon), unleashed by an old man who chastises the monk for his wish to leave the monastery. On Gregory's epistolary, see Pollard 2013. On the fine distinction between visions and dreams, see above, note 16. On the black dog as a recurrent manifestation of the devil or as an evil, hellish monster, from the three-headed Cerberus to Fenrir up to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, see at least Brown 1958 and Woods 1959.

32 The Latin source-text and the the two Old English versions of the *Dialogi* and Ælfric's rendition are presented synoptically in Appendix II.

Ælfric tackles crucial theological questions, such as the coexistence of divinity and humanity in Christ and the divine plan for universal redemption through His death on the cross.

The key theme of the homily is Christ's entry into Jerusalem, of which Ælfric provides a "fairly complex" exposition, by drawing on the accounts of all four Gospels and on different Patristic elucidations of the evangelical narratives, as well as "working at several levels of interpretation" (Godden 2000b, 110). In particular, the reading of the event as an allegory of mankind's redemption triggers a general discussion of the divine scheme for universal salvation (ll. 161-78), culminating in the graphic image of Satan as the greedy fish who is fooled by Christ's suffering body on the cross and tries to snatch Him, but is fatally pierced by the hook of His divine nature.

First attested in the corpus of Gregory of Nyssa († 394), the bait-and-hook imagery was introduced to the West by Rufinus of Aquileia and popularised by Gregory the Great as an effective metaphor to illustrate the ultimate conflict between God and the devil for the salvation of humankind.[33] As noted by Godden (2000b, 117), Ælfric's take on this imagery is most likely indebted, though not verbatim, to Gregory's *Homilia in Euangelia* xxv for Easter Sunday (Étaix 1999, 205-16).[34] Here the bait-and-hook metaphor follows the explanation of the Gospel pericope (John 20:11-18) recounting the meeting of Mary Magdalene with the two angels and the resuscitated Christ on Easter morning, and is instrumental in explaining the divine plan of Christ's incarnation, death on the cross, and resurrection, as well as its soteriological implications for mankind (§§7-9, ll. 212-84).

In particular, the key image of Satan as a greedy fish and of Christ as both the bait – in His human body – and the hook – in His divine nature –, is introduced to expound two quotations from Job (40:20-21), that is *Numquid capies Leviathan hamo [...] aut armilla perforabis maxillam eius?* ("Will you catch Leviathan with a fishhook? [...] Or will you pierce its jaw with a band?", ll. 224-55 and 257). The two (rhetorical) questions, allegedly uttered by Yahweh, insist on Job's, that is man's, inability to capture Leviathan, on which Gregory commented extensively in his own *Moralia in Iob*, XXXIII. vii.14 – xii.26 (Adriaen 1985, III, 1684-96).[35] Whereas the biblical source

33 See Di Sciacca 2019b, 71, and Bullitta, *infra*.

34 This homily features in four of the five manuscript witnesses of the *Homiliae in Evangelia* circulating in England *ante ca*. 1125, namely CCCC 69; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 314 (SC 2129); Salisbury, Cathedral Library 132; and Worcester, Cathedral Library Q. 21: see above, note 6. Moreover, it was included in six of the manuscript witnesses of Paul the Deacon's homiliary circulating in England by the early twelfth century, namely Cambridge, UL, Ii. 2. 19; Cambridge, Pembroke College 23; Durham, Cathedral Library, A. III. 29; London, BL, Harley 652; Worcester, Cathedral Library F. 93; and Salisbury, Cathedral Library 179 (s. xi^{ex}, Salisbury): on the first four manuscripts, see above, note 9, and on the Salisbury codex, see G&L, no. 753. The relevant sections from *Homilia* xxv and CH I. 14 are presented synoptically in Appendix III.

35 A subsequent passage of the *Moralia* (XXXIII.xv.30-31 and XXXIII.xvi.32; Adriaen 1985, III, 1699-702) concerns the description of Behemot (Job 40:15-24), which concludes with an

emphasises Leviathan's reptilian traits, Gregory's *Homilia* xxv rather describes it as a devouring sea-monster (*cetus deuorator*, l. 227), rushing hither and thither in the abyss with an open mouth in eager search of prey (see also *Moralia* XXXIII.ix.17, Adriaen 1985, III, 1687-88).[36]

Satan is misled by Christ's human flesh veiling His divine and immortal nature like a bait on a fishhook,[37] and greedily attempts to swallow Jesus dying on the cross, but gets trapped and ultimately vanquished. Thereby, Christ's apparent humiliation and suffering on the cross turns into His definitive triumph over Satan and death. Indeed, all mankind shares in Christ's victory, since by sacrificing Himself on the cross, He has ransomed humanity from Satan and death.[38] Thereby Christ has rescued mankind from the subjugation it had been enduring since the Edenic serpent first caused the progenitors to sin and, by deceptively promising to bestow divinity upon them, in fact took away their immortality (*qui dum se diuinitatem homini addere spondit, immortalitatem sustulit*, "when he [the serpent] promised to bestow divinity upon human beings, took away their immortality", ll. 227-78). Hence, through Christ's death on the cross the divine plan of redemption comes full circle and the human race is granted the possibility to escape Leviathan's mouth and return to life, both during our earthly existence, by repenting after having sinned, and after death, by participating in the eternal salvation won for us by Christ (*Homilia* xxv, §9, ll. 249-84).

The relevant section from Ælfric's Palm Sunday homily doesn't seem to rely closely on any of the sources which have so far been identified (cf. Godden 2011, 110-11, 117), and can instead be considered a pretty drastic précis of the Gregorian argument as laid out in both *Homilia* xxv and the *Moralia*.[39] In particular, Ælfric's synthesis revolves around a series of key

analogous rhetorical question (Job 40:24): *Numquid illudes ei quasi avi, aut ligabis eum ancillis tuis?* ("Shalt thou play with him as with a bird, or tie him up for thy handmaids?"). Behemot and Leviathan have been interpreted as both two distinct creatures or two personifications of one monster creature: see at least Batto [1995] 1998 and Uehlinger [1995] 1998. For a convenient overview of the Old Testament monsters and their often misleading different designations, see Di Sciacca 2019b, 65-66, and Kelly 2006, 150-51. On the devil in Gregory's *Moralia*, see Kingston 2011, 53-112.

36 Job 40:25 - 41:26 contains the most comprehensive and formidable description of Leviathan as a gigantic fanged, scale-covered, and fire-spitting reptile, a sort of hybrid between a crocodile and a dragon; however, elsewhere in the Old Testament, Leviathan and fellow monstrous creatures are associated with the sea: on the overlap between the reptilian and marine traits of the biblical Leviathan, see Di Sciacca 2019b, 54, 65-66.

37 On Gregory's interpretation of Christ's double nature, see Green 2013, 136-48.

38 On the motif of *Christus uictor*, the ransom theory, and their relationship to the bait-and-hook metaphor, see Russell 1981, 80-106, and Staines 2008, 89-95. See also Di Sciacca 2019b, 70-71, and Bullitta, *infra*. On Gregory's take on the soteriology of Christ's passion, see Green 2013, 149-55.

39 Whereas the *Moralia* features a diffusive exegetical argument, the *Homilia* presents a more succinct illustration of the bait-and-hook metaphor and, in line with its catechetic nature, the redeeming efficacy of Christ's sacrifice on the cross is applied to the daily fight against sin by the individual Christian.

oppositions, such as humanity (*þa menniscnysse*, l. 175) *versus* divinity (*ða godcundnysse*, ll. 175-76); mortality *versus* immortality or Christ's temporary death *versus* the eternal death that impended on all mankind before His redeeming sacrifice on the Cross (*he wolde* [...] *mancynn alysan fram* þ*am ecan deaðe mid his hwilwendlicum deaðe*, "He wanted to release mankind from the eternal death with His temporary death", ll. 162-64);[40] Christ's innocent death for all the believers *versus* the devil's deceitful instigation of the Jews to slay Him (*þurh* [*Cristes*] *unsceððian deaðe wurdon we alysede fram* þ*am ecan deaðe*, "through Christ's innocent death we have been released from the eternal death", ll. 170-71; *sprytte* [*se deofol*] *þæt Iudeisce folc to* [*Cristes*] *slege*, "[the devil] incited the Jewish folk to slay Christ", l. 176; *ða heafodmen* [...] *syrewydon mid micelre smeaunge hú hi mihton hine to deaðe gebringan*, "the elders plotted with great consideration how they could bring Him to death", ll. 159-61).

Ælfric must have been familiar with the bait-and-hook imagery and its soteriological implications, as it seems to underlie his sketch of God's plan of Christ's incarnation, passion, and resurrection in the opening sermon of the First Series of the Catholic Homilies, *De initio creaturae* (CH I. 1, 178-89, esp. ll. 265-76). Furthermore, in CH I.14 Ælfric seems to imply that he has often dealt with the ransoming of mankind from the devil on Christ's part (*We habbað oft gesæd*, "We have often said", l. 167), though presumably in his preaching rather than in written texts (Godden 2001, 117). Given the lack of any close correspondences between either the *Moralia* or *Homilia* xxv and the relevant passage in the Palm Sunday homily, the latter could be considered as a synthetic and memorial recollection of the extensive Gregorian treatment of the theme, perhaps triggered by Smaragdus's two homilies for Palm Sunday.

In Smaragdus's homiliary, the Gospel account of Christ's entry in Jerusalem as recounted in Matt. 21:1-9 makes up the pericope of the homily for the first Advent Sunday (PL 102, 512-15), which Godden lists among the possible sources of CH I. 14. However, I would suggest that a more pertinent relationship could instead be established with Smaragdus's Epistle and Gospel homilies for Palm Sunday. The former (PL 102, 199-202) expounds the famous Christological poem embedded within Paul's Phil. 2:5-11, whereas the latter (PL 102, 202-21) is an exposition of John's account (13:1-15) of the Last supper. Both the Epistle and the Gospel pericopes deal with Christ's double nature and the Pauline Epistle, in particular, focuses on His self-sacrifice on the cross as an act of universal redemption (see esp. PL 102, 200-02, 210-11, and 216-18). Although neither homily features the bait-and-hook metaphor itself, the topic of both largely overlaps with Ælfric's argument. Thus, the bait-and-hook section of the Palm Sunday homily of the First

40 On the soteriology of the cross in general, see Staines 2008. On the special devotion of the Cross endorsed by the *Regularis Concordia*, particularly within the paschal liturgy, see Di Sciacca 2019a, 380-83.

Series may be taken as a climactic close to the narrative of Christ's entry in Jerusalem, possibly recalled from memory by a spontaneous association with Smaragdus's homilies for the same liturgical occasion.

Indeed, it should be stressed that neither of the two Smaragdus homilies for Palm Sunday draws on Gregory: the epistle homily is a brief catena of passages from Augustine and John Chrysostom, whereas the much longer Gospel homily consists of extracts from St Augustine's *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus CXXIV* (Willelms 1990). This exegetical treatise was a major source of Smaragdus for his Johannine homilies, though mostly via Alcuin's *Commentaria in S. Iohannis evangelium* (PL 100, 733-1008; Hill 2013, 161).

Notably, the Augustinian tractates count among the ultimate sources of Ælfric's Palm Sunday for the Second Series of the Catholic Homilies (*De passione Domini*: CH II. 14, 135-49), though mediated, as is often the case with Ælfric, by Haymo and, again, Smaragdus (Godden 2000b, 474-86; Hill 2013, 172-76). The Palm Sunday homily of the Second Series is a long narrative piece on Christ's passion drawing on all four Gospels and supplemented with some points of interpretation, including a brief, but significant one about the humanity of Christ and His suffering on the cross (ll. 266-67), which may have been inspired by Augustine's *Tractatus* (Godden 2000b, 484) or be put down to Ælfric's "personal touch" (Hill 2013, 174). Be that as it may, it is noteworthy that the Smaragdus piece which is among the immediate sources of CH II. 14 is not so much a homily as a lengthy account of Christ's passion based on the three synoptic Gospels and integrated with exegetical commentary (*Passio Domini nostri Iesu Christi*, PL 102, 169-99) – not unlike Ælfric's text itself, with which it also shares an almost identical title.[41] Finally, the Smaragdus piece immediately precedes the two homilies for Palm Sunday which I have suggested may have inspired Ælfric's discussion of the bait-and-hook metaphor in the Palm Sunday homily of the First Series.

In sum, both Palm Sunday items in the two series of the Catholic Homilies seem to be somehow indebted to Smaragdus's homiliary, although such a debt cannot be forthrightly defined in terms of 'source-text'. The relationship between Ælfric's homilies and Smaragdus's ones should rather be assessed in the light of the dense and multi-layered intertextual tradition in which Ælfric consciously positioned himself, as well as of the methods of composition typical of a literary culture where ingrained biblical and patristic reading, doctrinal instruction, and liturgical practice coexisted (see at least Hill 2013, 188, and 2020, 67-69, 75, 77-79). On the one hand, the extensive discussion of Christ's double nature and the soteriology of

41 It is noteworthy that Smaragdus's comment on Christ's final cry to the Father (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34) draws on Augustine's *Tractatus* to point out that Christ's exhaustion and desperation were due to His human nature (PL 102, 192). This passage of the Gospel narrative is unparalleled in CH II. 14, presumably out of Ælfric's deliberate choice to omit those "moments which might suggest Christ's own reluctance" to submit to the excruciating death on the cross (Godden 2000b, 474).

the cross in the Palm Sunday homily of the First Series may have been inspired by Smaragdus's Epistle and Gospel homilies for Palm Sunday and ultimately crowned with the iconic bait-and-hook imagery of Gregorian brand, although the latter was not included in any of Ælfric's Carolingian intermediate sources. On the other, the corresponding item of the Second Series is structured as a Gospel-based account of Christ's passion in a guise "somewhat unusual" for Ælfric (Godden 2000b, 474) and possibly reminiscent of Smaragdus's *Passio Domini nostri Iesu Christi*, where Ælfric probably worked "as much from memory and his trained understanding of [the Gospel narratives] as from direct sources" (Godden 2000b, 475).

Interestingly, the bait-and-hook passage in CH I. 14 is followed by a very brief outline of the crucial events of Christ's passion, from His arrest on Friday evening up to His resurrection on Easter Sunday (ll. 179-91). In light of the distinction made concerning Christ's double nature, Ælfric makes a point of specifying that while Christ's body lay dead in the sepulchre in the night between Friday and Saturday and in the one between Saturday and Sunday, Christ in His divine nature was in hell (*his lic læg on byrigene þa sæterniht 7 sunnanniht. 7 seo godcundndnyss wæs þære hwile on helle*, ll. 186-88). It was during Christ's descent into hell that Satan was fatally pierced by the hook which he had greedily attempted to swallow, being then definitively bound at the bottom of hell, while Christ harrowed the progenitors and the patriarchs when resurrecting on Easter Sunday.[42] Significantly, then, Ælfric associates the Satanic devourer of the iconic bait-and-hook metaphor with the Harrowing of Hell, that is one of the eschatological themes which, as I have argued, played a crucial role in the development of the distinctively early English imagery of the zoomorphic mouth of hell (Di Sciacca 2019b; *Eadem, supra*). Indeed, not long after Ælfric, from the mid-eleventh century onwards, the monstrous mouth of hell seems to have become a distinctive trademark of illuminations depicting the Harrowing of Hell in English Psalters, as well as featuring in the late eleventh-century illustrations of the *Genesis* poem in the Junius Book (Di Sciacca 2019b, 60-64; G & L, no. 640).

4. conclusions

Contrary to the restraint with which he has been traditionally characterised as opposed to the many unnamed Old English anonymous homilists, as well as to his temperamental contemporary Wulfstan, Ælfric penned quite a few graphic and sensational visionary or eschatological scenes (Di Sciacca 2018; Di Giuseppe, *infra*). Indeed, as the above discussion has shown, Ælfric

42 Godden 2000b, 118. On the uncertain timing of the Harrowing of Hell and its association with Easter liturgy, see Di Sciacca 2019b, 97-98. Indeed, Ælfric mentions again the Harrowing of Hell in the Easter Sunday homily (CH I. 15, ll. 167-69), which immediately follows the Palm Sunday one in the First Series of the Catholic Homilies.

also included in his homilies some pretty haunting exempla of the demonic devourer, thereby sharing in what may be called the early English penchant for this imagery. Without indulging in the received dichotomy between the anonymous homilists and hagiographers, with their apocryphal slant and doctrinal liberties, on the one hand, and the rigorous, patristic-based, and reform-aligned Ælfric, on the other (Di Sciacca 2014, 177-81), it should be pointed out that in all the three case studies examined in this paper, Ælfric does indeed derive his take on the swallowing devilish monster from a most commanding patristic authority, Gregory the Great. However, as is often the case with Ælfric, the ultimate patristic source has been mediated by Carolingian transmitters, as well as being aptly elaborated on and integrated with echoes of ingrained biblical reading, exegetical learning, liturgical drill, and familiar stories of monastic literature. In this regard, the exempla discussed contribute interesting insights into Ælfric's methods of composition and into the densely multi-layered, intertextual tradition in which Ælfric actively participated and with which he subtly engaged.

Gregory's pivotal role in the development of medieval vision literature and demonology cannot be overemphasised (see above, note 3), as in the momentous transition from the sixth to the seventh century (Markus 1990, 222), Gregory heralded "an imaginative shift" (Brown 1999a, 290) or "a 'tilt' toward the moment of death and the subsequent fate of the soul in an increasingly circumstantial other world" (Brown 1999b, 38; Palmer 2014, 55-68). In particular, the *Dialogi* and the *Homiliae in Euangelia* were the texts where Gregory successfully managed to blend doctrinal concerns and homiletic exhortations, theological musings and hagiographic narratives, eschatological projections and pastoral care (Alexander 2000, 132-34; Dagens 1977, 45-55, 198-201; Keskiaho 2015, 12-13; McCready 1989, 47-57; Straw 1988, 106).

Mutatis mutandis, Ælfric was a monk like Gregory (Müller 2013) and presumably shared his very monastic preoccupation with the devil's ubiquity and the human vulnerability to it (Kingston 2011, 231-34), as well as his catechetic concerns and pastoral care. Like Gregory with the *Dialogi* and *Homiliae in Euangelia*, Ælfric too with his homilies and saints' lives tried to tailor exegetical learning as a resource for pastoral work, thereby negotiating between complex theological issues and everyday instruction, intellectual faith and popular belief, Christ's universal soteriology and the individual Christian's salvation. For both Gregory and Ælfric, the imagery of the devouring dragon and the bait-and-hook metaphor, themselves relying on a complex and time-honoured "conglomerate of early Christian notions" (Brown 1999b, 38), proved instrumental in conveying such a conglomerate to their respective audiences in captivating and exemplary narratives.[43]

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Appendix I

a)

Homelia in Euangelia xix §7 α (Étaix 1999, 149-51, ll. 160-213)	*Homelia in Euangelia* xix, §7 β (Étaix 1999, 149-51, ll. 160-213)	*Homelia in Euangelia* xxxviii, §16 (Étaix 1999, 376-78, ll. 436-82)	*Dialogi* IV.xl.2-5 (de Vogüé 1980, III, 140, l. 6 - 142, l. 46)
Rem, fratres, quae nuper contigit refero, ut si uos peccatores esse ex corde conspicitis, omnipotentis Dei misericordiam amplius ametis. Praesenti anno in monasterio meo, quod iuxta beatorum martyrum Iohannis et Pauli ecclesiam situm est, frater quidam ad conuersionem uenit, deuote susceptus est, sed ipse deuotius conuersatus. Hunc ad monasterium frater suus ex eodem patre et matre genitus corpore, non corde secutus est. Nam ualde conuersionis uitam et habitum detestans, in monasterio ut hospes habitabat, et monachorum uitam moribus fugiens, recedere a monasterii habitatione non poterat, quia uel quid ageret, uel unde uiueret non habebat. Erat eius prauitas cunctis onerosa, sed hunc omnes aequanimiter pro fratris eius amore tolerabant. Nam superbus et lubricus si qua post hoc saeculum sequeretur uita nesciebat; irridebat uero si quis illi hanc praedicare uoluisset. Ita que cum habitu saeculari uiuebat in monasterio, uerbis leuis, nutibus instabilis, mente tumidus, ueste compositus, actione dissipatus.	Rem, fratres, quae nuper contigit refero, ut si uos peccatores esse ex corde conspicitis, omnipotentis Dei misericordiam amplius ametis. Praesenti anno in monasterio meo, quod iuxta beatorum martyrum Iohannis et Pauli ecclesiam situm est, frater quidam ad conuersionem uenit, deuote susceptus est, sed ipse deuotius conuersatus. Hunc ad monasterium frater suus corpore, non corde secutus est. Nam ualde conuersionis uitam et habitum detestans, in monasterio ut hospes habitabat, et monachorum uitam moribus fugiens, recedere a monasterii habitatione non poterat, quia uel quid ageret, uel unde uiueret non habebat. Erat eius prauitas cunctis onerosa, sed hunc omnes aequanimiter pro fratris eius amore tolerabant. Nam superbus et lubricus si qua post hoc saeculum sequeretur uita nesciebat; irridebat uero si quis illi hanc praedicare uoluisset. Ita que cum habitu saeculari uiuebat in monasterio, uerbis leuis, nutibus instabilis, mente tumidus, ueste compositus, actione dissipatus.	Ante biennium frater quidam in monasterium meum, quod iuxta beatorum martyrum Iohannis et Pauli ecclesiam situm est, gratia conuersationis uenit, qui diu regulariter protractus, quandoque susceptus est. Quem frater suus ad monasterium non conuersationis studio, sed carnali amore secutus est. Is autem qui ad conuersationem uenerat ualde fratribus placebat; at contra frater illius longe a uita eius ac moribus discrepabat. Viuebat tamen in monasterio necessitate potius quam uoluntate. Et cum in cunctis actibus peruersus exsisteret, pro fratre suo ab omnibus aequanimiter tolerabatur. Erat enim leuis eloquio, prauus actione, cultus uestibus, moribus incultus; ferre uero non poterat si quisquam illi de sancti habitus conuersatione loqueretur. Facta autem fuerat uita illius cunctis fratribus uisu grauis, sed tamen, ut dictum est, pro fratris sui gratia erat cunctis tolerabilis. Aspernabatur ualde si quis sibi aliquid de prauitatis suae correptione loqueretur. Bona non solum facere, sed etiam audire non poterat. Numquam se ad sanctae conuersationis habitum uenire, iurando, irascendo, deridendo testabatur.	[2] Nam is de quo in omeliis coram populo iam narrasse me memini, inquietus ualde Theodorus nomine puer fuit, qui in meum monasterium fratrem suum necessitate magis quam uoluntate secutus est. Cui nimirum grauis erat si quis pro sua aliquid salute loqueretur. Bona autem non solum facere, sed etiam audire non poterat. Numquam se ad sanctae conuersationis habitum uenire, iurando, irascendo, deridendo testabatur. [3] In hac autem pestilentia, quae nuper huius urbis populum magna ex parte consumpsit, percussus in inguine est perductus ad mortem. Cumque extremum spiritum ageret, conuenerunt fratres, ut egressum illius orando protegerent. Iam corpus eius ab extrema fuerat parte praemortuum; in solo tantummodo pectore uitalis adhuc calor anhelabat. Cuncti autem fratres tanto pro eo coeperunt enixius orare, quanto eum iam uidebant sub celeritate discedere.

Mense autem iulio nuper elapso, huius quam nostis pestilentiae clade percussus est, qui ad extremum ueniens, urgeri coepit ut animam redderet. Et ultima iam corporis parte praemortua, uitalis uirtus in solo pectore et lingua remanserat. Fratres aderant, eius que exitum, in quantum Deo largiente poterant, oratione tuebantur. At ille subito ad deuorandum se draconem uenire conspiciens, magnis coepit uocibus clamare dicens: Ecce draconi ad deuorandum datus sum; propter uestram praesentiam deuorare me non potest. Quid mihi moras facitis? Date locum ut ei deuorare me liceat. Cum que hunc fratres ut signum sibi crucis imprimeret admonerent, respondebat magnis clamoribus dicens: Volo me signare, sed non possum, quia squamis draconis premor. Spumae oris eius faciem meam liniunt, guttur meum eius ore suffocatur et ne signare me possim, squamis eius mea brachia comprimuntur. Cum que hoc ille pallens, tremens et moriens diceret, coeperunt fratres uehementius orationibus insistere, et oppressum draconis praesentia suis precibus adiuuare.	Mense autem iulio nuper elapso, huius quam nostis pestilentiae clade percussus est, qui ad extremum ueniens, urgeri coepit ut animam redderet. Et ultima iam corporis parte praemortua, uitalis uirtus in solo pectore et lingua remanserat. Fratres aderant, eius que exitum, in quantum Deo largiente poterant, oratione tuebantur. At ille subito ad deuorandum se draconem uenire conspiciens, magnis coepit uocibus clamare dicens: Ecce draconi ad deuorandum datus sum; propter uestram praesentiam deuorare me non potest. Quid mihi moras facitis? Date locum ut ei deuorare me liceat. Cum que hunc fratres ut signum sibi crucis imprimeret admonerent, respondebat uirtute qua poterat dicens: Volo me signare, sed non possum, quia a dracone premor. Spumae oris eius faciem meam liniunt, guttur meum eius ore suffocatur. Ecce ab eo mea brachia comprimuntur, qui iam et caput meum in suo ore absorbuit. Cum que hoc ille pallens, tremens et moriens diceret, coeperunt fratres uehementius orationibus insistere, et oppressum draconis praesentia suis precibus adiuuare.	In hac autem pestilentia quae nuper huius urbis populum magna ex parte consumpsit, percussus in inguine est perductus ad mortem. Cum que extremum spiritum ageret, conuenerunt fratres, ut egressum illius orando protegerent. Iam corpus eius ab extrema fuerat parte praemortuum, in solo tantummodo pectore uitalis adhuc calor anhelabat. Cuncti autem fratres tanto pro eo coeperunt enixius orare, quanto eum iam uidebant sub celeritate discedere, cum repente coepit eisdem fratribus assistentibus adnisu quo poterat clamare et orationes eorum interrumpere, dicens: Recedite, recedite. Ecce draconi ad deuorandum datus sum, qui propter uestram praesentiam deuorare me non potest. Caput meum in suo ore iam absorbuit. Date locum ut non me amplius cruciet, sed faciat quod facturus est. Si ei ad deuorandum datus sum, quare propter uos moras patior? Tunc fratres coeperunt ei dicere: Quid est quod loqueris, frater? Signum tibi sanctae crucis imprime. Respondebat ille ut poterat, dicens: Volo me signare, sed non possum, quia a dracone premor. Cum que hoc fratres audirent, prostrati in terram cum lacrimis coeperunt pro ereptione illius uehementius orare.	[4] Cum repente coepit eisdem fratribus adsistentibus clamare, atque cum magnis uocibus orationes eorum interrumpere, dicens: “Recedite. Ecce draconi ad deuorandum datus sum, qui propter uestram praesentiam deuorare me non potest. Caput meum in suo ore iam absorbuit. Date locum, ut non me amplius cruciet, sed faciat quod facturus est. Si ei ad deuorandum datus sum, quare propter uos moras patior?” Tunc fratres coeperunt ei dicere: “Quid est quot loqueris, farter? Signum tibi sanctae crucis inprime”. Respondebat ille cum magnis clamoribus, dicens: “Volo me signare, sed non possum, quia squamis huius draconis premor.”

Cum repente liberatus, magnis coepit uocibus clamare dicens: Ecce discessit, ecce exiit, ante orationes uestras fugit draco qui me acceperat. Mox autem seruiturum se Deo et esse monachum deuouit, atque a tempore illo nuncusque febribus premitur, doloribus fatigatur. Morti quidem subtractus est, sed adhuc plenius uitae restitutus non est. Quia enim longis et diuturnis iniquitatibus pressus est, longo languore fatigatur et durum cor ignis purgationis durior concremat, quia diuina dispensatione agitur ut prolixiora uitia aegritudo prolixior exurat. Quis illum umquam seruari ad conuersionem crederet? Quis tantam dei misericordiam considerare sufficiat? Ecce iuuenis prauus draconem uidit in morte, cui seruiuit in uita; nec uidit ut uitam funditus perderet, sed ut cui seruierat sciret, sciendo resisteret, ipsum que resistendo superaret, et eum a quo prius non uidens tenebatur, uidit postea ne teneretur.	Cum repente liberatus, magnis coepit uocibus clamare dicens: Ecce discessit, ecce exiit, ante orationes uestras fugit draco qui me acceperat. Mox autem seruiturum se Deo et esse monachum deuouit, atque a tempore illo nuncusque febribus premitur, doloribus fatigatur. Morti quidem subtractus est, sed adhuc plenius uitae restitutus non est. Quia enim longis et diuturnis iniquitatibus pressus est, longo languore fatigatur et durum cor ignis purgationis durior concremat, quia diuina dispensatione agitur ut prolixiora uitia aegritudo prolixior exurat. Quis illum umquam seruari ad conuersionem crederet? Quis tantam dei misericordiam considerare sufficiat? Ecce iuuenis prauus draconem uidit in morte, cui seruiuit in uita; nec uidit ut uitam funditus perderet, sed ut cui seruierat sciret, sciendo resisteret, ipsum que resistendo superaret, et eum a quo prius non uidens tenebatur, uidit postea ne teneretur.	Et ecce subito coepit melioratus aeger quibus ualebat uocibus exsultare, dicens: Gratias Deo, ecce draco qui me ad deuorandum acceperat fugit. Orationibus uestris expulsus est, stare non potuit. Pro peccatis meis modo intercedite, quia conuerti paratus sum et saecularem uitam funditus relinquere. Homo ergo qui, sicut iam dictum est, ab extrema corporis fuerat parte praemortuus, reseruatus ad uitam, toto ad Deum corde conuersus est. Longis et continuis in conuersatione eadem flagellis eruditus, atque ante paucos dies excrescente corporis molestia defunctus est. Qui iam draconem moriens non uidit, quia illum per cordis immutationem uicit.	[5] Cumque hoc fratres audirent, prostrati in terra cum lacrimis coeperunt pro ereptione illius uehementius orare. Et ecce subito coepit aeger cum magnis uocibus clamare, dicens: "Gratias Deo. Ecce draco, qui me ad deuorandum acceperat, fugit. Orationibus uestris expulsus est, stare non potuit. Pro peccatis meis modo intercedite, quia conuerti paratus sum et saecularem uitam funditus relinquere". Homo ergo qui, sicut iam dictum est, ab extrema corporis fuerat parte praemortuus, reseruatus ad uitam toto ad Deum corde conuersus est, et postquam mutatus mente diu est flagellis adtritus, tunc eius anima carne soluta est.

Homilia in Euangelia xix, §7 (trans. adapted from Hurst 1990, 83-85)

I tell you something, brothers, which happened recently. So that if you perceive from your hearts that you are sinners you may love the mercy of the almighty God all the more. During this year a certain brother came to my monastery, which is situated next to the church of the blessed martyrs John and Paul, to lead the monastic life. He was received with faith, but he himself led the monastic life more faithfully. His

brother [α: born of the same father and mother] followed him into the monastery in body but not in heart. Despising the life and dress of a monk, he dwelt in the monastery as a guest; and fleeing the life of the monks by his conduct, he could not withdraw from the monastery because he had no other occupation or means of sustenance. His wickedness was a burden to all, but everyone put up with him patiently out of respect for his brother. He was proud and insecure. He did not know if there was any life to follow after this present age, but he scorned anyone who wished to preach to him about this. Accordingly, he lived in the monastery like a layman, frivolous in his speech, unpredictable in his likings, puffed up in mind, neatly dressed, dissipated in his actions. But during the month of July just passed he was stricken with the plague that you know about. As he approached the end of his life he began to be assailed by the thought that he was rendering up his soul. As the rest of his body was failing, he had strength only in his breast and tongue. His brothers were present and they were supporting his departure by their prayers as far as God granted them to do so. Suddenly he perceived a dragon coming to devour him. He began to shout in a loud voice, "Get back, get back! I'm being given up to a dragon to be devoured, but on account of your presence it cannot do it. Why do you stop it? Give it room so it can devour me!" When his brothers urged him to mark himself with the sign of the cross, he replied

α: with loud cries and said: "I want to sign myself but I cannot, because the dragon's scales are holding me down. The foam from its mouth is spread over my face, my throat is suffocated by his mouth and I cannot sign myself; my arms are squeezed together by his scales."

β: with what strength he had left, saying: "I want to sign myself, but I cannot, because the dragon is holding me down. The foam from its mouth is spread over my face, my throat is suffocated by his mouth. Lo, my arms are squeezed together by him, who has already swallowed even my head!"

As he was saying these things, pallid, trembling and dying, his brothers began to press on more insistently with their prayers, to help with their entreaties the poor man overwhelmed by the dragon. Suddenly he was set free! He began to shout with a loud voice, saying: "See, it has departed, it has gone away. The dragon which took me has fled from before your prayers." And he soon vowed that he would serve God and be a monk, and from then until now he has been overcome with fever and beset with sorrows. He was indeed saved from death, but he has still not been fully restored to life. Because he was held by oppressive and long lasting wickedness, he is beset by oppressive ill health. A harder fire of purification is completely consuming his hard heart, and by divinely-arranged plan a very protracted illness is entirely burning away his protracted vices. Who would have believed that he would be preserved to change his way of life? Who could have pondered enough the great mercy of God? A wicked young man at the time of his death saw the dragon he had served during his lifetime. The object of this vision was to prevent its utterly destroying his life. He

would know whom he had been serving, by knowing him, might oppose him and by opposing him might overcome him. He saw the one who had held him while he was unseeing, so that afterwards he might not be held.

Homilia in Euangelia xxxviii, §16 (trans. Hurst 1990, 354-55)

Two years ago a certain brother came by the grace of conversion to my monastery, which is situated beside the church of the blessed martyrs John and Paul. He was tested according to the rule, and eventually received. His brother followed him into the monastery, not from any desire for conversion but out of affection for him. Now the one who had come to lead the monastic life was most agreeable to the brothers, but his brother was very different in his way of life and habits. He lived in the monastery from necessity rather than of his own free will. Although he was unruly in all his actions, everyone bore with him calmly for his brother's sake. He was frivolous in his speech, misguided in his actions, careful about his dress, careless about his way of life. He could not bear it if anyone spoke to him of monastic life. His life had become a burden to all the brothers, but, as I have said, they all put up with him for the sake of his brother. He was scornful if anyone spoke to him about his bad behaviour; not only did he hate doing good deeds, but even hearing about them. By swearing, by anger, by scoffing, he declared that he would never come to the practice of monastic life. In the plague that recently killed a large part of the people of this city, his groin was affected, and he came close to death. As he was breathing his last, the brothers gathered to palliate his departure by their prayers. His body had lost all feeling in its extremities, and only the life-giving breath remained in his chest. As the brothers saw that his end was coming nearer, they began to pray more strenuously for him. Suddenly he began to cry out with all the strength he could muster to the brothers standing about him, and to interrupt their prayers saying: "Get back! I've been given up to a dragon to be devoured, but it cannot devour me because of your presence. It already had my head in its mouth! Give it room, that he may no longer torture me but may accomplish what it is about to do. If I've been given up to it to be devoured, why are you holding it back?" Then the brothers began to say to him: "What are you saying, brother? Sign yourself with the cross!" He answered as well as he could, "I want to sign myself but I can't because the dragon prevents me." When the brothers heard this they fell prostrate on the ground; with tears they began to pray more urgently for his release. Suddenly the sick man became better! He began to rejoice with what strength he had: "Thanks be to God! See the dragon which had undertaken to devour me has fled, he has been driven away by your prayers, he couldn't stay! Now intercede for my sins, because I am ready to be converted and to abandon completely my worldly way of life." And so the man who, as I described him, had lost all feeling in his extremities, was restored to life, and turned with all his heart to God. Instructed by long and continuous suffering during his sickness, he died a few days later, when his illness had grown worse. This time he saw no dragon as he died, because he had conquered it by his change of heart.

Dialogi IV.xl.2-5 (trans. Zimmerman 2002, 244-45)

I recall giving an example of this in my sermons to the people. I mentioned the case of Theodore, a very restless young man, who entered my monastery with his brother under force of circumstances rather than of his own free will. He was always irritated when any spiritual lesson was brought home to him. He could not bear doing good or hearing about it. In fact, he would become angry or sarcastic and swear that he had never intended to put on the religious habit or become a monk. During the plague which recently carried off a large part of the population of this city, Theodore became dangerously ill, with the disease lodging in his abdomen. When he was about to die, the brethren gathered round the bed to offer their prayers for his safe departure from this life to the next. The extremities of his body were now cold with death up to his breast, where the lifeblood was still pulsating warmly. Seeing the end approaching rapidly, his brethren became more fervent in their prayers. Suddenly, the sick man interrupted them. "Stand back!" he shouted, "I have been cast out to be devoured by the dragon. Your presence keeps him from doing so, but he has already taken my head into his jaws. Stand back! Don't make him torture me any longer. Let him finish me off, if that is what I am destined for. Why do you make me suffer this suspense?" The brethren tried to quiet him. "What is it you are saying?" they asked. "Bless yourself with the sign of the cross." In answer, he shouted excitedly, "I want to bless myself, but cannot because the dragon is holding me in his coils!" Hearing this, the brethren fell prostrate in prayer and, adding tears to their petitions, begged insistently for his release. Suddenly, with a sigh of relief, the sick brother cried happily, "Thanks be to God! The dragon who tried to devour me has fled. He could not stand the attack of your prayers. And now please beg God to forgive my sins, for I am ready to live like a real monk and fully determined to abandon my old, worldly ways." After recovering from the partial death of his body, this monk offered his life generously to God. With a complete change of heart, he now welcomed afflictions and endured them for a long time until his soul was finally freed from the body.

b)

Homelia in Euangelia xxxviii, §16 (Étaix 1999, 376-78, ll. 436-82)	*Dominica XXI post Pentecosten* (CH I. 35, 483-84, ll. 219-58)[1]
Ante biennium frater quidam in monasterium meum, quod iuxta beatorum martyrum Iohannis et Pauli ecclesiam situm est, gratia conuersationis uenit, qui diu regulariter protractus, quandoque susceptus est. Quem frater suus ad monasterium non conuersationis studio, sed carnali amore secutus est. Is autem qui ad conuersationem uenerat ualde fratribus placebat; at contra frater illius longe a uita eius ac moribus discrepabat. Viuebat tamen in monasterio necessitate potius quam uoluntate.	Cwyð nu sanctus gregorius. þæt sum broþer gecyrde to anum mynstre þe he sylf gestaþelode; and æfter regollicre fadunge munuchad underfeng; Đam fyligde sum flæsclic broþer to mynstre; na for gecnyrdnysse goddre drohtnunge; ac for flæsclicere lufe; Se gastlica broþer eallum þam mynstermunecum þearle þurh goddre drohtnunge gelicode. and his flæsclica broðer micclum his lifes þeawum mid þwyrnysse wiðcwæð;

1 Abbreviations have been silently explanded and *punctus elevati* have been replaced by semicolons.

Et cum in cunctis actibus peruersus exsisteret, pro fratre suo ab omnibus aequanimiter tolerabatur. Erat enim leuis eloquio, prauus actione, cultus uestibus, moribus incultus; ferre uero non poterat si quisquam illi de sancti habitus conuersatione loqueretur. Facta autem fuerat uita illius cunctis fratribus uisu grauis, sed tamen, ut dictum est, pro fratris sui gratia erat cunctis tolerabilis. Aspernabatur ualde si quis sibi aliquid de prauitatis suae correptione loqueretur. Bona non solum facere, sed etiam audire non poterat. Numquam se ad sanctae conuersationis habitum uenire, iurando, irascendo, deridendo testabatur. In hac autem pestilentia quae nuper huius urbis populum magna ex parte consumpsit, percussus in inguine est perductus ad mortem. Cum que extremum spiritum ageret, conuenerunt fratres, ut egressum illius orando protegerent.

Iam corpus eius ab extrema fuerat parte praemortuum, in solo tantummodo pectore uitalis adhuc calor anhelabat. Cuncti autem fratres tanto pro eo coeperunt enixius orare, quanto eum iam uidebant sub celeritate discedere, cum repente coepit eisdem fratribus assistentibus adnisu quo poterat clamare et orationes eorum interrumpere, dicens: Recedite, recedite. Ecce draconi ad deuorandum datus sum, qui propter uestram praesentiam deuorare me non potest. Caput meum in suo ore iam absorbuit. Date locum ut non me amplius cruciet, sed faciat quod facturus est. Si ei ad deuorandum datus sum, quare propter uos moras patior? Tunc fratres coeperunt ei dicere: Quid est quod loqueris, frater? Signum tibi sanctae crucis imprime. Respondebat ille ut poterat, dicens: Volo me signare, sed non possum, quia a dracone premor.

Cum que hoc fratres audirent, prostrati in terram cum lacrimis coeperunt pro ereptione illius uehementius orare. Et ecce subito coepit melioratus aeger quibus ualebat uocibus exsultare, dicens: Gratias Deo, ecce draco qui me ad deuorandum acceperat fugit. Orationibus uestris expulsus est, stare non potuit. Pro peccatis meis modo intercedite, quia conuerti paratus sum et saecularem uitam funditus relinquere. Homo ergo qui, sicut iam dictum est, ab extrema corporis fuerat parte praemortuus, reseruatus ad uitam, toto ad Deum corde conuersus est. Longis et continuis in conuersatione eadem flagellis eruditus, atque ante paucos dies excrescente corporis molestia defunctus est. Qui iam draconem moriens non uidit, quia illum per cordis immutationem uicit.

He leofode on mynstre for neode. swiðor þonne for beterunge; He wæs gegafspræce. and þwyr on dædum. wel besewen on reafe and yfel on þeawum; He nahte geþyld; gif hine hwa to goddre drohtnunge tihte; Wearð þa his lif swiþe hefityme þam gebroþrum. ac hi hit emlice forbæron for his broþer godnysse; he ne mihte nan þing to gode gedon; ne he nolde nan god gehyran; Ða wearð he færlice mid sumre coþe gestanden. and to deaþe gebroht; Þa ða he to forþsiþe ahafen wæs. þa comon þa gebroðra to þy ðæt hi his sawle becwæddon; He læg acealdod on nyþeweardum lymum; on þam breoste anum orþode þa gyt se gast; Þa gebroðru ða swa miccle geornfullicor for him gebædon; swa micclum swa hi gesawon þæt he hrædlice gewitan sceolde; He þa ferlice hrymde þus cweþende; Gewitað fram me; efne her is cumen an draca þe me sceal forswelgan; ac he ne mæg for eower andwerdnysse; Min heafod he hæfð mid his ceaflum befangen rymað him þæt he me leng ne geswence; Gif ic þysum dracan to forswelgenne geseald eom hwi sceal ic ælcunge þrowian for eowerum oferstealle; Ða gebroðra him cwædon to. hwi sprecst þu mid swa micelre orwennysse. mearca þe sylfne mid tacne þære halgan rode; He andwyrde be his mihte; Ic wolde lustbære mid tacne þære halgan rode me bletsian; ac ic næbbe þa mihte. for þan ðe se draca me þearle ofþrihð; Hwæt þa munecas þa hi astrehton mid wope to eorþan. and ongunnon georнlicor for his hreddinge þone wealdendan god biddan; Efne þa færlice awyrpte se adlia cniht. and mid blissiendre stemne cwæð;

Ic þancie gode; efne nu se draca þe me forswelgan wolde is afliged þurh eowerum benum; he is fram me ascofen and standan ne mihte ongean eowerum þingungum; Beoð nu mine þingeras biddende for minum synnum; for þan ðe ic eom gearo to gecyrrenne to munuclicere drohtnunge. and woruldlice þeawas ealle forlætan; His cealdan leomu þa geedcucedon and he mid ealre heortan to gode gecyrde; and mid langsumum broce on his gecyrrednysse wearð gerihtlæced and æt nextan on þære ylcan untrumnysse gewat; Ac he ne geseah þone dracan on his forðsiþe: for þan ðe he hine oferswyðde mid gecyrrednysse his heortan;

Homilia in Euangelia xxxviii, §16 (trans. Hurst 1990, 354-55)

Two years ago a certain brother came by the grace of conversion to my monastery, which is situated beside the church of the blessed martyrs John and Paul. He was tested according to the rule, and eventually received. His brother followed him into the monastery, not from any desire for conversion but out of affection for him. Now the one who had come to lead the monastic life was most agreeable to the brothers, but his brother was very different in his way of life and habits. He lived in the monastery from necessity rather than of his own free will. Although he was unruly in all his actions, everyone bore with him calmly for his brother's sake. He was frivolous in his speech, misguided in his actions, careful about his dress, careless about his way of life. He could not bear it if anyone spoke to him of monastic life. His life had become a burden to all the brothers, but, as I have said, they all put up with him for the sake of his brother. He was scornful if anyone spoke to him about his bad behaviour; not only did he hate doing good deeds, but even hearing about them. By swearing, by anger, by scoffing, he declared that he would never come to the practice of monastic life. In the plague that recently killed a large part of the people of this city, his groin was affected, and he came close to death. As he was breathing his last, the brothers gathered to palliate his departure by their prayers. His body had lost all feeling in its extremities, and only the life-giving breath remained in his chest. As the brothers saw that his end was coming nearer, they began to pray more strenuously for him. Suddenly he began to cry out with all the strength he could muster to the brothers standing about him, and to interrupt their prayers saying: "Get back! I've been given up to a dragon to be devoured, but it cannot devour me because of your presence. It already had my head in its mouth! Give it room, that he may no longer torture me but may accomplish what it is about to do. If I've been given up to it to be devoured, why are you holding it back?" Then the brothers began to say to him: "What are you saying, brother? Sign yourself with the cross!" He answered as well as he could, "I want to sign myself but I can't because the dragon prevents me." When the brothers heard this they fell prostrate on the ground; with tears they began to pray more urgently for his release. Suddenly the sick man became better! He began to rejoice with what strength he had: "Thanks be to God! See the dragon which had undertaken to devour me has fled, he has been driven away by your prayers, he couldn't stay! Now intercede for my sins, because I am ready to be converted and to abandon completely my worldly way of life." And so the man who, as I described him, had lost all feeling in his extremities, was restored to life, and turned with all his heart to God. Instructed by long and continuous suffering during his sickness, he died a few days later, when his illness had grown worse. This time he saw no dragon as he died, because he had conquered it by his change of heart.

Dominica XXI post Pentecosten (CH I. 35), ll. 219-58 (Translation adapted from Thorpe 1844, I, 533-35)

St. Gregory now says, that a certain brother entered into a monastery which he himself had founded, and after regular probation received monkhood. A worldly brother followed him to the monastery, not for desire of a good life, but for fleshly love. The spiritual brother, through his good life, was exceedingly liked by the monks of the monastery; and his worldly brother with perverseness greatly contradicted the usages of his life. He lived in the monastery rather from necessity than for bettering. He was idle of speech, and perverse in deeds; appearing well in attire, and evil in morals. He had no patience, if any one exhorted him to a good course. Hence his life was very irksome to the brothers, but they endured it calmly on account of his brother's goodness. He could do nothing good, nor would he hear any good. He was then suddenly seized with some disease, and brought to death. When he was raised up for departure, the brothers came that they might pray for his soul. He lay chilled in his lower limbs: in his breast alone the spirit yet breathed. The brothers then prayed for him the more fervently, the more they saw that he would quickly depart. He then suddenly cried, saying thus: "Depart from me. Lo, here is a dragon come which is to swallow me, but he cannot for your presence. He has seized my head in his jaws. Give place to him, that he may no longer afflict me. If I am given to this dragon to be swallowed, why should I suffer delay through your presence?" The brothers said to him: "Why do you speak with such great despair? Mark thyself with the sign of the holy cross." He answered as he was able: "I would joyfully bless myself with the sign of the holy cross, but I don't have the strength, for the dragon sorely oppresses me." Whereupon the monks prostrated themselves with weeping to the earth, and began more fervently to pray to the almighty God for his salvation. Lo, then, the sick man suddenly started, and with exulting voice said: "I thank God: behold now the dragon which would swallow me is put to flight through your prayers. He is driven from me, and could not stand against your intercession. Be now my intercessors, praying for my sins; for I am ready to turn to monastic life, and to forsake all worldly practices." His cold limbs then revived, and he turned with all his heart to God, and by long sickness in his conversion was justified, and at length died of the same disease; but he didn't see the dragon at his departure, for he had overcome him by the conversion of his heart.

c)

Dialogi IV.xl.2-5 (de Vogüé 1980, III, 140, l. 6 - 142, l. 46)	*Old English Dialogues*, IV.xl (Hecht 1965, 324, l. 4 - 325, l. 16)	*Dominica XXI post Pentecosten* (CH I. 35, 483-84, ll. 219-58)[2]
[2] Nam is de quo in omeliis coram populo iam narrasse me memini, inquietus ualde Theodorus nomine puer fuit, qui in meum monasterium fratrem suum necessitate magis quam uoluntate secutus est. Cui nimirum grauis erat si quis pro sua aliquid salute loqueretur. Bona autem non solum facere, sed etiam audire non poterat. Numquam se ad sanctae conuersationis habitum uenire, iurando, irascendo, deridendo testabatur. [3] In hac autem pestilentia, quae nuper huius urbis populum magna ex parte consumpsit, percussus in inguine est perductus ad mortem. Cumque extremum spiritum ageret, conuenerunt fratres, ut egressum illius orando protegerent. Iam corpus eius ab extrema fuerat parte praemortuum; in solo tantummodo pectore uitalis adhuc calor anhelabat. Cuncti autem fratres tanto pro eo coeperunt enixius orare, quanto eum iam uidebant sub celeritate discedere. [4] Cum repente coepit eisdem fratribus adsistentibus clamare, atque cum magnis uocibus orationes eorum interrumpere, dicens: 'Recedite. Ecce draconi ad deuorandum datus sum, qui propter uestram praesentiam deuorare me non potest.	Soðlice se swiðe unstilla cniht, þam wæs nama Theodorus, be þam ic geman þæt ic sæde iu in þam folclarum beforan þam folce, se cniht wæs in minum mynstre & fylgde his agnum breðer ma for nede þonne for his agnum willan. Þam wæs swyþe hefig, þæt gif hwilc man aht spræc to him be his agenre Hæle, nalæs þæt an, þæt he ne mihte don þa god, þe hine man lærde, ac eac swylce he ne mihte hi na gehyran, ne he næfre ne mihte cuman to ðam hade þære halgan liflade, ac for swa & spræc ealling swergende & yrsiende & bysmriende. Þa gelamp hit on þam mancwealme, þe nu niwan of mycclum dæle fornam þæt folc þissere burge, þæt he wearð drepen in þa sceare & þy wæs gelæded to deaþe. & þa þa he sceolde alætan þæt nihste oroð & agyfan his gast, þa gesomnodon þider þa broðru hi to his forðfore & woldon hine scyldan mid heora gebedum & fore gebiddan. & þa eallinga of þam mæstan dæle his lichama wæs ær dead, buton þæt an, þæt þa gyt in þam breoste anum fnæs hwylchugu liflic hætu þæs oreþes, þa þa broðra ongunnon swa myccle georнlicor for hine gebiddan, swa myccle ma swa hi gesawon, þæt he hrædlice sceolde beon gewiten. Þa færinga ongan se ilca cniht clypian to þam ætstandendum broðrum & mid hludum stefnum toslat & amyrde þara broðra sangas & gebedu þus cweþende: gaþ la onweg.	Cwyð nu sanctus gregorius. þæt sum broþer gecyrde to anum mynstre þe he sylf gestaþelode; and æfter regollicre fadunge munuchad underfeng; Ðam fyligde sum flæsclic broþer to mynstre; na for gecnyrdnysse goddre drohtnunge; ac for flæsclicere lufe; Se gastlica broþer eallum þam mynstermunecum þearle þurh goddre drohtnunge gelicode. and his flæsclica broðer micclum his lifes þeawum mid þwyrnysse wiðcwæð; He leofode on mynstre for neode. swiðor þonne for beterunge; He wæs gegafspræce. and þwyr on dædum. wel besewen on reafe and yfel on þeawum; He nahte geþyld; gif hine hwa to goddre drohtnunge tihte; Wearð þa his lif swiþe hefityme þam gebroþrum. ac hi hit emlice forbæron for his broþer godnysse; he ne mihte nan þing to gode gedon; ne he nolde nan god gehyran; Ða wearð he færlice mid sumre coþe gestanden. and to deaþe gebroht; Þa ða he to forþsiþe ahafen wæs. þa comon þa gebroðra to þy ðæt hi his sawle becwædon; He læg acealdod on nyþeweardum lymum; on þam breoste anum orþode þa gyt se gast; Þa gebroðru ða swa miccle georнfullicor for him gebædon; swa micclum swa hi gesawon þæt he hrædlice gewitan sceolde; He þa ferlice hrymde þus cweþende;

2 Abbreviations have been silently explanded and *punctus elevati* have been replaced by semicolons.

Caput meum in suo ore iam absorbuit. Date locum, ut non me amplius cruciet, sed faciat quod facturus est. Si ei ad deuorandum datus sum, quare propter uos moras patior?' Tunc fratres coeperunt ei dicere: 'Quid est quot loqueris, farter? Signum tibi sanctae crucis inprime'. Respondebat ille cum magnis clamoribus, dicens: 'Volo me signare, sed non possum, quia squamis huius draconis premor.' [5] Cumque hoc fratres audirent, prostrati in terra cum lacrimis coeperunt pro ereptione illius uehementius orare. Et ecce subito coepit aeger cum magnis uocibus clamare, dicens: 'Gratias Deo. Ecce draco, qui me ad deuorandum acceperat, fugit. Orationibus uestris expulsus est, stare non potuit. Pro peccatis meis modo intercedite, quia conuerti paratus sum et saecularem uitam funditus relinquere'. Homo ergo qui, sicut iam dictum est, ab extrema corporis fuerat parte praemortuus, reseruatus ad uitam toto ad Deum corde conuersus est, et postquam mutatus mente diu est flagellis adtritus, tunc eius anima carne soluta est.	Nu ic eom geseald þysum dracan to forswelganne, ac he ne mæg me forswelgan for eowre andweardnesse. Nu he hæfþ beginen in his muðe min heafod & forswolgen. Ac alyfaþ him þa stowe, þæt he me ma ne ceowe ne ne cwelmie, ac þæt he mote gedon þæt he donde is. For hwan la þrowige ic þa yldingce for eowrum þingum, nu ic eom him geseald to forswelganne? Þa broðor ongunnon cweoþan to him: hwæt is þæt, broðor, þæt ðu sprecest? Segna þe & sete þe on þæt tacen ðære halgan rode. & mid hludum cleopungum cwæð: ic wille me segnian, ac ic ne mæg, forðon þe ic eom forseted & forðrycced mid þam scyllum þisses dracan. Þa sona swa þæt geherdon þa gebroðra, hi astrehton hy on eorðan & ongunnon wepende bidden þæs cnihtes generenesse. Þa færinga ongan se ylca cniht mid miclum stefnum cleopian & cweþan: drihten Gode ic secge þancas, þæt ðes draca nu fleah for eowrum gebedum, se me hæfde underfongen to forswelgenne, ac he hwæðre aweg adrifen ne mihte her gestandan. Ðingiað la nu for minum synnum, forðam þe ic eom gearu, þæt ic wille gecyrran to rihte & eallinga forlætan þis woruldlice lif. Soðlice, Petrus, se ylca man, se ðe fulneah wæs of mæstum dæle þæs lichoman ær dead, swa swa hit ær gesæd wæs, ði him wæs þæt lif on gehealden, to ðon þæt he wære gecyrred mid ealre heortan to Gode. & ða æfter ðan þe he on his mode gehwerfed wæs, he læg lange geswenced mid mettrumnesse, & ða swa wearð onlysed his sawul of þam lichoman.	Gewitað fram me; efne her is cumen an draca þe me sceal forswelgan; ac he ne mæg for eower andwerdnysse; Min heafod he hæfð mid his ceaflum befangen rymað him þæt he me leng ne geswence; Gif ic þysum dracan to forswelgenne geseald eom hwi sceal ic ælcunge þrowian for eowerum oferstealle; Ða gebroðra him cwædon to. hwi sprecst þu mid swa micelre orwennysse. mearca þe sylfne mid tacne þære halgan rode; He andwyrde be his mihte; Ic wolde lustbære mid tacne þære halgan rode me bletsian; ac ic næbbe þa mihte. for þan ðe se draca me þearle ofþrihð; Hwæt þa munecas þa hi astrehton mid wope to eorþan. and ongunnon geornlicor for his hreddinge þone wealdendan god biddan; Efne þa færlice awyrpte se adlia cniht. and mid blissiendre stemne cwæð; Ic þancie gode; efne nu se draca þe me forswelgan wolde is afliged þurh eowerum benum; he is fram me ascofen and standan ne mihte ongean eowerum þingungum; Beoð nu mine þingeras biddende for minum synnum; for þan ðe ic eom gearo to gecyrrenne to munuclicere drohtnunge. and woruldlice þeawas ealle forlætan; His cealdan leomu þa geedcucedon and he mid ealre heortan to gode gecyrde; and mid langsumum broce on his gecyrrednysse wearð gerihtlæced and æt nextan on þære ylcan untrumnysse gewat; Ac he ne geseah þone dracan on his forðsiþe: for þan ðe he hine oferswyðde mid gecyrrednysse his heortan;

Dialogi IV.xl.2-5 (trans. Zimmerman 2002, 244-45)

I recall giving an example of this in my sermons to the people. I mentioned the case of Theodore, a very restless young man, who entered my monastery with his brother under force of circumstances rather than of his own free will. He was always irritated when any spiritual lesson was brought home to him. He could not bear doing good or hearing about it. In fact, he would become angry or sarcastic and swear that he had never intended to put on the religious habit or become a monk. During the plague which recently carried off a large part of the population of this city, Theodore became dangerously ill, with the disease lodging in his abdomen. When he was about to die, the brethren gathered round the bed to offer their prayers for his safe departure from this life to the next. The extremities of his body were now cold with death up to his breast, where the lifeblood was still pulsating warmly. Seeing the end approaching rapidly, his brethren became more fervent in their prayers. Suddenly, the sick man interrupted them. "Stand back!" he shouted, "I have been cast out to be devoured by the dragon. Your presence keeps him from doing so, but he has already taken my head into his jaws. Stand back! Don't make him torture me any longer. Let him finish me off, if that is what I am destined for. Why do you make me suffer this suspense?" The brethren tried to quiet him. "What is it you are saying?" they asked. "Bless yourself with the sign of the cross." In answer, he shouted excitedly, "I want to bless myself, but cannot because the dragon is holding me in his coils!" Hearing this, the brethren fell prostrate in prayer and, adding tears to their petitions, begged insistently for his release. Suddenly, with a sigh of relief, the sick brother cried happily, "Thanks be to God! The dragon who tried to devour me has fled. He could not stand the attack of your prayers. And now please beg God to forgive my sins, for I am ready to live like a real monk and fully determined to abandon my old, worldly ways." After recovering from the partial death of his body, this monk offered his life generously to God. With a complete change of heart, he now welcomed afflictions and endured them for a long time until his soul was finally freed from the body.

Old English Dialogues, IV.xl (my translation)

Indeed, the very restless boy – whose name was Theodore, with whom I once dealt in the homilies [delivered] in public – the boy was in my monastery and followed his own brother more for need than of his own will. To him was very burdensome if anyone said anything to him about his own salvation, not only that he couldn't do any good that one taught him, but he couldn't even hear them at all, nor could he ever come to the condition of the holy office, but he behaved so and always spoke swearing and raging and mocking. Then it happened in the pestilence that lately plundered a large portion of the people of this city, that he was struck in the groin and thereby led to death. And then, when he was about to breathe his last breath and give up his spirit, then the brethren [of the monastery] gathered thither to his departure and they wanted to shield him and encourage his departure with their prayers. And then most of his body was already dead, with the sole exception that in his breast alone still panted some lively heat of the breath; thereupon the brethren began

to pray for him so much more eagerly, the more the more they saw that he would be gone soon. Suddenly, the same boy began to call the brethren standing by and interrupted and hindered the brethren's chants and prayers with loud cries saying thus: "Lo, go away! I am now given to this dragon to swallow (me), but he cannot swallow me because of your presence. Now he has put my head in his mouth and swallowed [it]. Give him way so that he won't gnaw and torment me anymore, but he can do what he is bound to do. Lo, why do I suffer a delay because of your gathering, now that I am given to him to swallow [me]?" The brethren began to say to him: "What is it that you are talking about, brother? Sign yourself and put yourself under [the protection of] the sign of the holy cross." And he said with loud cries: "I want to sign myself, but I cannot because I am oppressed and crushed by the scales of this dragon." Then, as soon as the brethren heard that, they prostrated themselves on the ground and began to pray weeping for the boy's protection. Then suddenly the same boy began to call out with loud cries and say: "I give thanks to the Lord God that this dragon now fled before your prayers, [he], who had seized me to swallow [me], but he [was] nevertheless driven away and could not stay here. Lo, intercede now for my sins, because I am eager to convert to the [monastic] rule and give up this worldly life entirely." Indeed, Peter, to the same man who had previously been almost dead in most of his body, just as it was said before, life was therefore retained, in order that he may convert wholeheartedly to God. And then after that he had converted in his heart, he long lay afflicted with illness, and then his soul was released from the body.

Dominica XXI post Pentecosten (CH I. 35), ll. 219-58 (Translation adapted from Thorpe 1844, I, 533-35)

St. Gregory now says, that a certain brother entered into a monastery which he himself had founded, and after regular probation received monkhood. A worldly brother followed him to the monastery, not for desire of a good life, but for fleshly love. The spiritual brother, through his good life, was exceedingly liked by the monks of the monastery; and his worldly brother with perverseness greatly contradicted the usages of his life. He lived in the monastery rather from necessity than for bettering. He was idle of speech, and perverse in deeds; appearing well in attire, and evil in morals. He had no patience, if any one exhorted him to a good course. Hence his life was very irksome to the brothers, but they endured it calmly on account of his brother's goodness. He could do nothing good, nor would he hear any good. He was then suddenly seized with some disease, and brought to death. When he was raised up for departure, the brothers came that they might pray for his soul. He lay chilled in his lower limbs: in his breast alone the spirit yet breathed. The brothers then prayed for him the more fervently, the more they saw that he would quickly depart. He then suddenly cried, saying thus: "Depart from me. Lo, here is a dragon come which is to swallow me, but he cannot for your presence. He has seized my head in his jaws. Give place to him, that he may no longer afflict me. If I am given to this dragon to be swallowed, why should I suffer delay through your presence?" The brothers said to him: "Why do you speak with such great despair? Mark thyself with the sign of the holy cross." He answered as

he was able: "I would joyfully bless myself with the sign of the holy cross, but I don't have the strength, for the dragon sorely oppresses me." Whereupon the monks prostrated themselves with weeping to the earth, and began more fervently to pray to the almighty God for his salvation. Lo, then, the sick man suddenly started, and with exulting voice said: "I thank God: behold now the dragon which would swallow me is put to flight through your prayers. He is driven from me, and could not stand against your intercession. Be now my intercessors, praying for my sins; for I am ready to turn to monastic life, and to forsake all worldly practices." His cold limbs then revived, and he turned with all his heart to God, and by long sickness in his conversion was justified, and at length died of the same disease; but he didn't see the dragon at his departure, for he had overcome him by the conversion of his heart.

d)

Dialogi IV.xl.10-12 (de Vogüé 1980, III, 144, l. 80 – 146, l. 105)	*Old English Dialogues*, IV.xl (Hecht 1965, 326, l. 21 – 327, l. 19)
[10] Est etiam nunc apud nos Athanasius, Isauriae presbiter, qui diebus suis Iconii rem terribilem narrat euenisse. Ibi namque, ut ait, quoddam monasterium 'Ton Galathon' dicitur, in quo quidam monachus magnae aestimationis habebatur. Bonis quippe cernebatur moribus at in omni actione sua conpositus, sed, sicut ex fine res patuit, longe aliter quam apparebat fuit. Nam cum se ieiunare cum fratribus demonstraret, occulte manducare consueuerat. Quod eius uitium fratres omnino nesciebant. Sed corporis superueniente molestia, ad uitae extrema perductus est. [11] Qui cum iam esset in fine, fratres ad se omnes, qui monasterio inerrant, congregari fecit. At illi tali, ut putabant, uiro moriente, magnum quid ac delectabile se ab eo audire crediderunt. Quibus ipse adflictus et tremens conpulsus est prodere, cui hosti traditus cogebatur exire. Nam dixit: 'Quando me uobiscum ieiunare credebatis, occulte comedebam. Et nunc ecce ad deuorandum draconi sum traditus, qui cauda sua mea genua pedesque conligauit, caput uero suum intra meum os mittens, spiritum meum ebibens abstrahit'. [12] Quibus dictis statim defunctus est, atque ut paenitendo liberari potuisset a dracone quem uiderat, expectatus not est. Quod nimirum constat quia ad solam utilitatem audientium uiderit, qui eum hostem cui traditus fuerat et innotuit et non euasit.	Eac is nu mid us Athanasius se mæssepreost Licania þære mægðe, se sæde, þæt on his dagum gelumpe þær swyþe ondrysnlicu wise. He cwæð, þæt þær wære sum mynster, þe is haten Tongalatan, & in þam wæs sum munuc, se wæs hæfd & wened fram mannum mycelre arfæstnesse, & he wæs gesewen godra þeawa, & on ælcum his weorca he wæs geglænged, swylce he god wære, ac swa hit on ænde eft wearþ cuþ feorr on oþre wisan, þonne he ær æteowed wæs. Witodlice þonne he sceolde fæstan mid oðrum broþrum, he dyde þonne gelicost, ac hwæþre he gewunode, þæt he æt in his deogolnessum, swa swa he ana wiste, & þone leahtor nyston na þa oðre broðra. Ac þa æt nehstan ofercumendre þæs lichaman untrumnesse he wearð gelæded to his lifes ændedæge. & þa þa he wæs æt his ænde, he dyde, þæt þa broþra wæron ealle gesamnode to him, þe in þam mynstre wæron. & hi þa wendon & gelyfdon, þæt hi sceoldon æt þyllicum were sweltendum hwæthuga myccles & wynsumlices fram him gehyran. & he þa se munuc swa geswænced & beofiend wæs genyded, þæt he meldode þam broðrum & cyþde, hwylcum feonde he wæs gesealde þa, & fram hwylcum he wæs genyded, þæt he sceolde ut gan. Soðlice he cwæð þus beforan heom eallum: þa þe ge gelyfdon, þæt ic fæste mid eow, ic æt deogollice swa ge nyston, & nu forþ on ic eom seald þysum dracan to forswelganne, se hafaþ gebunden mid his tægle mine cneowu & mine fet, & his heafod is onsænded in minne muð, & drincende min oroð he tyhþ him to minne gast. Gecwedenum þisum wordum he wæs sona forðfered. Witodlice he mihte beon alysed ær fram ðam dracan mid hreowsunge & dædbote, & ða ne mihte na beon alysed, þa þa he gebad butan dædbote, þæt he þone geseah æt his ænde. Forþon þæt is cuð butan tweon, þæt he geseah þa gesihþe þam mannum to nytnesse, þe hit gehyrað & ongytaþ, & na him sylfum to ænigre helpe, se cyðde þam broðrum þone feond, þam he wæs geseald, & he him sylfa þone na ne gedygde ne ne bebearh.

Dialogi IV.xl.10-12 (trans. Zimmerman 2002, 246-47)

One of our fellow priests, Athanasius of Isauria, tells of a terrifying incident that took place in Iconium during his lifetime. In the monastery called Ton Galathon was a monk reputed for his sanctity and revered for his nobility of character. In all his actions he was most circumspect. But, as the outcome proves, he was not all he appeared to be. He made his brethren believe he was fasting while in reality he used to eat in secret, a vice of which his brethren were entirely unaware. Then he became seriously ill, and when he was face to face with death he asked to have the entire community gather round him. In view of his reputation, they expected in all sincerity to hear a noble and inspiring message from his lips. But, trembling in his wretchedness, he was forced to reveal that after he would be delivered into the power of Satan. "You thought all along that I was fasting with you," he said "but, unknown to you I took food secretly. For this reason I have been handed over to the dragon to be devoured. His tail is now coiled around my feet and knees and, with his head to my mouth, he is stealing the breath of life from me." Death followed at once, without leaving him time to repent and thus free himself from the dragon that appeared to him so vividly. It was clearly for the benefit of the bystanders that he saw the dragon into whose power he was delivered. He could point him out to others but for himself there was no escape.

Old English Dialogues, IV.xl (my translation)

Now, there is also with us Athanasius, the priest of the province of Licania, who said that in his days something very terrible happened there. He said that there was a certain monastery which is called Ton Galaton and in it was a certain monk that was esteemed and believed by men of great virtue, and he was considered of good morals, and on each of his actions he was composed, as if he was good, but as it became known afterwards at [his] death, [he proved to be] far different than he had appeared before. Indeed, when he should have fasted with the other brothers, he [apparently] did [just] like [them], yet he was used to eating in his secret places, so that he alone knew, and the other brothers had no clue of his sin. But then at the last he was led to the final day of his life by an illness that overcame the body, and when he was about to die, he caused the brethren, that lived in the monastery, to gather all around him. And then they went and believed that beside such a dying man they should hear something great and delightful from him. And then the monk was so afflicted and shaking that he was compelled to reveal [his sins] to the brethren and told [them] to which fiend he had surrendered and by which he was [so] oppressed that he had to die. Indeed, in front of them all he said so: "When you believed that I fasted with you, I ate secretly so that you didn't know, and henceforth I am given to this dragon to swallow [me]; he has bound my knees and my feet with his tail, and he is pushing forth his head into my mouth, and sucking my breath he is drawing to

him my [living] spirit." Saying these words, he soon passed away. Indeed, he might have been released from the dragon before with repentance and penitence, but then he couldn't be released at all when he prayed without [doing] penance after that he had seen him [the dragon] at the end of his life. Because it is plain and certain that he saw the vision for [other] men's sake, so that they may listen and understand, and not for any help to himself; he told the brethren about the fiend, to whom he was prey, and he himself didn't flee him [the dragon] nor did he guard himself [against the dragon].

Appendix II

Dialogi, II.xxv.1-2 (de Vogüé 1979, II, 212, ll. 1-19)	*Old English Dialogues*, II. xxiv (Hecht 1965, 155a, l. 23 – 56a, l. 31)	*Old English Dialogues* - Revised version, II. xxiv (Hecht 1965, 155b, l. 23 – 56b, l. 31)	*XII Kalendas Aprelis. Sancti Benedicti Abbatis* (CH II. 11, 103, ll. 376-92)
Quidam autem eius monachus mobililtati mentem dederat et permanere in monasterio nolebat. Cumque eum uir Deum adsidue corripe-ret, frequenter admoneret, ipse uero nullo modo consentiret in congregatione persistere atque inportunis pre-cibus ut relaxa-retur inmineret, quadam die isdem uenerabilis pater, nimietatis eius taedio affectus, iratus iussit ut discederet. [2] Qui mox ut monaste-rium exiit, contra se adsistere aperto ore draconem in itinere inuenit. Cumque cum isdem draco qui apparuerat deuo-rare uellet, coepit ipse tremens et palpitans magnis uocibus clamare, dicens: 'Currite, currite, quia draco iste me deuorare uult'.	Gregorius him andswarode: eac wæs Benedictes muneca sum, se wæs unstaþelfæst on his mode & nolde gewunian on þam mynstre. Mid þy se Godes wer hine genehhe þreade & cidde & eac gelom-lice lærde, þæt he hit gebetan sceolde, he swa þeah nanum gemete him to þon hyr-an nolde, þæt he on þære gesomnunge þurhwunian wolde, ac fylgede þam halgan were mid gemaglicum bedum, þæt him wære alyfed ut to farenne. Þa sume dæge se ylca arwyrða fæder wæs geswænced mid unluste his swiðlic-an georrnesse & þa yrre het, þæt he onweg gewite. Sona swa he þa eode ut of þam mynstre, he ge-mette on þam wege standan sumne dracan ongæn hine mid geniendum muþe. & se draca þa dyde, swylce he him forswelgan wolde. Þa ongan se munuc forhtiende & bredet-ende mid mycclum stefnum clypian & cweþan: yrnað hider. Yrnað hider.	Gregorius cwæð, soðlice sum wæs eac Benedictes munuc, se wæs unstaðolfæst on his mode & nolde gewunian on his mynstre. Hine þa se Godes wer geneahhe þreade & gelomlice mynegode & lærde to his þearfe, ac he swa þeah na to þæs hwon ne geþwærode to þurhwunianne on þære gesamnunge, ac mid gemalicum benum befealh þam halgan were, þæt him wære alyfed ut to farenne. Ða sume dæge se ylca arwurða fæder wearð ge-swenced mid gedrefed-nysse his swiðlican onhropes & þa yrre het, þæt he aweg gewite. Sona swa he of þam mynstre ut eode, þa gemette he on þam wege anne dracan him ongean standan mid giniendum muðe. Ða þa se ylca draca, þe him ætywde, wolde hine forswelgan, þa ongann he ofdrædd bifian & broddettan & mid mycelum hreame clypian þus cweðende, yrnað hider, yrnað, forþam þe þes draca wyle me forswelgan.	Sum oðer munuc wearð unstaðolfæst on his mynstre. and mid gemaglicum benum gewilnode þæt he moste of ðam munuclife. ac se halga wer him forwyrnde. and swiðe mid wordum ðreade his unstaðolfæst-nysse; Æt nextan ða ða he swa fus wæs. ða wearð se halga wer ge-hathyrt ðurh his unstæððignysse. and het hine aweg faran; Hwæt ða se munuc ut gewat. and gemette sona ænne dracan him togeanes standende. mid gynigendum muðe. þæt he hine forswulge; Se munuc ða swiðe bifigende. and forhtigende hrymde; Yrnað. yrnað. for ðan ðe þes draca me for-swelgan wile; Þa mynstermunecas urnon to.

Currentes autem fratres draconem minime uiderunt, sed tremenatem atque palpitantem monachum ad monasterium reduxerunt. Qui statim promisit numquam se esse iam a monasterio recessurum, atque ex hora eadem in sua promissione permansit, quippe qui sancti uiri orationibus contra se adsistere draconem uiderat, quem prius non uidendo sequebatur.	Forþon þe þes draca wile me forswelgan. Þa urnon þa gebroþru þider & nænigne dracan þær ne gesawon, ac ðone munuc byfiende & brodettendne hi eft gelæddon to þam mynstre. & he þa sona gehet, þæt he næfre of þam mynstre gewitan nolde, & he þa of þære ylcan tide þurhwunode on his gehatum. & þa swa se munuc geseah for þæs halgan weres benum him ongæn standan þone dracan, þæt wæs deofol sylf, þam he ær fylgde & hyrde, þeah þe he hine na ne gesawe.	Ða urnon þa broðru þyder & þær nænne dracan ne gesawon, ac hi þone munuc cwakiendne & broddettendne gelæddon ongean eft to mynstre. He þa þær rihte behet, þæt he næfre þanon forð of þam mynstre gewitan nolde, & he eac of þære ylcan tide on his behate þurhwunode. Witodlice for þæs halgan weres benum se munuc geseah him ongean standan þone dracan, þæt wæs sylf deofol, þam he fyligde ær, þeah þe he hine na ne gesawe.	and swa ðeah nateshwon þone dracan ne gesawon. for ðan þæt wæs se ungesewenlica deofol. ac hi læddon ðone munuc swa bifigendne binnon ðam mynstre; He ða sona behet. þæt he næfre siððan of ðam mynstre sceacan nolde. and he eac on ðam behate symle ðurhwunode; Þurh benedictes gebedum him wæs se ungesewenlica draca æteowod. ðam ðe he ær filigde. na geseonde;

Dialogi, II.xxv.1-2 (trans. Zimmermann 2002, 94-95)

One of Benedict's monks had set his fickle heart on leaving the monastery. Time and again the man of God pointed out how wrong this was and tried to reason with him but without any success. The monk persisted obstinately in his request to be released. Finally, Benedict lost patience with him and told him to go. Hardly had he left the monastery grounds when he noticed to his horror that a dragon with gaping jaws was blocking his way. 'Help! Help!' he cried out, trembling, 'or the dragon will devour me.' His brethren ran to the rescue, but could see nothing of the dragon. Still breathless with fright, the monk was only too glad to accompany them back to the abbey. Once safe within its walls, he promised never to leave again. And this time he kept his word, for Benedict's prayers had enabled him to see with his own eyes the invisible dragon that had been leading him astray.

Old English Dialogues, II. xxiv (my translation)

Gregory answered him: "There was also a certain monk of Benedict's [monastery], who was fickle in his heart and didn't want to live in the monastery. When the man of God often rebuked and scolded him and also frequently instructed [him] that he should make amends for it [= his desire to leave the monastery], nevertheless he [the monk] didn't want to listen to him [Benedict] on any account, to the extent that he should remain in the community, but pursued the holy man with importunate requests so that he would be given

permission to leave. Then one day the venerable father himself was distressed with weariness at his excessive eagerness [to leave] and then angrily bade that he should go away. As soon as he went out of the monastery, he met on the way a dragon standing opposite him with a gaping mouth. And the dragon then acted as if he wanted to swallow him. Then the monk, fearful and trembling, began to call with loud cries and say: 'Run hither! Run hither! Because the dragon wants to swallow me'. Then the brethren ran thither and they didn't see any dragon there, but they led the monk trembling and shaking back to the monastery. And then he soon vowed the he would never leave the monastery, and he stayed fast in his promises ever after. And so the monk saw the dragon standing in front of him because of the holy man's prayers – the dragon that was the devil himself, whom he had previously followed and listened to, although he didn't see him at all."

Old English Dialogues - Revised version, II. xxiv (my translation)

Gregory said: "Indeed, there was also a certain monk of Benedict's [monastery], who was fickle in his heart and didn't want to live in his monastery. Then the man of God often rebuked and frequently impelled and instructed [him] to his benefit, but he [the monk] nevertheless didn't consent at all to remain in the community, but with importunate requests insisted with the holy man that he would be allowed to leave. Then one day the venerable father himself grew vexed with the distress of his excessive importunity and then angrily bade that he should go away. As soon as he went out of the monastery, then he met on the way a dragon standing opposite him with a gaping mouth. When the dragon himself, which appeared to him, wanted to swallow him, then he began to shake and tremble terrified and to cry loudly saying thus: 'Run hither! Run! Because the dragon wants to swallow me'. Then the brethren ran thither and they didn't see any dragon there, but they led the monk trembling and shaking back again to the monastery. Then he promised straightaway that he would never thenceforward go out of the monastery and he stayed fast in his promise ever after. Indeed, the monk saw the dragon standing in front of him because of the holy man's prayers – the dragon that was the devil himself, whom he had previously followed, although he didn't see him at all."

XII Kalendas Aprelis. Sancti Benedicti Abbatis (CH II. 11), ll. 376-92 (translation adapted from Thorpe 1846, II, 177).

Another monk was unsteadfast in his monastery, and with importunate prayers desired that he might go away from the monastery, but the holy man forbade him, and with words strongly reproved his unsteadfastness. At last, as he was so bent, the holy man was irritated by his unsteadiness and bade him leave. Thereupon the monk went out, and immediately found a dragon standing opposite to him, with gaping mouth, that he might swallow him. The monk then sorely trembling and

fearing, cried: “Run, run, for this dragon will swallow me”. The monks ran to him, and yet didn’t see any dragon, for it was the invisible devil: but they led the monk so trembling within the monastery. He then immediately promised that he would never after depart from the monastery; and he also ever continued in that promise. Through Benedict’s prayers the invisible devil appeared to him, whom he had before followed without seeing.

Appendix III

Homilia in Euangelia xxv.8 (Étaix 1999, 213, l. 226 – 214, l. 248)	*In Dominica Palmarum* (CH I. 14, 295-96, ll. 161-78)[1]
Per Leuiathan quippe, quod additamentum eorum dicitur, cetus ille deuorator humani generis designatur, qui dum se diuinitatem homini addere spondit, immortalitatem sustulit; qui praeuaricationis quoque culpam, quam primo homini propinauit, dum se sequentibus pessima persuasione multiplicat, poenas eis sine cessatione coaceruat. In hamo autem esca ostenditur, aculeus occultatur. Hunc ergo Pater omnipotens hamo cepit, quia ad mortem illius Vnigenitum Filium incarnatum misit, in quo et caro passibilis uideri possit, et diuinitas impassibilis uideri non possit. Cumque in eo serpens iste per manus persequentium escam corporis momordit, diuinitatis illum aculeus perforauit. Prius uero eum in miraculis Deum cognouerat, sed de cognitione sua ad dubitationem cecidit, quando hunc passibilem uidit. Quasi hamo ergo fauces gluttientis tenuit, dum in illo esca carnis patuit, quam deuorator appeteret; et diuinitas passionis tempore latuit, quae necaret. In hamo eius incarnationis captus est, quia dum in illo appetit escam corporis, transfixus est aculeo diuinitatis. Ibi quippe inerat humanitas quae ad se deuoratorem duceret, ibi diuinitas quae perforaret, ibi aperta infirmitas quae prouocaret, ibi occulta uirtus quae raptoris faucem transfigeret. In hamo igtur captus est, quia inde interiit, unde momordit. Et quos iure tenebat mortales perdidit, quia eum in quo ius non habuit morte appetere immortalem praesumpsit.	Ne mihte se deað him genealæcan gif he sylf nolde. Ac he cóm to mannum to ðy. þæt he wolde. beon gehyrsum his fæder oð deað. 7 mancynn alysan from þam ecan deaðe mid his hwilwendlicum deaðe; þeahhwæðere ne nydde he na þæt iudeisce folc tó his cweale. Ac deoful hi tihte to ðam weorce. 7 god þæt geþafode to alysednysse ealles geleaffulles mancynnes; We habbað oft gesæd 7 git secgað þæt cristes rihtwisnys. ís swa micel þæt he nolde niman mancynn. neadunga of ðam deofle buton he hit forwyrhte; He hit forwyrhte þa ða he tihte þæt folc to cristes cweale þæs ælmihtigan godes; 7 þa þurh his unscedðian deaðe wurdon we alysede; fram þam ecan deaðe. gif we us sylfe ne forpærað; þa getimode þam reðan deofle. swa swa deð þam grædian fisce. þe gesihð þæt æs. 7 ne gesihð þone angel. þe on ðæm æse sticað; bið þonne grædig þæs æses. 7 forswylcð þone angel forð mid þam æse; Swa wæs þam deofle. he geseh þa mennyscnysse on criste. 7 na ða godcundnysse; Þa sprytte he þæt iudeisce folc to his slege. 7 gefredde þa ðone angel cristes godcundnysse þurh þa he wæs. to deaðe aceocod. and benæmed ealles mancynnes þara þe on god belyfað;

Homilia in Euangelia xxv.8 (Translation by Hurst 1990, 195-96)

Leviathan, which means 'their increment', designates that fish-like destroyer of the human race which, when he promised to bestow divinity upon human beings, took away their immortality. He was the cause, in the first human being, of the sin of collusion; when by his evil persuasive powers he increases many times over the sins of those who come after, he heaps up punishment for them without end. On a fishhook, the food is evident, the barb is concealed. The all-powerful Father caught

1 Abbreviations have been silently explanded and *punctus elevati* have been replaced by semicolons.

this fish-like creature by means of a fishhook, because he sent his only-begotten Son, who had become a human being, to his death. The Son had both a visible body which could suffer, and an invisible nature which could not. When, through the actions of his persecutors the serpent bit the food of his body, the barb of his divine nature pierced him. Earlier, indeed, he had recognized that he was God by his miracles, but he fell to doubting when he saw that he was capable of suffering. It is, then, as if the fishhook got caught in his throat as he was swallowing. The food of the Lord's body, which the destroyer craved, was visible on it; at the time of his passion his divine nature, which the destroyer would do away with, lay hidden. He was caught by the fishhook of the Lord's incarnation because while he was craving the food of his body, he was pierced by the barb of his divine nature. There was in the Lord a human nature which would lead the destroyer to him, and there was a divine nature which would pierce him; there was in him the obvious weakness which would entice him, and there was the hidden power which would pierce the throat of the one who seized him. Therefore was the destroyer caught by a fishhook, because the cause of his destruction was where he bit. And he lost the mortal human beings whom he rightfully held because he dared to crave the death of one who was immortal, over whom he had no claim.

In Dominica Palmarum (CH I. 14), ll. 161-78 (translation adapted from Thorpe 1844, I, 215-17)

Death could not have approached him if He Himself had not wanted it, but He came to men because He would be obedient to His Father till death, and redeem mankind from eternal death by His temporary death. Yet He didn't compel the Jewish people to slay Him, but the devil instigated them to the work, and God consented to it, for the redemption of all believing mankind. We have often said, and yet say, that the justice of Christ is so great, that He would not forcibly have taken mankind from the devil, unless he had forfeited them. He forfeited them when he instigated the people to the slaying of Christ, the Almighty God; and then through His innocent death we were redeemed from eternal death, if we do not destroy ourselves. Then it befell the cruel devil as it does the greedy fish, which sees the bait, and doesn't see the hook which sticks in the bait; then it is greedy after the bait and swallows up the hook with the bait. So it was with the devil: he saw the humanity in Christ, and not the divinity; he then instigated the Jewish people to slay him, and then felt the hook of Christ's divinity, by which he was choked to death, and deprived of all mankind who believe in God.

"THEIR SOULS WILL SHINE SEVEN TIMES BRIGHTER THAN THE SUN". AN ESCHATOLOGICAL MOTIF AND ITS PERMUTATIONS IN OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE

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0. Introduction

Early English eschatology is notoriously fond of motifs structured around numbers: the Three Utterances of the Soul, the Three Hosts of Doomsday, the Four Kinds of Death, the Five Likenesses of Hell, the Seven Joys of Heaven, the Seven Pains of Hell, the Fifteen Signs of Doomsday, and so forth. Most of these enumerative motifs are relatively fixed and consistent and have been carefully studied.[1] They occur repeatedly in Old English and early Irish and Latin texts under Insular influence. But one such motif defined by number that has not been closely examined is the one I propose to talk about in this essay, not so much a single motif as a cluster of interrelated motifs that are united by their fixation on an image multiplied by a factor of seven. There are lots and lots of these motifs, more than I have space to talk about here, but in what follows I will offer a summary overview by distinguishing five main permutations (and a number of derivative variants), and in some cases I will identify key factors in their origins and development.

1 The most comprehensive study of the "enumerative style" in early English, Irish, and Latin literature is Wright 1993, who provides copious examples and bibliography on particular enumerations. On the Seven Pains of Hell, see now Pelle 2011. On the Fifteen Signs of Doomsday, see Giliberto 2010 and Hawk 2018. On the Four Modes of Sin, an enumerative motif in Latin, Old English, and Old Norse, see Hill 2020.

I. WHEN THE SOUL OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN PARTS FROM ITS BODY IT IS SEVEN TIMES BRIGHTER THAN THE SUN, AND WHEN THE SOUL OF A WICKED MAN PARTS FROM ITS BODY IT IS SEVEN TIMES BLACKER THAN A RAVEN

It is a commonplace in early medieval soul-and-body sermons that good souls are white and wicked souls are black, and this is especially the case in sermons that make use of what has come to be known as the Three Utterances of the Soul exemplum.[2] The Three Utterances exemplum in Old English, Latin, and early Irish literature was first studied in detail by Rudolph Willard, who showed that most versions of this exemplum state that the demons who lead a wicked soul to hell are as black as coal (or as a raven or an Ethiopian), whereas the angels who guide a just soul to heaven are as bright as the sun (or as white as snow or wool) (Willard 1935, 31-149). The Latin version in Paris, BnF, lat. 2628 (*s.* xi, Fécamp), for instance, warns of two angelic armies that confront the souls, one a *hostis niger et ethiopus*, the other a *hostis in uestibus albis sicut lana alba aut nix* (Willard 1935, 38).[3] The Old English version in Bazire-Cross Homily ix (Cameron B3.2.31) tells of two angels who meet the departing souls: *oðer bið Godes encgel, se bið swa whit swa snaw; oðer bið deofles encgel, se bið swa sweart swa hræfen oððe Silharewa* (Bazire and Cross [1982] 1989, 121, ll. 10-12).[4] By contrast, the version in Luiselli Fadda Homily i (Cameron B3.5.5) asserts that when a sinful soul (not the demon) parts from its body it is seven times blacker than a raven, whereas a righteous soul (not the good angel) upon leaving its body is seven times brighter than the sun:

> Hit gelimpeð þanne þæs synfullan mannes saul gæð of his lichaman, ðonne bið heo seofon siðum sweartre ðonne se hræfen. [...] Ond þanne bið ðæs halgan mannes saul, witudlice, þanne heo of ðam lichaman gangeð. Seofon siðum heo bið beorhtre þanne sunne (Luiselli Fadda 1977, 19, ll. 169-70, 179-81).[5]

2 For the most recent and up-to-date scholarship on the Three Utterances exemplum, see Wright 2014, 2015, and 2021, 55-56 note 69, who has catalogued over fifty examples in manuscripts from the eighth to the fifteenth century.

3 "a black and Ethiopian army"; "an army in white robes like white wool or snow." This Latin sermon was first published by Dudley 1911, 164-65. The snow-white garments recall the image of the transfigured Christ (Matt. 17:2; cf. Mark 9:2), *vestimenta autem eius facta sunt alba sicut nix* ("and his garments became white as snow"), as well as the appearance of the angel at Christ's sepulchre (Matt. 28:3), *vestimentum eius sicut nix* ("his garments like snow"). In the vision of Daniel (Dan. 7:9), the Ancient of Days is seated upon a throne, *vestimentum eius quasi nix candidum* ("his garment as white as snow"). Unless otherwise specified, translations are my own.

4 "one is God's angel, which is as white as snow; the other is the devil's angel, which is as black as a raven or an Ethiopian." This passage is also printed by Willard 1935, 38-40.

5 "It happens when the soul of a sinful man passes from its body, then it is seven times blacker than a raven. [...] And then there is the soul of a holy man; indeed, when it passes from its body it is seven times brighter than the sun." Compare the earlier partial edition and fuller

In their foundational discussion of the Latin background of the Old English Three Utterances exemplum, Mary Wack and Charles D. Wright first drew attention to an abbreviated version of this exemplum in München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 28135, a ninth-century collection of Hiberno-Latin materials from Freising, which includes precisely this statement about the colours of the souls as they exit the body: *Anima hominis peccatoris cum exigerit de corpore septies nigrior erit quam coruus.* [...] *Anima autem hominis sequitur; cum exierit de corpore septiens splendior erit quam sol* (Wack and Wright 1991, 189-90).[6] To judge from the more commonly occurring versions of this exemplum in Latin, Old English, and Irish, which describe the colours not of the souls but of the demons and angels that accompany them, it appears that in Luiselli Fadda i and the Latin exemplum in Clm 28135, the opposing descriptions have simply shifted from the demons and angels to the souls in their charge and the colours have intensified sevenfold. These are not isolated examples, however, for a third occurs in a florilegium of moral extracts in an early ninth-century manuscript written at Fulda or Lorsch, now Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 556. This exemplum occurs within the context of a set of three triads, the second and third of which set out to name the three worst and three best things:

> Et tres sunt in hoc mundo deteriora omni malo: anima peccatoris, quae nigrior est coruo in septimo; et maligni demones qui eam adducunt; et infernus, cui dicitur [*leg.* ducitur]. [...] Tres sunt in hoc mundo meliora omni bono: anima sancti in septimo sole specior [*leg.* speci<osi>or]; et sancti angeli qui eam in sinu suo suspiciunt [*leg.* suscipiunt]; et paradisus cui dicitur [*leg.* ducitur] (Maioli 1963, 219-20; cited by Wack and Wright 1991, 197).[7]

discussion by Willard 1935, 39, 49. On the colour of the souls, see Willard 1935, 77-81; Teresi 2000, 106-07; Ritari 2013, 138-39; and Wright 2015, 54, 56. For examples of blessed souls whiter than snow and wicked souls blacker than a raven in Latin *Joca monachorum* dialogues, see Daly and Suchier 1939, 121 (no. 55), 127 (nos. 21, 22); and Suchier 1955, 37 (nos. 82, 83), 127 (nos. 48, 49).

6 "The soul of a sinful man when it exits its body will be seven times blacker than a raven. [...] The soul of a [blessed] man then follows; when it exits its body it will be seven times more brilliant than the sun." On this manuscript, see Wright 2014, 113 and 131-32 (his ms. 12). An additional witness to the Latin source of this passage in Luiselli Fadda i has since been published by Wright 2015, 52-60, from Engelberg, Stiftsbibliothek 44 (*s.* xiii^{1}), fol. 105^{v}.

7 "And there are three things in this world that are worse than any evil: the soul of a sinner, which is seven times blacker than a raven, and the malignant demons that conduct it, and hell, to which it is led. [...] There are three things in this world that are better than any good: the soul of a saint shining seven times more splendidly than the sun, and the holy angels that bear it, and paradise, to which it is led." A further example of a soul seven times blacker than a raven appears in another sermon printed by Maioli 1963, 222, ll. 39-40.

There is also the strange case of the Old English sermon *Be heofonwarum and be helwarum* (Cameron B3.2.5), which apparently inherited a version of the Three Utterances exemplum but mangles it almost beyond recognition, with the result that the coal-black demons and the angels shining brighter than the sun fight seven times over the good and bad souls on Doomsday:

> ure Drihten us eac tocymð mid fif þusend engla forþi he wile ure stal gehyran þe we sculan astellan beforan þam fif þusendan helle deofla. Ure teð sprecað 7 seo tunge swygað. 7 oþer þara weroda bið swa sweart swa col, 7 oðer bið beorhtre þonne sunne. 7 hi þonne seofan siþan feohtað him betweonan embe þa godan sawle 7 þa yfelan (Teresi 2002, 226, ll. 10-16).[8]

Of the several versions of the Three Utterances exemplum in Insular or Insular-related texts, three are thus in agreement in describing the colours of the souls and in multiplying those colours sevenfold. The first (Luiselli Fadda i) is in Old English, and the second and third (in Clm 28135 and Pal. lat. 556) are both in Latin, written in southern Germany, and preserved in collections of materials compiled from sources that circulated in England and Ireland.

This particular form of the sevenfold motif (and its non-sevenfold variants) thus appear to have been cultivated in England and Ireland and in Insular circles on the Continent, but how are we to explain the sevenfold intensification of the colours? I would speculate that this detail originated somewhere within the large body of Marian Assumption apocrypha represented by the following passage from a seventh-century Greek sermon on the Dormition of the Virgin Mary by John of Thessalonica (*BHG* 1144a-c; *CANT* 103; *CPG* 7924a). Here the context is not the immediate judgement of good and bad souls as they exit the body but the delivery of Mary's soul into the hands of the archangel Michael upon her dormition:

> Ἡμεῖς δὲ οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν ψυχὴν Μαρίας παραδιδομένην εἰς χεῖρας Μιχαὴλ, πεπληρωμένην πᾶσι μέλεσι τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, χωρὶς μόνου τοῦ σχήματος τῆς θηλείας καὶ τοῦ ἄῤῥενος, μηδενὸς ἄλλου ἐν αὐτῇ ὄντος εἰ μὴ δμοιόιητος παντὸς τοῦ σώματος καὶ λευκότητος τοῦ ἡλίου ἑπταπλασίως (Jugie 1925, II, 396-97).[9]

8 "Our Lord will also come to us with five thousand angels because he will wish to hear our confession that we must recount before the five thousand devils of hell. Our teeth will speak and the tongue will be silent, and one of those hosts will be as black as coal, and the other will be brighter than the sun, and they will then fight between themselves seven times over the good soul and the evil (one)."

9 "The Apostles looked on as the soul of Mary was given into the hands of Michael, filled out with all the members of a human being, except for the form of female and male, but with nothing else in it except the likeness of the whole body and a brilliance seven times greater

John of Thessalonica's sermon is a seventh-century revision of a lost fifth-century Greek apocryphon on the dormition and assumption of Mary and as such figures into a large family of Marian assumption apocrypha, most of which contain some version of this image. Whereas the Greek recensions generally claim that Mary's soul was seven times brighter than the sun,[10] however, the texts in the Latin tradition are at odds with one another on this point, most claiming simply that her soul was as white as snow.[11] In one particular Latin recension of the Marian assumption apocryphon known as *Transitus* W (*BHL* 5352b-n; *CANT* 114),[12] this image is amplified so that Mary's soul is seven times whiter than snow: *Et sic suscepit animam eius dominus, et tradidit eam sancto angelo Michahel, exceptis omnibus membris, nihil in se habens nisi tantummodo similitudinem hominis et candorem septies tantum quantum niuis est* (Wilmart 1933c, 344).[13] This 'seven times whiter than snow' image has in turn been incorporated into the tenth-century Old English assumption homily known as Blickling Homily xiii (Cameron B3.3.20), which, as Mary Clayton has shown, represents a fusion of the two recensions of Marian *Transitus* apocrypha known as *Transitus* B^2 (*BHL* 5251-2a) and *Transitus* W (1990a; 1990b; 2007a; 2007b). Here Christ enters Mary's house amid a great company of angels, blesses her, and delivers her soul to the archangel Michael, which occasions some commentary by St Peter on the remarkable brightness of her soul:

> & þa onfeng ure Drihten hire saule & he hie þa sealde Sancte Michahele þæm heahengle, & he onfeng hire saule mid ealra his leoma eaþmodnesse & næfde heo noht on hire buton þæt án þæt heo hæfde mennisce onlicnesse; & heo hæfde seofon siþum beorhtran saule þonne snaw. & þa frægn Petrus urne Drihten &

than the sun" (Daley 1998, 63). For discussion of this sermon, see Rivière 1936, 22; Capelle 1940 and 1949, 27; Clayton 1986, 33, and *Eadem* 1998, 61-63.

10 The 'seven times brighter then the sun' image can be traced back to the sixth-century Greek R recension of the *Transitus Mariae* (*BHG* 1056d; *CANT* 102), in which Mary's soul has *une clarté sept fois plus grande que celle du soleil* (Wenger 1955, 233; "a clarity seven times greater than that of the sun").

11 On the snow image in early versions of the *Transitus* apocrypha, see Wenger 1955, 83. In the *Transitus of Pseudo-Melito* (*Transitus* B^2), a version known to Bede that was probably taken to southern Germany by English missionaries, when Mary sends forth her spirit, *Viderunt autem apostoli animam eius tanti candoris esse, ut nulla mortalium lingua digne possit effari; uincebat enim omnem candorem niuis et uniuersa metalla argenti radians magni luminis claritate* (Clayton 1998, 338; "But the apostles saw her soul, and it was of such whiteness that no tongue of mortal men can worthily express it, for it excelled all whiteness of snow and of all metal and silver that shines with great brightness of light").

12 *Transitus* W is assigned the siglum L2 within the catalogue of recensions by Esbroeck 1981, 267. It is designated Recensio S in *BHL* 5352b; and it is assigned the siglum L4 by Mimouni 1995, 257-99. See further Clayton 2007b.

13 "And thus the Lord received her soul and conveyed it to the holy angel Michael without any of its members, having nothing in her but the semblance of a human form and a whiteness seven times that of snow."

> wæs cweþende, "Hwylc is of ús Drihten þæt hæbbe swa hwite saule swa þeos halige Marie?" Þa cwæþ ure Drihten to Petre & to eallum þæm mannum þe þær wæron, "Þisse halgan Marian saul biþ a gewuldrod mid Gode, & heo biþ aþwægen mid þæm halgan þweale. & oþre apostolas beoþ sende beforan hire bære, mid þy þe heo biþ gongende of lichoman." & hie ne gemetton nane swa hwíte saule swa þære eadigan Marian wæs, forþon heo lufode ma þeostro for hire synnum & heo wæs á þeh gehealden fram hire synnum; & hie gesawon ealle þæt seo eadige Marie hæfde swa hwíte saule swa snaw (Morris [1874-80] 1967, 147, ll. 13-27).[14]

Transitus W is not the most widely distributed recension of this apocryphon, but it survives in a dozen manuscripts from the eighth century onward and was especially well known in medieval Spain and the British Isles.[15] A copy appears in the late-eleventh or early-twelfth-century homiliary in Cambridge, Pembroke College 25, fols. 113^{v}-17^{v}, from Bury St Edmunds,[16] and it was this recension as well that gave rise to the Old Irish dormition text known as the *Udhacht Mhuire* (*The Testament of Mary*), which describes the assumption of Mary's soul in similar terms:

> Ó thairnic trá do Muiri na briatra-sin do ráda do-chuaid a spirat bethad aisti 7 ro gab an slánici in anmain idir a dá láim 7 tuc co huasal anórach leis é. Et at-rachtadur arcaingil nime uili uimpi 7 at-chonncadur na hapstail amail sin hí aga tócbáil leo dona hainglib 7 is amlaid do-conncas dóib hí co ndeilb 7 co ndénam

14 "And then our Lord received her soul, and he then gave it to St Michael the archangel, and he received her soul with the prostration of all his limbs. And she had nothing upon her save only a human form, and she had a soul seven times brighter than snow. And then St Peter asked our Lord, saying, 'Who is there of us, Lord, who has a soul as white as this holy Mary?' Then our Lord said to Peter and to all those who were present, 'This holy Mary's soul will forever be glorified by God, and she will be washed with the holy absolution, and the other apostles will be sent before her bier when she departs from her body.' And they found no soul as white as the holy Mary's was because she loved darkness more for her sins, and she was nevertheless preserved from her sins. And they all saw that the blessed Mary had a soul as white as snow." A second, more complete witness to this homily (Cameron B3.3.20.1) in CCCC 198 (this part *s.* xi^{2}, provenance Worcester by *s.* xiii), fols. 350^{r}-59^{r}, is ed. and trans. by Clayton 1998, 246-72. The corresponding passage, at 258, likewise says that Mary had *seofon siðum breohtran saule ðonne snaw* ("a soul seven times brighter than snow").

15 On the textual history of *Transitus* W, see Mimouni 1995, 281-86, and Clayton 1998, 69-83.

16 The Pembroke 25 sermon (Clayton 1998, 328-33), says only of Mary's soul that it was *niue candidiorem* (*ibid.*, 331; "whiter than snow"). The sources and contents of this manuscript are discussed by Hall 2021. On the reception of *Transitus* W in early medieval England, see Clayton 2007b.

> duine uirri 7 robo gili fo ṡecht hé ná snechta (Breatnach 2019, 322-23).[17]

Outside of Marian assumption apocrypha, the only other instance in Old English of a departing soul that is seven times brighter then snow appears in the entry for 15 June in the ninth-century *Old English Martyrology*, which recounts the death and ascension of the child martyr St Vitus and his tutor and foster-father, St Modestus. After a series of adventures in Lucania, in southern Italy, the two saints meet their end when an angel conducts them to a river and their dove-like souls are witnessed ascending to heaven:

> Ac Godes engel hine [St Vitus] þa gelædde ond his festerfæder mid hine, Sanctum Modestum, on þæs flodes neaweste se is cweden Siler. Đær gesegon Cristne men heora sawle fleogan to heofonum swa swa culfran, ond hi wæron seofon siðum hwittran þonne snaw (Rauer 2013, 116).[18]

The source of this entry in the *Old English Martyrology* is an unedited Latin *passio* of St Vitus (*BHL* 8712), two copies of which are preserved in the Worcester and Salisbury recensions of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary,[19] and while the printed version of the *passio* of St Vitus (*BHL* 8711) in the *Acta Sanctorum* says simply that the souls of Vitus and Modestus flew to heaven in the likeness of doves that were whiter than snow (*in similitudine*

17 "When Mary moreover had finished saying those words, her vital spirit departed from her, and the Saviour took her soul between his two hands and brought it nobly and honourably with him. And all the archangels of heaven arose around her, and the apostles saw her in that manner being raised up by the angels, and the way in which she was seen by them was with a human shape and form and she was seven times brighter than snow." Willard compares this passage to the parallel account in John of Thessalonica (1937, 357-58). See also Seymour 1921-22, 37. The Hiberno-Latin apocryphon *De morte Marie* (*BHL* 5352p; Flahive 2019) from Dublin, Trinity College Library, 667 (F. 5. 3) (*s.* xv^{2}), pp. 143-44, preserves the same image: *Tunc dominus suscepit animam beate Marie et tradidit eam Michaeli archangelo et uidebat animam eius habentem similitudinem hominis et erat candidior niue septuplum* ("Then the Lord took the soul of the Blessed Mary and gave it to the archangel Michael, and he saw her soul had a human likeness and was seven times whiter than snow"; Flahive 2019, 368-69). This latter text is not listed by Mimouni 1995 in his inventory of *Transitus* texts. For its relation to other Marian ascension apocrypha, see Colker 1991, II, 1144-45. As pointed out by Donahue (1942, 64 note 50), the Irish version of this apocryphon in the *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* describes Mary's soul as *robo gili fa seacht i na'n grian* ("seven times brighter than the sun"), in agreement with John of Thessalonica (see Breatnach 2019, 267).

18 "But God's angel then led him and his fosterfather, St Modestus, with him to the vicinity of a river which is called Siler [i.e. Sele]. There some Christians saw their souls fly to heaven like doves, and they were seven times whiter than snow" (Rauer 2013, 117).

19 The source of this entry was first identified by Cross 1982, 58-62. Cross was evidently then unaware of the copies of this *passio* in the two recensions of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary, but their existence is noted by Jackson and Lapidge 1996, 138, and by Whatley 2001.

columbarum nive candidiores),[20] the versions in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary both agree with the *Old English Martyrology* in asserting that their souls were like doves that were seven times whiter than snow (*Visę sunt autem animę eorum sicut columbę septies candidę tamquam nix*).[21]

Now the depiction of a saintly soul as "white as snow" is of course not at all uncommon in medieval and ancient near-eastern literature,[22] and the image of a saint's soul ascending to heaven in the form of a dove that is as white as snow or whiter than snow occurs with some regularity in medieval saints' lives, including those for Anstrude, Eulalia, Quintin, and Scholastica.[23] If these can be taken as representative of an established hagiographic convention, then the version of the *passio* of St Vitus known to the compilers of both the *Old English Martyrology* and the Cotton-Corpus Legendary appears to be original in introducing the qualifying numerical detail "*seven* times brighter then snow" into the story of Vitus's ascension. Wherever *BHL* 8712 originated, the inspiration for this innovative detail is likely to have been the scene in the W Recension of the *Transitus Mariae* in which Mary's soul ascends to heaven seven times brighter than snow, although as I will later suggest this is not the only possibility. The descriptions of the good and bad souls in the Three Utterances exemplum shining seven times brighter than the sun or seven times blacker than a raven likewise have a complex pedigree that will become clearer after digging a little deeper into apocryphal literature, beginning with a tradition concerning the appearance of Christ at Doomsday.

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20 *Passio SS. Viti, Modesti, Crescentiae* xvii, *AASS*, Iunii II (Antwerp, 1698), 1025: *Et his dictis, beatae sanctorum animae, sacris egressae corporibus, in similitudine columbarum nive candidiores* ("And with these words, the blessed souls of the saints departed from their holy bodies in the likeness of doves whiter than snow").

21 London, BL, Cotton Nero E. I, vol. 2 (*s.* xi$^{3/4}$, Worcester), fol. 29va10-11; and Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 222 (*s.* xi^{ex}, Salisbury), fol. 6^{v}22-23. *BHL* 8712 is unpublished. As Cross notes (1982, 62), this image is parallelled in the copies of *BHL* 8712 in Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, 412 (*s.* ix^{1} or ix^{med}, prob. NE Italy), fol. 120^{r} (*septies candide quam nivis*); and Montpellier, Bibliothèque de l'Université (École de Médicine), H 156 (*s.* ix^{in}), fol. 153^{r} (*septies nives candiores*).

22 For instance, the Coptic *Life of St Pachomius* (*BHO* 824) relates that the parting soul of a holy man is "beautiful to see and white as snow" (Veilleux 1980, 106). The entry for Paul the Hermit in the *Old English Martyrology* says that St Antony saw the soul of St Paul *swa hwite swa snauw* ("as white as snow") ascending to heaven (Rauer 2013, 46).

23 Examples are collected by Brewer 1884, 109, 458-60; Maury 1896, 270-73; Weicker 1902, 26-27; Dudley 1911, 173; Leclercq 1903, 1485-88; Sühling 1930, 110-91; Loomis 1948, 66, 180 note 131; Thompson 1955-58, no. E732.1 ("Soul in form of dove"); Courcelle 1972, 29-65; Kemp [1972] 2004, 138-43; Mengis [1987] 2006, 1572-77; and Gattiker and Gattiker 1989, 352-54. For the depiction of the soul of St Benignus as a *snawhwit culfre* ("snow-white dove"), see Rauer 2013, 210-11. For Anstrude, see Levison 1913, 75. For the examples of St Scholastica, St Foy, St Marcellinus and St Peter, and a Flemish clerk named Stephen, whose souls all ascend to heaven in the form of a dove, see Stouck 1999, 199, 325, 381, 549. Souls as birds in the Old Norse poem *Sólarljóð*, in the monk of Wenlock's vision as reported by Boniface, and in other medieval texts including (arguably) an Old English riddle are discussed by Pulsiano and Wolf 1991. The Platonic roots of this image and their connections to Jewish eschatology are examined by Aptowitzer 1925, 150-68.

2. When Christ appears at Doomsday he will be seven times brighter than the sun

Two early New Testament apocrypha assert that when Christ appears at Doomsday he will be seven times brighter than the sun. The first is the *Apocalypse of Peter* (*BHG* 1487; *CANT* 317), which was probably composed in Greek during the first half of the second century, although today it survives complete only in Ethiopic.[24] Its opening chapter relates Christ's prophecy to Peter concerning the Second Coming:

> For the coming of the Son of God shall not be plain; but as the lightning that shines from the east to the west, so will I come upon the clouds of heaven with a great host in my majesty; with my cross going before my face will I come in my majesty; shining seven times brighter than the sun will I come in my majesty with all my saints, my angels. And my Father shall set a crown upon my head, that I may judge the quick and the dead and recompense every man according to his works (Elliott [1993] 2009, 600).

The *Apocalypse of Peter* is the earliest Christian document to provide a detailed description of heaven and hell and exercised a powerful influence on later works of Christian eschatology, including the *Sibylline Oracles*, the *Apocalypse of Paul*, and the *Apocalypse of Thomas* (James 1911, 369-75, 380-83; Bauckham 1998, 256; Jakab 2003). On this particular detail, it also appears to have made its mark on the *Epistle of the Apostles* (*CANT* 22), an apocryphon probably from the third quarter of the second century that survives today in a fifth-century Latin fragment from Bobbio that must have been known in the Latin West (Bick 1908).[25] The corresponding passage in the *Epistle of the Apostles* 16 situates Christ's prophecy within a revelation made to all the apostles shortly after his resurrection:

> And we said to him, "O Lord, great is this that you say and reveal to us. In what kind of power and form are you about to come?" And he said to us, "Truly I say to you, I will come as the sun

24 Daley writes that the *Apocalypse of Peter* was "probably composed about 135 in Syria" (1991, 7). Bauckham argues that it is a work of Palestinian Jewish Christianity composed during the Bar Kokhba revolt of AD 132-35 (1998, 160-258). Bremmer accepts the general scholarly consensus "that it must date from the last decades of the first half of the second century AD" (2009, 301).

25 On the date of the *Epistle*, which survives in Coptic and Ethiopic translations going back to a lost Greek original, see Watson 2020, 8-10. Daley writes that the *Epistle of the Apostles* "seems to have been composed in a Jewish Christian community in Asia Minor about 160" (1998, 7). My thanks to Brandon Hawk and Charles D. Wright for keeping me up to date on scholarship on the *Epistle of the Apostles*.

> which bursts forth; thus will I, shining seven times brighter than it in glory, while I am carried on the wings of the clouds in splendour with my cross going before me, come to the earth to judge the living and the dead" (Elliott [1993] 2009, 565-66; cf. Watson 2020, 53).

The similarities between these two passages were first noted by M.R. James, who suggested that the *Epistle of the Apostles* was probably indebted to the *Apocalypse of Peter* for its account of Christ's parousia (James 1924, 490 note 1).[26] Regardless of how these two apocrypha both came to employ the same image of Christ at Doomsday shining seven times brighter than the sun, this detail seems not to have been taken up by many patristic writers, but a close parallel appears, of all places, in the sprawling thirteenth-century Norse collection of Marian legends and miracle tales known as *Maríu saga*, which includes a short prophetic account of Christ's Second Coming that reads: *Þat er sögn heilagra ritninga, at dómr enn efzti, sá er dróttinn skal dœma um allt mannkyn, skal þar vera i loptinu uppi yfir dalinum Josaphat* [...] *Hann skal vera .vii. lutum biartari en sól* (Unger 1871, I, 52, ll. 8-10, 26-27).[27] This passage from *Maríu saga* has no known source, but given the rarity and specificity of this image, one has to consider the possibility that it depends on an unidentified Latin intermediary that is ultimately based on either the *Apocalypse of Peter* or the *Epistle of the Apostles*, which were evidently responsible for providing the originary expressions of this idea.

Subtle variations on this 'Christ at Doomsday' permutation of the motif occur in a handful of other texts. In the fourth-century Greek *Acts of Philip* 2:15 (*BHG* 1516-24; *CANT* 250.I), the apostle Philip has a contentious encounter with the Jewish high priest of Jerusalem, Ananias, who declares Philip a magician and sorceror for having spread lies about Jesus that threaten to undo the pagans and the Jews. When Ananias accuses Philip of trying to turn the Jews away from the laws of their fathers, Philip calls out to God and asks him to send Christ to Jerusalem to reprimand the Jews for their incredulity: ἔτι δὲ ταῦτα βοῶντος τοῦ Φιλίππου ἐξαίφνης ἠνεῴχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ ἐφάνη ὁ Ἰησοῦς κατελθὼν ἐν τιμιωτάῃ δόξῃ καὶ ἀστραπῇ, καὶ

26 The connections between these passages in the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Epistle of the Apostles* are discussed by Hills, who makes no determination about whether one text influenced the other ([1990] 2008, 101-02, 104, 110). For additional passages in the *Apocalypse of Peter* that are now recognised as having influenced the *Epistle of the Apostles*, see Bauckham 1988, 148, and Jakab 2003, 175-76.

27 "There is a report in sacred writings that at the Last Judgement, when the Lord will judge all mankind, he will be in the air above the valley of Josaphat [...] He will be seven times brighter than the sun." On the traditional idea that at Doomsday Christ will appear in the Valley of J[eh]osaphat, see Hall 1994, 81-85. Najork connects this detail in *Maríu saga* with the passage in Honorius, *Elucidarium* III.79 cited below (128-29 and note 58) which says that at Judgement the bodies of the saints (not the risen Christ) will be seven times brighter than the sun and swifter than the soul, but the correspondence is not exact (2014, 142).

τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐπταπλάσιον λάμπον ὑπὲρ τὸν ἥλιον, καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ λευκότερα χιόνος (Bovon, Bouvier, and Amsler 1999, 61).[28] The setting is not Judgement Day, but the description of Christ in heaven in the presence of lightning sounds suspiciously like a derivative of the scene in the *Apocalypse of Peter*.

In the Middle Irish *Fís Adomnáin* (*Vision of Adomnán*), Adomnán's soul is transported by angels to heaven on the feast of John the Baptist, where he views the brilliance of Christ's face shining seven times brighter than the sun: *Dia mbé nech oca ṡírfégad imme anair 7 aníar anes 7 atúaid, fo-géba do cech leith a aigid n-airegda soillsithir fo ṡecht oltas grian* (Carey 2019, 68).[29] The vision takes place in the timeless interim before Doomsday, not at the end of time, but the text later adds that Adomnán's vision is *céitimmthúsa cecha anma iar techt a curp* (Carey 2019, 86),[30] and that after Adomnán returned to his body he preached what he had learned from his vision for the rest of his life.

In the Old Russian *Descent of the Virgin into Hell*, the Virgin Mary descends to hell to witness the torments of the damned and is told that the darkness of hell will be dispelled only by the advent of Christ:

> And the Holy Virgin said, "Let the darkness be dispersed that I may see the torment." And the angels who watched over the torment answered, "We have been enjoined not to let them see light until the coming of your blessed Son, who is brighter than seven suns" (Zenkovsky 1963, 123).

The anticipated coming of Christ into hell can easily be understood as a typological antecedent of Christ's anticipated Second Coming at Doomsday, and again the image seems to recall the image first introduced by the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Epistle of the Apostles*.

3. At Doomsday the bodies of the blessed will shine seven times brighter than the sun

In the two manuscripts containing the complete Ethiopic text of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the apocalypse itself forms part of a larger work entitled *The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead*, in which

28 "When Philip called out these words, the heavens suddenly opened, and Jesus appeared, descending in magnificent glory in the midst of lightning, and his face shone seven times brighter than the sun and his raiment was as white as snow."

29 "If anyone should gaze at him for a long time from all sides, from the east and from the west, from the south and from the north, he would find his noble face on every side, seven times brighter than the sun" (Carey 2019, 69).

30 "the first experiences of every soul after going out of the body" (Carey 2019, 89).

Peter, adopting the voice of God, addresses Clement and declares: "[The Son] will at His coming raise the dead at the sound of His word, and will make my righteous ones shine seven times more than the sun, and will make their crowns shine like the crystal, and like the rainbow in the time of rain" (James 1911, 365, adapted by Elliott [1993] 2009, 612).[31] This transfer of the sevenfold illumination from Christ at Doomsday to the blessed souls at Doomsday is not the first attestation of this image, however, since an even earlier one appears in the Slavonic Apocalypse of *2 Enoch* 66:7, an apocalypse of the late-first century AD, which declares: "How happy are the righteous who shall escape the Lord's great judgement; for they will be made to shine seven times brighter than the sun. For in that age everything is estimated sevenfold — light and darkness and food and enjoyment and misery and paradise and tortures" (Andersen [1983-85] 2011, I, 194).[32]

The biblical basis for this claim is Christ's teaching in Matt. 13:43 that "the just will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their father," with support from Judg. 5:31, "Let them that love thee shine as the sun shineth in his rising"; Dan. 12:3, "But [at the end of time] they that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity"; and *4 Ezra* 7:97, "The sixth order [of righteous souls before Judgement], when it is shown to them how their face is to shine like the sun, and how they are to be made like the light of the stars, being incorruptible from then on" (Metzger [1983-85] 2011, I, 540).[33] With the shining amplified sevenfold, this image becomes repeated in a variety of Insular and Insular-related texts including a homily on John 14:1-2 in the tenth-century *Catechesis Celtica*, where the verse from Matt. 13 is modified to include the number seven:

> Inde dixit [the apostle John]: "*Post haec uidi* et ecce *turba multa quam denumerare nemo poterat ex omni gente et tribu, populis et linguis, stantes* coram *sede et palmae in manibus, et clamabant uoce magna: 'Salus Deo nostro qui sedit super thronum et agno'*" [Rev. 7:9-10]. Vnusquisque autem de ipsis sic fulget ut sol, sicut scriptum est: *Tunc iusti fulgebunt sicut sol in regno Patris eorum* [Matt. 13:43], sed septuplo solem quam uidemus praecellens (Wilmart 1933b, 69-70, ll. 138-44, with some minor editing).[34]

31 The Ethiopic text is edited by Grébaut 1910.

32 See the comments by Orlov, who interprets the "sevenfold nature of the final age inhabited by humanity" in terms of "the familiar cluster of the sevenfold patterns permeating the anthropogony of the Slavonic apocalypse" (2014, 42, 41).

33 Additional ancient texts that refer to the souls of the righteous shining like the sun or the stars at the end of time are discussed by Stone 1990, 244-45.

34 "Then he said: 'After that I saw and, behold, a great multitude which no one could count from every nation and tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and palms in their hands, and they called out with a great voice: *Salvation to our God, who sits upon the throne,*

A passage from the Coptic *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* likewise shows that the verse from Matt. 13 was subject to editing to incorporate the number seven: "Then all the righteous rejoiced and were glad, and they ascribed blessing to God, saying, 'All the righteous shall shine in the kingdom of their Father seven times brighter than the sun'" (Budge 1913, 200). The same idea appears in the twelfth-century English sermon known as Trinity Homily xxviii, where Christ's return at Doomsday will be preceded by a cleansing fire that will leave the righteous shining seven times brighter than the sun:

> Fur berneð þe eorðe and al þat beð þar inne. oðer þar uppe. and clenseð alle bileffule men of alle þe sunnes þe hie hadden forleten. oðer bet. oðer bigunnen to beten. and makeð hem seuefealde brihtere þane þe sunne alse þe boc seið. *Fulgebunt iusti septies cplendidius* [sic] *quam sol*. Đe rihtwise shulle ben seuefeald brihtere þane þe sunne. and elles naren hie naht bicumeliche to wunien in heuene (Morris [1868] 1988, 170).[35]

The early thirteenth-century *Ancrene Wisse* VII.7 reports that at the resurrection on Judgement Day the mortal garment which we inherited from Adam will be torn asunder and we will receive a new garment, *þe fel undeadlich þet i þe neowe ariste schal schine seoueuald brihtre þen þe sunne* (Millett 2005-06, I, 137, ll. 220-21).[36] And the fifteenth-century Middle English Chester Play *The Prophets and Antichrist* asserts that at Judgement Day *They that shall be saued, shall be as bright / as seven tymes the Sonne is light* (Matthews [1916] 1968, 389, ll. 41-42).[37] But the most impressive witness to this idea is surely Aquinas's comment in the *Summa Theologica*, *Supplementum*, Q. 91, art. 3:

> Sed post resurrectionem, quando lux lunae augebitur secundum rei veritatem, non erit alicubi nox super terram, sed solum in centro terrae, ubi erit infernus; quia tunc, ut dicitur, luna lucebit quantum lucet nunc sol; sol autem in septuplum plus quam

and to the lamb. And each one of them shone like the sun, as it is written: *Then shall the just shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father*, yet surpassing the sun that we see sevenfold.'"

35 "Fire shall burn the earth and all that is therein or thereupon and shall cleanse all believing men of all the sins that they had renounced or repented of or commenced to repent of, and shall make them sevenfold brighter than the sun, as the book saith, *Fulgebunt justi septies splendidius quam sol*. The righteous shall be sevenfold brighter than the sun, and else would they not be fitting to dwell in heaven" (Morris [1868] 1988, 171).

36 "the immortal skin that in the new resurrection will shine seven times brighter than the sun" (Millett 2009, 137).

37 I learned of this example from Stephen Pelle. A statement to this effect in the Middle English *Castel of Love*, a translation of Robert Grosseteste's *Château d'amour*, is cited by Os 1932, 163.

> nunc; corpora autem beatorum septies magis sole, quamvis hoc non sit aliqua auctoritate vel ratione probatum.[38]

Aquinas's view of what he acknowledges to be an unfounded but popularly held belief here takes on a cosmological perspective involving the nature of the sun and moon at the end of time, and this steers us in the direction of a permutation of the sevenfold motif that sits at the very heart of early Insular eschatology, with abundant examples in Old and Middle English, Irish, and Anglo-Latin. This is the idea that from the moment of Creation to the Fall of Adam and Eve, the sun and moon were seven times brighter than they are now, and at Doomsday they will be restored to their original sevenfold brightness.

4. AT CREATION THE SUN WAS SEVEN TIMES BRIGHTER THAN IT IS NOW, AND AT DOOMSDAY IT WILL REGAIN ITS ORIGINAL SEVENFOLD BRIGHTNESS

The biblical authority for this idea is Isa. 30:26, which states that at an uncertain time in the future when the Lord will come to heal his people, "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days."[39] The context of this prophecy

38 "But after the resurrection, when the light of the moon will be increased in very truth, there will be night nowhere on earth but only in the center of the earth, where hell will be, because then, as it is said, the moon will shine as brightly as the sun does now, the sun seven times as much as now, and the bodies of the blessed will shine seven times brighter than the sun, although there is no authority or reason to prove this" (De Rubeis et al. 1927, V, 725). For discussion, see McDanell and Lang 1988, 83. Aquinas's comment is echoed by Albertus Magnus, who writes in his *Commentarii in quartum librum Sententiarum*, Dist. 48E, art. 8, that *Homines autem in septuplum plusquam sol in illis diebus, scilicet post judicium* (Borgnet 1890-99, XXX, 662, 1, l. 7; "In those days, that is after Judgement, men will be seven times brighter than the sun").

39 This idea is echoed in a section of the Ethiopic Apocalypse of *1 Enoch* devoted to a cosmological and astrological account of the heavenly luminaries, an account intended to aid calendrical reckoning. In this context the angel Uriel explains to Enoch that in the present reality of earthly experience (not in some otherworldly realm or at some future or eschatological time), the sun and moon are now of equal size, but the light of the sun is "sevenfold brighter than that of the moon" (*1 Enoch* 72:37: Isaac [1983-85] 2011, I, 52). Later in that same work (*1 Enoch* 91:16), a similar idea is adapted for an eschatological context, where in a dire apocalyptic prophecy, Enoch reveals that at the moment of the eternal Judgement, "[t]he first heaven shall depart and pass away; a new heaven shall appear; and all the powers of heaven shall shine forever sevenfold" (Isaac [1983-85] 2011, I, 73). Compare the apocalyptic prophecy in the *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer* li: "In the future that is to come, the Holy One, blessed be He, will renew them [the moon and stars] and add to their light a sevenfold light, as it is said, 'Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days'" (Friedlander 1916, 412). The idea occurs yet again in an otherworldly context in the Slavonic Apocalypse of *2 Enoch* 11:2, where Enoch is conveyed bodily to the fourth heaven, where he observes: "And I saw that the sun has a light seven times greater than the moon" (Andersen [1983-85] 2011, I, 120); see Geller 2010, 38.

in Isaiah is not a discussion of Doomsday as it was understood by medieval Christians but an apocalyptic vision of God's punishment of his enemies and the ensuing restoration of peace and order among the Israelites. But medieval exegetes routinely took this verse as a prophecy of Judgement Day and as a gloss on the nature of the heavenly bodies at Creation. A concise expression of this idea is recorded in the ninth-century *Old English Martyrology* under the entry for 21 March, on the fourth day of Creation:

> On ðone an ond twentegðan dæg bið se feorða worolde dæg. On ðæm dæge God gesette on heofones rodor sunnan ond monan. Þa wæs seo sunne seofon siðum beorhtre ðonne heo nu is, ond se mona hæfde ða ða beorhtnesse þe seo sunne nu hafað. Ac þa Adam ond Eua on neorxnawonge gesyngodan, ða wæs þæm tunglum gewonad heora beorhtnes, ond hi næfdon na siððan butan þone seofoðan dæl heora leohtes. Ac on domesdæge, þonne ure Drihten edniwað ealle gesceafte, ond eall mænnisc cynn eft ariseð, ond hi næfre ma ne gesyngiað, þonne scineð seo sunne seofon siðum beorhtre ðonne heo nu do, ond heo næfre on setl gangeþ. Ond se mona scineð swa swa nu seo sunne deþ, ond he næfre ma wonað ne ne weaxeð, ac he standeð a on his endebyrdnesse, þenden þa tunglu her lyhtaþ on ðysse deadlican worolde (Rauer 2013, 68).[40]

A somewhat fuller account appears in Irvine Homily vi on the Transfiguration (Cameron B3.4.2), where the mention of Christ's countenance shining like the sun at the Transfiguration prompts the homilist to recall the verse from Matt. 13 about the just shining like the sun in their father's kingdom. This in turn leads the homilist to remark on the reason for the diminished brightness of the sun and moon today:

> Leofe men, ær þam þe ðe æreste men Adam and Eua agulten and Gode wreðædon on neorxnawo[n]gæ, ær þan þa tunglæn, sunne and monæ hæfdæn mucele mare beorhtnesse þenne heo nu habbeð; ac syðæn heo gylten þurh unhersumnesse, and God heom weorp of þam mucele murhðe on þisse deaþelic lif hider on middæneard, þa sceolden þa (t)unglæ þæs wite þrowiæn, for

40 "On the twenty-first day is the fourth day of the world. On that day God positioned the sun and the moon in the heavenly sky. The sun then was seven times brighter than it is now, and the moon had the brightness that the sun has now. And when Adam and Eve sinned in paradise, the brightness of the heavenly bodies was then dimmed, and since then they have only had one seventh of their former brightness. And on Doomsday, when our Lord will renew all of creation, and all humankind will be resurrected and they will sin no more, the sun will then shine seven times brighter than it does now, and it will never set. And the moon will shine like the sun does now, and it will never after that wax and wane, but it will always remain in its place, for as long as the heavenly bodies shine here in this mortal world" (Rauer 2013, 69).

> þam ðe heo þare menniscen cunde onfon sceoldon, and heo þa for þon worden heoræ beorhtnes muceles dæles benumene. Hit ilimpð þeah on þissere weorlde endunge on domes dæg, þæt God gyfð heom æft heoræ fulle brihtnesse. Þenne underfehð þe mone þare sunne brihtnesse, and þeo sunne [bið] seofen siðe brihtre þenne heo nu is (Irvine 1993, 169, ll. 80-90).[41]

The main source for these passages in the *Old English Martyrology* and Irvine Homily vi was first identified by J.E. Cross (1972 and 1981, 185-86) as the chapter on the sun and the moon in the seventh-century Hiberno-Latin *Liber de ordine creaturarum*, where the verse from Isa. 30 gets built up into a complex philosophical statement about the animation of the sun and moon. A portion of that chapter is reproduced below, but by way of introduction, I should first explain that in order to understand this passage in the *De ordine creaturarum*, it will be useful to recall that throughout Antiquity and for much of the Middle Ages there was a widespread belief that the stars and planets were endowed with souls (Dales 1980; Scott 1994; Smyth 1996, 173-75).[42] Aristotle held that the stars are living, sentient beings whose motion through the heavens is partly voluntary, and the souls that embody them occupy the position of intermediate semi-divine beings above the rank of humans but beneath that of the highest deity (Scott 1994, 35-37). Similar beliefs were expressed by Zeno and the Stoics, who thought that astral souls and the souls of humans are both composed of ether and that the hot, dry nature of the soul is what forces it to ascend to heaven when it leaves the body (Scott 1994, 43-45). Plato was likewise influenced by the ancient pagan idea that human souls are born inside stars, with which they share a common physical materiality, and that good souls who are able to overcome the weight of their passions are able to return to their native stars after death. In his account of the creation of the heavens in the *Timaeus*, Plato writes that after the divine creator placed the planets in their orbits and created the fixed and wandering stars, he set about to complete the material universe by populating it with a hierarchy of gods and mortal beings. To fashion the latter, he first blended the universal soul in a great bowl and distributed it among the stars, from which each individual astral soul would then be able

41 "Beloved men, before the first people Adam and Eve sinned and angered God in paradise, before that, the stars and sun and moon had much more brightness than they do now, but after they had sinned through their disobedience and God cast them forth from that great bliss into this deadly life here in the world, the stars had to suffer punishment for it, because they had to experience their human condition, and therefore were deprived of a great part of their brightness. However, it shall come to pass at the end of this world, on the day of Judgement, that God will restore them to their complete brightness. Then the moon shall receive the brightness of the sun, and the sun shall be seven times brighter than it is now."

42 For related folk-beliefs concerning souls in the form of stars or departed souls that ascend into the heavens to become stars, see Thompson 1955-58, nos. A761 ("Ascent to stars") and E741.1 ("Soul in form of star").

to descend to earth and assume human form: "And when He had compounded the whole [universal soul] he divided it into souls equal in number to the stars, and each several soul He assigned to one star, and setting them each as it were in a chariot. He showed them the nature of the Universe, and declared unto them the laws of destiny" (Bury [1929] 1981, 91).[43] These laws of destiny, Plato writes, include the fact that once each individual soul reaches earth, depending on how well it is able to master human passion and live justly, it will be permitted to return to its star of origin after death: "And he that has lived his appointed time well shall return again to his abode in his native star, and shall gain a life that is blessed and congenial" (Bury [1929] 1981, 91-93). In early English and Irish literature, a vestige of this Platonic idea can still be seen in the Adam Octipartite myth in *In Tenga Bithnúa* (*The Evernew Tongue*) and elsewhere, which in some versions teaches that Adam's body was fashioned from various elements, including astral matter, and that even Adam's name derives from the stars.[44]

When this complex set of ancient beliefs eventually fell into the hands of early Christian writers, it naturally gave way to the idea that since astral souls and human souls are made from the same ethereal substance, and since human souls are capable of sin, it follows that the stars are likewise subject to sin. Origen, who was the first Christian thinker to discuss the physical composition of the stars and who has sometimes been accused of operating on the verge of astral mysticism, explains in his first homily on Genesis that it is a sign of their greatness that humans were created on an equal footing with the sun, moon, and stars and that redeemed humanity has been honoured with the promise that at the end of time it will shine like the sun and moon (Heine 1982, 63). The claim one occasionally encounters in early Insular literature that the souls of the righteous will "shine after

43 This idea has had an impressive longevity, as witnessed, for instance, by Wordsworth's *Sonnet* of 1817, which begins: "The Stars are Mansions built by Nature's hand, / And, haply, there the spirits of the blest / Live, clothed in radiance, their immortal vest" (Ketcham 1989, 242, ll. 1-3). For other literary expressions of this idea, from Vergil and Dante to Shakespeare and beyond, see Allen 1963, 26-27.

44 The version of the Microcosmic Adam myth in *The Evernew Tongue* xiii asserts that the human body is composed, among other things, of *adbar di gréin 7 rennuib nimhe oulcena; conid ed do-gni lien 7 soillse i suilibh doine* ("material from the sun and the stars of heaven also; so that is what makes the brightness and the light in people's eyes"; Carey 2009, 117). Two manuscripts of the Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch (*2 Enoch*) 30:8 likewise derive Adam's "eyes from the sun" (Andersen [1983-85] 2011, I, 151 note h). For other early Insular variants on this theme, with full bibliography, see Cross and Hill 1982, 67-70, and Wasserstein 1988. On the derivation of Adam's name from the stars, see Wright 2018, 942, 975-76, 983, 989, and 991-92, with further references. It is difficult to know just how far back beliefs in astral animism may have existed in the British Isles, but for the fascinating thesis that the inhabitants of prehistoric Britain identified stars as the spirits of their deceased ancestors, and that Neolithic monuments such as the long barrows at Wayland's Smithy and West Kennet in Wessex were designed to permit the observation of certain stars rising or setting above the barrow's entrance as if leaving or entering the tomb, see North 1996, 46, 277, 525-27.

death"[45] is thus not simply a reflex of the idea that good souls go to heaven and heaven is a bright and shiny place, but instead a recollection of precisely this ancient belief that after death the righteous soul begins to radiate light as it once again assumes its original astral form. Clement of Alexandria writes that after the resurrection, "the righteous all return to the same unity, where in different ways they will be 'gleaming like the sun' or rather in the sun" (Scott 1994, 108). The process is especially clear in the Middle Irish *Vision of Adomnán*, in which the blessed souls travelling through the seven heavens must pass through the flaming fiery stream before the doorway of the second heaven, where *Abersetus danó aingel ingaire 7 forcoiméta int ṡrotha-sin. Is é in sruth-sin derbus 7 niges anmanna na nóem din chutrumma chinad nos lenann co rroichet comglaine 7 comṡollse fri étrochta rétlann* (Carey 2019, 78).[46] The medieval Christian inheritance of these beliefs includes the more familiar doctrine that demons (including Lucifer) are stars that have fallen through sin, and that they accordingly need to be redeemed (Scott 1994, 139, 141). Ambrose and Jerome both assert that the heavenly luminaries share in mankind's fallen state and that they have consequently been deprived of the brilliant luminescence which they originally possessed before the Fall of Adam and Eve (Smyth 1996, 173 and note 228).[47]

Although most of the later Latin Fathers seem to have been largely uninterested in these questions concerning the animation of the heavens, the Platonic teachings on the subject filtered down into seventh-century Ireland with surprising clarity and are lucidly expressed in the chapter on the sun and the moon in the *De ordine creaturarum* v.2-7, which teaches that the sun

45 In Vercelli Homily viii (Cameron B3.2.3), Christ invites the blessed souls to follow him to heaven and promises them that *ge ðonne scinaþ swa biorhte swa sunne þonne hio æfre on midne dæg fægerost scineð 7 biorhtost*" (Scragg 1992, 147, ll. 91-93; "you will then shine as brightly as the sun whenever it shines most beautifully and most brightly at midday"). According to the *Leabhar Breac Betha Coluim Cille* (*The Life of St Columba*), lxv, the spiritual perfection of St Columba will at last be fully revealed at Judgement Day, *in tan taitnigfes amal gréin nemthrualnide a chuirp 7 a anma* ("when the incorruptibility of his body and soul will shine like the sun"; Herbert 1988, 243, 265). A ninth-century sermon for All Saints, pseudo-Augustine, *Sermo* 209, that circulated in several eleventh-century English homiliaries speaks of the beauties of heaven where the blessed will eventually congregate, *ubi sancti fulgebunt ut stellae in perpetuas aeternitates* (PL 39, 2136; "where the saints will shine like the stars for all eternity").

46 "Abersetus, then, is the angel who tends and watches over that stream. It is that stream which assays the souls of the righteous, and cleanses them from the amount of guilt which adheres to them, so that they attain to the same purity and brightness as the radiance of the stars" (Carey 2019, 79).

47 The Greek-Slavonic apocalypse of *3 Baruch* 9:7 goes even further in claiming that God dimmed the moon's light as a punishment for providing Satan with light in Eden, thereby facilitating the Fall: "And during the transgression of the first Adam, she [the moon] gave light to Samael [*scil.* Satan] when he took the serpent as a garment, and did not hide, but on the contrary, waxed. And God was angered with her, and diminished her and shortened her days" (Gaylord Jr. [1983-85] 2011, I, 673). For Jewish teachings that God diminished the moon's light for its insolence in questioning God's motives at Creation and that, after the moon persisted in questioning, God punished the moon by increasing the sun's light sevenfold, see Ginzberg 1913-38, I, 24.

and moon are indeed animate, intelligent beings that were created for the express purpose of serving man and that now share in the punishment for the Fall:

> Sol ergo et luna duo luminaria in firmamento caeli constituta, unum quod est maius ut praeesset diei, secundum quod minus est statutum ut praeesset nocti [Gen. 1:14-18]; sed non eandem sui splendoris lucem quam cum in principio creata sunt habuerunt nunc per omne sui ministerii tempus dierum ac noctium decursionibus conseruant. Haec enim, dum humanis usibus ministrare a deo creatore destinata sunt, cum homines inculpabiliter uixissent et sub creatoris quo conditi sunt lege perseuerassent, etiam sui luminis plenitudine decorata ministrabant; cum uero homines, quibus in ministerio sociata primitus rutulabant, propter transgressionem deiecti paradisi beatitudinem amiserunt, ipsa quoque luminaria, quamuis non sua culpa, sui luminis detrimenta non sine suo dolore pertulerunt, sicut apostolus Paulus contestatur dicens: *quia omnis creatura congemiscit et dolet usque adhuc* [Rom. 8:22]. Sed quia per redemptoris aduentum humano generi pristinae beatitudinis in melius restauratio promittitur, etiam creatura suum antiquum decorem acceptura non dubitatur; unde propheta de sole specialiter et luna inlustratus spiritali famine inquit: *et erit in die illa cum ceciderint turres, erit lux lunae sicut lux solis et lux solis septempliciter motabitur in lucem septem dierum cum alligauerit dominus uulnus populi sui et percussuram plagae eius sanauerit* [Isa. 30:25-26]. Cum enim factum fuerit *caelum nouum et terra noua et non fuerint in memoria priora* [Isa. 65:17] quae corruptioni seruiunt, et peccati uulnus et percussuram plagae mortis in corporibus resurrectorum dominus sanauerit, et superbi spiritus ex inperio quod arripuerant depositi fuerint, tunc lux lunae in lucem solis motabitur et lux solis restaurabitur in lucem septem dierum quibus conditus fuerat, hoc est, in septuplum suum lumen restaurabitur. Nihil enim restauratur nisi quod amissum est aut corruptum. Quod igitur sol amisit et luna, hoc rursum accipient; ex quo apparet septimam nunc sui luminis partem luminaria retinere quam septempliciter resument quando, sicut per Abacuc spiritus sanctus pro futuris praeterita ponens, ut prophetis mos est, inquit: *eleuabitur sol in ortu suo et luna stabit in ordine suo* [Hab. 3:11]. Cessante namque motabilitate humani status cui seruiunt, et sui cursus motabilitas cessabit; quod enim inquit: *eleuabitur sol in ortu suo*, hoc indicat quod nunquam inclinabitur in occasu suo, et in eo quod dicit: *luna stabit in ordine*

suo, hoc insinuat quod motationes incrementi et detrimenti sui iterum non patietur, sed in suo ordine semper stabit. Hoc autem erit *quando* — ut apostolus loquitur — *ipsa creatura liberabitur a seruitute corruptionis in libertatem gloriae filiorum dei* [Rom. 8:21]; cum enim sancti pro mercede sui laboris, quo deo seruierunt, inmotati fuerint et fulserint *sicut sol iustitiae, cuius in pennis est sanitas* [Mal. 4:2], tunc et ipsi corporeo huic soli pro mercede sui ministerii quo seruituti corruptionis subiecta est, in septuplum sui fulgoris rutulatio restituetur" (Díaz y Díaz 1972, 112-16, ll. 10-53).[48]

48 "For the sun and the moon are two great luminaries set in the firmament of heaven, the greater one to rule over the day, the second smaller one to rule over the night (Gen. 1:14-18). But they do not now retain throughout the duration of their ministry of days and nights, that same splendid light they possessed when created in the beginning. These two were intended by God the Creator to minister to the needs of man, and so long as men lived untainted by sin and obeyed with great constancy the law of the Creator by whom they came to be, they remained adorned with the fullness of their light as they performed this service. But when men — for whom they were glowing as colleagues in this ministry — lost their state of happiness on being cast out of Paradise for their disobedience, the luminaries themselves — though through no fault of their own — endured a loss of brightness, and this not without suffering on their part. The apostle Paul testifies to this when he says: 'For we know that every creature groans and suffers pain, even till now' (Rom. 8:22). But because through the coming of the Redeemer restoration into a state better than its original happiness has been promised to the human race, it cannot be doubted that creation itself will receive its former beauty. Thus, with special reference to the sun and to the moon, the inspired Prophet says in spiritual speech: 'And it shall be in that day when the towers shall fall, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be changed sevenfold into the light of seven days, when the Lord shall bind up the wound of his people, and heal the injury from his blow' (Isa. 30:25-26). When 'a new heaven and a new earth' shall be made 'and the former things' which were subject to corruption 'shall not be in remembrance' (Isa. 65:17), and the Lord has healed the wound of sin and the injury from the blow of death in the bodies of those resurrected, and the proud spirits will have been deposed from the rule they seized, then the light of the moon will be changed into the light of the sun and the light of the sun will be restored to the light of the seven days when it was created, that is, into seven times its present brightness. For nothing is restored except what was lost or corrupted. The sun and the moon will thus receive again that which they had lost. From which it is manifest that the luminaries now retain the seventh part of their brightness, which they will recover sevenfold when, as the Holy Spirit says through Habacuc, setting past events for future ones as is customary for prophets: 'the sun shall be raised in its rising and the moon shall stand in its proper state' (cf. Hab. 3:11). With the end of the mutability of the human condition which they served, the mutability of their course will also cease; for when it is said: 'the sun shall be raised in its rising,' this shows that it will never decline in its setting, and when it is said: 'the moon shall stand in its proper state,' this suggests that it will no longer endure the changes of its increase and decrease, but will always remain in its proper state. This will be — as the Apostle says — 'when creation itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God' (Rom. 8:21), for when the saints will have been transformed as the reward for their labour with which they served God, and will shine 'like the sun of justice, in whose rays there is health' (Mal. 4:2), then the brightness of its glow will be restored sevenfold to the corporeal sun itself, in recompense for its service through which it was subjected to the servitude of corruption" (Smyth 2011, 174-76).

This chapter of the *De ordine creaturarum* gives an unusually thorough explanation of the rationale behind the restored sevenfold brightness of the luminaries at the end of time, and its impact on the development of Insular eschatology is evident in both the *Old English Martyrology* and Irvine Homily vi. Both of these passages can ultimately be traced to the chapter on the sun and the moon in the *De ordine creaturarum*, but in both cases there must be another source-text intervening between the *De ordine creaturarum* and the Old English homily and the *Martyrology* entry since, as Irvine has persuasively demonstrated, each text contains information that is lacking in the other but that is also found in the *De ordine creaturarum*, and "there are sufficiently close resemblances between the two Old English texts to suggest that they stem from a source closer to both than" to the *De ordine creaturarum* (Irvine 1993, 152-54).[49]

This doctrine concerning the restored sevenfold luminescence of the sun and the moon at Doomsday was embraced by so many early English and Irish authors that it seems to have been accepted as the equivalent of biblical truth. I offer just a few examples, among the earliest of which is Bede's hymn *De Enoch et Haeliae*, a harrowing account of the Last Judgement that includes a description of the transformation of the heavenly luminaries, with a clear echo of Isa. 30:26:

> Tum lunae globus modernis absolutus motibus
> splendebit fulgens Olimpo solis aestiui ut iubar
> *in perennis die sabbati*.
> At sol ipse luce flagrans ardebit septemplici,
> lucebit septem dierum mundum inlustrans lampade
> *in perennis die sabbati* (Lapidge 2019, 436-8, ll. 88-93).[50]

49 I suspect that this chapter of the *De ordine creaturarum* may have been influenced by a passage in Jerome's *Commentarius in Amos* II.5 that reads: *Transformat autem Deus omnia, quando de terrenis facit caelestia, et homines angelorum donat similitudine; quando luna solis fulgore rutilabit, et sol habebit lumen septuplum, quando animalis, et infirmus et corruptibilis homo transformatur in spiritalem et robustum et in incorruptum mutans gloriam, non naturam; quando intelligentes fulgebunt sicut splendor firmamenti, et implebitur quod scriptum est*: "*Alia gloria solis, alia gloria lunae, alia gloria stellarum. Stella enim a stella differt in claritate, sic et resurrectio mortuorum*" (1 Cor. 15:41-42) (Adriaen 1969, 282, ll. 321-30; "And God transforms all things when he makes heavenly things from earthly and gives unto men the similitude of angels, when the moon will turn red with the brilliance of the sun and the sun will have a sevenfold light, when the bestial and weak and corruptible man is transformed into a spiritual and robust and incorrupt, exchanging nature for glory, when their intelligences will shine like the glory of the firmament, and what is written will be fulfilled: 'One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, another the glory of the stars. One star differs from another in its brilliance. So also is the resurrection of the dead' [1 Cor. 15:41-42])."

50 "Then the globe of the moon, released from its present motions, will shine refulgent from heaven like the brilliance of the summer sun, *on the Day of the eternal Sabbath*. But the shining sun itself will burn with sevenfold light; it will shine illuminating the world with its lantern of seven days, *on the Day of the eternal Sabbath*" (Lapidge 2019, 437-39; italics here and in the Latin text quoted above are in the original).

Likewise, Byrhtferth of Ramsey's gloss to chapter 43 of Bede's *De temporum ratione*:

> Suspiremus itaque ad illam ardentius vitam aeterna pace beatissimam, quando *erit lux lunae sicut lux solis, et lux solis septempliciter, sicut lux septem dierum*. Esaias: *Et erit lux lunae sicut lux solis, et lux solis septempliciter, sicut lux septem dierum* [Isa. 30:26]. [...] In die autem judicii determinato illo examine, cum fuerint omnes reprobi una cum diabolo in inferno conclusi, sustollet se Dominus Jesus pariter cum corpore suo, quod sunt omnes electi in coelum, et tunc mutuabit sibi luna splendorem solis, et sol septempliciter lucebit quam modo, sicut lux septem dierum, hoc est multipliciter, et recipiet lumen et splendorem solis, quem amisit peccante primo homine (PL 90, 479BC; italics are in the original).[51]

Ælfric invokes this idea on three separate occasions. In his First Series homily for the second Sunday in Advent (CH I. 40) he takes up Christ's prophecy in Luke 21:25-33 regarding the signs that will presage the end of the world — "There shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars" — and observes that such signs are already coming to pass in the form of contemporary astronomical phenomena such as eclipses and the volatile behaviours of stars that suddenly appear and disappear. At the end of time, he writes, these aberrant celestial phenomena will cease when heaven and earth are transformed from their present imperfect state to a perfected one: *hi beoð awende of þam hiwe þe hi nu on wuniað, to beteran hiwe* (CH I, 529, ll. 158-59).[52] As a result of their purification, *ðonne bið seo sunne be seofonfealdan beorhtre þonne heo nu sy. 7 se mona hæfð þære sunnan leoht* (530, ll. 163-65).[53] This point is echoed in a later sermon for the octave of Pentecost (SH I. 11), where Ælfric again explains that the purification of the earth at the end of time will be accompanied by a sevenfold increase in the brightness of the sun and moon:

51 "So we long more ardently for that most blessed life of eternal peace, *when the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days*. Isaiah: *And the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days*. [...] For at that certain examination on the Day of Judgement, when all the condemned will have been confined in hell together with the devil, the Lord Jesus shall raise himself up together with his body, which are all the elect in heaven, and then the moon will transform itself into the radiance of the sun, and the sun will shine seven times brighter than it does now, like the light of seven days, that is many times over, and [the moon] will receive the light and radiance of the sun, which it lost when the first man sinned". On Byrhtferth's authorship of this gloss, see Lapidge 2007.

52 "They will be transformed from the state in which they now exist to a better state."

53 "Then the sun will be seven times brighter than it is now, and the moon will have the light of the sun."

for ðan ðe þes middanéard bið mid þam brádan fýre
ðe on Cristes tocyme cymð swa færlice
eall geedníwod, and éác seo sunne
and se móna soðlice be seofanfealdum beoð
beorhtran þonne hi nú syndon, be þan ðe us secgað béc
(SH I, 443-44, ll. 511-15).[54]

In both of these passages the emphasis is on the idea of purification, but a more thorough explanation of this event in Ælfric's *De falsis diis* (SH II. 21) makes it clear that the sevenfold brightness of the sun and moon will constitute a restoration of their original state:

Eac swylce seo sunne, and soðlice se móna
wurdon benæmde heora wynsuman beorhtnysse
æfter Adames gylte, na be agenum gewyrhtum.
Be seofonfealdan wæs seo sunne þa beorhtre
ærþam se mann agylte, and se mona hæfde
þære sunnan beorhtnysse, swa swa heo scinð nu ús.
Hi sceolan eft swaþeah æfter Domes-dæge habban
be fullan heora beorhtnysse, be þam þe hy gesceapene wæran;
and se mona ne ealdað æfter þam dæge,
ac bið ansund scinende, swa swa seo [sunne] deð nú
(SH II, 679-80, ll. 56-65).[55]

The Old Irish *Cáin Domnaig* (*The Law of Sunday*) proposes that *I n-domnach athnuigfither in uli dúl i n-deilb bus áille 7 bus ferr oldás, amail dorónta ina cét-oirecc, intan mbete renna nime amail éscai 7 éscai amail gréin 7 grían amail sollsi secht samlathi, feib bói isin cétna sollsi do gréin .i. ria n-imarbus Ádaim* (O'Keeffe 1905, 200-01).[56] The Middle Irish poem *Gnímradha in Śeseadh Lai Láin* (*The Works of the Sixth Day*) extends the diminution of the sun's and moon's light after the Fall to other phenomena as well. After the expulsion of Adam from paradise, the poet explains:

54 "For with that immense fire that will appear at Christ's Coming, this world will be utterly renewed, and also the sun and moon will indeed be seven times brighter than they are now, so books tell us."

55 "And likewise the sun and truly the moon were deprived of their pleasing brightness after Adam's offence, not because of their own deeds. The sun was then brighter by sevenfold before the man sinned, and the moon had the brightness of the sun, just as it [the sun] shines on us now. However, after Doomsday, they will have their full brightness with which they were created, and the moon will not grow old after that day but will be shining undiminished, just as the sun does now."

56 "On Sunday there shall be a renewal of every element in a form fairer and better than at present, as they were made at the first Creation, when the stars of Heaven will be as the moon, and the moon as the sun, and the sun as the light of seven summer days, as it was in the first sun's light, even before Adam's sin." The *De ordine creaturarum* was first proposed as a source for this passage by Whitelock 1982, 64.

32. Seachtmhadh a solsi i ngren nglain,
ise [a]nni ro-fás de sin,
seachtmhadh a theasa maille,
craebh dhorcha dhar gnuis esgi.
33. Sechtmhadh toraidh for fidh
ised ro-fás don mhoirchin,
seachtmhadh a bindi i nguth gle,
sechtmhadh a nirt in nirt in duine.
34. Sechtmadh ndelbhi for duine.
uii[m]adh balaidh for luibhe,
secht[m]adh bhlais for toradh dhe,
uii[m]ad toraidh i fairrge (Carney 1969, 154-55).[57]

The third book of Honorius's *Elucidarium*, written in England shortly before the year 1100, consists of a dialogue between a *magister* and *discipulus* on matters of fundamental Christian doctrine, especially of an eschatological nature. It features an elaborate account of Antichrist, the general resurrection, Judgement Day, and eternal beatitude. At one point the *discipulus* asks his *magister* what will happen to the earth after Judgement is rendered and whether it will be destroyed. The *magister* replies:

> Faciet Dominus *caelum novum et terram novam* [cf. Isa. 65:17]. Denique caelum, sol, luna, stellae, aquae, quae nunc festinant cursu irretardabili quasi cupientes in meliorem statum immutari, tunc fixa stabiliter manebunt et quieta et immutabili glorificatione immutata. Nam caelum gloriam solis induet; sol septempliciter plus quam nunc lucebit, ut dicitur: *Sol habebit lumen septem dierum* [cf. Isa. 30:26]. Luna et stellae vestientur ineffabili splendore (Lefèvre 1954, 462-63).[58]

57 "(32) One seventh of its light in the clear sun, that is what developed from that, together with one seventh of its heat, a dark branch over the face of the moon. (33) One seventh of fruit on a tree, that is what resulted from the great sin, one seventh of its sweetness in a clear voice, one seventh of his strength in man. (34) One seventh of shapeliness on man, one seventh of fragrance in plants, one seventh of savour in fruit from it (the transgression): one seventh of produce in the sea" (Carney 1969, 161). Carney dates the poem "not very distant from the year 1000" (1969, 149).

58 "The Lord will make a new heaven and a new earth. And then heaven, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the waters that now hasten on their unstoppable course as if yearning to be altered to a better state, shall then remain permanently fixed and at rest and shall be transformed by their immutable glorification. For heaven will assume the glory of the sun; the sun will shine seven times brighter than it does now, as it is said: The sun will have the light of seven days. The moon and the stars will be adorned with ineffable splendour."

The *discipulus* then asks *At dic qualia corpora habebunt sancti*? To which the *magister* replies: *Septies quam sol splendidiora et prae animo agiliora* (Lefèvre 1954, 463).[59]

The transformation of the sun and moon and even the planets and stars is also described in the Middle English *Pricke of Conscience*:

> Þan sal alle þe werld, in alle partys
> Seme als it war a paradys.
> Þe planetes and þe sternes ilkane
> Sal shyne brighter þan ever þai shane;
> Þe son sal be, als som clerkes demes,
> Seven sythe brighter þan it now semes,
> For it sal be als bright als it first was,
> Byfor ar Adam did trespas.
> Þe mone sal be als bright and clere,
> Als þe son es now þat shynes here
> (Hanna and Wood 2013, 175, ll. 6351-60).[60]

Other examples of this idea could be cited as well,[61] but one further permutation of the sevenfold motif and several radical reformulations deserve attention before I attempt to draw some conclusions.

5. In the interim paradise the sun shines seven times brighter than it does here on earth

This permutation involving a relocation of the "seven times brighter than the sun" motif to a paradisal context occurs, so far as I know, only in Old English and Old Norse. It appears in both versions of the English *Prose Phoenix* and in their Norse counterpart, which is thought to be based on a lost Old English version, all deriving from a lost Latin original of English

59 "But tell me what kind of bodies the saints will have? Seven times brighter than the sun and swifter than the soul."

60 As Hanna and Wood note in their commentary to these lines (2013, 341), the "detail that the sun will shine seven times brighter than now" is taken from Hugh Ripelin of Strasbourg's *Compendium theologicae veritatis* VII.28.

61 For example, in the *Revelatio Matthaei (prima) de novissimis*, a rare Latin apocalyptic text which Stephen Pelle suspects may have been written between the eighth and thirteenth centuries (2019, 132, 135), we are told that following the reign of Antichrist, *Tunc sol sepcies fulgebit clarius quam ante solebat* ("Then the sun will shine seven times brighter than it used to"). A search of the phrase *sol septempliciter lucebit* in the online database *Corpus Corporum: Repositorium operum Latinorum apud universitatem Turicensem* (<http://www.mlat.uzh.ch/MLS/>) yielded 21 hits in the writings of authors from the eighth to the fourteenth century, all discussing the restoration of the sun's sevenfold light at the end of time (accessed 15 September 2021).

origin, itself based on the Latin poem *De phoenice* attributed to Lactantius.[62] The eleventh-century English text in CCCC 198 (Cameron B3.4.17.1) explains that: *Paradisus is uprihte on eastewearde ðysse worulde. Nis þær ne hete ne hungor, ne þær niht næfre ne cymeð, ac a simble dæg. Sunne þær scineð seofen siðe brihtlycor ðone her deð* (Cook 1919, 129, ll. 20-22).[63] The parallel passage in London, BL, Cotton Vespasian D. xiv (Cameron B3.4.17.2) reads: *Neorxenewange is upprihte on eastewearde þisse wurlde. Nis þær ne hete ne hunger; ne þær niht nefre ne byð, ac simble dæig. Sunne þær scineð seofen siðe brihtlycor þone on þissen earde* (Warner 1917, 146, l. 33-147, l. 1).[64] The Norse version reads: *Þar* [in Paradise] *er hvorki hatr ne hungr, ok alldri er þar nott ne myrkr, helldr er hinn sami dagr avallt, ok skinn sol þar vii hlutum biartari en i þessum heim, þviat þar kemr vid aull birti himintungla* (Kålund 1908, 4, ll. 14-18).[65] In all three cases, paradise is located neither in heaven nor on earth but somewhere in the east between heaven and earth, forty fathoms higher than the height of Noah's flood. Ananya Kabir has interpreted this peculiar location of paradise as "an attempt to mediate between the usual celestial location of the interim paradise, and the terrestrial location of the phoenix's abode" and as an eclectic amalgam of borrowings from multiple traditions, including the *locus amoenus* and the "green landscapes of Old English poetry" (Kabir 2001, 173, 175). As we see here, that impulse to adapt and modify eschatological convention extends as well to the relocation of the sevenfold brightness of the sun from heaven at the end of time to the interim paradise.

6. some further permutations

To sum up thus far, what we find is a loose configuration of eschatological motifs which share a common rhetorical structure built around the image of something shining seven times brighter than something else (usually but not always the sun) but which demonstrate an impressive degree of malleability and susceptibility to reformulation. The adaptability of the

62 The scholarship is summarized by Frankis, who argues that "the ON text that underlies the extant [Norse] versions was translated from an OE original in England" (2016, 81-90, quotation at 83-84).

63 "Paradise is directly overhead in the eastern part of this world. There is neither hatred nor hunger there, nor does night ever come there, but always eternal day. There the sun shines seven times brighter than it does here."

64 "Paradise is directly overhead in the eastern part of this world. There is neither hatred nor hunger there, nor is there ever night, but eternal day. The sun shines seven times brighter than it does here."

65 "There [in Paradise] there is never hatred nor hunger, and night does not darken, rather it is always day, and the sun shines there seven times brighter than in this world, because it comes there with all the brightness of the stars of heaven." A second copy of this Old Norse version of the *Prose Phoenix* (in AM 764 4to) is unedited: see Frankis 2016, 82.

motif seems to have encouraged experimentation, and it should not surprise us that additional permutations can still be discovered. To illustrate the open-endedness of this form, I here call attention to several additional examples that don't quite fit into the categories surveyed thus far, either because some other number is substituted for the number seven or because the motif is applied to a new and unusual context.

I begin with the unique Latin fragment of the apocryphal *1 Enoch* 106 printed by M.R. James from London, BL, Royal 5. E. XIII (*s.* ix, Brittany, provenance Worcester by *s.* x), in which Lamech and his wife give birth to a son, Noah, whose appearance is so striking and unusual that Lamech first takes him to be an angel. Whereas the Ethiopic original says that the boy's eyes "glowed like the sun" and his hair was "as white as wool," the Latin fragment – and apparently *only* the Latin fragment – declares twice that his *oculi sunt sicut radi solis, capilli autem eius candidiores in septies niue* (James 1893, 148).[66]

A passage from the fragmentary apocalypse of the first century BC or first or second century AD known as the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* (*CANT* 345) is quoted by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* V.xi.77, who says that in the *Apocalypse*, the prophet Zephaniah was transported to the fifth heaven: "And I saw angels who are called 'lords,' and the diadem was set upon them in the Holy Spirit, and the throne of each of them was sevenfold more (brilliant) than the light of the rising sun" (Wintermute [1983-85] 2011, I, 508).[67]

One of the Thanksgiving Hymns from Cave 1 at Qumran, *1QHodayot*[a] 15:23-24, includes the pious declaration: "You, my God, have saved my life, and lifted my horn up high. I am radiant with sevenfold light, in the light which you prepared for your glory" (García Martínez and Tigchelaar 1999, 179).

In the *Questions of Bartholomew* 4:57 (*BHG* 228; *CANT* 63), Satan recounts his fall to the apostle Bartholomew, explaining that when he and his fellow angels were cast out of heaven, they lay upon the earth senseless for forty years, until Satan finally awoke "when the sun shone forth seven times brighter than fire" (Elliott [1993] 2009, 665).

In the Coptic Gnostic *Apocalypse of Paul* V.xxii.27-30 (*CANT* 323), an early (second-century?) text from Nag Hammadi not related to the Greek apocalypse by the same name, the apostle Paul ascends through multiple heavens until he encounters a hostile figure in the seventh heaven identified only as an "old man" seated on a throne, and "[His throne], which is in the seventh

66 "[Noah's] eyes are like the rays of the sun, and his hair seven times whiter than snow." Compare the English translation of the corresponding passage in the Ethiopic *1 Enoch* 106 by Isaac [1983-85] 2011, I, 86. The passage recalls Rev. 1:14: *caput autem eius et capilli erant candidi tamquam lana alba tamquam nix, et oculi eius velut flamma ignis* ("and his head and his hairs were white, as white wool and as snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire").

67 On this passage see James 1920, 72; Sparks 1984, 917; and Wright 2000, 156.

heaven, [was] brighter than the sun by [seven] times" (MacRae and Murdock [1977] 1988, 259).[68]

During his famous otherworldly tour in the Greek *Apocalypse of Paul* 21-22 (*BHG* 1460; *CANT* 325), the apostle Paul is escorted through various heavens by an angel until they cross the ocean that separates the heavens from earth and they encounter a great light that illuminates the land of promise:

> And suddenly I [St Paul] went out of heaven, and I understood that it is the light of heaven which lightens all the earth. For the land there is seven times brighter than silver. [...] And I looked around upon that land, and I saw a river flowing with milk and honey, and there were trees planted by the bank of that river, full of fruit; moreover, each single tree bore twelve fruits in the year, having various and diverse fruits; and I saw the created things which are in that place and all the work of God, and I saw there palms of twenty cubits, but others of ten cubits; and that land was seven times brighter than silver (Elliott [1993] 2009, 628-29).[69]

The Coptic *Book of the Resurrection of Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle* (*CANT* 80) tells how Bartholomew receives a vision of God in heaven and sees that "the thongs of the sandals which were on the feet of the Father shone brighter than the sun and the moon twice seven times" (Budge 1913, 197).

An apocryphal epistle known as the *Anaphora Pilati* (*BHG* 779xI-xII; *CANT* 50) which claims to have been written by Pontius Pilate to Caesar Augustus in Rome recounts the miracles performed by Christ and the wonders that occurred at his crucifixion. At the moment of Christ's death, Pilate explains, the world went dark, the moon turned to blood, the temple was swallowed up by the earth, the dead rose from their graves, "[a]nd on the evening of the first day of the week there was a sound out of the heaven, so that the heaven became enlightened sevenfold more than all the days" (Walker 1870, 226).

In the Greek apocryphal *Narrative of Joseph of Arimathea* (*BHG* 779r; *CANT* 76), Joseph requests the body of Christ from Pilate and lays it in his tomb. The next evening, the risen Christ then appears to Joseph along with the thief who had been crucified with him, here named Demas, who had

68 Kaler translates this damaged passage as: "[I saw] an old ma[n...] | [...] the light [...] | [...] white [...] | [...] in the seventh heaven, | [sh]ining [seven] times more than the sun" (2006, 24 and 189). He explains that "[a]lthough this section is lacunous, the association of brightness, whiteness and a light seven times that of the sun with the old man is clearly indebted to the portrayal of God in the apocalyptic tradition" (2006, 30).

69 See Silverstein and Hilhorst 1997, 116; Kabir 2001, 20-21; and Rosenstiehl 2014, 273.

been granted to visit the earthly paradise after his death. Demas gives Jesus a letter that had been written by the cherubim guarding paradise, and the letter describes the fear and awe of the cherubim at beholding the blinding light emanating from the nail marks in Demas's hands and feet:

> When we saw the mark of the nails on the robber that was crucified with you and the light of the letters of your Godhead, the fire [of the flaming sword with which the cherubim were guarding paradise] was quenched, being unable to bear the light of the mark, and we were in great fear and crouched down. For we heard that the maker of heaven and earth and all creation had come to dwell in the lower parts of the earth for the sake of Adam the first-created. For we beheld the spotless cross, with the robber flashing with light and shining with seven times the light of the sun, and trembling came on us (Elliott [1993] 2009, 221).

The medieval Armenian *Questions of St Gregory* includes a dialogue between St Gregory and an angel, who explains the process of conveying a righteous soul to heaven after death, a process that involves leading the soul upwards along seven steps to the supernal Jerusalem. At the fifth step the soul "shines with God's light." At the sixth "the righteous one shines seven-fold more than the sun." Upon reaching the throne of God "the righteous is more resplendant than the sun" and is "adorned with Adamic light" (Stone 2018, 163, 165).

The ninth- or tenth-century Georgian *Life of St Nino* (*BHO* 811) provides an account of the missionary St Nino who converted the pagan Queen Nana and King Mirian III of Iberia to Christianity in the early fourth century. After the Iberians are baptised, a miraculous tree is discovered that gives off a sweet-smelling perfume and remains green and flourishing long after it is cut down. St Nino has a cross fashioned from this tree and sets it upon a hill, where a series of miracles then occurs. As a pillar of light in the shape of a cross descends upon it, "[t]hey saw another wonder of the cross: how a fire stood upon it, seven times brighter than the sun. It rested there like a spark from a furnace, and the angels of God ascended and descended" (Wardrop 1903, 49).

In the tenth-century Byzantine *Life of St Andrew the Fool* by Nikephoros of Constantinople (*BHG* 1152), when the holy man St Andrew dies, his pupil Epiphanios witnesses his soul ascending to heaven:

> That night when the blessed man [St Andrew] passed away, just before daybreak, Epiphanios, standing on the balcony on the east side of his room, saw the soul of the holy man ascending

> towards the heights of the heavens, sending out a light seven times brighter than that of the sun, and gleaming divinely (Rydén 1995, II, 425).

A spurious account of the miracles performed by St Jerome on his deathbed (*BHL* 3867) written probably in the twelfth century tells that Jerome's death was accompanied by some remarkable celestial phenomena witnessed by the monks attending him. At the appointed hour, an incredible symphony fills the air about Jerome's house. Then: *Stupefacti illico omnes illi elevantes oculos, coelum totum, aethera et omnia quae eorum continentur ambitu, quadam viderunt luce septies solis luce praeclariore clarescere: ex qua omnia odorum aromata erumpebant*.[70]

In the Ethiopic *Vision of Mary*, Mary relates her visit to heaven and hell to John, the son of Zebedee, and a form of the sevenfold motif appears in her description of heaven five times:

> And then my Son showed me [the risen Mary] a white land, which shone seven times more brightly than the sun, and moon, and stars; and the whole of it was decorated with gold and silver. [...] And then He carried me onwards to that river, and He made me cross the river in a ship of gold, and He brought me into a house, which was white and was shining with a light which was seven times brighter than the light of the sun, moon, and stars. [...] and I saw there also a shining city whereof the brightness was seven times greater than that of the sun. [...] And when He had said these things He took me and carried me up to the Heavenly Jerusalem. And I saw there a sanctuary of light, and a pavilion of light, and a tent covered over with fire. And I saw there a man, and he shone with a light seven times brighter than that of the sun. And in his hand he held an instrument of music with strings and a lyre. [...] And then He took me up and carried me on to the city, and brought me to the City of God. And He showed me a shining city which was built in the form of the flower of a rose, whereof the boundary and the end [i.e. extent] and the riches cannot be known. And its splendour was seven times more than that of the heavens (Budge 1933, 258-65).

In its elaborate account of the geography of the land of punishments in hell, the Middle Irish *Vision of Adomnán* xlix explains that *Atá danó múr*

70 Pseudo-Augustine, *Epistola de magnificentiis beati Hieronymi* (PL 22, 286): "In that instant, they were all amazed and raising their eyes they saw the whole of heaven, the sky, and everything contained within their compass shining with a certain light seven times more brilliant than the light of the sun, from which all sorts of fragrant odours burst forth."

teined fri tir inna pian anall. Adúathmairiu 7 acairbiu é fo ṡecht oltas tir inna pían fession (Carey 2019, 100).[71]

The ninth- or tenth-century Book of Lismore recension of *The Evernew Tongue* is especially remarkable for combining hyperbolic formulations of permutations 2, 3, and 4 together in a single sentence describing the brightness of Christ's face at Doomsday:

> Ata di etrachtu 7 ane 7 soilse a gnuisi, in tan astoidet .ix. ngraid nimhe, 7 bas etrachta cach aingel dib fo shect oldas in grian, 7 as-toidet anmann inna noeb fon n-oincosmailius, 7 in tan bas giliu in grian fo .uii. oldaas innossa, soillsighfid tairsib-sin uile etrachta gnuisi ind Righ mair ro gni cach nduil, co foruaisligder aingle 7 renna nime 7 anmand inna noeb soilse in Coimded, ocus amal foruaisliges soilsi gréne 7 a hetrachta renda aili (Carey 2009, 221).[72]

An early Middle English sermon on the Lord's Day (Lambeth Homily xiv) declares Sunday to be seven times brighter than the sun:

> Muchel man ach to wurþen þis halie dei þat is sunnen dei icleoped. for hit is godes agen dei. All oðer dages of þe wike beoð to þreldome to þis dei. þis dei is þet halie dei, þet blescede dei, þe blisfulle dei, þe murie dei, þe dei seouensiþe brictere þene þe sunne, þe formeste dei þet eauer giete was isegen buuen eorðe (Morris [1868] 1988, 138).[73]

71 "There is, then, a wall of fire over against the land of punishments on the far side. It is seven times more horrible and more harsh than the land of punishments itself" (Carey 2019, 101).

72 "Such is the radiance and splendour and brilliance of his face that when the nine heavenly orders shine forth, and every angel of them is seven times brighter than the sun; and when the souls of the saints shine forth with the same semblance; and when the sun is seven times brighter than it is now — the radiance of the face of the great King who made every created thing will outshine them all, so that the brightness of the Lord will surpass the angels and the stars of heaven and the souls of the saints just as the sun's brightness and radiance surpass the other stars" (Carey 2009, 223). Earlier in the Lismore recension there are two further permutations of this motif. The first occurs on Easter eve when at the blinding appearance of the apostle Philip on the summit of Mount Zion, "That bright sunlike blaze was turning upon itself too fast for the eye to follow; for it was seven times brighter than the sun" (2009, 109). The second comes in the description of the icy cold third heaven, which is "seven times colder than snow" (2009, 133). This latter detail is also preserved in the second recension (Nic Énri and Mac Niocaill 1971, 18-19). The Lismore recension also declares that if the risen Christ were to make known the full extent of his wrath, the torments in hell "would be seven times worse than they are; for it is the wrath of God that seethes in the hells" (Carey 2009, 219). The version in Rennes, Bibliothèque Municipale, 598/15489 includes the apparently unique detail that the stream of torments on the island of punishments "is seven times hotter than fire" (Carey 2009, 303).

73 "Greatly ought we to honour this holy day that is called Sunday, for it is God's own day. All other days of the week are subservient to this day. This day is the holy day, the blessed

The Christmas sermon in the Old Norwegian Homily Book, from the first quarter of the twelfth century, describes the billowing fires of hell as seven times hotter than the hottest fire on earth: *Ok þæim er ætlat hælviti með dioflum, þar er óp ok gratr ok hungr ok þorste ok svælgiande ældr .vii. lutum hæitare en á veroldo mege hinn hæitasta gera* (Indrebø [1931] 1966, 33, l. 34 – 34, l. 1).[74]

The Irish *Airdena inna Cóic Lá nDéc ria mBráth* (*The Fifteen Tokens of Doomsday*) explains that:

> Oir ceithri teinnti fil ann 7 secht tes gach teinedh dibh naroili,
> amal isbert aroile ecnaidhi .i. teine talman 7 teine gealain 7 teine
> bratha 7 teine ifrind.
> Secht tes teinedh talman tais
> a[n] teine ghealain gealbrais,
> secht tes teinedh bratha brais
> a[n] teine ifrinn amhnais (Stokes 1907, 314).[75]

According to the eleventh-century Old Bulgarian *Narration of the Holy Prophet Isaiah about the Years to Come and the Kings and the Antichrist*, at the end of time God will send Enoch and Elijah to fight Antichrist. He will then set the earth on fire and will send four great winds to scatter the dust: "And the earth will become flat like paper and more beautiful than this world and seven times whiter" (Tăpkova-Zaimova and Miltenova 2011, 214).[76]

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day, the blissful day, the pleasant day, the day seven times brighter than the sun, the first day that ever yet was seen on earth" (Morris [1868] 1988, 139). In his unpublished 2012 study "An Edition of the Latin Source of Lambeth Homily XIV," Stephen Pelle identifies the Latin source of this homily, which also declares Sunday to be seven times brighter than the sun (*dies splendidior sole septies*), as well as a Middle High German sermon that does likewise (*Der suntak ist* [...] *Schoner wen dy sunne sebenstunt*).

74 "And for them is intended hell-torment among the demons, where there is weeping and lamentation and hunger and thirst and consuming flame seven times hotter than the hottest [fire one] can generate on earth." David Johnson discusses this passage as a rare Old Norse example of a numerically based 'Horrors of Hell' motif which he has otherwise found exclusively in early English and Irish literature (1993, 427). Compare the Old English sermon *Be heofonwarum and be helwarum* (Cameron B3.2.5), which warns that hellfire is nine times hotter than the fire of Doomsday: *nigon syþan hattre þonne domes dægges fyr* (Teresi 2002, 228, ll. 55-56). Wright suggests that this detail probably "derives from the Gnostic sources of the Seven Heavens apocryphon," citing a passage from the Gnostic apocryphon *Pistis Sophia*, where "the fire of Amenti is nine times hotter than the earthly fire; the fire in the great Chaos is nine times hotter than in Amenti; the fire in the judgments of the rulers who are in the way of the midst is nine times hotter than that in the great Chaos; and, finally, the fire in the dragon of outer darkness is seventy times hotter than the fire of the rulers" (1993, 220).

75 "For there are four fires there, and seven (times greater is) the heat of each of them than (that of) another: as said a certain sage, namely, fire of earth, fire of lightning, fire of Doom, and fire of Hell: 'Seven (times greater than) the heat of the fire of the soft earth (is) the fire of bright-quick lightning. Seven (times greater than) the heat of the fire of ready Doom (is) the fire of cruel Hell'" (Stokes 1907, 315).

76 An Old Church Slavonic version of this text that includes precisely this same statement is printed (in German translation) by Petkov 2016, 421.

The Old English sermon in the margins of CCCC 41 (this part *s.* xi[1]–xi[*med*], probably S. England, provenance Exeter by *s.* xi[3/4]) that combines a translation of the *Apocalypse of Thomas* and the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* (Cameron B3.4.12.1-3) declares that at Creation the sun shone a hundred times brighter than it does now and that at the end of time the saints in heaven will shine brighter than the sun:

> Ac þær on-foð ða halegan þem fægeran wuldor-beacne þæs ecan rices. 7 þonne scinað fægrur, þonne sunne æfre dyde oððe þa dyde, þa hio beorhtost wæs, þæt wæs, þa hio ærest ge-worht wæs. Ða hio wæs hundteontegum siðum beorhtre þonne hio nu sie. Ac hio of-teah hire leoman 7 leohtes þriddan dæles, ða se Scippend ealles middan-geardes on rode hangude, þæs leohtes 7 þæs leoman 7 þære fægernisse (Förster 1955, 18-19).[77]

According to Epiphanius of Salamis's *Panarion* XLVIII.x.3, the second-century prophet Montanus is reputed to have taught that at the end of time "the righteous shall shine a hundredfold brighter than the sun; and the least of you that are saved, an hundredfold brighter than the moon" (Williams 1994, 15).

The ninth-century Coptic *Martyrdom of Paêsi and Thekla* tells how an angel carried the holy Paêsi aloft into heaven and showed him "the city of the pure ones, which was of gold and precious stones, shining more than the sun a thousand times" (Evelyn-White 1926, 118). Similarly, the Coptic *Encomium of St Michael the Archangel* by Eustathius of Trake (*BHO* 765) features a scene in which the Devil, disguised as an archangel, appears to Euphemia, wife of the governor Aristarchus, and tells her: "I have come from God Almighty, and I have seen that the prayers which thou hast made this day have come up before God and they are a thousand times brighter than the sun" (Budge 1894, 92*).

A couple of early Coptic texts employ the number ten thousand rather than seven (or a hundred or a thousand) in describing an image that is brighter than the sun, possibly under the influence of Sir. 23:19: "the eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun" (Metzger 1977, 158). First, the Coptic *Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin* (*BHO* 671; *CANT* 135 copt.; *CPG* 7153) by Archbishop Theodosius of Alexandria († 566 or 567) reports that after the death of Jesus, the apostles Peter and John visit the Virgin Mary one day and find her looking very sad. When asked what is

77 "But there [in the heavenly Jerusalem] the saints will receive that beautiful crown of glory of the eternal kingdom, and then they will shine more beautifully than the sun ever did or than it did when it was at its brightest, which was when it was first created, when it was a hundred times brighter than it is now. But it withdrew a third part of its radiance and light when the Creator of the entire world hung on the Cross — [a third] of the light and radiance and beauty."

troubling her, she replies: "It happened to me this night that when I had ceased making my little office, I slumbered for a little while; and I saw a beautiful youth about thirty years of age, ten thousand times brighter than the sun" (Robinson 1896, 93-95). The beautiful youth is of course the risen Christ.[78]

On the other hand, in the Coptic *Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin* attributed to Evodius of Rome (*BHO* 666; *CANT* 134 copt.) it is not Christ but Mary who is associated with this image. After Mary's death, Christ appears to his mourning disciples and sends for Mary to return from heaven to comfort them. The disciples declare: "Straightaway we looked, and saw a great chariot of light. It came and stayed in our midst, Cherubim drawing it, the holy Virgin Mary sitting upon it, and shining ten thousand times more than the sun and the moon" (Robinson 1896, 64).[79]

And a passage from the *Prose Solomon and Saturn Pater Noster Dialogue* that has been characterized as one of "the most fantastic descriptive passages in all of Old English literature" (Wright 1993, 249) raises the multiplying number to twelve thousand in its description of the eyes of the Pater Noster:

> Ond his [the Pater Noster's] eagan sindon .xii. ðusendum siða beorhtran ðonne ealles middangeardes eorðe, ðeah ðe hio sie mid ðæra beorhtestan lilian blostmum ofbræded, ond æghwylc blostman leaf hæbbe .xii. sunnan, ond æghwylc blostma hæbbe .xii. monan, ond æghwylc mona sie sinderlice .xii. ðusendum siða beorhtra ðonne he ieo wæs ær Abeles slege (Anlezark 2009, 74, ll. 56-61).[80]

7. CONCLUSIONS

The concept of a light seven times brighter than the sun is at least as old as the biblical book of Isaiah, which includes the prophecy that "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days" (Isa. 30:26). This verse is echoed in the "sevenfold light" of one of the Thanksgiving Hymns of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and it was likely the inspiration for the scenes in the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Epistle of the Apostles* where Christ appears at Doomsday

78 This sermon is edited with a French translation by Chaîne 1933-34. See the discussions by Bellet 1951 and Shoemaker 2002, 62.

79 On the date of this text (pre-mid-sixth century?) and its relation to other Coptic homilies on the Dormition, see Shoemaker 1999 and 2002, 60. Shoemaker's 1999 English translation is reproduced in Shoemaker 2002, 397-407.

80 "And his eyes are twelve thousand times brighter than all the orb of middle-earth – even if it were spread over with the brightest lily blossoms, and each blossom's leaf have twelve suns, and each blossom have twelve moons, and each moon be individually twelve thousand times brighter than it was before Abel's murder" (Anlezark 2009, 75).

shining seven times brighter than the sun (Permutation 2). That verse from Isaiah was also the ultimate inspiration for the scene in the sixth-century Greek R Recension of the *Transitus Mariae* in which the soul of the Virgin Mary ascends to heaven shining seven times brighter than the sun, and this *Transitus* text in turn (I would conjecture) is the probable origin of the image in the Latin and Old English Three Utterances exempla in which a blessed soul parts from its body shining seven times brighter than the sun (Permutation 1). The parting-of-the-soul scene in the Three Utterances exempla introduces a clever new twist to the sevenfold image by pairing it with a negative counterpart to yield the image of a damned soul seven times blacker than a raven and by grafting both of these images onto a scene of individual judgement taken ultimately from the *Visio Pauli*. As a number-based construct, the Three Utterances episode in Luiselli Fadda i can be understood as a double double triad (three utterances each by a good and bad soul mirrored by three utterances each by a good and bad angel) accompanied by a double inverse sevenfold amplification (seven times brighter juxtaposing seven times blacker) that takes place at the doubling of the individual into body and soul at death.

The family of Greek *Transitus* apocrypha represented by the R Recension and John of Thessalonica's sermon on the Dormition lies behind all the medieval Latin *Transitus* apocrypha, but a recension of the Latin *Transitus* best known in early medieval England (Recension W) substitutes "seven times whiter than snow" for "seven times brighter than the sun," and this image (I would again conjecture) is the origin of the image of the soul of St Vitus in the *Old English Martyrology* ascending to heaven seven times whiter than snow.

Meanwhile the depiction of the bodies of the blessed at Doomsday shining seven times brighter than the sun in the *Catechesis Celtica* and elsewhere (Permutation 3) is arguably modeled on Christ's appearance at Doomsday shining seven times brighter than the sun in Permutation 2, which would put the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Epistle of the Apostles* in the background of both of these permutations, both set at Doomsday.

The enormously influential idea that at Creation the sun was seven times brighter than it is now and that at Doomsday it will be restored to its original sevenfold brightness (Permutation 4) owes its popularity in large measure to the seventh-century Hiberno-Latin *De ordine creaturarum*, a synthesis of early medieval theology, cosmology, eschatology, natural science, and Platonic teachings concerning the animation of the heavens that was well known in England from the time of Bede onward. It is repeated in several Old English and Anglo-Latin texts including Bede's apocalyptic hymn *De Enoch et Haeliae*, the *Old English Martyrology*, Byrhtferth's commentary on Bede's *De temporum ratione*, three homilies by Ælfric, Honorius's *Elucidarium*, and Irvine Homily vi. Of all the permutations under discussion here, this one

appears to have had the greatest impact on medieval eschatology generally and was even acknowledged, albeit with scepticism, by Aquinas.

Permutations 1-4 are all situated either at the moment of an individual's death or at (Creation and) Doomsday and are concerned with questions of eschatological time. By contrast, the relatively rare notion that in the interim paradise, located far in the east way up in the sky, the sun shines seven times brighter than it does here on earth (Permutation 5) is implicitly placed between death and universal Judgement and is presented as a curiosity of otherworldly geographical lore. This idea appears to have originated in England and survives only in Old English and Old Norse. Its ultimate inspiration is again Isa. 30:26, but by the eleventh century, when the earliest Old English prose *Phoenix* text was written, literary references to something shining seven times brighter than something else were so varied and widespread in apocrypha, sermons, saints' lives, poems, and cosmological treatises that pinning down a specific immediate source or influence may not be possible.

In fact, the claims I have made so far about the individual histories of these images are in some cases probably grossly oversimplified since they don't take into account the incalculable number of lost or undiscovered ancient and medieval texts that incorporate some version of a sevenfold motif and that may have played a role in transmitting and reshaping it. My claims are also probably grossly oversimplified in that they presume direct lines of transmission and inheritance from one specific text to another, whereas there is no reason not to think that some are products of *sui generis* invention. I've claimed, for example, that the image of the soul of St Vitus ascending to heaven seven times whiter than snow in the *Old English Martyrology* is likely indebted to the W Recension of the *Transitus Mariae*, which says exactly the same thing about the soul of the Virgin Mary. But a writer of some imagination who was familiar with eschatological conventions could easily yoke together the commonplace image of a blessed soul as white as snow with the fluid concept of something shining seven times brighter than something else and arrive at the same result.

A distinction worth making here is that while what I have been referring to loosely as 'the sevenfold motif' is a numerical formulation, a motif based on number, it is not an enumerative one since it doesn't enumerate or list anything. The formal structure of enumerative motifs such as the Three Hosts of Doomsday (heaven-dwellers, earth-dwellers, and hell-dwellers) or the Seven Joys of Heaven (life without death, youth without old age, light without darkness, joy without sorrow, peace without discord, free will without injury, and a kingdom without change, or a comparable sequence) requires consistency in number and a list or enumeration of constituent elements (which need not be consistent in content from one attestation of the motif to the next). The sevenfold motif requires only a subject multiplied by a factor of seven, a comparative quality such as brightness or whiteness, and

a thing to which the subject is compared, but beyond that it has no further restrictions or requirements. A dominant subset of the sevenfold motif, inspired ultimately by Isa. 30:26, involves something shining seven times brighter than the sun, but the open-ended form allows anything to be the subject multiplied by seven and anything to serve as the comparandum. This is why in the examples cited above under "Further Permutations" there are subjects as diverse as the thrones of angels, the thongs of God's sandals, the souls of the righteous, the nail marks in the hands and feet of the thief crucified with Christ, the ascending soul of St Andrew the Fool, heaven itself, and even Sunday which are all said to shine seven times brighter than the sun. It is also why we find examples in which the hair of the infant Noah is seven times whiter than snow, the sun shines seven times brighter than fire, the fires of hell are seven times hotter than the hottest fires on earth, the icy cold third heaven is seven times colder than snow, and one of the celestial realms toured by St Paul is seven times brighter than silver. The formula is infinitely flexible and adaptable. It also conveys authority because it preserves an element of biblical diction, and this combination of adaptability and an aura of biblical authority goes far towards explaining the long life and frequent occurrence of this extended family of motifs, which in their various permutations exercised such a prominent role in medieval eschatology.[81]

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ÞÆR BIÐ ÆFRE ECE FYR AND UNDEADLIC WYRM. THE WORM OF HELL IN ÆLFRIC'S CORPUS

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0. introduction

From classical antiquity to Christian and Germanic tradition, the fear of being eaten by beasts played a crucial role in the shaping of cultures and beliefs, holding great importance in folklore, religion and mythology as well. Within this context, worms that feast on human flesh become an ever-present preoccupation in the Middle Ages, and their long literary life most likely goes back to the pre-Christian period. Such is the fear of these animals that, while often associated with decay and with the pain inflicted as judgement upon the unrighteous, worms come to play a relevant role in apocalyptic visions of infernal punishment as well (Di Sciacca 2019, 53-64; Ogden 2013; Pluskowski 2003; Robinson 2021, 383-85; Salisbury [1994] 2011, 55-57).

Early medieval England inherits much of the aversion with which worms had been viewed and features ravenous crawling beings that are generally associated with evil, becoming a trope in soul-and-body literature (Momma 2019; Thompson [2002] 2012, 137-43). The OE word used to describe such creatures is *wyrm*, which occurs approximately 513 times in the extant corpus[1], and which covers the widest range of meanings, from insects and worms proper to dragons, snakes and other reptilian-form venomous beasts (Momma 2016, 200-04).[2] The word is featured in the corpus of Ælfric of

1 The number includes all occurrences of the word in the DOEC, both as a simplex and in compounds.

2 The reason behind such polysemy may lie in the etymology of the word (Jente 1921, 135; Pokorny 1959, 1152).

Eynsham: drawing upon medieval priestly tradition, serpentine beasts and creeping *animalia* become part of his evocations of hell. In particular, Ælfric relies on the scriptural motifs of the immortal worm devouring the bodies of impenitent sinners and the unquenchable fire so as to depict his own vision of judgement and retribution.

This paper proposes to illustrate how Ælfric avails himself of motifs which are commonly used in descriptions of hell and death and how he exposes his eschatological concerns by means of *fyr* and *wyrm*, the latter being continually linked to the condition of the body and the soul before and after Judgement (Thompson [2002] 2012, 132). Giving a brief overview of the use of *wyrm* within Ælfric's corpus, special emphasis will be on how the word is employed when he engages with descriptions of divine judgement. The discussion will then focus on three works where Ælfric's imagery of hell includes both the worm and the fire, namely the *Homily for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany* (CH I. 8), the homily *On Auguries* (LS 17), and the *Passion of St Julian and his wife Basilissa* (LS 4; Upchurch 2007, 54-71). These compositions are the only ones in his corpus where the eternal fire joins the immortal worm in the depiction of the infernal industry. Moreover, they show how Ælfric's need to warn his audience about the coming Judgement may well feature both the Worm of hell and the maggots devouring the flesh, which his hearers and readers would certainly know from everyday life.

1. Ælfric's *wyrm*-motifs

As Thornbury notes, Ælfric certainly studied animals, gathering information from a variety of sources (2008, 152). His *Glossary* has two entries related to *wyrm* (Zupitza 1880, 309-10): on the one hand, the word appears as *interpretamentum* of Lat. *uermis* "worm"; on the other hand, OE *slawyrm* is the *interpretamentum* for Lat. *stellio* "newt". As for the meaning of 'serpent', the *Glossary* presents us with OE *snaca* (Lat. *coluber*) and *næddre* (Lat. *vipera, anguis, serpens*) (Zupitza 1880, 310), the latter used as a synonym for *wyrm* in Ælfric's works. For example, both *næddre* and *wyrm* designate the Genesis Serpent in Ælfric's *Alcuini Interrogationes Sigeuulfi in Genesin*, where it is said that the devil would speak through the animal in order to deceive humanity (Mac Lean [1883] 1884, 35, ll. 218-23).

Ælfric is aware of the role played by God in the creation of reptiles and crawling creatures in general, therefore they cannot be exclusively negative.[3] Nevertheless, the association of *wyrm* (or *wyrmcynn*, lit. "worm-kind")

3 On God creating *wyrmcynn*, see *The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ* (LS 1, ll. 49-61) or *De Temporibus Anni* (Henel [1942] 1970, l. 14). On positive connotations of serpents, see *De Populo Israhel* (SH II 21, l. 329).

with evil is evident in much of his production: the homily for the *Feast of the Lord's Circumcision* mentions *wyrmcynn* among the monstrous beasts created as punishment of evil deeds (CH I. 6, l. 178), and *On the Greater Litany* explores the symbolical overtones of *næddre* and *wyrm* (here "scorpion"), both threatening the faith of men (CH I. 18, ll. 122-35). While the *Decollation of St John the Baptist* claims that no *wyrmcynn* or *draca* ("dragon") is worse than an evil and loquacious woman (CH I. 32, ll. 172-86), the *Deposition of St Martin Bishop* has the holy man healing a boy bitten by an adder (CH II. 39, l. 245). Ælfric recounts the episode also in his *Lives of Saints*, where he deals with Martin's *vita* in a much more extensive way (LS 31, ll. 949-64).[4] In both cases anyway, the serpent is (again) rendered as both *næddre* and *wurm* and it becomes a means to forge and test Martin's sanctity and steadfastness (Dendle 2001, 40-61; Momma 2016, 211). Herod dies *mid wyrmum fornumen* ("consumed by worms") because he has never given glory to God (CH II. 28, ll. 38-42); and being eaten alive by *wurmas* ("worms") is a fitting punishment for the emperor Antiochu (LS 25, ll. 544-46), who oppressed the Maccabees and defiled the temple by making offerings to idols. Thereby, the circumstances of Herod and Antiochu's death are most likely a foretaste of the infernal tortures, thus accounting for the symbolical association of worms and hell proper.

This association comes as no surprise: on the one hand, worms are the agents responsible for the physical destruction of the body after death; on the other hand, "many of the zoological examples which Ælfric uses are elucidations of the significance of animals in Biblical passages, and rely on this long tradition of animal symbolism" (Thornbury 2008, 145). Accordingly, *wyrm* often becomes a hellish symbol in his Lives and homilies, drawn on to intensify the horror of damnation and occasionally playing a significant role in nailing down his eschatological concerns (Scott 2019, 967; Thompson [2002] 2012, 137).

The English were deeply curious about matters which formally fall within the category of eschatology, and a great number of literary texts from pre-Conquest England address questions concerning the fate of the soul after death, the physical landscape of the otherworld, or the correct behaviour of the living in preparation for Doomsday (Hall 2005, 136-37). These topics are prominent not only in the OE preaching material but also in Latin theology of the post-patristic period. The reasons for such prominence lie in the Latin Fathers emphasising the eschatological urgency of the New Testament, and in them informing much of the early medieval speculation on the subject. Allusions to eschatological motifs can be found

4 This variation in length is in line with Ælfric's different attitude when dealing with Martin's life: as for the homily, he abridges the narrative and adapts it to his preaching purposes; conversely, he faithfully sticks to the sources while downplaying Martin's humility in the hagiography proper. On differences occurring between Ælfric's lives of Martin, see Ogawa 2011; Olsen 2004; and Szarmach 2003.

in different points of Ælfric's corpus, and the national deterioration at the end of the millennium inevitably heightens his sense of impending doom (Gatch 1977, 61-62, 79). Indeed, the late tenth and eleventh centuries did bring a deep crisis that affected all aspects of life in early medieval England: the Norsemen did show no signs of withdrawal and king Æthelred's attempt at restoring divine favour to his kingdom failed to stop an increase in Viking raids; corruption and political dissent made it clear that a change in politics was urgently needed; the famine of 1005 forced the raiders to move to the Continent but left the English in despair (Cubitt 2009; Roach 2016; Stenton [1971] 2002, 372-90; Williams 2003). Within this context, the need for sound teaching on the Last Judgement becomes an urgent one in Ælfric's theology: redemption is crucial in his programme of pastoral care, and dramatic descriptions of hell work as an exhortation to the audience to embrace right living and repent before either the individual or the final judgement (Wieland 2020, 93).[5]

2. The eschatology of the fire and the worm

As long as visions of heaven and hell are concerned, early medieval England had plenty of material to draw on: from the Bible and the apocrypha to ancient Germanic and classical mythology, it inherits diverse ideas about the nature of the otherworld (Hall 2005, 144; Wieland 2020). Of course, the threat of Hell is ever-present and images evoking its landscape become an effective preaching tool when addressing a large and partially unlearned audience, for they are both intelligible and memorable, and they allow people to picture eternal damnation in much clearer terms (Appleton 2021, 13-14, 22).

As Tristram puts it, infernal descriptions in OE literature are stereotyped, as authors avail themselves of recurrent patterns, stylistic formulae and motifs (1978, 102). Amidst these elements, the fire and the worm play an important role in the development of the doctrine of hell, and they become commonplaces in the representation of *post-mortem* punishments of impenitent sinners: the Jewish Gehenna consists of fire, brimstone, smoke and worms, while the *Apocalypse of Peter* features murderers tormented by venomous creatures and worms (Ethiopic 7:9-11; Greek 25). The fire and the worm punish the body physically and the soul psychologically in Gregory the Great's exposition, and they are traditionally associated with the subterranean location of hell along with ice and darkness. Moreover, both the motifs appear in Jth. 16:17, where they feature in the judgement of the wicked nations, and in Sir. 7:17 punishing the individual instead. The worm as an instrument of infernal torture builds on Isa. 66:24 reading *vermis*

5 On the approaching of the millennium and on Ælfric's views of the matter, see Cubitt 2015; Duncan 1999; Gatch 1977, 78-81; Godden 1994 and 2003; Szittya 1992.

eorum non morietur, et ignis eorum non estinguetur ("for their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched") – a verse which is then paralleled by Mark's statement in the New Testament, that is *in gehennam in ignem inextinguibilem ubi vermis eorum non moritur et ignis non extinguitur* ("into gehenna, where the fire never goes out, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched", Mark 9:42-43, 45, 48).[6]

The passage in Mark 9:43-50 clearly hints at eschatological expectations on the fate of the wicked, building upon Old Testament prophecies about divine judgement. Indeed, it includes "the first extant written use outside the Hebrew Scriptures of the word *gehenna* as a reference to the eschatological punishment of unrepentant sinners" (Papaioannou 2013, 28). In the Old Testament, *gehenna* was the valley where the Canaanites engaged in human sacrifice by fire (Kyrtatas 2009, 283; Rowell 1990, 319). For this reason, Jeremiah prophesies that God will turn it into a place of slaughter where the bodies of the apostates will be left unburied (Papaioannou 2013, 28-29). Desecrated by Josiah, the place becomes a garbage dump where the corpses of criminals are burnt together with trash. The New Testament converts *gehenna* into a metaphor for the everlasting punishment of the wicked in hell: quoting Isa. 66:24,[7] Mark 9:43-50 equates the valley with a place where the bodies of those who rebel against God are left unburied, exposed to the immortal worm and the unquenchable fire (Kyrtatas 2009, 284; Rowell 1990, 319). In this case, as well as in early medieval understanding, the biblical worm is not just an earthworm or common maggot easily associated with the grave, but "an assortment of beasts that swim, fly, and crawl" (Bernstein 2017, 74). Its mention alongside the *devouring* theme entails how the fear of being eaten by beasts was a common one in Christian thought, especially when it comes to damnation or images of eternal death as opposed to eternal salvation (Salisbury [1994] 2011, 56).

The nature of 'worm' accounts for the way the word features in the OE corpus and, more specifically, its occurrence in combination with the inextinguishable fire becomes part of an imagery which is integral to Ælfric's evocation of hell. His depictions of death and *post-mortem* punishment, while relying on a common set of motifs and compositional devices, reflect the growing preoccupation of the early medieval Church of England at the turn of the millennium with perdition and damnation awaiting sinners and heathens (Semple 2003, 231). In Ælfric's works, mankind will be divided according to present merits and this division will then influence the destiny of every individual in the afterlife (CH I. 27, ll. 177-92). Those who rejected God in life, or

6 For an overview on the role of the fire and the worm as motifs in hellish descriptions, see Bauckham 1998, 220-21; Bernstein 2017, 33-98; Himmelfarb [1983] 2016, 106-26; Finnegan [1977] 2006, 44; Fiocco 1993-94, 362.

7 Isa. 66 is intensely eschatological in nature: it describes the restoration of God's people in Jerusalem (66:8, 10, 13) and the fate of His enemies, whose bodies are left exposed after the battle with God, eaten by maggots and burned by fire (66:24).

who had no knowledge of Him at all, will be doomed to eternal suffering in hell, and from such condition there will be no release (CH I. 11, ll. 114-15). The fire constantly burns in the otherworld, though not consuming (LS 7, ll. 137-40), and sinners are grouped according to their wrongdoings (CH I. 8, ll. 190-94). Within this context, the immortal worm is unavoidably there in Ælfric's imagination, and in the imagination of his congregation and audience as they contemplate death and inferno.[8]

The three works here considered offer a chance to see how both the eternal fire and the devouring worm feature in Ælfric's economy of salvation: on the one hand, the motifs might have already been mentioned in his direct sources; on the other hand, associative memory should be taken into account when considering Ælfric's mode of composition, as well as the fact that such motifs are inevitably stepped in commonplace tradition. While Ælfric surely has access to many texts at the time of writing, some of the material he uses is drawn from memory of earlier readings (Cross 1972; Godden 2000, xlv; Hill 2016; Thomas 2017). Accordingly, the allusions to the fire and the worm could well be attributed to a biblically and patristically based tradition of hellish descriptions.

3. The *Homily for the Third Sunday after Epiphany* (CH I. 8)

Many of Ælfric's homilies suggest his awareness of "the imminence of Antichrist's coming and the end of the world, a context which required urgent and correct teaching" (Clayton [1991] 2013, 170). Moved to Cerne at the request of his lay patrons Æthelweard and Æthelmær[9], Ælfric realises that there is a significantly lower level of learning in small monastic communities and the secular church than in the great centres of Reform, such as he was accustomed to in Winchester. Consequently, he begins to compose his vernacular corpus in response. The initial completion of CH I and II belongs to this period (989x991/2) (Kleist 2019, 71-87), and the OE Preface to the First Series mentions how the new environment prompted him to provide material for pastoral preaching (CH I, OE Preface, 174-77, ll. 44-56).

An example of how Ælfric's responsibility of instructing his audience features the inevitable duty to teach people about heaven and hell can be found in the *Homily for the Third Sunday after Epiphany* (CH I. 8). Dealing with Jesus's early miracles (Godden 2000, 60; Olsen 2015, 203), this homily focuses on the Gospel reading for the occasion, namely Matt. 8:1-13, which is about the healing of the leper and the centurion's servant: the passage is translated and explained in detail and, in doing so, Ælfric is following

8 An overview of Ælfric's allusions to features of hell is to be found in Gatch 1977, 83-84.

9 Æthelmær, together with his father Æthelweard, was a strong supporter of the Reform. He ordered Ælfric's moving from Winchester to Cerne in an attempt to establish a small reformed monastery with land in his family's possession (Hill 2009, 52).

Haymo[10], though using the latter's homily 19 very selectively. Indeed, he adopts "his customary freedom" (Smetana 1959, 186) and combines material from different sources, making occasional use of Ps-Origen and Smaragdus, Augustine's *In Iohannis Euangelium tractatus CXXIV*[11] and Gregory's *Homilia in Evangelia* xxviii (Godden 2000, 61).[12]

At first, Ælfric expands on how Jesus heals the leper touching him with His hands (Matt. 8:1-4); then, he focuses on the centurion asking Jesus to heal his servant from a distance and on the Lord humbly agreeing to visit his house instead (Matt. 8:5-13). John's episode of the ruler's son follows (John 4:46-53) in order to draw a comparison with the Matthean passage: while Jesus agrees to come into the presence of the servant in Matthew, He heals the king's son with just a word in John. In some cases, Ælfric seems to value the allegorical reading of the passage more than the literal one, and while Jesus ends up standing for humility, those requesting the healing represent the centrality of faith to the Christian life (Godden 2000, 60-61; Olsen 2015, 195).[13]

Within this homily, an example of Ælfric's stress on allegorical interpretations of the Gospel pericope is the healing of the leper. Interestingly, he first recounts the story and then presents the leper as the symbol of the whole humanity struggling with the disease of sin, priestly absolution being the only way to gain salvation (ll. 40-44). As any ecclesiastical figure had the right to decide whether a leprous man could regain access to the community or not (Lev. 14), in the same way any priest should be able to *ascyrian, and amansumian fram cristenum mannum, þe sa hreoflig bið on manfullum þeawum þæt he oðre mid his yfelnysse besmit* (ll. 76-79).[14] Excommunication is here seen through the lenses of the Rule of Benedict and it points to the social implications of sin in the early Middle Ages. Indeed, l. 82 reads *[a]*

10 Within his homilies, Ælfric usually mentions the ultimate sources (namely, the Church Fathers) rather than their Frankish intermediaries (Paul the Deacon, Haymo and Smaragdus) so as to stress his participation in patristic orthodoxy. CH I. 8 (l. 11) and CH I. 34 (l. 155) are the only two occasions when he names Haymo, probably because the information could not be traced back to any antecedent source and he needed validation for what he was writing (Hill 1992, 205; Smetana 1961, 457).

11 Even though Godden includes CH I. 8 in the list of Ælfric's compositions related to the *Tractatus*, Hill states that he is making a comparison rather than claiming a source relationship, as it is difficult to imagine Ælfric would rely on Augustine's work concerning John 4:43-53 in this homily, which is on the day's lection of the Matthean passage (Godden 2000, xlviii; Hill 2013, 164-65).

12 Ælfric was concerned with the meaning behind liturgy and biblical accounts: he usually adapts scriptural stories to make them clearer to his audience. These adjustments include explanatory additions or interpretations proper (Bedingfield 1999).

13 Drawing on *Regula* 7, 51-54, Olsen claims that Jesus's willingness to engage with people of all stations and conditions in the healing episodes becomes a way to stress the importance of humility as a monastic value (Olsen 2015, 195-200).

14 "Separate, and excommunicate from Christian men the one so leprous in evil deeds that he will defile others with his evilness". Translations of the CH are adapted from Thorpe [1844-46] 2013.

fyrsiað þone yfelan fram eow, ðylæs ðe an wannhal scep ealle ða eowde besmite[15]: this is a reference to I Cor. 5:13 but the mention of the sick sheep suggests that Ælfric is recalling the way the same verse is used in the Rule of Benedict (*Regula* 28, 6-8) when dealing with sinful monks (Godden 2000, 63).[16] The church had to prevent evil behaviour from spreading, since "the presence of unrepentant sinners within the community threatened the whole community's eschatological standing" (Olsen 2015, 210).

In line with this allegorical interpretation, Ælfric turns to the healing of the centurion's servant and rephrases the biblical text so as to emphasise the final destiny of individual souls. He singles out Jesus's humility in wanting to visit a servant and, conversely, His disregard of human social status when refusing to go and see the ruler's son (ll. 87-146). The most evident change here occurs in the rendering of Matt. 8:12, which reads *filii autem regni eicientur in tenebras exteriors ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium* ("but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"): while the gospel mentions the 'sons of the kingdom' (that is, the Jews according to Haymo), in Ælfric's homily it is the 'rich sons' who will be cast into darkness instead. As Godden notes, nowhere in the commentaries or in the Bible we find 'rich sons' in place of 'sons of the kingdom' in Matt. 8:12 (2000, 66). The OE word for 'kingdom' (*rīce*) is a homophone for the adjective meaning 'rich, wealthy' (OE *rīce*) but they are declined differently: 'sons of the kingdom' would be OE *rīces bearn* while Ælfric's text reads OE *rīcan bearn* ("rich sons"). While Haymo condemns the Jews and stresses the distinction between them and the Gentiles, Ælfric favours the more general opposition between the earthly and spiritually rich (Anlezark 2016, 144-45; Olsen 2015, 202). When explaining the verse, he takes on an eschatological approach: whereas the children of God (the Gentiles in Haymo's homily) are those who value faith over material wealth, and will be allowed access to heaven, the rich children, who live on wealth and status, will end in utter darkness. Ælfric expands on this topic with references to Mark 9:43-50, building upon its eschatological implications and quoting the part where the gospel traces worms and unquenchable fire to the torments in hell (CH I. 8, ll. 186-89):

> Þa earman forscyldegodan cwylmiað on ecum fyre, and swaðeah þæt swearte fyr him nane lihtinge ne deð. Wurmas toslitað heora lichaman mid fyrenum toðum, swa swa Crist on his

15 "Remove the evil man from you, lest one unsound sheep infect all the flock."

16 A comprehensive record of the sources of Ælfric's homilies can be found in the *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici* database, available at https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/fontes/, and in Godden 2000. In this case, only Godden 2000 has been mentioned, given it is an expanded and updated version of his entries in the *Fontes* database. The paragraph summarises his treatment of the homily.

> godspelle cwæð, "Þær næfre heora wyrm ne swylt, ne heora fyr ne bið adwæsced."[17]

The passage features two separate occurrences of the OE word for 'worm': on the one hand, *wyrm* is expressly related to the biblical verse from Mark's Gospel; on the other hand, *wurmas* take on a penitential tone and they happen to own a feature commonly associated with infernal crawling creatures, that is their need for human flesh (Fiocco 1993-94, 368). Even though *wyrm* covers a wide range of meanings, it is maggots that Ælfric probably has in mind here when using the word to convey his representation of hellish torment, and evidence for this comes from two different points.

Firstly, the worm that never dies is not only a reminder of the pain awaiting those who did not redeem themselves, but it also hints at a common motif in homiletic literature, namely the beasts devouring the corpse of sinful individuals. Ravenous worms are often mentioned alongside the homiletic theme of soul and body and here, as Frantzen puts it, "[d]ecay in the grave acquire[s] punitive force through this connection with the torment of hell" (1982, 83). Within this context, Mark's passage is consistent with the Old Testament imagery of *gehenna*, a place where maggots feed on the corpses of the wicked (see above), and *wurmas* most likely appeal to the medieval English fear of the body being consumed after death in the most degrading way (Thompson [2002] 2012, 137).

Secondly, while turning to list those sinners who will suffer similar afflictions (ll. 190-94), Ælfric arguably draws upon Pseudo-Ambrose's sermon 24 (PL 17, 653), which is the closest source in this case because it shows parallels with Ælfric's preceding clauses, including a reference to Mark 9:43.[18] Indeed, Ps-Ambrose's verse reading *illi sine fine cruciantur in inferno, ubi vermes eorum non morientur, et ignis eorum non extinguetur* (*Sermo* 24, PL 17, 653A)[19] makes it clear that Ælfric has lat. *vermis* in mind when using *wyrm* in his homily. Moreover, such verse might also be the reason why, amongst the commonplaces he surely has knowledge of, Ælfric decides to use the fire and the worm in this depiction of hell and torture.

In line with this tradition, Ælfric also mentions a motif that well suits the eschatological setting of the passage, that is the 'weeping and gnashing of teeth'. The phrase appears six times in Matthew, probably because the theme of judgement permeates this gospel (Erdey and Smith 2012), and

17 "The miserable guilty ones shall suffer torment in everlasting fire, and yet that black fire shall give them no light. Worms shall tear their bodies with fiery teeth, as Christ said in his gospel, 'There their worm shall never die, nor their fire be quenched'."

18 The motif of sinners being grouped according to their sin in Hell seems to be a Latin commonplace. Apart from Ps-Ambrose, it occurs in Ps-Augustine's *Sermo ad fratres in eremo* 67 (PL 40, 1354), Ps-Isidore's *Sermo* 3 (PL 83, 1224B) and two sermons of Haymo, *Homiliae* 81 and 100 (PL 118, 491 and 559): see Godden 2000, 67.

19 "They are tortured endlessly in hell, where their worms will not die, and their fire will not be quenched."

one of the occurrences is recorded in Matt. 8:12. While the 'weeping' is a common *topos* when addressing the pain of the wicked on the Day of Judgement, the 'gnashing of teeth' is less frequent but, at times, it takes on an eschatological meaning, especially in the gospels (Papaioannou 2013, 177-84). Before closing the homily and turning to the need for his audience to value the importance of faith, Ælfric thus depicts a vivid vision of hell and damnation which echoes Matthew's emphasis on the theme of judgement and eschatology (Erdey and Smith 2012, 27-31) and is aptly illustrated to the audience thanks to images which are frequently used in descriptions of hell. Amongst these images, the fire and the worm are commonplaces which must have served well Ælfric's purpose.

In sum, the *Homily for the Third Sunday after Epiphany* conveys the spiritual and metaphorical meaning behind the healings described by Matt. 8:1-13, focusing on the importance of faith in order to please God and earn salvation. Ælfric was aware of the need for sound teaching in times of crisis and his awareness must have played a significant role in the shaping of the homily. While insisting on right living and on redemption from spiritual leprosy, he presents a vivid description of hell. Within this context, the eternal fire and the devouring worm are common features of eschatological settings which Ælfric draws from memory of earlier readings and which he uses to warn people against damnation.

4. *On Auguries* (LS 17)

After the *Lives of Saints*, Ælfric puts considerable effort into revising and expanding the two series of the *Catholic Homilies* so as to produce his *Temporale Homilies* (TH) I and II (Clemoes 1959).[20] However, his literary corpus contains evidence of more general productions, that is *quando uolueris* homilies: they are to be found in the *Lives of Saints* but Ælfric also grouped some of these sermons into a collection proper, the so-called R-type collection (Clayton 2005). It is in the first part of this collection that we find the augmented version of his *On Auguries*, a text which appears within the *Lives of Saints* in its most basic form, and which was probably modified as part of a revision for the issuing of the *quando uolueris* compilation.[21]

20 According to Teresi 2007, evidence of Ælfric's responsibility for TH I is not conclusive. See also Kleist 2019, 27-33.

21 *On Auguries* survives in eight manuscripts: six of them preserve the text edited by Skeat in LS 17 while two include an augmented version (Clayton 2005). One of these two manuscripts, namely Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 178, Part I, pp. 1-270 (R1), forms the R-type collection together with Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 162, Part II, pp. 139-60 (R2). The collection has a note explaining the *rationale* of the whole work: the first book (CCCC 178, pp. 1-30 and 33-163; CCCC 162, Part II) is said to consist of *quando uolueris* homilies, whereas the second one (CCCC 178, pp. 164-270) contains *temporale* and *sanctorale* items, covering a large part of the liturgical year (Kleist 2019, 228-29). According to Pope, this division goes further

According to Meaney, *On Auguries* is "one of our richest sources for superstition and witchcraft in late Anglo-Saxon England" (1985, 477). Ælfric often addresses the question of idolatrous customs in his works,[22] but *On Auguries* gives a literal and figurative interpretation of it. In this text, he skilfully uses the sources so that the references to superstitious practices are concurrent with what the audience knows and experiences in England.[23] As in the *Passion of St Julian and his wife Basilissa* (see below), this sermon works as an exhortation to his audience not to give in to temptation, be it sins or heathenism. Shared themes and verbal parallelisms between St Julian's life and *On Auguries* suggest that Ælfric wants people to apply the lessons of the legend to their spiritual lives, understanding the "conflict between Christians and pagans as representative of every believer's fight against temptation and the devil" (Upchurch 2005, 214).

In the sermon, Ælfric gives two different definitions of idolatry (LS 17, ll. 47-51):

> Deofol-gild bið þæt man his drihten forlæte and his cristendom,
> and to deofollicum hæðenscype, gebuge bysmrigende his scyppend.
> Oðer defolgild is, derigendlic þære sawle,
> ðonne se man forsihð his scyppendes beboda,
> and þa sceandlican leahtras begæð þe se sceocca hine lærð.[24]

In Ælfric's eyes, the idolater is both the apostate who turns to heathenism and the unrepentant sinner. He expands on the theme in two separate sections of the text, adding references to those practices which are deemed to be sinful or idolatrous.

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back than R to a now lost manuscript whose compiler was responsible for both the augmentations and the note (1967-68, I, 68, and II, 458-60). Conversely, Clayton (2005) argues that Ælfric was the one to issue this R-type collection and that he was also the one to revise his texts in order for them to fit the collection. The revisions probably occur in two different stages: a first stage of R has twenty-two works, including three augmented ones; in the second stage, Ælfric furtherly adds two revised texts. One of these two texts is *On Auguries*. For the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on Skeat's version of the sermon.

22 Some instances can be found in the *Nativity of the Virgin Mary* (Assmann 3. 93-100), the *Life of St Bartholomew* (CH I. 31) or the *Feast of the Lord's Circumcision* (CH I. 6) (Meaney 1984).

23 For example, Ælfric's silence concerning planet superstitions suggests that people still believed that a person's character could be affected by the planets. Consequently, he most likely refuses to discuss the matter so as to avoid "giv[ing] food to the superstitious practices [...] which were common in his day" (Henel 1934; [1942] 1970, 101; Meaney 1984, 126-28; 1985, 483).

24 "Idolatry is when a man forsakes his Lord and his Christianity, and yields to diabolical heathenism, dishonouring his Creator. There is another idolatry, hurtful to the soul, when the man despises his Creator's commands, and practises the shameful sins which the devil teaches him". Translation adapted from LS.

The first section of *On Auguries* (ll. 1-66) takes on a penitential atmosphere and deals with the Christian battle between the body and the soul and with unatoned sins. In doing so, Ælfric relies on Paul's exhortation to the Galatians to avoid fleshy lusts (ll. 1-29), and then he turns to list the sins from I Cor. 6:9-10 (ll. 34-44), concluding with Paul's declaration of sanctity (ll. 44-46). Idolatry, heresy, and witchcraft are mentioned alongside murder, uncleanness, and drunkenness. All those people who engage in such *flæsces weorc* ("the works of the flesh", ll. 23-24) will be deprived of the possibility of going to heaven (ll. 28, 43-44).

Like the rest of Ælfric's homilies, *On Auguries* is not a mere translation but an original composition. One of the ways in which Ælfric makes his voice heard is by drawing upon an eschatological imagery of reward and retribution centred, in this case, on the worm and the fire that cannot be quenched. This holds particularly true when he adds his own description of the fate of idolaters and, more specifically, of unrepentant sinners (LS 17, ll. 29-33):

> Gehwa mot yfeles geswican and gebetan ac gif he ðurh-wunað on yfelnysse and forsihð his Scyppendes beboda and deofla gecwemð þonne sceal he unðances on ecnysse ðrowian on ðam unadwæscend-licum fyre betwux ðam wyrrestan wurm-cynne þe næfre ne bið adyd ac ceowað symle þæra arleasra lichama on ðam hellican lige.[25]

This passage clearly shows many correspondences with Julian's prediction in the Passion that the heathens will burn in hell, their bodies eternally devoured by the immortal worm (see below). Both descriptions of hell owe much to commonplaces ultimately deriving from Mark 9:43-50, which is here rearranged and expanded: the *ece fyr* of the *Passion of St Julian and his wife Basilissa* (Upchurch 2007, 68, l. 278) is described in *On Auguries* as *unadwæscend-lic fyr*, an expression which is also found in the West Saxon version of Mark 9 (Liuzza 1994, 79-82). Similarly, the *undeadlic wyrm* of the Passion (Upchurch 2007, 68, l. 278) features in the homily as the *wyrrest wurm-cynn* ("worst kind of worm"), the worm that never dies and destroys the bodies which are eternally renewed for the torment. If Julian's life addresses the torments to the pagans, *On Auguries* has every Christian idolater (whether apostate or impenitent believer) face the same fate.

Verbal parallels common to these two works suggest that Ælfric sees a connection between them (Upchurch 2005, 215): apart from belonging to the standard repertoire when one is evoking hell, the fire and the worm

25 "Everyone may cease from evil and amend; but if he continues in wickedness and despises his Creator's commands and pleases the devils, then he shall suffer in eternity against his will, in the unquenchable fire, amidst the worst serpent-kind which shall never be destroyed, but shall ever chew the bodies of the wicked in the fire of hell."

probably come to play a relevant role in the Passion not only because they are featured in the Latin source (see below), but also because they inform much of the infernal description in *On Auguries*, whose composition is supposedly earlier than the life of the Virgin Spouses.[26] Moreover, the devouring worm well suits the penitential background of the first sixty-six lines in the homily: the Pauline scheme in which the body and the soul are at war brings to mind their shared responsibility in defining the destiny of individuals after death. Consequently, those who did not redeem themselves in life will be consumed by tortures among which the maggots stand out for their relevance in soul-and-body literature. Indeed, though being different from these concrete destroyers of the body, the afterlife worm devouring sinners in hell might well have stemmed from the motif of worms attacking the corpse in the grave (Trask 1977, 175).[27]

Ælfric balances the earlier description of hell with a vision of heavenly joy. The homily mentions the good dispositions of those people leading a good Christian life (ll. 52-59), and then it turns to their fate after death (ll. 60-66):

> Nis nan æ wiðerræde þus geworhtum mannum
> ac ða þe cristes synd cwylmiað heora flæsc.
> Swa þæt hi nellað onbugan ðam bysmorfullum leahtrum
> ne ðam yfelum gewilnungum ac winnað him to-geanes
> oð þæt hi sigefæste siðiað to criste
> and to ðam ecan wuldre for ðam sceortan gewinne
> and hi blyssiað on ecnysse bliðe mid criste.[28]

In the second section (ll. 67-271) Ælfric deals with pagan customs that Christians should avoid and it opens with a line mentioning the source he is going to rely on, namely *Agustinus se snotera bisceop sæde eac on sumere*

26 *On Auguries*, as well as the Ælfric's Latin abridgement of Caesarius's *Sermo* 54, respectively date back to the middle of the period and in/before ca. 993x998, which is also the timespan when Ælfric completed his *Lives of Saints*. Even if there is little to suggest a chronological order between the works that form the collection, the homily (especially ll. 1-48) as well as other compositions which do not present Ælfric's rythmical style are seemingly earlier than the *Lives* proper, thus including the *Passion of St. Julian and his wife Basilissa* (Clemoes 1959, 221-26; Kleist 2019, 105-06, 131-45, 175, 276-308).

27 Though acknowledging Trask's argument, Fiocco also claims that maggots feeding on corpses is a motif which probably has its origins in biblical tradition. In this regard, she quotes Job 21:26 *et tamen simul in pulvere dormient, et vermes operient in eos* and Isidore's *Etymologiae* as well, especially for the line in Book XII.v.18 reading *proprie autem vermis in carne putri nascitur* (Fiocco 1993-94, 352n; 362n).

28 "There is no law against men thus disposed, but those that are Christ's crucify their flesh, so that they will not yield to shameful sins, nor to those evil desires, but will fight against them until they depart victoriously to Christ, and to the everlasting glory in exchange for the short warfare, and they shall rejoice for ever in joy with Christ."

bec (Meaney 1985, 477; Trahern Jr. 1976, 114).[29] Ælfric was following pseudo-Augustine's *Sermo* 278, in fact Caesarius of Arles's *Sermo* 54 (Morin 1953, 235-40). However, Caesarius's *Sermo* 54 is not the only text Ælfric draws on in this section of the homily and he often moves away from it so as to include other authorities or his own ideas on the question of idolatry. An example is the expansions he makes to Caesarius's text in ll. 68-79, where he stresses how foolish it is to engage in pagan practices and not to behave like *geleaffulle men* ("faithful men").[30] These expansions, as well as the whole work, emphasise the contrast between good Christian people, on one side, and idolaters, on the other. This contrast was present in Caesarius's homily but it becomes all the more evident in Ælfric's remastering of his sources.

In conclusion, it is evident that *On Auguries*, as well as *Julian and Basilissa*, "work to comfort the faithful and goad the lax, and Ælfric reshapes the legend into a compelling dramatization of the spiritual warfare he discusses in the homily" (Upchurch 2005, 216). In doing so, he relies on different sources but ends up using them with great control and ability. Indeed, Ælfric expresses his biblically and patristically based eschatological ideas in and through his own additions and developments. As in CH I. 8, damnation features here the punishment presented in Mark 9:43-50 in a rearrangement of its motifs: the undying worm and the inextinguishable fire become part of the fate awaiting all idolaters, from sinners to apostates proper.

5. THE *PASSION OF ST JULIAN AND HIS WIFE BASILISSA*

The theological and ethical concepts of Ælfric's sermons occur in other compilations, an instance being the *Lives of Saints* which seem to exemplify his main teachings by means of biographies and actions (Godden 1996, 261). Amidst the most pervasive ideas of Ælfric's theology are clerical celibacy and sexual abstinence within marriage, two themes which hold great importance in his literary corpus and which take on eschatological significance in many of his writings.

Firstly, his concern with chastity should be considered in the wider picture of attitudes to sexuality in early medieval England. No treatise or discourse on sexual matters survives from there, but both secular and Christian texts express a general sense of restraint (Lees 1997, 18). On the one hand, sexual relations were seen as an obstacle to spiritual perfection in the eyes of the Church (Davies 1989); on the other hand, "restrained disinterest in sexual matters of Anglo-Saxon heroic literature [...] signifies the presence of

29 "Augustine the wise bishop said likewise in a certain book" (l. 67).

30 The additions to Lat. *ut illas sacrilegas paganorum consuetudines observare minime deberetis* are l. 70b *þe unwise men healdað* ("which unwise men observe") and l. 71b *swa swa geleaffulle men* ("like faithful men"). L. 78b *to gremigenne his Scyppend* ("to anger his Creator") is added to Lat. *ut nullus ex vobis caraios et divinos vel sortilegos requirat* (Meaney 1985, 480; Morin 1953, 235).

cultural attitudes towards issues of sexuality in the secular sphere" (Green 2007, 28; Lees 1997, 18-19). Accordingly, many OE texts show either lack of concern with sexual themes as a distinctive trait inherited from Germanic heroic tradition, or the 'sexual pessimism' characteristic of patristic thought and the early medieval church (Magennis 1995, 8; Osborne 1993). As a representative of the Benedictine Reform, Ælfric was affected by this latter approach, virginity and sexual abstinence being central values to the reform (Cubitt 2000; Stafford 1999). While insisting on celibacy and virginity for monks and nuns, he tried to extend these monastic values also to the laity. According to Ælfric, each condition (virgins, continent non-virgins, and the sexually active who practised restraint) was identified with a different category of society: the monastic order, the widowed as well as the secular clergy, and the married (Cubitt 2000, 19-21). As for married couples, Ælfric's works illustrate three main kinds of marital celibacy, namely temporary marital celibacy, permanent marital celibacy, and spiritual chastity. The latter kind is probably the more inclusive one because it implies that all believers can be virgins of the faith (*geleafan mægðhad*, "virginity of faith", CH II. 44, l. 79) as long as they constantly follow Christian precepts, no matter if they are *physically* virgins or not. This concern with chastity within marriage could have been caused by Ælfric's disdain for the married clergy, his desire to involve the laity in the creation of a new English church which was to secure peace in this life and the next, and his attempt at bridging the gap between laymen and clergymen (Upchurch 2004, 71-78). In this sense, virginity becomes the highest virtue in Ælfric's system of values, and the chief benchmark of *post-mortem* judgement. Thus, mankind will be judged accordingly. These ideas about chastity become pivotal in the hagiographies of the Virgin Martyrs, who come to stand for steadfast faith and monastic renunciation. The historical setting of these lives, namely the period of pagan persecutions against early Christians, well suits the English context of the tenth and eleventh century: in that time, Christian faith was threatened by sexual promiscuity and Vikings attacks, which were seen as part of an ancient pattern of heathen hostility (Cubitt 2000, 6-9).

These aspects are evident in Ælfric's lives of the Virgin Spouses, three tales of martyrdom and chaste marriage where he presents physical purity in this world as key to salvation within a general context of eschatological preparation (Gulley 2018). The *Passion of St Julian and his Wife Basilissa*[31] offers a good example of how Ælfric's adaptation of his sources is consistent with the attempt at emphasising the Virgin Spouses as symbols of spiritual chastity as opposed to physical virginity (Gulley 2016, 1-36). With respect to the Latin source, Jackson and Lapidge suggest that Ælfric worked from

31 The OE passion has been edited in LS (4, 90-115) and by Upchurch 2007, 54-71. I will refer to the latter for both the Latin and the vernacular text. On the sources of this passion, see Jayatilaka 1996.

a hybrid version of *BHL* 4532, which Ott identified as the type included in London, British Library, Cotton Nero E i., vol. 1 (Worcester Cathedral, s.xi$^{3/4}$), 77va17-85^{vb}16^{32}, and *BHL* 4529 (Jackson and Lapidge 1996, 135; Ott 1892, 14-17; Zettel 1979, 201-08; Whatley 1996, 9-15).[33]

The story of this *passio* is set in Antinoe and revolves around Julian, who has been asked by his parents to marry[34], and Basilissa, his bride with whom he will live in chastity (ll. 1-55). Julian and Basilissa establish monasteries and become parents to spiritual children, the OE version turning the meaning of marital celibacy into a state of moral purity (ll. 56-63). Indeed, the more inclusive meaning of chastity is evident in the lines describing Basilissa's conversion (ll. 25-36): while the word Ælfric generally uses for physical virginity occurs twice (*mægðhad*, ll. 31 and 34), the adjective *clæne* and some derivatives occur at least five times in the passage to suggest chastity.[35] *Clæne* has a greater semantic range and adds spiritual connotations to marital celibacy (Upchurch 2005, 205-06). After Basilissa's death, Julian's steadfastness and purity is threatened by Martianus's pagan persecutions and the saint's resistance becomes a symbol of Christian unfaltering belief (ll. 85-131), also bringing about the conversion of many others.[36]

These demonstrations of faith are set against the consequences of worshipping pagan idols, an opposition which becomes all the more noticeable in Ælfric's individual rendering of the Latin life thanks to his changes affecting the general atmosphere of the legend. An example is in ll. 268-312: this part seems to build upon an eschatological narration of the events, the aim being to show how sinners will be doomed to suffer eternally in hell while saints will be rewarded for the constancy Ælfric asked of his audience. This dual and vivid imagery starts with a direct speech which he translates quite faithfully from his source. Julian, asked by Martianus to apostatise and make a sacrifice to the gods, enters the temple and predicts the heathens' destruction (ll. 268-76), announcing their fate in the afterlife (ll. 275-80):

> Hwær is nu seo fægernys þines gefrætowodan temples? Hwær synd þa anlicnyssa þe þu on wuldrodest? Swa swa hi besuncon on ðone swartan grund, swa sceole ge hæðene on helle grund besincan þær bið æfre ece fyr and undeadlic wyrm þe eowre lichaman cywð and ge þeah ne sweltað ac bið æfre se lichama

32 This is one of the manuscripts attesting to the so-called 'Cotton-Corpus Legendary' (Godden 2000, xlii-iii; Jackson and Lapidge 1996; Zettel 1979).

33 An overview of the comparison between the Latin and OE versions of the Virgin Spouses can be found in Gulley 2016, esp. chapters 6 and 7; Upchurch 2005 and 2007.

34 Differently from its Latin source, Ælfric's version does not mention Julian's parents' desire that he produces an heir: they just want him to marry, which he agrees to do, thereby meeting parental and societal expectation (Upchurch 2004, 54-60, and 2005, 203-06).

35 *Clænan* (l. 25), *clennisse* (l. 28), *clænnysse* (l. 31), *clænlice* (l. 32) and *clænum* (l. 35).

36 Among the converted, a pagan soldier (ll. 103-29), Martianus's son Celsus (ll. 135-39) and his wife (ll. 247-56).

> geedniwod to ðam witum. Þær ge biddað mildsunga ac eow biþ forwyrned.[37]

The immortal worm devouring the bodies of those who sinned and the unquenchable fire play a significant role in the definition of eternal tortures of hell already in the Latin *vita* and, as it is evident, they become part of Ælfric's apocalyptic vision of judgement and retribution in the OE version as well.[38] So as to stress the focus on this eschatological duality, Ælfric works his structural changes and, in the following lines, he curtails the narrative and omits parts of the Latin version which do not put the emphasis on the contrast between the pagans' wickedness (Martianus's vengeance for the destruction of the temple, ll. 281-94) and the saints' composure in the face of tortures (l. 295).[39]

Another change is introduced in the concluding part of Ælfric's version of the life. The Latin text describes God's destruction of Antinoe and Martianus's death and then it recounts the saints' burial inside a church where spring miraculously arrives. Moving away from this conclusion, Ælfric adds a list of those who have been martyred in the story (ll. 295-302), who rejoice in heaven with God, and then he expands the narrative again to introduce the pagans' damnation (ll. 303-09). After the saints have been slain, many heathens die because of an earthquake, thunder and lightning striking them and the temple. Martianus, mortally wounded, flees but will eventually find death by illness, his body consumed by worms (ll. 306-09):

> Þa fleah Martianus, fornean adyd, and he wearð fornumen æfter feawum dagum, swa þæt wurmas crupon cuce of his lice and se arleasa gewat mid wite to helle.[40]

As in CH I. 8, death and torments of hell are associated to maggots devouring the flesh of those who did not redeem themselves in their life, giving the audience an impressive representation of what awaits them, should

37 "Where now is the beauty of your adorned temple? Where are the images that you gloried in? Just as they sunk into the dark depth, so will you heathens sink into the depth of hell where there will always be everlasting fire and the immortal worm that will chew your bodies, and yet you will not die, but (your) body will continually be renewed for the torments. There you will pray for mercy, but it will be refused you". Translations from *Julian and Basilissa* are quoted from Upchurch 2007.

38 The Latin text reads as follows: *[...] ubi ignis eternus et uermis non moritur, ubi corpus ad poenam semper renouatur [...]* ("[...] where the fire and the maggot do not die, where the body is always renewed for punishment [...]", ll. 873-74).

39 For example, Ælfric omits from the Latin account the saints' return to prison and their vision of Basilissa and other martyrs announcing God will receive them in Heaven (ll. 879-88). Moreover, he does not include Martianus's final confrontation with his son and wife (ll. 905-10).

40 "Then Martianus fled, nearly killed, and he was destroyed after a few days so that worms crawled alive out of his body, and the wicked one departed with torture to hell."

they violate their spiritual purity. Ælfric closely follows the *passio* in this case. Indeed, the Latin text has Martianus eventually killed by worms as well, a punishment which is seen as just and which resonates with Julian's prediction of his death (see above).

The *Passion of St Julian and his Wife Basilissa* has proven to be a good example of how the lives of the Virgin Martyrs and, more specifically, those of the Virgin Spouses convey Ælfric's eschatological concern. Julian and Basilissa's legend builds upon a dual imagery of hellish torment and heavenly joy. This opposition is further emphasised in the vernacular version of the passion where Ælfric adapts the narrative so as to exhort his audience to preserve their 'virginity of faith' in the face of the impending end. Indeed, the English will be judged also on the basis of their attitudes to sexuality and that is why chastity (either physical or spiritual) is important within marriage. Ælfric's narrative mode makes it clear that he wants to show the consequences of the eternal punishment: while the saints' constancy earns them everlasting joy, torments in hell involve both the Worm that never dies and the worms devouring the flesh.

6. Concluding remarks

Steeped in scriptural and patristic tradition, Ælfric balances his visions of hell with references to salvation in heaven so as to exhort his audience to show constancy in the face of the impending end. The present paper has focused on three texts where this eschatological duality features motifs which are commonplaces in the doctrine of hell: the devouring worm and the fire that cannot be extinguished.

The *Homily for the Third Sunday after Epiphany* (CH I. 8) deals with three healing miracles and conveys the importance of steadfast faith in Christian life. Ælfric expands the theme with references to the bliss of believers and to the torment which awaits sinners. Pertinently, he quotes Mark 9:43 and mentions the immortal worm tormenting the soul as well as the maggots devouring the flesh of the wicked.

On Auguries (LS 17) shows good evidence of Ælfric's mastery of his sources, as he uses them in a skilful way. Indeed, he expands on hellish motifs and he draws on features which are commonly found in the depiction of the Christian infernal industry. In this case, it is the Worm of hell the one devouring and tormenting sinners as well as apostates, while the eternal fire constantly burns.

Last but not least, the *Passion of St Julian and his Wife Basilissa* provides a true model of constancy and endurance and lingers on the different fates of heathens and of unrepentant sinners. The worm that never dies and the unquenchable fire feature in the Latin source, as do the maggots feeding on

corpses. Nevertheless, Ælfric makes them all the more consistent with his eschatological preoccupation thanks to the changes he works in the narrative.

In conclusion, these three texts illustrate how Ælfric's evocation of hell relies on two scriptural motifs which are embedded in the medieval priestly consciousness, though being (ultimately) provided by Mark 9:43-50. The worm, mostly associated with the grave and with the death of the unrighteous, is transmuted in these works from an element of human mortality into a symbol of eternal punishment, figuring as both maggot and Worm of hell but always tormenting the damned *mid fyrenum toðum* ("with fiery teeth"). Consequently, the body happens to be in constant danger of being eaten both before and after the Last Judgement, when unrepentant sinners will be doomed to be devoured in eternity (Burrus 2019, 221-22; Thompson [2002] 2012, 132). Ælfric relies on these motifs, and he rearranges them so as to emphasise the need for steadfast faith in the context of the impending End of Times: the worm that never dies and the unquenchable fire become relevant in showing the consequences of yielding to sin in a period when England needed correct teaching, threatened as it was by moral corruption and military Viking attacks.[41]

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FROM GULPING DRAGON TO HARMLESS MOUSE. CHRIST'S DECEPTION AND ENTRAPMENT OF SATAN IN *NIÐRSTIGNINGAR SAGA*

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0. Introduction

Along with the *Infancy Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew*, the *Gospel of Nicodemus* or *Evangelium Nicodemi*, which forcefully depicts extra-canonical scenes relating to Christ's Passion, entombment, and Harrowing of Hell, was undoubtedly one of the most widely circulated and influential narratives amongst the New Testament Apocrypha. Such fortune is testified today by the survival of some 436 Latin codices preserving both primitive and progressively embellished texts that can be grouped into four main redactions and a great number of sub-redactions.[1]

The earliest evidence of the dissemination and knowledge of the *Evangelium Nicodemi* in medieval Scandinavia is represented by an Old Norse-Icelandic adaptation of the Latin text known already from medieval sources as *Niðrstigningar saga*, "The Story of the Descent".[2] As promptly clarified by its title, the Old Norse-Icelandic text includes only the second section of the

1 Latin A, Latin B, Latin C, and Latin T. The full census of the Latin tradition is available in Izydorczyk 1993. On the genesis and development of the Latin text, see especially Izydorczyk 1997b and 1997c; and Izydorczyk and Dubois 1997. On the nomenclature of the Latin texts, see especially Izydorczyk 1997c and Bullitta 2017a, 3-20. I have recently suggested the ninth-century cathedral schools of northern France as a possible place of production of the primitive Latin text. See the discussion in Bullitta 2017a, 9-12.

2 A first comprehensive survey on the reception of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* in medieval Scandinavia can be found in Wolf [1993] 1997. A second, independent Old Norse translation of the *Evangelium Nicodemi*, ultimately derived from Latin A and entitled *Af fangelsi Joseps*, is first

apocryphon, the *Descensus Christi ad inferos*, while the *Acta Pilati* are entirely omitted. In my recent study and edition of the vernacular text, I have suggested how the presence in *Niðrstigningar saga* of variant readings typical of a twelfth-century Latin version produced in northern France known as Latin T[3] indicates that the Icelandic compiler employed this version rather than Latin A, the so-called 'Majority Text' of the Latin tradition, the more widely disseminated version of the apocryphon in western Europe (Bullitta 2017a, 54-69; cf. Bullitta 2014a, 134-37).[4] Moreover, a closer analysis of the textual interpolations drawn from foreign sources revealed the compiler's acquaintance with biblical glosses and commentaries produced during the second half of the twelfth century by some of the greatest exegetes of the Paris school of theology, Peter Lombard (1100-1160) and Peter Comestor (1100-1178) in particular. The work of translating and revising the Latin *Evangelium Nicodemi* might reasonably have been undertaken at the Skálholt cathedral school (southern Iceland) between the years 1199 and 1211 – roughly a century after the date suggested by Magnús Már Lárusson (cf. Bullitta 2014a, 147-48, and 2017a, 96). This essay focuses on two of the four interpolations in *Niðrstigningar saga* that provide two highly divergent descriptions of Satan, both before and after his encounter with Christ in hell, and on the editorial and theological nature of such interventions (cf. Bullitta 2014a, 137-47, and 2017a, 70-85).

1. SEVEN-HEADED SATAN

Except for the epithets that emphasize the role of Satan as the undisputed sovereign of hell – *princeps et dux mortis* (Kim 1973, 38; "Prince and ruler of Death") – or his low position in the cosmogonical order as a consequence of his disastrous fall – *sputio iustorum, derisio angelorum Dei* (Kim 1973, 38; "spittle of the just, scorn of the angels of God") – the standard text of the *Evangelium Nicodemi* omits any detailed physical description of Satan. Nevertheless, when finally Satan is overcome by Christ and Inferus addresses him as *princeps perditionis et dux exterminationis Beelzebub* (Kim 1973, 43; "Prince of perdition and Ruler of destruction Beelzebub"), Latin T adds the adjective *tricabite* (Bullitta and Izydorczyk 2017, 611; "three-headed"), thus evoking the figure of Cerberus, the mythological hound guarding the underworld in Greek and Roman traditions. The reading "three-headed devil" can be traced back to a Good Friday sermon by Eusebius of Alexandria[5] and might have been known

edited and discussed in Bullitta 2016. The text is fragmentary and includes exclusively Joseph of Arimathea's legendary imprisonment and miraculous release on the part of Christ.

3 Latin T is known as 'The Troyes Redaction' after the call number of its most ancient witness, Troyes, Médiathèque du Grand Troyes, 1636 (*s.* xii^{ex}, Clairvaux). Its text was first made available in a recent critical edition. Cf. Bullitta and Izydorczyk 2017.

4 A fifteenth-century Old Swedish translation compiled at Vadstena Abbey is a close rendition of a text of a T-type. Cf. Bullitta 2014b and 2017b.

5 Eusebius of Alexandria, *Sermones* 1-12, 403-04.

to the twelfth-century author of Latin T through Augustine's *De civitate Dei*.[6] The Icelandic compiler remains faithful to his source and recalls the image of a *Satan meþ III høfðom* "Satan with three heads" juxtaposing it to the adjective which describes *Satan meþ VII høfðom* "Satan with seven heads", an interpolation derived from the seven-headed dragon of Rev. 12:3 that is absent in Latin A and in Latin T and peculiar only to the Old Norse-Icelandic translation:

Niðrstigningar saga	Rev. 12:3
Satan iotunn helvitis høfðingi er stundom er meþ VII høfðom enn stundom meþ III enn stundom i drekalike þess er omorlegr er oc ogorlegr oc illilegr a allar lunder (Bullitta 2017a, 137).[7]	et visum est aliud signum in caelo et ecce draco magnus rufus habens capita septem et cornua decem et in capitibus suis septem diademata (Weber et al. [1969] 2007).[8]

It appears that the Icelandic compiler made a typological connection between the historical Harrowing of Hell, which took place between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, and Christ's ultimate dealing with Satan during his Second Coming as reported in Revelation. This shifting of the narrative timeline from the first century AD to the Last Days renders the Icelandic translation more topical and confers on it a more liturgical character: the Christian audience is compelled to consider the future prophetic implications of the story, hence becoming all the more engrossed in the narrative action of the pseudo-gospel.

2. THE CAPTURE OF SATAN ON THE CROSS

The following interpolated section can undoubtedly be considered one of the high points of the narrative, as it describes the rapid succession of events after Satan has been cast out of hell. First, taking the shape of a gigantic dragon, Satan threatens the world, and at the news of Christ's crucifixion, he travels to Jerusalem, convinced that he is capable of slaying Christ. Just as he is about to swallow the soul of Christ, he belatedly and bitterly realizes that he has instead been entrapped on the cross, much like a fish caught on a fishhook, a mouse in a mousetrap, or a fox in a snare.

6 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 4. For a discussion on the figure of Cerberus in the Middle Ages, see Savage 1949-52.

7 "The giant Satan, the Prince of Hell, who sometimes has seven heads and sometimes three, and sometimes is in the shape of a dragon, which is horrible, terrible, and awful in all respects" (Bullitta 2017a, 160).

8 "And there was seen another sign in Heaven: and behold a great dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns, and on his head seven diadems." Here and in the following, all English translations of the Vulgate are taken from the Douay-Rheims Bible, available at http://drbo.org, accessed 23 January 2023.

> Þa bra hann ser i drecalike oc gørdiz þa sva mikill at hann þottesc liggia mundo umb heimenn allan utan. Hann sa þau tiþende ⟨er gørdoz⟩ at Iorsolom at Iesus Christus var þa i andlati oc for ⟨hann⟩ þangat þegar oc ætlaþi at slita ondina þegar fra honom. Enn er hann com þar oc hugþez gløpa mundo hann oc hafa meþ ser þa beit øngullinn goddomens hann enn crossmarkit fell a hann ovann oc varþ hann þa sva veiddr se⟨m⟩ fiscr a øngle eþa mus under treketti eþa sem melracki i gilldro eptir þvi sem fyrer var spat. Þa for til Dominus Noster oc bat hann (Bullitta 2017a, 137).[9]

Scholars have interpreted this passage in various ways. Gabriel Turville-Petre, followed by Magnús Már Lárusson, posits that it is derived from the famous passage in Job 41, where Yahweh warns Job of the absurdity of any attempt to catch the Leviathan (the mythological monster of chaos) and ironically asks his interlocutor whether he is able to simply catch the beast and pierce it with a fishhook (cf. Turville-Petre 1953, 126-28; Magnús Már Lárusson, 1955, 161):

> an extrahere poteris Leviathan hamo et fune ligabis linguam eius numquid pones circulum in naribus eius et armilla perforabis maxillam eius numquid multiplicabit ad te preces aut loquetur tibi mollia numquid feriet tecum pactum et accipies eum servum sempiternum numquid includes ei quasi avi aut ligabis illum ancillis tuis concident eum amici dividentillum negotiatiores numquid implebis sagenas pelle eius et gurgustium piscium capite illius pone super eum manum tuam memento belli nec ultra addas loqui ecce spes eius frustabitur eum et videntibus cunctis praecipitabitur non quasi crudelis suscitabo eum quis enim resistere potest vultui meo quis ante dedit mihi ut reddam ei omnia quae sub caelo sunt mea sunt (Weber et al. [1969] 2007).[10]

9 "Then he transformed himself into the shape of a dragon and grew to such a stature that it seemed he could lie around the whole world. He saw those events that occurred in Jerusalem, that Jesus Christ was breathing His last, and immediately travelled there and intended to tear away His soul at once from Him. But when he came there and thought he could swallow Him and carry Him away, the hook of divinity bit him, and the sign of the cross fell down on him, and he was caught like a fish on a fishhook, a mouse in a mousetrap or an arctic fox in a snare, according to what was previously prophesied. Then Our Lord went to him and bound him." (Bullitta 2017a, 160).

10 "Canst thou draw out the Leviathan with a hook, or canst thou tie his tongue with a cord? Canst thou put a ring in his nose, or bore through his jaw with a buckle? Will he make many supplications to thee, or speak soft words to thee? Will he make a covenant to thee, and wilt thou take him to be a servant forever? Shalt thou play with him as with a bird, or tie him up for thy handmaids? Shall friends cut him in pieces, shall merchants divide him? Wilt thou fill nets with his skin, and the cabins of fishes with his head? Lay thy hand upon him: remember the battle, and speak no more. Behold this hope shall fall him, and in the sight of all he shall be

Gary Aho considered the interpolation as native narrative material derived from the mythological fishing for the Miðgarðsormr, the World Serpent of Norse mythology, related most extensively in the poem *Hymiskviða* of the *Poetic Edda*, and subsequently treated by Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241) in the *Prose Edda*, in which Þórr, on his fishing expedition, attempts to catch the Miðgarðsormr but eventually fails (Aho 1969).[11] James Marchand subsequently discarded this theory and drew attention to Gregory the Great's *Homilia XXV in Evangelia* on the Resurrection of Christ, in which Job 41 is quoted and commented upon, a homily that made its way into the *Icelandic Homily Book*, Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 15 4to (*s.* xiii^{in}, Iceland), in which the name *Leviathan* is glossed above the line with *Miðgarðsormr* (Marchand 1975, 329):

> oc ſté h*a*ɴ þá yver ᴇɴ forna fiánda eſ h*a*ɴ lét ofriþar m*e*ɴ b*e*riasc í gegn ſér. þat ſýnde dr*ó*ttᴇɴ þa eſ h*a*ɴ mælte viþ ᴇɴ sæla iób. Mᴏɴ e*i*g*e* þu dr*a*ga leviaþan ˋmiþgarþar ormrˊ a ǫngle eþa bora kiþr h*a*n*s* meþ báuge. Sia gléypande hvalr m*e*r*ker* gróþgan aɴſota þaɴ eſ ſvelga vill aɪt maɴkyn idauþa. Agn es lagt a ǫngol en hvas broddr léynesc. þᴇɴa orm tók almáttegr goþ a ǫngle. þa es h*a*ɴ ſende ſon ſɪɴ til dáuþa sýnelegan at lík*a*m en oſýnelegan at goþdóme. Diaboluſ ſa agn líc*a*mſ hanſ þ*a*t es h*a*ɴ beit oc vɪɪde fyrfara. en goþdomſ br*o*ddr stangaþe h*a*ɴ ſvaſem ǫngoʟ. A ǫngle varþ h*a*ɴ tekᴇɴ. þ*ui*at h*a*ɴ beidesc at gr*i*pa líc*a*ms agn þ*a*t eſ h*a*ɴ sa. en vas goþdóm*s* brodr ſa eſ léyndr vaſ ſærþe h*a*ɴ. A ongle varþ h*a*ɴ tekᴇɴ. þ*ui*at h*a*ɴ fek scaþa afþui eſ h*a*ɴ béit. oc glataþe h*a*ɴ þei*m* es h*a*ɴ haſþe áþr veɪde yver. þ*ui*at ˋh*a*ɴˊ tréytesſ at gr*i*pa þaɴ es h*a*ɴ haſþe etke veɪde igegn (de Leeuw van Weenen 1993, fol. 35^{v}).[12]

cast down. I will not stir him up, like one that is cruel: for who can resist my countenance? Who hath given me before that I should repay him? All things that are under Heaven are mine." Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

11 The myth is addressed in Meulengracht Sørensen 1986. Snorri's treatment of the poem is discussed in Wolf 1977.

12 "And then He [Christ] overcame the Old Enemy, who had let hostile people go against Him. This was shown by the Lord when He spoke to the blessed Job: *You cannot drag out the Leviathan*, i.e. the Miðgarðsormr, *on a fishhook, or pierce its jaw with a ring* [Job 41:1-3 (40:20-21)]. This devouring whale symbolizes the greedy enemy that wants to swallow mankind into Death. The bait is lain on the fishhook and its sharp point remains hidden. That serpent was taken on a fishhook by the Almighty Lord when He sent His Son to death with a visible body but an invisible divinity. The Devil saw the bait of his body, which he bit and wanted to destroy, but the divinity picked him like a fishhook. He was taken on a fishhook because he was impelled to seize the bait of the body, which he could see, but the sharp point of the divinity, which was hidden, injured him. He was taken on the fishhook because he was hurt by what he had bitten and he lost what previously was under his power because he trusted himself in seizing the One upon whom he had no power." The text corresponds to Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, col. 1194.

It should nevertheless be noted that the first line of the interpolation makes no explicit reference to the Leviathan itself; instead it describes the terrifying transformation of Satan into a great dragon after his expulsion from hell. This description seems to be typologically and formally more suitable to the literary context of Revelation, Satan's rejection from hell being reminiscent of his other epic expulsion, his fall from Paradise.

As I have recently suggested, the second section concerning the defeat of Satan is not derived from the Bible itself, and the homily of Gregory the Great in the *Icelandic Homily Book*, albeit thematically and theologically suitable, cannot be considered the ultimate source of this passage, since it lacks the other two images: those of a mousetrap and a snare (cf. Bullitta 2017a, 54-69; see also Bullitta 2014a, 134-37). The analogy between the cross and a fishhook, subsequently adopted by Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century, was first employed in the fourth century by Gregory of Nyssa (*c.* 372-395) in one of his sermons to illustrate the meaning and consequence of the death of Christ.[13] Gregory of Nyssa suggested that the death of Christ was a necessary ransom paid to the Devil by God himself, who sacrificed his only Son to deliver humanity from original sin. Satan accepted God's bargain, but he was eventually defeated as he failed to recognize the duality of Christ's nature: both human and divine. Gregory tells that when the Devil, hungry for death and blinded by his greed, saw Christ in his earthly body on the cross, he rushed to gulp down Christ's body but was instead entrapped on the cross like a "ravenous fish" on a "fishhook."[14] This view, which was later labelled the 'Ransom theory of Atonement', became the most widely disseminated theory of Redemption throughout Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages.[15] In the fifth century, Augustine drew extensively on this theory and further developed it, suggesting that God consciously decided not to defeat the Devil by exercising his absolute power over him but instead preferred to conquer him through justice in order to provide a good example to humanity.[16] It is implicit then that Christ's victory over the Devil was the result of the Devil's own abuse of power since he tried to exercise over Christ the power that he possessed over earthly sinners only.

13 Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica magna*, col. 65.

14 "For since, as has been said before, it was not in the nature of the opposing power to come in contact with the undiluted presence of God and to undergo His enclouded manifestation, therefore, in order to secure that the ransom in our behalf might be easily accepted by him who required it, the Deity was hidden under the veil of our nature, so that, as with ravenous fish, the hook of the Deity might be gulped down along with the bait of flesh, and thus life being introduced into the house of death and light shining in darkness that which is diametrically opposed to light and life must vanish; for it is not in the nature of darkness to remain when light is present, or of death to exist when life is active." (Schaff and Wallace 1982, 927-73). On Gregory of Nyssa's employment of the fishhook metaphor, see especially Satran 2004, 357-64.

15 For a historical overview of the different theories of atonement, see Rashdall 1919; Aulén [1930] 1969.

16 The Devil's rights of possession are exposed in Augustine's *De Trinitate*, book 13, chapter 12, col. 1026, in a section entitled *Propter Adae peccatum iusto Dei iudicio in potestatem diaboli est genus humanum*.

Accordingly, Gregory's fishhook metaphor seems to have at least partially inspired Augustine to adopt the image of a so-called *muscipula* ('mousetrap') for the capturing of Satan on the cross, a gloomy image that was normally reserved for the temptations of Satan. While it has been recently advanced that in his writings, Augustine might have intended *muscipula* simply as a synonym to the more common *laqueus* ('snare/trap for animals and birds') and not as a specific 'mousetrap' (see Scott-Macnab 2014), it is evident that throughout the Middle Ages and modern times, the noun *muscipula* has been consistently interpreted with its specific meaning of 'trap for mice'.[17]

Of particular interest to this discussion is *Sermo* 265D entitled *De Quadragesima Ascensione Domini*, a sermon delivered against the Manicheans and their heresies, which contemplated Christ as a pure emanation of the deity and neglected his human substance. A section of the text commenting upon 1 Cor. 15:54 that reads "Death is swallowed up in victory" and entitled *Crux Christi muscipula fuit diabolo*, "The cross of Christ became a mousetrap for the devil", displays important verbal and thematic affinities to the interpolated text of *Niðrstigningar saga*:

Niðrstigningar saga	*De Quadragesima Ascensione Domini*
Þa bra hann ser i drecalike oc gørdiz þa sva mikill at hann þottesc liggia mundo umb heimenn allan utan. Hann sa þau tiþende ⟨er gørdoz⟩ at Iorsolom at Iesus Christus var þa i andlati oc for ⟨hann⟩ þangat þegar oc ætlaþi at slita ondina þegar fra honom. Enn er hann com þar oc hugþez gløpa mundo hann oc hafa meþ ser þa beit øngullinn goddomens hann enn crossmarkit fell a hann ovann oc varþ hann þa sva veiddr se⟨m⟩ fiscr a øngle eþa mus under treketti eþa sem melracki i gilldro eptir þvi sem fyrer var spat. Þa for til Dominus Noster oc bat hann (Bullitta 2017a, 137).[18]	quid ergo miraris? certe uita est christus: quare mortua est uita? nec anima mortua est, nec uerbum mortuum est: caro mortua est, ut in ea mors moreretur. mortem passus, mortem occidit: ad leonem escam in laqueo posuit. piscis si nihil uellet deuorare, in hamo non caperetur. mortis auidus diabolus fuit, mortis auarus diabolus fuit. crux christi muscipula fuit: mors christi, immo caro mortalis christi tamquam esca in muscipula fuit. uenit, hausit et captus est. ecce resurrexit christus: mors ubi est? iam in illius carne dicitur, quod in nostra in fine dicetur: absorta est mors in uictoriam. caro erat, sed corruptio non erat. manente natura qualitas immutatur: ipsa substantia, sed nullus ibi iam defectus, nulla tarditas, nulla corruptio, nulla indigentia, nihil mortale, nihil quale solemus nosse terrenum. tangebatur, tractabatur, palpabatur, sed non occidebatur (Augustine, *Sermo* 265D, 662).[19]

17 For a survey of the mousetrap metaphor in the writings of Augustine, see Berchtold 1992, 21-52.

18 "Then he transformed himself into the shape of a dragon and grew to such a stature that it seemed he could lie around the whole world. He saw those events that occurred in Jerusalem, that Jesus Christ was breathing His last, and immediately travelled there and intended to tear away His soul at once from Him. But when he came there and thought he could swallow Him and carry Him away, the hook of divinity bit him, and the sign of the cross fell down on him, and he was caught like a fish on a fishhook, a mouse in a mousetrap, or an arctic fox in a snare, according to what was previously prophesied. Then Our Lord went to him and bound him."

19 "The cross of Christ was a mousetrap for the Devil. So why be surprised? Surely, Christ is life: so why did life die? The soul did not die, the Word did not die, but the flesh died, so that Death would die in it. Having suffered Death, He slew Death; He put the bait for the lion in the snare. If the fish did not want to devour anything, he would not be caught on the fishhook.

In the Old Norse-Icelandic text, these narrative elements are presented in a different order due to the necessary reformulation and adaptation of the sermon to the plot of the pseudo-gospel. Nevertheless, the Icelandic compiler seems to be attentive by partly translating and partly accommodating all the above-mentioned similes. Accordingly, the interpolated passage states that upon the death of Christ in Jerusalem – that is before his cross at Golgotha, right above the entrance to hell – Satan wanted to tear away the soul of Christ (*slita ondina*), which, as Augustine asserts, would never die (*nec anima mortua est*). The Old Enemy craved to swallow it (*gløpa*/*devorare*), but being unable to recognize the true nature of Christ – that is, his hidden divinity (*godomens*/*verbum*) – he was instead captured (*veiddr*/*captus*) on the cross (*crossmarkit*/*crux christi*) like a fish (*fiscr*/*piscis*) on a fishhook (*øngull-inn*/*hamo*), like a mouse in a mousetrap (*treketti*/*muscipula*), or even caught in a snare (*gilldro*/*laqueo*) like an artic fox (*melracki*) – a necessary adaptation of an African lion (*leo*) into a suitable Nordic equivalent – the prey most commonly caught in traps in medieval Iceland (see Durrenberger and Gísli Pálsson 1989, 39).

Augustine's *Sermo* 265D seems to have enjoyed limited circulation in Europe and is today extant in only two twelfth-century codices: Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 4951 (*s.* xii^{in}, Rochester), and Worcester, Cathedral Library, F 93 (*s.* xii^{in}, Worcester). Although Vat. lat. 4951 was copied in England, the collection it contains shows greater similarity with Roman than Carolingian homiliaries, it resembles English collections even less, as it gives much space to the texts of Augustine, pseudo-Augustine, and Caesarius of Arles (*c.* 470-542 AD), while none of the 221 sermons is from either Bede (*c.* 673-735) or Gregory the Great (*c.* 540-604), only 57 of them are connected to Paul the Deacon's (*c.* 720-96) reconstructed homiliary, while in the Roman homiliaries, 78 are from Alan of Farfa (d. 769) and 15 from Agimundus (*c.* 700-50) (see Richards 1988, 112-20). Furthermore, the excellent state of the texts might be proof that it is a copy of a Continental collection of sermons only recently acquired by the Rochester Cathedral Library. Like the two great twelfth-century Rochester Bibles, sharing both textual and paleographic features with the northern French Bibles revised at Saint-Germain-des-Prés, the Rochester homiliary may have been brought to Rochester from Paris (or a nearby region) via

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The Devil was greedy for Death, the Devil coveted Death. The cross of Christ was a mousetrap: the Death of Christ, or rather the mortal flesh of Christ, was like a bait in the mousetrap. He came, he swallowed it, and was caught. And behold, Christ rose up again. Where is Death now? Already for His flesh can be said what will be said for ours in the end: Death is swallowed up in victory [1 Cor. 15:54]. It was flesh, but it was not corruptible. Its nature remains the same, its quality changes. The substance is the same, but there is no deficiency there, no tardiness, no corruption, no neediness, nothing mortal, nothing which we know to be earthly. He was touched, He was patted, but he was not slain." The text of the sermon has been reprinted in PLS 2, cols. 704-08.

Canterbury, which maintained strong ties with northern France throughout the twelfth century (see Floyer and Hamilton 1906, 61-84).

After a long absence from theological sources, the metaphor of the mousetrap for the cross of Christ surfaces again in the theological and exegetical writings of Peter Lombard, bishop of Paris and one of the greatest exponents of the Paris school of theology. Perhaps prompted by renewed interest in the theological writings of Augustine, the metaphor is used in his *Sententiae in quattuor libris distinctae*, a comprehensive collection of theological texts extracted from the Bible and from the relevant patristic commentaries composed by Lombard at Saint-Victor Abbey between 1157 and 1158.[20] The excerpts were systematically collected in the form of a continuous gloss divided into four main books, partitioned according to the main theological themes summarized in the articles of the Creed: the Trinity, the Creation, the Incarnation, and the Sacraments. The *Sententiae* enjoyed extensive circulation and, towards the end of the twelfth century, the completion of individual scholarly commentaries on it became a fundamental requirement for the successful completion of a bachelor's degree in theology, the so-called *baccalarii Sententiarii*, which normally lasted two years and later led to the full degree known as *baccalarius formatus* (Wawrykow 1999, 650; Grant 1996, 48). In book 3, distinction 19, chapter 1, which draws extensively on Augustine's *Sermo* 130 (a) – in which Christ is described as the Good Merchant who ransomed humanity from the Devil – Lombard illustrates how the cross functioned as a mousetrap, and Christ's blood as a bait for the devil.[21]

> Per illum ergo redempti sumus, in quo princeps mundi nihil inuenit. Unde augustinus, causam et modum nostrae redemptionis insinuans, ait: Nihil inuenit diabolus in christo ut moreretur, sed pro uoluntate patris mori christus uoluit; non habens mortis causam de peccato, sed de obedientia et iustitia mortem gustauit; per quam nos redemit a seruitute diaboli. Incideramus enim in principem huius saeculi, qui seduxit adam et seruum fecit, coepit que nos quasi uernaculos possidere. Sed uenit redemptor, et uictus est deceptor. Et quid fecit redemptor captiuatori nostro? Tetendit ei muscipulam, crucem suam; posuit ibi quasi escam, sanguinem suum. Ille autem sanguinem fudit non debitoris, per quod recessit a debitoribus. Ille quippe ad hoc

20 Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, par. 5/1-15. See also PL 192, cols. 795-96. The most extensive study on Peter Lombard is Colish 1994. A translation of all four books of the *Sententiae* is available in Peter Lombard, *The Sentences* (2007-10). The familiarity of the compiler of *Niðrstigningar saga* with this passage of Lombard's *Sententiae* and the mousetrap metaphor was postulated by Otto Gschwantler, who suggested that the translation must therefore have been compiled in the second half of the twelfth century (cf. Gschwantler 1968, 155).

21 Augustine's *Sermo* 130 (a) is available in *Sermones ad populum*, cols. 725-28.

> sanguinem suum fudit, ut peccata nostra deleret. Unde ergo diabolus nos tenebat, deletum est sanguine redemptoris: Non enim tenebat nos nisi uinculis peccatorum nostrorum. Istae erant catenae captiuorum. Venit ille, alligauit fortem uinculis passionis suae; intrauit in domum eius, id est in corda eorum ubi ipse habitabat, et uasa eius, scilicet nos, eripuit; quae ille impleuerat amaritudine sua. Deus autem noster, uasa eius eripiens et sua faciens, fudit amaritudinem et impleuit dulcedine, per mortem suam a peccatis redimens et adoptionem gloriae filiorum largiens (Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, par. 5, 1-5).[22]

Lombard again quotes Augustine's *Sermo* 130 (a) in one of his sermons on the Nativity of the Lord[23] and in his *Collectaneorum in Paulum continuatio*, citing Heb. 2:14: "through Death, He might destroy him who had the Empire of Death, that is to say, the Devil".[24] It is from this last commentary that the mousetrap simile even entered the *Glossa ordinaria* (the standard glossed Bible), which was initiated in Laon in the early twelfth century and completed in Paris and Auxerre.[25] Lombard was one of the Parisian exegetes who edited the *Glossa* in the middle of the twelfth century.

As the Apocalypse-based physical descriptions of Satan (resembling his description in Revelation) has shown, the Icelandic compiler turned to the

22 "Then through Him we have been redeemed, as in Him the Prince of the World [Satan] has found nothing. Hence, Augustine, alluding to the reason and manner of our Redemption, said: *The Devil found nothing in Christ for which He should die. Christ wished to die because that was His Father's will. Having no reason of death on account of sin, He tasted death through obedience and justice; through it He redeemed us from the servitude of the devil. Indeed, we had fallen upon that Prince of the World, who seduced Adam and made him his servant and he began to possess us almost like slaves. But the Redeemer came and the Seducer was overcome. And what did the Redeemer do to our Capturer? He set a mousetrap for him with His cross. He set there His blood almost like a bait. He has shed there His blood not because He was the debtor, therefore He receded from the debtors. He shed His blood to extinguish our sins. Therefore, what held us detained by the Devil was destroyed by the Redeemer; he detained us only through the bonds of our sins, which were the chains of the captives. He came and bound the strong one with the bonds of His Passion. He came into His house, that is, into the hearts of those where He was living, and rescued His vases, that is, us, which he had filled with his bitterness. But Our God, rescuing his vases and making them His own, poured out the bitterness and filled them with sweetness, redeeming the sins through His death and bestowing the adoption of the glory of the sons.*" Augustine's original text has been italicised.

23 The sermon has previously been wrongly attributed to Hildebert of Lavardin, archbishop of Tours (1056-1133); see Hildebert of Lavardin, *Sermones de tempore*, cols. 385A-385B. On Peter Lombard's sermons being mistakenly attributed to Hildebert, see Rosemann 2004, 353.

24 Peter Lombard, *Collectaneorum in Paulum continuatio*, 421B-421D. Heb. 2:14: *quia ergo pueri communicaverunt sanguini et carni et ipse similiter participavit hisdem ut per mortem destrueret eum qui habeat mortis imperium id est diabolum* ("Therefore, because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same: that, through Death, He might destroy him who had the Empire of Death, that is to say, the Devil").

25 The mousetrap simile occurs in the version of the *Glossa ordinaria* by Nicholas of Lyra (1270-1349). See Nicholas of Lyra, *Textus Biblie cum glossa ordinaria*, fol. 138^{r}.

Scriptures when he felt the original descriptions in the Latin *Evangelium Nicodemi* were insufficient. He must have found the cursory description of Christ's final victory over Satan, which can certainly be viewed as the focal point of the *Evangelium Nicodemi*, also equally unsatisfying. For a remedy, he may have turned to a copy of the *Sententiae* in search for pertinent passages (such as, for instance, 1 Cor. 15:54, Col. 1:13-14, Heb. 2:14-15) alluding to Christ's victory over the Devil through the cross. Given the high variance of the interlinear and marginal glosses of the *Sententiae* – each copy represented a unique attempt to assist the student with issues of language, syntax, and rhetorical techniques of the Scriptures – it is highly likely that, much as in the case of Augustine's *Sermo* 130 (a) explaining Heb. 2:14, the very copy consulted by the Icelandic compiler included a marginal gloss invoking Augustine's *Sermo* 265D with its fishhook/mousetrap/snare metaphors for the cross.

3. PARISIAN PROVENANCE

An almost immediate circulation of writings produced by the Paris school of theology in early-thirteenth-century Iceland is confirmed by the survival of two texts, produced at Saint-Victor Abbey around 1200, among the remnants of 144 Latin manuscripts of devotional literature at the Arnamagnæan Institute in Copenhagen and catalogued by Merete Geert Andersen (see Andersen 2008).

It is remarkable that already around the year 1200 Iceland owned one of the few copies of the *Eulogium ad Alexandrum papam tertium* composed by John of Cornwall in Paris between 1177 and 1178 (Andersen 2008, item 103).[26] This work greatly influenced the debate concerning the hypostatic union, which took place during the Third Lateran Council, convened by Pope Alexander III in March 1179. In his treatise, John of Cornwall criticizes Peter Lombard's Christological views, accusing him above all of nihilism in asserting that Christ had assumed a human nature only accidentally.[27] This view clashed with the classical Boethian view, which traditionally contemplated the nature of Christ as a single unit of humanity and divinity, inseparable from each other (Bradshaw 2009, 123-24). This antinihilistic position that spread rapidly throughout Europe after the Third Lateran Council (and all the more radically in the early thirteenth century) might well underlie the theological conception and interpretation of *Niðrstigningar saga*.

The second piece of evidence of the circulation of the scholastic exegetical texts in thirteenth-century Iceland is the impressive Parisian Bible dating

26 Five other manuscripts of the *Eulogium* are known today. See Curley 2006, 1038.

27 Its text has been edited in Häring 1951. On the criticism advanced against Peter Lombard's *Sententiae*, see, most recently, Monagle 2007.

from the thirteenth century and consisting of seventy leaves scattered in the bindings of several manuscripts (Andersen 2008, item 122). The text of this *Glossa ordinaria* covers the entire Old and New Testaments and transmits Peter Lombard's prologue to 1 Corinthians (incipit *Corinthii sunt Achaei*) and Gilbert of Poitiers's (1070-1154) prologue to Revelation (incipit *Omnes qui pie*).[28] Both scholars had worked at the Abbey of Saint-Victor to finalize the text of the *Glossa ordinaria* in the middle of the twelfth century.[29] It is plausible that this volume, or a similar manuscript, was the biblical source consulted by the Icelandic compiler for the insertion of the interpolations derived from Revelation, since it still transmits sections of it and might have included the entire text.[30]

4. CONCLUSION

The nature of the editorial interventions in *Niðrstigningar saga* indicates that the translation and revision of the *Evangelium Nicodemi* was undertaken by an Icelandic cleric well acquainted with the contemporary biblical glosses and commentaries produced by the exegetes of the Paris school of theology during the second half of the twelfth century. Such interventions were especially made to substantiate the original text of the apocryphon with information on Satan's intrinsic nature and on his role in Salvation history. If the seven-headed dragon of the Apocalypse is first invoked in *Niðrstigningar saga* to emphasize the monstrosity and potential distructiveness of Satan, Augustine's lurid methaphors for the cross and, by implication, the description of Satan as an infesting and greedy animal, available at that time through Peter Lombard's *Sententiae*, place great emphasis on Satan's immense pride and especially on his inability to recognize Christ's bipartite and inseparable natures: the human and the divine. Such inadequacy is implicity extended to all individuals who dared to doubt or called into question the perfect hypostasis of Christ, which had been recently reestablished during the Third Lateran Council in 1179.

Thus, in a balance created by inversion, the Deceiver *par excellence* is now deceived and conquered. Like a greedy beast that infests waters, houses, or farms, Satan is incapable of understanding the sophistication and the intrinsic mechanism of the divine traps. Due to his low and vile attributes of predatoriness and viciousness, Satan is able to see and recognize only the detectable flesh of Christ, whereas he is entirely blind to the Divine *Logos*, on which he remains hanging transfixed. It is this grave miscalculation that would eventually cause his self-destruction and final defeat, in

28 Gilbert of Poitiers's authorship of the prologue is rejected in Lobrichon 1984, 113.

29 For an overview of the great exegetical work around the *Glossa ordinaria*, see van Liere 2011, 167-70.

30 Rev. 1-4:2 and 10:10-16:16 (fols. 69^{r}–70).

a disatrous fall from a terrifying gulping dragon to a harmless mouse that concurrently fascinated and educated Icelanders throughout the Middle Ages and beyond.

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Index of Manuscripts

Cambridge,
Corpus Christi College,
41 22-23, 25, 27, 137
69 58, 67, 70
162 162
178 162
198 110, 130
201 27-28
303 20, 27, 29
Pembroke College,
23 59, 70
25 110
University Library,
Ii.2.11 26
Ii. 2. 19 59, 70

Copenhagen, Den arnamagnæanske Samling,
AM 233a fol. 30
AM 736b 4to 29
AM 764 4to 29, 130

Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana,
Pal. lat. 556 107-08
Vat. lat. 4951 186

Cork, University College Cork Library, Book of Lismore 135

Dublin,
Royal Irish Academy,
23 O 48 a-b (Cat. no. 476) (*Liber Flavus Fergusiorum*) 21, 111
23 P 16 (Cat. no. 1230) (*Leabhar Breac*) 122
Trinity College Library, 667 (F. 5. 3) 111

Durham, Cathedral Library,
A. III. 29 59, 67, 70
B. III. 11, fols. 1-135 58, 67

Engelberg, Stiftsbibliothek, 44 107

Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, 412 112

Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Aug. perg. 254 21

London, BL,
Cotton Nero E.i, vols. 1 and 2 112, 168
Cotton Otho B.x 20
Cotton Tiberius A.iii 20, 28
Cotton Titus C.xv, fol. 1 58
Cotton Vespasian D.xiv 26, 130
Cotton Vitellius A.xv, pt. I 26
Harley 652 59, 67, 70
Royal 5.E.xiii 26

Montpellier, Bibliothèque de l'Université
(École de Médicine), H 156 112

München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 28135 107-08

Oxford, Bodleian Library,
Bodley 314 (SC 2129) 58, 70
Junius 11 (SC 5123) (Junius Book) 74
Junius 121 (SC 5232) 26

Paris, BnF,
lat. 2628 106
lat. 5574 20

Rennes, Bibliothèque de Rennes Métropole, 598/15489 135

Saint-Omer, BM, 202 20, 26

Salisbury, Cathedral Library,
132 58, 70
179 70
222 112

Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, Holm perg 15 4to 183

Worcester, Cathedral Library,
F. 48 68
F. 93 59, 70
Q. 21 58, 70

Index of Texts Cited and Discussed

1 Enoch 118, 131
2 Enoch 116, 118, 121
3 Baruch 122
4 Ezra 116

Acta Pilati
see *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Latin
Acts of Philip 114
Adhortationes Sanctorum Patrum
see *Vitas Patrum*
Ælfric
Alcuini Interrogationes Sigeuulfi in Genesin 154
Catholic Homilies 12, 57, 58, 159, 162
First Series 27, 69, 72-74, 158, 162
Old English Preface 158
1 72
6 155, 163
8 154, 158-62, 166, 169, 170
11 158
14 12, 27, 57, 69-74, 103-04
15 74
18 155
27 157

31	163
32	155
34	159
35	12, 58-60, 69, 88-89, 91-93, 95-96
40	126
Second Series	68, 73, 158, 162
11	12, 57, 68, 69, 99-102
14	73-74
28	155
39	155
44	167
Lives of Saints	155, 162, 165-66
1	154
4	12, 154, 163-70
7	158
17	154, 162-66, 170
25	155
31	155
Supplementary Homilies	
11	126-27
21	127, 154
27	29, 68
Temporale Homilies, I and II	162
De Temporibus Anni	154
Glossary	154
Grammar	63
Nativity of the Virgin Mary (Assmann 3)	163
Af fangelsi Joseps	179
Airdena inna Cóic Lá nDéc ria mBráth (*The Fifteen Tokens of Doomsday*)	136
Albertus Magnus	
Commentarii in quartum librum sententiarum	118
Alcuin	
Commentaria in S. Iohannis evangelium	73

Aldhelm
Enigmata
lxxxi 30
lxxxii 30
Pseudo-Ambrose
Sermo 24 161
Anaphora Pilati 132
Ancrene Wisse 117
Apocalypse of Paul 113
Coptic 22, 131
Greek 132
Latin
see *Visio S. Pauli*
Apocalypse of Peter 113-15, 138-39, 156
Apocalypse of Thomas 113
Old English (Cameron B3.4.12.1) 21-22, 137
Apocalypse of Zephaniah 131
Apocrypha Priscillianistica 21
Augustine
De civitate Dei 181
De Trinitate 184
In Iohannis evangelium tractatus CXXIV 73, 159
Sermo 130 (a) 187-89
Sermo 265D 13, 185-86, 189
Pseudo-Augustine
Epistola de magnificentiis beati Hieronymi 134
Sermo 209 122
Sermo ad fratres in eremo 67 161

Bede
De Enoch et Haeliae 125, 139
De temporum ratione 126, 139
Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum,
Old English version 22
Benedict of Nursia
Regula (*Rule of Benedict*) 159-60

Benedikts saga 68
Betha Coluim Cille (*The Life of St Columba*) 122
Bible 39, 40, 156-57, 160, 184, 187-89
Old Testament
Gen. 1:14-18 123-24
Lev. 14 159
Isa.
30 120
30:25-26 123-24
30:26 118, 125-26, 128, 138, 140-41
65:17 123-24, 128
66 157
66:8 157
66:10 157
66:13 157
66:24 156-57
Jer. 14:6 45
Dan.
7:9 106
12:3 116
Judg. 5:31 116
Job 39, 45
21:26 165
30:29 45
40:15-24 70
40:20-21 70, 183
40: 24 71
40:25-41:26 71
41 182-83
41:6 45
Jth. 16:17 156
Sir.
7:17 156
23:19 137

New Testament

Matt.

8:1-4 159
8:1-13 158, 162
8:5-13 159
13 116-17, 119
13:43 116
17:2 106
20:1-16 40, 63
20:16 63
21:1-9 72
22:1-14 41, 58-59
26 23
27 23
27:46 73
28:3 106

Mark

9:2 106
9:42-43 157
9:43 161, 170
9:43-50 12, 157, 160-61, 164, 166, 170-71
9:45 157
9:48 157
15:34 73

John

4:43-53 159
13:1-15 72
20:11-18 70

I Cor.

5:13 160
6:9-10 164
15:41-42 125
15:54 185-86, 189

Col. 1:13-14 189

Eph. 5:15-21 59

Heb.
2:14 188-89
2:14-15 189
Phil. 2:5-11 72
Rev. 181, 184, 188
1:14 131
1-4:2 190
7:9-10 116
10:10-16:16 190
12 11
12:3 13, 181
Book of the Resurrection of Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle, Coptic 117, 132
Boniface
Enigma iv 30

Caesarius of Arles
Sermo 54 165-66
Cáin Domnaig (*The Law of Sunday*) 127
Castel of Love
see Robert Grosseteste, *Château d'amour*
Catechesis Celtica 116, 139
Christmas Sermon, Old Norwegian 136
Clement of Alexandria
Stromata, V.xi.77 131
Cotton-Corpus Legendary 59, 111-12, 168

Dead Sea Scrolls 138
1QHodayot[a], 15. 23-24 131
De morte Marie 111
Descensus Christi ad inferos
see *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Latin
Descent of the Virgin into Hell, Old Russian 115
Devil's Account of the Next World 28-29
Dormition of the Virgin
see Evodius of Rome, John of Thessalonica, and Theodosius of Alexandria

Eiríks saga víðfǫrla 31
Epiphanius of Salamis
Panarion 137
Epistle of the Apostles 113-15, 138-39
Eustathius of Trake
Encomium of St Michael the Archangel 137
Evangelium Nicodemi
see *Gospel of Nicodemus*
Evodius of Rome
Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin, Coptic 138

Genesis, Old English poem 74
Gilbert of Poitiers
Prologue to Revelation (*inc.*: *Omnes qui pie*) 190
Glossa Ordinaria 188, 190
Nicholas of Lyra's version 188
Gospel of Nicodemus 11, 13, 19, 25-28, 30-31, 179-80, 189-90
Latin
Acta Pilati 25, 180
Descensus Christi ad inferos 11, 13, 25-27, 30, 180
Old English
NicA (Cameron B8.5.2.1) 26-27
NicB (Cameron B8.5.2.2) 26
NicC (Cameron B8.5.3.1) 26
NicD (Cameron B8.5.3.2) 22-23, 27
NicE (Cameron B8.5.3.3) 27
Old Norse
see *Niðrstigningar saga*
Gnímradha in Śeseadh Lai Láin (*The Works of the Sixth Day*) 127-28
Gregory the Great
Dialogi 11, 29, 50-53, 65-69, 75, 83-85, 88, 92-97, 99-100
II.xxv.2 69, 99-100
IV.xl 51-53
IV.xl.2-5 63, 65-68, 83-85, 88, 92-94

IV.xl.10-12 67, 96-97
Old English version 66, 69, 92-101
II. xxiv 99-101
IV. xl 66-67, 92-98
Old Norse version 66, 68
Epistolae
xi 69
Homiliae in Evangelia 11, 39-41, 58-59, 63, 65-66, 70, 75, 183
xix 40, 41-47, 49-53, 63-66, 69, 83-87
xxv 70-72, 103, 183
xxviii 159
xxxviii 40-41, 47-53, 58-66, 83-85, 87-90
Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam 39, 53
Moralia in Iob 11, 39, 45, 53, 70-72
XXIX.xxvi.52 45
XXXIII.vii.14 – xii.26 70
XXXIII.ix.17 71
XXXIII.xv.30-31 70
XXXIII.xvi.32 70
XXXIII.xxix.51 46
XXXIII.xxix.52 46-47

Haymo of Auxerre
Homiliae de tempore 58-59, 73
19 159-60
81 161
100 161
Homilies, Old English anonymous
Bazire-Cross Homily ix (Cameron B3.2.31) 106
Be heofonwarum and be helwarum
(Cameron B3.2.5) 24-25, 30, 108, 136
Blickling Homily xiii (Cameron B3.3.20) 109

Easter Homily
in CCCC 41 (Cameron B8.5.3.2)
see *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Old English, *NicD*
in CCCC 303 (Cameron B8.5.3.3)
see *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Old English, *NicE*
in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121 (Cameron B3.2.28) 26
Homily on St. Michael in CCCC 41 (Cameron B3.3.24) 22
Irvine Homily vi (Cameron B3.4.2) 119-20, 139
Lambeth Homilies
xi 27
xiv 135-36
Luiselli Fadda Homily i (Cameron B3.5.5) 106-08, 139
Macarius Homily (Cameron B3.4.55) 25
Napier Homily xxix (Cameron B3.4.26) 25
Palm Sunday Homily, in CCCC 41 (Cameron B3.2.19) 23
Vercelli Homilies,
iv (Cameron B3.4.9) 22, 25
viii (Cameron B3.2.3) 122
Honorius Augustodunensis
Elucidarium 20, 31, 114, 128, 139
III.79 114, 128-29
Imago mundi 31
Hugh Ripelin
Compendium theologicae Veritatis 129
Hymiskviða 183

Infancy Gospel of the Pseudo-Matthew 179
In Tenga Bithnúa (*The Evernew Tongue*)
see *Seven Heavens Apocryphon*, Irish
Inventio S. Crucis, Old Norse
see *Kross saga*
Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XII.v.18 165
Pseudo-Isidore
Sermo 3 161

Jerome
Commentarius in Ezechielem, IX.29 44-45
Commentarius in Amos, II.5 125
John of Cornwall,
Eulogium ad Alexandrum papam tertium 189
John of Thessalonica
Sermon on the Dormition of the Virgin Mary 108-09, 111, 139

Kross saga 30

Liber de ordine creaturarum 120, 122-25, 127, 139
Liber Flavus Fergusiorum 21, 111
Life of St Margaret 20, 27, 61
Latin (*BHL* 5303) 27
Old English
in CCCC 303 (Cameron B3.3.14) 20, 27, 30-31
in London, BL, Cotton Otho B. x 20
in London, BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii (Cameron B3.3.16) 20, 28
in *Old English Martyrology* 20
Old Norse
see *Margrétar saga*
Life of St Nino, Georgian 133
Life of St Pachomius, Coptic 112

Margrétar saga 30
Maríu saga 114
Martyrdom of Paêsi and Thekla, Coptic 137

Narration of the Holy Prophet Isaiah about the Years to Come and the Antichrist
Old Bulgarian 136
Old Church Slavonic 136
Narrative of Joseph of Arimathea 132-33
Na Seacht Neamha (*The Seven Heavens*)
see *Seven Heavens Apocryphon*, Irish

New Testament Apocrypha 113, 179
Niðrstigningar saga 13, 30, 179-91
Nikephoros of Constantinople
Life of St Andrew the Fool 133

Old English Martyrology 20, 22, 111-12, 119-20, 125, 139-40

Passio SS. Viti, Modesti, Crescentiae 112
Paul the Deacon
Homiliary 58-59, 70, 186
Peter Lombard
Collectaneorum in Paulum continuatio 188
Prologue to 1 Corinthians (*Corinthii sunt Achaei*) 190
Sententiae in quattuor libris distinctae 13, 187-90
Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer (*The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great*) 118
Pistis Sophia 21, 23-25, 31, 136
Plato
Timaeus 120-21
Poetic Edda 183
The Prophets and Antichrist 117
Prose Phoenix
Old English 129-30, 140
Old Norse 129-30

Questions of Bartholomew 131
Questions of St Gregory, Armenian 133

Regularis Concordia 72
Robert Grosseteste
Château d'amour 117

Scriptures
see *Bible*
Seven Heavens Apocryphon 11, 19, 21-25, 27, 29-31, 136-37

Latin
see *Apocrypha Priscillianistica*
Irish
Fís Adamnáin (*The Vision of Adamnán*) 21, 122
In Tenga Bithnúa (*The Evernew Tongue*) 21, 121
Na Seacht Neamha (*The Seven Heavens*) 21
Old English (Cameron B3.4.12.2) 21-24, 27, 137
see also *Apocalypse of Thomas*
Sibylline Oracles 113
Smaragdus of Saint Mihiel
Collectiones in epistolas et euangelia (or *Expositio libri comitis*) 58-59
Gospel homily for Palm Sunday 72-74
Epistle homily for Palm Sunday 72-74
Gospel homily for the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost 59
Epistle homily for the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost 59
Snorri Sturluson
Prose Edda 183
Solomon and Saturn I 22, 30
Solomon and Saturn Prose Pater Noster Dialogue 30, 138

Theodosius of Alexandria
Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin, Coptic 137
The Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead 115-16
Thomas Aquinas
Summa Theologica, Supplementum, Q. 91, art. 3 117-18
Three Utterances of the Soul 105-08, 112, 139
Transitus Mariae
B^2 22, 109
Old English version (Cameron B3.3.21) 22
R (Greek recension) 109, 139
W 109-10, 112, 139-40
Two Deaths
Irish 29, 68

Old Norse 29, 68

Udhacht Mhuire (*The Testament of Mary*) 110-11

Vindicta Salvatoris 28
Visio S. Pauli 22, 139
Visio Tnugdali 31
Vision of Mary, Ethiopic 134
Vitas Patrum 28-29, 67
Adhortationes Sanctorum Patrum 29, 67
Verba Seniorum 29
Old Norse version
see *Two Deaths*

Index of Names

Abersetus 122
Adriaen, Marc 40, 45-47, 70-71, 125
Ælfric of Eynsham 12, 27, 29, 57-64, 66-75, 126-27, 139, 153-71
Æthelmær 158
Æthelred II 156
Æthelweard 158
Agimundus 186
Aho, Gary 183
Alan of Farfa 186
Albertus Magnus 118
Alcuin of York 73
Alexander III, Pope 189
Alexander, Dominic D. 75
Alighieri, Dante 121
Allen, Richard Hinckley 121
St Ambrose 122
Pseudo-Ambrose 161
Amsler, Frédéric 115
St Ananias 47
Ananias, Jewish high priest of Jerusalem 114
Andersen, Francis I. 116, 118, 121
Andersen, Merete Geert 189-90
Anderson, Rachel 61
St Andrew the Apostle 51
St Andrew the Fool 133, 141
Anlezark, Daniel 30, 138, 160
St Anstrude 112
Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Emperor 155
St Antony 112
Appleton, Helen 156
Aptowitzer, Victor 112
Aristarchus 137
Aristotle 120
Assmann, Bruno 163
Athanasius, monk in Gregory's *Dialogi* 67, 96-97
St Augustine of Hippo 13, 73, 159, 166, 181, 184-90
Pseudo-Augustine 122, 134, 161, 166, 186
Aulén, Gustaf 184

Babcock, Robert G. 58
St Basilissa 12, 168-70
Bately, Janet M. 69
Battle, Columba M. 67
Batto, Bernard F. 71
Bauckham, Richard 113-14, 157
Bazire, Joyce 106
Bede 22, 109, 125-26, 139, 186
Bedingfield, Bradford M. 159
Bellet, Paulino M. 138

St Benedict of Nursia 12, 57, 68-69, 99-102, 159-60
St Benignus 112
Bernstein, Alan E. 157
Bick, Josef 113
Boniface (Wynfrid) 30, 112
Borgnet, Auguste 118
Bori, Pier C. 40
Bouhot, Jean-Paul 41
Bouvier, Bertrand 115
Bovon, François 115
Bradshaw, David 189
Breatnach, Caoimhín 111
Bremmer, Jan N. 113
Brewer, Ebenezer Cobham 112
Brown, Peter 75
Brown, Theo 69
Budge, E.A. Wallis 117, 132, 134, 137
Bullitta, Dario 13, 26, 30, 70-71, 179-82, 184-185
Burrus, Virginia 171
Bury, Robert G. 121
Byrhtferth of Ramsey 126, 139

Caesar Augustus 132
Caesarius of Arles 165-66, 186
St Caluppan of Auvergne 61
Camiz, Mauro 68
Capelle, Bernard 109
Carey, John 21, 23-24, 115, 121-22, 135
Carney, Maura 128
Carozzi, Claude 58
Castaldi, Lucia 11-13, 25, 41, 50, 53, 58, 63-64, 66-67
Celsus 168
Cerberus 69, 180-81
Chaîne, Marius 138
Chiesa, Paolo 53
Ciccarese, Maria P. 58
Clark, Francis 40, 49-51
Clayton, Mary 20, 22, 28, 57, 109-10, 158, 162-63
Clement of Alessandria 116, 122, 131
St Clement of Metz 61
Clemoes, Peter 57, 162, 165
Colish, Martia L. 187
Colker, Marvin L. 111
Cook, Albert Stanburrough 130
Cormack, Margaret 20
Courcelle, Pierre 112
Cremascoli, Giuseppe 40
Crick, Julia 20
Cross, James E. 20, 26, 28, 32, 67, 106, 111-12, 120-21, 158
Cubitt, Catherine 156, 167
Curley, Michael 189

Dagens, Claude 75
Dales, Richard C. 120
Daley, Brian E. 109, 113
Daly, Lloyd William 107
Davies, Anthony 166
Dechow, Jon F. 24
Dekker, Kees 66
De Rubeis, Bernardo Maria 118
St Demas, the Penitent Thief 132-33
Dendle, Peter 155
de Vogüé, Adalbert 63, 65, 67, 69, 83, 92, 96, 99
Di Giuseppe, Federica 12, 57, 74
Di Sciacca, Claudia 11-12, 19-22, 24-31, 57-61, 67-68, 70-72, 74-75, 153
Díaz y Díaz, Manuel C. 124
diPaolo Healey, Antonette 22
Donahue, Charles 111
St Donatus 61
Dubois, Jean-Daniel 179
Dudley, Louise 106, 112
Duncan, Edwin 156
Dumville, David N. 22
Durrenberger, Paul E. 186

Elliott, James K. 113-14, 116, 131-33
Epiphanios, pupil of St Andrew the Fool 133
Epiphanius of Salamis 137

Erdey, Zoltan L. 161-62
Étaix, Raymond 41-42, 49, 58, 63, 66, 70, 83, 88, 103
St Eulalia 112
St Euphemia 137
Eusebius of Alexandria 180
Eustathius of Trake 137
Evelyn-White, Hugh G. 137
Evodius of Rome 138

Fenrir 69
Finnegan, Robert 157
Fiocco, Teresa 157, 161, 165
Flahive, Joseph 111
Förster, Max 22, 137
Foxhall Forbes, Helen 60
St Foy 112
Frankis, John 130
Frantzen, Allen J. 161
Friedlander, Gerald 118

García Martínez, Florentino 131
Gardiner, Eileen 31
Gatch, Milton McC. 156, 158
Gattiker, Ernst 112
Gattiker, Luise 112
Gaylord, Harry E. Jr. 122
Geller, Florentina Badalanova 118
St George 61
Ginzberg, Louis 122
Gísli Pálsson 186
Glorie, François 30, 45
Godden, Malcom R. 57-59, 61, 66, 68, 70-74, 156, 158-61, 166, 168
Gneuss, Helmut 57
Grant, Edward 187
Grant, Raymond J.S. 23
Grébaut, Sylvain 116
Green, Bernard 71
Green, Cassandra 167
Grégoire, Réginald 59
Gregory the Great 11-12, 25, 29, 39-41, 44-47, 49-53, 57-71, 73, 75, 91, 95, 99-101, 133, 156, 159, 183-86
Gregory of Nyssa 70, 184
Gregory, Tullio 58
Gretsch, Mechthild 61
Gschwantler, Otto 187
Guiliano, Zachary 59
Gulley, Alison 167-68
Gurevich, Anton J. 31
St Guthlac 28

Hall, Thomas N. 12-13, 26-28, 58-59, 110, 114, 155-56
Hanna, Ralph 129
Häring, Nikolaus 189
Hawk, Brandon W. 105, 113
Haymo of Auxerre 58-59, 73, 159-61
Hecht, Hans 66-67, 92, 96, 99
Heine, Ronald E. 121
Henel, Heinrich 154, 163
Herod the Great 155
Hildebert of Lavardin 188
Hilhorst, Anthony 22, 132
Hill, Joyce 57-59, 67, 73, 158-59
Hill, Thomas D. 31, 105, 121
Hills, Julian V. 114
Himmelfarb, Martha 157
Honorius Augustodunensis 20, 31, 114, 128, 139
Hugh Ripelin of Strasbourg 129
Hulme, William H. 22, 26-27
Hurst, David 43, 49, 85, 87, 90, 103

Indrebø, Gustav 136
Inferus 180
Isaac, Ephraim 118, 131
Isaiah 119, 126, 138-39
Isidore of Seville 165
Pseudo-Isidore 161
Izydorczyk, Zbigniew 26, 179-80

Jackson, Peter 28, 59, 111, 167-68

Jakab, Attila 113-14
James, Montague Rhodes 113-14, 116, 131
Jenott, Lance 24
Jensen, Helle 31
Jente, Richard 153
Jeremiah 157
St Jerome 44-45, 122, 125, 134
Jesus Christ 12, 21-23, 25-27, 47, 57, 60, 70-75, 104, 106, 109, 112-17, 119, 121, 126-27, 132-33, 135, 137-39, 141, 158-61, 165, 179-90
Jiroušková, Lena 22
Job 70, 182-83
St John, martyr together with St Paul 40-41, 43, 47, 49, 61, 83, 85, 87-88, 90
John III, Pope 67
John the Baptist 115
John Chrysostom 73
John the Evangelist 72, 116, 134, 137, 159
John of Cornwall 189
John of Thessalonica 108-09, 111, 139
Johnson, David F. 61, 66, 136
Johnson, Richard F. 23
Joseph of Arimathea 180
Josiah, King 157
Jugie, Martin 108
St Julian 12, 163-64, 168, 170

Kabir, Ananya Jahanara 130, 132
Kaler, Michael 132
Kålund, Kristian 130
Kelly, Henry A. 71
Kemp, Wolfgang 112
Ker, Neil R. 20-29
Keskiaho, Jesse 29, 58, 61, 75
Ketcham, Carl H. 121
Kim, Hack C. 180
Kingston, Charlotte E. 71, 75
Kleist, Aaron J. 57, 158, 162, 165

Lactantius 130
Lamech 131
Lang, Bernhard 118
Langefeld, Brigitte 66
Lapidge, Michael 27, 59, 111, 125-26, 167-68
Leclercq, Henri 112
Lees, Clare A. 166-67
Lefèvre, Yves 128-29
Leviathan 46, 70-71, 103, 182-84
Levison, Wilhelm 112
Liuzza, Roy M. 164
Lobrichon, Guy 190
Loomis, C. Grant 112
Love, Rosalind C. 13, 59
Luiselli Fadda, Anna Maria 26, 29, 106
Lundhaug, Hugo 24

Macarius 25
Mac Lean, George E. 154
Mac Niocaill, Gearóid 135
Macdermot, Violet 23-24
MacRae, George W. 132
Magennis, Hugh 20, 28, 57, 167
Magnús Már Lárusson 180, 182
Maioli, Graziano (Graziano di S. Teresa) 107
Major, Tristan 61
St Marcellinus 112
Marchand, James W. 32, 183
Marcian, Emperor 168-70
St Margaret 20, 25, 28, 61
St Mark the Evangelist 157, 161
Markus, Robert A. 75
Marsden, Richard 61
Martello, Fabrizio 53
Martin of Tours 155
Mary Magdalene 70
St Matthew the Evangelist 40, 162
Matthews, John 117

Maury, Alfred 112
Mayr-Harting, Henry 28
McCready, William D. 75
McDanell, Colleen 118
Meaney, Audrey 163, 166
Pseudo-Melito 22
Mengis, Carl 112
Metzger, Bruce M. 116, 137
Meulengracht Sørensen, Preben 183
St Michael 21-23, 108-11
Millett, Bella 117
Miltenova, Anissava 136
Mimouni, Simon Claude 109-11
Minst, Karl J. 30
Mirian III, King of Iberia 133
Miðgarðsormr 183
St Modestus 111
Momma, Haruko 153, 155
Monagle, Clare 189
Monster of Hell 19, 22
Montanus, prophet 137
Morin, Germain 166
Morris, Richard 26-27, 110, 117, 135-36
Müller, Barbara 75
Murdock, William R. 132

Najork, Daniel 114
Nana, Queen of Iberia 133
Napier, Arthur S. 25
Nic Cárthaigh, Emma 21
Nic Énri, Úna 135
Nicholas of Lyra 188
St Nino 133
Noah 130-31, 141
Norberg, Dag 69
North, John 121

Ó Dochartaigh, Caitríona 21
Ogawa, Hiroshi 155
Ogden, Daniel 20, 61, 153
O'Keeffe, James G. 127
Olsen, Derek A. 158-60
Olsen, Karin E. 22, 155
Orchard, Andy 26, 28
Origen 121
Pseudo-Origen 159
Orlov, Andrei A. 116
Osborne, Lawrence 167
Ott, Heinrich J. 168

Palmer, James T. 75
Paoli, Emore 40
Papaioannou, Kim 157, 162
St Paul the Apostle 22, 52, 72, 123-24, 131-32, 141, 164
St Paul, martyr together with St John 40-41, 43, 47, 49, 61, 83, 85, 87-88, 90
Paul the Deacon 58-59, 70, 159, 186
Paul the Hermit 112
Pelagius I, Pope 67
Pelle, Stephen 27, 105, 117, 129, 136
Peter Comestor 180
Peter Lombard 13, 180, 187-190
St Peter 23, 109-10, 112-13, 116, 137
Petkov, Julian 136
Pfeilschifter, Georg 50
St Philip 114-15, 135
Pitman, James H. 30
Plato 120-21
Pluskowski, Aleks 153
Pokorny, Julius 153
Pollard, Richard M. 69
Pontius Pilate 132
Pope, John C. 162
Pricoco, Salvatore 50, 52
Pulsiano, Phillip 112

St Quintin 112

Rashdall, Hastings 184
Rauer, Christine 20, 111-12, 119
Reinsma, Luke M. 57
Ricci, Cristina 57
Richards, Mary P. 186

Riches, Samantha J.E. 20
Ritari, Katja 29, 68, 107
Rivière, Jean 109
Roach, Levi 156
Robert Grosseteste 117
Robinson, Forbes 138
Robinson, Fred C. 29
Robinson, Will 153
Rosemann, Philipp W. 188
Rosenstiehl, Jean-Marc 132
Rosweyde, Heribert 67
Rowell, Edd 157
Rudolf, Winfried 29
Rufinus of Aquileia 70
Ruggerini, Maria Elena 23
Russell, Jeffrey B. 71
Rusticiana 51
Rydén, Lennart 134

Salisbury, Joyce E. 153, 157
Salvador-Bello, Mercedes 30
Satan 13, 21, 25, 27, 30, 70-71, 74, 97, 122, 131, 180-81, 184-186, 188-190
  Beelzebub 180
  Behemot 70-71
  the Deceiver 190
  the Devil 28, 137, 183-89
  Lucifer 122
Satran, David 184
Savage, John J. 181
Schaff, Philipp 184
Scheck, Thomas P. 45
Schmidt, Carl 23-24
St Scholastica 112
Scott, Alan 120, 122
Scott, Penelope 155
Scott-Macnab, David 185
Scragg, Donald G. 25, 122
Secondinus of Taormina 41, 47, 53
Semple, Sarah 157
Seymour, St John D. 111
Shakespeare, William 121
Shoemaker, Stephen J. 138
Silverstein, Theodore 22, 132
Simek, Rudolf 30
Simonetti, Manlio 50, 52
Skeat, Walter W. 162-63
Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel 58-59, 72-74, 159
Smetana, Cyril 59, 159
Smith, Kevin G. 161-62
Smyth, Marina 120, 122, 124
Snorri Sturluson 20, 183
Sparks, Hedley F.D. 131
Stafford, Pauline 167
Staines, Robert G. 71-72
Stanton, Robert 61
Stenton, Frank M. 156
Stephen, Flemish clerk 112
Stevenson, Jane 22
Stokes, Whitley 136
Stone, Michael E. 116, 133
Stouck, Mary-Ann 112
Straw, Carole 75
Suchier, Walther 107
Sühling, Friedrich 112
Swan, Mary 27, 57, 67

Tamburr, Karl 26
Tăpkova-Zaimova, Vassilka 136
Teresi, Loredana 24-25, 30, 67, 107-08, 136, 162
Theodore, monk in an exemplum from Gregory's *Dialogi* 52, 66, 88, 94
Theodosius of Alexandria 137
St Thomas, apostle 22
Thomas Aquinas 117-18, 140
Thomas, Daniel 158
Thompson, Stith 112, 120
Thompson, Victoria 153-55, 161, 171
Thornbury, Emily V. 26, 154-55
Thorpe, Benjamin 91, 95, 101, 104, 159
Tigchelaar, Eibert J.C. 131
Touati, Charlotte 23-24

Trahern, Joseph B. Jr. 166
Trask, Richard M. 165
Tristram, Hildegard L.C. 156
Turville-Petre, Gabriel 182
Tveitane, Mattias 29, 68

Unger, Carl R. 29, 66-68, 114
Upchurch, Robert K. 154, 163-64, 166-69
Uriel, angel 118

van Esbroeck, Michel 109
van Liere, Frans 190
van Os, Arnold Barel 117
Veilleux, Armand 112
Vergil 121
St Vitus 111-12, 139-40
Volmering, Nicole 21-24

Wærferth, Bishop of Worcester 66, 69
Wack, Mary F. 107
Walker, Alexander 132
Wallace, Henry 184
Wardrop, Margery 133
Warner, Rubie D.-N. 130
Wasserstein, David 121
Watson, Francis 113-14
Wawrykow, Joseph 187
Weber, Robert 181-82
Weicker, Georg 112
Wenger, Antoine 109
Whatley, E. Gordon 59, 111, 168
Whitelock, Dorothy 127
Wieland, Gernot R. 156
Wilcox, Jonathan 61
Willard, Rudolph 30, 106-07, 111
Williams, Ann 156
Williams, Frank 137
Wilmart, André 109, 116
Wintermute, Orval S. 131
Wolf, Alois 183
Wolf, Kirsten 20, 66, 68, 112, 179
Wood, Sarah 129
Woods, Barbara A. 69
Wordsworth, William 121
Wright, Charles D. 22, 25-26, 28-29, 67-68, 105-07, 113, 121, 136, 138
Wright, J. Edward 131

Yerkes, David 66

Zaffuto, Rosanna 25
Zebedee 134
Zenkovsky, Serge A. 115
Zeno 120
Zettel, Patrick H. 59, 168
Zimmermann, Odo J. 100
Zupitza, Julius 154

Abstracts

C. Di Sciacca: *Feeding the Dragon. A Foreword*

This essay introduces some of the key themes of the present volume and presents a résumé of the project that underlies it. It will be argued that the two widespread motifs of the devouring devil, especially in the guise of a dragon, and the mouth of hell coalesced into the distinctively early English zoomorphic mouth of hell and that this coalescence was probably triggered by two apocrypha especially popular in early medieval England, the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. Relevant textual and manuscript evidence affords intriguing insights into this syncretic blending, as well as hinting at the milieu where such a blending may have been endorsed and popularised, if not initiated. Finally, significant analogues from the Scandinavian context will be presented, suggesting that the same apocryphal eschatology could have reached Scandinavia as part of that network of exchanges of men and books which demonstrably crisscrossed the North Sea in the early Middle Ages.

L. Castaldi: Recedite, ecce draconi ad devorandum datus sum. *The Devouring Dragon Topos in the Works of Gregory the Great*

The article deals with the exemplum of a young sinner saved from the jaws of the dragon/Leviathan by the prayers of some monks. The story is presented twice in the *Homiliae in Evangelia*: it can be found in *Homilia* XIX of *Liber* I and in *Homilia* XXXVIII of *Liber* II. Actually, of *Homilia* XIX there are two recensions (α and β) and the scales (*squamae*) of the dragon/

Leviathan are found only in recension α, but not in the later β; similarly, the scales are not even mentioned in *Homilia* XXXVIII. Gregory's removal of the scales from the description of the dragon in the *Homiliae in Evangelia* is justified by exegetical *loci* in which the dragon's scales represent the sins of the wicked, whose hard surface only God can pierce (and not simple monks). Surprisingly, in the third version of the story, found in *Dialogi* IV.xl, the scales (*squamae*) appear again in the description of the dragon. These data, together with other elements that reveal a patchwork structure, raise again the problem whether all the books of *Dialogi* are by Gregory, or whether the last book or last two books were completed by collaborators on the pontiff's death.

C. Di Sciacca: efne her is cumen an draca þe me sceal forswelgan. *Ælfric's Take on Gregory the Great's Swallowing Dragons*

This paper discusses Ælfric's take on the imagery of the swallowing devil in three of the Catholic Homilies: the homily for the twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost (CH I. 35), the homily for St Benedict's Day (CH II. 11), and the homily for Palm Sunday (CH I. 14). In all three homilies, the antecedent of the demonic devourer has ultimately been traced to Gregory the Great, although, as is often the case with Ælfric, the ultimate patristic source has been mediated by Carolingian compilers and integrated with echoes of ingrained biblical reading, exegetical learning, liturgical drill, and familiar stories within the monastic context. Through a detailed comparative analysis of the primary sources, this essay will try to clarify the relationship between Ælfric's homilies and their source-texts, both ultimate and intermediate, as well as assessing Ælfric's distinctive contribution to the imagery of the devouring dragon, a veritable topos of early English demonology and eschatology which proved instrumental in conveying key concepts of Christian theology and eschatology in captivating and exemplary narratives.

T.N. Hall: *"Their Souls Will Shine Seven Times Brighter Than the Sun". An Eschatological Motif and Its Permutations in Old English Literature*

Early English eschatology is notoriously fond of motifs structured around numbers: the three utterances of the soul, the three hosts of Doomsday, the four kinds of death, the five likenesses of hell, the seven joys of heaven, the fifteen signs of Doomsday, and so forth. Most of these enumerative motifs are relatively fixed and consistent and have been carefully studied. They occur repeatedly in Old English and early Irish and Latin texts under Insular influence. But one such enumerative motif that has not been closely

examined is the one discussed in this essay, not so much a single motif as a cluster of interrelated motifs that are united by their fixation on an image multiplied by a factor of seven. The essay distinguishes five main permutations of this motif (and a number of derivative variants), and in some cases suggests key factors in their origins and development.

F. Di Giuseppe: Þær bið æfre ece fyr and undeadlic wyrm. *The serpent of Hell in Ælfric's Literary Corpus*

Amidst the many beasts of classical antiquity as well as of Judeo-Christian and Germanic traditions, the serpent stands out not only as a symbol of evil but also for its ambivalence. This paper will place special emphasis on Ælfric of Eynsham's works where the eschatological punishment of unrepentant sinners involves motifs from Mark 9:43-50, namely the eternal serpent and the unquenchable fire. The three texts under discussion, namely the *Homily for the Third Sunday after Epiphany*, *On Auguries*, and the *Passion of St Julian and His Wife Basilissa*, offer a way to consider how the serpent of Mark 9:43-50 is embedded in Ælfric's eschatological approach to the conflict between Good and Evil, inciting people to follow a Christian conduct that will save them from the jaws of the *undeadlic wyrm*. While *On Auguries* focuses on those guilty of idolatry and the *Homily for the Third Sunday after Epiphany* conveys the spiritual meaning of Christ's healing miracles, the *Passion* presents an exemplary tale of resistance against hostile forces.

D. Bullitta: *From Gulping Dragon to Harmless Mouse. Christ's Deception and Entrapment of Satan in* Niðrstigningar saga

The present essay aims at surveying two of the four interpolations of *Niðrstigningar saga*, in which Satan is first described as the seven-headed dragon of Revelation then figuratively entrapped on the Cross of Christ in Jerusalem "like a fish on a fishhook, a mouse in a mousetrap or a fox in a snare". It is argued that the latter metaphors are likely derived from Augustine's *Sermo* 265D through a marginal gloss to Peter Lombard's *Sententiae*. It is also suggested that the typological connection between the historical Harrowing of Hell and Christ's ultimate dealing with Satan of the first interpolation renders the Icelandic translation more topical and confers on it a more liturgical character. Conversely, the second interpolation places great emphasis on Satan's inability to recognize Christ's inseparable natures, the human and the divine, and might well reflect anti-nihilistic positions that spread rapidly throughout Europe after the Third Lateran Council (1179).

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Scrivere di tessuti, abiti, accessori. Studi in onore di Liana Nissim (Tomo I)

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Scrivere di tessuti, abiti, accessori. Studi in onore di Liana Nissim (Tomo II)

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Scrivere di tessuti, abiti, accessori. Studi in onore di Liana Nissim (Tomo III)

| 13 |

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| 29 |

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Studi sulla citazione in contesti europeo ed extraeuropeo

| 30 |

Marcella Uberti-Bona
Geografías del diálogo.
La traducción en la obra de Carmen Martín Gaite

| 31 |

Sara Sullam (a cura di)
Filigrane

| 32 |

Damiano Rebecchini, Raffaella Vassena (eds.)
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| 36 |

Camilla Binasco
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| 37 |

Gabriele Bizzarri
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| 38 |

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in collaborazione con Simone Ferrari e Alice Nagini
Dante nelle letterature straniere. Dialoghi e percorsi

| 39 |

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strategie di complicità nella scrittura di finzione

| 40 |

Moira Paleari (a cura di)
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| 41 |

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Sui sentieri delle lingue. Sistemi linguistici tra movimento e complessità

| 42 |

Sandra Lorenzano
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| 43 |

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| 44 |

Claudia Di Sciacca, Andrea Meregalli (eds.)
Feeding the Dragon. An Eschatological Motif in Medieval Europe

This book consists of six original essays concerning two popular eschatological motifs of medieval Europe: the devouring devil, especially in the guise of a dragon, and the zoomorphic mouth of hell, arguably a distinctive English adaptation of the anthropomorphic mouth of hell of classical antiquity.

Over a time span ranging from late antiquity to the late Middle Ages and stretching across three languages, Latin, Old English, and Old Norse, the topos of the devouring demonic monster, a veritable commonplace across cultures and ages, is investigated in a variety of texts, including the Holy Scripture, homiletic and hagiographic works by authors such as Augustine of Hippo, Gregory the Great, and Ælfric of Eynsham, and apocryphal writings, e.g. the *Seven Heavens Apocryphon* and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, especially its latter section, the *Descensus Christi ad inferos*.

By detailing the creative interaction of a wide range of influences and the various practices of appropriation and adaptation of a vast stock of source material, both ultimate and intermediate, the contributions afford relevant case studies of the densely interlingual and intertextual modes of textual production, transmission, and reception in the European Middle Ages. Advancing our understanding of the cultural and textual networks of the period, this book will prove an important resource for anyone interested in the dynamic process of mediation between past and present, pagan and Christian, orthodoxy and apocrypha, exotic and local that makes up medieval literary and figurative culture.

Contributions by Dario Bullitta, Lucia Castaldi, Federica Di Giuseppe, Claudia Di Sciacca, Thomas N. Hall.

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