EPIC EXEGESIS AND THE USE OF VERGIL IN THE EARLY BIBLICAL POETS

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The Latin Christian biblical poets of late antiquity are customarily divided into two groups: a) those who keep rather strictly to a "paraphrase" of the scriptural narrative, and b) those who go "beyond paraphrase" in order to develop imaginative and dramatic interest or allegorical and typological commentary. Thus Juvencus and "Cyprianus" Gallus, the straightforward paraphrase-makers of the New and Old Testaments respectively, are set apart, usually with disparagement, from Proba, Sedulius, Victorius, Dracontius, Avitus, and Arator, the poets who are noted, and sometimes praised, for exercising a degree of poetic or exegetical freedom from the sacred text.[1]

Although this conventional distinction is neither false nor useless, it should not be allowed to distract our attention from the essential character-istics shared by both kinds of poets: in their various ways, they all have "interpreted" some portion or theme of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures in the "medium" or "language" of the Greco-Roman hexameter epic tradition. The recognition in all their works of a collective and personal achievement of *cultural synthesis* can provide a sound starting point for a new critical approach.

It is important for us to focus on the common characteristics of these poets because their proper appreciation has been distorted by the special emphases of the established modern disciplines. Caught as they are in a "no-man's land" between Patristic / Biblical and Classical / Literary studies, it is difficult to ask the right critical questions about them. When the

distinction between "mere" paraphrastic and more poetic or exegetical
methods is allowed to overcome our sense of what they have in common, our
study of the biblical poets is guided by the interests of one or the other
of these two disciplines, leading us to ask at the outset to what extent they
"depart" from the scriptural text and thus produce better poetry (like Avitus)
or become more recognizably exegetical (like Arator).[2]

Regardless of how closely they seem to keep to the text or how drasti-
cally they seem to reshape it, we should never forget two things: first,
that they are all, as poets, equally faithful to certain fundamental require-
ments of the traditional hexameter epic medium, and second, that they are all,
as Christian poets, equally engaged in the traditional Judaeo-Christian
enterprise of actualizing sacred history for a particular human audience.
In this article I propose to show how current critical approaches to the
biblical poets tend to obscure this simple but all-important fact of cultural
synthesis, and I will then attempt to illustrate its presence in passages
from three roughly contemporary poems (the first half of the fifth century)
on both sides of the customary divide: from the *Heptateuchos* of Cyprianus
Gallus (a "merely paraphrastic" poet), and from the *Carmen Paschale* of Caelius
Sedulius and the *Alethia* of Claudius Marius Victorius (both of whom go beyond
"mere paraphrasis").

By emphasizing the cultural synthesis we will also be better prepared
to face another problem even more fundamental than the divisions of modern
disciplines: the synthesis of Christian and Classical, if acknowledged, is
generally held to have been a failure in the work of these poets. Christine
Mohrmann speaks of the "disappointment of the modern reader at this treatment
inflicted on the Bible by the mediocre technique of pedantic versifiers,"[3]
while E.R. Curtius calls the whole tradition of biblical epic from Juvencus
to the eighteenth-century Klopstock "a hybrid with an inner lack of truth,
a *genre faux*," and maintains that "the Christian story, as the Bible pre-
sents it, admits no transformation into pseudo-antique form. Not only does
it thereby lose its powerful, unique, authoritative expression, but it is
falsified by the genre borrowed from antique Classicism and by the con-
comitant linguistic and metrical conventions."[4] Since neither of these
authorities can be taken to be opponents of a synthesis of Christian and
Classical *per se*, it must be the peculiar form the synthesis takes in the
biblical poets which causes their annoyance and which, consequently, requires
defense.

Fortunately, amidst the recent rise of interest in early Christian
Latin poetry of all varieties,[5] two full-length works have now been specially

devoted to the biblical poets by Reinhard Herzog[6] and Michael Roberts,[7] and
have thus taken us a long way toward the solution of the first or "discip-
linary" problem by establishing the general study of these poets as a dis-
tinct field for critical analysis and appreciation. While not intending to
dispute in detail the many valuable observations presented in these two works,
I would like to focus on the opposing theories of biblical poetry on which
they are founded, in order to clarify the need for a new approach based on
the idea of cultural synthesis. Although both Herzog and Roberts present
constant evidence for such a synthesis, and show no discomfort with it, both
their theories require an undue emphasis on one of the two traditions at the
expense of the other, and thus serve to perpetuate the old disciplinary dis-
tortions in a disguised form.

Herzog emphasizes the "Christian" side at the expense of the "Classical."
Basing his interpretation on the theories of the school of form-criticism
(*Formgeschichte*),[8] he explains the development of the biblical epic as a
further continuation of the Christian modes of expression (as defined by the
form-critical school), already present in the New Testament, but with the
fourth-century biblical epic "moving into the aesthetically autonomous
expression-world of antiquity."[9] The techniques of the ancient epic are
"received" by this poetry in the function of a devotional "intensification"
of the scriptural narrative.[10] This process, however, is not to be thought
of as a genuine continuation of the Greco-Roman *epos*: Herzog speaks of the
Destruktion of the antique genre brought about by its incorporation into the
biblical epic.[11] There is a "heteronomous" relationship between the literary
and aesthetic values of the ancient epic and the devotional and edifying
(*erbaulich*) intent of the biblical poets.[12]

With such an explanation we seem not to have gone beyond Curtius' notion
of the *genre faux*: all the "didacticism" is ascribed to the Christian side,
while the Greco-Roman epic tradition is assumed to have only a "literary" or
"aesthetic" nature, at cross-purposes with the edifying intent of the
Christian poet, and only passively absorbed, as disintegrated elements, into
the new unity of Christian form.[13] To understand the biblical epic in this
manner, however, is to neglect the highly serious and socially-central,
educative function of the ancient epic, a function which had remained
relatively constant from before Homer to late antiquity, and which was
consciously assumed by the Christian poets. As Havelock has shown so
vividly in his *Preface to Plato*, the Honeric poems were "the sole vehicle of
the group *paideia*"[14] which provided, in easily memorizable and deeply
pleasurable form, an encyclopedic knowledge and a magnificent array of moral

exempla through the concrete visualization of acting persons.[15] The poems
of Homer were considered at once the most beautiful form of language and the
most essential mode of ethical and even technical instruction: in the
Hellenistic period, the new schools of rhetoric (which applied the epic
language-arts to prose and oratory) and philosophy (which provided a more
objective method of acquiring knowledge and wisdom) did not supplant the
fundamental educative role of the epic as taught by the grammatical school.[16]
The epic also remained the highest ideal for literary aspiration, enshrining
popular science (Aratus' *Phainomena*) as well as mythical and historical
heritage (Apollonius of Rhodes, Callimachus, Rhianos, et al.). Among the
Romans, Vergil's *Aeneid* found a place prepared for it in the grammatical
schools by Livius Andronicus and Ennius,[17] and in the fourth century it was
still supplying the same "group *paideia*" for the leaders of Roman society as
had Homer for the Greeks,[18] but with a new and distinctively Roman "vatic"
dimension, with its universal moral symbolism and its story of the heroic
assumption of a providential task in history, shown by the poet to have lain
in the very seed of Romanitas from the beginning.[19]

Vergil's success, at once literary and pedagogical, did not reduce the
desire for further excursions into myth, history, and science by later
practitioners who followed his lead.[20] Through the gradually changing moral
and political climate, the socially-central purpose, and the high aspiration
-- both literary and pedagogical -- to mold minds and hearts by epic poetry
remained constant, and the grammatical schools still provided the vehicle
for a life-long education, based on the memorization of the poets. The
Christian makers of biblical epic found in their Faith and their Scriptures
a new opportunity to fulfill this ancient need. Without this long tradition
of pagan epic *Erbaulichkeit*, the *Erbaulichkeit* of the biblical epic could
not have existed and could not have gone on to play a dominant role in medi-
aeval education:[21] the "expression-world" of antiquity was far from being
"aesthetically autonomous," especially with regard to the epic and its basic
pedagogical function.

Roberts, on the other hand, intends to redress the balance, and although
not disagreeing with Herzog in understanding the biblical epic as "an
expression of the devotional needs of the Christian community," wishes to
"set it in a continuing literary tradition which can be traced to the classi-
cal period," instead of emphasizing with Herzog the "differentiating character-
istics of the biblical epic as a genre."[22] According to Roberts, then, the
biblical epic was created by the application to the scriptural text of the
technique of paraphrase or elegant re-wording, which preserves the meaning

of the text used for a base, an exercise taught in the schools of rhetoric
since the Hellenistic era and justified in theory and practice by Isocrates,
Cicero, and Quintilian.[23] Roberts shows in detail the evidence in the
biblical poets of the omission, transposition, and amplification of material,
the obedience to rhetorical precepts in the ordering of discourse, and the
widespread use of figures of speech and thought, and is enabled by the
application of these common criteria to set in order the wide variety of
approaches taken by the poets to their task.[24]

Although this method is certainly fruitful and illuminating, it is based
on a theory which is historically inaccurate in two important respects. The
first problem involves the nature of the composition of epic poetry in ancient
times. The *rhetorical school* tradition, though it provided necessary support,
could not in itself have been the *primary* source of epic poetry, pagan or
Christian.[25] The rhetorical exercise of paraphrase was exclusively used, as
Roberts shows, for the re-casting of prose into prose, verse into prose, or
(very rarely) verse into verse.[26] When in late antiquity prose texts (of
Scripture or hagiography) are "re-cast" into verse, it is a new flowering
of the *epic poetic* tradition which had been adapting prose texts (of science,
history, and philosophy) to its own purposes since the Hellenistic era.
Furthermore, the tradition of the epic which supplied this basic motive was
transmitted, as mentioned above, by the grammatical schools, and thus the
aspiration to create epic, as well as the fundamental basis for its creation
(the thorough learning of models), would have been transmitted to the would-
be maker of epic at a much earlier phase of his education. By the time he
came to the rhetorician, the intending poet would only be learning the names
and the systematic application in prose and oratory of figures and elegant
modes of expression learned long before *by example* from the study of Vergil
and the other poets in the grammatical school.

Finally, and most important, the practical training of the epic poet
was a deeply personal and traditional process, bound up with the use of the
hexameter, and it was not the responsibility of either the grammatical or
rhetorical schools.[27] This again shows a continuity reaching back beyond
Homer. The practical training of the oral epic poet, sketched so convincing-
ly by A.B. Lord with reference to the modern South Slavic tradition,[28]
involved a long spiritual process of re-integrating the phrases, lines,
scenes, stories, and ideas of revered predecessors into new creations, and
this was not essentially changed by the advent of literacy. In the words
of W.F. Jackson Knight, "the integration of words, phrases, and lines is a
continuous thread, delicately and infinitely complex, running from Homer

through Greek and Latin poets to Vergil, then all through Vergil's own work,
and onwards to the successors who learnt from him. A phrase may start in
some Greek poem, and by combinations and alterations live on until it starts
a new history in Vergil's mind, and a sequence of developing appearances in
his work, gathering power and depth of meaning on its way. Sometimes, of
course, the history of Vergil's expressions might be said to start in Vergil's
own mind, for he may be the first to associate together, into a new complex,
sounds, thoughts, and words never put together before. But often, and
probably most often, the history and ancestry goes back to earlier poetry,
sometimes old, and sometimes almost or quite contemporary."[29]

The detailed demonstration that this same tradition was carried on by
the biblical poets, who made their own not only pagan poetry but also the
recent poetry of their fellow Christians, and that they thereby founded the
diction, imagery, and Christian tone of mediaeval Latin epic, is one of
Roberts' many valuable contributions.[30]   By the same token, however, it shows
that the real basis for the "continuing literary tradition" that goes back
to Classical antiquity is the epic poetic tradition itself and not primarily
a set of practices taught in the rhetorical schools, even though these
practices were naturally used by poets (from whose ancient methods rhetoric
originally sprang) as a traditional means for the achievement of their end.

The second major difficulty with Roberts' interpretation brings us
back to the question of cultural synthesis. In line with his emphasis on
rhetoric, Roberts characterizes the common purpose of all the biblical poets
as the motive to improve stylistically the scriptural text, though this motive
is "overlaid in varying degrees with a more characteristically Christian
purpose of spiritual instruction, moral edification, or biblical exegesis."[31]
To put it this way is to emphasize the "Classical" at the expense of the
"Christian," by superimposing a "secondary" Christian purpose onto an under-
lying rhetorical motive. The relationship of all these poets to their prose
text, however, was radically determined by the peculiar nature of that text
as the holy book of Jews and Christians: their poetic techniques are all
fundamentally *exegetical*, from the "mere paraphrastic" to the most poetically
developed or doctrinal.   This means that the whole range of their poetic
activity is to be understood not merely in terms of the Greco-Roman tradition
but as a genuine manifestation of a completely distinct Judaeo-Christian
educational tradition at least as old as Homer: the actualization for a
contemporary audience of the sacred history of God's dealings with mankind,
first with the Jews but after Christ with all humanity.

In order to grasp this we need to widen our notion of exegesis, which
we tend to associate with the difficult prose works of Origen, Jerome, Ambrose,
or Augustine on the one hand, or with the more popular liturgical or catechet-
ical sermon on the other. Both of these types of writings, whose difference
from the Greco-Roman poetic genres is not doubted, are Christian continuations
of ancient Judaic *midrash*, or method of studying and explaining Scripture
and its meaning for the people of Israel, according to the changing needs of
contemporary experience.[32] Such interpretation involved the "use of Scripture
to explain Scripture," the explication of small details or large themes in
order to actualize the scriptural account in terms of contemporary experience,
and the assumption of a synthetic view of the whole history of salvation.[33]
The various forms of literature that resulted from this activity form not
only much of the Old Testament,[34] but also the Aramaic *targumim* (pre-Christian
paraphrase-translations of the Bible) and the two main kinds of Rabbinic
exegesis, *midrash haggadah* and *midrash halakhah*.[35] The person of Jesus Christ
himself participates in this tradition, and provides its key, while initiat-
ing the Christian interpretation of both Testaments.[36] The various forms
such teaching took was determined by the consistent purpose -- bound up with
a "religion of the book" -- to bring to the faithful in various circumstances
the knowledge of God and his manner of dealing with humanity, as revealed in
the words and actions of the past and as eventually enshrined in the canon-
ical Scriptures.[37]

The late antique biblical epic, then, is not primarily motivated by the
desire of a rhetorician-poet to "improve" the style of a text: the reverence
of the poets for the Scriptures, as well as the contemporary flowering of
studies on the biblical text itself, as Judith McClure has shown, would not
permit this purely "Greco-Roman" definition of their enterprise.[38] I would
suggest that what they were doing, in their capacity as epic poets, was at
the same time something fundamentally "Judaeo-Christian": making the
Scripture and its meaning "come alive" for the ancient mind that had so long
been attuned to the deeply pleasurable teaching method of the epic. In
doing this they are going beyond translation to actualize the meaning of
Scripture to a mental and emotional world of leading importance within
ancient society, an educational context that could never be reached to the
same degree by either the liturgical sermon or the prose exegetical treatise.
This meant addressing an audience which, being both Christian and educated,
may have been well acquainted with both of these other forms. The tradition
of Greco-Roman *epos* thus made possible a new or third kind of Christian
exegesis which gave special emphasis to the historical narrative, while the

Judaeo-Christian tradition of scriptural interpretation made possible a new kind of Classical epic which brought personal devotion and theological teaching to the fore. In a just critical theory of this poetry neither of the two cultural traditions can finally be subordinated to the other. Whenever prose exegetical methods or sources are used, they are adapted to the epic-poetic purpose, with its emphasis on the concrete visualization of actions, its use of traditional diction and rhetoric, and its ancestral, rhythmically-keyed moral atmosphere; whenever poetic techniques find fuller realization, they do so by advancing the exegetical intention to actualize the sacred history as revealed in the Scriptures for a human audience with particular needs.

Understood in these terms, the late antique biblical epic becomes intelligible not only in all its personal variety but also in relation to other kinds of literature. It belongs to the Classical epic tradition, though it differs in its exegetical nature; it belongs to Christian exegetical literature, though it differs in being epic poetry; finally, it inaugurates the long tradition of Western Christian epic -- including Old English poetry, mediaeval "Monastic" and "Scholastic" Latin epic, and the Latin or vernacular works of Dante, Vida, Du Bartas, Milton, and Klopstock -- but differs from these in language, learning, and poetic tradition by the limits of its late antique setting.[39]

One of the most important characteristics of this milieu was the reverence felt for Vergil, and although other Latin poets (both old and contemporary, pagan and Christian) were also widely used, the places where Vergilian phrases, lines, or ideas can be recognized are particularly well-suited for illustrating the cultural synthesis of the late antique biblical epic. In what follows we will observe, in three passages of increasingly wider scope, how the personal and traditional poetic experience gained from reverent study of the Aeneid works hand in hand with the Judaeo-Christian method of actualizing and interpreting Scripture to become embodied in a new or epic exegesis of the biblical narrative.[40]

Sometime in the first half of the fifth century, a Gallic poet traditionally, but not with certainty, named "Cyprianus" undertook to make an epic hexameter interpretation of the Old Testament.[41] Only the first seven books survive intact (hence the name Heptateuchos), but the poet's thorough, practically line-by-line method makes for a substantial work. Although he has tried to abbreviate some of the more intractable material from Leviticus and elsewhere, the result is rather slow-moving, especially in comparison with the selective approach to the Old Testament taken by Sedulius or Avitus.

However, one particular advantage of "Cyprianus'" method is the opportunity
he provides of seeing a vast landscape with considerable detail: many subtle,
human, and divine beauties of the story of the Patriarchs and the people of
Israel are allowed to come alive in the Vergilian-epic atmosphere that would
be omitted in a more summary treatment.[42]

One very beautiful example of this can be seen in the poet's treatment
of Moses in dialogue with the Lord at the burning bush. The Latin text of
Scripture which he used cannot be determined exactly, but it may not have
diverged much from this passage (Exodus 4:10-14) taken from the *Codex
Lugdunensis*:[43]

> (10) Dixit autem Moyses ad Dominum: Precor, Domine: non sum dig-
> nus ante hesternam vel nudustertiam diem, neque ex quo coepisti
> loqui cum famula tuo: gracili enim voce et tardiore lingua sum
> ego. (11) Dixit autem Dominus ad Moysen: Quis dedit os homini,
> et quis fecit mutum et surdum, videntem et caecum? nonne ego
> Dominus Deus? (12) Et nunc vade, et ego aperiam os tuum, et sub-
> monebo te quae debeas loqui. (13) Et dixit Moyses ad Dominum:
> Precor, Domine: provide qui possit ire alium, quem mittas. (14)
> Et iratus factus est iracundia Dominus ad Moysen, et dixit: Nonne
> ecce Aron frater tuus Levitis? Quem optime novi, quia loquens
> loquetur ipse tibi . . . .

> ((10) Now Moses said to the Lord: "I beg you, Lord: I am not
> worthy, neither yesterday nor the day before, nor ever since you
> began to speak with me, your servant: I have a delicate voice and
> am very slow of speech." (11) But the Lord said to Moses: "Who
> gave man his mouth, and Who has made him mute or deaf, seeing or
> blind? Is it not I, the Lord? (12) So now go forth, and I shall
> open your mouth, and I will suggest to you what you are to say."
> (13) And Moses said to the Lord: "I beg you, Lord: provide
> another man to go, whom you might send." (14) And the Lord, made
> angry at Moses, said: "Behold, is there not Aaron the Levite, your
> brother? I know him very well, that he will speak for you . . . .")

This passage occurs toward the end of the dialogue, after the Lord has already
given Moses ample instruments of power and persuasion with the staff that
changes to a serpent and the withered and healed hand (Exodus 4:1-9); he
has already instructed Moses about his mission, and has repeatedly suffered
his lack of confidence (Exodus 3:11, 13; 4:1). At this point in the dialogue
it is becoming clear that Moses' humility is becoming lack of faith in God's

power to provide, and thus the Lord is said to have become "angry."[44] Yet this anger is soon turned to mercy, in the granting to Moses of an eloquent spokesman, his brother Aaron.

In Greek and Latin Patristic exegesis this passage is interpreted in a variety of directions, but two main themes stand out, which will be of interest to the passage at hand. First, the statement by the Lord that it is he who made man's mouth and thus is able to make men's powers of speech or sight effective or otherwise is related to the story of Balaam, the unwilling prophet of the Lord (Numbers 22-24) as well as to Christ's command to his disciples not to concern themselves about what to say when persecuted, since he himself will give them eloquence (Luke 21:14-15).[45] A second aspect of the passage which interests commentators is the mention of God's anger, which, as an unfitting attribute of God, is explained away or qualified.[46]

Although it is impossible to determine to what extent "Cyprianus" was familiar with these interpretations, it is at least clear that his own exegesis, which we will soon consider, does not contradict them, and yet was facilitated by the adaptation of a well-known Vergilian phrase which occurs at the very beginning of the *Aeneid*:

> Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso,
> Quidve dolens regina deum tot volvere casus
> *Insignem pietate virum*, tot adire labores
> Impulerit. Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?

> (Muse, recount for me the reasons, what divinity was injured,
> Or what grieving did the Queen of the Gods compel
> *A man renowed for piety* to undergo so many misfortunes,
> So many labors? Is the anger of heavenly spirits so great?)
>
> *Aeneid* I.8-11

In the phrase *insignem pietate* ("renowned for piety") is conveyed, as through a traditional epithet,[47] an essential feature of Aeneas' character, which supplies in its context a key to the whole meaning of the *Aeneid*. Aeneas, and indeed Rome herself, must suffer much from the irrational forces of evil in carrying out the divinely appointed task. The brightness of the phrase stands out at the head of its line in sharp chiaroscuro with the divine anger and endless sufferings which surround it. Looking now at "Cyprianus'" adaptation of the phrase, we can see how he brings out the climax of the dialogue between Moses and the Lord:

nil denique dignum
Esse sibi, quod mens hominum subnixa sequatur.
Arguitur nullum, Domino nisi dante, politis
Sensibus effari, nec longa silentia mutos
Rumpere, ni Dominus laxaret vincula linguae;
Tempora qui reserat surdis, qui lumina caecis,
Videntumque aciem qui pura luce serenat.
"Vade," ait, "et plena confisus fare loquella
Nobilis eloquio sensuque ad verba rotundo."
Sed dum saepe Deum poscit aliumque precatur
Substitui subdique sibi, commovit in iram
Insignem pietate Deum, qui concitus infit:
"Germanus est ecce tuus limata facundus
Ora gerens notusque mihi, Levita creatus . . . ."

([Moses said that] he had nothing worthy
That the mind of men should support and follow him.
He is reproved that nothing is spoken with polished
Intelligence unless the Lord grant it, nor do mute ones
Break their long silences unless the Lord release the binding
of their tongues;
He Who opens the temples of the deaf, gives light to the blind,
And, for those who see, clarifies their sight with pure light.
"Go forth," He said, "and speak confidently with a full speech,
Noble in eloquence and with sense well-rounded to words."
But while he often pleads with God and begs Him to send
Another, as a substitute for him, he stirred into anger
The God renowned for piety, who thus incited said:
"Behold, there is your brother, who is eloquent and has a well-
polished mouth,
Well-known to me, born a Levite . . . .")
Heptateuchos, Exodus 204-15

By changing *virum* to *deum* "Cyprianus" seems at first sight to have
merely adapted a Vergilian locution for the purpose of softening the
scriptural attribution of anger to God. Although that in itself is an
"exegetical" strategy, much more is involved as well. The phrase provides
an intelligible structure for the whole incident, and it does so through
the genuine realization on the part of the poet of the meaning and effect of
the Vergilian passage and through his ability to apply this realization to

the scriptural scene. The poet felt an analogy between the long-suffering
goodness of Aeneas, assaulted and tried by the evil, irrational chaos of
Juno's anger, and the long-suffering goodness of God, assaulted and tried
by the stubborn lack of faith of Moses. The evil and irrationality of the
pagan cosmos is now more accurately ascribed to the evil tendency in human
nature itself, as exemplified here by Moses. Seen in this way, the phrase,
coming as it does at the climax of the dialogue and standing at the head of
the line, provides an explanation not only of the Lord's anger but also of
the Lord's mercy in finally granting to Moses a spokesman. That the Lord is
characterized precisely here as *pious* through an epic epithet reminds us of
his nature, making clear the insult implied by Moses' lack of faith, as well
as preparing us for his merciful act of granting Moses' plea. An interpret-
ation is thereby provided by the adaptation of Vergil which accords perfectly
with the Patristic exegesis on the passage, in the course of bringing alive
the ancient Hebrew story in epic terms.

The second passage to be considered is taken from the *Carmen Paschale*
of Caelius Sedulius.[48] This poet, about whom only a little more is known than
about "Cyprianus," was an Italian *presbyter* composing in the second quarter
of the fifth century.[49] His method of creating a Christian epic exegesis
resulted in a five-book poem, of which the first book sets forth general
theological positions and a selective review of God's supernatural actions
as given in the Old Testament, followed by four books treating the life,
death, and Resurrection of Christ. In accordance with its title, this epic
is a true cultural synthesis. Penetrated with Christian theological ideas
as expressed through the medium of the Classical epic tradition, it is a
Greco-Roman poem (*Carmen*) devoted to a strictly Judaeo-Christian theme
(Christ as the fulfillment of the Jewish *Pasch*).[50] It differs from the
Heptateuchos not only in its emphasis on the New Testament but also by
Sedulius' method of drawing explicit theological and moral lessons from each
incident he narrates. Nevertheless, this more explicitly doctrinal pur-
pose is everywhere facilitated by the traditional poetic method, which makes
more lavish use than "Cyprianus" of simile, word play, figures of speech and
thought, and apostrophe, resulting in a new variety of the same kind of
cultural synthesis.

We can observe the poet at work in his interpretation of the story of
King Herod's "slaughter of the Innocents." The passage in the Vulgate is
as follows:[51]

(16) Tunc Herodes videns quoniam illusus esset a Magis, iratus

est valde, / et mittens occidit omnes pueros, qui erant in Bethlehem,

et in omnibus finibus eius, / a bimatu et infra secundum tempus,

quod exquisierat a Magis. (17) Tunc adimpletum est quod dictum

est per Ieremiam prophetam dicentem: (18) *Vox in Rama audita est,*

ploratus, et ululatus multus: / Rachel plorans filios suos, et

noluit consolari, quia non sunt.

((16) Then Herod, seeing that he had been deceived by the Magi,

became very angered, and sent people to kill all the boys who

were in Bethlehem, and in all its *neighbouring regions, who were*

two years old or less, according to the date that he had obtained

from the Magi. (17) Then was fulfilled what had been said through

the prophet Jeremiah when he says: (18) "A voice was heard in

Rama / Wailing and much lamentation: / Rachel weeping for her

children, / and she refused to be consoled, because they were

not".)

(Matthew 2:16-18)

In their prose exegeses of this passage, Jerome and Hilary agree in
emphasizing the sanctity of the murdered babies (the first martyrs for
Christ), and their comments focus on the meaning of the passage from Jeremiah:
they explain that the reason for Rachel's refusal to be consoled was that she
had no need for consolation, knowing that her children were now specially
blessed in heaven.[52] As we shall see, Sedulius is similarly concerned to
bring out their sanctity in dying for Christ, but his epic poetic method of
exegesis allows him to go more deeply into the experience itself as narrated
in the Gospel. The poet arrives at a theological interpretation of their
deaths as *alteri Christi* ("other Christs"), with whose suffering and death
Christ also shared, but he arrives at this only after taking the reader /
listener through an adequate emotional preparation.

His treatment, starting at II.107, emphasizes two things: the inhuman
ferocity of Herod -- likened by simile to a raging lion, *ceu leo frendens,*
(110) -- and the pathos of the babies and their mothers -- likened to an
innocent flock of sheep attacked by the lion (112-17), enraged that one of
the lambs (i.e., Jesus) had slipped his grasp (111). This most ancient of
epic similes sets the tone for ten further lines which develop horror at
Herod's rage and grief for the bereaved mothers (117-26). At this point the
poet feels the need to draw out a little longer this contrast between the
lordly perpetrator of evil and the innocent victims of his rage, focusing

now on the frustration of Herod as he looks from his palace walls on the
bloody spectacle below, where, unknown to him and despite his intentions, the
first Christian victory of martyrdom is taking place. In order to realize
this complex contrast the poet has recourse to a passage from Vergil deeply
set in his memory, the scene in the fourth book of the *Aeneid* where Dido sees
from her palace tower the distant preparations of the Trojans on the beach,
and where Vergil addresses her in words that make clear her frustration:

> Quis tibi tum, Dido, cernenti talia sensus?
> Quosve dabas gemitus, cum litora fervere late
> Prospiceres arce ex summa, totumque videres
> Misceri ante oculos tantis clamoribus aequor?
> Improbe Amor! quid non mortalia pectora cogis!
>
> (What, O Dido, were your feelings then, on seeing this?
> What groans did you give forth, when you saw from your
> High tower the shore busy far and wide with activity,
> And before your eyes the whole sea astir with shouts?
> Baneful Love! How many mortal hearts you snare!)
>
> > (*Aeneid* IV.408-12)

It should be noticed here how the ancient poet's sympathy for Dido in
her abandonment is tempered by his censure of immoderate passion, which has
blinded Dido's eyes to the providential task of the Romans, a task which
must go on despite her. Four centuries later the Christian Sedulius applied
the scene, and its moral / emotional complex, to Herod in this way:[53]

> Quis tibi tum, lanio, cernenti talia sensus?
> Quosve dabas fremitus, cum vulnera fervere late
> Prospiceres arce ex summa vastumque videres
> Misceri ante oculos tantis plangoribus aequor?
>
> (What, O Butcher, were your feelings then, on seeing this?
> What snarls did you give forth, when you saw from your
> High tower the wounds spread far and wide,
> And before your eyes a vast plain astir with groaning?)
>
> > (*Carmen Paschale* II.127-30)

A learned allusion to Dido -- in the manner of T.S. Eliot -- was not his
intention. It is the experience of frustration, the scene of a miserable
figure looking down at a group of people swept up in a destiny beyond the

reach of his grasp, that the poet wishes to convey. The stage is at last
set for the climax, at once poetic and exegetical:

> Extinctisque tamen quamvis infantibus absens,
>
> Praesens Christus erat, qui sancta pericula semper
>
> Suscipit, et poenas alieno in corpore sentit.

> (Though all those infants were killed, He was not there --
>
> And yet *was* there, the Christ, Who always takes
>
> Upon Himself holy dangers, and feels the pains endured in the
>
> > body of another.)

> > > (131-33)

Instead of addressing Amor, Sedulius brings the frustration of Herod, and
our horror at the death of the Innocents, into a unity, set off with ration-
al and emotional sharpness by the antithesis of *absens* (at the end of line
131) and *praesens* (at the beginning of line 132). Despite Herod's cruel
program, Christ is not killed, and despite our sorrow at the death of the
infants, Christ's will is done, Christ is present at their suffering, and
they are received in glory as the first martyrs of the Church. Impotent
rage and deepest sorrow are suddenly, mysteriously, transmuted to peace --
and an emotionally complex movement taken from Vergil has become the basis
for a vivid exegesis of Scripture.

Our third and final example, of still greater length, will show more
fully the same kind of synthesis, as epic narrative techniques and Vergilian
phrases, images, and ideas are applied to the story of Noah and the Flood
to communicate both Old and New Testament themes. Claudius Marius Victorius,
a rhetor of Marseilles, composed his *Alethia* or "Truth" about the same time
as "Cyprianus" Gallus and Caelius Sedulius composed their poems.[54] His
approach to his task differs from both of the others, resulting in an (unfin-
ished) interpretation of the Old Testament which in three books covers only
Genesis 1-19. While he resembles Sedulius in being lavish in his incorpor-
ation of explicit doctrine and in his application of poetic artifice, he
resembles "Cyprianus" in his choice of subject and his slow, meditative
quality.[55]

The story of Noah, too long to quote in full here, begins at II.382 in
Hovingh's edition and runs for 285 lines to III.98; for the present pur-
pose we can focus only on the story of the Flood proper (Genesis 7-8), which
provides a kind of climax to the second book (II.417-559). We will be able
to observe how Vergil and the epic tradition are drawn upon at varying depths

to communicate the meaning and the experience of the story in a manner
impossible for a prose exegete.

Several important aspects of the poet's technique in this passage have
been accurately described by Roberts;[56] my purpose is only to emphasize the
perfect synthesis of *epos* and scriptural actualization and interpretation
which it exemplifies. At one level, particular formulae or phrases from
Vergil (and other poets) are adapted to make vivid some of the key moments
in the story. In the climactic duel between Aeneas and Turnus in *Aeneid*
XII the world-wide scope of the contest is conveyed through the eyes of
King Latinus:

> stupet ipse Latinus
> Ingentis, genitos *diversis partibus orbis*
> Inter se coiisse viros et cernere ferro . . . .

> (Latinus himself wonders
> At the two huge men, born *in different parts of the world*,
> And now going into combat, to contend with the sword . . . .)
> (*Aeneid* XII.707-9)

Just so the universal effect of the Flood and the unifying safety of the Ark
for all the animals of the earth are conveyed by the Christian poet:

> Nec mora fit: quicquid convexo cardine caeli
> Nascitur ignotum *diversis partibus orbis* . . .
> Una ruit trepidans et apertae immergitur arcae . . . .

> (And no delay: whatever under the curved canopy of heaven
> Has been born unknown *in different parts of the world* . . .
> Rushes at once, in fear, and is taken into the open Ark . . . .)
> (*Alethia* II.445-46; 450)

In another of Vergil's battle scenes, Aeneas, learning of the death of his
young ally Pallas, storms vengefully into the fray "like the hundred-handed
Giant Aegaeon":

> Aegaeon qualis, centum qui bracchia dicunt
> Centenasque manus . . .
> Sic *toto Aeneas desaevit in aequore victor*
> Ut semel intepuit mucro . . . .

(Like Aegaeon, with his fabled hundred arms
And hundred hands . . .
So *Aeneas raged throughout the plain in victory*
Once he first warmed his blade . . . .)

$\hspace{6cm}$(*Aeneid* X.565-66; 569-70)

Just so the rains begin to fall and pick up speed, raging with a universal
vengeance on the world:

Nox ruit et subitae caelum obduxere tenebrae
Effusoque cadens terras ferit aere nimbus
Praeceps, more brevis, servaturusque tenorem
Sic furit et *toto pariter desaevit in orbe*
Tamquam in parte solet . . . .

(Night falls, and sudden darkness cloaks the heavens,
And a cloud, striking the lands with poured-out air
Falls steeply, as in a brief storm, and keeping its force continuous,
Storms and *rages throughout the whole world*
As it usually does only in a part . . . .)

$\hspace{6cm}$(*Alethia* II.456-60)

When at last the rains are stopped, and the Flood begins to subside,
first the raven and next the dove are sent forth by Noah, the dove in his
second flight bringing the olive branch of peace:

columba . . .quae rursum missa reportat
Paciferae frugis parvum libamen olivae.

(the dove . . . sent again, brings back
A little sample of the fruit of the peace-bearing olive)

$\hspace{6cm}$(*Alethia* II.501-2)

This is an image taken from Aeneas' first meeting with Pallas, during the
Trojans' up-river embassy to Evander:

$\hspace{4cm}$Pallas
. . . procul e tumulo . . . [inquit]
"Qui genus? unde domo? pacemne huc fertis an arma?
Tum pater Aeneas puppi sic fatur ab alta
Paciferaeque manu ramum praetendit olivae
"Troiugenas ac tela vides inimica Latinis . . . ."

(Pallas

[Thus spoke] from the mound far away:

"What is your race? Where is your home? Do you bring peace here

or war?"

Then Father Aeneas thus spoke from the high stern,

And held forth in his hand the branch of peace-bearing olive,

"Trojan-born ones, and arms opposed to the Latins do you behold

. . . .")

(*Aeneid* VIII.115-17)

And at last, in the same words and imagery with which the winds burst forth
from Aeolus' cave in the first book of the *Aeneid,*

ac venti, velut agmine facto,

Qua data porta, ruunt . . . .

(and the winds, as if in a battle line,

Rush forth at the opening of the gate . . . .)

(*Aeneid* I.82-83)

so, at last, do the animals spring forth from the Ark:

Quae, *postquam data porta, ruunt*: pars aera pennis,

Pars saltus silvasque petunt, pars mersa cavernis

Infoditur patulis terrae, pars libera campis

Exultat siccis et prato vernat aperto . . . .

(And [the animals], *after the gate was opened, rush forth*: some

seek the air with wings,

Others seek the valleys and the woods, some dig and

Bury themselves in the broad caverns of the earth,

Still others rejoice, free on the broad fields, and flourish on

the open plain . . . .)

(*Alethia* II.524-27)

We should not assume that the specific passages from the *Aeneid* would
have to have been recalled by the late antique reader in order for him to
appreciate the poetry: whether recognized or not, the richness of epic
feeling in the animals coming in from all over the world, the furious rains,
the olive-branch of peace, and the bursting-forth in freedom only contribute
subtle details to the epic realization of the scriptural narrative. Con-
sidering this level of his composition only, the poet approximates Proba,

whose Christian epic is "pure Vergil,"[57] and yet even here the synthesis is
at work, as the epic experience extends, and is extended by, the actualiz-
ation of Scripture. Victorius' method, however, also takes him farther, so
that at another level, by making more individual use of traditional epic
poetic-rhetorical devices without necessarily drawing on actual phrases of a
predecessor, he is able to bring out the actual experience of the characters
in the story. There are two outstanding examples of this in our passage.

First, when the Ark-travellers receive the good news brought by the
dove, their joy is expressed with a three-fold simile using anaphora:

> Tantus ad indicium magni cum laude parentis
> Clausorum fletus, quo se quoque laeta revelant,
> Exoritur, *quantus*, muris cum victor acerbus
> Insultat, subitum obsessis si forte feratur
> Auxilium, *quantus*, cum iudice missa modesto
> Addictos *rursum vitae sententia reddit*,
> *Quantus*, in ambiguum funus cum vita recurrit
> Inter lugentum lacrimas et gaudia, fletus . . . .

> (So great was the weeping at the sign, with praise for the great
> father,
> Arose from the people enclosed, as everywhere gladness was revealed,
> As great as when a cruel victor mounts the walls,
> And sudden aid is brought by chance to the besieged,
> As great as when the sentence of a moderate judge
> Grants life again to the accused;
> As great a weeping as when life comes back to a doubtful death
> And amid the tears of the grieving ones is joy.)
>
> (*Alethia* II.503-10)

The unbounded joy of the discouraged captives of the Ark is made clear in
terms of contemporary experience, in Roman law courts and in the chaos of
the early fifth-century Germanic movements in Gaul. A second example of a
similar use of rich epic-poetic rhetoric occurs a little later, after the
animals have dispersed, when the psychological focus is concentrated on
Noah's impression of a whole new world: first his own perceptions, and
next the description of the world he sees, are conveyed with three-fold
interpretatio:

At dominus, mundi sortitus regna secundi,

Cuncta Noe gaudens oculis ac mente capaci

Accipit atque animam nequit exsaturare replendo[58]

Et cupido raptim perlustrans omnia visu

Ut nova miratur. Noto fulgentior ortu

Et mage sol rutilus, ridet maiore sereno

Laeta poli facies et desperata virescunt

Fetibus arva novis . . . .

(But the master Noah, now granted a realm of a second world,

Rejoicing takes in everything with his eyes and capacious mind,

And he cannot fill his soul sufficiently,

Going over all with a swift and desirous gaze,

He wonders at its newness. More brightly than

At its usual rising gleams the sun, the glad face of heaven

Smiles with greater serenity, and the despaired-of fields

Grow green with new fruits . . . .)

<div align="right">(Alethia II.528-35)</div>

Here again it is clear that the poet is developing the experience of the characters in the scriptural story in order to engage the experience of the audience in an actual historical event, now allowed to live in epic terms.

But this vivid psychological portrait is also the basis for a Christian exegesis, and at this point the poet's exegetical epic method must be considered at a third level. In the foregoing analysis we have seen how the Vergilian reminiscences and use of epic-poetic rhetoric have brought into play the experiences of judgment, harsh retribution, peace granted after trials, rescue from imminent death, liberation, and receiving the gift of a new creation; in the concluding lines of the story Victorius brings all these hints together into an explicit and climactic formulation of the standard Christian exegesis of the Flood as the sign of Baptism and the Last Judgment, and of the Ark as the Church, nourished in its journey by the Eucharistic food and drink.[59] And yet even this typological interpretation is conveyed as arising naturally from the epic presentation of the inner and outer experiences of the actors in the story. While taking in the new world around him, Noah cannot easily forget the horror they have just passed through, and he is envisaged by the poet as leading his family in a kind of communal reflection on the meaning of their recent ordeal:

Sed adhuc versatur imago
Ante oculos tantae semper memoranda ruinae,
Inter aquas quid pertulerint, quid munere sacro
Et non pertulerint, fremeret cum verbere saevo
Pontus et inlisas contemneret arca procellas;
Cumque suis reputat, quam late sancta parentis
Se circum summi fundens largitio constet,
Et docet attonitos verumque addiscere promptos,
Unde cibus tantis toto suffecerit anno,
Quis potus; namque hoc constat, si cetera vitae
Suppeterent, clausos, dum fluctuat arca, necari
Inter aquas potuisse siti, nisi rector Olympi
Depositos penitus nec iam ulla extrema timentis
Sustinuisset eo, quo condidit omnia, nutu.
Ille animas longae perituras carcere noctis
Affectu lucis spolians virtute replevit;
Ille, ut tam segnem possent perferre quietem,
Infudit pigri placidum torporis amorem,
Ille potens, cui, si placuit, virtute severa
Praegelido raptim sub gurgite cogere fas est
Immersos ardere malos flammisque futuris
Invectos algere bonos, qui tempore parvo,
Ut nunc edocuit populos sic posse necari,
Ipse docebit aquis populos sic posse renasci.

(But still there lingers
Before his eyes an image always to be remembered of so great a ruin,
What they suffered amid the waves, and what, by a holy gift,
They didn't suffer, when the sea raged with a savage scourge
And the Ark spurned the gusts that dashed against it;
With his family he thinks over how widely the holy generosity
Of their High Parent poured itself around them,
And he teaches them as they marvel and show themselves eager to
                                    learn the truth,
Whence came the food that had sufficed for so many creatures for
                                    a whole year,
And what drink; for this is agreed, that even were the rest of
                                    life's necessities
Supplied, the ones enclosed, while the Ark wafted, would have been
                                    killed

> Amid the waves by thirst, if the Governor of heaven
> Had not, as they stayed deeply enclosed and not fearing for their
> > fates,
> Sustained them with that nod, by which he created all.
> He was the one Who, when their souls were going to perish in the
> > prison of a long night,
> Filled them with strength, and removed their longing for day;
> He was the one Who, in order that they could endure a wait so long,
> Poured upon them a placid love of slow idleness;
> He was the mighty One, Who, should it please him, with stern power
> Could justly compel the evil ones, swiftly immersed beneath the
> > cold flood,
> To burn -- and, in those future flames allow the good ones, to be
> > carried cool above,
> He Who, as he has now taught how people can be slain,
> Will Himself teach how, by water, the peoples can be reborn.)
> > (*Alethia* II.535-58)

In these final lines of the second book of the *Alethia* we are allowed to imagine the inner workings of typology -- without disturbing the reality of the actual historical narrative. Noah's "vatic" deductions from the experience of being saved from a universal judgment and his deep thankfulness for their physical and psychological sustenance while afloat provides the lineaments of the standard exegesis without far-flung digressions in the manner of Origen or Augustine. In Noah's capacity as leader and moral guide of a way-faring people, upon whose doings depends the future of all subsequent humanity, he approximates Aeneas himself. Indeed, Victorius himself had just such an idea in mind, as is clear from the first lines of the third book:

> Talia mente gerens, venturaque saecula cernens . . . .

> (Bearing such things in his mind, and discerning future ages . . . .)

Just so had Aeneas dimly discerned the future glories of Rome in the under-world (*Aeneid* VI.756-892) and in the shield given him by Venus (*Aeneid* VIII. 608-731). The Vergilian idea, at once moral, political, and religious, of the heroic bridge-building between past and future, is in this Christian epic made the basis for understanding in similar terms the heroic righteous-ness of Noah.

Three examples of the late antique Latin biblical epic have been
presented in order to show how a cultural synthesis of Judaeo-Christian
scriptural teaching and Greco-Roman *epos* was accomplished by "mere para-
phrasing" as well as by more developed methods. In thus bringing into mutual
fruition two distinct thousand year-old cultural traditions they made a new
kind of epic and a new kind of exegesis, laying the first foundations for
all subsequent Christian epic and providing a basis for mediaeval grammatical
and literary education. Like Aeneas and Noah, the biblical poets accomplished
a providential task as the Western Empire fell in the "deluge" of Germania:
by uniting the interpretation of the Bible with the world of the epic, they
built the first stage of the poetic and educational bridge that leads from
the world of Homer and Vergil on one side, to the world of Dante and Milton
on the other.

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NOTES

[1] Special thanks are due to Professor John H. Corbett of the University
of Toronto Centre for Medieval Studies, whose personal encouragement and
wide learning have helped make this paper a reality. The standard critical
editions of the late antique biblical poets are as follows: Juvencus (Gaius
Vettius Aquilinus Juvencus): CSEL 24 (1891), ed. J. Huemer; "Cyprianus"
Gallus: CSEL 23.1 (1891) 1-208, ed. R. Peiper; Proba (Faltonia Betitia
Proba): CSEL 16 (1888) 569-609, ed. K. Schenkl (see also n. 57 below);
Sedulius (Caelius Sedulius): CSEL 10 (1885) 1-146, ed. J. Huemer; Victorius
(Claudius Marius Victorius): CCSL 128 (1960), ed. P.F. Hovingh; Dracontius
(Blossius Aemilius Dracontius): MGH *AA* 14 (1905) 23-113, ed. F. Vollmer;
Avitus (Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus); MGH *AA* 6.2 (1883) 201-74, ed. R. Peiper
and see now *Avitus, The Fall of Man: De Spiritalis Historiae Gestis Libri
I-III,* ed. Daniel J. Nodes (Toronto 1985); Arator: CSEL 72 (1951), ed. A.P.
Mckinlay. For brief general discussions and basic bibliography see Max
Manitius, *Geschichte der Christlich-Lateininschen Poesie* (Stuttgart 1891);
F.J.E. Raby, *A History of Christian Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the*

Close of the Middle Ages (2nd ed., Oxford 1953) chs. 1, 3, and 5; Jacques
Fontaine, *Naissance de la Poesie dans l'Occident Chrétien* (Paris 1981). See
n. 6 and n. 7 below for the works of Herzog and Roberts.

The dominance in critical theory of the distinction between "mere para-
phrastic" and otherwise can be illustrated in the following remarks of recent
authorities: Charles Witke *in Numen Litterarum, Mittellateinischen Studien
und Texte 5*, ed. Karl Langosch (Leiden und Köln 1971) 214 says "Juvencus is
so faithful a follower of his source that the result is a rather choppy line
. . . . Sedulius is free from such limitations." As for "Cyprianus" Gallus
the same author says (p. 191) that "there is no place in this text for the
poet to stand . . . there is no coordination between what is said or done and
a literary effect," whereas Proba's poem is "a more interesting failure"
(p. 198) and Avitus, who "shows a deep concern for literature" in his
Praefatio (p. 182), "was as free as Vergil in writing the *Aeneid*" (p. 189).
Dieter Kartschoke in *Bibeldichtung* (München 1975) 34-35 says in regard to
Cyprianus, "von einer artistischer Gesämtskonception kann keine Rede sein"
and in regard to Juvencus that "der subtilen Künstlösigkeit entspricht der
Mangel einsichtiger Komposition" (p. 33), and compares the two groups in
these terms (p. 85): "Die spanne von wort-frommer Treue zu grosster Unabhän-
gigkeit von der biblischen Vorlage ist in beiden Reihen [i.e., OT and NT
themes] gleich gross: der Weg von Juvencus bis Arator ist ebenso weit wie
der von Cyprianus zu Avitus." Klaus Thraede, in his influential article "Epos"
in *RAC* 5 (Stuttgart 1965) 983-1042, contrasts in a similar fashion the
"grammatical-historical" paraphrases of Juvencus and "Cyprianus" with the
"rhetorical-didactic," "elegiac-hymnic," and "dramatic-lyric" treatments of
the rest (cols. 1022-31).

[2] Thus it is possible to take two different views toward the development
of the biblical poets, depending on one's disciplinary interests. While
Leonard H. Frey, in "The Rhetoric of Latin Christian Epic Poetry,"
Duquesne Studies, *Annuale Medievale* 2 (1961) 15-30, characterizes its devel-
opment as a progress from the close imitation of Vergil to "manifold excur-
sions into formalized rhetorical posturing" (p. 17), Judith McClure in "The
Biblical Epic and its Audience in Late Antiquity," *Papers of the Liverpool
Latin Seminar III,* 1981, ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers, and
Monographs, 7 (Liverpool 1981) defines the development in terms of an
increasing presence of exegetical concerns (pp. 307, 315).

[3] *Etudes sur le latin des Chrétiens*, vol. 2 (Roma 1961) II.3 "Le latin
médiéval," at pp. 219-20.

[4] *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages,* tr. Willard R. Trask (Princeton 1973) 462.

[5] In addition to the works by Witke and Fontaine (at n. 1), which also discuss other kinds of Latin Christian poetry, and the book by Kartschoke (at n. 1), which also discusses Germanic biblical epic and later Latin rhythmic poetry, see Angelo di Berardino, "La Poesia Cristiana" in *Patrologia III* (Roma 1978; augmented Italian version of J. Qasten's *Patrologia*) 241-321, and the studies devoted to Prudentius by Reinhard Herzog, *Die Allegorische Dichtkunst des Prudentius,* Zetemata 42 (München 1966); by Macklin Smith, *Prudentius' Psychomachia: A Reëxamination* (Princeton 1976); and by H.J. Westra, "Prudentius" in *European Writers: the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,* ed. William T.H. Jackson and George Stade (New York 1983) 1-22. For a recent study of Avitus see Daniel J. Nodes, *Avitus of Vienne's Spiritual History: Its Theme and Doctrinal Implications,* (unpubl. Univ. of Toronto diss. 1981).

[6] *Die Bibelepik der lateinischen Spätantike:Formgeschichte einer erbaulichen Gattung* (München 1976). See the review by J. Fontaine in *Latomus* 38 (1979) 724-27.

[7] *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity,* ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 16 (Liverpool 1985).

[8] Herzog (at n. 6) lxxiii; the author provides a convenient sketch of the development of this school and its relevance to the biblical poets on pp. lxxiii-lxxvi.

[9] Ibid. lxxv.

[10] Ibid. 42-43; 158.

[11] Ibid. 1; 156-57.

[12] Ibid. xlix.

[13] Cf. Fontaine's comments (at n. 6) 725: "Cette formule [i.e., "heteronomes Verhältnis"] me parait dangereusement contradictoire . . . elle suppose en effet une antinomie abstraite et irrealiste entre création littéraire (considerée comme relevant d'un domaine ésthetique purement formel) et oeuvre de caractère religieux."

[14] Eric Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Oxford 1963) 125.

[15] Ibid. 80-84; 180. See also H.I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity,* tr. George Lamb (Madison 1982) 13.

[16] Ibid. 161-62.

[17] Ibid. 277-78.

[18] See M. Louis Holtz, "La survie de Vergile dans le haut moyen âge," *Présence de Virgile,* Actes du Colloque des 9, 11, et 12 décembre 1976, Caesarodunum XIII bis, Numéro spécial, ed. R. Chevallier (Paris 1978) 209-22; esp. 211-12.

[19] See J.K. Newman, *Augustus and the New Poetry*, Collection Latomus 88 (Bruxelles-Berchem 1967) 104-11; 231-32.

[20] See A.J. Gossage, "Vergil and the Flavian Epic," in *Vergil*, ed. D.R. Dudley (London 1969) 67-93.

[21] See Gunther Glauche, *Schullektüre im Mittelalter: Entstehung une Wandlungen des Lektürekanons bis 1200 nach der Quellen dargestellt,* Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung 5 (München 1970) and A.G. Rigg and G.R. Wieland, "A Canterbury Classbook of the Mid-Eleventh Century (The "Cambridge Songs" Manuscript), *Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (1975) 113-30, esp. 120-22, 130.

[22] Roberts (at n. 7) 61-62.

[23] Ibid. 5-36.

[24] Ibid. 107-226.

[25] As shown in part by Herzog (at n. 6) 60-68.

[26] Roberts (at n. 7) 37-60. Although Roberts says that "many of them [i.e., rhetorical paraphrases] are poetic versions of prose originals" (58, and notes 72-75), these are precisely the biblical epics and the Christian hagiographic epics of Paulinus of Périgueux and Venantius Fortunatus, with the exception of three pagan hagiographic epics which do not survive. These late antique pagan and Christian hagiographic epics are similar to the biblical epic in being motivated primarily by the desire to renew the epic tradition around a new ideal, as opposed to the desire to improve the style of a text.

[27] Cf. Roberts (at n. 7) 70-71: "Verse composition certainly does not seem to have been a regular part of grammatical or rhetorical instruction."

[28] Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 24 (Cambridge, Mass. 1960) 21-29.

[29] W.F. Jackson Knight, *Roman Vergil* (Harmondsworth 1966) 113-14; cf.

also 311: "It was the sound, metre, and rhythm, of course, which mainly
carried to, and carried in, Vergil's mind the originals of earlier poetry,
poetry of others or his own, out of which he integrated his new work. With-
out the containing and energizing metre and rhythm the integration could not
go on."

[30] See Roberts (at n. 7) 223-24 and the "General Index" under the rubric
"Christian Latin Poetry: Christian poetic idiom . . . development of Christian
tradition of," etc. (p. 248).

[31] Ibid. 69; 107-8.

[32] For the Judaic backgrounds of Christian exegesis see the articles in
Dizionario Patristico di Antiquita Cristiane, ed. Angelo di Berardino (Casale
Montferatto 1983) on "Esegesi Patristico" by M. Simonetti (vol. I, 1211-23,
esp. 1211-12) and on "Omelia" by R. Gregoire (vol. II, 2467-72, esp. 2471).
For *midrash* see Renée Bloch, "Midrash" in *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, supp.
vol. V (Paris 1957) 1263-81.

[33] See Roger Le Deaut, *Targum du Pentateuch*, Sources Chretiennes 245
(Paris 1978) 43-62.

[34] Bloch (at n. 31) 1269-76.

[35] Ibid. 1266-67; the *midrash haggadah* was the liturgical exposition of
the Scriptures in the synagogue, with emphasis on the narrative sections,
while the *midrash halakhah* was the exposition of the legislative sections of
the Scriptures in the school.

[36] Cf. Hebrews 1:1-2; see Roger Le Deaut, "A propos d'une definition
du midrash," *Biblica* 50 (1969) 395-413, esp. 407-8.

[37] Ibid. 402.

[38] McClure (at n. 2) 307-10.

[39] See Max Wehrli, "Sacra Poiesis: Bibelepik als Europäische Tradition"
in Max Wehrli, *Formen Mittelalterlichen Erzählung* (Zürich und Freiburg 1969)
51-71.

[40] Three approximately contemporary poets have been chosen in order to
emphasize the essential characteristics without raising questions about the
historical development of the tradition, a very complex problem which cannot
be dealt with here. See Roberts (n. 7) passim and n. 2 above.

[41] For "Cyprianus" Gallus (edition at n. 1) see Manitius (at n. 1) 166-
70; Martin Schanz, Carl Hosius, Gustav Kruger, *Geschichte der Römischen*

Literatur bis zum Gesetzgebungswerk des Kaisers Justinian, Vierter Teil: Die
Literatur des vierten Jahrhunderts (München 1914) Bd. 1, 212-14; Raby (at
n. 1) 76; Fontaine (at n. 1) 246-48; Herzog (at n. 6) 53-60, 99-154;
di Berardino (at n. 1) 295-97; Roberts (at n. 7) 92-96.

[42] For critical analyses of passages of "Cyprianus" see Frey (at n. 2)
20-22; J.M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford 1968)
137-41; Witke (at n. 1) 190-91; K. Smolak, "Lateinische Umdichtungen des
biblischen Schöpfungsberichtes," *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte
der altchristlichen Literatur* 115 (1975) 350-60, esp. 351-52; Roberts (at
n. 7) 116-21; 130; 182-86; 202-7.

[43] See Roberts (at n. 7) 92-95 for a discussion of "Cyprianus'" Biblical
text (esp. n. 125). The text cited is taken from *Codex Lugdunensis.
Pentateuchi Versio Latina Antiquissima e Codice Lugdunensi,* ed. Ulysse Robert
(Paris 1881) 170.

[44] See Moshe Greenberg, *Understanding Exodus* (New York 1969) 89-90 and
Lester Meyer, *The Message of Exodus: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis
1983) 55-56.

[45] Cf. Origen *Homiliae in Numeros*, GCS 30 (ed. W.A. Baehrens 1-285)
XVII.3 (p. 158); Tertullian *Adversus Marcionem*, CCSL 1 (ed. Aem. Kroymann,
437-726) 4.39.6 (p. 652); Cyprian of Carthage *Ad Fortunatum*, CCSL 3 (ed.
R. Weber, 181-216) 10 (p. 200).

[46] Cf. Origen *De Principiis*, GCS 22 (ed. P. Koetschau) 2.4.4. (pp. 131-
32); Augustine *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum Libri VII*, CCSL 23 (ed. J. Fraipont)
Quaestiones Exodi II. 10 (p. 72).

[47] Vergil will be quoted from *Vergilii Opera*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford
1969). Cf. the first line of the *Odyssey* of Homer, where the essential
epithet of *andra . . . polytropon* ("a man of many shifts") is used to define
Odysseus' character throughout the epic.

[48] For the edition see n. 1 above.

[49] For what is known about Sedulius' date, place, and biography see
Manitius (at n. 1) 303-12; Schanz-Hosius-Kruger (at n. 41) Bd. 2 (München
1920) 368-74; Raby (at n. 1) 108-10; Fontaine (at n. 1) 248-52; Di Berardino
(at n. 1) 304-8; Roberts (at n. 7) 77-86.

[50] For critical descriptions and analyses of specific passages of Sedulius
see Frey (at n. 2) 22-24, 26; Barbara K. Lewalski, *Milton's Brief Epic:
The Genre, Meaning, and Art of Paradise Regained* (Providence 1966) 45-47

(note particularly this author's contention that typology *enhances* the poem's
epic dimension); Witke (at n. 1) 206-18; Roberts (at n. 7) 110-13,
138, 142, 144-45, 154-57, 165-71.

[51] The text is quoted here from *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem,*
ed. R. Weber, OSB (Stuttgart 1983).

[52] St Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matthaeum Libri IV,* CCSL 77 (ed. D. Hurst
and M. Adriaen) I (p. 14-15); St Hilary, *Sur Matthieu,* Sources Chretiennes
254 (ed. J. Doignon) 1.7 (p. 100).

[53] For another study of this particular Vergilian adaptation by Sedulius
see A. Grillo, "La Presenza di Vergilio in Sedulio Poeta Paraphrastico" in
M. Chevallier (at n. 18) 185-94, esp. 189-91.

[54] For background details and bibliography see Manitius (at n. 1) 180-
88; Schanz-Hosius-Kruger (at n. 49); Raby (at n. 1) 77; P.F. Hovingh, *Claudius
Marius Victorius' Alethia: la prière et les verses 1-170 du livre I avec
introduction, traduction et commentaire* (Groningen 1955); Fontaine (at n. 1)
241-43; di Berardino (at n. 1) 301-4; Roberts (at n. 7) 96-99. Edition at
n. 1.

[55] For critical discussion and analyses of passages see Hovingh (at n. 54),
Evans (at n. 42) 121-26; Witke (at n. 1) 156-61; Smolak (at n. 42) 352-53;
Roberts (at n. 7) 121-22, 130-31, 145-46, 158-59, 186-93, 207, 210-11, 213-14.

[56] Roberts (at n. 7) 158-59, 207.

[57] See the next text and study of Proba by Elizabeth A. Clark and Diane
F. Hatch, *The Golden Bough, The Oaken Cross: the Vergilian Cento of Faltonia
Betitia Proba,* American Academy of Religion Texts and Translation Series 5
(Chico 1981).

[58] Cf. Vergil's description of Dido's fascination with Ascanius at *Aeneid*
I.712-14: *praecipue infelix, pesti devota futurae, / expleri mentem nequit
ardescitque tuendo / Phoenissa . . . .*

[59] See Jack P. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood
in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden 1968) 161-76.